

The Revelation of the Personal Archive in Performance

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ABSTRACT

This explication focuses on the use of memory from the personal archive as it has been implemented in the process and conception of my thesis production: *Vessel: images of a life more/less lived*.

In the introduction I explain that it was a training opportunity with Deborah Hay in 2005 in Scotland that incited this study. It was during this time that I came to realise the value of working with the body as a cellular entity and that the information housed within it can be accessed and used, both artistically as well as personally.

Section one deals with the notions of memory and cellular memory by investigating the works of Paul Ricouer's philosophical theories on memory, history and forgetting. The relationship between the personal archive and cellular memory is analysed by referring to the body as analogous to an archive building. Section two delves deeper into the world of our memories and of forgetting and suggests two possible hypotheses for the emergence of detritus in the archive.

Section three is an in depth discussion of the source of my study. Deborah Hay's performance theories and some of her working methodologies are unpacked. Section four looks at the three performance works that were created after I was inspired to use the body's inherent intelligence in performance. In this chapter, *From Hay to Home*, I also discuss the ways in which I have developed Hay's theories in my own search for artistic expression. The three works: *Pad*, *Once Blind Now Seen* and *Ariadne's Boots* are discussed under a series of headings which emerged from my workings with the cellular body, its history and the personal archive.

The explication critically investigates the ways in which concepts were developed into creative processes and prepared the way for *Vessel*, the thesis production. In the conclusion, I present the material that is being created from all the different dimensions of my life by taking into consideration existential theory and the current political milieu within which I live.

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INTRODUCTION

It was in Findhorn, Scotland, under the guidance of acclaimed choreographer, Deborah Hay, that I started exploring my body's memory and intelligence. Central to the study lies my personal attempt to do as Hay claims she attempts to do and get a "wider perspective on how dancing impacts my life and how my life impacts my dancing" (Hay, D. 2008).

It was during my participation in the Solo Performance Commissioning Project¹ in August 2005, that I realised the inherent knowledge of the body. Since I am a theatre maker, it was specifically within the realm of performance that I wanted to probe the body's wisdom and knowledge. The personal archive, I have to come to realise, represents this very knowledge and wisdom, and it has become a source from which I can work as well as live. It is through this understanding that I have realised how little - if at all - I have drawn inspiration as a performer from this readily available reservoir of experiences and knowledge. I stand in awe in the presence of my own body's wisdom. This is an intimate way of being with one's thoughts as they emerge. It focuses one's attention on one thing: the body, which is a reliable and helpful resource both creatively and personally. This awareness reminds me of the many examples of primal peoples living subsistence lives in non-literate communities across the globe. It would be accurate to say that, unlike me, until recently at least, primal people indeed nurture a deep understanding and awareness of the sentience of the body. In his book, *Dance: Rituals of Experience*, Jamake Highwater writes: "for primal peoples this process of being transformed into [body] movement is easy. 'To you', they [primal people] explain, 'the apple is a very, very complicated and mysterious thing. But for the apple tree it is easy'" (Highwater, 1992: 27).

¹ Deborah Hay started The Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP) in 1998. Since 2004 it is hosted annually in Findhorn, Scotland, over a period of ten days. All participants are taught the same solo and encouraged to adapt the work for performance in their own community after a daily practice of at least three months.

Primitive cultures nurture a deep “belief in a world of essences which is embodied in all forces and elements. The name of this fundamental “power” is generally designated in English as *nature* [...]”(Highwater, 1992: 23). In linguistic terms it is the verb that is linked closest to the action of dancing, moving or performing a ritual. All of these actions involve the body in performance. It is the same body that is able to run, walk, sit, crawl, writhe, jump, jolt and so on. These are the active verbs; yet the same body is also responsible for honouring and executing the passive verbs of recall, recognise, intuit and feel. In both cases of active and passive action, it is the body that is “an organ of action and not of representation and [...] the brain is the organising centre of this acting system” (Ricoeur, 2004: 431). Conversely, it is indeed through the physical body that we are represented in performance. “The body is capable of communicating in its own bodily manner. When one considers how powerfully movement influences us, it isn’t difficult to understand why primal people regard an action as the embodiment of a mysterious force” (Highwater, 1992: 24).

Initially, I thought of using the notion of the *representation* of the personal archive in performance in the title of this explication. It was through the work of Deborah Hay that I was challenged to explore the possibilities of staging productions that use the personal archive as the source of the material. The ‘representation of the personal archive’ therefore refers to the ways in which the cellular body can represent what is contained within it. Since then, I have come to realise that instead of finding ways of representation, it is more about the *revelatory* nature of accessing the personal archive in rehearsal as well as performance, which more accurately describes what I do. Therefore, I have settled on the term *revelation* (as opposed to *representation*) as mentioned in the thesis statement. However, a strong dynamic exists between the notions of representation and revelation: if one is representing something it would have been revealed to you or be in the process of being revealed to you. Conversely, to reveal suggests bringing to the fore what is concealed and then representing it.

Since this paper investigates the notion of the revelation of personal archives, the emphasis is on the *personal content* of my own history and life experience, that is, the investigation focuses on the experience of being a 38-year old, Caucasian, gay male, born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. My first language is Afrikaans and I live and work in Cape Town as a choreographer and teacher of performance. My upbringing and life form part of a Westernised, consumer-driven society and my enquiry into the body and its innate history stems from this viewpoint. I am part of the group of people to whom connecting with the body tends not to be natural since my culture comes from another part of the spectrum to what Highwater terms, 'primal people.'

This study is an investigation into the revelation of the personal archive of the performer as well as the performance event, since it is in these areas that the un-mindful treatment of my body has occurred. Never in the 17 years that I have practiced physical movement in performance has the acute awareness of the body been as central to my work as at the present moment. It is true that my body has been used in many ways to portray and deliver a story or a feeling, but the practice of cellular memory is different because it encourages previously ignored awareness of the information that already exists in the body. As performers we also neglect to think of the body metaphorically as an archive in which "secret" documents are filed. I say "secret" or "hidden" because the information is already there, perhaps outside of our consciousness, and not all of it available to us all the time (Ricoeur, 2004: 427). Again it has to be noted that there are several other theatre and dance practitioners who work in the body/mind modality and it is not new to the fraternity of theatre makers. The names of Deborah Hay, Anna Halprin and Ruth Zaporah (to name but a few) are in the forefront of my mind while conducting this study. There are of course many more experimental theatre makers whom I have not mentioned here.

THROUGH THE LENS OF THE ARCHIVE: THEORY OF CELLULAR MEMORY AND MEMORY ITSELF

Cellular memory as a scientific phenomenon is a very broad and indeed complex area of scientific research in biology and, in particular, neurobiology. Instead of getting caught up in the minutiae of the scientific nature of these complex fields of study, I have recently shifted my focus to the metaphorical use of the body as a cellular entity and locus of the personal archive. In doing so, the personal archive, which I feel deals more directly and substantively with artistic interpretation, comes to the fore. I do still refer to cellular memory, albeit in the sense in which Deborah Hay hypothesises about its functioning. Having said that, I do, however briefly, dwell on the impossibility of the Cartesian split of mind and body, notably from the titanic research done by Antonio Damasio in this regard, in his book entitled, *Descartes' Error*. As the title suggests, Damasio argues and proves, to my mind, that it was an untrue assumption of Descartes to claim that there is indeed a split between the body and the mind.

Over the past year of this study, I have been alluding to the imbalance between body and mind in the creative act, in that the mind takes precedence over the creative act. I stand by this assertion. Initially I sought to redress this imbalance by suggesting precedence of body over mind, through the practice of Deborah Hay's work. I was challenged to review the Cartesian split of body and mind and have since come to new insights. In his book, Damasio speaks of the "body-minded brain", discussing how the body "provides a ground reference for the mind." (Damasio, 2000: 223). This ground reference is a helpful term in understanding my stance toward the relationship between body and mind. Damasio proceeds to explain that "it is the entire organism rather than the body alone or the brain alone that interacts with the environment" (Damasio, 2000: 224).

Notion of the 'Archive'

In the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary the word **archive** is defined as:

1. *A place in which collected public or corporate records are kept; a repository for documents etc; a data bank.*
2. *Records so kept. Place or store in an archive; (Computing) transfer to a store of infrequently used files, or to a memory at a lower hierarchical level (e.g. from disc to tape).*

(Brown, 1993: 110).

In order to better understand how I see cellular memory and memory itself in relation to the archive, I propose the following analogy: our ephemeral memories can be seen as the collection of physically written documents - letters, papers or photographs - which exist within each individual. Additionally, I am treating the archive or 'physical building' as analogous to the physical body of the subject. An historian is the person who documents events and happenings and in this instance is represented by the performer. Thus each subject acts in the capacity of historian as well as archivist of her/his own history and has the choice of selecting those memories, which she/he feels are more significant than others. In the same way that the historian orders the archive, the subject determines what status each memory holds in the body. Thus the memories are archived as more, or less, significant. In the same way that physical documents are archived or kept in safety for later use or reference, the body houses its memory cellularly. This point triggers thought around issues such as selective memory and forgetfulness. The ideas of partial and selective memory are discussed in more detail later on. As a written document in an archive "is open to whoever knows how to read", so the performer can access these secret documents - imprinted cellularly - and it is open to anyone who knows how to intuit (Ricoeur, 2004: 169).

Cellular memory is Deborah Hay's way of visualising the body. In her work strong emphasis is placed on the very cellularity of her body, which consists of trillions of cells, each with the ability to hold memory information. She uses

this as the primary source of her creativity in performance. Access to the revelations of the body's archive is not something that happens automatically or randomly; instead it is a conscious choice made by the performance artist.

Usually preference, and therefore higher status, is given to the intellect and the mind to think for us, or, since we are speaking in terms of dance theatre, to create the dance. In this regard the notion of writing a ballet is helpful in understanding the formulaic way of creating and structuring a dance without the dancers being present. Traditionally, ballets are made using a limited and set choreographic vocabulary. In stark contrast to this age-old dance form, my own investigation and practice of dance theatre since working with Deborah Hay relies heavily on the body, its memory and the possible ways of representing these memories. When I compare the two ways of creating dance forms like this, I am not advocating that ballet is devoid of feeling or meaning because ballet dancers do bring unique interpretations each time they perform and evoke strong emotions in the minds of their audiences. Whether creating work from a balletic or contemporary dance background, the body remains the primary means of conveying a message in all dances. It is also the thing that creates the images, message and/or feeling in a dance.

But the body's ability to remember and inform extends its already primary function in performance. This ability of the body radicalises the traditional outlook of mind over body and redresses the imbalance, not to one of body over mind, but to one in which the two work together instantaneously in the creation process— if the body is allowed to do so.

I further believe that using the cellular awareness of the body in the creative process has a rub-off effect, encouraging us to live more truthfully in our personal lives. Put a little differently, we can use the body to better understand who we are. While the theory around cellular memory and its practice does not provide answers to life's difficulties, the profound insights into self and other speak eloquently of its possibilities.

Memory refers to the thing remembered. Cellular memory forms part of our memory field and goes one step deeper. It refers to the information imprints, which are archived or filed in each cell of the body. These imprints, according to Ricoeur, are comparable to the “imprint, after the model of the mark left by a signet ring on wax” (Ricoeur, 2004: 415). Some are less prominently imprinted on the memory field, yet others are crystal clear. Some imprints become vague and altered by infinite layers of memory. Think of looking at a source of light through a stained glass window and adding a new layer of glass each time you look at it. What transpires is a myriad of possible configurations - past and present merge momentarily to create a new, unique image. The effect is one of sensitising the body’s relationship with that image in each moment. Add to the memory aporia the possibility of each and every cell having this capability, and we begin to comprehend the density of the height, width and depth of the memory field. I am alluding to Ricoeur’s mention of the horizontal and vertical depth of the memory/forgetting field (Ricoeur, 2004: 414). I explain this in more detail later on in the chapter. I opted to add a third dimension of depth of field to this visual representation of our memory domain.

The body becomes the physical catchment area for the experiences and history of each individual. “Victor Turner has described the human body as ‘the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialisation is enacted’” (Turner in Hess, 2006: 140). Janet Hess continues to describe “the body [as] the battle site of contending values and their representations” (Hess, 2006: 140).

Therefore, cellular memory is one way of envisioning how our memory capacity functions. Memory refers to what the mind is able to recollect at any given moment. Cellular memory, on the other hand, goes one step further: it playfully refers to a deepened metaphorical reliance on the whole being, each and every cell, to inform, recall and recognise. This should not be confused with Descartes’ philosophy of splitting mind and body but, as I have pointed out previously, the two entities, body and mind, now work together instantaneously in the moment of creation. Ruth Zaporah confirms this unity of body and mind when she speaks of her own body. “When I refer to my body, I

am also referring to the mind, for the two are known through one another and are inseparable. We can talk about taming or disciplining the body, quieting the mind, relaxing the body, focusing attention. But can you imagine doing any of these without both body and mind?" (Albright, 2003: 21).

This non-dualistic view of body and mind has increased the ease with which I am able to create theatre. It allows for a deep-seated introspection. It opens up multiple ways to stage a theatre work. My relationship with my audience can take on many guises. While some dance theatre practitioners rely heavily on an external metaphor to suit their concept or idea, working with the personal archive in terms of its cellular memory, I draw from an internal source, which is ever-changing and informative. And omnipresent! Instead of relying on a concept, which might or might not be foreign to each performer, performers are asked to connect with the "frailty of the brain-body connection." (Jennings, 2008: 47). What transpires is the "visceral thrill of moving [as well as the ability to] create from instinct" (ibid).

FROM MEMORY TO FORGETTING AND BACK: DETRITUS IN THE ARCHIVE

The central statement about memory in Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004), is that all memory is of the past. His study delves into the myriad of related terms and terminologies involved when one uncovers the phenomenological study of memory. There are two components concerned with memory: that of the memories themselves and the imagination. A memory refers to the 'thing remembered'; to a prior reality where priority is given to the time when this thing/person/event was originally encountered. Imagination, on the other hand, refers to the fictional and the unreal. The world of our memories is encapsulated and recreated in the present by our imagination.

Of more importance here is the dichotomy of 'pastness' in the phenomenological world of our 'present' memories. All memories are of the past therefore they are best described as "the present representation of an absent thing" (Ricoeur, 2004: 7). Memories therefore are always remembered, whereas the imagination is the association of ideas. It should be noted that not all memories are correctly remembered or recollected, that some memories are imagined, some are false and yet others become constructed realities, i.e. snippets of memories amalgamated into new, inaccurate, composite memories. There are also areas in the body archive that have restricted access because they contain information about sensitive issues; information an individual prefers to forget. Some of these cases could possibly stem from a pathological condition, or can be caused by forgetting or the desire to forget. Two thoughts come into play here: firstly that the awareness of a past, present and future implies a constant to and fro movement between remembering and the phenomenon of forgetting. Secondly, this movement between these two poles allows for the development of detritus in the archive of memories. In Matthew Reason's article: *Archive or Memory? The detritus of live performance*, this detritus can be better understood to be a state of "not completeness" rather than waste matter or garbage (Reason, 2003: 82). As we consciously contact different memories while moving between

remembering and forgetting, these memories become fragmented or incomplete, theoretically creating detritus in the archive.

When placing the phenomenon of memory on the past–present–future continuum, it is something that occurred in the past and occupies a place in history. In turn, there is a constant movement from present to past occurring in the phenomenological world of memory resulting in an archive of detritus. The consideration of a detrital archive is appropriate “for the disappearing state of live performance and of memory” (Reason, 2003: 88 – 89). Antonio Damasio develops this thought further. He states that “our self, [...] only ‘learns’ about that ‘now’ an instant later. Pascal’s statements on past, present and future [...] capture this essence in lapidary fashion. Present continuously becomes past, and by the time we take stock of it we are in another present, consumed with planning the future, which we do on the stepping-stones of the past. The present is never here. We are hopelessly late for consciousness” (Damasio, 2000: 240).

Of particular importance in this study is Deborah Hay’s hypothesis that the body consists of trillions of cells, each of which has the ability to remember. Therefore, all cells exist with the memory capacity described here. To develop this thought further, as suggested in the title of Ricoeur’s philosophical work: *Memory, History, Forgetting* – there exists an unequivocal link between our memory and history. How else will the very study of history be possible without the capacity to remember? I am compelled once again to mention the metaphorical use of the concept here in terms of the body: each and every cell has the ability to remember and is therefore ineluctably capable of holding history, or, because it has a history, it is able to remember.

The notion of forgetting can be viewed as the enemy of memory itself. The two - memory and forgetting – are placed at the extreme ends on the continuum of human consciousness; yet the one cannot exist without the other. We have to forget certain things in order to be able to remember them again and one can therefore define memory primarily “as a struggle against forgetting” (Ricoeur, 2004: 413). Forgetting is experienced as an “attack on

the reliability of memory” (ibid). It is also against forgetting that we conduct the work of memory in order to “slow it down, even to hold it at bay” (Ricoeur, 2004: 426). Ricoeur continues to discuss forgetting and compares our view of forgetting with death (ibid). It may be that as we desperately hang on to life we also hang on to our memory or conversely to the ‘non-forgetting’ of our memories. “Forgetting is lamented in the same way as ageing and death” (ibid). It is the slow letting go of what was. However, conversely, forgetting, at least partial forgetting, is part of the process of forgiveness which facilitates living: we have to forget to hold the grudge, forget to be angry, forget that we were hurt by someone in order not to be a prisoner of our past. If we don’t forget or forgive our present is affected by our history.

Ricoeur also mentions the inextricable link between forgetting and forgiveness. They each belong to “a distinct problematic: for forgetting, the problematic of memory and faithfulness to the past; for forgiveness, guilt and reconciliation with the past” (Ricoeur, 2004: 412). It is imperative for me as a person, performer and theatre-maker to be able to deal with the past, the memories which make up my life. Without forgiveness I am unable to be fully present in each moment and reconciliation becomes a constant battle. Presence, or being fully present in the moment, is what performers aspire to attain in the act of performance. It is something drama teachers and theatre critics the world over hold in high regard. For, as Patrice Pavis states: presence “is being endowed with an indefinable quality that immediately arouses the spectator’s identification, giving them the impression of being elsewhere, in an eternal present” (Pavis, 1998: 285). The ability to forget and forgive is being more present, now and now and now.

The ephemeral nature of a live performance predetermines that the only place where the performance can truly live on and take effect is in the minds and memories of the audience and that they have to talk, think or write about it for this to take effect. “A work finds and holds onto a public precisely because it offers an experience that slips away from words and the ready to hand categories they provide. We turn to the visual and performing arts because these modes of expression capture aspects of experience and feeling that

elude words. [...] But then we must use words to share processes that communicate on other levels. Verbal accounts act as currency, but they can be the whole story only in the archive" (Smith, 2002: 5). There will be as many different accounts or fragments as there are people in the audience.

There are some surprising similarities between the personal archive and the archive (e.g. a building or a safe). Both body and building are physical places. Furthermore both body and building can produce a physical document: the body by writing them down and the building by accessing the relevant storage cabinet or computer file being accessed. The result is the same: in both instances one is able to leave with a physical document.

To return to my previous mention of detritus, Ricoeur's philosophic discussion places memory and forgetting on a physical plane within our world of existence. The interaction between memory and forgetting can be visualized like this: memory, on a horizontal plane; that is, a memory is either near us or far away, depending on the level of possible recollection. Somewhat differently, "forgetting proposes [...] something like an endless abyss, which the metaphor for vertical depth attempts to express" (Ricoeur, 2004: 414).

There are two possible hypotheses pertaining to detritus in the archive. Firstly, as our minds move inside the three-dimensional graph created by the horizontal and vertical (abyss-like) depths created by memory and forgetting, the pieces of non-complete memories are collected and fuse to become newly constructed and unique memories. This hypothesis is kaleidoscopic. Secondly, and in opposition to the first one, there is the idea that as the detritus of our memories erode and recede into the abyss they are gone forever, never to return, and that we retain only the distilled essence of the memory.

Memory and forgetting play distinct parts in our daily existence and are pursued throughout our lives. "On the one hand forgetting makes us afraid. Are we not condemned to forget everything? On the other we welcome as a

small happiness the return of a sliver of the past, wrestled away, as we say from oblivion” (Ricoeur, 2004: 417).

DEBORAH HAY: A PERFORMANCE PRIMER²

I dare you to see my attention.

(*Deborah Hay* in Drobnick, 2006: 43).

At the very core of Deborah Hay's work lies the notion of cellular memory and how this construct informs her creative process. She works from the assumption that her body is prescribed to by a constantly changing and evolving set of performance meditations, "organized around [her] work as a practising performer, choreographer and teacher" (Hay, 2000: xxiv). Hay's definition of a performance meditation is "a specific phrase or affirmation that focuses the mind of the performer during a performance" (Hay in Drobnick, 2006: 53). This may differ from one work to another. For example, for one work she might pose the questions: "What if alignment is everywhere? What if your teacher (your 53 trillion cells) inspires mine?" (Hay, 2000: xxiv). And then for another work - as she did for *The Love Song Project* of the 1980's - she used another three meditations: "What if the awareness of movement is healing; [what if] the potential to perceive ceremony [is] in every moment [and what if] the presence of the past is in the present" (Hay in Drobnick, 2006: 53).

Hay continues: "I reconfigure the three-dimensional body into an immeasurable fifty-three trillion cells perceived perceiving, all of them, at once" (Hay, 2000: xxiv). One's immediate response to this statement notices the contradiction contained therein. By referring to the 53 trillion body cells (or close to 100 trillion as more up to date scientific research has proven) as immeasurable, Hay's statement becomes devoid of meaning. It is statements like these that make it hard to take Deborah Hay's theory of cellular memory seriously. As a recognised practising artist and choreographer, she is given the latitude to explore these contradictory statements and she admits to the impossibility of fully realising any of them. For the researcher this might stand in the way of concretising a theory supporting the existence of cellular memory. Nonetheless, however 'idiotic, impossible or simple' it may seem,

² This is the title of Jim Drobnik's article published in *Performance Research* 11(2) p. 43 – 57. Taylor and Francis Ltd. 2006.

her practice continually returns to body and “to unlearn how to dance” after many years of dance training (Daly in Drobnick, 2006: 46). In other words, for her it is not about how beautifully the performer’s physical form translates into performance nor is it about impressive choreography. Instead, it is about actively engaging in the process of giving and receiving information from the cellular body.

During Hay’s career of more than 40 years she has come to define a choreographic performance vocabulary such as “performance consciousness”, “positionlessness” and “attention” to name a few (Drobnick, 2006: 48 -54). Her performance meditations or *what ifs* are used to get her ideas across to herself and/or her performers, and ultimately to her audience, during a performance or practice session.

For example, the movement meditation for the creation of *Room*, (this is only one of them as there were many), was: “What if every cell in my body has the potential to get what it needs or thinks it needs?”³ These meditations can become very complex. Consider the following one, which the abovementioned meditation for *Room* eventually developed into: “What if every cell in my body at once has the potential to invite being seen, getting what it needs while surrendering the instinctual pattern of facing a single direction within the ‘wholegg theory’⁴ wherein every moment is perceived as unique and original?” What unfolded was a complex experience for me as a performer. I experienced the work as complex because her practice pivots on a set of contradictions. She confesses to the fact that many of the instructions or movement meditations (like: imagining every cell in the body can get what it needs or thinks it needs), are in fact “impossible to do, yet she imagines them possible” (Personal communication during SPCP: Sep 2005). While

³ I had the singular opportunity of working with Deborah Hay at the Solo Performance commissioning Project 2005, where the same solo- *Room* -was choreographed and taught to each of the 19 participants.

⁴ *Room* was choreographed in the round. “The wholegg theory is a metaphor for the performer’s relationship to an audience seated in the round. The performer is the yolk. The viscous fluid called albumen surrounding the yolk, represents the pliable space between the performer and the audience. Where the albumen ends is where the audience begins.” Rino Pizzi (Entry in choreographic score/handout at SPCP)

experiencing her contradictory statements in practice, the work remains staggeringly simple, yet at the same moment bafflingly complex. During the project in Scotland, I recall her inviting us “to be seen” and at the same moment to see other performers. The fact that one is asked to do the impossible focuses one’s attention on the “simplicity of being aware in the present moment as opposed to any expected outcome or goal” (Personal communication during the SPCP: Sep 2005).

Here lurks the danger of losing the connection with one’s audience. Although Hay’s work is not too concerned about what her audience thinks or feels about her performance, there is the very real danger that audience members will disengage from it. I have found that while the audience’s access to a work is of great importance, their acceptance of the work is less important to me. The former is more important as it is the access to a work that is fundamental in communicating with an audience. For it is what is communicated that, ultimately, will live on in their own memories.

As an artist, I would like to reflect on the world within which I function and exist. If this reflection is done truthfully, I feel I have done my job well. The ‘truth’ is something that each individual determines and is highly subjective. By embracing the body-minded brain, in which both body and mind contribute equally toward the creating moment, a greater sense of personal truth is achieved. As I have mentioned, truth is a relative concept and in a post-modern era there are as many truths as there are individuals. Each person subscribes to his or her own individual truth. There is no one ultimate truth and it cannot be considered as hierarchical; i.e. one truth cannot be better, greater or superior to another. It is not so much finding the truth as much as it is finding a mode of representation that is real.

Hay’s devotion to attaining the impossible by imagining it possible, allows for the rightness of all movement. She describes her choreography as falling into three broad categories:

- 1) “impossible to realise,
- 2) embarrassing to do, or idiotic to contemplate,

3) maddeningly simple”.

(<http://www.deborahhay.com/How%20do%20I%20recognize.html>)

Furthermore she states that the questions she asks are “unanswerable, impossible to truly comprehend and at the same time poignantly immediate” (ibid).

The fact that many of the questions Hay poses are impossible to answer corresponds with the contradictory nature of her work: maddeningly simple and at the same time impossibly complex to execute. If it is impossible to do then why are we doing it? This leaves serious unanswered questions for the practitioner.

Performing to a fixed choreographic score, the performer interprets each instruction in his/her own way while allowing the cellular body to be informed by the movement directive or ‘what if’, e.g. “what if dying is movement in communion with all there is?” (Hay, 2001: 12). The meditative statements “seek to direct the actions of the performer without over-determining the outcome, instruct while stimulating creative thought, and critically challenge physical and mental habits that diminish the potential of the body.” (Drobnick, 2006: 43).

I posit here that Deborah Hay’s working methodology is aimed at enhancing expressiveness of the body. One is able to understand her methodology more by comparing the creative body to that of a computational motherboard or memory card, so to speak, with its multitude of interlinked, soldered dots. By directing attention to one dot movement and cognisance of all the other dots is impelled. Furthermore, Hay’s practice places emphasis on “process over product in which the attitude of the performer is prioritised over the accomplishment of a specific outcome” (Drobnick, 2006: 44). Since her performance career extends over four decades, Deborah Hay is given latitude to position process over product, even though theatre makers and performance artists admittedly work toward the culminating moment of performance, after weeks and, sometimes, months or even years of work in rehearsal.

Hay defines the body as “a site of multiple, complex insights that can emerge into language when properly facilitated. Opposing the mind/body dualism that subordinates the body to the status of a thing to be manipulated and controlled, the body is capable of providing subtle forms of knowledge, if only one can open trapdoors ‘that prevent awareness of the body’s daringly ordinary perspicacity’” (Drobnick, 2006: 44 - 45). And yet from the viewer/audience perspective it is the mind or intellect that, in the semiotic process, seeks for meaning in that which it observes, feels and experiences. From birth we learn to decipher subtle changes of body language and facial gesture. When ‘properly facilitated’ the body is perhaps ‘a site of multiple complex insights that can emerge into language.’

Perhaps most profoundly befitting my search in locating a personal archive that reveals truthfully who and what we are, is Hay’s description of the ‘ah-ha’ moment: “a lucid moment of revelation; an epiphany-like moment that engenders a spontaneously inclusive cosmic shift in perception” (Drobnick, 2006: 47). It is in these moments that one can guarantee true synergy between body and mind and the flawless communion of body with all that there is. This is not too dissimilar to the moment of improvisation. “An ah-ha is the simultaneous upwelling of the body’s intelligence into the mind and the outflowing of the mind into the body, an interrelation that circumvents rational consciousness [...]. Ah-has can be simple, profound, funny, poetic, tragic, insightful, phantasmagorical” (ibid).

With this, I took on repeated performances of *Room*⁵. This afforded me the opportunity to assimilate and test Deborah Hay’s practice. My practising and performances of *Room* have made me realise how deeply connected I am to my body and the knowledge it harbours. The connection between my creativity, body and mind has been revived and gives me a sense of being alive and awake in the world.

⁵ *Room* is the solo that Deborah Hay choreographed on all the participants of the SPCP in 2005. I performed the solo in 2006 at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and again at the FNB Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg early in 2007.

The work I am doing is an acutely aware, bodily account of what there is. Opening up my senses to the multiple layers of information that exist has reminded me that the mind is not the only tool with which to create.

My performances of *Room* are over. To a large degree I have departed from the work of Deborah Hay. Although the obscurities of some of her performance directives are simultaneously refreshing and frustrating, I have no need to repeat or develop them. Through experiencing them I became convinced of the necessity of a performance mode in which the presence of the personal archive is paramount.

FROM HAY TO HOME? MY OWN REPRESENTATION OF MEMORY IN *PAD*, *ONCE BLIND NOW SEEN* AND *ARIADNE'S BOOTS*

In this section I offer analysis and critique of the three performance works that I created over the course of this study. In the true sense of the word, these were my first formal steps along the way of practising what I have started to hypothesise and theorise during the course of study. I have extracted certain key concepts from the mentioned works and assess how these concepts are represented in each one.

The three performances were created and performed over a two-year period. They were intended to function as building blocks in preparation for the final thesis production. *Pad* was created first as a duet and was performed as a site-specific performance. It dealt with the pathway of our lives, inspired by the history of both performers. Following that performance came *Once Blind Now Seen*, which I choreographed on 4 performers, including myself. It took place in the Playroom, a small, intimate venue on the campus of the University of Cape Town Drama Department. The title suggests that one might be 'blind' to the information that exists as part of the personal archive. It is by accessing the personal archive in performance that the information becomes 'seen' or visible to fellow performers as well as to an audience. Finally, I performed the solo piece, *Ariadne's Boots*, which was inspired by a personal obsession. The genesis of the work lay in a set class exercise in which inspiration for the piece had to come from a personal power object which could be used as a metaphor for one's life. I chose a pair of boots bought a number of years ago while I lived in London. I travelled extensively with these boots and I explored my relationship with them as analogous to that of the love relationship between Ariadne and Theseus.

Experimentation

Pad, the Afrikaans word for 'path, way, or pathway' was the title of my Minor Project performance piece. It was the first, formal attempt to practice my own understanding of the revelatory nature of the personal archive through the use of cellular memory in performance. The piece was conceptualised by evoking

childhood memories and interpreting them in order to understand the value of connectedness to self, fellow performer(s) and audience (community) more fully. During the making of *Pad*, I was faced with fresh challenges of how to further my experiments working with the wide range that personal memories and cellular memory offer. Personal memories are experiences from the past or recollected images which, when matched to the corresponding imprints they have left on the mind, remember the thought or memory and any number of other related memories. These memories leave a larger, cellular imprint on the body and it is my hypothesis that by using body and mind simultaneously one is deeply connected to the self. More importantly, I wanted to see how these cellular memories can be represented in performance by delving into the personal archive of each performer individually, as well as collectively.

Pad was created collaboratively with Vaneshran Arumugam, a fellow Master's student. In rehearsal together, we experimented loosely around the themes of childhood memories and tracing the pathways that have led us here. We found a connection in the fact that we were present in each other's company, relinquishing the past in order to create the path ahead. Out of our joint experiments came a meaningful story. The bruised and broken bride, preparing her own pathway towards a life with her partner, responds to the rhetorical speech of a father about the birth of his daughter. Mother, daughter and wife images intermingle with childhood memorabilia to show lost connections and how the ebb and flow of life bring us together and tear us apart. There is no one answer, only acceptance of what was, before we proceed along our pathways.

Since the start of my study I have also been aware of the challenge of transferring my ideas onto a group of performers. I chose to work with three of my own students from CityVarsity. In *Once Blind Now Seen*, I wanted the cast to engage physically and mentally with my ideas and see what shape the work would take. This was a rewarding and deeply personal experience for all of us.

Together we experimented with procedures of accessing memories and then using text, dance and sound to play and mould the material. My quest to access the personal archive had now become a shared journey. Together we narrated our stories and memories and found that the self-reflexive nature of the process made us realise how closely connected we all are. Performers wrote down their memories, creating a physical archive of written documents. These were placed on the floor and together we read and improvised from the material. The process of connecting with our memories also had its challenges. There were issues around vulnerability and sharing information with each other as well as, finally, with a wider public in performance. Initially, I felt uneasy working in this way with students whom I teach on a daily basis: in the classroom they look to me for information, yet, experimenting with the personal archive, most of the time, the information they accessed had to come from within them. There was no asking me for the right answers. All of us had to accept that in the rehearsal room we were equal and we had to let go of any hierarchical relationship of 'teacher' and 'student', which normally exists.

The central idea of the work was to reclaim and reaffirm the commonality, which we as human beings (as well as the performers of *Once Blind Now Seen*), share. For us it included investigating the self and one's personal history; the idea being that the deeper we dug into our own memories, the more universal it became. The audience was presented with an opportunity of choosing to connect with their own memories through vicariously experiencing the performance of *Once Blind Now Seen*.

It is not very dissimilar to the way in which Ruth Zaporah works. Talking about her own process she says: "I begin with a spontaneous action and then step by step build a scenario [...and] within it, I introduce characters, events and situations that reflect *the mingling of imagination, memories and sensory input*" (Albright, 2003: 21, my emphasis).

Collaboration

Since *Pad* was developed collaboratively with Vaneshran, a great deal of time was spent on the connections and similarities found in our respective lived memories. In this sense *Pad* achieved its goal since more and more connections appeared along the way. It was, and largely remains, my sense that our connection as a community in the broader sense of the word is threatened and replaced by feelings of singularity and isolation, the antipode of which is *Pad*.

In *Once Blind Now Seen*, the use of video projection was the product of a collaborative effort between Garth Paton, a fellow Master's Film student, and me. We discussed the concept and Garth was keen to create video footage that would be inter-active, since this is his area of interest as a filmmaker. Since the work uses text, dance, live sound and recorded video footage (without sound) the two of us took time to select carefully appropriate images for different sections.

The difficulty with collaboration lies in the fact that the collaborators have to be totally available to each other during the process. During the collaborations of making both *Pad* as well as *Once Blind Now Seen*, I was challenged to fully grasp the concept. No second measure would suffice, I had to share freely, make subtle suggestions and, above all, be open to the needs of the work rather than those of any one individual, including myself.

Intention/Attention

My intention in my art is always to get clearer insights into who I am and how I operate in the world. It is a conscious attempt to connect truthfully with myself and others in order to make sense of the world around us.

The intention behind *Pad* was that it had to remain accessible – not necessarily acceptable - to an audience. This accessibility aspect of my enquiry, is something I developed and experimented with even further in the Medium Project: *Once Blind Now Seen*. In both the works, the intention was to give the audience access to the work by using dramatic conventions of

space/site, staging, lighting, music/sound, costume, props and so on. In his essay, *Exposed to Gravity*, Bruce Curtis goes into the details of being a quadriplegic as well as a performer. Fascinated by the free, fluid rhythms of able-bodied dancers, he was keen to find out how his own body would move. One of his conclusions states, that “when we don’t make fences around our bodies, all movements become acceptable” (Curtis in Albright, 2003: 16).

“Our conscious is like a body interacting with the exterior world. Because our nerves cannot extend beyond our skin, we only really sense ourselves in contact with the larger world, but separate from it. In the same way we only ‘know’ what is present within our consciousness, yet by touching it, by dancing with it, we can sense the contours and textures of an infinite world that exists beyond the boundaries of knowledge.

But ‘the cutting edge of awareness’ cleaves deeper than that. Improvisation as I understand it is an attentional practice: the more you attend to movement and memory and sensing and intention, the more you play (improvise) with all of the elements of what we call living – and the more you come to understand that reality is based on the relationship between our attention and the world. You sense that your attention is both selecting and forming your experience in real time, but that what is being selected and formed is not completely of your choosing, because the world is improvising too; and that dance, your interaction with the world, forms you just as you form the world”

(Kent De Spain in Albright, 2003: 37).

When Deborah Hay says ‘I dare you to see my attention’, she is referring to the “mindfulness, the act – and continuing struggle of remaining awake [...] Attention is an exceptional way of being because it noticeably stands out from the ordinary tendency to live distractedly and habitually” (Drobnik, 2006: 48). As performers we do not place enough emphasis on ‘attention’. While some argue in favour of the separation of body and mind, I rally for the unification of these two entities. Ruth Zaporah sheds more light on this idea when she states: “sometimes my body seems to have a mind of its own. It fidgets, slumps and jerks while my mental attention is elsewhere. And conversely my mind fidgets, slumps and jerks while my body appears to be calm and still. We talk about the mind and body as if they were separate but, in fact, it is our attention that is split” (Albright, 2003: 22). This statement powerfully combines the mind and body into one expressive being and by focusing attention on the one it also includes the other.

Improvisation

Improvisation is a way of being present in the moment and your awareness of yourself within that moment both challenges and refines your presence in each subsequent moment.

Kent De Spain in Albright, 2003: 27

The notion of having a sense of 'self' and 'other', stands central in any actor's training. It is understood that all performers will continuously work opposite other individuals. In her article: *The Performative Self: Improvisation for Self and Other*, Ruth Quinn states that "'the other' is of course nothing more than a self seen from a different perspective: we truly only know ourselves through the other" (Quinn: 2003, 19). As performers we need to connect with self and other in each moment if we want a truly moving experience for the audience. For this to happen performers have to work with an "improvisation technique at an advanced level" (ibid). I have experimented with a similar improvisation technique while working on *Pad* as well as *Once Blind Now Seen*.

Connections can be made with Deborah Hay's idea of referring to the body as the ultimate 'teacher' and that your teacher inspires mine and vice versa. In other words, performing bodies can respond and connect on a kinaesthetic awareness level. It is not only about the connection between actors on stage, but also "how we operate communally in a society that encourages us to focus on our individual desires and overlook our corporate needs. This is also a way in which any group of learners can have a stronger sense of how they can work together to effect change" (Quinn, 2003: 19). By working in this way we liberate our deeper sense of self and we honour the "organic shifting beings" that we are, "growing into becoming and ever able to do something new" (Quinn, 2003: 21).

With regards to the performances of *Pad* as well as *Once Blind Now Seen*, I had to be very honest with my students as we started this process of performing memories and accessing our personal archives as I cleared the way for us all to work alongside each other. On the one hand, whilst I remain

their teacher, I had to allow us all to practice on an equal platform; yet on the other, I was the one driving the process and proposing a working methodology for the creation of the work. This I found challenging yet engaging, because they had taken a keen interest in my questions. Some questions I asked were: What truths have emerged? What is left of the memory after recollecting it and performing/*celling* (sic) it? Is there a sense of encountering detritus in the performing of one's memories? Are there shared elements in the way that we work?

The result was a highly personal bodily account of something that took place in the past, made public for other performers and audience. There had to be a considerable amount of trust and vulnerability from all the performers for it to succeed. Although this was not a psychological experiment to correct the events of the past for any person, it was a real time re-membling of an event that shaped each performer's life.

Location/Site

Pad was a site-specific performance. Vaneshran and I chose to perform in an alleyway on the Hiddingh campus leading to the quad of the Intimate Theatre. Audience members watched from the sides of the alley, reminiscent of the aisle in church. They then had to follow us down this 'pathway' and the rest of the performance took place in and on the roofs of the adjacent quad. At the time of our performance, the Little Theatre was undergoing a major overhaul and the old ventilation system was replaced by a new state of the art air conditioner. The debris of the old lay heaped and scattered on the site. I cannot ignore the uncanny resemblance this physical state of detritus has on what I call the state of detritus in the personal archive. This was a complete coincidence and as much as we were surprised, we had no choice but to incorporate it into the piece. Performers, audience and site formed three layers of an interactive system. Giovanni Anselmo alludes to this when he mentions that "a successful piece of art is like a meeting point where energies go and from which energies depart. It's a movement of tension between the inside and the outside, in all senses: in the personal sense and in the sense of

the space [...] From my point of view I'm putting in relationship my inside with this story outside" (Kaye, 2000: 148).

In stark contrast to the large scale, site-specific nature of *Pad, Once Blind Now Seen* was performed in a small, contained space. The intimate nature of the piece was echoed in the stage arrangement and lighting. Seating was arranged on three sides of the performers and the performance area was no larger than 3 m². The back of the space was covered by a projection screen and closed the performers in a tight square. A maximum of 32 audience members sat in two rows on each of the three sides, looking in. Lighting was kept very low and the action took place in front of the screen with back projection. The live performance aspect of the work was so rich that adding sound to the recording could potentially mar the performance. The result was silence during the projection of images. Our intention was to enclose the performers in the actual performance space in order to blur the divide between what is filmed and what is real. In other words performers would 'enter or exit' on screen just before the actual entrance or exit took place during the performance. Performers danced and acted out their memories and then stood back and watched themselves on-screen; they repeated certain actions that had just taken place. This gave a second layer to each memory: a memory of the already remembered memory. It is possible to compare these pieces of memory or snippets of repeated action, to the detritus which lie, metaphorically speaking, scattered all over the archive floor.

CONCLUSION: VESSEL – 5 CONTAINERS FOR MY LIFE

IMAGES OF A LIFE MORE/LESS LIVED

In performance, and as a theatre maker, I rely on the body to communicate meaning. The body is in high demand. Creatively it mines the personal archive through the use of improvisation, memory recall and intuition. Ultimately, access to the personal archive reveals past information to us in a fresh way. Walter Benjamin sheds light on the stance of the performer who accesses past memory:

Memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred. He who seeks to access his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging."

(Benjamin in Preston-Dunlop; 2002: 192)

The revelatory nature of memories below the everyday surface brings to the fore my experience of a world that is falling apart around me. In the programme note of *Intiem etc*, which premiered at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown 2008, Tossie van Tonder aptly stated that "we, as people and performers, could not avoid facing humankind's ultimate position on the edge of crisis." I am not alone yet desperately aware of the rupture and feeling of uncertainty as I progress precariously on shaky ground. As I explore through my practice, I strive for wholeness and understanding as a human being.

There is more than one possible realm in which to search for the origins of my need to better understand my life. I am unsure as to exactly where this need is located but it might be found somewhere betwixt and between existential thought, political dogma and my own personal history and background.

The need to reveal, re-emphasise and reclaim my feelings of belonging and security springs from my experience of the world as a place with disruption, disunity and singularity at its apex. This supports the existential outlook, in which, as Sartre states, for the individual, "existence comes before essence" (Sartre trans. Mairet, 1980: 28). We must begin our search for the meaning of

our existence in the subjective self. "Man is nothing else but that what he makes of himself" (ibid.) Many individuals within society suffer from the illusion that something or someone outside of themselves determines their truth; whereas the existentialists believe "truth is found in the subjective and psychological spheres of oneself" (Sartre trans. Mairet, 1980: 10). It is in working with this innermost material that *Vessel* is being created. It is not about grappling with belief. Nor is it about searching for meaning outside of oneself to justify one's everyday experience.

In existential theory there is the notion that "the man who discovers himself directly in the *cogito* also discovers all the others and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognises that he cannot be anything unless others recognise him as such. I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself except through the mediation of another" (Sartre, 1980: 45). This is how we exist: not as individuals isolated from one another, but rather intimately linked and connected. This has been established in the practice of the revelatory nature of drawing from the cellular body and its memory: that indeed I rely on myself but also on my fellow performer(s) to inform me in the search for meaning. Meaning emanates from within the individual performer but finds form and expression in relation to another.

It is highly unlikely that the world is going to stop existing soon; we will keep on heading into the future, which is unknown to us. Despite this, what is becoming clearer to me when thinking about the future is that the present does not hold much promise either. And if the present is a constant reminder of the bleak picture of our daily human experience, then the projected future becomes equally sombre. We don't have a choice in determining our futures. We have to accept what it is when it arrives. We have to live in the present moment, now and now and now.

Given that Sartre may be regarded as the father of existential thought, I turn to Ashraf Jamal's writing as both a contemporary existentialist and a socio-political and cultural commentator. I propose a state of mind whereby our shared needs are ignored, destroyed or have become superficial. This is

our existence in the subjective self. "Man is nothing else but that what he makes of himself" (ibid.) Many individuals within society suffer from the illusion that something or someone outside of themselves determines their truth; whereas the existentialists believe "truth is found in the subjective and psychological spheres of oneself" (Sartre trans. Mairet, 1980: 10). It is in working with this innermost material that *Vessel* is being created. It is not about grappling with belief. Nor is it about searching for meaning outside of oneself to justify one's everyday experience.

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symptomatic of what Jamal refers to as our “resistance to self-knowledge” (Jamal, 2007: 4). Jamal is commenting on Albie Sachs’s paper *Spring is rebellious: Arguments About Cultural Freedom*. In discussing the paper, Jamal presents some thoughts on the debilitating nature of the apartheid regime and how South African culture “continues to be stalked by the apartheid imagination” (ibid). As South Africans we all carry the scars of an apartheid regime spanning several centuries made manifest in many different guises within our psyches. This statement, to my mind, further concretises my perception that people’s sense of self is numbed to the point of being completely lost. Jamal’s reference to ‘self-knowledge’ or the lack thereof, alludes to the unwillingness to truly know oneself. This is the ability that we lack, that we resist. This is what needs to shift. This resistance is made manifest within society like a barren desert: it lives on within us for as long as we avoid facing the truth within ourselves.

In his book, *Predicaments of Culture in South Africa*, Jamal argues the fact that we as a people in South Africa are indeed “advancing towards [...] an age of ignorance”, of a world of isolation and “lovelessness” (Jamal, 2005: pp back cover). Amidst the uncertainty created by an unstable political and social milieu, my body remains constant and is a safe harbour for my quest to understanding and researching the work I do. As a South African born artist, I am in a strong position to relate to the predicaments of the culture in South Africa. It is within this culture of estrangement that *Vessel* deepens my exploration.

In this sense *Vessel* offers a starting place, a place of re-connection with self first and foremost, and by doing so also visits the histories of all cast members to find our collective unity. This is where my own personal history plays informant. Lefebvre states that “the body serves both as a point of departure and a destination...” (Lefebvre in Preston-Dunlop; 2002: 173). This view is no exception when, in *Vessel*, “the body [is utilised] as the subject of and the subject in performance” (Sanchez-Colberg in Preston-Dunlop; 2002: 173).

It has become my quest to improve my understanding of the value of the integration of body and mind and how the two feed off each other continuously and instantaneously. I have already established how the 'body minded brain' leads us to the revelations that can be accessed from the personal archive. By thinking of our beings in this way, the personal archive becomes an infinitely intricate web of information from which to draw. *Vessel* continues on this trajectory. In the work the body becomes the vessel that carries us through life. It is by accessing the personal archive in rehearsal and performance that I am able to make meaning of my life's purpose. The personal archive is a consistently dependable vehicle to which I have access through the minutiae of the trillions of cells via the body minded brain. I am better able to understand who I am by thinking and acting via the cellular body.

Vessel is characteristic of previous performances in that it too attempts to find the connections that are made with fellow performers as well as an audience – individually and also collectively. With the work I deepen my search for meaning by delving into the personal archive of each performer to discover thoughts that are common to and feelings that are shared by us all. The need for social interaction, being touched and loved, is a response to the separation that I encounter daily. Largely, the need stems from my sense that people are becoming more isolated and separated from one another, mentally as well as physically. I am interested in discovering what it is that we, as a cast, share regarding our current situation as parts of a larger whole. So I am working from the premise that we are indeed embedded within a society and that we share some common experiences and basic needs. I allow for the possibility that perhaps the only commonality that we share is a feeling of unease with our current situation and therefore the inclination to reconnect with self and other.

I am looking to treat the body as the one dependable and safe vessel on which to hold. The body is the container for all that lives within me. Our skins are the membranes that contain our bodies. The skin acts as the interface between what is inside and outside of us. A performance that theatricalises

the revelation of the personal archive is often very intimate and subtle. It is not always externally visible as we reveal via the skin what is inside.

In this sense, film media is an ideal means to reveal and amplify this detail. Audiences can appreciate the subtlest nuances, which ordinarily might be overlooked. This is the primary reason for the collaboration with Garth Paton. Garth is a fellow masters student who works with film and mixed media. Since we collaborated previously, our mutual interest in performance and shared enthusiasm for abstract work continues its development in *Vessel*.

In the same way that our skins contain what is inside of us, the film screen becomes the 'skin' for what is inside and on the outside of the projection. Images can be amplified while retaining their integrity, something that I started exploring in *Once Blind Now Seen*. The mouth, clavicle, back and abdomen were projected larger than life size to draw attention to their functioning. With filmed imagery I am able to enlarge the images to fit the need of the performance, whereas in live performance the actors have to enlarge it. In this instance one runs the risk of losing the true nature of the moment.

The use of filmed images in *Vessel* will extend to projection onto performers' bodies, stage screens, walls, costumes as well as furniture pieces. My collaboration with Garth explores the levels of synergy between filmed imagery and live performances. We are attempting to achieve a true symbiotic relationship of co-existence in support of and not to the exclusion of one another.

Vessel is a dance theatre work, which will take place in five stages and one interlude. Actor-dancers perform the stages as they delve into their own as well as each others' lived memories relating to each part. The five stages are:

1. The cello
2. The vessel
3. The wedding dress
4. The horse
5. The future

Due to the fact that this explication has been written prior to the final performance of the intended work, *Vessel*, the conceptual outline as discussed here is accurate at the time of submitting this explication and may shift in the weeks to come. The process for making the work utilises the to and fro conversation between the tripartite of idea, image and movement. Ideas lead to images, which in turn become movements and again generate new ideas. The five stages represent the five main ideas and serve as entry point into as well as a structure for the work. The first four are chosen as modes of transportation for one's life. In the fifth one – *The Future* – performers project their ideas of the unknown. The stages become the vessels, metaphorically speaking, for the performers' lives. The collaborative process between the video artist, Garth and myself, for the performance of *Vessel*, is to generate material in true symbiotic fashion: the improvised material created in rehearsal will generate the filmed images, while the film footage will generate more material to be performed. In order for this to be realised, we envisage completing filming by end of week four of the rehearsal process, leaving a further four weeks to allow for interaction and rehearsal between live and filmed performances.

Cello is the musical instrument. It is the most unlikely 'vessel' used in the production. I say this because of its inability to physically transport someone or itself. However, the sound it makes has an effect on one. It can take the listener to another place. This is what interests me. I am drawing comparisons between the body of the cello and the shape of a human body. Questions that I have at the moment include how the sounds inside our bodies prepare the way into the future? Are they bold or tenuous at first? Is my 'body-sound' able to create the calm that is required?

Vessel refers to a boat. It consist of 48 separate blocks which when assembled become the primary vessel or container to carry us through the production. It will transform into more than just a boat: the aisle of a church and a podium. As performers carry parts across stage and assemble it in various ways, it remains the central image of the production, echoed in

various ways through film. Some blocks are solid while others remain hollow. When projected onto, the audience may only see parts of an image. This echoes the fragmented nature of the memory field.

The **wedding dress** is a dress of adornment and ceremony. Nostalgic and hopeful stories of the 'big day' are projected onto parts of wedding costume. As in my previous production of *Pad*, we encounter the hopeful bride who is drawn towards her future husband. The dress carries her forward.

The horse is a mythological creature, which offers assistance to those who need it. The horse is a hard worker. Images reflect on the Trojan horse, the container of the enemy or evil.

The **future** is where we are heading. By using the four previous stages or 'vessels' we enter the future. In this section performers will narrate what we think the future will be. These include funny, disturbing, phantasmagorical, profound and unreal mind projections. The future stays outside of our grasp.

It is because of performances of *Vessel* and the theatricalisation of my memory that my body is able to exist as a cellular being. The cellular body is inevitable. It is real. It is present. At every moment my consciousness is influenced by it in some way.

In closing, the following statement by Jamake Highwater, a dance theorist, speaks aptly of the experience of creating my work, which is a conscious attempt to improve our understanding of who we are, after each performance.

"In watching a ritual, or a dance, you do not see what is physically before you. What you see is an intersection of forces by which something else arises[...]. What we are able to see if we use our bodies as eyes is a virtual image. It is real, for when we are confronted by it, it really does exist, but it is not actually there. The reflection in a mirror is such an image; so is the rainbow. It seems to stand on earth or in the clouds, but it really stands nowhere. It is only visible not tangible. It is the unspeakable, the ineffable made visible, made audible, made experiential."
(Highwater, 1996: 33).

However impossible and ridiculous it may seem to even contemplate accessing a thought or memory from the 10th cell from the right in my elbow, I tolerate it. It is worth my while to investigate my past from a composition of cells' perspective. It is worth my while to think that you are a composition of trillions of cells and that through these cells we are connected to each other: we are the 'cells' of the body of humanity - intimately, bewilderingly connected. I continue to selfishly reconcile my own wish to know myself. The world that I live in and the theatre that I create is a search for the making of meaning and the meaning of making.

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