When a Voice Is Not Enough:  
the existentialist opera performer as auteur

by

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Para a minha mãe e avó
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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.
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Dissemination

During the process of completing this thesis I have contributed material from the project to the following:

Publications:


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Nomenclature / Glossary

Abandonment – The complete absence of a higher power by which to measure one’s actions and one’s choices; a direct result of the atheism at the basis of Sartre’s philosophy.

Anguish – “Existentialists describe anguish as a mood or state of mind […]. It is a universal possibility of human existence and an abiding threat. Anguish is different from fear, which is an unreflective apprehension of something definite in the world that can be met with action. Anguish, on the other hand, is reflective apprehension of the self, essentially, of one’s freedom.” (Kenevan 2013: 8)

Anxiety – “In Being and Nothingness, Sartre analyzes anxiety in light of freedom: I anguish over the threat that my freedom poses and also over the threat others pose to my freedom. To exist as freedom is to exist as nothingness—he, too, understands the object of anxiety as nothing. To exist as a conscious, free being is to exist by projecting beyond yourself toward some future possibility.” (Mui 2013: 11)

Auto-cours – “The name given to the […] sessions […] when groups of students work on their own, without direct supervision by teachers.” (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 174)

Bad faith – “In Sartre’s ontology, this form of self-deception is based on the profound duality of in-itself/for-itself, of facticity/transcendence, respectively, that characterizes human reality. Because I do not coincide with myself, because of the inner distance that marks consciousness in relation to itself, I am able to lie to myself about the tension that this radical division entails. This truncated ignorance, an ignorance that knows better, can assume two forms: either I collapse transcendence into facticity (the more common case), or I volatilize facticity into transcendence.” (Flynn 2013a: 26)
Being-for-itself – Man’s potentiality. *Being-for-itself* creates the force that thrusts man’s ‘being’ forward by representing his own projection into the future, using man’s own will as its fuel.


*Cabotinage* – “[Copeau] used the term to identify the qualities which he most vehemently despised in the commercial actor: the cult of the star performer, the falseness of the ‘ham’ actor, the use of superficial technique and empty histrionics.” (Evans 2006: 11)

Choice – “Choice in existential philosophy is connected with the question of freedom and the ultimate openness and groundlessness of the human condition. Existentialism rejects all forms of determinism that explain human actions as governed by forces beyond the control of the individual – as exemplified in religious, naturalistic, behavioristic, biological, or social forms of determinism.” (Hatab 2013a: 75)

Creativity – “[T]he process of developing original ideas that have value [...]” (Robinson 2010c: 2–3)

ENO – English National Opera (www.eno.org)

Factual – Adjective identifying *facticity*

Facticity – “Facticity denotes the given dimension of any situation, its resistance and obstacles, [...] as distinct from transcendence or the free surpassing of the given by consciousness. [...] Examples of facticity are my place, my past, my environment, my fellowman, my death.” (Flynn 2013b: 151)

Freedom – “Existential philosophers champion the freedom of individuals to define and choose their course in life. Existential thought combines a conception of freedom that rejects deterministic systems and explanations of human behavior [...]. [Sartre] defines freedom in negative terms since it follows from the intrinsic
negativity of consciousness, which exhibits a pervasive sense of possibility and becoming, a capacity for creation, denial, refusal, and multiple interpretations of the meaning of things. Such shows that human consciousness involves a negative transcendence that continually reaches beyond objective conditions of facticity.” (Hatab 2013b: 160)

GSMD – Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, UK (www.gsmd.ac.uk)

Imagination – “[T]he process of bringing to mind things that are not present to our senses […].” (Robinson 2010c: 2)

Innovation – “[T]he process of putting new ideas into practice […].” (Robinson 2010c: 3)

IQ – Intelligence quotient

Lecoq method – Actor training method developed by Jacques Lecoq and first taught at his school, L’École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

MA – Masters of Arts

MI – Theory of multiple intelligences

Nothingness – “In Being and Nothingness, Sartre equates nothingness with the nihilating consciousness that secretes negativity as it constitutes a world. As the internal negation of its objects, consciousness is the nothingness of things or being-in-itself. Nonbeing is a component of the real. All forms of the ‘not’ that inhabit our world, including negative judgments and what he calls negativities – the fragility of a glass or of a friendship – are both correlative to consciousness and symptoms of our contingency. Though consciousness-relative, negativities are not subjective phenomena. They presuppose a prejudicative comprehension of nonbeing as transphenomenal.” (Flynn 2013c)
Neutral mask – “A perfectly balanced mask which produces a physical sensation of calm. This object, when placed on the face, should enable one to experience the state of neutrality prior to action, a state of receptiveness to everything around us, with no inner conflict.” (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 177)

PaR – Practice-as-Research

Phenomenology – “[A] philosophical method, given definitive form by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), based on the reduction of the physical world to its manifestations in and for consciousness, in the hope of arriving at a purely ‘scientific’ or ‘presuppositionless’ philosophy. To accomplish this, one must suspend all judgment concerning a supposed objective world and focus strictly on the phenomena (mental presentations) by which we come to know a world.” (Moore 2001: 281)

RADA – Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, UK (www.rada.ac.uk)

RAM – Royal Academy of Music, London, UK (www.ram.ac.uk)

RCM – Royal College of Music, London, UK (www.rcm.ac.uk)

Regietheater – Productions in which the director’s style and interpretation are in more evidence than the author’s.

ROH – Royal Opera House

SCUDD – Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (www.scudd.org.uk)
Abstract

This document is the written component of a Practice-as-Research (PaR) doctoral project exploring opera training and opera production, with a particular focus on the creativity of the opera performer. It is submitted alongside a DVD evidencing a two-week-long training workshop with professional opera performers based on the Jacques Lecoq method of actor training. The four main research questions ask how performers can be included in the creative process as auteurs; what characterises a type of training model capable of unlocking the performers’ creativity and what skills it develops; how opera can evolve and outgrow definitions constrained by specific production models; and what impact the PaR processes had on the artistic practice.

Chapter 1 starts by giving an overview of opera training and production practices and establishes the research within the radical humanist paradigm of the social sciences. Chapter 2 introduces the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, the theory of multiple intelligences of Howard Gardner and aspects of the creativity theory of Ken Robinson as the three major philosophical pillars of the study. Chapter 3 positions the research in the history and debates of PaR. It also details the Lecoq-inspired content of the workshop and offers a rationale for the use of studio-based group training, semi-structured interviews and training diaries as primary research methods. Chapter 4 complements the accompanying DVD to present the data that is further analysed in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by establishing the need for a safe exploratory ensemble environment, if the performer is to achieve his/her creative potential. That, however, requires the fostering and application of ‘multiple intelligences’ to performance and a non-deterministic view of the material. Ultimately, the thesis establishes the notion of an opera beyond the confinements of the structures that define what opera currently is, and presents a vision of opera as what we will it to become.
Chapter 1  Introduction

Throughout most of our [twentieth] century the opera house could be called a museum exhibiting what its audiences accepted as the great monuments of the operatic past. […] Vital though opera still seems as a performing art, our view of the form remains primarily retrospective.

(Lindenberger 1984: 16)

The object of this research is opera: the opera of today leading towards that of tomorrow. It focuses primarily on the opera performer, the opera director/teacher and on what happens (or might happen) between them in a rehearsal or training studio. Supported by Sartre’s existentialist philosophy, Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and Ken Robinson’s anatomy of the creative process, this thesis explores opera training and opera production creative strategies that push performers’ and directors’ interpretative remit beyond that of first reads. It does so by borrowing and adapting elements of Jacques Lecoq’s training method for actors and applying them to a short and intensive workshop with opera performers, evidenced on the accompanying DVD. The subsequent analysis is threefold: existentialist analysis, multiple intelligences analysis and creativity analysis; which mirrors the philosophical framework of the project.

This first chapter starts by offering an overview of the state of the art of opera and of contemporary performer training. It then locates the research within a general paradigm of social sciences and establishes its purposes and design.
Contemporary theatre performance is evolving and with it the lines separating traditional genres and disciplines are getting increasingly more blurred. But is opera evolving with it, or does it keep holding on to a romantic idea of the past? Composer Philip Venables seems to think that it is not evolving, when stating that, “[a]ll the other contemporary arts have had anarchic moments and anti-establishment manifestos […]. But not opera. New opera still seems shackled to the corpse of the old […]. Most modern art rails against conservatism; is new opera its last bastion?” (Venables 2010: 39).

In this quest to discover what this forward-looking opera might come to mean, this thesis examines the role of the performer and director as creative agents and considers the potential that their relationship has to shape the art form.

1.1 Background

During the twentieth century, opera went from being a European-based art form to becoming a global phenomenon with the establishment of opera-producing houses around the world. For example, New York’s Metropolitan Opera, the oldest opera company in the US, was founded in 1883 ('Our Story' 2013), and Sydney’s Opera Australia (then known as Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust) was founded in 1956 ('History' 2014). With opera thus served all around the world by the specificities of the infrastructures that local opera houses had to offer, these institutions developed, generally speaking, into very similarly structured providers of very similarly selected works and similarly produced productions. Despite the fact that these companies have not lost their local remit of bringing core repertoire to their local communities, the twenty-first century’s global marketplace comprised of recordings, broadcasts ('Résultats de Recherche: opera' 2014), live screenings ('BP Big Screens' 2014, 'Live in HD: 2014–15' 2014), DVDs and international co-productions contributes to an increased consciousness of the global Narrowness of repertoire as well as
to an inevitable comparison of production practices and degrees of originality. This awareness is, in turn, one of the primary factors contributing to what can be perceived as the urgency to expand the repertoire of opera as well as the lines defining the art form itself. As Robert Cannon writes, unless we expand conceptions of opera, “we will be not opera lovers engaged in the full range of this marvellous art form, but enjoyers of a narrow repertoire that merely suits our own prejudices and restricted taste. We will never grow” (Cannon 2012).

The issue of originality is made more apparent, and its judgments less forgiving, by an increased awareness of what other opera houses produce, how they do it and of the structures and protocols put in place to maximise productivity. As for the issue of the narrowness of repertoire, it questions whether its rate of expansion tracks the fluctuations of contemporary composers’ output of new opera or if there are periods in which the rate of expansion of repertoire might be negative, leading to a contraction of repertoire. James Heilbrun evidences that, for instance, between 1991/92 and 1997/98 there was a decline in repertory diversity among American opera companies (Heilbrun 2001). So repertoire diversity, let alone its expansion, should not be taken for granted. Furthermore, these issues have been aggravated by a prevailing ‘star system’ in opera “by which the major vocal stars jetted from one opera house to the other, necessitating exceedingly short rehearsal times and producing, in turn, a routinization of production practices while reinforcing an ongoing contraction of the repertoire” (Levin 2007: 24). In these terms, opera has been steadily increasing its number of performances and its geographic coverage but shrinking in the range of pieces produced and in the range of alternative styles and/or interpretations deployed to produce them. In other words, the breadth of what is perceived as opera has been curtailed by external factors, such as the specificities of production models employed by opera houses as well as the average size and configuration of their production forces and spaces.
A number of authors (Fisher 2003, Grout 1965, Lindenberger 1998) have adopted historical perspectives in their studies of opera. These studies highlight the footprints of different eras and the cultural contexts of the last four centuries that are imprinted in opera and assess how they contribute to and define our understanding of the art form today. They are generally based on the idea that “an opera libretto will usually reflect the prevailing ideas of its time with regard to drama […] and] opera music will be, in general, very much like other music of the same period” (Grout 1965: 4). This dichotomy (sometimes a tension) between words and music expressed by both Grout and Fisher (Fisher 2003: 14) highlights the conspicuous absence (or subordination) of stage performance within many understandings of opera. Grout further conceives visual action as an element that merely enriches and clarifies the mutual analogy of words and music, which is understood to be the essence of opera (Grout 1965: 5). This bias in favour of music and words can be understood as a preference for understanding rooted in documentary evidence, which, prior to the dawn of audio-visual recordings, excluded stage performance practices from the essential elements of opera.

These definitions, tidy as they might appear to be, are increasingly problematic in terms of defining the whole of the art form. Taking the linguistic element of opera as an example, the words of the libretto are no longer considered the only or primary way to express narrative or plot details. The departure from traditional narrative structures is evidenced, for instance, by how loosely words and sentences convey meaning in Pascal Dusapin’s Roméo et Juliette (Dusapin 2003 [1985–89]) or Philip Glass’s Einstein on the Beach (Glass 1993 [1976]) or by how cryptic words become when performed in obscure languages such as in ‘Akkadian’ in Glass’s Akhnaten (Glass 1990 [1983]) or even by their complete absence in operas such as Paul Alan Barker’s Nye Tand, Eh? (Barker 2015, ElectricVoiceTheatre 2009).

Other simplistic attempts at defining opera have branded it as particularly long (Grout 1965: 4), expensive (Lindenberger 1984: 17) or inherently simpler in
characterisation than a play (Grout 1965: 3). But what of Lee Hoiby’s one-woman opera *Bon Appétit!* (Hoiby 1989), which runs for only eighteen minutes? Or Peter Brook’s production of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (Mozart 2006 [1787]), which, with no set but a few benches, poles and pieces of cloth and with no costume changes is cheap to produce but does not need to compromise in dramatic intensity. Last, but not least, the level of characterisation is not necessarily simpler in opera than in theatre; for example, the nuanced characterisation achieved by Nadja Michael in Willy Decker’s production of *Die Tote Stadt* for the Royal Opera (Korngold 2009 [1920]) goes certainly beyond any *commedia dell’arte* inspired theatrical production of, for instance, Goldoni’s *A Servant of Two Masters* (Goldoni and Louise 2003), which by definition requires a highly stylised acting style.

**Fluid concepts and diverse approaches**

Herbert Lindenberger explicitly established and theorised *Opera Studies* as an interdisciplinary but independent field of knowledge by drawing from a range of disciplines such as “musicology, obviously, but also theater history, art history, and every one of the literature fields in those countries where opera has thrived” (Lindenberger 2005: 253). But for Lindenberger too, the opera-house system, with its institutional organisation of opera “around a predictable crew of characters – impresario, librettist, composer, stage designer, singers, instrumentalists, chorus [and] dancers” (Lindenberger 2005: 254) is presented as one of the constants throughout opera history and, consequently, as one of the defining characteristics of opera itself.

The focus of this study will be less on an attempt to apply judgments of value that compare and grade different attitudes and practices of opera than on arguing the case for a compatibilistic attitude. The fact that one structure might be better or worse than any other (assuming one accepts that, according to
whichever standard is adopted to qualify better, that is a testifiable premise), is of less importance than making a case for the fluidity and flexibility of fields of knowledge and disciplines (academic and artistic). In order to challenge prescriptive and deterministic concepts and establish that they do not, in definitive terms, hold the monopoly on the definition of opera, it suffices to establish that alternative models already exist. More crucially, that other models can, in the future, be created (perhaps even outside of the traditional opera house) without labels other than opera having to be sought. Levin identifies an alternative that was established in the last quarter of the twentieth century by some European opera houses. They re-established an ensemble of resident singers that were contractually attached to a single company for a long period of time (Levin 2007: 24). This change can be seen as one of the major catalysts for what happened next: a decisive dramaturgical shift from a previously tacit and unquestioning interpretative attitude towards a commitment to exploratory processes and flexible dramaturgies. The old attitude was fuelled primarily by superficial reads of the material, by what through sheer repetition (and without a critical attitude) passes for performance tradition and by both lack of time in rehearsals and by how low a performer’s engagement in exploratory interpretative work fares in a list of priorities.

**Form vs. content**

The inclusion of staged performance as a defining element of opera has, since the second half of the twentieth century, encountered a great deal of resistance and criticism. Henry Pleasants, for instance, highlights that, “[w]hat had begun as a singer’s art nearly four centuries ago was taken over by the conductor […] and has now passed to the producer – or director, or director/designer” (Pleasants 1989: 29). However, Pleasants’s position clearly antagonises this recent shift, seeing directors’ and designers’ attempts to reinterpret canonical operas as sacrilegious and as one of the sources for the crisis in opera. Pleasants
implies this to be a *pathology*, by calling it ‘produceritis’; it is otherwise (and more neutrally) known as *Regietheater*, or director’s theatre.

While some recoil in horror at the liberties some directors take when eviscerating the works of venerated authors (Lash 2005, Llewellyn 2008, Pleasants 1989), others vehemently refuse to see the classics as immutable and untouchable museum pieces, which should be preserved in aspic (Müller 2006). The acrimonious stance against *Regietheater* has even assumed ideological and political defensive overtones when talking, for instance, about the work of directors from the former German Democratic Republic, stating that “[e]xcept in the case of works intended as such (those produced by Brecht and Weill, for instance) polemics and the stage make bad bed fellows” (Alan Blythe quoted in Pleasants 1989: 30). Some critics think that “[o]pera is sick. Very sick. Once handsome and noble, its formerly elegant features have over recent years become ever more contorted and distorted beneath a toxic, suppurating excrescence currently known as *Regietheater*” (Robins 2014). Yet others believe that in opera, just as in theatre, “in order to bring across, in thought and feeling, the intellectual and emotional core of Shakespeare, Goethe and Ibsen, it is imperative for directors [...] to translate world views and cut superfluous material” (Müller 2006), (Levin 2007).

From both sides of the argument, for and against *Regietheater*, there are voices such as David Littlejohn (Littlejohn 1992) and Tom Sutcliffe (Sutcliffe 1996) acknowledging the impact of *Regietheater* in the history and development of opera by making those productions their object of study. Littlejohn does so primarily by focusing on director Peter Sellars’ productions of the three Mozart operas with librettos by Lorenzo da Ponte: *Così Fan Tutte* (Mozart 1991 [1790]), *Don Giovanni* (Mozart 1991 [1787]) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart 1991 [1786]); he is not particularly complimentary about any of the three. He focuses on how Sellars’ adaptations (more than mere translations and/or updatings) of these operas into the performances’ contemporary America create tension points and (according to him) become irreparably ludicrous.
Littlejohn goes on to question Sellars’s respect for the score (Littlejohn 1992: 149), the “poses and postures in which Sellars’s actors have to sing” (Littlejohn 1992: 151) and the unbashful aesthetic choices when dealing with violence, sex and violent sex (Littlejohn 1992: 153–155).

Sutcliffe, on the other hand, has a more sympathetic view of Regietheater applied to opera in his “book about performance and interpretation” (Sutcliffe 1996: 11). According to him, “[e]very serious attempt to perform an opera adds to the richness and depth of that process” (Sutcliffe 1996: 3) and, based on that premise, he analyses a series of seminal productions by some of the most influential opera directors of the later twentieth century such as Patrice Chéreau, Graham Vick, Ruth Berghaus, David Alden and Peter Sellars, among others. Sutcliffe is considerably less critical of Sellars’s work (Sutcliffe 1996: 195-226) than Littlejohn, and his analysis (Sutcliffe 1996: 99-116) of Chéreau’s centenary production of Wagner’s Ring Cycle (Wagner 2000 [1869], 2000 [1870], 2000 [1876]-a, 2000 [1876]-b) identifies it as “among the most telling and momentous interpretations in many years’ opera-going” (Sutcliffe 1996: 115).

Ultimately, Regietheater simply identifies the attitude of a production towards the product of the original author(s). It identifies those instances in which the director’s view of the work assumes a primacy over the author’s supposed intentions or any other predetermined aspect. It does not, however, imply the degree to which it is done and how much friction a new interpretation might create when applied to material that may be unsuitable for such an interpretation.

The reactions for and against Regietheater in opera can be seen as the corollaries of what Lindenberger identifies as a much older contention between the dramatic principle (Lindenberger 1984: 56-65) and the operatic principle (Lindenberger 1984: 65-69). According to Lindenberger, any history of opera “generally depicts the form as moving back and forth between two extremes –
on the one hand, a dramatic emphasis in which musical values serve the interests of the text; on the other, an emphasis on performative features such as vocal virtuosity and sumptuousness of spectacle” (Lindenberger 1984: 56). However, the interpretation of these principles is strongly constrained by the context in (and to) which they are to be applied. The dramatic ‘reforms’ of opera by Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) and by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) are two examples of how dependent on contemporary concepts of drama the ‘dramatic principle’ is, with Gluck boldly defending the subservience of music to poetry and with Wagner painstakingly engineering opera as an integrated dramatic whole. Even the powerful shift in musical criticism that occurred in the 1950s with Joseph Kerman’s Opera as Drama (Kerman 1956) was profoundly constrained by its time. Kerman expanded the concepts of what drama can (and does) mean in opera based upon Wagner’s view that “opera is properly a musical form of drama, with its own individual dignity and force” (Kerman 1956: 3), but he fails to see beyond the primacy of the composer as opera’s definitive source of dramatic content. On the other hand, by presenting the dichotomy of principles as dramatic/operatic, Lindenberger is already blurring the issue by robbing opera of drama as one of its inalienable identifiers and by identifying the performance artifice as the core of the art form. Would it not be fairer to consider this dichotomy in terms of Hegel’s dialectic of form and content (Houlgate 2009–2014)? After all, from our twenty-first-century vantage point it is possible not only to recognise dramatic value in the artifices described as operatic by Lindenberger, but also to consider opera that dispenses with those supposedly ‘operatic’ characteristics.

The contention here does, however, extend beyond Lindenberger’s dichotomy, by considering that even Hans-Thies Lehmann’s Postdramatic Theatre (Lehmann 2006) might be misleadingly named. One of the major characteristics of Postdramatic Theatre is the fact that it does not rely on the dramatic text in order to convey its drama; so would it not be more aptly named as Postdramatic-Text Theatre or even Postliterary Theatre? Equating the dramatic text to the dramatic,
paradoxically weakens the thesis of postdramatic theatre by endowing the
dramatic text with the monopoly on drama. Ultimately, this means that it is not
the need of theatre and opera for drama that has disappeared, but our concept
of drama that has evolved and expanded. In fact, it has evolved and expanded
in such ways that “[n]ineteenth century dramaturgies no longer serve as
vehicles with which to engage with life in the twenty-first century” (Till 2004:
18). One can recognise the presence and value of drama in elements other than
the textual contributions of composer and librettist and support authors such
as Alan E. Hicks in the compatibilistic view that ”opera was and is meant to be
a true fusion of art forms in which no element is more important than the other”
(Hicks 2011: 3).

A perfect example of how this new layer of meaning can be incorporated
without challenging conservative readings of the score, can be found, for
instance, in the physicality developed by director Laurent Pelly and soprano
Natalie Dessay for the Royal Opera’s production of Donizetti’s La Fille du
Régiment (Donizetti 2008 [1840], 2010 [1840]). Creating a stylised gestural
language with clear influences of commedia dell’arte in the duo ‘Au bruit de la
guerre’ the collaboration between voice and body really pays off. Pelly and
Dessay achieve a perfect balance in which the bel canto vocal fireworks find
their dramatic raison d’être in the movement, thus allowing audiences to
understand coloratura in a dramatic context, beyond the simple aesthetic
musical appreciation. Furthermore, if they had simply accepted that, according
to the abovementioned dichotomy, this simply is one of those moments in
which the dramatic loses against the operatic, an opportunity for what became
one of the most impactful moments of the night would have been lost. Just
because Donizetti writes a large number of florid passages, which at first sight
might not come across as obvious vehicles for drama, does not necessarily
mean that drama is not there or that it cannot be added by the performer
and/or director.
The following example illustrates a slightly more adventurous attitude that aims to push the boundaries separating music from characterisation, by allowing the creation of a well-rounded character and of the character’s idiosyncratic gestures to interfere with the singing. As part of the collaboration between director David McVicar and mezzo-soprano Anne Sophie von Otter for the Glyndebourne’s production of Bizet’s Carmen (Bizet 2003 [1875]), Carmen’s characterisation reaches the point of actually challenging the music, with parts of the Habanera (arguably one of the most recognisable melodies in opera) being hummed instead of sung simply because Carmen is smoking a cigar. Arguing the validity of such ‘interferences’ is beyond the scope of this introduction but these two examples serve to illustrate the argument that the productions of opera houses are at their best when, despite the large scale of the set and the huge number of people who might be involved, the creative relationship between director and performer is allowed space and time to bear its best fruit. It is the nature of these relationships, between performer and director, which forms the core of the object of study in this thesis.

Daniel Helfgot and William O. Beeman identify the abovementioned contribution by the opera performer (in collaboration with the director) as the third line. “The third line is, briefly, the interpretive line a singer adds to the other two lines [libretto and music] in an operatic score. […] [It] consists of the body movement, eye focus, facial expression, and inflection that makes the score leap off the page and into reality on stage” (Helfgot and Beeman 1993: 6). However, this process of creating the third line, of bringing a character to life through one’s body, voice and mind from the text and music notation of the score requires dramatic-technical expertise. Technique is necessary not only to create material from diverse elements and to process it into a coherent performance, but it is also paramount to ensure that such performance is crystalised and stable: to ensure that it is solid enough to endure a long run of the same production and that it is immune to the vagaries of mood and inspiration. The diversity of performance styles and operatic outputs made
inevitable by the normalisation of Regietheater has direct consequences not only for directors and designers, but also for performers, how they perform and for what is (or might be) asked of them. These are some examples of different skills contemporary opera performance may require:

- Total integration of the musical and dramatic aspects, as made evident in the distinct thoughts clearly expressed in the different coloratura musical phrases of Diana Damrau’s Queen of the Night’s first aria in David McVicar’s Royal Opera production of Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte (Mozart 2003 [1791]);

- High levels of physical stamina, as required by the Catalan company La Fura dels Baus in the English National Opera’s production of Ligeti’s Le Grand Macabre (Ligeti 2009 [1978]);

- Ease and comfort with full-frontal nudity throughout the entire opera as in John Pascoe’s in La Fenice’s production of Vivaldi’s Ercole su’l Termodonte (Vivaldi 2007 [1723]) and with explicit scenes of a sexual and violent nature to serve dramatic purposes, as in Calixto Bieito’s production of Mozart’s Die Entführung aus dem Serail for the Komische Oper Berlin (Mozart 2004 [1782]);

- The ability to act and emote through highly stylised and minutely choreographed movement, beyond naturalistic or semaphoric acting, as in Bob Wilson’s Théâtre du Châtelet production of Gluck’s Orphée et Eurydice (Gluck 2000 [1774]).

The diversity of the contemporary operatic output can also increasingly be felt beyond the big opera houses. Small companies are reinventing their remit by avoiding the temptation to become mere providers of second-rate productions of what their bigger counterparts are doing. Companies such as Size Zero Opera (‘Size Zero Opera’ 2015), with projects like its recent exploration of the world of female boxers and the Olivier Award winner (‘Olivier Winners 2011’
2011) Opera Up Close (‘Opera Up Close’ 2015) with its intimate and pared down productions of the traditional repertoire are two examples of small opera companies exploring beyond the perceived limitations of opera. Such work is supported, complemented and magnified by festivals such as Tête-à-tête (‘Tête-à-tête’ 2015) and Grimeborn (‘Grimeborn’ 2015), which offer platforms for contemporary and daring opera-makers to present their work.

In order to cater for these and other demands of contemporary opera performance, the systematic training of dramatic opera performers is necessary. It can foster the interpretative and expressive foundations and tools enabling the opera performer’s development towards mastering the abovementioned skills (or indeed others) that a production might require.

1.2 Performer Training

Most opera performers receive the message that they are on stage primarily to sing instead of perform. Whatever else they are able to do is icing on the cake. The result is that opera singers in training receive instruction in little other than vocal technique. When called upon to act, they hide behind their need to produce sound.

(Helgøt and Beeman 1993: ix)

Following Helgøt and Beeman’s distinction between singing and performing, the difference between opera singer and opera performer goes beyond a lexical distinction and requires both a theoretical and practical redefinition of the voice-body-psychology interface in performance. A good opera performer (someone who performs in professionally staged opera productions) is necessarily a good opera singer, but a good opera singer (someone who sings music from operas) is not necessarily a good opera performer. In other words, musicianship is paramount to a good opera performer but, for dramatic stage work, it is not enough by itself.
The primacy of musicianship and vocal quality in the expected output of the opera performer is corroborated by the current training pathways available. Formal opera training generally only happens at postgraduate level, after a very long period of studying music and usually culminating in a vocal studies undergraduate degree, as the entry requirements (a musical audition and, generally, a music undergraduate degree) to opera courses suggest (‘Entry Requirements: Taught Masters & Research’ 2014, ‘Opera Studies Audition’ 2014, ‘Postgraduate Entry Requirements’ 2014). Students entering opera courses are thus musicians (or at least have been able to demonstrate a high standard of musicianship during the auditions for the course) who either hope to metamorphose into dramatic performers by attending acting and stagecraft classes and performing in a number of quasi-professional fully staged productions, or else see the opera world as requiring little beyond musical excellence. In the former case, training can be an opportunity to develop individual dramatic skills in light of an established professional practice such as opera, but also, even if it is less common, to challenge the definition boundaries of the art form according to individuals’ discoveries during training.

As Helena Gaunt notes, music training is unique among performing arts trainings for its heavy reliance on one-to-one tuition (Gaunt 2011, 2012). Both drama and dance training are generally offered by means of group classes, whilst the core of music training still remains one of one-to-one tuition. In traditional opera training, one-to-one tuition amounts to little more than voice lessons. Thus students “get the bulk of their instruction from voice teachers who do all they can to make the voice a reliable instrument. […] The result is that vocal interpretation is replaced by vocal mechanization” (Helfgot and Beeman 1993: 11-12). But as Richard Crittenden, an opera performer, educator and the founder of the Crittenden Opera Studio in New York, notes, the primacy of vocalism in opera performance is not restricted to the narrowness
of institutional provision; students themselves do not identify the need to supplement their training beyond voice lessons:

Thousands of dollars and years of voice training prepare singers to navigate the arduous and demanding medium of operatic singing. Tessitura, volume, flexibility, control and expressivity, among other skills, are worked on and refined to enable singers to perform operatic music effectively. On the other hand, how much effort is expended training the body to be instantaneously responsive to a singer’s emotions, to be able to move and gesture as different characters, to make oneself stage savvy, and to be so flexible that working with different directors and in different styles is a pleasure, not a chore or an embarrassment? The answer to that question is ‘not very much.’

(Crittenden 1999a: 28)

But this is not to say that there has been no evolution in the training offered by opera courses. Opera training has indeed evolved into more holistic structures and pedagogic practices than what British tenor Alexander Oliver reports of his two years of training at the Wiener Akademie in the 1960s (Oliver 2010): one-to-one singing lessons, watching scenes from Mozart’s operas and learning how to dance the Viennese waltz and the Tričš-Třatsch-Polk. Nowadays, opera programmes most often offer a wider curriculum, with “[c]lasses in body-work and movement, stage technique, European languages, singing lessons and vocal coaching form[ing] an integral part of the weekly training schedule” (Royal Academy Opera: Study Details' 2014). But, when taking into account Mandy Demetriou’s report (movement teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, the National Opera Studio and the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House) that only eighteen hours of movement lessons are scheduled for opera students at the Royal Academy in the course of a year (and even these are not strictly compulsory) (Demetriou 2010), the imbalance among the different performance disciplines in opera makes itself felt once again.
A major feature of these courses is the number of full productions they allow students to take part in. These are designed to offer students an experience similar to what they will, supposedly, encounter in the professional world, as well as, often, the first opportunity to perform a role from beginning to end. However, according to Helfgot and Beeman, “[t]oo often, students were thrust into full student productions of operas with no stage background except voice instruction. They were expected to learn stage movement and acting on the fly” (Helfgot and Beeman 1993: 5). Within theatre training, Burnet M. Hobgood rejects learning-by-doing and imitation, calling for an alternative way of training performers:

The teacher of theatre has to keep in touch with that state of affairs [diversity of theatre forms] and prepare students to understand and be proficient in it. That being the case, the motifs of imitation and learning by doing seldom seem appropriate in a contemporary teaching rationale. (Hobgood 1987: 71)

If opera is evolving and becoming increasingly more diverse, it demands from the performers a range of skills to deal with constant streams of new variables. These variables range from some librettos’ rejection of linear narratives, such as in Harrison Birtwistle’s *Punch and Judy* (Birtwistle 2007 [1968]) and Philip Glass’s *Satyagraha* (Glass 1985), to the physical demands made by some directors and audiences, such as the physical *and* vocal virtuosity of the Gym Instructress in Robert Lepage’s production of Lorin Maazel’s *1984* for the Royal Opera (Maazel 2008 [2008]).

Having established the need for a broader training, what model might be suitable for the contemporary opera performer? Ian Watson differentiates between direct and indirect training in his book *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures* (Watson 2001: 1-2). Opera performers often learn and specialise in specific roles instead of focusing on learning general performance skills, or a grammar, which can then be applied to a range of different productions.
According to Watson’s model, Western opera training seems currently more akin to Asian actor training than it is to Western actor training. This is due to the fact that the training culture favours the specialisation of the performer in specific roles and in those individual performance skills that are intimately connected to those same roles over a broader more comprehensive and, ultimately, more versatile form of training. Most Western systems and styles of acting and performance (there are exceptions, such as commedia dell’arte) share in the idea that the systematic study and learning of what the underlying rules and forces common to many types of performance are, as well as understanding how they manifest themselves and how the performer can impact on them, is prioritised over the technical mastery of an expressive device (vocal, physical or otherwise). This is what Watson identifies as indirect training.

In opera, it is not uncommon for performers like Nadja Michael to build careers upon specific roles, particularly upon those that require particular voice types and/or vocal ability, like Salome in Richard Strauss’s Salome (Michael 2014, Strauss 2008 [1905]). But in order to successfully respond to the demands for diversity made by audiences and to ensure the creative output is always as diverse and fresh as it can possibly be, Nadja needs tools to create Salome almost from scratch at the start of each rehearsal process. This only becomes harder if her number of Salomes goes on climbing from the current ten different productions performed all around the globe. Furthermore, her Salome in David McVicar’s production at Covent Garden, London, for the Royal Opera has been immortalised on DVD (Strauss 2008 [1905]). This means that adding to the 10 Salomes peppered across Europe and North America and to the knowledge of how much more people travel nowadays (which increases the chances of having attended one of Nadja’s performances as Salome somewhere far away) is the possibility of having someone in the audience who has watched the recording to exhaustion. This surely makes Nadja’s job considerably more difficult. It is, however, in these difficult moments that elements of indirect
training become vital. A refocusing of the training from teaching specific techniques to promoting an understanding of the underlying principles connecting a range of techniques promotes the training’s output of more versatile, self-aware and creative performers.

The tradition of indirect training in theatre performance in the West can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Watson 2001: 6) and to Konstantin Stanislavsky’s seminal works An Actor Prepares (Stanislavsky 2006) and Stanislavski on Opera (Stanislavski and Rumyantsev 1998). Stanislavsky’s acting method relies heavily on the performer’s emotional memories (Stanislavski and Rumyantsev 1998: 30) to bring a character to life, thus cementing it firmly in reality; more precisely, in the performer’s reality. The Stanislavsky method fails, however, to analyse emotional memory semiotically and to separate signifier from signified. This can potentially, despite the clear and explicit focus on action (Stanislavski and Rumyantsev 1998: 27), lead to emotions being felt by the performer but, ultimately, not being read by the audience. It can therefore be argued that, in Stanislavsky’s psychological inside-out approach (focusing first on internal elements and only afterwards on their external manifestations), performance is constantly connected to real emotions and real memories without an accurate and efficient understanding of how a spectator might read the external (visible and audible) signs of those emotions. Furthermore, as an example, for a performer playing Lucia in Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti 1890 [1835]) to systematically access her own emotions and memories fuelling the character’s murderous madness scene, night after night, is not only potentially emotionally unhealthy but also an unstable and unreliable process which jeopardises the consistency of the show’s run. This thesis chooses to follow a parallel French outside-in tradition, discussed later, that circumvents some of these issues.
Stanislavsky’s ideas on acting were taken further by many theatre practitioners, educators and theorists; most notably by his students Michael Chekhov (Chekhov 2002) and Vsevolod Meyerhold (Pitches 2003), who all developed systems, programs and exercises specific to the training of actors.

“For singing mannequins such exercises are indeed superfluous,” said Stanislavski, “but for living human beings, if they wish to remain so on the stage, they are imperative.”

(Stanislavski and Rumyantsev 1998: 5)

However, despite the contributions of Stanislavsky and his disciples, it was not until the 1970s that the argument for an organic and systematic relationship between the dramatic and musical training of music-theatre performers (including opera performers) found a serious defender. H. Wesley Balk recognised that “[m]ost vocal and musical training […] attempts to create singers capable of doing whatever they wish to do musically and vocally, with maximum vitality and understanding. But their theatrical training, let alone integration of their musical and theatrical training, is treated in a haphazard manner at best” (Balk 1977: 35). It follows his idea that “[m]usic-theater is an art form in which music and theatre are equal partners and not, as in the musical comedy tradition or the grand, grand opera tradition, inferior servants of one another” (Balk 1977: 8).

Balk’s book The Complete Singer-Actor (Balk 1977) identifies the absence of a body of technique for the singer-actor, elaborates on the need for such a training within the music-theatre forms (including opera) and establishes a clear and detailed set of exercises that develops some basic skills of the music-theatre performer. Furthermore, and vital for establishing the performer’s role as a creator, is the exploration of improvisation as a creative tool in two distinct arenas: exercise and performance (Balk 1977: 102-103). It is this distinction that allows the results of improvisation to be considered and evaluated beyond their immediate performative value. In other words, for improvisation to take
place without any of the participants constraining it according to the outcome’s perceived readiness for an audience. Improvisation on stage and improvisation in the rehearsal studio are ruled by completely different standards.

If a character’s journey is the product of the decisions he/she has made (or even better, that the performer has made for him/her), logic dictates that the journey finally (and more or less neatly) presented to the audience is but one of many other possible ones characterised by different decision-making. Improvisation, as part of the creative performer’s toolbox, unsettles the idea of an exclusive, linear and unchallengeable journey and proposes instead a diverse, flexible and (at times) oppositional route towards an artistic outcome. Thus, Balk’s idea of the performer as explorer (Balk 1977: 104-106) becomes central to this research and will later inform this thesis’s practical work with the performers.

Balk’s book was later distilled (and very simplified) into Mark Ross Clark’s *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera* (Clark 2002), which adds some peripheral aspects to performance and random (at times contradictory) testimony, first-person accounts, opinions or anecdotes about the state of the art and production practices. Both Balk and Clark, however, at times give in to the temptation of defining opera with too broad a brush stroke, with sweeping generalisations. For example, even if opera might sometimes be a collective effort by a large number of artists from many different disciplines, to define it as “the most collaborative art form ever conceived, involving the cooperation of more artists of different kinds than any art has the right to expect or a reason to tolerate” (Balk 1977: 5) is not a sound (nor even a valid) argument, as the proliferation of small opera companies refutes it.

Clark further troubles the operatic interpretative waters when he mentions being true to:
In mentioning composer and librettist, for instance, Clark not only narrows down the full potential of Balk’s exploratory performer remit, but he also gives in to the fallacy that first, it is possible to accurately ascertain what composers and librettists’ intentions might have been and second, that it necessarily matters at all. One of this thesis’s main points of contention with Clark’s instructional handbook for opera performers does not relate to any of the elements or techniques it describes, but to their presentation as the only possible way to create a character in opera. Clark’s list does offer the performer six possible starting points for research and from where to start creating a character; but a production that does not acknowledge one or more of these is indeed conceivable. Furthermore, how useful the esoteric expression ‘being true to something’ really is and what does it really mean in this context?

Perhaps one of the best organised of recent texts that most resembles a coherent acting method for opera performers is Alan E. Hicks’s *Singer and Actor: Acting Technique and the Operatic Performer* (Hicks 2011). In it, Hicks identifies a series of issues with current opera programmes, such as the fact that some institutions hire voice teachers instead of stage directors or acting coaches to teach Opera Workshop, a subject covering a range of (supposedly) secondary stage skills such as movement, acting, dance and stage combat (Hicks 2011: 28). Hicks then proposes a structured and head-on pedagogic approach to acting that is largely based on Stanislavsky’s method. There is an overt and very useful disentanglement of Stanislavsky with his American offshoots, Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg, whose work developed primarily from Stanislavsky’s early
work and largely ignoring his later developments. In this book, Hicks distils
the main elements of Stanislavsky’s teachings (such as the method of physical
action, the creative if, units and objectives…) and, after a brief overview of the
history of acting in opera, applies them to opera performance. Hicks’s book is
very compelling and didactic for anyone opting for a Stanislavskian inside-out
approach to acting, but thus shares in the abovementioned criticisms to
Stanislavsky.

Leon Major and Michael Laing’s The Empty Voice: Acting Opera (Major and
Laing 2011) is inspired by Peter Brook’s seminal work The Empty Space (Brook
1990). Its introduction (Major and Laing 2011: xiii-xvii) is very insightful when
highlighting the diva who does not put the work in as an archetype of poor
opera practice. Major and Laing conclude the introduction to their book by
identifying a committed extended period of six weeks for “singers and director
to explore together the nuances of music and text and patiently build a true
ensemble” (Major and Laing 2011: xvi) as the key to a successfully collaborative
process. However, they offer very little in terms of how to fill those six weeks.
Their most relevant foundational tenet is stating the five questions a performer
should always ask before stepping on stage:

1. Where am I coming from?
2. Where am I going?
3. What do I want?
4. What might block me?
5. How do I overcome that block?

(Major and Laing 2011: 11)

Important as these questions are, Major and Laing offer little insight as to how
their answers might be conveyed on stage. Intentions and objectives are indeed
paramount to opera performance, but should acting technique not go beyond
the identification of these intentions and objectives to explore how body and
voice can express them to an audience? That is one of the main aims of this
research, to find strategies and techniques that can make the answers to these
questions apparent to spectators and thus influence how the performance is read by them. Whilst it may be important to ground any discussion of operatic acting technique in real and concrete opera practice, Major and Laing only address it as a result of specific and singular cases in practice. The book focuses so much on specific cases that it addresses the theory of acting in no more than 11 pages entitled ‘A Little Theory’ (Major and Laing 2011: 9-19).

Major and Laing’s lack of theoretical underpinning and underlying grammar is mirrored in Jonathan Miller’s DVD Acting in Opera (Miller and Croft 2007), which offers lengthy cerebral discussions about what a character is feeling at a certain moment or about what the character wants from a scene, but allows little creative scope for the performer to explore a range of ways in which that can be conveyed. By repeatedly portraying the director as telling the performer what to do, or even as showing the performer how to do it, this approach promotes an imbalance between director and performer. The director is supposed to have all the answers prior to the rehearsals, whilst the performer is relegated to a factory-worker role, re-creating what the director wants instead of collaboratively creating it.

Miller does consider the importance of connecting emotional singing with physical actions when he says “[b]ut you see how your expressions, your sung pieces, should come out of something that you’re doing?” (Miller and Croft 2007: 12:08). However, the entire process is undermined by him showing the performer exactly what he should be doing instead of finding creative strategies through which the performer can find his own range of possible physical actions. If that was the case, if director and performer were both exploring the possibilities at the same moment in time together in rehearsals, perhaps Miller could even be surprised by what the performer would have to offer, and which may have escaped directorial expectations and/or pre-emptive vision.
This authorial agency of the performer in exploring a new creative stream that runs parallel to the composer’s music and the librettist’s words is the core issue of the abovementioned book by Daniel Helfgot and William O. Beeman *The Third Line: The Opera Performer as Interpreter* (Helfgot and Beeman 1993). However, how this ‘third line’ is written can greatly differ depending on which school of acting and on which production structures are relevant to a specific production. This third line, particularly when fuelled by the *outside-in* French tradition of Copeau and Lecoq (running somewhat in opposition to a Stanislavskian Russian-American tradition), is the main subject of this research.

This French tradition focuses primarily on dramatic movement, on control over one’s body and on the body’s potential for character transformation. This French tradition (encompassing several different schools) can be traced back to Jacques Copeau at the turn of the twentieth century. Copeau rebelled against the reduction of the theatre of his time to ‘frivolous’ spectacle and set out to free it from ‘cabotinage’, a term he used “to identify the qualities which he most vehemently despised in the commercial actor: the cult of the star performer, the falseness of the ‘ham’ actor, the use of superficial technique and empty histrionics” (Evans 2006: 11). Arguably, opera (or at least some opera) is at a similar stage. Would a similar intervention have a comparable effect?

Copeau’s first and foremost contribution is the use of the neutral mask as a training tool and his consequent instatement of the concept of ‘neutral’ as a starting point for any performer’s creative process (Evans 2006). Among other contributions, Copeau is crucially responsible for asserting the idea that no performer can be truly creative before learning how to control his/her own idiosyncrasies and to become a blank canvas. Only then can characterisation happen.

The Lecoq method for the training of actors (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002), devised by Jacques Lecoq a few decades after Copeau, adopts Copeau’s neutral mask and instates it as its first major step. The Lecoq method is an established
body-centred creative and improvisational method that has the potential to raise the influence of the opera performer in production to the level of *auteur*. In the same way that Alexandre Astruc coined the concept *caméra-stylo* (camera-pen) in 1948, allowing François Truffaut (1932–1984) shortly afterwards to describe film directors who imprint their individual creative style as *auteurs* instead of mere *metteurs-en-scène* (Lapsley and Westlake 2006: 106), the Lecoq method suggests the birth of a ‘stage-pen’, of performers as *auteurs*. In the words of Lecoq: “Mine is a school of creativity. I remind the actors that they are ‘auteurs’” (Lecoq quoted in Murray 2002: 25). In the context of this thesis, the word *auteur* implies the performer becoming a major creative force in the production of opera.

### 1.3 The Research

The gap in knowledge filled by this research, consists primarily of the creative and interpretative limits of the opera performer and in how these can be influenced by training and rehearsal methods drawn from actor training and theatre production processes. This gap extends beyond the scope of this project, to the implications of the systematic expansion of the performer’s creative and interpretative remit within the context of an opera course and/or an opera production. Therefore, the primary research questions for this thesis are as follows:

1. **How can the performer be successfully included in the creative process as an *auteur***?

2. **What characterises the type of training model capable of unlocking the performer’s creativity and what specific skills does it develop?**

3. **How can opera evolve and outgrow definitions that are constrained by specific production models?**
These three primary questions cover the impact of creative processes on the role of the individual, on performer training structures and on the art form respectively.

Theoretical Framework

Built upon “the idea that ‘all theories of organisation are based upon a philosophy of science and theory of society’” (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 1), this section aims to identify the sociological paradigm underpinning this research. In order to do so, it applies Burrell and Morgan’s system, which first locates this project, on a horizontal vector representing the project’s assumptions about a philosophy of science ranging between subjective and objective. This dimension is established through the exploration of four philosophical debates: the ontological, the epistemological, the human nature and the methodological debates.

A second vector is then drawn, this time represented vertically, identifying the theory of society. It ranges between the sociology of regulation at the bottom and the sociology of radical change at the top (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 22)
Chapter 1: Introduction

Opera as Social Structure

Throughout this section, opera will be referred to as a social structure, since social structures are “relatively permanent features of society that take on new characteristics different from the individuals who make up the social structure” (Lawson and Garrod 2001: 247). Since opera’s meaning is, indeed, more than the sum of its parts, more than the sum of the individuals and institutions that make up the total membership of the opera world, it implies a set of patterned relationships assigning roles, meanings and purposes to each element. Opera, as a social structure, is a complex social system. The way in which opera organises itself is a direct result of its function – or, at least, a direct result of what some identify opera’s function to be. Ultimately, social structures require a certain amount of stability and permanence, and are capable of coerciveness to preserve that stability; structures tend to be systems that are not particularly conducive to change and reinvention. As Daniel Little writes,

A social structure consists of rules, institutions, and practices. A social structure is socially embodied in the actions, thoughts, beliefs, and durable dispositions of individual human beings. A social structure is effective in organizing behavior of large numbers of actors. A structure is coercive of individual and group behavior. A social structure assigns roles and powers to individual actors. A social structure often has distributive consequences for individuals and groups. A social structure is geographically dispersed. (Little 2007)

This idea of opera as a giant coercive faceless structure, constricting the individual with a multitude of seemingly mandatory relationships and processes, is particularly useful in addressing the performer’s freedom of creativity encapsulated in the third research question. This project started from an impulse to set the opera performer free, unbound and disentangled from the rule-imposing and border-enforcing social structure of opera. But what of its nature? How solid is it, and how strong a grip does it have on the performer?
The ontological debate

Is the structure of opera “external to the individual — imposing itself on individual consciousness from without — or the product of individual consciousness” (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 1)? Any ontological argument is resolved by agreeing on a point within a spectrum ranging between realism and nominalism. The former is generally inclined to accept that the mechanics and laws ruling any social structure are, like in the natural world, independent of human cognition. In this context, opera would exist as a solid structure of works and practices immune to the effect that individuals might have on it.

But at the other end of the ontological spectrum, there are no universals enabling someone to identify two or more individual units (subjects, objects, events…) as being opera or operatic. In fact, from a nominalist stance, opera is but a word when considered independently of human cognition. By itself, it does not describe any real existing structure or unifying characteristic. Consequently, it follows that, in the absence of a human subject, opera is an empty vessel; it does not carry meaning without the creative power of the individual (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 4). Furthermore, by embracing a nominalist view of the world, the possibility of separating opera from its current structures in order to free the performer without annihilating the art form is thus enabled.

The epistemological debate

Having established the nature of the object of knowledge, how does the ‘knowing process’ take place? How does the subject engage with the object of knowledge? The epistemological debate illuminating these questions stretches between positivism and anti-positivism according to the knowable priorities of a given research project. Two of the basic characteristics of positivistic epistemologies are their tendency to look for regularities and causal relationships and their assumption that the observer’s detached objectivity not
only amounts to a vantage point but is also an indispensable condition of scientific enquiry. Conversely, this thesis is based upon the anti-positivist conviction that “the social world is essentially relativistic and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities that are to be studied” (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 5).

Anti-positivist in nature, this research has placed the researcher at the centre of the field of enquiry, in a position that interacts directly with the participants and even becomes one of the sources of data, thus doubling up as researcher and participant. It dismisses the positivist claim that objectivity and detachment are necessary or even desirable. These anti-positivist elements are a direct consequence of this project’s adopted methodology, Practice-as-Research (PaR). Through PaR, there is a conscious effort to engage with both practice and theory. The relationship between practice, theory and praxis, as well as other characteristic elements of PaR, will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

**The human nature debate**

Are one’s actions completely determined by one’s situation and/or environment, or is the individual autonomous and endowed with free agency? This issue is particularly important because it identifies the type of relationship the individual has with the social structures that make up his/her social environment – the social structures which structure the individual and his/her way of living. If, at one end of the spectrum, determinism denies the existence of the individual’s free will, condemning human choices and actions to the effect of causal sequences, voluntarism, at its extreme, defends the individual’s total absence of compulsion or constraint.

In considering conservatoires and opera companies as some of the key elements of opera’s social structure, the human nature debate can be translated into questioning how much they pre-determine the individual’s creative output. In
these terms, and despite recognising the ability that social structures have to present themselves as seemingly inevitable and unavoidable, this does not amount to a deterministic view of the world. Instead, this research subscribes to a voluntarist model of mankind by claiming that individuals are ultimately autonomous and free-willed.

Whilst the social environment often frames and limits what the individual sees as his/her scope for action, everyone (consciously or not) has the means to escape those deterministic constraints and compulsions in order to create their own artistic path. From this perspective, this research is concerned with articulating ways in which “human beings can transcend the […] bonds and fetters which tie them into existing social patterns and thus realise their full potential” (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 32). These structural bonds and fetters are the tools by which the environment limits and controls the individual, potentially to the point of convincing him/her of the absence of free will.

The process of removing those limitations, of unlimiting the potential of the individual to act upon the surrounding world and convincing him/her of the exclusivity of his/her jurisdiction over his/her own life, is reclaimed by highlighting the importance of regaining total control over those same elements. Only by embracing the possibility of voluntarism can the idea of auteurship be conceived.

The methodological debate

The way in which research can access the process by which performers regain control over the abovementioned elements is argued in the context of a methodological debate. It encompasses approaches to social science ranging from the ideographic to the nomothetic. In general terms, the former is characterised by a foregrounding of qualitative methods whilst the latter by a foregrounding of quantitative ones, which in turn denote a preference for subjective or objective accounts respectively.
As the aim of this research is to track the return centre stage of the individual’s creativity in opera, its methodological bias is expressed in the preference for subjective accounts and experiences over the insights offered by narratives constructed through the analysis of patterns accessed by the deployment of quantitative methods. Therefore, methodologically, this research is ideographic: it, “is based on the view that one can only understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation” (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 6). There is a preference for individual, idiosyncratic and sometimes personal data. The processes adopted will aim at uncovering rich readings for what happens during the research by considering the performers’ perspectives. This project will focus not only on how one can train opera performers, but also on how opera performers process and experience that same training.

Furthering the ideographic aspect of this project is its Practice-as-Research typification. This specific type of artistic research, further discussed in Chapter 3, follows Robin Nelson’s dynamic model (Nelson 2009: 127, 2013: 37), which interconnects practitioner knowledge, conceptual framework and critical reflection in a unified knowledge-producing system. It acknowledges and accepts the performers’ encultured and embodied knowledge, places it within a theoretical framework and reflects upon the process of making explicit the previously tacit knowledge before starting the process all over again in an ascending knowledge-producing spiral of practice and research.

By making this a potentially infinite cyclical system, there are in fact not one, but two types of reflection in this model. The first one is reflection-in-action, the ability to “think about doing something while doing it” (Schön 1991: 54). Reflection-in-action is dynamic; it happens in motion and prompts the beginning of yet another cycle. The other type of reflection offers a synthesis: it happens with hindsight and allows for a full stop to be applied and final conclusions to emerge, as is required of PhD research.
The order–conflict debate

Besides the abovementioned assertions on the nature of social science, as applied to this project, which together define its positioning in the horizontal subjective-objective vector (Fig. 1), Burrell and Morgan consider another dimension based on assumptions about the nature of society. This vertical vector ranges from sociology of regulation to sociology of radical change (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 16-19) and, by intersecting the first vector, thus creates four equal and mutually exclusive quadrants (Fig. 1).

The sociology of regulation refers to those theorists whose work offers a view of society based on its unity and cohesiveness, emphasising the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, the ability that social structures have to satisfy individual needs and actuality (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 17). On the other hand, the sociology of radical change refers to those other theorists whose work offers an alternative view of society based on division and coercion, emphasising change, structural conflict, modes of domination, contradiction, emancipation, deprivation and potentiality (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 17). In other words, whilst a sociology of regulation will explain the status quo and focus on periods of stability during which existing structures are strengthened, a sociology of radical change will seek alternatives to that status quo and focus on moments of rupture that look beyond actuality for potentiality.

When applied to opera, a sociology of regulation could be illustrated by a research project looking into historically-informed performance, for example; a line of enquiry unveiling the social and professional structures of eighteenth-century performance would allow not only for a better understanding of that specific context, but would consequently enable the identification of stylistic characteristics that one can choose to recreate in performance today. This project, however, in order to help the performer attain the status of auteur, adopts the alternative approach offered by a sociology of radical change. Its
line of enquiry is thus concerned essentially with the opera performer’s emancipation from the structures which limit his/her creative licence.

Opera may indeed reach us loaded with a heavy set of features and requirements, some of them seemingly as undisputable as the law of gravity; but are they really so unchangeable? And would the impact of those changes be necessarily all that catastrophic for opera’s confidence in its own identity? Could opera perhaps shed some of the aspects that it has accumulated through the centuries and that have come to be accepted as identifiers of the art form in order to reveal a more flexible, versatile and lightweight version of itself? In its quest for the performer’s auteurship, this research is less concerned with what opera currently is than with what it can become; less fixated with the acceptance of the status quo than with alternative approaches to opera’s creative process.

**Radical Humanism**

In a graphical representation of the two dimensions explored, Burrell and Morgan name each of the resulting quadrants and establish four distinct, mutually exclusive sociological paradigms. Each of the four paradigms can be “defined by very basic meta-theoretical assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorising and modus operandi of the social theorists who operate within them” (Burrell and Morgan 1992: 23).

Having established this project’s concern with developing a sociology of radical change from a subjectivist standpoint, it is therefore intrinsically grounded in the radical humanist paradigm.
One of the most basic notions underlying the whole of this paradigm is that the consciousness of man is dominated by the ideological superstructures with which he interacts, and that these drive a cognitive wedge between himself and his true consciousness.

(Burrell and Morgan 1992: 32)

Translated into opera, this view means that opera training, as well as opera production structures and practices, may stunt the individual opera performer’s creativity and his/her true value within the contemporary art form. This research aims to enable the evolution of opera beyond long-lasting and generally unchallenged practices by challenging its dogmatic structures and *modi operandi*. It does so by placing the opera performer’s creative potential at the centre of the art form. It entrusts the performer’s creativity with the task of powering a continually fresh look at both new and old pieces. It hypothesises that instead of training individuals solely to fit the current professional structures, training could be designed and delivered according to the extent to which it can change and push forward those same structures.

The radical humanist paradigm is home to a range of theorists and schools of thought, among them critical theory, anarchistic individualism and French existentialism. The latter, and in particular the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, is to become the philosophical backbone of this thesis, further explored in the next chapter.

**Purposes & Design**

This thesis primarily aims to identify a philosophical framework underpinning Lecoq actor training methods and then to apply those methods and that framework to opera. Secondly, through a dialogic process between theory and practice hereafter referred to as *praxis*, it aims at questioning established and seemingly unwavering production methods by putting the opera performer
and the opera director together at the centre of an improvisatory creative process. It employs a reflective practice (Schön 1987, 1991) right from the first stages of creation, during which material is created.

This research is framed by a Practice-as-Research methodology (Allegue, Jones, Kershaw and Piccini 2009, Freeman 2010, Nelson 2013) discussed in Chapter 3. It is designed around a practical element lasting two full weeks with three participants (professional opera performers), in the shape of an opera performance-training workshop held at the University of Portsmouth in 2013. The data collected consists of audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, video footage of the training sessions and individual training diaries (one for each participant and workshop leader). The content of the workshop is largely based on applying the initial elements of the Lecoq method for the training of actors (Lecoq 2006, Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002), which are delivered according to a structure that first offers the performers training in established techniques and then asks them to creatively apply them to opera.

**Thesis: its structure and relation to practice**

This thesis is submitted alongside a DVD that evidences the practice element of this research. Together they form the complete PhD submission, mutually informing each other. In Chapter 4, entitled ‘Data’, there will be references drawing the reader’s attention to the audio-visual material. These references mirror the DVD menu structure adopted for presenting the recordings. These references always include one of three possible chapters (Bohème, Candide or Medium) followed by a track number ranging between 1 and 4 in square brackets (e.g. [DVD Bohème 3], [DVD Medium 1]).

The written element of the thesis is organised into chapters which, in turn, reflect its argument. Chapter 2, ‘Philosophical Framework’, establishes a philosophical foundation for the thesis by focusing on Jean-Paul Sartre, Howard Gardner and Ken Robinson. Chapter 3, ‘Methodology’, starts by
offering an overview of some of the debates central to Practice-as-Research, and finishes with a detailed description of the methodological choices and methods employed that are specific to this project. Chapter 4, ‘Data’, presents a unified account of the data according to three parallel narratives. Chapter 5, ‘Analysis and Reflection’, analyses and presents this project’s analysis according to the categories of performer training, creativity, multiple intelligences, existentialism and Practice-as-Research. Chapter 6, ‘Conclusion’, summarises the thesis’s arguments and findings and states the limitations of the project and my recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2  Philosophical Framework

The previous chapter established this research project’s radical humanist agenda. This one focuses it onto specific views of the world and, consequently, of how they impact the subject of inquiry: opera. It foregrounds choice as the principal ingredient of an opera training that escapes traditional voice-centred modes by framing the creation of options philosophically, as a result of intellectual process and as a practical system of and for creativity.

2.1  Towards an Existentialist Art Form

Existentialism is a cultural, philosophical and literary movement that flourished in the 1940s and 50s; its nineteenth-century roots are in the works of Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). More than a specific doctrine, it is rather a broad church that encompasses diverse authors and philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), Albert Camus (1913–1960), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (though Camus and Heidegger both repudiated the label), Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) and others. But, despite the differences between its many and diverse authors’ works, existentialism more generally is a concrete philosophy of action (philosophy as a way of life) rather than a set of abstract constructs, which makes it particularly useful in building a theory of operatic action. As some of its authors are contemporary with Jacques Lecoq (1921–1999), his work developing actors’ training is further explored with its underpinning in existential philosophy in Chapter 3.
Thomas Flynn identifies the following five basic common existentialist themes:

1. *Existence precedes essence.* What you are (your essence) is the result of your choices (your existence) rather than the reverse. 

   [...] 

2. *Time is of the essence.* We are fundamentally time-bound beings. 

   [...] 

3. *Humanism.* Existentialism is a person-centred philosophy. [...] 

4. *Freedom/Responsibility.* [...] We are always ‘more’ than ourselves. But we are as responsible as we are free. 

5. *Ethical considerations are paramount.* [...] The underlying concern is to invite us to examine the authenticity of our personal lives and of our society. (Flynn 2006: 8) 

A philosophy grounded on these five essential elements enables this project to view opera from a performer-centred perspective by openly providing the art form with a philosophical framework that stresses choices available to performers. Since the phenomenological tradition suggests objects can only be apprehended partially and “against a ‘horizon’ of other objects in which they stand in various relations – causal relations, spatial relations, etc.” (Baggini and Fosl 2010: 213), it becomes beyond the remit of this project to refute the potential suitability of other philosophical frameworks to understand the role of the performer in opera and of opera in the world. Furthermore, existential philosophy has often been expressed in imaginative modes, which makes it particularly suitable to find its voice in and be applied to the arts in general and, in this case, to opera. 

Sartre separates existentialists into two groups: the atheists (such as himself and Heidegger) and the Christians (such as Jaspers and Marcel) (Sartre 2007: 20). Equating Sartre’s starting point of the absence of God to the composer’s loss of omnipotence in opera, this project aligns itself with the atheist existentialists and especially with Sartre. But, despite the distinctions separating different modes of existentialism, they are generally united in their
search for “a truth that is lived as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the more detached and scientific use of the term” (Flynn 2006: 2-3).

Existence precedes essence

Man is, before all else, something that projects himself into a future, and is conscious of doing so. (Sartre 2007: 23)

The first principle of existentialism is that existence precedes essence; or in other words, that subjectivity should be one’s ‘point of departure’. Sartre’s atheistic existentialism defends this statement by acknowledging that if God does not exist, then neither does a pre-existing human nature, for there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to conceive of it. In the same way, if the composer is to lose his/her privilege in opera, there is no definition of an operatic work that pre-exists the creative production process. Back to Sartre, it follows that man’s existence must precede his essence, since man exists before man can be defined by any concept of man. In simple terms, this means that man is first materialised into the world (thrown into existence) and only then, by his own conscious means and will, does he define himself. Man is thus responsible for what (and indeed who) he is:

Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he conceives of himself only after he exists, just as he wills himself to be after being thrown into existence, man is nothing other than what he makes of himself. (Sartre 2007: 22)

Furthermore, what he makes of himself is a direct result of the tension between what Sartre calls being-in-itself and being-for-itself.

Sartre defines being-in-itself, non-conscious being, as having three main characteristics:
1. “Being-[in-itself] is itself.” (Sartre 2003: 20) – This aspect of being simply is; it was not created by something/someone else, not even by itself. Primarily a metaphysical statement relating to Sartre’s atheism, it means that being-in-itself is without a cause.

2. “[B]eing-[in-itself] is what it is.” (Sartre 2003: 21) – By being what it is, being-in-itself is solid (massif), homogeneous and not what it is not. Being-in-itself is thoroughly positive and utterly actual; there is neither potentiality nor negation in this aspect of being: it undergoes no change and is not constrained by time.

3. “[B]eing-in-itself is.” (Sartre 2003: 22) – Being-in-itself is without explanation. Sartre denies the necessity for being-in-itself to be explained by calling it ‘de trop’, superfluous. Being-in-itself is not contingent; it simply is. It denies Leibniz’s Principle of Sufficient Reason, which states that “[f]or every fact F, there must be an explanation why F is the case” (Melamed and Lin 2013).

In contrast, being-for-itself, the conscious and human aspect of being (unique to man), has the following characteristics:

1. Being-for-itself is not only itself – This aspect of being depends on being-in-itself; it is fuelled by it. Being-for-itself arises from and is itself conscious of being-in-itself.

2. Being-for-itself is also what it is not – Being-for-itself is what it is and what it is not; it includes negation and potentiality and can also be contradictory. Being-for-itself accounts for change and for time.

3. Being-for-itself is – Being-for-itself (just like being-in-itself) is without explanation. For Sartre, there is no ultimate reason for consciousness to exist. However, since it arises from being-in-itself, being-for-itself is not totally contingent or incidental.
If one interprets *being-in-itself* as ‘matter’, *being-for-itself* is ‘conscious will’; whilst the first is man’s actuality, the second is man’s potentiality. *Being-for-itself* creates the force that thrusts man’s ‘being’ forward by representing his own projection into the future, using man’s own will as its fuel. This volitional process of transforming one’s potentiality into actuality is always achieved through action, and for Sartre is ultimately the true and only measure of man. He writes, “Man is nothing other than his own project. He exists only to the extent that he realises himself, therefore he is nothing more than the sum of his actions, nothing more than his life” (Sartre 2007: 37). In both operatic and Lecoqian terms, the artefact is nothing more than the sum of the artists’ actions, which in turn are a product of the creative tension generated by the distance between the original material (which in opera are the composer’s and librettist’s contributions, an idea further discussed below) and what cast and creative team imagine the realisation of that material to be. It is this empty space between actuality and potentiality, this *Nothingness*, that creates man’s motion towards who he will become, and it is from within himself, and not from any external source, that man must harness it. In Sartre’s words: “The being by which Nothingness comes into the world must be its own Nothingness” (Sartre 2003: 47).

At the core of Sartre’s existentialism, in order to create this Nothingness, this creative tension, is a process founded on free choice. This free choice becomes Sartre’s ultimate requirement – an unchallengeable *conditio sine qua non* of his existentialism. Without the pre-existence of human nature or codes of ethics, religion or mystic insight (or of any other deterministic element) to guide the projection of *being-for-itself*, man is alone in that deciding moment: “man is free, man is freedom” (Sartre 2007: 29). But, for Sartre, being alone and being free do not mean that *being-for-itself* is free to improvise without restrictions; after all, *being-for-itself* is not completely contingent. There are constraints and conditions on the transcendence of *being-for-itself* (on the intentionality of consciousness), which Sartre collectively calls ‘*facticity*’. They include, but are
not restricted to, one’s past, social and cultural contexts, individual talents and limitations and physical characteristics, among others.

How can Sartre’s ontology of such big ideas, moral imperatives and political engagement be applied to the specificities of the world of opera? This thesis proposes a two-fold application; the first is directly related to the opera artist, and the second (perhaps a less conventional one) to the operatic role.

The existentialist opera performer

If being-in-itself is atemporal and unchangeable, then when applying this concept to the opera performer it relates to his/her raw body and voice, the base or starting point which he/she is to build upon. This is the body and voice as actuality, as a set of conditions which, underneath the training, technique and ambition are at the centre of who the individual opera performer is. When the performer projects who he/she is to become in the profession, it is not enough to dream it but acting upon it is necessary. His/her being-for-itself, framed by facticity, thrusts the performer into a series of choices aimed at making actual his/her potential. In this case, facticity may be understood in terms of how exposed he/she has been to opera culture, the availability of opera courses, the teachers and contents of those courses, the professional opportunities available, socio-economic factors, the encouragement of family and friends, etc. But, how the performer decides to deal with these (and other) potential constraints is already part of the realm of being-for-itself. It is this decision-making, predicated on the availability of a range of options, that becomes the foundation of the performer’s existentialist conscience of him/herself both as he/she is and also as he/she will become.

On the other hand, to foster and complement the aforementioned hands-on attitude towards his/her training and professional future, navigating the facticity of opera culture should also be one of the aims of any training course:
to encourage the performer-in-training to think critically about his/her education and, consequently, about who he/she wills to become. A young artist should not be afraid of taking the driving seat when it comes to what he/she wants to achieve and to how to get there. The road is his/her responsibility, so being a passive passenger in his/her own education by blindly accepting what is being thrown at him/her by the curriculum and the teachers should not be an option. From this existentialist perspective, and despite the duty of encouragement that teachers and training institutions have, it is ultimately the individual’s responsibility to take charge of his/her education and become who he/she wills him/herself to become:

Unlike the military leader, where a militaristic chain of command exists which demands adherence without questions to orders, the teacher cultivates spontaneity and critical thinking among his students. He wants to be questioned, he wants the students to be able to understand the material at hand. He does not want to weld his group into a colorless mass. He does not want a crowd of students.

(Bedford 1972: 226)

What is striking in Mitchell Bedford’s description of the existentialist teacher’s aims is his discomfort with dogmatic learning processes and the importance placed on individual and subjective concepts of learning. Within the scope of opera training, as a training of creative artists, this becomes even more important due to the uniqueness intrinsic to (and often demanded of) a work of art (Wilkerson 1983: 303). In this case, this is the product of the opera performer’s professional activity: opera. But if the individuality and subjectivity of performers-in-training were to lose importance in favour of a one-size-fits-all standardised (or, in the words of Bedford, militaristic) idea of what a professional and the profession are, then the output would be a

*colourless mass* of graduate performers — Bedford’s abovementioned *crowd of students*. Who would want creative artists to be indistinct from their peers? A homogeneous group of creators would consequently result in homogeneous
creations: a strong blow to the idea that a work of art is ultimately and irrevocably unique as well as being the result of and/or offering some novel insight. “Since works of art are necessarily unique, copies, fakes, forgeries, pastiches and ‘works in the style of…’, however plausible, however skilful, however close to the original, can never have the same aesthetic merit” (Wilkerson 1983: 303) and, therefore, can never be the same; they are forever doomed to be evaluated according to their own unique merits (or lack thereof). A way of ensuring the uniqueness of each performer, and the consequent wide range of performances, is to foster the individual’s ownership of their training, professional progress and creative output. These considerations about the uniqueness of the work of art link directly to my second proposed application of Sartre’s ontology: the reinterpretation or re-creation of the operatic role.

The existentialist operatic role

In rethinking the operatic role according to Sartre, the notation of both music and words becomes the being-in-itself. Quite importantly, it is not the words and music themselves but their notation, for sound is, by definition, temporal. The solid (massif) foundation of an operatic role is, therefore, its notation. In turn, its being-for-itself is the idea of that character that is created collaboratively by cast and creative team (director, conductor, movement director, set, costume and lighting designers, etc.) working together. From this perspective, the rehearsal process becomes the examination of factual elements of an opera and the transforming of the performers’ and creative team’s potential into actuality. Within the panoply of factual elements at play in an opera production, there are those that are unavoidable and those that one may choose to allow (or not allow) to constrain the being-for-itself. Any materialisation of an operatic role will be constrained by the specificity of a particular performer’s body and voice, by the particular performance space and by the particular audience, for
these are conditions without which there is no performance. As Peter Brook (1925–) contends:

A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.

(Brook 1990: 11)

As for the operatic act, the lowest common denominator would add to Brook’s theatrical act the use of the unamplified singing voice as an essential mode of expression. To gloss Brook:  *A man walks across this empty space and uses his unamplified voice to express himself musically whilst someone else is watching and listening to him, and this is all that is needed for an act of opera to be engaged.* On the other hand, there is an endless number of factors that one may choose to allow (or not) to constrain one’s vision: performance tradition, stylistic preferences, political agenda, aesthetic considerations, how friendly one’s colleagues are, production budget, socio-economic context of the performance and the composer’s supposed intentions are some of the many *factual* elements that the company and the individual must actively accept or refute before allowing it to constrain the *being-for-itself*. Each member of the creative team and each cast member must embrace the freedom bestowed upon him/her, and realise that there are no pre-existing structures beyond those collectively chosen by his/her colleagues in the cast and creative team to guide him/her through the creative process. This individual freedom-of-choice within a collective effort is akin to Sartre’s political commitment, a central issue in the understanding of how Sartre sees the role of the individual in the context of collective efforts:
I will always depend on my comrades-in-arms in the struggle, inasmuch as they are committed, as I am, to a definite common cause, in the solidarity of a party or a group that I can more or less control – that is to say, that I joined the group as militant and so its every move is familiar to me.

“Will collectivization ever be a reality?” I have no idea. All I know is that I will do everything in my power to make it happen. Beyond that, I cannot count on anything. (Sartre 2007: 35-36)

In the creative process, and particularly in a Lecoqian context of ensemble work, this implies that one can count on one’s colleagues each to do their individual share to attain a common vision, but ultimately the individual can count only on him/herself to make the choices and, consequently, to produce the work that is specific to him/her. This paradox is what Sartre calls *despair*: that whatever is beyond one’s sphere of action should not concern him/her and, consequently, that man should concentrate only on the variables that can lead to action and are dependent on his will. Individual freedom at this moment of choice, even if that choice is part of a collective effort, is the cornerstone of Sartre’s existentialism. However, this freedom comes with responsibility, and understanding the relationship between these two concepts becomes paramount to understanding the creative process. If responsibility is a requirement of freedom, which in turn is a requirement of creativity, then it follows that there is no creative process without responsibility. In other words, an awareness of how the act of creating affects the performer himself, others and the world around him must at some point become an intrinsic element in the process of creation.

**Freedom and Responsibility**

The first aspect of responsibility in Sartre, as has already been established, is that man is responsible for and conscious of what he is; this involves taking
responsibility for his own existence. However, it also means that “when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men” (Sartre 2007: 23). Intrinsic to the individual choice is the universal moral value of that decision, measured between poles of good and evil. Since, for Sartre, man can never choose evil and there is nothing that can be good for an individual that cannot be good for all, then the act of choosing automatically awards moral value to what is chosen. From this, it follows that whenever man chooses who he is and projects himself into the future (who he is to become), he is also responsible for choosing and projecting for all of mankind. The realisation that when choosing who he is to become he is also a legislator responsible for choosing what mankind should be, the awareness of that power and deep responsibility, forcibly leaves man in a state of anguish (Sartre 2007: 25). This anguish, rooted in the awareness of man’s responsibility towards all other men who will be affected by his choice, is not a type of anguish that would leave him frozen and scared of action; on the contrary, existentialist anguish spurs man into action instead of shielding him from it.

By denying the existence of an a priori human nature, or universal essence, in order to accept that there is a universal dimension to individual action, Sartre accepts that there is a set of pre-existing necessities that define man’s situation in the world; he calls this the ‘human condition’ (Sartre 2007: 42). Ultimately, this ‘human condition’, this set of objective conditions defining every man’s situation but experienced subjectively and differently by each individual, becomes the common denominator for all mankind. Sartre offers man’s need to be and work in the world, live his life among others and eventually die in the world, as examples of this ‘human condition’ (Sartre 2007: 42). Furthermore, he states:

There is universality in every project, inasmuch as any man is capable of understanding any human project. This should not be taken to mean that a certain project defines a man forever, but that it can be reinvented again and again. (Sartre 2007: 43)
It is this power for something to be ‘reinvented again and again’ that is of particular interest to a Lecoq-based approach and to this study of opera. In fact, if the operatic landscape is going to offer more than faithful revivals of old productions and attempts to recreate historical performances, then the need for creative reinvention becomes indisputable. But what aspect of the individual practitioner’s sphere of action has jurisdiction to legislate universally? Which object or action carries an equivalent moral imperative (conscious or otherwise) to what Sartre identifies? Certainly not the creative outcomes, since Sartre does not contend that every man’s product should be exactly the same. The answer lies in a set of principles underpinning the practitioners’ creative processes: the lowest common denominators unifying a wide range of specific processes by which a variety of creative outcomes may be achieved. After all, the universal aspect and moral seriousness of those processes could, despite the many differences that make them unique, be also a way to validate a set of universal conditions for performance: the ‘performance condition’, which can, in turn, be lifted from the Lecoq method and applied to the opera performer and to the operatic role. It can be identified by the need of a performer to perform in the world, in front of an audience and among other performers; and the latter, by the intrinsic need of a role to be performed in order to fully fulfil its potential. The validity of these creative processes (no matter how diverse) becomes, under a Sartrean light, dependent on their foundation in a steady stream of real conscious choices. In the same way that the individual’s freedom and the act of choosing are axiomatic in Sartre’s existentialism, the Lecoq process applied to an existentialist view of opera implies that the entire process of creating an opera production has to always be, from beginning to end, the result of free choice and the manifestation of the creators’ artistic freedom. It is this honesty of the creative team members when facing a piece together, this open attitude that is free of preconceived ideas at the start of a collective creative journey, that carries a Sartre-like universal moral value with it. Following Sartre’s thought process, choosing is possible but not choosing is not, for choosing not
to choose is already a choice itself. However, Sartre allows for a snag in the unavoidable validity of choice; and that is when the individual tries to eschew his/her anguish.

From Bad Faith to Deadly Theatre

Sartre offers a very simple and versatile question-tool: “What would happen if everyone did what I am doing?” (Sartre 2007: 25). This simple question can be applied to almost any situation and becomes the ultimate measure of one’s commitment. If the answer/excuse/justification were ever “But everyone does not act that way”, then Sartre would call that ‘bad faith’.

The existential imperative of this thesis is that the opera artist must at every step of the way embrace his/her anguish and avoid acting in bad faith. He/she must embrace the individual choice and thus legislate that this is the only way of maintaining the creative momentum and relevance of the art form. For example, if a tenor, in preparing the role of Nemorino in Donizetti’s L’Elisir d’Amore (Donizetti 1960 [1832]), decides to ‘borrow’ elements from, for instance, Rolando Villazón’s remarkable interpretation of that character (Donizetti 2006 [1832]), he will be cheating himself out of his anguish and, consequently, out of a truly creative process. Besides ignoring the uniqueness of his specific facticity (which would make his interpretation unlike any other) he is also contributing to the sedimentation of a performance tradition that if followed by every performer would ultimately lead to the calcification of the role and the complete stagnation of the art form. All this is achieved by the extinction of that rare, shy and fleeting involuntary spark that precedes (often unnoticeably) most great ideas and honest creative impulses. If an artist, tempted by the possibility of a shortcut, is continuously running away from what this existentialist thesis and Lecoq method identify as the core of his creative profession (identifying a number of possible solutions to a problem,
exploring the potential of as many as possible, elect one and finally perform it), noticing the little creative spark becomes increasingly difficult. Furthermore, the only possible justification that he could offer (that everyone does not act this way) is exactly what Sartre identifies as bad faith, which is extremely similar to Peter Brook’s idea of deadly theatre. As Brook writes, “Deadly Theatre approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done” (Brook 1990: 17).

Brook’s critique of deadly theatre is profoundly existentialist in that it defends the aloneness of the artist in the process of giving meaning to the notated text. Brook, just as Lecoq, defends a fresh attitude, a completely innocent gaze over the material from which the work of art is to emerge; an attitude equivalent to Sartre’s abandonment. This thesis suggests an equivalent critique of Deadly Opera.

From the Death of God to the Death of the Author

The idea of the complete absence of a higher power by which to measure one’s actions and one’s choices is in Sartre’s existentialism called abandonment and is a direct result of the atheism at the basis of his philosophy. This atheism is inherited from Friedrich Nietzsche, who declared the death of God and then voiced man’s consequent need to find a new mode of being (Nietzsche 1974). This made room for the truly anthropocentric, humanist and subjective views of the world that followed – one of them being Sartre’s existentialism.

In this respect, the implication for the world of opera is slightly more problematic. After all, what has been until now considered as the being-in-itself of opera is not without a cause. In fact, the score and libretto have very concrete causes: the composer and librettist are their authors. So in order for Sartre’s existentialism to be applied to opera, one must first ‘kill’ the authors – not
Chapter 2: Philosophical Framework

literally, of course, but the supremacy of the author in the interpretation of the material must be undermined.

Luckily, this thesis will not be the first to suggest such killing; someone else has already done this ‘dirty work’. Roland Barthes (1915–1980) declared the ‘death of the author’ back in 1968, rebelling against the “explanation of a work [...] [being] sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end [...] the voice of a single person, the author ‘confiding’ in us” (Barthes 1977a: 143). By 1971, Barthes preferred to view an author’s production as a ‘text’, rather than a ‘work’ (Barthes 1977b), making it no longer a static monolithic asset, but a pliable matter opened to interpretation. To apply these terms to operatic authors, their supposed intentions are no longer part of the being-in-itself, but are now instead just another factual element that the cast and creative team may choose to accept or ignore with no need for remorse.

Sartre’s embodiment and the stage

Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system. (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 235)

Embodiment is a philosophical concept that frames human perception in bodily constraints, thus establishing the subject’s unique and (necessarily) subjective perspective; its vantage point. It is the central theme of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, which establishes a process for understanding perception through experience and for deconstructing Cartesian dualism (i.e. body and mind, sensation and matter). It establishes that one perceives and conceptualises everything through the body. Merleau-Ponty “distinguishes between “the objective body,” which is the body regarded as a physiological entity, and “the phenomenal body,” which is not just some body [...], but my (or your) body as I (or you) experience it” (Leland 1999). Embodiment pertains
solely to the latter and to the resulting necessarily partial, corporeally constituted, experience of the world.

The problem in translating Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the phenomenal body onto acting is that it does not bridge the distance between one’s physical body as one’s own phenomenal body (perceived by oneself) and as others’ phenomenal body (perceived by others). This can lead to one of two possible outcomes: either it is impossible to establish a relation between what performers and audiences feel, experience or perceive, or then one accepts the performer’s feeling, experience and perception as a measure for that of the audience. Whilst the former interpretation of embodiment in performance ultimately negates the possibility of acting, the latter supports the inside-out tradition of which Stanislavsky is the major representative in theatre.

In Sartre’s existentialism, however, the body is understood within three separate and irreconcilable ontological dimensions (Moran 2010: 135), in contrast to Merleau-Ponty’s two. The first, the body-for-itself or the body as lived, is but a vehicle for the perception of the world; the body as experienced from within. The second, the body-for-others or the body as seen, is the body from the objective point of view of the outside world; generally the body separated from the subject. Finally the third, and perhaps the most complex of the three, is the body-for-itself-for-others; one’s own body understood through others’ perception of it. It is this “intersubjective dimension: the manner I experience my body as experienced by others, the dialectics of which Sartre has explored more than any other phenomenologist (with the possible exception of Levinas)” (Moran 2010: 136), that best highlights the parallels between Sartre’s and Lecoq’s views on embodiment; the former in a philosophical context, the latter in a dramatic practice for actors and, in the case of this study, for opera performers.

Sartre’s clear separation between the body as seen from the outside and as experienced from within gives way to what was to become one of his truly
innovative concepts and a break with other phenomenologists. Unlike Merleau-Ponty, following Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), in cases of seeing and touching, “Sartre maintains that our perceivings objectify what we perceive and displace the feeling onto the felt” (Moran 2010: 136). In other words, instead of attempting to identify the experienced body with the objectivity of the body-for-others, Sartre maintains that that “experience is not of the body at all, but rather, of the world, or the situation” (Moran 2010: 137); that experience is of the body-for-itself-for-others. The consequence of this philosophical shift in the realm of dramatic practice was that the performer’s feeling, unlike in the Stanislavskian tradition, is no longer at the centre in a position of privilege; Lecoq replaces it with the performer’s understanding of how audiences read feelings in the performer. In operatic terms, to feel the music and the words becomes less relevant than the ability to convey the supposed presence of feeling. In fact, the presence or absence of the feeling itself becomes secondary or subsidiary to the ability to communicate its presence and to the awareness of that communication.

But what tools do opera performers have at their disposal in order to convey that elusive feeling and to bring into existence the tension between the being-in-itself and the being-for-itself, also known as nothingness? Or more importantly, how do they choose the ways in which they are to apply their concrete tools, their voice (spoken and/or sung) and their body, to a role in order to produce a new artefact? The rationale underpinning their creative decision-making process deserves consideration as part of this project and is the main subject of the next section. In fact, it is of paramount importance to this research to find a theory that supports an intelligent application rather than a random use of voice and body by opera performers. But what is intelligence, and how is it foregrounded in the artistic practice of opera performance?
2.2 Multiple Intelligences in Opera

[A] human intellectual competence must entail a set of skills of problem solving – enabling the individual to resolve genuine problems or difficulties that he or she encounters and, when appropriate, to create an effective product – and must also entail the potential for finding or creating problems – thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge. (Gardner 2011: 64-65)

Before Howard Gardner first published *Frames of Mind* (Gardner 2011) in 1983, human intelligence was seen primarily as a unified concept that could be objectively measured through a batch of tests and translated into a number known as the IQ. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences provided a distinct explanation of cognitive processes to that provided by psychometricians, who until then had been the dominant school of thought in psychology on intelligence for nearly a century (Gardner 2006 [2002]: 84). Since then, the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) and its offshoots have effected dramatic changes to what is widely accepted as the nature of human intelligence. It has strongly influenced how intelligence is conceptualised and diagnosed, even though the devising and administration of tests that measure intelligence(s) was never one of Gardner’s priorities. Of particular importance to Gardner and to this thesis is that it illuminated how intelligence(s) can be nurtured and potentiated through education (Gardner 2006 [2002]: 86), in particular by approaching the pedagogical process from different angles. MI proposes that an individual’s intellectual abilities cannot be reduced to a single factor, but have instead to be understood as a unique blend of at least seven individual and autonomous distinct intelligences. Gardner later explored the possibilities of additional candidates to this list (Gardner 2011: xiv) (Smith 2002, 2008).

This section will consider a group of characteristics that Gardner identifies as not being specific to any single one of the proposed intelligences, but that are, instead, clues or fundamental ‘signs’ of an intelligence. It will then review the
seven original propositions and establish how every single one of them has a role to play as part of the opera performer’s artistic practice.

By accepting a widening of the individual’s intellectual abilities to know (to acquire and process information with the purpose of solving a problem), Gardner expanded the boundaries of contemporary epistemology. When Gardner suggests that there are multiple ways of knowing (intelligences), it is implied that the objects of knowledge are also diverse; or at least, that one can counterbalance the effects of the phenomenological tradition’s axiom that objects can only be apprehended partially. By approaching an object from multiple angles, by applying different intellectual mechanisms in the acquisition, processing and application of knowledge, one paints a richer picture of what is being known.

With MI, Howard Gardner engages not only with individuals’ unique intelligences – a single brain processing information and sending signals as an autonomous processor – but also with how intelligences are accessed and developed corporately. Gardner acknowledges that when people come together as communities, collectively, they award value to those skills/assets that best solve the problems that community identifies as most pressing.

Gardner makes a case for seeing human intelligences as fluid and susceptible to influence (either catalysing or inhibiting) from environmental factors. Unlike the psychometricians’ concept of human intelligence, MI does not believe it to be entirely dictated by genetics, nor capable of being expressed by a number that attests to someone’s intellectual capacities as a lifelong identifier of genius or idiocy. On the contrary, MI “underscores the centrality of gene-environmental interactions” (Gardner 2006 [1995]: 57). According to MI, “intelligence is a biological and psychological potential [...] capable of being realized to a greater or lesser extent as a consequence of the experiential, cultural and motivational factors that affect a person” (Gardner 2006 [1995]: 55).
The set of conditions that each ability had to meet in order for Gardner to recognise it as an intelligence came from fields as diverse as neuroscience to logic. They are, themselves, an indication of Gardner’s preference for a holistic and heterogeneous approach, processing the subject of study simultaneously on multiple fronts. Here is a list:

1. “Potential Isolation by Brain Damage” (Gardner 2011: 67) – an intelligence has to potentially be impacted by a lesion affecting a delimited part of the brain whilst leaving the other areas of the brain and other faculties unaffected.

2. “The Existence of Idiots Savants, Prodigies, and Other Exceptional Individuals” (Gardner 2011: 67) – Individuals with one or more overdeveloped intelligences towering above their other unremarkable ones (prodigies) as well as those in whom an overdeveloped intelligence is contrasted against mediocre or practically null competences in the remaining domains (idiots savants) are seen as deviations from a norm. This perceived norm is characterised by the general constancy of proficiency across an individual’s different intelligences. Despite the general autonomy of each intelligence, the assumption is that the attention paid to and the rate of development of a specific intelligence should not come at the expense of the other remaining ones or of a general balance among all of one’s abilities.

3. “An Identifiable Core Operation or Set of Operations” (Gardner 2011: 68) – Central to Gardner’s notion of intelligence is the existence of a series of automated information-processing mechanisms that are primordially embedded in the human mind and are therefore not dependent on being learned or taught. Taking this statement to its extreme, a human intelligence becomes “a neural mechanism or computational system that is genetically programmed to be activated
or ‘triggered’ by certain kinds of internally or externally presented information” (Gardner 2011: 68).

4. “A Distinctive Developmental History, Along with a Definable Set of Expert ‘End-State’ Performances” (Gardner 2011: 68) – Gardner expects each of his intelligences to be linked to an identifiable development history, which is experienced by most people in similar ways and at similar moments as part of their stages of development. For Gardner, an intelligence presupposes a set gradual process of maturation from its first clumsy manifestations (experienced by most people) up to the highest peak of competence (only ever reached by a minority of individuals endowed with unusual talent and/or who have received special training). This timeline is marked by identifiable milestones and critical periods during which specific events in the maturation of an intelligence encounter the perfect conditions for maximum impact and rate of development.

5. “An Evolutionary History and Evolutionary Plausibility” (Gardner 2011: 69) – In the naming of human intelligences, an understanding of how through time a certain ability may have risen to existence as a response to a specific environmental demand is of vital importance. That ability, having proved effective, continued evolving and has played a role in the survival and evolution of humankind. Intelligences evolve, not only across the course of an individual’s life, but also through millennia of human evolution. Gardner lists the plausibility of the macro development history of an intelligence from its very first manifestation marking an imagined (yet plausible) moment in humankind’s distant past up to the present as a requirement for MI’s intelligences.

6. “Support from Experimental Psychological Tasks” (Gardner 2011: 69) – Gardner confidently situates MI within the tradition of experimental psychology, an empiricist branch of psychology
applying a wide range of methods including, but not restricted to, experiments with human and animal subjects.

7. Support from Psychometric Findings (Gardner 2011: 70) – Gardner relied primarily on two types of sources for collecting the data relevant to establishing MI: psychological experiments, and the outcomes of standardised tests such as IQ. If the tasks employed to (supposedly) assess one intelligence are more closely linked to each other than they are to those other tasks assessing other intelligences (a self-perpetuating omission), then standardised tests can provide unrivalled insight into what is generally perceived to be of value in a certain socio-cultural context and how much of human potential is being wasted as the result of the insistence on assessing that value according to too narrow a concept.

8. “Susceptibility to Encoding in a Symbol System” (Gardner 2011: 70) – Last, but not least, is each intelligence’s adherence to symbol systems: “culturally contrived systems of meaning that capture important forms of information” (Gardner 2011: 70) also responsible for much of human representation and communication of knowledge. Gardner sees the raw computational capacity (the intelligence) and an equivalent culturally-sanctioned symbol system as two sides of the same coin. None would endure without the other. If, on the one hand, the emergence of an intelligence as useful and valid is dependent on it being harnessed by the culture it belongs to, on the other hand, the evolution and permanence of a symbol system is dependent on the existence of an equivalent computational system.

An enduring outcome of these characteristics, beyond the multiplicity stated in the title of Gardner’s theory, is that despite their general autonomy they are often interwoven and that most human action and interaction is dependent not on an orderly one-at-a-time type of intelligence, but on a complex web of
connections between the individual intelligences of each individual. Furthermore, it implies that the richness of the individual’s experience of the world is dependent on the number of those interactions and on how multifaceted the processing of that information may be. However, it also means that the development or even the survival of an intelligence is dependent on the applicability it finds in its social context. In other words, MI concedes that an intelligence may wane, be atrophied or even never manifest itself if it does not encounter a conducive environment for development and the social recognition as an asset. The monopoly of certain intelligences over specific subjects or disciplines results not only in an unchallenged partiality of how a community views the world and interacts with it, but also contributes to the marginalisation and ultimately extinction of other intellectual abilities.

The following sections summarise the seven intelligences first proposed by Gardner, and seek to indicate the ways in which they come into play as part of the opera performer’s artistic practice.

**Linguistic Intelligence**

We turn our attention first to language because it is a pre-eminent instance of human intelligence. […] Relevant information has also been secured on the evolutionary course of human language, its cross-cultural manifestations, and its relation to the other human intelligences. (Gardner 2011: 83)

Gardner’s linguistic intelligence manifests itself as a superlative sensitivity to the different functions of language: semantics, phonology, syntax and pragmatics. This is an intelligence present in all healthy individuals across every culture, but the extent to which it exists in its raw form and the level to which it can be developed during the course of one’s personal and/or professional life can vary dramatically. Semantic sensitivity endows the
individual with an acute awareness and elegant mastery of the shades of meaning that words and expressions may carry (Gardner 2011: 80). Sensitivity to phonology relates to language’s musical aspects of tone and metre (Gardner 2011: 80) and sensitivity to syntax relates to the way in which words are strung together to form sentences within (or consciously outside) established grammatical rules (Gardner 2011: 81). Lastly, the pragmatic function of language relates to the impact of the purpose of the discourse on how it is shaped, assuming a central role in the individual’s powers of persuasion (Gardner 2011: 81).

Traditionally, the linguistic intelligence embodied in language and literature studies has been one of the cornerstones of Western mainstream education, and its role within the sphere of action of the opera performer cannot be neglected. First, opera performers are interpreters of not only musical material, but also of text. The initial challenge to the performer is that libretti may present themselves in different languages, and therefore an understanding of those languages, including a sensitivity to their unique nuances and cultural contexts, is ultimately necessary. Without it, the performer’s range of options for presenting the ideas and emotions conveyed by the words is considerably reduced. The ability to analyse the text to be sung can be the initial gateway to better understanding the material upon which the composer wrote the music, and upon which, in turn, the director constructs a specific production by guiding cast and creative team in their joint creative effort. On the other hand, linguistic intelligence also fuels the performer’s sensitivity to the ways the other performers in a scene are interpreting their role; this sensitivity is vital if his/her creative process is to be reactive and atuned to others’. As opera is a creative team effort, it is also paramount that performers are able to articulate their practice and to process others’ articulations. It is through language that ideas are discussed and this makes it an essential tool for the collaborative success of a rehearsal process.
If one accepts the opera performer as a creative artist (and not just a re-creator, someone whose work is just to follow instructions devised by someone else as closely as possible), the raw sensitivity that each individual performer may have to language should, through the training process, be nurtured and developed in order to creatively produce a ‘vocal translation’ of the written text. It becomes essential that the opera performer masters the tools that enable him/her to analyse the libretto at a semantic, phonetic, syntactic and pragmatic level, and to react to the choices of his/her creative collaborators. In a holistic approach to opera, linguistic intelligence is a most important performance quality, as much by means of analysis as by eloquence.

Nowadays, many opera courses realise the value of offering language classes as part of their curricula ('Opera Studies' 2014, 'Royal Academy Opera: Study Details' 2014), but what do they include in their syllabi? What Gardner describes as phonology is of utmost importance and is probably undisputed territory for the clear and direct impact it has on the music. So is basic semantics, since it signposts the narrative structure of an opera; but is an understanding of a libretto given enough importance in all its potential depth and breadth? What of literary analysis, for example? Or training the performers’ resourcefulness and fluidity of outcomes by asking them to continuously come up with different interpretations of the same piece of text? Even the confidence to articulate one’s own practice in words as well as to critically engage with peer learning by expressing one’s views of others’ work are processes that are of the realm of the performer and that are dependent on aspects of linguistic intelligence deserving careful consideration. From MI, it follows that ways of actively promoting the potential value of applying all of the performer’s intelligences to opera should become an educational priority. Ultimately, a skilled performer can choose to use or not use a specific intelligence for his/her approach as part of a certain production; the unskilled performer does not have that option.
A complementary view of linguistic intelligence suggests that gestural languages can share many of the characteristics of the written and spoken word. Should sensitivity to languages such as British Sign Language (Brien 1993), Baroque Gesture (Barnett and Massy-Westropp 1987) or even Bharatanatyam (Eshwar 2006) not be considered important in performers’ training? Not necessarily in order to master any of these (otherwise, why these and not any others?), but this sensitivity would serve at least to prepare the terrain for a later acquisition of skills that may prove useful for a specific production in the course of a performer’s professional career.

These are only three examples of linguistic systems formed of movements. Since these movements are linguistic signs organised according to specific grammars at a similar level of complexity and performative potential as any other language, they attest to a potential hybridity of approaches by being dependent on the individual’s linguistic intelligence. In this case, pure technical training would ensure that performers would be proficient in one of these languages, but by developing ways of targeting linguistic intelligence instead, a desirable outcome could be, perhaps, a range of non-style-specific linguistic soft skills that form the foundations for the development of linguistic intelligence and consequent linguistic aptitude. Identifying those foundational skills and devising ways of targeting them in a consistent and integrated strategy as part of the training of opera performers becomes one of the central concerns highlighted by the holistic approach which I take Gardner’s MI to suggest.
Musical Intelligence

Of all the gifts with which individuals may be endowed, none emerges earlier than musical talent. [...] A study of musical intelligence may help us understand the special flavor of music and at the same time illuminate its relation to other forms of human intellect.

(Gardner 2011: 105)

In much the same way Gardner presents linguistic intelligence as sensitivity to the components of language, musical intelligence is characterised by a particular sensitivity to the components of music. These components include pitch (frequency of sound), duration (length of sound), timbre (wave form or ‘colour’ of sound), the horizontal organisation of sound (which produces rhythm, the placement of sound in musical time, and melody, the rhythmic succession of pitches) and finally the vertical organisation of sound or harmony (structure of musical sounds played simultaneously). As with linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence can be expressed not only by the ability to produce music but also by one’s receptiveness to it and by the ability to engage with a variety of musical artefacts, independently of their styles.

Considering the marked prevalence of the affiliation of opera training programmes with music schools and music departments – three of the major postgraduate opera courses in London are offered by the Royal Academy of Music (‘Royal Academy Opera’ 2014), the Royal College of Music (‘The RCM International Opera School’ 2014) and the music department of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (‘Opera Studies’ 2014) – it is unsurprising that musical intelligence has been the favoured intelligence in the training of opera performers, as evidenced by their audition requirements (‘Entry Requirements: Taught Masters & Research’ 2014, ‘Opera Studies Audition’ 2014, 'Postgraduate Entry Requirements' 2014). This reliance is made more evident by considering that these are taught at postgraduate level, and this presupposes more than a decade of a predominantly musical training. But, is
this training effective in the development of musical intelligence and is there not a distinction between musical training and the training of musical intelligence?

This thesis does not set out to belittle or discredit the crucial role of a technical training in music – after all, skilled creativity in music is impossible without it – but it argues that Gardner’s musical intelligence is not about the mastery of musical techniques and tools as such. Musical skill is necessary to allow the performer’s expression of his/her musical intelligence. This thesis, however, questions whether too technically heavy an education can potentially stifle creativity, and highlights how crucial achieving balance in this regard might be. It opens up the possibility that there may be non-musical approaches that bring beneficial results to the musical outcome.

In order for opera performers’ musical intelligence to be fostered and developed within training institutions, opera courses will have to find strategies by which the young performers are encouraged to think laterally: to experiment with new solutions for old problems as well as uncovering brand new sets of problems. The mastery of technical tools for musical production and analysis should serve as the foundation for creative impetus in which conscious rule-breaking is just as valid as any other conscious creative decision. If, according to Gardner, the opera performer is endowed with at least seven different intelligences, it seems reductive to single out musical intelligence as the sole (or even main) intelligence at play in his/her creative process. And even if one was to accept that the output of an opera performer is primarily music, denying the potential that intelligences other than the musical one may have to inform (and indeed improve) the production of music, seems to deprive the performer of working with the full range of tools at his/her disposal.
Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

[T]his form of thought can be traced to a confrontation with the world of objects. For it is in ordering and reordering them, and in assessing their quantity, that the young child gains his or her initial and most fundamental knowledge about the logical-mathematical realm. From this preliminary point, logical mathematical intelligence rapidly becomes remote from the world of material objects; [...] from objects to statements, from actions to the relations among actions, from the realm of the sensori-motor to the realm of pure abstraction.

(Gardner 2011: 135-136)

Gardner was strongly influenced by the work of Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980), and derives logical-mathematical thought, in the first instance, from the actions upon objects that children encounter in the world. Gradually, as the child develops, he/she will gain consciousness of the objects’ permanence beyond his/her frame of time-and-space, of their similarities and then of their cardinal quantity. This allows the child to develop the basic skills required for basic numerical operations. The ability to perform these basic numerical operations soon becomes independent of the material world that they first had to relate to. This allows for abstract thought, which replaces empirical discovery with necessary truths; the child no longer needs to go back to his/her senses in order to check if something is true, for now the child knows it to be true. The last stage in Piaget’s notion of mental development takes place when the child becomes capable of formal mental operations, without reference to objects and/or their images. The child can now operate upon words, symbols or strings of symbols independently and without having to refer to objects in the real world.

By restricting the applicability of Piaget’s model solely to logical-mathematical thought and away from the assumption that it relates to all human domains, Gardner recognises the primacy of this type of intelligence in Western society.
and on the fact that most science (natural or otherwise) is traditionally based on logical-mathematical thought. But what of the arts?

Artistic creation presupposes that there are alternative forms of knowing beyond that of traditional science, positivism and logic. But to allow that artistic creation can at times be illogical is not the same as saying that it is *a-logical*. The fact that the artistic creation can choose to go against what would be dictated by logic is not the same as taking logic completely out of the picture. In fact, an illogical process is as dependent on logic (and logical-mathematical intelligence) as a logical process. One of the main aims of this thesis is to locate logic within creative thinking: to translate artistic creation into scientific, disseminable knowledge. This process is further explored in the next chapter under the section heading ‘Practice-as-Research’.

MI does not attempt to wipe out logical-mathematical intelligence (or any other) in favour of any single intelligence. It promotes that there is never just a single possible approach, and consequently possible outcome, and that individuals should make the most of all intellectual tools at their disposal. But in order for this to be achieved, education should promote a flexibility of approaches. Consequently, it is not the rules and the teaching of the rules so much of the Western educational systems are based upon that should be reassessed. But the training of opera performers should strive to enable a wider range of outputs by focusing on the validity of a multiplicity of processes. These would include, but not be restricted to, those processes recognised as logical-mathematical intelligence: the processes that enable opera performers to identify works as being of the same genre, of the same era, by the same composer, directed in the same style, or sharing any other category that might potentially be seen as having an impact on how a piece is performed. If, in the context of MI, there is no reason to deny the performer the skills required, for instance, for the type of historical research demanded by historically-informed performances, there is also no gain in teaching that there is no other valid process for performing opera.
Central to spatial intelligence are the capacities to perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications upon one’s initial perceptions, and to be able to re-create aspects of one’s visual experience, even in the absence of relevant physical stimuli. (Gardner 2011: 182)

Spatial intelligence, as much as the types already discussed, includes a range of interconnected yet autonomous abilities, such as the facility to recognise instances of the same element, to transform and recognise the transformation of one element into another, to create mental images and transform them, etc. These abilities endow the individual with a sense of direction as they allow him/her to decipher and/or create graphic depictions of the real world, to recognise objects and scenes and to read maps, diagrams and other symbolic representations.

Furthermore, “the sensitivity to the various lines of force that enter into a visual or spatial display […] the feelings of tension, balance, and composition” (Gardner 2011: 185) that Gardner recognises in paintings, sculptures and natural elements such as a fire or waterfall, are of the utmost importance on stage. The opera performer should thus be sensitive to the nuances that stage composition can achieve so that he/she can actively participate in the creation of those living tableaux as well as being able to recreate them with precision. Also, the ability to read a scene quickly and effectively whenever something does not go according to plan, so that the individual’s blocking is adjusted without the audience noticing the mishap, becomes a valuable skill dependent on spatial intelligence. It is also spatial intelligence that allows performers to understand the early stages of a set designer’s work and to factor the model of the set into the first rehearsals, which effectively explore a space that does not yet exist. In the same way, it is also this spatial intelligence that allows the reading of the lines on the floor drawn by the stage manager, which refer to the
model created by the set designer; the image each performer creates in his/her head of what the set is going to be and the choices made according to that image are utterly dependent on spatial intelligence. Another current practice significantly dependent on spatial intelligence is the need of touring companies to quickly translate the blocking of a production to different stages, often with different dimensions and proportions. But besides the potential that an active nurturing of performers’ spatial intelligence may have to inform current practices, embracing it may allow for unforeseen solutions that have otherwise been overlooked.

The blocking in opera is often devised according to musical considerations (such as who is singing at each moment, how well the performer can see the conductor, how big the performer’s voice is, etc). Accepting MI in the training of opera would, among other things, challenge the subservience of blocking to music: sensitising the performer to the space and endowing him/her with spatial intelligence allows the performer to make musical decisions according to spatial variables. Once again, this is not to say that this reversal is better or worse than the original, but the choice of reversing the approach makes the creative process and, consequently, the creative product richer in possibilities.

Bodily-Kinaesthetic Intelligence

Characteristic to […] [the bodily-kinaesthetic] intelligence is the ability to use one’s body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes […]. Characteristic as well is the capacity to work skilfully with objects, both those that involve the fine motor movements of one’s fingers and hands and those that exploit gross motor movements of the body. (Gardner 2011: 218)

By identifying the use of the body as a form of intelligence, Gardner opposes a traditional radical disjunction between body and mind. This regards anything
pertaining to the body as less privileged than that pertaining to language or reasoning. Gardner not only identifies disparities between cultures, which raise the question of the universality of Cartesian thought, but also recognises what was then a recent trend in the work of psychologists: to focus on the close link between the use of the body and the deployment of cognitive powers (Gardner 2011: 220).

For the opera performer, who has a remit of representation through his/her voice and body, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence is applied at different levels that work simultaneously towards a seamless final product. A detailed account of these processes will be discussed in the next chapter, when addressing the work of Jacques Lecoq, but here is a summarised account. At the first level, there is the performer with all his/her habitual and idiosyncratic tics and gestures. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence endows the performer with the ability to consciously identify those personal elements and supress them in order to create a state of neutrality upon which a character can emerge. At a second level, there is a character. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence endows the performer with the ability to minutely analyse something outside of him/herself (a person, an animal, an object, the weather…) and find ways of poetically representing it (more or less literally) through his/her body. At the next level there is action. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence allows the performer to discover ways in which the character created can do the things he/she needs to do on stage according to the libretto and score as well as to the other performers. Next, there is the music. With the voice as a deeply bodied element, the negotiation between all the previous levels and the physical demands of the voice are an ongoing process of dialectical tension which performers and directors can consider as a valid source of performance material, posing its own problems but also potentially creating its own solutions. The last level is context. At this level, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence will find a final physical version of the character by making the final adjustments according to costume, set and audience, among other elements.
Intrapersonal Intelligence

The core capacity at work here is access to one’s own feeling life – one’s range of affects or emotions: the capacity instantly to effect discriminations among these feelings and, eventually, to label them, to enmesh them in symbolic codes, to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one’s behaviour. (Gardner 2011: 253)

The first of Gardner’s two personal intelligences focuses inwardly on the self. At its most primitive, it allows the individual to distinguish pain from pleasure and thus is ultimately responsible for survival. In contrast, at its most refined, it endows the individual with the ability to detect and symbolise minute differences in the shades of a wide range of feelings and to act accordingly.

For the opera performer engaging in character work, particularly in Stanislavsky-based acting methods, the ability to identify those feelings in him/herself becomes of utmost importance in order to be able to symbolise them. In this case, symbolising one’s feelings means firstly to process them intellectually – to identify them as accurately as possible. Only then can they be recreated in a controlled environment according to the specificities of the style at play in a specific production. But this raises two primary questions for the opera performer:

1. Is the gamut of emotions and expressive tools available to the performer restricted to those that have been experienced at first hand?
2. Is feeling something sufficient to make it apparent to others (including audiences)?

If the opera performer is to answer no to any of these two questions, then the attention to emotions must not be directed solely inwards, but also outwards towards others. In fact, intrapersonal intelligence is one of the two aspects that form what Gardner calls the emotional intelligences.
Interpersonal Intelligence

The core capacity here is the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions. (Gardner 2011: 253)

This intelligence allows the individual to discriminate among those around him/her, to identify their moods and to act accordingly, even when those moods are hidden. In contrast with intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence has an outwards focus towards the other.

This intelligence puts the individual in a constant position of spectator, observing others and making judgments about their inner emotional world based on external signs. In order to understand the process by which audiences will read his/her character’s emotions on stage, the opera performer must find ways of observing and interpreting others’ systematically. Observation is a task that is at the core of many concepts of acting, such as Stanislavsky’s (Stanislavsky 2006: 93-94), Copeau’s (Evans 2006: 149) and Lecoq’s (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 74) among others, and it serves not only the purpose of gathering the actor’s raw material, but also that of enabling an understanding of the semiotics of emotions in performance.

By engaging the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences together, the performer becomes aware of the devices of signification at play both in real life and in representations of real life (no matter how literally or figuratively coded they might end up being). But it is not until all the remaining intelligences are engaged that the performer can begin to create a consistent and well-rounded performance of a character.

In order to embrace the existentialist condition of free choice, Gardner offers the opera performer the possibility of engaging with the same object of knowledge in multiple ways by engaging all the intellectual tools available to
him/her. But these intellectual tools, according to MI, go beyond the abstract operations located in the brain, thus implying a holistic view of the individual.

MI directly challenged the established views on how we know and on what is knowable and, by doing so, it prompted an increased awareness of the definition and value of creativity as well as how it relates to current educational systems. Furthermore, these discussions are now being had, simultaneously (albeit in different terms), in academia and forums of popular culture. According to *Vanity Fair* (Feirstein 2013), one can track the coming of age of these issues, their foregrounding to a range of public and popular arenas of discussion, to the moment in which Ken Robinson’s TED talk *How Schools Kill Creativity* (Robinson 2006) went up on YouTube.

### 2.3 Creativity Training for Opera

Ken Robinson (1950–) is an academic who has focused on the study, development and practical implementation of creativity. He stresses the importance of clearly defining what creativity is and how it works in practice. According to Robinson, in a fast-evolving world with an increasing number of variables, the individual has available to him/her a set of three information processing/producing tools that allow him/her to make sense of and impact on the world around him/her. These tools “are imagination, which is the process of bringing to mind things that are not present to our senses; creativity, which is the process of developing original ideas that have value; and innovation, which is the process of putting new ideas into practice” (Robinson 2010c: 2-3).

Robinson identifies three main reasons for the fact that these fundamental human abilities have not (yet) been given the full importance they warrant (Robinson 2010a: 9):
1. We tend to ignore the full range of our abilities, consequently living our lives never developing them to their full extent – the number of creative choices available to the opera performer increases according to the range of abilities the performer is able to master;

2. We also tend to ignore the fact that human abilities are not watertight, but instead dependent on each other exchanging and sharing information in an organic way: by deploying a range of his/her intelligences and holistically collecting all the information from these different approaches, yet again the opera performer’s range of available choices increases.

3. Finally, we also tend to underestimate our ability to grow and change – implicit in this statement is the idea that just because an opera performer has always done something in a specific way, or even if there seems to be an agreed way of doing something supported by performance tradition, these are not peremptory enough reasons to give in, give up and simply follow what has been done before.

Imagination

*Imagination* is the first step in the creative process during which anything that might not be readily available to the senses can potentially be considered as if it were; in other words, it is the process of materialising what is as yet immaterial. This materialisation results from three types of thought process: *imaginal*, the process by which one brings images drawn from real experience to mind; *imaginative*, the process by which those images are composed in the mind, rather than recalled to mind from experience; and *imaginary*, by which imaginative experiences can be mistaken for real ones (Robinson 2010c: 141). It is *imagination* that endows the individual with the ultimate freedom of seeing the restrictions imposed by time and space (among other constraints) as merely
optional, for he/she can travel these two dimensions far beyond the here and now. Revisiting the past or anticipating a range of possible futures are only two of the many avenues made available by imagination.

Creativity

The second stage is creativity. If imagination can be conceived as an internal process completely disconnected from the material world of reality, creativity cannot. For Robinson, creativity is action: it is doing. Most importantly, creativity is doing something. Thus, creativity requires a conscious action upon the world, and that action implies and defines an area of knowledge, which in turn serves as its context. Robinson writes that “[p]eople are not creative in the abstract; they are creative in something [...]. Creativity involves putting your imagination to work. In a sense, creativity is applied imagination” (Robinson 2010c: 142).

Innovation

The last step, for Robinson, is innovation. At this stage, the fluid product of creativity solidifies into concrete applications (strategies, products, policies, blocking…), thus reshaping the status quo. Now, the three-step creative process can be reset and focused on this newly created reality. This circular process avoids loss of momentum and, when applied to opera, contributes towards the perpetual evolutorial motion of the specific artefact currently at hand, of the individual opera performer as a fully engaged and responsible artist and, ultimately, of opera as an art form.

A number of axiomatic assumptions are implied by the abovementioned definitions, and by the non-subject-specific language that Robison employs,
which are central to this thesis. Robinson promptly refutes the idea that creativity is a characteristic reserved to a certain few creative-types and that some aspects (or more precisely, disciplines) of human life and/or knowledge might have the monopoly on creativity (Robinson 2010c: 3-5). Notwithstanding the familiarity and the unveiled interdependency of, for instance, the arts and creativity, this three-step creative process is within reach of, and can be equally relevant to, the natural scientist. In fact, the ability to constantly approach a certain aspect of human life from a different angle and allow for a set of different conclusions to emerge, becomes increasingly more important (vital, even) in a world that is changing faster than ever before. But are the current education systems fulfilling their remit to educate the adults-of-tomorrow according to that imperative? Robinson, in his persuasive presentation for the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (Robinson 2010b), states they are not. In fact, and despite how abundant and unbridled creativity seems to be in children, it appears to wane as a direct result of enculturation; as if individuals did not grow into creativity, but instead out of it, through education.

An outdated education model

The pace of change is quickening every day. New technologies are transforming how we think, work, play and relate to each other. At the same time, the population of the earth is larger and growing faster than at any time in history. Many of the challenges that we face are being generated by the powerful interaction of these forces. The problem is that many of our established ways of doing things, in business, in government and education, are rooted in old ways of thinking. They are facing backwards, not forwards. (Robinson 2010c: 19)

Robinson argues the urgency for a paradigm shift in education primarily on the basis of two factors:
1. Economic – “How do we educate our children to take their place in the economies of the twenty first century, [...] given that we can’t anticipate what the economy will look like at the end of next week?” (Robinson 2010b: 00:24-00:36)

2. Cultural – “How do we educate our children so they have a sense of cultural identity and so we can pass on the cultural genes of our communities, while being part of the process of globalisation?” (Robinson 2010b: 00:45-00:57)

According to Robinson, our present training structures are largely based on the industrial model of division of labour and specialised skills. But, sooner or later, they will have to face up to their inability to efficiently prepare students to enter an ever-changing and increasingly more demanding work market. Having been designed with clearly defined objectives (to develop students’ skills according to the specific demands of the professional world), once the end-state becomes uncertain so do the purposes of education as well as the content and curricula design of courses.

Similarly, since the evolution of opera leads to an ever-wider range of possible outputs, the validity of training structures that primarily try to respond to the current demands of professional practices instead of pre-empting those of future practices are called into question.

Robinson proposes that education, at its most fundamental, exists by the support of three basic statements of purpose:

1. **Individual**: to develop individual talents and sensibilities

2. **Cultural**: to deepen understanding of the world

3. **Economic**: to provide the skills required to earn a living and be economically productive.

   (Robinson 2010c: 67)
By accepting Robinson’s premise, that one of the main aims of education is the realisation of each individual’s potential, and Gardner’s, that each individual has in himself/herself a unique blend of several intelligences, it follows that the approach to education should aim at becoming truly holistic. Consequently, restricting the creative remit of the opera performer solely to vocal music production, is ignoring the totality of the individual’s creative potential. The application of Robinson’s threefold creative process to opera, the successive application of imagination, creativity and innovation, thus becomes one of the central elements of this thesis.

Philosophical Summary

Sartre’s existentialism, Gardner’s MI and Robinson’s structure of the creative process promote opera as an art form that actively fights a positivistic tendency to crystallise meaning and interpretations. Being confident that there is no one ultimate and definitive interpretation hidden in the work becomes essential, if one is to allow for new interpretations of that piece to emerge. There is no knowable absolute truth hidden in the work of the composer, librettist, director or their synthesis, so the performer is not charged with a tacit responsibility to find ‘it’, that one hidden interpretation. Instead, the performer’s duty becomes to find ‘them’, the range of possible interpretations he/she collaboratively constructs with others in rehearsal. Furthermore, a training programme encouraging the performer to look at the material from a variety of potential angles, offering him/her training in a range of techniques and enabling this multi-fronted approach seems not only to enable the performer to better perform whenever working in creatively demanding unconventional productions, but it will also not hinder his/her ability to follow the tenets of performance tradition or to be part of someone else’s strict (sometimes even dictatorial) vision.
At the core of this thesis are thus three axiomatic principles:

1. **Free Choice** – As derived from Sartre’s existentialism. As Sartre founded his entire system on the concept of free choice, this research starts by assuming the impossibility of artistic creation in the absence of choice. Therefore, free choice is not only one of the foundations of this thesis’s approach, but the availability of a range of choices at all times will also be considered proof of the success and validity of a creative process.

2. **Multiple Intelligences** – The present approach embraces the multiplicity of intelligences theorised by Gardner. It acknowledges the opera performer’s creative process as intrinsically involving all of the opera performer’s intellectual abilities. It chooses to focus its attention on the body (the preferred locus of bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence) as a starting point, or gateway, but will actively promote the constant articulation of all other intelligences.

3. **Creativity** – Following the three-step creative process delineated by Robinson, the object of this research will primarily be the fostering of a particular kind of imagination and articulating it with creativity. In order words, how can opera training foster the performers’ ability to see beyond what already exists and bring into existence what he/she has just created? The third step, *innovation*, is beyond the scope of this project. By avoiding the performers’ possible premature concern with the details of application to a final product this thesis acknowledges the potentially restrictive and censorial impact that premature concern can have on the freedom required by imagination and *creativity*. That freedom, as well as how to promote it, is at the centre of this thesis.
Chapter 3  Methodology

Having established a radical humanist outlook in Chapter 1 and having identified the three major influences in fine-tuning the theoretical stance in Chapter 2, this chapter begins with an overview of Practice-as-Research as a methodology for academic research. This focuses on some of the key debates within, and questions raised by, Practice-as-Research scholarship. The chapter concludes by outlining the decisions regarding how to translate the flexible methodological guidelines utilized in Practice-as-Research to the specificities of this project whilst offering detail on, and rationale behind, the methods chosen. It establishes the relationship between the modes of knowledge of the author’s artistic and academic practices, locates this project within a set of distinct typifications, and provides the groundwork for the choices regarding documentation.

3.1 Practice-as-Research (PaR)

[Practice as research is an attempt to see and understand performance media practices and processes as arenas in which knowledges might be opened. The institutional acceptance of practice as research in the higher education sector acknowledges fundamental epistemological issues that can only be addressed in and through theatre, dance, film, TV and video practices. (PARIP 2006)]

Practice-as-Research (PaR) is a relatively new approach to academic research in the arts, with a history of about three decades. According to Robin Nelson, “PaR may have originated in Finland in the mid 1980s and was emergent in the UK about that time” (Nelson 2013: 11). While acknowledging the different paces at which PaR has established itself in different countries around the
world, this subchapter is UK-centred but does not attempt to offer a full historical account of its evolution in the UK. For that, please refer to Angela Piccini and Baz Kershaw’s detailed chronological accounts (Kershaw 2009, Piccini 2004).

As the name suggests, PaR brings together two different concepts: practice and research. Separately, neither of these seems particularly resistant to definition: practice relates to the carrying out of the actions associated with a particular artistic activity (performing, directing, choreographing, coaching…) and (academic) research to the processes involved in establishing new knowledge, or affording substantial new insights, within an academic context. However, far from being a mere juxtaposition of two concepts, in PaR they influence each other, they create points of tension that require attention and, ultimately, this new compound concept allows for both practice and research to grow in breadth and scope.

The definition of research as sanctioned by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (formerly the Arts & Humanities Research Board) has evolved through consultation with practitioner-researchers so that it can accommodate a wide variety of PaR projects (AHRC 2014, Piccini 2004). Its current definition establishes that it “should primarily be concerned with research processes, rather than outputs” (AHRC 2014), which is already a clear attempt to set it apart from professional artistic practice and traditional research practice. The definition is built around three essential principles: that a research project should be the product of a clear identification of the research questions or problems to be addressed; that it should be able to contextualise the research questions and the practical elements within existing arts practices and scholarship, whilst making a case for its unique contribution to knowledge; that it has to be able to identify appropriate methods to address the research questions and to be able to defend the rationale for choosing them (AHRC 2014).
Along similar lines to one of Robinson’s arguments in the previous chapter, academia is traditionally structured to support a clear division of labour. In simple(istic) terms, academics are supposed to think and theorise, whereas arts practitioners are supposed to do. Judged solely on the artefacts which practitioners create, there is often little expectation that they will explain, theorise or contextualise their own work within academia. In this context, besides discipline specialisation, this division of labour also presents itself as the manifestation of a much older idea: the dichotomy in thinking-doing. Piccini and Kershaw identify the roots of this split in a long tradition of dualism that, having started with René Descartes (1596–1650), has been kept alive by theorists and academics such as Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) and Noam Chomsky (1928–), among others (Piccini and Kershaw 2004). Robin Nelson goes even further, mapping the origins of the schism all the way back to Plato in ancient Greece (Nelson 2009: 115). But, in any case, there is consensus in recognising the tendency of Western intellectual tradition to privilege mind over body.

This separation between body and mind, between action and thought, is echoed in the binary of practice and research. It is felt at its strongest when, besides isolating individuals or grouping them according to narrow fields of knowledge (and consequently restricting the range of experiences and influences one is exposed to), it starts ‘mining’ a chasm at the core of individuals (in extremis contributing towards a fragmentation restricting their ability to engage with the world as diversely as they could otherwise have done). PaR also serves the function of lining up the experiences of theory and practice, instead of perpetuating the notion that these two elements are irreconcilable.

Acknowledging the perceived friction and competing cross-purposes of both practice and research, one of PaR’s cardinal commitments is to highlight the validity of embodied knowledges, to establish their cross-compatibility and to design structures and systems that are flexible and, from their inception, multi-
modal. This is one of the major aims of this thesis: to consider the validity of opera practitioners’ embodied modes of knowing in the advancement of opera studies in academia.

Modes of Knowledge

The 2013 version of Robin Nelson’s multi-mode epistemological model for PaR (Nelson 2009: 127, 2013: 37) is graphically represented in Figure 2. It shows how Practice-as-Research projects are constantly evolving and being fine-tuned:

![Multi-mode epistemological model for PaR](image)

**Fig. 2: Multi-mode epistemological model for PaR (Nelson 2013: 37)**

Nelson’s model accounts for the relationship (creative tension or otherwise) between practice and theory in performance research. It acknowledges and is characterised by the co-existence and inter-relation of three modes of knowing, three equally important corners to a dynamic epistemological triangle. They are:
1. Know-how or Practitioner Knowledge – This type of knowledge is predominantly tacit and embodied, experiential and haptic. Being closely linked to action and, therefore, highly performative in nature, it is more ‘knowing’ than ‘knowledge’ and more processual than conceptual.

2. Know-that or Conceptual Framework – This is traditional theoretical knowledge. Cognitive-academic and propositional, it often strives to be value-free and objective. It presupposes a certain observational distance between subject and object and primarily produces concepts.

3. Know-what or Critical Reflection – The type of knowledge responsible for making explicit what was tacit. It accounts for a consciousness of methods, principles and probable outcomes in practice.

In this updated version of Nelson’s model, each of the three corners of the triangle is connected to the other two by two-way arrows (reinforcing the idea of a dialogical relationship between modes of knowing) and the triangle is placed within a circle (highlighting the circularity of the process and the potential arbitrariness of a starting point). However, for the graphic to embody the absence of a default protagonism awarded to any of the types of knowledge, why the isosceles triangle? In its pure, abstract form, should the epistemological triangle not be equilateral instead? With multiple intelligences and multiple modes of knowing at one’s disposal, it seems counter-productive to hierarchise them by default. No distance between two corners (modes of knowing) should be bigger than any other, in the abstract. Each individual PaR project, as a direct result of identifying its philosophical framework, can then establish any oscillation away from a neutral equilateral triangle.
Applying this model to the training of opera performers, there is currently a heavy focus on know-what, as in knowing what (supposedly) ‘works’ or at least has in the past ‘worked’. When performers’ learning is focused primarily on this know-what without insisting in theoretical know-that contextualisation or with no reference to an embodied and freshly-discovered know-how, it becomes empty and esoteric technical knowledge.

The current research’s intent to analyse know-what practices mirrors that of other PaR projects preceding it, such as Helka-Maria Kinnunen’s doctoral research (Kinnunen 2008). Kinnunen establishes one of her project’s aims as “to know more about the activities, layers and phases of artistic processes” (Kinnunen 2010: 26). The present research identifies with Kinnunen’s for its aim to uncover and decode performers’ know-what practices when working collaboratively and from improvisation. These two elements are particularly important in identifying the object of research as a shared product between performers and director and establishing their remit as operatic auteurs. If, according to Kinnunen, “actors often think of themselves as a collective organised by the director” (Kinnunen 2010), it is fair to assume that the same happens in opera to the same (or even a greater) extent, for there is a more established tradition of improvisational practices in the training of actors than in that of opera performers. If “[a]ctors’ creativity is often on-demand creativity” (Kinnunen 2010: 29), it is because their training has provided them with tools to do so. In the case of opera performers, if their creative arsenal is limited, this research gives one step back to endow them with some of the same tools. Consequently, unlike Kinnunen’s, it does not track the creative process all the way to performance, choosing to concentrate primarily on the first two stages of Robinson’s creative process: imagination and creativity.
Documentation

Despite the AHRC’s focus on research processes rather than on outputs, it concedes that:

outputs of the research may include, for example, monographs, editions or articles; electronic data, including sound or images; performances, films or broadcasts; or exhibitions. […] The Council would expect, however, this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and as a record of your critical reflection. (AHRC 2014)

Whilst the issue of acknowledging performance as a locus for knowledge has already been addressed above, the question assumes a different scope in the context of documentation. Beyond accepting the existence of knowledge to be accessed in/by performers and performance, can that knowledge be made explicit and serve the purposes of the academy? Can performance comply with the mechanics of academia, such as citation, archiving and indexing? And what are the implications of the inclusion of performance for current modes of dissemination? If one is to understand live performance stricto sensu, then the answer would be simply ‘no’. The live event, in its purest and unadulterated form, cannot be cited, revisited, archived… or even disseminated. It can, however, be seen as the dissemination vehicle of the production; the dissemination of a professional artistic type, which does not necessarily share the primary concerns of academic dissemination.

A game changer was the democratisation of audiovisual technology. Since the 1970’s, the standards for sound and image quality of recorded media have not only constantly become higher and higher (from Betamax to Blu-Ray as well as all available definitions of streaming media) but also steadily more accessible (nowadays, video recording is a standard feature in most mobile phones). The ability to record an artistic practice opens up the possibility of compliance to
academic requirements. By creating from the live event documentation of a certain permanence which, to some extent, can stand in its stead as the subject of critical analysis, opens up ways in which performance can be archived, indexed, cited and, ultimately, revisited for the purposes of academic dissemination. Piccini and Rye warn against blurring the distinction between document and documentation:

[...] It is crucial up front to signpost the difference between ‘document’ (the unintentional traces, detritus, residues left over from Practice-as-Research in the form of coffee cups, cigarette butts and the hair, skin and sweat of our bodies that may later be identified as important by the archaeo-archivist) and ‘documentation’ (the intentional desire to create the indexical sign out of which meaning may be revealed). (Piccini and Rye 2009: 35)

The process of documentation demands intentionality. In order to produce this documentation, the act of documenting must be the result of a previous and conscious methodological decision to document; it cannot happen a posteriori. It is important to note, however, that this documentation of a live event is not the live event. It can, depending on the specificities of the individual project (and indeed of the individual recording), stand in for the live element when gaining access to an event (stage production, rehearsal, workshop…) as the object of study. This project’s method of data collection follows Kinnunen’s (Kinnunen 2010: 27) by using video and participants’ diaries, further discussed below.

According to Piccini and Rye, the audiovisual support of a DVD is seen as the standard for PaR submissions, primarily for its portability, capacity and versatility; but there is an increasing interest in the possibilities offered by digital media (Piccini and Rye 2009). Again, there is not one but a range of already existing (and many more still to be invented) options for how to present one’s practice and how to make it relate to the written component. It is assumed that there is no one better to decide on the format for the research output than
the practitioner-researcher; in this case, the author. The present submission includes a DVD with several edited video segments which, not standing in as the practice, are presented as documenting practice.

Summary of PaR

Practice-as-Research in the arts is a broad term identifying a range of arts-based academic research projects that make use of artistic practice as part of their methodology. It acknowledges the diversity of knowledges available to the practitioner-researcher, and allows for a wide range of possible ways in which to engage with both theory and practice. However, not all artistic-creation, not even all which takes place within universities, is research. Back in 1998, the second SCUDD (Standing Conference of University Drama Departments) working group declared “[t]hat while it should be acknowledged that high-quality creative work (including professional practice) is undertaken that might qualify as research, there is other work, however ‘well researched’, that might not” (SCUDD quoted in Piccini 2004: 196). This view is shared by Nicholas Till, who consequently calls for the creation of methods for evaluating the merit of professional artists and craftspersons working in academic institutions but who do not engage with research (Till 2013). Flexible as PaR is, as a methodology for academic research, it does require for something to qualify as academic research in the first place. According to Anna Pakes, for a creative process to qualify as academic research, it must comply to the Intentional Action Model (Pakes 2004) by evidencing the practitioner-researcher’s intentional action, the documentation process, the presentation of the research output and the critical reflection contextualising the output in academic, as well as aesthetic, terms. Till offers a similar type of checklist when stating that “[w]ith artistic practice as research, emphasis is placed on the aptness of the research questions, the rigour of the methodology, the thoroughness of the contextual research and the acumen of the theoretical
conclusions that are adduced. Process rather than product; generalisable knowledge rather than specific aesthetic experience” (Till 2013).

Often trans-disciplinary, PaR is characterised by its in-betweenness: its ability to look at the object of research from different perspectives simultaneously, using different methods, different frameworks and different professional identities. The ability to play more than one role, to be both subject and object, is fundamental to the role of practitioner-researcher, which is predicated on knowing how to negotiate sometimes seemingly incompatible outcomes. Simon Jones explains:

[A]ny attempt to reconcile embodied and textual practices is doomed to falter at the hurdle of judgement, since in that locutionary and scriptural act all knowings and knowledges must be rendered comparative. Whereas complementarity admits no comparison; it is more fundamental than a set of contradictory terms produced by writings alongside or the different knowings of collaborative practice.

(Jones 2009: 31)

PaR’s irreverence can potentially challenge the stability and unquestioned endurance of some foundational sets of values in academia. The ability PaR has to organise different perspectives of the same object of research so that they are complementary (instead of competing or mutually exclusive) is one of its major strengths. The embracing of different modes of knowing enables, for instance, the unpacking of performance jargon expressions such as “that works”, or “this time it felt better” typical of an orphan know-what. These can at times be uttered by practitioners with no clear notion of what they mean or what they are referring to, as well as occasionally being tacitly dismissed by academics as carrying no meaning whatsoever or referring to something that is equally silly and esoteric.
This PaR Project

Acknowledging the coexistence and cooperation of different modes of knowledge engaged in this specific PaR project, in order to highlight them and make evident the different objectives at play at different moments of the research, this thesis unfolds the author’s persona into two I’s: practitioner ‘I’ (director and teacher) and academic ‘I’ (scholar). This is a direct result of research through performance’s tendency to blur the roles and primary concerns of practitioner and researcher by using the training/rehearsal studio as something akin to laboratories (Freeman 2010: 65): whilst the former ‘I’ is particularly concerned with the performers’ know-how and know-what, the latter focuses primarily on know-that. It is important to stress that this distinction is made purely for expositional purposes, for in practice there is no schism between the roles: they co-exist peacefully and fruitfully in one person. Nevertheless, this unfolding can be understood as an existentialist choice, by which one has to consciously choose which aspect of reality, which facet of oneself, to engage at any given moment.

Within the scope of this research project, know-how will be understood as how practitioner ‘I’ perceives the performers’ ability to perform and their responsiveness to this training. Know-that is this thesis itself and the disseminable knowledge it contains; the bringing together by academic ‘I’ of all modes of knowing into one single strand of disseminable material. Know-what will refer to the practitioners’ ability to reflect upon their practice – in other words, their ability to engage with what Donald A. Schön calls reflection-in-practice:

Through reflection, he [the practitioner] can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience. (Schön 1991: 61)
Considering the primacy of free choice established by the existentialist charter for this research, reflection-in-practice becomes of particular importance for endowing the performers with the ability to evaluate, adapt and reconceive their performances and the material from which their performances are born. In doing so, according to this existentialist perspective, they are not only choosing an individual way of working, but they are also legislating for their entire practice.

### 3.2 Methods

As part of a PaR methodology, the research design synthesises four methods divided into two categories: those that derive primarily from artistic practice and those that derive primarily from academic research; this variety accounts for the types of knowledge required to be engaged. The ‘artistic methods’ are the formal content of the training workshop and the type of lesson through which the content is to be delivered: the Jacques Lecoq training method for actors (‘The Journey’) and studio-based group-training sessions. The ‘research methods’ involve semi-structured interviews and training diaries in order to give voice to the subjective experiences of the participants. The following section will explore each of the methods as well as their relevance and application to the broader field of opera.

**Method 1: *Le Corps Poétique***

Jacques Lecoq (1921–1999) was not originally a man of the theatre (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 3). Since he was first a sportsman, his method finds its foundations in physical training. When he was as young as seventeen, Lecoq discovered what he called ‘physical poetry’ (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 3).
3). He discovered that the pure abstract movement of the body through space (as required by gymnastics and athletics) would prompt a range of sensations that could be carried over into life beyond sports. By recalling those sensations he “would sense those rhythms perfectly, far more than in reality” (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 3). Lecoq discovered the poetic potential of the body at this early age, and still not in a theatrical context. Later, this physical poetry would prompt him to teach his students to locate emotions in the palpable and self-evident objectivity of the body. From creating ‘replay’, the first exercise in his method, which involves silently “reviving lived experience in the simplest possible way […] with no thought for spectators” (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 29), Lecoq developed a sequence of exercises into a coherent training method. The Lecoq method, which is still taught today at the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, defines a practice of acting based in observation, analysis and improvisation (Rolfe 1972). While acknowledging that the development and deployment of the classical voice finds its foundation in the process of listening and analysing vocal production, there is a definite parallel between the surgical precision that the Lecoq method strives to obtain in physical performance and what opera performers already do vocally.

Lecoq’s school opened in Paris on 5th December 1956. Since then, the course, which is also known as ‘the journey’ (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 18-19), has slowly evolved; the lessons may always be slightly different, but they always follow a precise order of progression. The school’s main programme (Fig. 3) is spread over two years and covers two main parallel paths of the Lecoq method: the study of improvisation and its rules and the study of movement technique and its analysis. To these pathways, Lecoq added auto-cours, in which students create their own theatre via small productions, produced without the teachers’ supervision (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 14).

In the first year, students start by exploring ‘silent play’ and then ‘replay’. Then they explore the neutral mask, which kickstarts their use of the miming body and will later lead to character acting. They start exploring the potential to
interpret natural elements (earth, fire, water and air), materials (wood, rock, fur, putty...), animals, colours, lights, sounds and words through physical improvisation. They experiment with a series of masks, dramatic structures and stylistic constraints. They develop the receptive and expressive potential of the human body and approach stimuli from the worlds of music, painting and poetry (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 14). The teacher, when guiding the student in improvisations, “works primarily through a for of via negativa (the negative way). This is a strategy in which the teacher restricts comments to the negative, namely what is inappropriate and unacceptable, thus forcing the student to discover what is appropriate, whilst avoiding being prescriptive” (Wright 2002). The via negativa is a tool that was also explored by Jerzy Grotowsky (1933–1999) (Arcari 2010: 12).

The second year of the course starts with the study of the language of gesture, followed by the exploration of the full range of dramatic territories. As Lecoq explains:

> This geodramatic journey, [...] as I call it, is based on five principal territories, which may in turn generate others, all of which have commonly accepted names in the history of theatre:
> 1. Melodrama (grand emotions);
> 2. Commedia dell’arte (human comedy);
> 3. Bouffons (from grotesque to mystery);
> 4. Tragedy (chorus and hero);
> 5. Clowns (burlesque and absurd).

(Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 14-15)
Fig. 3: The Lecoq educational journey (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 18-19)
One of the main aims of the journey is to create an energised and vibrant theatre of new work with an emphasis on the actor’s physical play; this new work can be expressed either by the creation of new pieces or by fresh interpretation of written texts. Creativity, the ability to bring to light something of value that did not previously exist, is constantly stimulated by the recurrent use of improvisation and by the auto-cours, which are intrinsic parts of the course. Another learning outcome of the auto-cours is the understanding of the structures of drama that are made visible by prompting the performer to look at the performance not only from the point of view of the performer, but also from that of the director, the designer and the dramaturge. Since this multi-angled understanding and interpretative freedom in creativity are qualities seldom expressly fostered in opera performers, this research puts them at the centre of the training practice and examines the results, to see whether performers can, in turn, be placed at the centre of the creation of new productions as auteurs.

The existential core of the Lecoq method is thus highlighted by its focus (insistence, even) in performers’ creativity, which is the result of its heavy reliance on improvisation, of the central role of the auto-cours and of the systematic application of the via negativa. These three strategies, in slightly different ways and from slightly different angles, collectively push the performer to create his/her own being-for-itself, whilst understanding the brief given as the being-in-itself and the context as facticity elements. The brief, can be presented in a range of forms, from an abstract stimulus to a precise text which can, in turn, be verbal, musical, physical, emotional… But in every instance, the brief will not amount to more than a starting point to performance; it is up to the performer to, through the creative process, birth something into performance from the tension between what it already is and what he/she wills it to be. This existential tension at play in the Lecoq method depends on the performer’s choice, which in turn depends on freedom.
Tim Kjeldsen questions how existential freedom can be reconciled with a structured practice such as Alexander Technique (Kjeldsen 2015), and the same question can be raised when considering the Lecoq method. Are techniques and methods not restrictive of performers’ freedom by establishing protocols, structuring learning and formalise performance? Kjeldsen answers the question by invoking Sartre’s *internal negation* and thus claiming that “[c]ontrol and freedom are both interdependent and contradictory. This […] is a paradox that may be embraced in practice by cultivating the core capacity to let go of existing forms of control and open oneself to the possibilities that subsequently emerge” (Kjeldsen 2015: 46). In other words, existentialist performance training is that which, by offering structure, endows the performer with the ability to identify options, the technical skills to perform them and the confidence to do so. The Lecoq method of actor training has been designed with these essential characteristics in mind, thus reinforcing its existentialist charter.

Another important and underlying constant that runs through the two years of training at Lecoq’s school is the distinction between ‘expression’ and ‘creation’. For Lecoq, ‘expression’ is an important stage in training and of the creative process, but it should never become an end in itself. Lecoq’s notion is that in the act of expressing, one does not take the spectator into consideration; but in the act of creation, one does. In Lecoq’s own words:

> If students feel better after doing the course, that is a bonus, but my aim is not to provide therapy through theatre. In any process of creation the object made no longer belongs to the creator. The aim of this act of creation is to bear fruit which then separates from the tree.

*(Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 17)*

It is this central and constant attention to the spectator’s experience, to how audiences ‘read’ the performance, that establishes Lecoq firmly in the *outside-in* camp and that addresses the previously mentioned concerns that the Stanislavsky method and its American offshoots often raise. Unlike them, there is a focused attention and a greater attempt to control the semiotics of acting.
The notion of applying Lecoq’s method to the training of opera performers suggests a case for greater integration in opera of dramatic movement work, which is often seen as subsidiary to vocal production and musical interpretation of a role, and control over how the whole performance is being decoded. This research does not attempt to squeeze in (or distil) a two-year training programme into an intensive project, but the practical element loosely follows the very beginning stages of the Lecoq first-year syllabus. It thus introduces the opera performers to: Silence, Neutral Mask, Gesture, Improvisation, Animals and Clown. The latter is the only unit borrowed from the second year at the school. The rationale for including the Clown in this P-a-R Project is that, along with the Neutral Mask they are considered by Lecoq as being at opposite ends of a spectrum of mask work. In other words, they represent the biggest and the smallest of masks or the most discreet and most raucous of them. This pairing, thus frames extreme ends of a spectrum of performance possibilities and, as Lecoq himself states, “[t]ogether, they [the neutral mask and the clown] frame the teaching offered by the school” (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 152).

The opera training workshop part of this research is structured in such a way that it first provides the performers with training in specific techniques and then immediately asks them to apply them as part of their own creative process. In order to focus on the existentialist idea of choice, performers are asked to always come up with (at least) two distinct, contrasting proposals, for there can be no choice without at least two options to choose from. How the performers understand and process the words ‘distinct’, ‘contrasting’ and ‘opposite’ is solely the responsibility of the performers, and is thus always pertinent data for analysis presented in Chapter 4.
A Silent Singer

We begin with silence, for the spoken word often forgets the roots from which it grew, and it is a good thing for students to begin by pacing themselves in the position of primal naivety, a state of innocent curiosity. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 29)

In this context, silence can be understood in two different ways: first, as the absence of sound and music during improvisations; second, as the sole focus on the notated material without the interference of any ‘noise’ beyond what has been previously established by composer and librettist as the being-in-itself. As Lecoq remarks, “since the reformers of the theatre, Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Copeau, theatre pedagogues have developed silent improvisation, seeking to return sensitivity to the perception of the body for the performing actor, eliminating real objects in order to perceive them better” (Lecoq 2006: 73). In other words, this project retraces the path back to silence and stillness, which are vital to better understand music and movement, respectively.

It is only by silencing one’s mind of all the ‘voices’ that have previously performed that role, a silence similar to when a role is being performed for the very first time, that the performer can bring something new and of value to the production. On this matter, this research aligns with the words of singer, teacher, director and academic Mark Ross Clark:

Often basic characteristics of well-known roles are documented in books or displayed in videos and live performance. I believe, however, that research into source background materials should stimulate new ideas of character study, not just carry on conventions. (Clark 2002: 26-27)

In summary, the existentialist approach outlined by Sartre is inherent to the opera performer’s creative process when Lecoq is invoked. When looking at any opera scene, either in a new work or in a staple of the traditional operatic canon, the Lecoq-orientated opera performer thus needs to reset his/her
expectations and engage with the material anew, or with fresh eyes, as if they have never encountered it before. In order to do that, a process of analysis of the notated material that the librettist and composer offer the contemporary opera performer and director (or in other words, of the being-in-itself) becomes vital, but is immediately followed by a series of ‘silent’ improvisations aimed at uncovering possible hidden meanings and interpretations of the scene. This is achieved by, as far as possible, silencing performance tradition or any other widely accepted dogmas relating to (or dismissing) specific characters, genres and/or works (which are but factual elements). This phase of the work has as its main objective, the freeing of the production from tacit interpretations of the material. This objective is achieved by creating a repertoire of raw material, which the production will later draw upon in order to construct the final performance.

**Becoming a Blank Canvas**

To start from silence and calm. That is the very first point. An actor must know how to be silent, to listen, to answer, to remain motionless, to start a gesture, follow through with it, come back to motionlessness and silence, with all the shadings and half-tones that these actions imply. (Copeau quoted in Eldredge and Huston 2002: 140)

At the core of Lecoq’s method, and inherent to most elements throughout Lecoq’s *journey*, are some theatrical principles first developed at the beginning of the twentieth century by Jacques Copeau (1879–1940). He reconceived French theatre as a collaborative art, distilling it down to its bare essentials and refocusing it around the relationship between the playwright, the creative actor and the director (Evans 2006: 49). As is stated above, he steered the performer away from what was considered as the ‘ham’ acting and audience adulation of the theatre of *La Belle Époque*, with all its glamour and excesses, perils and exoticism (Evans 2006: 10-11). Susan Rutherford’s compilation of historical examples (Rutherford 2011: 236-237) suggests that opera performance suffers
from the same sort of malaise. Consequently, if Copeau reconceived the actor as a discrete creative force, who instead of imposing him/herself onto the work would now become permeable to it by using his/her skills to create and serve it, the same can surely be done for the opera performer. The product that the actor or opera performer helps to create thus becomes more important than the performer or any of the other co-creators in the production process.

Copeau’s *noble mask* was first developed during the First World War, but was later adopted by practitioners such as Étienne Decroux (1898–1991) and famously became the first step in Lecoq’s emerging training method. Lecoq renamed it *neutral mask*. Importantly, Decroux’s and Lecoq’s teachings differ, since “Lecoq worked from an intuitive base which rejected the severe and strict codification of style inherent in Decroux’s Corporeal Mime, seeking instead to train performers who were capable of developing and shaping their own forms of theatre” (Arrighi 2003: 56).

A performer arriving at the first day of stage rehearsals (opera or theatre) brings with him/her all the temperamental traits that constitute his/her individual persona – all that makes him/her unique and which can ultimately inform and/or cloud the construction of a new character. For these reasons, Lecoq introduces the *neutral mask*:

> The neutral mask is [...] a perfectly balanced mask which produces a physical sensation of calm. This object, when placed on the face, should enable one to experience the state of neutrality prior to action, a state of receptiveness to everything around us, with no inner conflict.

*(Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 36)*

The neutral mask thus puts the performer in a state of *economical receptiveness*: the performer is ready for anything without ever knowing what is to follow (and foresight would already not be neutral) but, at the same time, is not yet actively investing energy in anything. With the neutral mask, there is nothing but the present, not even a character, since this ‘generic being’ knows neither
where it comes from nor where it is going (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 37-38). Every facial expression has a consequence on the body (often repressed and/or ignored) and, without being able to rely on the face, every single one of the performer’s physical expressions becomes intensified as if viewed under a magnifying glass. According to Lecoq, after a successful neutral mask exercise, a silent story will have been clearly told with the utmost economy and the performer’s face under the mask will remain relaxed.

Lecoq indicates that neutral mask exercises work mainly in two ways: as a training mechanism promoting the performers' awareness of and control over their own physical idiosyncrasies, and as a creative tool for mapping out a character’s physical make-up and journey on stage whilst providing a series of fulcrum points essential for acting, which will eventually come later in the creative process (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 38).

**Gesture as a Building Block**

Lecoq’s training is a system of tools that can be used to observe, analyse and represent the world in a wide range of potential stylistic outputs. It “unveils man in action, reaction, and interaction with his surroundings, which are always physical phenomena” (Rolfe 1972: 36). A substantial part of the Lecoq method focuses on the study of, and creative control over, these physical phenomena or gestures. Opera performer and teacher Richard Crittenden has recognised the value of gesture as a tool for the opera performer:

> The good gestures are those that are expressive of the character’s emotions and are appropriate for the situation. Bad gestures are those connected to singer tension or habits and those that we notice.

(Crittenden 1999b: 46)

Based on the principle that every emotion finds its expression in the body, the recreation of that gesture on stage can become the signifier for that same emotion in a dramatic process of ‘reverse engineering’. In other words, if inter
and intrapersonal intelligences allow the performer to identify certain physical and/or vocal signs as manifestations of emotions, the same performer can portrait emotions by recreating those same signs. In the same way that "[i]t is the emotions that cause movement, for one need not move while only thinking" (Crittenden 1999a: 30), emotionally unmotivated movement can be confusing and/or deceptive. Lecoq’s neutral mask enables the opera performer to employ a similar level of surgical precision to the body as he/she does to vocal production. “Every shift of weight, every little finger movement and every lift of an eyebrow conveys the actor’s [or opera performer’s] intention to the audience” (Crittenden 1999a: 31) in the same way as he/she does with vocal phrasing, timbre or musical ornamentation.

Gesture, within the Lecoq method, is always born from real-life observation. The second stage of his method sees the performer analysing the mechanics and emotional connections of the gestures he/she has observed. The third and last stage then applies those gestures to performance: firstly during improvisations, and then in selecting and fixing some of them into a solid and repeatable blocking. Since, more than in the straight actor’s script, the performance of the opera performer’s voice has been more clearly pre-established in the score by librettist and composer, it can be argued that physical performance (and gesture in particular) becomes one of his/her most important expressive tools; one of the elements in which there is the most creative freedom.

Lecoq divides gesture into three major categories – gestures of action, of expression and of demonstration (Lecoq 2006: 9). It is worth considering each in turn for they create a blueprint for the performer’s creation of theatre and/or opera physical characters.

**Gestures of Action**

Gestures of Action involve the whole body and are personal to and most characteristic of an individual (Lecoq 2006: 9-10). Someone’s gait is a
particularly important type of gesture, because it grounds every character’s identity in its most primordial essence. On this subject, Lecoq quotes Honoré de Balzac’s (1799–1850) Théorie de la Démarche:

1. Gait is the physiognomy of the body.
2. The look, the voice, the breathing, the gait are identical, but since it is beyond human power to keep watch at the same time over these diverse and simultaneous expressions of human thought, look for the one that tells the truth: it will allow you to know the whole man.
3. Rest is the silence of the body.

(Balzac quoted in Lecoq 2006: 15)

This classification extends beyond Lecoq’s notion of gait. By observing how people (or animals) carry themselves and move from A to B, by paying attention to all movement around us and to the forces and tensions that prompt it, the performer carefully selects the ingredients to create his/her character’s unique and insightful gait. This gait can become indicative of the character’s upbringing, environment, profession and temperament (Lecoq 2006: 10-16). By stripping away the incidental aspects of the way someone walks (tight shoes, being late, back pain, etc.), Lecoq suggests it is possible to reach the essence of a person’s unique gait by finding the lowest common denominator among all the gestures in a person’s movement.

Despite not existing in its truest form, the abstract concept of an economical or neutral gait is, for Lecoq, paramount to the work of a performer engaging with character work, such as the opera performer, as it becomes a term of comparison to his/her observations. This attention to detail and constant checking for unintended messages (in this context, unintended gestures) are founded on the Lecoq method’s premise that human beings, consciously or not, assign meaning to all signifiers they encounter, irrespective of the sender’s intentionality. Notes such as “[h]e swings one arm more freely than the other as if he were holding something back” (Lecoq 2006: 10) become indicative of
how the character is perceived. Conversely, by creating a character’s gait, the performer can jumpstart the process of building an original character. For example, in order for a mezzo-soprano to portray Carmen in Bizet’s opera *Carmen* (Bizet 1895 [1875]) as a sexually voracious Spanish gypsy woman and Charlotte in Massenet’s *Werther* (Massenet 1892 [1892]) as a small-town, young and demure bourgeois German girl, she should adopt different gaits to ensure the audience reads those characters as she intends them to be read. Were she to experiment with portraying Charlotte as a Spanish gypsy woman instead, since music and words are set, focusing on the character’s gait can quickly and effectively establish the new interpretation of the character; if it would work as a final product or even bring out an extra subtle colouring to a delicately nuanced performance is a completely different matter and the material of a critical rehearsal process. According to the Lecoq method, the characters’ gaits should be appropriate to such things as their personalities, their objectives in the opera and their social environment, which, being different, should be reflected in different gaits.

**Gestures of Expression**

For Lecoq, expressive gestures offer an insight into the often-concealed emotional state of a character (Lecoq 2006: 9, 16). Since people often try to hide their inner emotional world, the perceptive performer should be able to identify a gesture of expression as a ‘tell’ that cuts straight to a character’s emotional state.

The tensing of a muscle, the hint of a smile or the clasping of a fist are all examples of Lecoq’s gestures of expression. They are used (or more often in real life, happen involuntarily) when what people say does not necessarily match what they do. Such gestures can, for instance, provide an opera performer with a clear way of marking Carmen’s evolution from the first to the last act.
Here is a possible interpretation: Carmen is a complex character who can be interpreted as drawing most of her strength from her efforts to keep her public and private personas hermetically separated. A flat literal reading of Carmen throwing a flower at Don José in Act I that does not differentiate this action from throwing a ring at him in Act IV would not account for her emotional journey through the opera and for all the differences that separate what would otherwise appear as two very similar actions. For the actor and director, the number of available artistic choices is predicated on how different these actions can be. Particular gestures of expression allow the subtext to, now and then, become apparent.

Gestures of expression provide the performer with a physical mapping of a character’s emotional journey, by offering both performer and audience a window into what the character often wants to hide.

**Gestures of Demonstration**

For Lecoq, these gestures are pantomimic: they form part of a descriptive language and are concentrated mainly in the hands, but sometimes implicate the arms too. They punctuate, precede, prolong or replace words. (Lecoq 2006: 9, 19). By using these gestures, the individual draws his/her speech in space (as if with pen and paper) providing emphasis to specific words and/or moments.

According to Lecoq, these gestures are deeply connected to cultural and social constructs and/or conventions. Ultimately, for Lecoq, gestures of demonstration are those that can effectively replace specific words; and, for this same reason, are bound to a community’s linguistic codes. An opera performer, when preparing a role, should thus acquaint him/herself with the social constructs of the place and time in which the opera is set, the conventions of the time in which the opera was created and with the most likely interpretations of the place and time of performance, since a simple greeting, for example, can vary greatly. It is up to performer and director to consciously
make a judgement call on which of those to foreground. The latter, as well as who the audience is expected to be, are vital elements to ensure the linguistic codes that the performance is using are shared by its audiences and thus ensuring a faithful decoding of the message it wants to convey. If the performer is to be in control of his/her performance and of how it is going to be received, then the full range of possible reactions to a gesture should inform the performer’s choice; if a certain gesture used on stage is to offend or mislead audiences, this should be the fruit of conscious choice, and not just an accident.\footnote{A hand gesture with straight index and middle fingers may have the same meaning whichever way the palm is facing in most places, but assuming that that is also the case in the United Kingdom can be, at the very least, distracting to an audience.}

**A Red Nose Does Not a Clown Make**

The clown doesn’t exist aside from the actor performing him. We are all clowns, we all think we are beautiful, clever and strong, whereas we all have our weaknesses, our ridiculous side, which can make people laugh when we allow it to express itself.

(Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 154)

Lecoq’s clown was born out of his investigations into the relationship between *commedia dell’arte* and circus clowns, but it evolved into something quite separate from either of those (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 152).

For Lecoq, the clown can exist without the red nose. Despite the fact that it can be (and often is) used in performance, the red nose is rather a tool used in the process of discovering one’s own clown. Admittedly, this entire dramatic territory is predicated on the assumption that every performer has within him/her an individual and unique clown bursting to come out to play. According to Lecoq, the job of the performer in this context is to try to find it, nurture it and deploy it into specific situations.

The first step, for Lecoq, is usually to look for one’s ridiculous side – the same sort of ridicule that makes the clown profoundly human. The ridicule of the
clown is always based on those elements that most people try to hide; thus it relies on an element of identification from the audience. Unlike in *commedia dell’arte*, there are no pre-established archetypes that present the performer with a framework for their performance (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 154-155). There is no backstory, no established set of motivations, no identifiable general attitude or pre-choreographed movement structures which provide the performer with a fixed and solid starting point. Therefore, the performer must, according to Lecoq, look for the clown within himself/herself through a series of improvisational exercises. This clown is the hidden version of the performer that he/she tries to hide; clowns bank on a total lack of social filtering, on the utmost innocence, on an incurable curiosity and on a verging-on-the-pathological desire to always say ‘yes’ and to please others (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 154-155).

The immediate physical reaction to putting on a clown’s nose, since it pinches the performer’s making it hard to breathe through the nose, is that the performer’s mouth will relax open, the eyebrows and hairline will raise and the eyes open wide. Together, these phenomena present the performer’s face in a state of openness that runs parallel to the typically receptive attitude of a clown. Generally, according to Lecoq, the clown experiences the world for the first time like a baby: filled with wonder, always receptive and ready to play. Furthermore, the clown is also characterised by his/her failures. In Lecoq’s own words:

> The clown is the person who flops, who messes up his turn, and, by so doing, gives his audience a sense of superiority. […] But he cannot flop with just anything, he has to mess up something he knows how to do, that is to say an exploit. […] Clown work then consists in establishing a relationship between the exploit and the flop. […] If he never succeeds, we are tipping over into the tragic.

(Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 156)
The clown’s inability to say ‘no’, his/her sheer enthusiasm to please everyone and make everyone happy, can often be the source of his/her dramatic journey. Often finding him/herself in unexpected situations and entrusted with unforeseen charges, the clown fails. And then fails again, right in front of the audience who empathise with this struggle. But eventually, and often by accident, the clown overcomes the obstacle and shares with the audience this sense of achievement. This idea can be applied to a wide range of dramatic performances, including opera, and whilst no higher value is attributed to the choices these techniques derive when compared to any others, the creation of alternatives to choose from – or at least the acknowledgment that alternatives can be created – is the cornerstone of this project’s existentialism.

As has been mentioned, clowns are above all reactive: they react not just to what happens on stage but also to their audiences. In fact, they aim to establish contact with every single audience member and to allow each one of them to influence their performance in constant dialogue. So, for the attentive clown, “[t]he smallest reaction, a movement, a laugh, a single word from the audience [...] [can be] used by him to take off in a new direction” (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 157).

But how can a performer approach the daunting task of letting his/her ridiculous but hidden side emerge? Once again, Lecoq turns to the function of the gait. In contrast with the neutral mask and its denial of the actor’s expressive self, the clown functions, for Lecoq, as a magnifying glass that augments every single one of the performer’s physical idiosyncrasies. Through a series of improvisations and exercises, the performer gradually finds his/her clown’s gait through the development and exponential exaggeration of his/her own walk. Lecoq offers Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977), Groucho Marx (1890–1977) and Jacques Tati (1907–1982) as examples of dramatic clowns with iconic gaits (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002).
For Lecoq, the clown prompts a total inversion of the performer’s process. If the neutral mask aims at finding the most succinct and essential elements of a character at play in all performers’ interpretations, the clown brings into play what is individual and unique in each performer. While most of Lecoq’s dramatic territories rely on the performer’s ability to observe the world and allow it to be reflected in him/her, the clown asks the actor or opera performer to be profoundly him/herself and observe the effect he/she has on the audience (the clown’s world). Also, unlike most other territories, clowns do not require dramatic conflict, since they are in constant conflict with themselves (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias 2002: 158-159).

Clowns are intrinsically funny and their comedy can comfortably stand on its own in front of an audience as a final product in itself. However, like all of Lecoq’s territories, clowning can be used as a performance tool in rehearsals for a production, even if in seemingly unrelated or apparently inappropriate contexts. For example, in productions of Mozart’s opera *Die Zauberflöte*, Tamino, a young prince, is often portrayed as a romantic hero. But what would happen to the character if he borrowed some elements of Lecoq’s clown?

The following is a possible director’s reading. Right at the beginning of the opera, the audience first meets Tamino in a less than heroic situation: running away from a giant serpent and, instead of trying to fight it, he faints. In his being saved by the Three Ladies, the flop is established by the discordance between what everyone expects of a prince and his lack of heroic action. The gap separating his role as a prince from his real ability is further widened when the Queen of the Night sends him on a quest to save Pamina and, unwilling to disappoint, he accepts the quest knowing how unsuitable he is for it. With the audience on his side, he does eventually come out at the other end of the opera, with the skills and courage (as well as the girl) that he lacked at the beginning. In this way, clowning can be used as a reading tool and as part of a rehearsal process with the aim of enriching the spectrum of choices available to portray
a character; and choice, as discussed before, is at the core of this research’s existentialist concept of opera.

Implicit in the Lecoq methodology is an approach to performance that focuses first on creating character material and only after that on trying to reconcile it into a coherent performance practice. The practice element of this research, thus addresses the established research questions, with their particular focus on the performer’s creative ownership of the production and attempts to establish a similar Lecoqian process in opera. For this to happen, opera performers need to master a set of Lecoq-based tools to enable them to follow the Lecoq journey towards creating a character. This project examines the potential for Lecoq’s auteur mindset to be applied to opera and strives to empower opera performers to discover the full potential of their creative remit and the full creative potential of a flexible and dynamic art form. The foregrounding of the importance of the performers’ existentialist choice is intimately connected to the empowerment of those performers.

Method 2: Studio-based group training

This research embraces the methodological stance established in Chapter 1 and further emphasised in the PaR section (3.1) of the present chapter, by focusing the attention of its practical component on the particular and individual characteristics of two participant-performers and one participant-teacher/director. As PaR, it embraces the subjectivity of individuals’ defining emphases and biases as a source of valid data, instead of dismissing them as obstacles to (premature) generalisation in the attempt to establish universal laws.

This practical element takes the form of a studio-based group-training lasting two weeks, with a week of interval in between the two. The free week in the middle is designed to allow the performers to learn the music that they will
work on during the follow-up week. The pieces are selected from outside of the
performers’ repertoires, in order to minimise the potential for fossilisation of
interpretation. The workshop will run from Monday to Friday, and each day
will comprise of two three-hour sessions. A full breakdown of all the training
sessions, and respective aims, can be found in Appendix 1. This Lecoq-based
opera training opportunity was advertised online, making use of professional
opera networks.

The decision to design and deliver the training course as studio-based group
sessions was partly due to a conscious alignment with the Lecoq method, but
it also reflects the aim of offering a learning environment that complements the
one-to-one tuition generally favoured by music conservatoires (Gaunt 2008,
2012). Taking into account that professional opera training generally occurs at
postgraduate level, after a lengthy period studying music and usually
culminates in a vocal studies undergraduate degree, this project creates a
training environment closer to that of actors’ than opera singers’, in the hope of
promoting a more even balance of skills and experience than is usual. Training
can be an opportunity to develop individual skills in light of an established
professional practice such as opera, but also to challenge the definition
boundaries of the art form according to individuals’ discoveries during
training. This project adopts a holistic and inclusive view of what opera is and
what it can potentially become.

Choosing studio-based group classes as the delivery method goes beyond the
choice of a vehicle for learning, there is the expectation that sharing every step
of the process will become a catalyst to establishing a more daring creative
attitude based on the creation of options leading to embracing free choice in a
safe and supportive atmosphere. The complicity of a tight-knit ensemble is
something for which one-to-one tuition cannot prepare students of
performance.
Another reason for this choice can be found in the relationship between training and professional environments. Opera is, in creative terms, primarily a group effort, so an argument based on the similarities between training and professional environments can justifiably give preference to group learning opportunities. Schön charges the training environment, which he names *practicum*, with responsibilities beyond the mere transference of technical knowledge:

> A practicum is a setting designed for the task of learning a practice. In a context that approximates a practice world, students learn by doing, although their doing usually falls short of real-world work. They learn by undertaking projects that simulate and simplify practice; or they take on real-world projects under close supervision. (Schön 1987: 37)

This argument justifies the inclusion of student opera productions as milestones of particular importance woven into the fabric of most opera course syllabi. This project thus aims at expanding the range of group-learning opportunities beyond the production periods by exploring the potential of studio-based group work to become one of the main creative and pedagogic elements at the centre of performers’ training as well as of their professional practice. There is an expectation that by increasing both the number of instances and the perceived value of ensemble work, the ease of process and quality of outcomes will also increase, both in new and established contexts.

**Method 3: Interviews**

This research recognises the practitioners involved as its most valuable asset. They are the holders of valuable information and it is one of the aims of this research to access the individuals’ inner vault of data. In order to frame their progress and their reactions in the studio, to learn about how they see the world and their expectations of opera, some background information beyond what
features on a résumé is required. Semi-structured individual interviews can provide those insights – particularly into the performers’ previous experiences, their expectations of the profession and how they define their practice as opera performers. These will attempt to capture their opinions before being completely immersed in the processes and techniques of the workshop, but having already established a level of familiarity with the researcher, the other practitioners and with the object of study. This contributes towards the interview assuming the format of a relaxed conversation between colleagues. These interviews are designed not only to establish the ‘ground zero’ upon which the training is founded and upon which development can be assessed, but it also offers the performers an opportunity to verbalise how they see themselves within the opera world.

The data collected from these interviews is primarily of two types. On the one hand, these interviews aim at enriching the professional portrait established by their professional résumés with additional biographical data. On the other hand, they seek to collect markers that can, at a later stage, categorise other data by offering them context and proportion. This aspect is of utmost importance, for it frames all observations in the course of the workshop. Everything gains meaning according to the parameters that the interviews have established since, ultimately, no action or event is endowed with absolute value.

**Method 4: Training Diaries**

The last element of data collection consists in individual training diaries kept by the two performers and by practitioner ‘I’. Each diary has a dual purpose: firstly, it is used as a data collection strategy by academic ‘I’ in order to try and gain insight into how practitioners are absorbing the training, particularly into those more private reactions that might not necessarily be acknowledged or expressed in a workshop context; secondly, these diaries have the potential to
prompt and stimulate the engagement of all of their authors’ intelligences in
the creative process by establishing that the material can be approached from a
number of different angles, which in turn might result in a range of
perspectives that will ultimately demand and justify free choice. Furthermore,
they enable the practitioners’ reflective process by tracking and signposting
every step of the way, which contributes towards an understanding of how
each of them creates and of the choices they have made.

When given the blank diaries at the start of the workshop, the performers are
encouraged to chart every aspect of their training experience, both in sessions
and outside. The diary should not be seen only as a repository for already fully
digested acquired knowledge but potentially as a fundamental tool in the
creative development of an idea, a character, a scene, a show… Not restricted
to being just a memory-aid and the act of writing to blindly note-taking, this
project allows space for a new relationship between author and diary to
emerge. This relationship, unique to each practitioner and project, if creatively
successful and exhaustively explored to its limits, has the potential to become
an important discursive element in the creative training and work of the opera
performer.

Given that one of the principal objectives of the training course is the creation
of practitioner knowledge, or know-how, the process by which that knowledge
becomes conscious of itself deserves careful consideration, particularly since it
can at times not be at all evident. The training diary is conceived to, in these
cases, be used not only as the finishing line of an intellectual process where
conclusions go to rest and decisions are made, but also as an active partner in
the journey, by collecting all possible avenues that are conjured up, used and
discarded through the course of a creative process. The diary is included as an
admonition that the learning, the practicing and the consequent mastery of a
technique should not lead to rote performance by reminding practitioners of
the the specific paths (filled with both mistakes and successes) that lead to a
certain outcome. In Robinson’s words: “if you’re not prepared to be wrong,
you’ll never come up with anything original” (Robinson 2010a: 15). By constantly prompting the performer to process newfound practitioner knowledge away from its most natural habitat (the specific action or set of actions characteristic of the individual’s professional output) and onto the pages of the diary, the performer is instantly translating one type of tacit knowledge into a more palpable, permanent and disseminable one. Furthermore, the diary also aims to serve as a prompt for the performer to understand and analyse what he/she does as part of his/her professional practice and, in like manner, this process also leads the individual to engage with concepts and identify vocabulary that enable him/her to communicate what he/she does in the practice; in other words, the ability to verbalise what his/her professional practice consists of.

In the attempt to combat the perceived primacy of some of the individual’s intelligences, the participants are encouraged to explore any forms of expression an object with the characteristics of a diary might be able to support. To draw on, to paint over, sellotape in, staple onto, tear out or cut into are but some of the alternatives the experimental diary author may adopt as an alternative to written text. An individual’s intervention (written or otherwise) in the diary is expected to awaken and engage the individual’s dormant intelligences.

As a data collection device, the diaries will be analysed by academic ‘I’ in direct relation to the actions, exercises and events punctuating the practical sessions. These two sources of data were designed to inform each other and to highlight the synchronicity (or its absence) of, for instance, a breakthrough in action (identified by analysing the video recordings of the sessions) and the conscience an individual has of that same breakthrough (which hopefully will find its way onto one of the diary pages).

Despite the impossibility of ever fully and totally knowing any object, but in order to engage as fully as possible with its object of study and bank on the
richness of possible perspectives, one of the major concerns of this research is to collect data that is heterogenous both in source and in content. This task is not dissimilar from what the performance training asks of the practitioners: firstly to gather as much material as possible that might inform the project, and only afterwards to evaluate, select and (indeed) choose which elements to use and which to discard in the process of creating an opera production. An equivalent process mirroring the selection and blocking in the studio needs to be devised in the writing of the thesis, so that those disparate strands of data are analysed, brought together and, eventually, come to form a coherent and unified discourse. That process starts with the task of data processing.

3.3 Data Processing

Each of the three main information routes pertinent to this project presents a different partial (complementary) view of the world. But, in the same way that the performers will be asked never to work in less than two diverging and distinct directions during the workshop, this research will consciously approach its subject and collect all its data from multiple sources, which, in turn, account for multiple perspectives. Embracing the complexity of reality in general and, in particular, of the event under analysis, this thesis cherishes the freedom of moving between these three parallel dimensions, thus consciously creating its unique narrative of the events filtered through the eyes of academic ‘I’.
The data processing element of this thesis draws on the territory shared by PaR and autoethnography:

Autoethnography is a way of researching and writing that seeks to connect the personal to the cultural, placing the self at all times within a social context. […] [It] is intrinsically emic in that texts are regularly written in the first person and contain self-consciously relational, reflexive and highly personalised material. (Freeman 2010: 181)

Given the multiplicity of personal accounts, that are in turn to be examined through an also very personal lens, the results of the first cycle of data processing can only be expressed in the first person. In this way, with the overt embracing of the ‘I’, not only the form matches the language the participants use, but it also reflects the content of what is said. An artificial and forced academic formality would betray the very personal and subjective character of what is said. Thus Chapter 4 becomes an emic chapter, an aspect explored in more detail in the section ‘Challenges and choices presenting documentation’.

The role of academic ‘I’, in order to produce an original doctoral thesis contributing towards the advancement of knowledge, is to braid the three parallel strands of data from each of the three sources into a coherent discourse with a particular focus on the moments that best connect with the three essential themes of this project:

1. From an existentialist standpoint, choice is an essential element in all human processes. The ability to create options unhindered by the premature urge to start selecting what can be used and second-guess what the outcome might be.

2. Human intelligence is comprised of at least seven distinct intelligences. To know something as wholely as possible implies having exhausted all possible insights reached by applying each intelligence separately as well as all possible combinations of intelligences to the knowable object.
3. Creativity is currently one of the most sought-after characteristics in and beyond the professional sphere. It is important to nurture one’s own ability to challenge the status quo or quickly adapt to ever-changing realities by exercising the ‘muscles’ of imagination, creativity and innovation. Holding off premature self-censorship creates the possibility of discovering new things, new ways of doing old things or even be responsible for starting a paradigm shifting chain reaction.

Chapter 5 will present the results of the second and final cycle of data analysis, which returns the tone of the discourse to the more traditionally academic third person and considers the implications of the findings to the world beyond the walls of the drama studio in Portsmouth. It addresses and tries to provide answers to the original research questions.

Challenges and choices for documenting process

Focusing primarily on training (more specifically on the very first stages of creating a character), as opposed to focusing on a final and finished performance, implies that the DVD provided is not a poor replacement for not being in attendance, as Nelson suggests that this sometimes is the case with such mediations (Nelson 2013: 27). In fact, the video is a discrete window into a process (and more precisely, into a specific stage of the process) that is very rarely made public. Training sessions, except for public masterclasses, are usually very private in order to create a safe environment in which the students feel able to experiment without fear of failure or ridicule. The same is true for rehearsal studios, particularly in the first rehearsal sessions, during which everyone is still trying to get to know everyone else and create an ensemble atmosphere. The DVD submitted as part of this thesis makes the private public, thus it does not stand in for or replace or substitute a live event but, instead, evidences a sixty-hour-long workshop. Unlike other PaR projects, the video
presented here is not of a finished and polished artefact that would, regardless of the research element, have been created for an audience anyway. The selection of video segments is intended as a window into the inherently messy and rough stages of training and production.

Having considered a number of options available for capturing the practical sessions in video, practitioner ‘I’ opted for compromising the quality of the footage in order to maintain the rehearsal studio as undisturbed as possible. An unmanned camera pointing generally towards the centre of the studio was placed in one corner. It silently and discreetly recorded 60 hours of practice during the course of the two weeks of the workshop. This compromise, discretion over image quality, frees practitioner ‘I’ and the performers from camera duties, which can be intrusive and distracting. Despite being filmed at all times, the ways in which people’s behaviour is at times affected by the presence of a lens is thus kept to a minimum. By allowing everyone involved to forget about the filming, this type of recording offers an account of the studio events without disturbing the training workshop per se.

Parallel to this, the training diary is a privileged locus for collecting images or diagrams that may prove revealing of the nature, character or context of the performer’s creative process.

Challenges and choices in presenting documentation

The presentation and analysis of the training workshop is the section of this thesis more impacted by the decision to divide myself into the two I’s. Whilst academic ‘I’ is primarily responsible for setting up the research and analysing its results, what happens inside the studio is primarily of the realm of the practitioner. Both personae co-exist, interact and influence each other, but dealing with both of them as an indistinct unit in this document could be misleading because the tension sometimes created by each ‘I’’s different
priorities has the potential to either energise the whole process or then to paralyse it completely. Being aware of when it is more important to strive for artistic excellence or for clarity responding to the project’s research questions is vital, because they often are not compatible. The most insightful research project can, in fact, be almost totally devoid of artistic value, and vice-versa. Thus this split implies that the performer-researcher chooses which ‘I’ should be driving the process at every given moment.

Chapter 4 will be devoted to presenting the data collected during the practice, but the selection of data already implies a first cycle of analysis. Academic ‘I’ collects all data from the interviews, the workshop footage and the training diaries, identifies what data is pertinent to each of the two performers and to practitioner ‘I’, and finally creates Chapter 4 as an emic piece of creative nonfiction. What follows are three first-person accounts. The voice of two participants, hereafter named Amy (Amy Spruce, soprano) and Maddie (Madeleine Sexton, mezzo-soprano) and that of practitioner ‘I’, hereafter named Jorge (Jorge Balça, teacher / director), are presented filtered through the lens of academic ‘I’, a discreet (yet constant) presence. When considering the highly personal content and the highly personal filter of analysis, the choice of first person accounts can be seen as form (the ‘shape’ of the text) matching content (personal accounts of drama training in opera).

For each of the three voices, as characteristic of creative nonfiction, academic ‘I’ “adopts a persona that perforce is a simplification of the multiplicity of threads and contradictory impulses that make every human being human” (Roorbach 2001: 6). Underlying this account is an analysis of the three accounts (which are, in turn, the product of the three strands of data collected), and synthesises them into the unified narrative by stressing different characteristic elements in each of the three characters/practitioners. The result is an organised and rational product derived from gradually combining disparate elements of data, but maintaining its highly personal tone and character. It is accompanied by scans
of pages from the training diaries, presented in line with the text, and by video segments grouped under three sections and submitted on DVD.

Mirroring what happens in the studio and the rationale already established for the studio practice, the processing, analysis and presentation of the data is punctuated by a series of choices. The choices by which academic ‘I’ constructs the discourse of Chapter 4 is itself profoundly existentialist, for it gives meaning and, therefore, generates an overarching essence for the strands of data collected. In other words, in existentialist terms, the raw data can be seen as the being-in-itself, and it is up to academic ‘I’ to establish the being-for-itself.

The workshop consists primarily in acquainting the performers with a number of creative dramatic techniques and then asking them to apply those same techniques to improvisations or set pieces of opera. The techniques include people observation (both in real life and in performance), animal work (both literal and metaphoric) and the techniques of neutral mask, clown and commedia dell’arte. The techniques are applied to a number of exercises, which include: the creation (by the performers) of a scene from scratch and the subsequent application of different techniques to that same scene; the creation (by the performers) of a condensed version without words or ‘real’ music of La Bohème (Puccini 1898); work on the duet ‘We Are Women’ from Bernstein’s opera Candide (Bernstein 1994 [1956–89]: 129-138); work on ‘Monica’s Waltz’ from Menotti’s opera The Medium (Menotti 1997 [1946–47]: 61-70); and work on ‘Oh, la pitoyable aventure!’ from Ravel’s opera L’Heure Espagnole (Ravel 1908: 76-81).

By taking into consideration the existentialist tone of this research project, the focus is therefore on choice or, more specifically, on the ability the performers have to create options from which to choose. For this reason, the data is chosen, analysed and then presented according to the following sections:
1. **Who** – Data taken primarily from the interviews and résumés of the two performers and practitioner ‘I’, which establishes the three subjects’ expectations and biases when working in opera.

2. **La Bohème** – Focusing on the process of performers working alone and on the realisation of the intricacies of storytelling. The choice between primary events and secondary events. Choosing a style. The clown.


4. **The Medium** – The neutral mask as a tool. The active role of a mute character in opera. Complete change of the reading by only changing the physical intentions and, consequently, the movement. Final considerations.

Each of the last three sections is accompanied by several videos. Each video consists of an edit of the raw footage highlighting and/or evidencing what is being discussed in the text.

### 3.4 Scope and Limitations

This research project aims to pave the way for establishing the potential value of a more holistic system of opera training, which would enlist all of the opera performer’s intelligences (refuting a contextual primacy of musical intelligence) in creating a performer-centred creative art form with a varied and diverse output. It especially explores the potential of the body in performance and dramatic movement training as a key element for that holistic approach. It tries to demystify movement-based performance, establishing it as distinct from dance and compatible with operatic vocal performance. It aims to offer performers versatile tools that can be used very differently in very different
contexts. It explores and selects basic movement-based dramatic elements that have the potential to become the embryo of a non-style-specific grammar of performance applicable to a wide range of opera productions in a wide range of performance styles.

This research project is not an exhaustive exploration of alternatives to current training practices and it does not attempt to refute other potential alternatives. After all, it should not limit choice. Instead, it focuses on the relationship between two young professional opera performers and a director/teacher during the first steps of a creative process. In order to challenge the notion that there is only one way of training performers in opera and, consequently, of performing opera, it is sufficient to establish the feasibility of just one of many possible alternatives. It is, however, implied that in the event of a successful outcome there might be other methods that are equally successful.
Chapter 4  Data

Existentialist choice endows me, academic ‘I’, with the power to decide how to present and, consequently, how to frame the data collected. There is no doubt that the training workshop is an intricate web of information exchange in which a lot of the processes happen simultaneously, at different levels and flowing in various and varying directions; however, this thesis chooses not to present its data chronologically in a single strand. Instead, in order to try and harness onto the thesis the sense of continuous progress felt in the studio, the data collected in the workshop will be untangled and organised into three separate strands. Whilst recognising that either option is potentially just as valid as the other one, the awareness of how much the path chosen is meaning-producing suffices to charge it with a Sartrean responsibility and significance.

Thus I choose to highlight how elements previously learned contribute towards what is produced in later stages of the process. If, in the context of this thesis, being is the fruit of the tension between being-in-itself and being-for-itself, then reality (in this case, the outcome of this research project) is shaped according to my choices and to my ability to imagine what I consciously will reality to be. The being that I project into the future is, therefore, not shackled by the conditioning constraints of the world of today nor is it forced to revere that of yesterday.

Therefore, the data is hereby presented using three distinct concurrent narrative vectors, thus offering insight into three different journeys that each of the participants has gone through and which had approximately the same departure and finishing moments.

At this point, it is important to note that despite the relative clarity of the narrative structure that is used to isolate certain elements and translate them onto paper, this document does not contend that any aspect of what happened
in the workshop can be completely distilled and reduced to linear processes of causality leading to determinism. Whilst focusing on a number of discrete causal elements at play, there is no attempt to reduce human life to rigid and constant laws of cause and effect. Everything that was observed is the fruit of a rich and dense web of stimuli that spreads well beyond the physical limits of the studio and the temporal ones of the duration of the workshop. That notwithstanding, it is possible to isolate certain events or pieces of information that signpost the participants’ clearly defined trajectories. That is one of the reasons supporting the choice to present three journeys:


2. *Candide*: focusing on text work, stereotypes, animals, other characters, bringing body and voice together and opposites.

3. *The Medium*: focusing on the neutral mask, movement analysis, push/pull and movement’s narrative and dramatic potential.

These journeys are prefaced by interview material that profile each participant.

### 4.1 Who

**The Soprano**

My name is Amy and I’m a soprano. I grew up in a singing household (my mother is a professional singer) so I’ve been singing since I was a child. Despite having always loved musical theatre, my voice always had a natural tendency
towards a more classical sound. I would sing anything, but that is where the voice already wanted to go.

I was 18 years old when I started singing lessons. I focused primarily on lieder, art song and other classical stuff. So when at about 22 or 23 I went back to a music degree, I struggled quite a bit with the choice of whether to do a musical theatre or an opera course. But since my voice was much more classically inclined, I decided to give opera a try. I thought I’d do an opera course, and then I could always choose to sing musical theatre a bit further down the line, like my mother; but if I had done music theatre, I could not do opera. In short, that’s how I chose to become an opera singer; unlike my sister, whose mind (and voice) had always been firmly set on musicals.

I did an undergraduate music degree in voice, followed by a postgraduate opera course; both in Australia. It was during my postgraduate course that I met my current teacher, who was in Australia at the time. He is fantastic! It wasn’t until I started working with him that my voice really started developing. So when he moved to London, I followed and have been continuing my training with him here ever since.

The opera course I attended, the Opera Studio Melbourne, involved little more than doing a bunch of operas. There was one main stage production, and then various smaller chamber or children’s operas. There were some master classes and some language coaching too, but it was all really just a matter of learning on the job through doing, which means maybe four or five operas over the course of a year. It wasn’t really structured; it was hands-on practical learning-through-doing training; thrown into the deep end, sink or swim. Since an undergraduate music degree was mandatory, there was no music theory or history. It was learning-through-doing; so we did.

In contrast, there were no drama pre-requisites to apply and no drama sessions timetabled into the curriculum. The drama training we had was solely dependent on the directors we were working with. There was this one director
who had trained both as a singer and as an actor, who gave us some clear tools to approach and build the character. I chose to have quite a bit of private coaching with him on arias; he would insist on me being clear about specific and nuanced intentions for each line, which had to be expressed by an active verb. I found that incredibly useful. It was such a new and radical approach from what I saw as the norm.

As for professional experiences, I guess my biggest one has been Buxton\(^2\) (‘Buxton Festival’ 2014) the Gilbert & Sullivan Festival, and that allows for little to no time for character development or experimentation. Everything is so fast! It’s all done with one week of rehearsals, then travelling to Buxton, and then a few more days rehearsing and then you’re on. Although, having said that, one of the directors I worked with last year was fantastic. He had a very clear idea of what he wanted, but then trusted us to run with that idea and come up with our own ways of developing it. He would set us in place, to a point, but there was scope to be a bit creative... and then if he didn’t like it, or if it wasn’t working, he would change it or put something else in. I guess that, despite the very short time available, he trusted us enough and was genuinely interested in what we had to offer. From my experience, it seems to me that this collaborative trust might be an exception to what generally happens.

I like the idea of being an *auteur*, and I hope there are opportunities in the current production structures for performers to engage in that way with the process. I love to improvise, and I often end up performing something that comes directly from an idea I originated. During the opera course, when preparing scenes from operas, I would often go home and think “Can I do this here?”, “What if I do that?” or even “I think it could be great fun if my character forgets to do that”. The director often said to keep it in... and I like that. But yet again, with increasing budget constraints come time constraints... and with one

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\(^2\) The Buxton Festival is, since 1979, a major producing summer opera festival in the Peak District, in the UK.
week to rehearse a full opera, how much input does a director really want or is able to accept and process? Probably not a lot.

In fact, even during my training, everyone was delighted I had the initiative and drive to bring my own ideas to the table, but there weren’t structures in place to enable us to do so. In some ways, sometimes, they even encouraged other students to do the same, but I think some of the others were reluctant because they didn’t have the tools and did not know how to do it. The default is always being told what to do and where to stand whilst singing something.

If I had to write the job description for today’s opera performer, it would definitely include:

1. The voice. Good vocal training. Vocally up to scratch.

2. Musicianship. Quick to learn and quick to take on musical feedback.

3. Being able to move on stage. Able to work with one’s colleagues and an awareness of what moving on a stage implies. Not necessarily to dance, but perhaps the beginnings of that. But sometimes dancing is expressly required.

4. To act. Honesty in performance. The ability to portrait a character, to convince one’s audience of the character’s motivations and intentions.

Having said this, in Buxton there was never a talk about “this is your character”. But that’s maybe because I was in the chorus, so that’s simply not the done thing.

However, in my ideal world, there would be much more depth of acting required. I would like to approach preparing an opera character closer to how a straight actor prepares. I naturally do that… I like to research characters and draw brainstorming maps, and think of all of her aspects… and I like to draw the character… work out her hair… and make-up, that's my big thing: “Oooh,
what sort of hair is she gonna have?” I love all that stuff. Unfortunately, I think that at my level it still tends to be all about the singing.

I feel that I’m quite aware of what my strengths and weaknesses are as a performer. It has taken me a long time to get to this point, to have a realistic idea of what I have to offer compared to everyone else. Who am I? Where do I fit in the grand scheme of things? Still, it’s constantly evolving. I’ve always known that while I’ve done a lot of hard, hard work to get my voice to the stage that it’s at, I was never one of these natural voices. I’m never the girl that people go “Oh, she’s got a voice on that note!…” I’m a package. And I can do a character, I can do comedy… I can move, I look good on stage… I hold myself well, I’m creative… and all of that comes with a voice that’s ok, but it’s not my best thing. I’m the package. Unfortunately, in opera, it is always going to be first and foremost about the voice. And if you put me next to someone with an amazing voice, who can’t act to save themselves, chances are that person will get the role. So I wish there was more value placed on acting and movement and everything else that’s involved in making opera.

(Spruce 2013a)

The Mezzo

My name is Maddie and I’m a mezzo-soprano. My mum says that when I was about two years old, there were two records I asked her to play all the time. One was by Pavarotti and the other by an Irish nun called Mary O’Hara. My parents aren’t massive classical music fans or trained musicians, but my mum says I sang before I talked. I can’t remember ever not wanting to sing and, for some reason, it was always opera. I knew really early what I wanted to do, so my parents allowed me to do some choral stuff and at about 17 I started singing lessons. From there, I changed schools to go to a really good music school, then
Uni, then postgrad opera training, and have been working at my craft since then.

My undergraduate was an Arts and Music course; not a great course, but the best I could do in Melbourne, Australia. Weekly lessons with a teacher, masterclasses once a week for a few hours where we shared what we were doing with visiting practitioners, not much movement, no drama at all, weekly concert classes, period music, very bad and very little language coaching, a little scene work, history of music and things like that... Then I did a postgraduate at Australian Opera Studio in Perth, still as a soprano, but I wasn’t singing the way I wanted to, so I didn’t do the auditions my teacher wanted me to; after all, I could only sing every three days in that high register. After that, I did Drama; lots of impulse work and some Stanislavsky. And that’s when I met the teacher who encouraged me to change to mezzo. From then on, everything became much easier.

Doing Drama was, for me, a bit of a revelation. I felt that both in training and professionally I could be truly creative and respond in the moment. In my experience, you have this river inside of you that only really flows when you are open and really working with and responding to others. That is also the feeling that I try to find in music. However, in music training it was like they were teaching me to put blocks instead of making the river flow. I find that that overstructured blockage is counterproductive to making really beautiful music. When I look at the musicians I really love, like Tony [Antonio] Pappano, it’s all opened and flowing; the same quality I discovered through drama training. To make beautiful music with lots of different people, you have to let the river flow freely. But how to do it in opera, when there are so many more rules? I am getting closer to that... for starters, I’m now singing in my right *fach*,

> Term for ‘voice-category’. Rather more than others, the Germans have systematically distinguished between the various types of singing voice and have stipulated which operatic roles are suitable for each of them.”

more able to make the sounds that are naturally in my body more relaxed. But it’s definitely an exploration and an ongoing process. But even for actors it is ongoing. Even as a mezzo, my fach has been evolving and deepening. I have worked quite a lot in my lower register, which I had never done as a soprano, but now I’m once again working on the top of my voice, but trying not to fall into bad habits and making sure it stays connected to my body. That is quite an exciting thing.

As for the structure of rehearsals and productions, in my experience, it really depends on budget and time. Some productions have more time than others, with a few being done in two weeks, or something ridiculous like that. Actually, in every single opera I have been involved in, the directors have said they wanted more time. They often say that they would rather start slowly working on an ensemble feel, but for lack of time we have to go straight into blocking. I think that is a real shame. Another problem, because music is structured, is that opera performers end up walking to the beat because there was no time to work on the physicality of the character and finding alternative ways to just going with the music, like against the music or around the music. It’s not that people don’t want to listen to what directors are asking, but their priorities are framed by their training and the ability to explore beyond a first read is not a priority when there are considerable time constraints.

Speaking of training, I think it is important never to stop. I often do short courses at RADA [Royal Academy of Dramatic Art], I work with an acting coach on my arias and when it comes to character development I go to the National Portrait Gallery and take pictures, collect postcards and paintings that remind me of all the different facets of that character. So I got all my journals of Sesto and Irene filled with things that remind me of them, but they’re not set pieces. I tend to collect lots of options. But there’s still something I’d like to

4 A character in G.F. Handel’s opera Giulio Cesare in Egitto.
5 A character in G.F. Handel’s dramatic oratorio Theodora.
do a lot more of, and that’s working on the craft of my body and movement, so that I’m more flexible and stronger, which in turn gives me more options.

When it comes to being an auteur, the training to become an opera singer can leave you quite disempowered because you do what your teacher says. I know that it should always be a joint thing, so I don’t really want a guru, but someone I can discover things with in lots of different areas. I have to have confidence in what I have to contribute to this partnership. But there’s something about that word... I can be an auteur, but by looking at what the librettist and composer wrote, wanting to do what the conductor says and then wanting to do what the director says, your sense of authorship can be forgotten. I think it’s easier in recital work because it’s just me, the pianist and the music. But the training does not help at all to feel ownership over the material of opera. A lot of my experiences have been pretty much about control, in which someone tells me “If you do that, then you will never be able to do this,” or then “Why aren’t you singing that with emotion? No, not that emotion, this emotion.” That is quite controlling, and when you’re still in the process of becoming a real artist, it is quite counterproductive to finding your voice. Drama helped me with that.

In my view these are the remits of an opera performer:

1. To be vulnerable, courageous and real in the connections he/she makes with the audience;

2. Clarity and accuracy of both music and words;

3. To be entertaining in all possible aspects of the word;

4. To be able to work as an ensemble for the audience, opera should not be a star vehicle;

5. Physical, mental and emotional openness and availability;

6. Beauty of delivery (pretty or otherwise, but always for communicative reasons);
7. And most important of all, telling a story.

The opera performers that I really love are not just the voice. They are both physically and vocally engaged and certainly always part of an ensemble.

(Sexton 2013a)

The Director / Teacher

My name is Jorge and I’m a stage director and teacher. I started my musical studies quite early, but it wasn’t until the age of 15 that I joined a local choir in Portugal and one year later enrolled in the singing course at the local conservatoire that ran parallel to my mainstream secondary education. It was during this period that I attended my first opera performances. These were fairly conventional touring productions of the operatic repertoire, a ‘hit-parade’, performed by foreign companies. I loved singing and loved performing but, even though these audience experiences were pleasant ones, I was not won over by the art form. As a result, at 18 years old, I went to drama school to train as an actor, keeping my musical education as a singer, again, as something running parallel (and complementary) to my primary training.

As a countertenor with an unconventional voice, I felt that I was constantly trying to fit into a pre-existing mould that wasn’t for me all that natural. In contrast, the freedom and creative agency I owned from the outset as an actor led me to focus on my drama training (largely influenced by the Lecoq method).

I remained in the audience of opera, moved to London and did an undergraduate Performing Arts degree. During that I discovered directing and did an MA in theatre directing which, among other things, took me to Moscow to study Meyerhold and Biomechanics. It wasn’t until graduating that I
rediscovered opera and considered applying everything I had learned to explore the potential for an approximation of opera to drama training.

It is not that I have a problem with the strictness required by the technicalities of making music, but in my experience the performers’ and directors’ creativity and ability to ‘play’ is frequently overshadowed by musical rigidity or design imperatives. As a result, I feel that rehearsals often dispense with workshopping and exploration periods in favour of other aspects of putting on an opera. I believe that whilst this might be the best option in certain cases, it should not be the default scenario. And furthermore, when there is time for exploration, many of the performers will not have been trained in skills allowing them to actively participate in this type of creative process. The result is that I, as a director, will either have to train them on the spot (which itself steals time away from true exploratory work) or approach the production in the more conventional ‘chessboard’ way – sing that there, move here, lift your arm at word x.

I have worked with a range of different opera performers. Some of them are incredible musicians, but see the moving around and dramatic aspect of it all as the price that needs to be paid in order to sing some wonderful music that has been written for opera. Others are incredibly keen on exploring the depths and nuances of characters as well as the different possible interpretations of the music, words, piece, character, etc., but do not have the skills to do so. And a very few will have both the interest and the means to become true partners within the creative process; true auteurs putting their own personal and individual stamp on the artistic outcome.

My perfect opera performer is therefore:

1. Someone without vocal problems;
2. Someone whose body and mind are both strong and flexible;
3. A risk-taker. Someone who is bold enough to think and act outside the box, to redefine boxes, to move them, to explode them or implode them;


4.2 *La Bohème*

Jorge: One of my main aims was to enable performers to explore the wide range of possibilities in storytelling and to understand the mechanics of telling a story. In other words, to apply logical-mathematical intelligence to the anatomy, or morphology, of drama. This decision was based on the assumption that if performers understand the structural elements of storytelling and its potential to be conveyed through a range of forms beyond an obvious linear narrative, they will better serve the different strands that can be found in a text (words, music, choreography).

Amy: On day 1, Jorge asked us to mime our way to the studio in six gestures [DVD Bohème 2]. I found it difficult to limit myself to six gestures, but that difficulty resulted in me learning a few things about myself right from that first exercise alone. I’m fairly literal and realistic, for example. I hadn’t thought that I didn’t need to literally represent each step of getting there; I could select some and skip others. Another interesting idea was when Jorge told me not to be ‘constrained by geography’. As a result, I tried to use more of the stage space, but another way of interpreting that direction is by doing the exact opposite and performing the whole thing on the one spot.

Maddie: I found the whole idea of interpreting negative directions a bit of a challenge, but I see how saying “not the same speed” allows performers to come up with their own solutions, when saying “faster” or “slower” wouldn’t.
The *via negativa* way of offering feedback constantly puts the performer on the driving seat. But it also meant that when we offered feedback to others we had to be a lot more careful not to stage someone else’s scene for them.

A: At first, I wasn’t sure how I felt about that, as throughout my life I’ve always been told (bringing up children, offering feedback at work...) that it’s better to be positive; “hold it carefully” being better than “don’t drop it”.

M: Yes, but by telling me what not to do, a whole range of what to do still remains available. It forced me to constantly make decisions instead of just doing what I’m told.

J: After that first exercise, I proposed a series of other ones with the main aim of exploring narrative structures, all of them based on improvisation. They culminated in the *auto-cours* assignment: to tell the story of *La Bohème* without words or formal music in a maximum of five minutes [DVD Bohème 4].

M: It was interesting to discover the elements without which the story could not be told and to identify the need to be clear and concise in those elements. And whilst trying to make this happen, we were also trying to avoid talking and deciding too much beforehand and just play instead. I could start to feel ideas being expressed in my body without my head getting in the way, but the temptation to constantly try to decide what we should do next is very strong. Only afterwards we can look at what emerged and edit it. The first question to ask was always if an element really was necessary. Play first, edit later. By editing before playing we would be denying the potential value of the unexpected.

A: Yes, there was a tendency to talk and plan too much: “I’ll go here, and then you’ll do that...” But only talking afterwards (difficult as it sometimes was) worked so much better. Once we worked out the bare bones of the piece and which actions occur in each scene, then it was easier to put more detail in
and think more about each character’s objectives. The neutral mask was a big help in finding this distilled version. But it was when we tried it out as clowns that we took more risks and the piece started assuming its final shape and coming alive.

J: The clown [DVD Bohème 3] had been introduced by a rebirth exercise and a series of simple improvisation exercises.

M: I loved the rebirth exercise. It allowed me to really be in the moment, to discover everything anew. To touch, smell, listen… to be aware of everything as if for the first time and make bold choices. Clowning, seen from this angle, is more of an attitude than a style. The clown is completely open, extremely curious, eager to explore, delighted by connections and game for anything. The clown always says ‘yes’. Curiosity is an amazing tool!

A: I’ve done plenty of relaxation exercises before in yoga, but this one was a bit different. The idea of not just sinking into the floor, but melting and losing your physical form altogether was really useful. It was like removing any habits, everything you’ve learned and experienced, behaviours and memories, relationships and connections to become ‘nothing’ or ‘emptiness’. My mind was still there – I was thinking, experiencing – but my body wasn’t. Then by rediscovering my body from one body part and then the surrounding environment, everything was presented to me as if for the first time and without frames of reference.

M: We did this exercise twice and, despite it being more difficult to stay in the ‘everything new’ headspace the second time, I managed not to just remember it. It is possible to find that innocent attitude and ‘virgin gaze’ over and over again.

A: It was really lovely to discover the other girls as well; such an innocent experience… a pure meeting. I would love to do more acting classes. Not only because it would help me as an opera performer, but I also believe it
would be great from a personal development point of view; it would make me a better person.

M: Finding my clown (or at least searching for it) was a scary thing to do. After all, it is supposed to be the real you, without guards or filters. But by now, an atmosphere of trust and safety had been established, so I gave it a go. We had been working with and for each other, as well as talking about each other’s work, for a few days, six hours a day. By now there was a feeling of safety and ensemble. It is something that can’t be rushed, but really did not take very long to be established.

J: Another element aiding this bonding was the quasi-ritualistic start of the day with an intense physical warm up [DVD Bohème 1]. It was structured as something focused more on strength and flexibility than cardiovascular aerobic exercise and increasing in difficulty as the days went by. This promoted an even mindset among all participants, a sense of differentiation between the studio and the world outside the studio and an ensemble cohesion was reached by sweating and being physically active together.

A: As a long-term yoga practitioner, the physical warm-ups got me straight into a good headspace to work and ‘into my body’. It is undeniable how important strength and flexibility are to an opera performer, and this was the right balance of exercises at the right point of every day.

M: We surprised ourselves when working by ourselves with how big a bank of shared exploration and experiences, of offerings and play we had accumulated in such a short time and how much it informed our La Bohème work, created completely without Jorge’s help or supervision. I discovered my clown to be a joyous and happy clown. It was scary at first, but by the end I found the experience incredibly liberating. I’m aware that I only touched the tip of the iceberg; there is so much more to explore and to discover!
A: One of the things I realised that I still have to work a lot on is scale. I know I have it in me to be bigger, but it sometimes takes a few goes to ‘bring it out’. You think you’re being big, and then you’re not. Working as a clown gives you permission to play and be big. Ultimately, to be creative.

M: I understood the differences in scale and the stylistic ‘strangeness’ when Jorge showed us an excerpt of Le Bal (Scola 1983). I loved how clearly the story was told physically, how bold the choices were, how strange, interesting and compelling the whole thing was. It showed me how much further one can go; how distant we can get from naturalism whilst still being credible and plausible. This was a great example of how choices that lie far outside my normal range should not be dismissed by the simple fact that they are not my default ones.

J: I was very pleased with the clarity in storytelling the performers achieved by themselves and how stylistically coherent the piece was. The ability to identify musical themes that punctuate and signpost key moments of the opera was particularly successful. I believe this vision of the opera, based on the selection of specific moments these practitioners selected as their story’s building blocks, could be a very promising and exciting starting point for a production. For instance, the humour they found in Mimi would be, from a director’s perspective, a welcome shade to a character that all too easily can be presented as limp and wet. I am not necessarily advocating that La Bohème should be done as a comic opera, but finding the lightness and the laughter even in the saddest of pieces can have a very powerful effect. Another interesting aspect was the performers’ use of the space and of props. The uncluttering of the stage in order to reinvent it as a versatile element and avoid clunky scene-changes is a testament to the spatial intelligence the performers had to apply to, and certainly developed through, their devising process. Ultimately, it increases the range of choices available to both performers and director when tackling pieces of a (supposedly) more serious nature.
Personally, as a director going forward from this exercise into a fully staged production of Puccini’s opera, I could focus on how balanced Mimi’s attraction for Rodolfo and Rodolfo’s for Mimi were in this clown proposal. In this *auto-cours* performance, Mimi is presented as a character as active and sexual as her male counterpart, which can potentially greatly inform my future production. As a director, I’m left with the idea “What would happen if Mimi from Jonathan Larson’s 1996 musical *Rent* gatecrashed my production of *La Bohème*?”

(Balça 2013a, 2013b, Sexton 2013b, Spruce 2013b)

### 4.3 *Candide*

**J:** There were several elements influencing my choice of pieces, but picking something that did not yet feature in the performers’ repertoire was top of my list. Too often performers arrive at rehearsals with their arias so well studied that there is little room or flexibility to explore alternative interpretations to the one they already bring with them. I chose ‘We Are Women’ because, even though it’s a duet sung by Cunégonde and The Old Woman, it is structured as an aria; meaning that the piece happens in a still moment of the narrative and does not include prescribed actions in the libretto or musical score. These still moments-in-time often happen in opera, presenting the performers with the challenge of having to decide what to do (if anything) on stage.

**A:** We first approached the piece as text [DVD Candide 1]. It was very difficult not to say it to the rhythm of the music. Despite the fact that the piece was not in our repertoire (it was a new piece) it was surprising to notice how much the music was already conditioning how we delivered the text.

**M:** And unless we accept that we will never want to experiment with tension, or even friction, between words and music and that we will always
seek a delivery based on a harmonious relationship between the two elements, it is vital to have the ability to separate the two. The ability to pull the elements apart, play with each of them in order to explore their expressive and dramatic potentials and then to put the pieces back together for performance is essential.

J: This process focused primarily on discovering new possible meanings for the words and on playing with possible resonances which would eventually lead to performance. But such process could not have fully happened without the active engagement and nurturing of the performers’ linguistic intelligence.

A: We explored different rhythms and resonances speaking, until Jorge suggested we tried it in a stronger Australian accent.

J: At that moment, I felt you were actively trying to suppress your natural Australian accents, so I simply asked you not to, in order to see where it might lead.

M: Yes, we had already started from the assumption that the characters would sound English. Instead, they ended up sounding more like _Kath & Kim_ (Riley and Turner 2002-2007).

A: I’d never considered it that way, but it brought a real energy to the piece. And it was good to work on a character that is completely against type, for me. I tend to have stock characters that come naturally and that people expect me to do, so I end up applying them to most roles I do. But this was new. I had to be completely creative without relying on what is familiar (i.e. ingénue/debutante, neurotic/bookish, posh/diva…).

M: Judging by the results, it begs the question of how narrow we consider our “what comes naturally” to be.

J: From that moment onwards, I started pushing both to take their new idea for these characters as far as possible, and then asked them to create
two versions of the piece. One version would be wherever these extreme brash Australian experiments might lead to [DVD Medium 2], and the other would be an opposite (or at least distinct) version. My underlying motive for this being the belief that the richness of their characterisation is proportional to the number of options performers make available for themselves and for their directors. *En route* to both extremes, a number of elements can be discovered, recorded and, perhaps, applied to the final product.

M: With the characters becoming increasingly more aggressive, we embraced the country ‘bogan’\(^6\) elements and tried to find ways of pushing the characters even further in that direction. It was at that point that we started using animal work. I really enjoy exploring animals and it is very good for me. It helps me get physically far more *present* and into a character. My first attempt a few days before had been with a fox. I started exploring not only anatomic, physiological and behavioural elements, but also how the animal is portrayed in literature and popular culture. Their skeletal structure, for instance, including the shape of their heads, was particularly useful in exploring how a fox character might move. Their hunting habits (the fact, for instance, that foxes kill quickly) were also insightful, as well as the generalised perceived notion that they are cunning and cautious animals, always alert and aware of their surroundings. Did you know foxes rest their heads like dogs but retract their claws like cats? All of

\(^6\) Australian and New Zealander slang for someone who is rude, uneducated and unsophisticated.
these elements collected through research came to life through improvisation without me having to over-intellectualise them.

A: When it came to applying animal work to the duet, I looked at chihuahuas. It gave my Cunégonde a kind of unbalanced, manic energy, which was completely the opposite of what I would usually choose for a ‘seductive’ piece; but it was really interesting to explore. The physical aspect started from the spine, but then during improvisations it shifted more to an awareness of the hips (which would be the hind legs) moving back and forth as if wagging a tail. Chihuahuas are in a constant state of tension, like a tight wound spring. The character continued growing to what I felt was the extreme of crass with a strong nymphomaniac streak.

J: But then, from the outside you were not half as big and crass as you thought you were. And that’s when I gave you another reference to look at.

A: Yes, the nymphomaniac character in Californication (Kapinos 2013 Season 6, Episode 11) is quite extreme and it certainly gave me new ideas and ‘moves’. She also helped me expand my views on what is acceptable and reassured me on how it might come across. Having a frame of reference really helps; whether it’s an animal or another character. Jorge calls it a ‘trampoline’; something you jump on here and that shoots you somewhere completely different (but often quite exciting).

M: By contrast, the more Amy’s character became more frantic and restless, the more stern, threatening and rooted mine became. I felt that she needed me as a still point of strength and concentrated energy as much as I needed an energy-dispersing satellite around me in constant motion. This is exactly the type of development that could not have happened if we were...
talking and planning things beforehand; or if we were developing our characters separately; or even if the character development aspect was made around the piano. At this point we had had a few unprepared sessions with the pianist and then had only a week to learn the pieces. Since actively working on them from the start of week 3 (the second week of work), we had not yet sung the duet.

J: I confess that I was not entirely confident the process of adding the music would be as smooth and as successful as in the end it was. It was a very positive outcome.

A: It’s amazing how much doing high-energy movement helped me sing rather than hindered my voice. I tend to think too much when I’m singing, and to anticipate tricky technical parts approaching (like the high notes in this duet), but spending so much time working purely on the acting in such a free, creative and improvisatory headspace, means that when I add the singing, I am still in that same headspace rather than in a closed-up constricting technical one. The result is that it ends up eliminating a lot of my vocal issues that come from listening to, anticipating and analysing my own sound. Of course, it requires that you’ve done the technical work separately so that you know it’s there, but I was honestly surprised to discover that, even after a few days not singing, the piece felt quite easy (relatively speaking).

M: It was also when we added the music that we decided to drop the Aussie accents. The twang changed the voice dramatically, and it stopped being an operatic sound. But after having done it so many times, the character of the accent remained even though the sound itself was more neutral. It is interesting to see how everything we experimented had imprinted on what we created, even those elements we discarded.

A: After a few sung runs I felt I had to take a step back. I found it difficult not to ‘be the character’, not to get lost in the high energy of it and, instead, try to maintain an ‘eye’ outside the character, looking at it, controlling
it. My throat was starting to feel the effects of my enthusiasm and some adjustments had to be made. I discovered that the tension in the legs and hips could remain, but that I had to completely relax my neck. The surprising result was how much easier it was to sing a high C# whilst ‘wagging my tail’ than it is standing still. Actually, I found that I sing better from many different positions than I do just standing there.

J: This process was very useful in discovering who the characters were, but did nothing about what they did. For that, I asked the performers to allocate clear intentions to different lines of the score.

M: The trick to doing this is to pick action verbs; especially verbs that imply an action and that require someone else as an object. It requires a bit of devising between performers and director when, in a piece such as this one, there are no references to action nor even stage business. Figure 6 is a sample of the intentions I used for this version.

J: It was interesting to see how, despite this version having started from the stimulus of doing the opposite of their default readings, when I asked them to create an opposite version [DVD Candide 3] the result was not the original default register; they created something that despite being in many ways the antithesis of what they had developed, they did not land on the cliché territory of first reads.
A: My first attempt simply did not work. I went into my Gilbert & Sullivan default [setting], but it simply wasn’t good enough; and it was boring. So I went back to the drawing board, looked for another animal and found inspiration in hummingbirds.

The hummingbird translated rather naturally into a ballerina; constantly on tip-toes, constantly moving, light on her feet. The great thing about improvising is that, in the process of finding new layers and selecting or discarding material, you discover things you had no other way of discovering. So this character became all about stretching and yoga poses. Unlike the previous version, in which my character was a satellite of Maddie’s, in this one, Cunégonde is completely self-centred. This egotism is supported by the text, since all Cunégonde’s text is about her, whilst The Old Woman’s can be about either of them. When we started singing, like in the previous version, there was a range of adjustments that were needed (I couldn’t sing in a shoulder stand\(^7\) or in the ‘plough’ positon\(^8\), for instance), but I don’t think I’d have found a lot of the end material if I had from the start been considering what I could or could not do.

M: This second version of my Old Woman evolved a bit differently. It started inspired by a bumblebee, which meant the centre-of-gravity was lower and the character’s movement was slower. Then, Jorge suggested I try to work with some characteristics of Pantalone (Rudlin 2006: 91-105). I added the walking-in-a-grid and the disconnection between head and body (head turns

\(^7\) A yoga pose in which the torso and legs are raised vertically over the head and supported on the shoulders and arms.

\(^8\) A yoga pose in which the torso is bent forward with legs over the head, toes on the floor and supported on the shoulders and arms.
and body follows) typical of this *commedia* character and a new character had been born; an older and more disenchanted version of The Old Woman.

A: Another interesting thing is that some of the movement becomes shorthand for the character; or at least a shortcut to the character. Before performing the ‘nympho version’, I start with shaking my hips (a movement that originated in the chihuahua tail wag), then start shaking my left hand in a jittery, manic, ‘meth-head’ ‘tweaker’ way (which comes from the *Californication* character) and only then do I start thinking about what the character really wants (to get laid). Provided the music is secure, it is more useful to concentrate on the movement because it instantly sets up the mood and energy for the scene.

J: The two final versions of this duet are far from being finished and polished products, but could provide interesting platforms for different productions of *Candide*. Ultimately, as a director, this process allowed me to be surprised and consider options I could not have otherwise foreseen.

(Balça 2013a, 2013b, Sexton 2013b, Spruce 2013b)

### 4.4 *The Medium*

J: I chose this piece to concentrate primarily on the characters’ actions. Even though musically this is an aria, dramatically it’s a duet. Monica and Toby are two children playing; Monica lends her voice to Toby, who does not speak. As a scene, the score is very clear about structure and much of its content. Unlike an aria, that is generally a static moment in time, in this piece things happen in succession and time does not stand still. But the amount of information offered by librettist and composer does not come without its own challenges; performers and director have to identify what exactly is established by the text and the music and ensure that what is performed physically is
coherent with what is being sung (which does not necessarily mean that, for example, there is no room for irony or contradiction). To create a pool of viable options is therefore vital for the possibility of subsequent creative choices.

M: Going back to the neutral mask at the start of the first week, was a great help in approaching this piece [DVD Medium 1]. The realisation that no one’s physicality is really neutral, but that each body has its own defaults, was very insightful. One of the things the neutral mask work enables us to do is to identify our own personal default as performers; another is choosing to use our own or any other default for a character.

J: It is that realisation that, followed by the development of physical strategies and skills, evidences the development of bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence. Without this type of intelligence you would have not been able to pick and choose how to physically create the characters and how to physically navigate the scene.

A: I particularly liked Jorge’s analogy of painting a delicate watercolour on top of an oil painting of Dante’s Inferno, rather than on a blank canvas. We are all very strong oil paintings, but performers should have the ability to choose how much of that (if any) is present in the character we are creating from scratch. The neutral mask not only allows the performer that choice, but it can also distil a scene to its bare minimum. I found it quite challenging to remove emotion and just perform the action alone with no character or feeling behind it.

M: It forces the performer to really look at the mechanics of movement. Observing closely how bodies (other people’s and our own) react to stimuli becomes very important. It is not enough to pretend to throw a ball, for instance; you need to really throw the ball, even if there is no ball in your hand. Our bodies know a lot of things that our minds don’t, so if we assume that we know how we look at something without really observing ourselves and others looking at things, chances are that the actions are going to be vague
and not compelling to watch. In the worst-case scenario, the suspension of disbelief is suspended due to the performer’s lack of skill.

J: Upon exposing the scene’s bare bones (the sequence of events without which the scene disintegrates), we set a line of exploration based on who might be the scene’s driving force.

A: Monica is 13 or 14 years old, probably at the tail end of puberty, breasts and pubic hair have recently grown, etc. She might be having new sexual feelings that she doesn’t understand and doesn’t know what to do with them. She doesn’t get out of the house, so Toby is her only companion (besides her scary overbearing mother) and perhaps she has only just started seeing him in a new light [DVD Medium 2].

M: On the other hand, it might be Toby who is feeling these sexual urges first. Toby is a gypsy boy who, having lived most of his life on the streets, now lives in the house, having been rescued by Baba, Monica’s mother. No family, no concept of love (Baba frequently beats him) and no voice to express his feelings, Toby can be seen as a domesticated feral child. When these new
urges for Monica blossom, he might not even recognise his forceful actions as violent [DVD Medium 3].

J: The two versions are then set around sexual tension, awakenings and desire. In order to establish dramatic conflict, we know that they are not both having the same feelings (otherwise they’d simply have sex and it would be the end of it), so with the same words and the same music, how far can we push the scene in these two opposite directions in order to gauge the full range of options this scene has to offer?

A: It was quite incredible how different both scenes felt to me from the outset. From simply swapping a push for a pull, or a pull for a push, I felt a completely different Monica emerging. With Monica being physically passive, I felt her completely innocent, knowing nothing of sex and, by purely playing a child’s game, she ends up almost being raped. It really felt so incredibly different from the first Monica, the one in control of the situation. Monica felt younger, more naïve, innocent and, in the bit when Toby gets on top of her, I even felt a bit scared and violated. This happened in an improvisation and really was unexpected. It required us to take a step back and then technically look at ways of safely making it happen again and again and again. It was a really exciting realisation of the ‘artist vs. character’ dichotomy – how we need to have the artist part of our minds always monitoring what the character is doing, to make sure things stay on track, we don’t hurt ourselves (physically, vocally or emotionally), we’re aware of other performers, we know what is coming next, etc.; but then the rest of your brain is ‘being the character’. It is all about finding the balance. While you are in ‘creating’ mode, purely improvising, you need to just give yourself over to the character and to what is happening in the scene, so that material can be created. But once it takes shape and you know what is

Fig. 9: Monica’s opposites (Spruce 2013b)
going to happen, you have to become aware of what you need to do to make it sustainable.

M: From my perspective, I would have felt really uncomfortable in going with the rape impulse during the improvisation if we had not developed the bond we did. In a two-week rehearsal process, there is no way the second version could even be an option. I would not have allowed myself to express Toby’s hunger to that extent. But I guess we created a safe space that allowed the body to become a gateway to engage the emotional intelligences, as Jorge had mentioned in the workshops. We trusted the body to discover and process how we felt about ourselves and about each other, both as a character and as a performer.

J: In other words, by taking the rational analytical approach off the creative process, you engaged both your interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences through the body.

A: This level of confidence would not have existed if Maddie and I had not had the first week of intensive exploration together and felt absolutely safe with each other and with Jorge. Jorge has a really good balance of letting you come up with things yourself, giving you a framework and enough guidance to get you started, but letting you have the freedom to be creative yourself. I like that he will step in and physically help when necessary, whether for technical reasons (how to get in and out of the right position and manoeuvre Toby away from me on the bed) or when he can give your idea a push in the right direction to make it that much bigger, more intense or impactful. He also fills in the gaps and makes sense of parts that might not be clear. I also like how, at the end of a run, he says, “talk to me”, to know how we felt about that run and what was difficult and then asks us what would be useful to do next. By the end of the first week, we could come up with material quickly and efficiently, which suggests that this way of working might actually be time-effective and, therefore, make also budgetary sense.
M: But also important is the fact that this way of working can be applied in other environments, in other productions, with other cast colleagues and different directors. This way of working will be most impactful and effective whenever it is part of an ensemble project where everyone is comfortable understands it and works in a similar way; but it can (and will by me) also be used discreetly as part of an individual private process of preparing a role.

A: What I have learned will definitely help me to create more three-dimensional characters on stage, in any context. It gets me over my own insecurities as a performer by focusing my energy and attention on creating a character. In this way, I am able to do my best work whilst getting the most pleasure out of it and, incidentally, sing my best too. I feel I’m a better performer for having done this work – I’m more confident in my abilities, more willing to take risks, to be open to new and different ways of doing things, more discerning (and in less of a hurry to make decisions) about what works and what doesn’t and I am quicker to assimilate, integrate and offer feedback.

M: I certainly have learned that I worry and resist a bit. Jorge stretched me and challenged me in new areas and I understand how my perfectionist streak can sometimes be an impediment to creativity. It is very important to allow myself to be messy in order to be creative. This larger arc over my work, larger than the technicalities and details of it all, is very important, so I must embrace the fun and excitement of walking into the unknown. More regularly. Full of life.

(Balça 2013a, 2013b, Sexton 2013b, Spruce 2013b)
Chapter 5  Analysis and Reflection

The results of a first cycle of analysis presented in Chapter 4 relied primarily on a unique background and individual voice to homogenise the different voices and different strands of data into a coherent piece of creative nonfiction. Chapter 5 analyses the current state of the data by reflecting (and reflecting upon) the major theoretical currents and undercurrents implicit and explicit in this project. It does so by identifying five major strands in the overall objects of study (performer training, creativity, MI, Existentialism and PaR) and applying the three major elements of the philosophical framework established in Chapter 2 (Existentialism, MI and creativity) to their analysis. The coincidence of the methods of analysis with three of the objects of study highlights the self-reflective element of this research.

Throughout the chapter there are quotations without references. They are all drawn from the data presented in Chapter 4.

5.1  Performer Training

Out of all the themes at play in this research project, performer training is the most explicit of them all. It is the one called upon whenever someone asks what the PhD or the workshop is about and it is the one that ‘seduced’ the participants into taking part. In other words, the contract between practitioners and researcher is negotiated and, ultimately, agreed upon with performer training as its currency.
Existentialist analysis

The participants reported that many opera productions start with blocking. Since most of the work developed here happens before that stage, the current work is thus placed before the start of such productions.

There are at least two radically different ways of interpreting this fact. The first implies that if opera exists without these skills and processes, since they come before the stage at which many rehearsals begin, then they are not necessary and should not be a priority at all. The second contends that the possibility of conceiving of opera without including its full range of possible processual and output manifestations is not a good enough reason not to teach and study them. Furthermore, it contends that opera would be artistically poorer without them and that there is no reason why the world should be deprived of such manifestations because of the greater creativity involved and, consequently, variety and choice it offers. This thesis aligns with the second interpretation, thus claiming that there can be no existentialist choice without multiple possible output options. Not providing forms of training that make the most of the imaginative potential, creative genius, interpretative flair and technical excellence of the whole performer deprives the art form of presenting itself in the full gamut of possible outputs.

When Maddie identifies the via negativa as a way of “put[ting] the performer in the driving seat”, she is highlighting Lecoq’s fundamental idea of the auteur. This idea, steeped in every element of his performer-training method and which defines his concept of both performer and performance, is itself a profound existentialist concept. If leaving one’s mark on the work, imprinting it with something that is uniquely of the individual, or even of the individual in a unique moment in time, then at that moment the performer is alone and there are no shortcuts or any other way of eschewing the responsibility of choosing what the work is going to be. This anxiety is what Sartre calls anguish.
When Maddie states “I would have felt really uncomfortable in going with the rape impulse during the improvisation if we had not developed the bond we did”, she supports the notion that as time went by in the workshop, the choices that the performers were making gradually became bolder and more self-assured. She also implies that the time the performers took to make them was also gradually reduced. The realisation of not being big enough (of not pushing and exploring each choice to its limits to create as wide a spectrum of options as possible), led to a gradual increased ownership over each statement she made. The rape element suggests that improvisations in the second week of the workshop showed minimal pre-judgment and a confident but tacit acceptance and follow-through of every impulse. In other words, the performers allowed themselves to switch off the ‘selector’ part of their brains and engage with all options without prematurely judging them; the manifestation of Sartre’s anguish. The results were highly personal, often unexpected and uniquely creative outcomes; the work of auteurs.

Finally, and in summary, the training focused primarily on equipping the performers with a varied set of tools to enable them to work with a wide range of beings-for-itself prior to the selection and blocking stages. Amy’s idea of a humming bird and that of a chihuahua, are two examples of different beings-for-itself that, when counterpointing the same being-in-itself (the written music and words) produce distinct character outcomes. Consequently, these distinct characters can become the central elements of a more creative art form that constantly questions and reinvents the classics in the same way it produces new works.

By establishing that the creative freedom experienced in the second week of the workshop was dependent of the tools learned and explored in the first week, this project supports Kjeldsen’s analysis of the control/freedom apparent paradox in performance (Kjeldsen 2015). Without technique, the performers would not even have recognised the range of options available to them, let alone have the skills or confidence to explore them and materialise them into
performed material. Like Kjeldsen on Alexander Technique, this research establishes the Sartrean internal negation between technique (control) and freedom in the Lecoq method.

Multiple Intelligences analysis

The process of developing the ‘nympho’ version of Cunégonde, in the scene from *Candide*, is a good example of this study’s attempt to establish the compatibility of the Lecoq method’s foundational creative structure for acting – observation, analysis and improvisation (Rolfe 1972) – with opera. The attention to detail in the observation and analysis of a chihuahua’s movements enabled Amy to create a physical vocabulary that was rich both in detail and in breadth and which she thoroughly explored during the improvisations. Had this process been part of a production, the next step would be starting to block the scene. This entire process is itself the product of more than one intelligence: logical-mathematical intelligence is responsible for the research element and the analysis of the score, spatial intelligence for creating a pictorial representation of both the animal and human bodies, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence for physically translating those animals onto a human body and into real movement, the personal intelligences for relating those animals to emotions and emotional states and finally linguistic and musical intelligences for translating text and music respectively according to those animal-inspired frameworks.

Lecoq’s method typically starts from the body but, as it has been described above, that does not mean it focuses solely on bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence. In fact, it presupposes the inter-relation of different intelligences, thus placing the complexity of physical acting in the intersectionality of multiple intelligences. Distilling movement training in opera performance to its
foundational purposes and basic types, this thesis proposes the following threefold typology:

1. **Primary training** – This aspect of movement training focuses on the development of body’s qualities such as strength, flexibility, coordination, posture, responsiveness and endurance.

2. **Secondary training** – This aspect of movement training promotes an awareness and mastery of the body as a dramatic tool. It is responsible for establishing the connection between the body, the physical world around it and the emotional world within; how the body is affected by them and how they can be made present by the body alone.

3. **Tertiary training** – This aspect of movement training relates to the teaching of organised physical codes such as any style of dance, movement-based language or even military drills.

Whilst primary training looks mainly at the mechanical elements of the body and at some aspects of bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, the fulcrum of physical acting lies primarily in secondary training, which implies highly developed bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and every other type of intelligence. It is this secondary training that allows Amy to equate her chihuahua movement to “a kind of unbalanced, manic energy”. As for tertiary training, it focuses on the intersection between bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, spatial and logical-mathematical intelligences.

The overall richness of the data and sheer volume of it, particularly in the diaries, is partly due to the consistent, effective and active promotion of dialogue between all the participants, both about their own work and about their peers’. This is the fruit of linguistic intelligence, but also of the personal intelligences and logical-mathematical intelligence. Prompted partially by the need to bring out latent information and make it ‘visible’, talking about the work being developed as it was being developed was a fruitful practice in
cementing the performers’ know-what. The recurrent director’s “talk to me” prompt deserving a mention in Amy’s diary not only implies that her collective experiences do not amount to seeing that attitude as universal, but also establish and support an interrelation between intelligences. The call to verbalise the experience, to engage linguistic intelligence to further process what the other intelligences have produced, offers the performer the beginnings of a reflective structure and practice. As Schön’s ‘reflective practitioner’ is not born with innate abilities of reflection, it is fair to assume that these must be developed along the way, throughout education and professional practice. Opera should not be an exception.

Finally, whilst acknowledging the vital importance of musical-technical instruction and of teaching specific professional practice that are currently at the core of opera courses, this thesis makes a case for models of opera pedagogy and practice that place notions of and techniques for creativity that are based on approaches informed by MI at the centre of opera training.

Creativity analysis

The physical work, that is central to the Lecoq method was seen by all participants as particularly positive. Not only objectively, in terms of the effects it had on the bodies and on the relationship of the performers with their own and each other’s bodies, but also in a more discrete way; by establishing a quasi-ritualistic routine at the start of each day. According to the participants, the group warm-up routine, an integral part of the group training sessions, were particularly conducive to an ensemble way of working. They established trust, broke down barriers and insecurities which, in turn, allowed for some of the improvisations to, naturally and without directorial prompting, go surprisingly far. For example, the rape version of Monica’s Waltz from *The Medium*, simply ‘happened’ in improvisation; no one (not even the performers
performing it) had prepared for it. This ability to acknowledge impulses in improvisation and to feel comfortable to the point of going with that impulse and following it through to see where it might lead is not something that can be taught, as such; it is, however, something that can be prepared. Creating a safe environment and a familiarity (physical and otherwise) with the other performers and with the director is a process that can start being prepared in training and followed through in production. It is only when the performer is in control of the technical elements of improvisation within a context of trust and safety that these glimpses of tacit dramaturgy can occur. A sense of play, security and immunity-to-embarrassment became the *sine qua non* conditions for a wealth of performer-led material.

Analysing the improvisation that led to the rape version, breaking it down into Robinson’s stages of creativity, one can understand how easily they can merge into each other and how nebulous the boundaries between them can become. Whilst it is possible to think of Robinson’s *imagination*, *creativity* and *innovation* as three separate and watertight processes that, in some contexts, occur neatly one at a time, the artistic creative process (particularly that which is fuelled by improvisation) is sometimes not as tidy. In the present example, *imagination* and *creativity* are intimately intertwined in an instinctual phenomenon. In this case, with no time for rationalisation, an image (or thought, or concept) comes to the performer’s mind and is immediately followed by a physical response, which in turn prompts another mental image, which is then followed by another physical action. This seesaw effect between *imagination* and *creativity* is continuously repeated until the end of the improvisation and, sometimes, to the end of several improvisations that may follow. In these terms, the *creativity* stage does exactly what it claims to do: it ‘creates’ material which can later be used or discarded in the *innovation* process.

A truly creative training structure will endow the performer with the tools (which must be taught/learned) to freely and fully engage with *imagination* and *creativity* prior to *innovation*, for *innovation* only becomes an important element
at the blocking stage. So, in the same way that innovation cannot exist without the processes of imagination and creativity that precede it, it follows that a production that starts with blocking shuns its full creative potential.

5.2 Creativity

Existentialist analysis

Creativity, the process through which something new is created and which, according to Robinson, consists of imagination, creativity and innovation, is intimately connected to the performer’s abovementioned ability to project a panoply of beings-for-itself from a fixed being-in-itself offered by the music and text notations. But why is this not common practice and why do the performers complain that their creative ability/input is not always required? The temptation to blindly and uncritically follow performance tradition can be explained by Sartre’s anguish and despair. The sheer number of possible choices ahead, as well as the individual’s ultimate responsibility to alone choose, make the shortcut of uncritical imitation disguised and justified as the imperative of a performance tradition extremely appealing.

However, the Sartrean individual responsibility inherent in anguish and despair can only be understood as part of a collective effort which, in being allied to accepting that creativity, works by trial and error and can potentially make both anguish and despair even more daunting. Accepting that creativity embraces error as an integral part of its process, requires the establishment of supportive training and rehearsal environments.

This thesis confirms that an opera performer with a ‘mature voice’, one that has been trained to the standard required to be accepted into an opera postgraduate
course or to work professionally, can afford to subvert any perceived genre-specific rules for exploratory purposes. But, only when the environment is perceived to be safe, even when faced with potential failure, will the performer give him/herself permission to come up with alternative options and thus be creative. If that safety is not established, the courage and drive to contest, or at least to critically appraise, whatever might be presented as indisputable will very possibly never emerge. The narrow vision, single-mindedness and domineering deterministic attitude encapsulated in the sentence, “if you do that, then you will never be able to do this”, which Maddie used to illustrate something she identified as “a lot of my experiences” proved to be a hard-to-shake impediment to creativity.

Multiple Intelligences analysis

“I’m the package.” This could be a glorious hymn of celebration, the outward manifestation of a performer’s inner-pride that comes from offering proficiency in several strands. However, Amy says it as an apology; as the sign of resignation to the perceived fact that what she has to offer will never be worth as much as a great voice (even when in the absence of everything else). Surely there are several directors who would rather work with Amy than with Ms. Beautiful-Voice-But-Can’t-Act, but that is not the point being made here. The point is that there are Amys who do indeed feel like that and who, consequently, might neglect or start to mistrust one of their most valuable assets: their creative instinct.

“I can do a character, I can do comedy… I can move, I look good on stage… I hold myself well, I’m creative.” Creativity thus rises to the power of multiple intelligences. Being able to draw new sparks of imagination from the body, from emotional memories, from space, from language and from any other
agents of the performer’s many intelligences expands the creative potential of a production.

Creativity analysis

The exercise of Day 1 that is mentioned by Amy, for instance, in which the performers were asked to mime their way to the studio in six gestures, is a good example of creativity being addressed head-on. The clear elements of the creative process are, in this exercise, purposefully implicit in its structure. Firstly, imagination allowed Amy to bring to mind something that was not readily available to her senses; in this case, this was an imaginal process for the images of her journey to the studio were drawn from real experience. Then, creativity fuelled Amy’s physical exploration of how to apply those abstract mental images to her body on stage in a range of different ways. The primary focus here was on producing enough material to ensure the success of the final stage, innovation. This last stage consisted in her selection and composition of the movement material into a unit, a mini-choreography. Having completed a cycle, Amy was given further directions, which she had to incorporate. At this point, she went back to the creativity stage in order to apply the direction to the existing material. But she could have gone even further back, to the imagination stage, to bring to mind other images that might have prompted gestures that more easily complied with the directions she was given. This simple exercise on the first day of training encapsulates Lecoq’s creative structure; something that can be repeated in different scales in other creative assignments.

The previous example, undoubtedly because of its simplicity, shows a somewhat regular and precise process. However, when this process is translated to a bigger scale, the regularity of its structure can be obfuscated by the need to sometimes give preference to creating streams of material rather than to organising it and setting it. This absolute (and at times quasi-chaotic)
focus on *imagination* and *creativity* avoiding the temptation to settle and prematurely entering the *innovation* stage can potentially feel like one is creating in a vacuum. This intrinsic lack of linearity, the apparent absence of method of creative processes and the inability to see the final outcome at the end of the creative tunnel can be a challenge for some performers. It can be scary and look messy, but it can also be very rewarding, as Maddie observes when talking about embracing the excitement of walking into the unknown. But despite that assertion, the antagonism she attributes to the words ‘perfectionist’ and ‘creativity’ denotes a perceived clash of attitudes. Changing that perception would require further exploration of the *innovation* stage, which in opera generally occurs when blocking is complete, the costumes ready, the set built and painted; in other words, when the production is audience-ready.

Perfectionism is most important when it is time to define the creative output ready for performance. On the other hand, and that is surely what Maddie meant, being a perfectionist during the *imagination* or *creativity* stages is premature and prevents the performer from fully engaging with every option available.

The first step of the creative process, *imagination*, is rooted in the performer’s unique experiences and background. The development of the *Candide* duet might have taken a completely different turn, had both performers not been Australian; with similar reference points and linguistic resources. This particular ‘common element’ ended up becoming the starting point for the development of one of the versions of the duet, thus establishing the performers’ authorial effect and agency. The uniqueness of that version to those performers highlights their role as *auteurs*. 


5.3 Multiple Intelligences

Existentialist analysis

The number of options a performer can create is conditioned by the different ways in which he/she relates to the world. This project’s particular attention to bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence is made clear by the centrality the participants gave to the body in the three narratives they presented. However, this primacy is balanced by the holistic approach that is inherent to this training process, which is highlighted in the data by mentions of all other intelligences.

The following sentence by Maddie is particularly insightful:

I could start to feel ideas being expressed in my body without my head getting in the way, but the temptation to constantly try to decide what we should do next is very strong.

The dichotomy of mind/body is very clearly present here. In this case, Maddie is so used to the separation of the two that we see that they struggle to coexist. In other words, here the mind refers to a logical-mathematical intelligence that focuses primarily on the being-in-itself, whilst the body refers to bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence and to the being-for-itself. It is through the engagement of multiple intelligences that the performer propels his/her creative process towards a yet unchartered being-for-itself. Upon identifying a being-for-itself, it is from the tension that it creates with the rational analysis of the being-in-itself (libretto, music notation or even objective direction) that a new artefact emerges.

Furthermore, rational thinking is so much more developed and self-assured than the body, that the attempt to foreground the body as a focus of and for
knowledge becomes extremely arduous. In other words, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence atrophied and the aim here was to reawaken it.

Multiple Intelligences analysis

Another aspect of MI clearly highlighted by the data is the relationship between bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence and the personal intelligences. In no other moment of the workshop was the power of the body to communicate emotional shifts made clearer than in the contrast between the two versions of *The Medium*. The music and the words were the same, the setting was the same, the only thing that changed was which character was leading the scene. Also, the only way to convey that change, which exceeded everyone’s expectations, was through the body; the expressive tool least prescribed by the score.

The data thus suggests that whilst the application of different intelligences may be insightful on their own, they inform and potentiate each other when in combination. In the abovementioned case, the movement resulting from a primarily bodily-kinaesthetic directorial prompt fuelled new interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional readings, which went on to affect both music and text.

These results suggest that further exploration of the creative impact that the engagement of different intelligences and the understanding of their interaction have on opera may prove fruitful and insightful.

Creativity analysis

Maddie accurately explains the need to think with the body when talking about the need to “*really* throw the ball”, which in reality was not really there. The point she raises, that there are things that bodies know and minds do not, but that minds are sometimes presumptuous in thinking they do, is supported by
several moments in the practice (including the ‘throwing the ball’) in which movement becomes vague and disengaged. Those moments are the result of a faulty memory in charge of a disempowered body.

In other words, the engagement of bodily-kinaesthetic and spatial intelligences (in the abovementioned example) is vital when passing from the imagination to the creativity stage, as well as from the creativity to the innovation stage. It is bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence that translates the immaterial mental image of throwing a ball into concrete movement whilst framing it in a chosen style. It is spatial intelligence that allows Maddie to geographically contextualise that movement within the chosen performance space. Later, at the innovation stage, logical-mathematical intelligence allows Maddie to analyse her movement so that it can be reliably repeated with maximum dramatic impact and minimum performer effort. Spatial intelligence ensures that blocking will not be absolute, but flexibly set in relation to other elements on stage.

5.4 Existentialism

Existentialist analysis

To choose. To create options and to choose. Freely. The constant reiteration of free choice by which all choices (except not choosing) are valid was one of the main ideas fed into the workshop; so it bodes well that these elements are vividly present in the data coming out of the workshop at the other end of the process.

One of the moments that proved to be quite unexpected was when, in having to create something opposite to a scene that was already different from what the performers were used to, Amy initially identified the default choices as no
longer being “good enough”. It seems that after having experienced the type of creative process that implies originating all the material afresh, going back to automatic and unquestioned templates of performance seems not to make sense anymore. It is a manifestation, perhaps, of the intensity with which existential choice presents itself: in a form akin to a moral imperative. The research initially took the view that the provision of an alternative type of training would be cumulative and compatible with current practices, which could remain unperturbed whilst new ways of doing things would be added. The abovementioned example suggests that this might not be the case, so further consideration should be given to the potential impacts and consequences before further research is undertaken.

This research thus puts performance work forward as a suitable and fertile arena for existentialism. Existential thought can be materialised or, in other words, be embedded and embodied in performance and performance processes. Furthermore, Sartre’s existentialist moral imperative is also echoed in performance, making it (at the very least) difficult for the performer to return to previous automatic and unquestioning performance-producing processes.

**Multiple Intelligences analysis**

Existentialism’s relentless drive forwards relies heavily on the individual’s ability to thrust the being-for-itself into a future. However, this being an intellectual process does not equate it to a purely mental one, within an MI framework. On the contrary, the range and richness of being-for-itself is dependent of the variety of intellectual tools (indeed intelligences) one uses to create the tension from which being is created. Mental processes are primarily abstractions of reality or, in other words, the fruit of logical-mathematical intelligence. By expanding the term ‘intellectual’ to include the body, emotions, space and sound (to name but a few) as valid elements in establishing the being-
existentialist thought becomes grounded in a range of performance tools. This refusal of a purely abstract concept of the intellect, reinforces the idea of existentialism as a concrete and practical philosophy.

Creativity analysis

By asking the performers to always work in at least two contrasting versions, the expectation was that at least one of them did not rely on default solutions. The content of the workshop intended to encourage the performers to see the score, the notated music and words, as the being-in-itself and allow themselves to project their being-for-itself into an unknown future. The underlying premise is that this projection can only exist as the result of choice. A clearly positive outcome can be identified in the various occasions in which existentialist concepts or ideas found their way into the participants’ own words or can otherwise be identified in the practice. For example, when Maddie says about the via negativa, “by telling me what not to do, a whole range of what to do still remains available”. She then followed it by stating, “[i]t forced me to constantly make decisions instead of just doing what I’m told”. The last part of the sentence, in particular, not only demonstrates a shared recognition of the value of free choice but also implies that ‘just doing what she’s told’ is something she recognises as an existing practice.

The idea of existentialism as a creative philosophy is supported by the parallels between its inner structure and Robinson’s stages of creativity that are highlighted in this thesis. Both rely on the extrapolation of abstract concepts from concrete ones. Creative being is, then, established from the tension between these two. In other words, the imagination stage of creativity establishes the being-for-itself, by making present what was not previously available to the senses. Through the creativity and innovation stages, a newfound ontological outcome will be established and sedimented from the
tension between what is and what is willed to be and, eventually, it becomes the being-in-itself in another creative cycle.

5.5 Practice-as-Research

Existentialist analysis

From an existentialist perspective (as from any other similarly located in the radical humanist paradigm), to look at the world necessarily implies acting upon it. There is no use in observing, in knowing, if it does not lead to action for, in Sartrean terms, man is action.

From this point of view, PaR presents itself as a justifiable choice. This methodological appropriateness is particularly relevant when considering that, beyond the contributions to knowledge associated with either practice or with research, the dialogic exchange between the two is itself knowledge-producing. Upon the establishment of the potential roles of performance in academia and of theory in Arts circles, the role of the practitioner-researcher has risen to prominence as praxis, the privileged locus for this meeting of two worlds.

Unlike pure archival research, PaR relies on the ontological projection of the being-for-itself. The acceptance that the facticity elements and the being-in-itself tell but half of the story is itself a profoundly existentialist element, thus establishing that it is through doing that new knowings originate. The critical reflection of PaR, or know-what, is the product of know-that and know-how, two types of knowledge parallel to the existential distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. The conceptual framework, or know-that, establishes the being-in-itself, but it is not until tacit knowledge, the practitioner knowledge,
projects the *being-for-itself* into the future whilst still relating it to the conceptual framework, that *know-what* is established.

**Multiple Intelligences analysis**

PaR, as an intellectual exercise, functions on a dual basis of reading and writing. If, on the one hand, MI offers PaR a range of ways to interpret the world and to collect and decode data to fuel its reflections, on the other hand, it also enables a range of potential outputs that code, present and disseminate its results. In other words, PaR not only recognises the value of the body, of language, of emotions and of sound (to name but a few) as sources of knowledge, but also their instrumental value in presenting and disseminating such knowledge.

With the term ‘researcher’ generally understood as more intimately connected to traditional intelligences such as linguistic and logical-mathematical, whilst ‘practitioner’ as more immediately linked to other intelligences, PaR makes a case for a full integration of all intellectual modes into a unified (yet plural) discursive narrative. ‘Practitioner-researcher’ is thus not to be understood as the foregrounding of any of the two elements that form it as a compound term; in this thesis, ‘researcher-practitioner’ would have signified exactly the same role. A role that can take many forms but, ultimately, is involved in articulating Nelson’s idea that theory “is not prior to practice, functioning to inform it, but theory and practice are rather ‘imbricated within each other’ in praxis” (Nelson 2013: 62).

This thesis, the combination of words on paper and audiovisual evidence on DVD, is itself a complex artefact that not only articulates an artistic practice but also, in the process of being conceived, planned, carried-out, written, recorded, edited and finally submitted, has an impact on practice, thus transforming it into praxis. This rise of praxis as an MI exercise above both practice and research is, ultimately, one of the most important outcomes of this research.
Although it did not feature in the initial research objectives, nor was it translated into research questions in Chapter 1, it demands to be featured prominently here.

**Creativity analysis**

It is tempting to write questions now that would hint at a consciously self-reflective process from the outset and for which this praxis would be the answer; and, once that had been done, it would be hard to prove otherwise. But not only would it be untrue and misleading to do so, more importantly, it would deny a true pedagogic value of PaR for the practitioner-researcher: the messy and unruly element of creative processes.

This does not amount to dismissing the supremacy of Pakes’s intentional action model (Pakes 2004) when it comes to validating an artistic practice as an instance of research. But it allows the practitioner-researcher to be aware that some of the answers at the end of a research project might be direct responses to questions that were never explicitly asked. This realisation also acknowledges that PaR is partly heuristic, a characteristic that might be a symptom of its artistic-practice heritage.

This research started with a practitioner’s self-assurance of almost twenty years of professional artistic practice in theatre and with a very clear desire to either validate it or to recognise its unsuitability when applied to opera. So, it would be inaccurate to state that there was a conscious predisposition to consider the practice itself when, at the start, it was just its suitability to a new context that was under consideration. However, by recontextualising that practice, and by doing it within academia, the practice itself changed. Thus the practitioner-researcher becomes more conscious of his practice, of its inner workings and of where all the embodied knowledge manifested in the creative process comes from.
Practitioner ‘I’ certainly became more inquisitive about his assumptions, which had often been translated into a range of aphorisms collected and developed through years of studying and working with other practitioners. He had for some time been confident about ‘what works’ and ‘what doesn’t’ in his practice, and he could even identify and promote what in different situations is required for it ‘to work’. But it is his practice’s evolution into praxis, through PaR and the creative collision with academic ‘I’, that began to enable him to uncover why ‘it works’.

The implication here is that explicitly or implicitly, acknowledged or otherwise, theory is immanent to practice: that despite the unawareness of the existentialist model’s relevance to the practice, it has always been there. This is not a case of thrusting a random theory onto a practice, or of following someone else’s theoretical model in order to artificially produce a new practice. It is rather the unveiling of the theoretical foundations that shore up a practice that was developed over the course of many years. The foundations that, despite being hidden, are no less responsible for the structures developed upon them. It is not because this thesis calls it existentialist that the themes of free will and choice enter the research, or lose their esoteric value that only artists could possibly understand. It is, however, through the imagination process of thinking about artistic methods in those terms and then of shaping the product of that same imagination into this document through creativity and innovation that both elements come together to support and justify each other. This is what this thesis identifies as the manifestation of Nelson’s imbricated relationship between theory and practice; it is what makes it praxis.

The separation of the two I’s in Chapter 3 is a direct result of this process of divergent exploration. It mirrors the process through which knowledges were produced, but also through which identity was maintained. The unfolding of the individual was a particularly useful device, which enabled the not-always-easy balance to be maintained between validating the role of practitioner ‘I’ and allowing studio time and space for academic ‘I’. For the practice itself, it meant
not forgetting why certain structures of the practice were created in the first place, whilst allowing some latitude to accommodate more scholarly concerns.

Ultimately, if there was such a conscious effort to promote a safe environment in which the performers could freely experiment without any fears, why should the same not be done for the practitioner-researcher and his multiple selves? The unfolding of the two I’s ‘works’ because it allows for the dialogue between theory and practice to be undertaken by two fictionalised (even if autobiographic) characters. Maybe this practitioner-researcher’s intrapersonal intelligence is not his forte, or maybe it is simply the case that creating two characters allows him to adopt his directorial stance and better ensure that both are being looked after and having their say. More important than the underlying causes particular to this practitioner-researcher’s concerns and to how he manages his perceived abilities, is the concern with and creation of strategies ensuring that the narrative presented is a fair account of both sides of the story.
Chapter 6  Conclusion

Dear Reader,

I feel that having invited you into my rehearsal studio and office through the previous chapters we have developed a bond; a common language thriving on the in-betweenness of Practice-as-Research, of embodied and theoretical knowings, of reader and writer, of the cold starkness of third person and the fleshy muddiness of first person accounts and, ultimately, of what opera currently is and what we want the art form to become.

The object of this research is opera, and I chose to start this document by considering the uniqueness of its relationship to time. Time is, or alternatively the many experiences of time are, very important in how it frames Sartrean reality (opera) and realities (operas). Lindenberger’s quote about the retrospective nature of our view of opera, which opened Chapter 1, impacts directly on what I do as a Practitioner-Researcher; it identifies opera’s tendency to be slower-moving in its development than other social structures in its quasi-fetishisation of the past. It was never my aim, and it certainly is not now, to deny the importance of the past, or even to present tradition, or any other inherited element, as necessarily negative influences. I do, however, argue the case for acknowledging that there are always alternative views and alternative modes of practice that might refresh opera. Furthermore, the urgency of these alternatives increases when confronted with views and modes of practice that present themselves as predetermined, unavoidably axiomatic and to which no alternative currently exists. In fact, it is this precise argument that runs throughout the entire thesis and becomes its consistent backbone: ‘what about looking at it from another angle?’
What follows is a summary of the arguments that validate and promote these alternatives, considerations founded on the theoretical impact of my findings, the acknowledgment of this study’s limitations and an indication of recommended future research.

6.1 Summary of Arguments

In being faithful to the priorities of the radical humanist paradigm introduced in Chapter 1, this research aligns itself with discourses calling for the individual’s emancipation from the social structures that restrict his/her creative freedom. The point was made to argue for this emancipation on three fronts established by the three original research questions. They focused primarily on the performer, on performance training and on opera as an art form, respectively. A fourth complementary front and research question was added at a later stage, in Chapter 5, acknowledging how impacted the practitioner-researcher was by the process itself.

Despite the productions that are cited as positive examples of interpretative creativity that transcend the limitations of ‘first-reads’ and that challenge, each in different ways, the expectations of an opera performance, this thesis presents them as exceptions to general culture of current practice in opera. Instead, it paints a picture of that practice as:

- relying heavily on very narrow concepts of technical ability;
- claiming that there is no time (and no money, despite the lavish costumes and set) for any type of exploratory and vaguely heuristic process in production;
- tailoring the training offered so it produces performers who can systematically deliver one type of product but little beyond that (and
those who can and who indeed do, do not necessarily owe that ability to institutionalised opera programmes);

• justifying current artistic practices by incorporating them in the definition of the art form, as if opera could not possibly exist without them.

As a consequence of this less-than-flattering picture, this research intended to elevate the role of the opera performer beyond the rote, repetitive and automatised processes of industrial ideology by focusing on two concrete aims:

1. To shore up a strong philosophical framework within which practices seeking to address performer training according to similar principles of creativity, freedom and authorship are theoretically supported;

2. To challenge, through PaR, current established artistic pedagogic and production practices and to contribute towards the evolution of opera as a self-aware and fluid art form.

Philosophical framework

The first line of enquiry of this research project set out (in Chapter 2) to reveal a flexible yet resistant ontology via an artistic practice that presupposes the creative contribution of the individual as integral to the definition of the object of knowledge. It then embraced an epistemology that allowed for the existence and equal validity of different knowledges and modes of knowing. Lastly, it established a general processual blueprint that is potentially applicable to a variety of creativity-based methodologies.

The existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre provided an ontological system which, being a part of the phenomenological tradition, embraces a subjective approach. It also entrusts the individual with the responsibility of choosing
who the individual wants to become and entrusts him/her with a clear mandate in actively choosing what he/she wills the organisations of which he/she is a member to become. Axiomatic of Sartre’s existentialism is free choice, which came to underpin the entirety of this thesis and came to serve as a measure for evaluating practice. Sartre’s concept of internal negation, as explored by Kjeldsen (Kjeldsen 2015), is crucial when examining the tension between technique and freedom. The validity of a technique is thus measured by how much freedom it provides and by how big a range of options it creates, instead of how prescriptive it is and how regular and stable its results might be.

The epistemological line of enquiry is addressed through the support of Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (MI), which, in its original guise, acknowledges the existence of at least seven different intelligences. The rationale for the inclusion of MI in this research is not only based on the recognition of the different ways of knowing and different loci for intelligence, but also on the consequent potential to engage with an object of knowledge in more than one way. It is the embracing of this multi-modal approach that can lead to different outcomes and to the discovery of alternative ‘truths’ about oneself and the surrounding world, which were otherwise out of reach. If, according to phenomenological lines of thought, our knowledge can never be other than partial and fragmented, then the more strategies available to the practitioner to engage with that same fragmented reality, the better the chances of collecting a bigger number of complementary fragments and, consequently, of gaining a better and more complete understanding of the object, which in this case is opera.

As for the general blueprint for creative processes, Ken Robinson’s three stages of a creative process were invoked: imagination, creativity and innovation. The outwards direction implied in this sequence matches the subjective nature of Sartre’s and Gardner’s contributions. The three approaches, together, paint a picture of the specific type of performer training this research set out to test.
Performer training

Lecoq’s methodology was chosen as a means towards embodiment of the three aforementioned theories. The detailed account of the practical method in Chapter 3, as well as the workshop plans presented in Appendix 1, serve to offer an insight into the pedagogic content of the praxis in the studio and to evidence how it articulates the characteristics derived from the philosophical framework. It is not the aim of this thesis to promote the Lecoq method \textit{per se}, but to establish it as an example of the type of training advocated by the theoretical enquiry. In fact, the proliferation of a range of different training methods that are consistent with what is outlined by the philosophical framework could be seen as a very welcomed outcome, not only because these would ensure the performers’ active participation in the creative process, but also because they would express an expansion of the range of approaches currently available. To satisfy the theoretical framework, and based on the Lecoq method, the workshop was designed to include four types of session:

1. warm-up/body conditioning/physical skills;
2. drama technique classes;
3. application of skills/improvisation/performance;
4. \textit{auto-cours}.

6.2 Findings

The findings of this research can be organised according to the three distinct research questions raised in the Introduction Chapter relating to the individual performer, the performance training and the art form, plus the research question added in Chapter 5 focusing on the practitioner-researcher.
1. How can the performer be successfully included in the creative process as an auteur?

Despite the temptation to avoid real existential commitment in the creations of performance, it is only in the loneliness of that moment, in which the performer chooses what is to follow, that he/she is completely free. That moment encapsulates Sartre’s anguish. It is through it, and only through it (without recurring to tricks or ‘borrowed’ material), that the performer can hope to imprint the work with enough of his/her unique artistry and references, which will make him/her an auteur and the work an auteur piece.

This research suggests that creating an environment conducive to exploratory work might not be a complex task. The success of the training workshop was largely due to the fact that a lot of thought was put into the planning to ensure the participants felt safe, confident and competent at all times. In environments in which failure is a common occurrence (and in a drama/opera studio it is) it becomes vital to demystify error and assert the importance of failing. There is a clear tendency to always want to produce performance-ready material, but that can get in the way of creative flow and of the performer’s permeability and responsiveness to every impulse.

As for how to approach the material, the more diverse the approaches, the bigger the range of outputs. The engagement of all the performer’s intelligences and an awareness of how they all cooperate in the meaning-producing creative process is vital to imprint the work with the performer’s artistic fingerprint. But, in order for this to happen, it is vital to start rehearsals before the blocking stage (something identified as common practice). Ultimately, an initial period promoting an ensemble collaborative atmosphere can be seen as an investment, which when followed by a period devoted solely to exploration, promotes high levels of creativity and a heightened sense of ownership over the material.

There is also a sense that the time invested at the start of the production can result in smoother and quicker creative journeys towards the end of the
rehearsal period. However, this is not something the present project planned or even aimed to explore. Further research is required in order to be able to give that claim any degree of certainty. What is often tacitly accepted as the binomial ‘budget constraints’/‘time constraints’ argument, needs to be constantly and consistently challenged. Whilst it has become clear that curtailing the workshopping period (the initial period of a rehearsal process prior to blocking) of a production process for financial (or any other) reasons will necessarily impact the quality and richness of the creative output, analysing the full impact of tensions created by financial concerns and creative requirements is beyond the scope of this thesis.

2. What characterises the type of training model capable of unlocking the performer’s creativity and what specific skills does it develop?

Creativity and determinism are concepts in direct opposition. If a set of conditions could determine only one outcome, then there would be no place for creativity and the role of the creative performer would be reduced to that of a production-line worker. Consequently, allowing for a range of possible outcomes, performer-centred creative opera training should promote a diversity of approaches. It should endow the performer with a range of techniques aimed at uncovering hidden meanings and at challenging preconceived and tacitly accepted ideas. In addition to technical skills (vocal, physical, interpretative), this thesis supports a pedagogy of creative thinking, of critical appraisal of material and of stylistic versatility. Technique, whichever it may be, should always empower the performer to identify and explore an ever-increasing number of possible options and make bolder and more confident choices.

In order to embrace the potential multiplicity of outcomes, accepting and fostering the development of the performer’s multiple intelligences becomes key. Adding to the opera performer’s traditionally highly developed musical intelligence (a characteristic of technical music training), this project explored
the potential of the Lecoq method to target and potentiate not only bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (the one most directly linked to a physical theatre pedagogy) but also all the other intelligences. The interaction of these intelligences becomes the key element in the expansion of the opera performer’s creative remit, and this thesis acknowledges how they can be fostered by existing training structures (such as by deploying the Lecoq method) and how they develop an awareness of the creative process. It is this development and awareness that contribute towards the performer’s ownership of and engagement in the authoring of the work.

Ultimately, this research promotes a type of training that primes the performers’ bodies and voices to, firstly, respond to stimuli without the selective filter of rational thought. At the centre of this type of training is the notion that reason, as an intellectual and creative ability, should only be engaged at the blocking stage, leaving the first stage of producing material free of intellectual censorship and of any type of restriction. In other words, unlike in Stanislavskian approaches, this type of outside-in training allows performers to engage with a character’s (or a scene’s, or an opera’s) psychology only inasmuch as it can be conveyed by physical and/or vocal expression. It focuses on how the signs on stage are to be read by audiences, instead of relying on performers’ own emotional inner-journey as the measure for the effectiveness of their performance and dramatic skill. For that to happen, the training needs to endow the performer with the ability to understand and master the semiotics of his/her own performance.

3. **How can opera evolve and outgrow definitions that are constrained by specific production models?**

In the same way that this thesis advocates the flexibility of the performer, it also does so for opera as an art form. In order to place the performer at its centre, this thesis suggests that opera is to be understood as more than a mere musical genre and that it amounts to more than merely the sum of opera compositions
and the practices that have hitherto made them. Thus, this thesis aligns itself with Robert Donington in fully considering opera as a threefold compatibility of words, music and staging (Donington 1990: 13) and promotes that the latter be approached both inventively and collaboratively with respect to the others.

Over time, opera repeatedly evolved and outgrew the theatrical, musical, social and political structures of its origins, which made the birth of the modern opera house inevitable. Bigger houses, more accessible, with bigger stages and orchestra pits and more efficiently designed and versatile backstage areas, became the norm. With a network of magnificent buildings right in the centre of, first, most European cities, and then of almost every major city in the world, the clout of the new art form was to become inextricably linked to these buildings, to the composers who write for these buildings, to the organisations that occupy them and to the constant flow of audience members who decree the dos and don’ts of this then young art form. However, this does not mean that opera has to restrict itself to those structures to the detriment of everything else. Despite the fact that the big opera houses are among the best equipped theatres in the world, and that a large portion of the operatic repertoire seems to naturally fit these structures (partly because it was written with these stages in mind), to claim that opera involves large forces (on stage, backstage and playing in the pit) and that it requires a lot of space (stage, pit and audience) is an example of the fallacy of composition – “the error of arguing from a property of parts of a whole to a property of the whole” (Walton 1999: 432).

In being true to the radical humanist paradigm from which this thesis stems, the research defends the idea that opera evolves by the continuous struggle to free itself from the social structures that constrain it. Despite how characteristic mainstream opera houses may be of opera as a genre, opera can (and indeed does) exist outside of them and according to different production means, processes and elements such as architecture, number of chorus members and production schedules for, in Sartrean terms, they are but facticity. This thesis thus challenges the rigid and patterned production process that is characteristic
of the opera houses and that is followed by many companies of different sizes as a defining factor of the art form. By identifying improvisation and physical drama as a desirable starting point for an opera production, this thesis opens up the possibility for the acceptance of multiple and diverse creative production processes and strives for a less exclusionary concept of opera. The evolution of opera is thus dependent on the creators’ ability to challenge existing production models and create new ones, which will in time be challenged too.

4. **What impact did the processes of PaR have on the artistic practice?**

The absence of this question in Chapter 1 and the first acknowledgment of its importance in Chapter 5 stands among some of the most insightful findings of this research. The self-reflective element of a PaR methodology made it impossible for this project not to be also about PaR. Embracing a multi-modal epistemology implies establishing a dynamic relation between knowledges (practical and academic), which implies that they communicate and influence each other. Thus, the establishing of a theoretical framework necessarily impacted on the artistic practice. However, this research project was neither a case of sticking a random theory on top of an artistic practice in order to justify it, nor of designing a practice to embody a pre-existing theoretical model. In fact, this thesis uncovers theory that is immanent to the practice – theory that, even if not explicitly, already underscored and shored up the artistic practice of the researcher.

In Nelson’s terms, theory and practice are imbricated in each other in the PaR of this project (Nelson 2013: 62). The major difference between the practice pre- and post-research is how self-aware artistic practice becomes through processes of reflexion in and on practice. This consciousness is, then, translated into the confidence afforded by the dynamic collaboration between know-how, know-what and know-that: a confidence that endows practice with the ability to assert itself both artistically and academically. Furthermore, it results in a
more consistent and systematic application of methods and techniques of and onto the practice.

### 6.3 Limitations of the study

Taking into account that the advert for the workshop that first captured the participants’ attention mentioned a Lecoq-based type of training for opera performance, it is fair to assume that the participants already had a predisposition towards this type of work. It is not only possible but probable that, in the absence of this predisposition, the results might have been very different. However, it is also fair to assume that if these opera performers were so predisposed, so might others be. This, in turn, could be considered as an indication of potential demand for courses offering similar types of training.

The three operatic pieces were chosen for the workshops primarily for the opportunities they offered for the exploration of different approaches to performance and I acknowledge that they cover only around 60 of the more than 400 years of operatic tradition. There are equally valid arguments both for and against this focus on a relatively narrow period in the history of opera. On the one hand, the inclusion of compositional period and, consequently, musical and dramatic styles and conventions as variables could contribute towards more universalisable results and mirror the wider range of repertoire that opera performers are nowadays required to master. On the other hand, that inclusion would have been made at the expense of the current relative consistency of the raw material used. This consistency highlighted the possibility of different approaches to similar works (at least formally); in other words, the research focused on establishing that the style of composition and the specific theatrical conventions of a certain period do not set in stone how the material should be approached and how it should be performed.
This project explored how a range of different dramatic approaches (starting from the study of animals, from analysing the words in the libretto and experimenting with accents, from improvisations, etc.) can be applied to a set of similar pieces and found that the perceived original character of the piece does not have to dictate how the performer engages with it. It remains to be explored how successful the opposite exercise — a very precise and structured approach to character applied to a range of very contrasting pieces — could potentially be. The language of the libretto, compositional structure, historical performance styles, orchestral arrangement and performance venue are some other variables that, by their absence from this research, also colour the results.

Whilst exploring the creative potential of a heuristic and experimental start of the creative process, this thesis had no ambition to establish how the practice under analysis can be systematically applied as part of an opera course at a conservatoire or as part of an opera production. How would it fare when delivered to an entire cast with fixed production schedules and commercial commitments? How could assessment be structured to include and value failure?

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis paves the way for further research on three separate (yet interconnected) fronts:

1. The systematic application of the training methodology presented here in different contexts: e.g. the training of opera performers in a conservatoire setting (or equivalent performance training institution) over a longer period of time, to a larger group of students with different degrees of prior interest in physical acting training, etc.;
2. The systematic application of the practice to professional opera production: e.g. researching how the material created during the first period of rehearsals (here explored) can then be selected and refined to create a creatively coherent, polished and performance-ready artefact, exploring the potential of improvisation, clown or animal work in reimagining different styles of opera, or recording the impact that long-term professional ensemble work has on a company’s artistic output etc.;

3. The identification, development and application of similar performer-centred opera training methods that prioritise creativity and existential freedom: e.g. researching equivalent methods based on MI, exploring the benefits and challenges of the cross-pollination between training methods when students of different art forms are trained together, etc.

6.5 Final Statement

In addition to all of the above, this project has also been a personal journey. It has been one that has enabled me to learn a lot about myself: particularly about my beliefs and ideology concerning opera training and performance. It has been one that has taken me from being a confident practitioner, to a practitioner using research, to a second-guessing practitioner and uncertain researcher and then finally to a practitioner-researcher. This has been an arduous process, but I believe wholeheartedly that as a practitioner-researcher I have become a better researcher and a better practitioner.

As a teacher/director, I embarked on this process armed with the ‘shoulds’ and ‘have tos’ typical of know-how when it is supported only by know-what. The theoretical framework uncovered by this study replaced those ‘shoulds’ with ‘coulds’ and ‘mays’. It also made me realise that my hardline or radical attitude towards performance and my sometimes over-prescriptive expectations of
myself and other artists were in fact not all that different in nature to the perceived staleness and rigidity of opera processes and outcomes against which I was reacting.

The existential core of this thesis is a direct result of the identification of what was already, inconsistently and unselfconsciously, driving my artistic and pedagogic practice. By foregrounding this, I have identified and embraced a new way of looking at performance in general and at opera in particular. This newfound personal attitude is simultaneously a compatibilistic one, rejecting ‘either/or’ propositions, and a radical humanist one, refusing to allow current social structures to hermetically define opera.

I believe opera to be a bigger concept than you or I can imagine. There is no opera without the individual and, from an existential perspective, the individual has the moral responsibility to constantly propel it into the future by fighting its tendency towards “remaining primarily retrospective” (Lindenberger 1984: 16). In the end, there need be no limitations to the ‘what’ and ‘how to’ of opera.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Pedagogic Rationale</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:45</td>
<td>Physical warm-up. Body conditioning.</td>
<td>Physical exercises based on Pilates.</td>
<td>Increased strength, increased flexibility, increased stamina. Ensemble feel and collective learning environment.</td>
<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group’s proficiency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 - 11:15</td>
<td>Ice breaker.</td>
<td>Welcome. Course structure. Dos and don'ts. Individual introductions.</td>
<td>Outline course structure. Identify each of the participants.</td>
<td>Each participant should silently 're-play' a sequence of actions performed that morning leading to arriving at the workshop. Only then, can they speak and tell everyone a bit about them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15 - 11:30</td>
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<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 - 12:15</td>
<td>Technique session: the Neutral Mask and the performer's body. Peer learning.</td>
<td>Dos and don’ts of masked performance. Putting the mask on, entering the space, looking at the audience and leaving the space. Discussion.</td>
<td>Identify one’s own physical habits. Identify colleagues’ physical ‘habits. Interpret colleagues’ presentations. Discuss colleague’s presentations. Construct the idea of ‘neutrality’.</td>
<td>All exercises with the Neutral Mask are performed in silence. After each participant’s exercise, the entire group is invited to identify deviations from neutral, interpret those deviations and advise the participant on how to combat those non-neutral elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 - 13:00</td>
<td>Improv session: the Neutral Mask. Peer learning.</td>
<td>Solo improvisation (entering the space, finding something in the space, reacting to it; finding a reason to leave the space, leaving the space). Discussion. Pair improvisation (as before). Discussion.</td>
<td>Use the neutral mask as a dramatic tool. Select the most efficient and the fewest number of dramatic elements necessary to create a dramatic scene. Appraise colleagues’ work and offer valid criticism.</td>
<td>These improvisations should be done without the aid of props. It is the performer’s responsibility to identify everything they encounter in the space and silently communicate it to the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Pedagogic Rationale</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>14:00 -</td>
<td>Theory: Lecoq's types of Gesture.</td>
<td>Gestures of Action, of Expression and of Deonstration</td>
<td>Identify and classify the different types of gesture. Compare and contrast the different categories of gesture.</td>
<td>Reference can be made to the first neutral mask exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30 -</td>
<td>Observation: People out in the world</td>
<td>Observing real people in the real world.</td>
<td>Examine real people's physicalities and identify their different types of gesture. Deconstruct physicalities into individual gestures. Interpret people's physicalities and construct their stories based on these observations.</td>
<td>Students will be encouraged to work alone and make notes on their training diary; they can write, draw, sketch, or use any other form of notation they may see fit to translate their observations to paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:15 -</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 -</td>
<td>Solo improv session: Real people with neutral mask. Peer learning.</td>
<td>Applying real life's observations to the morning's solo improvisations. Discussion.</td>
<td>Define a character's principal physical elements and reproduce them in situation. Develop a simple situation through characterisation. Appraise colleagues' work and offer valid criticism.</td>
<td>Performers should try to keep to the specificities of the scene created in the morning (entering, finding something, reacting to it, deciding to leave and leaving). In this instance, characterisation only serves to colour the scene, not to create a new one.</td>
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<td>10:00 -</td>
<td>Physical warm-up. Body conditioning.</td>
<td>Physical exercises based on Pilates.</td>
<td>Increased strength. Increased flexibility. Increased stamina. Ensemble feed and collective learning environment.</td>
<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group’s proficiency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 -</td>
<td>Ensemble Training, Listening skills, Focus.</td>
<td>Ensemble exercises.</td>
<td>Listening to others. Create ensemble feel. Recall group dramatic structures.</td>
<td>Exercises are designed to emulate dramatic ensemble features in game (play) contexts.</td>
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<td>11:15 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 -</td>
<td>Group improv session: Real people with neutral mask. Peer learning.</td>
<td>Creating a group scene from improvisation: A place, an event. Discussion.</td>
<td>Define a place through the body. React to others. Create a scene through group improvisation. Listen to others. Make physical proposals. Self-evaluation. Discuss the material.</td>
<td>Ensure that everyone speaks and gives their opinions / suggestions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 - 14:30</td>
<td>Exploring animals</td>
<td>Physical exploration of animal characteristics in character construction.</td>
<td>Deconstruct an animal’s characteristics. Select an animal’s physical characteristics. Incorporate animal physicality in the creative process. Experiment with different levels of movement adaptation.</td>
<td>Exploration is first done individually. Afterwards, animals start exploring the space and find others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30 - 15:15</td>
<td>Solo improv session:</td>
<td>Applying animal characteristics to the previous day’s solo improvisations. Discussion.</td>
<td>Adapt a simple situation through characterisation. Examine how the animal characteristics affect the original scene. Appraise colleagues’ work and offer valid criticism.</td>
<td>Performers should try to keep to the specificities of the original scene (entering, finding something, reacting to it, deciding to leave and leaving).</td>
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<td>15:15 - 15:30</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 16:15</td>
<td>Duo improv session:</td>
<td>Applying animal characteristics to the previous day’s duo improvisations. Discussion.</td>
<td>Adapt a simple situation through characterisation. Examine how the animal characteristics affect the original scene. ‘Listen’ and react to other characters. Appraise colleagues’ work and offer valid criticism.</td>
<td>(as above). Homework: select and study an animal’s physicality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:15 - 17:00</td>
<td>Group improv session:</td>
<td>Silent improvisation exploring status: The Party. Discussion</td>
<td>Recognise and identify physical signs of status. Compare different character portrayals and their statuses. Appraise colleagues’ work and offer valid criticism.</td>
<td>Each participant will randomly select a playing card representing his/her status. They will have to act accordingly during an improvised party and observe others. In the end, they must form a line according to where they believe they rank statuswise.</td>
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<td>Physical warm-up. Body</td>
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<td>Increased strength, increased flexibility, increased stamina.</td>
<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group’s proficiency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 -</td>
<td>Technique: Acro &amp; choreography</td>
<td>A mix of acrobatics and dance exercises.</td>
<td>To demonstrate the value of movement clarity, precision and conviction. To support and be supported by their peers: physically at first, but later, during the creative process, more generally.</td>
<td>Students should be reminded of the level of vocal detail they accept as paramount to their creative success and construct a similar level for their physical performance.</td>
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<td>11:15 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 -</td>
<td>Individual training. Discovering one's</td>
<td>A guided deep relaxation exercise (rebirth)</td>
<td>To examine everything with a sense of wonder. To select and appraise each element free from prejudice. To question everything they encounter and construct a poetic vision of both the poetic and the trivial. To examine the world as it is and to interpret it using their imagination.</td>
<td>Students are to be constantly aware of the teacher’s voice as if it was inside them. Students will only be prompted to engage with others in the final 5 minutes. It will be suggested that they try sustaining that innocent gaze during their break in the real world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 -</td>
<td>Case study. Peer learning.</td>
<td>Screening of the first scene of the Ettore Scola’s film <em>Le Bal</em>. Discussion.</td>
<td>To identify the building blocks to a physical character. To compare the characters’ different decisions (style, scale, speed). To argue the value of widening performance territories. To question assumptions on tone.</td>
<td>Students should be guided to link the film with the neutral mask and observation of reality. <em>Le Bal</em> should also serve as a bridge to the clown work introduced after lunch.</td>
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<td>14:00 -</td>
<td>Technique session: clown.</td>
<td>Who and what do we call clown. Putting the nose on, entering the space,</td>
<td>Identify the characteristics of clown performance. Acknowledge and accept every</td>
<td>It is important to make clear that circus clowns and dramatic clowns are two distinct forms. And that 'being funny' should not be the performer's main concern. 'Funny' happens when all guards are down.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30 -</td>
<td>Peer learning.</td>
<td>engaging with the audience and leaving the space. Discussion.</td>
<td>internal and external stimuli. Suppress judgement when performing. Analyse</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30 -</td>
<td>Solo improv session: The flop. Peer</td>
<td>The basic structure of the flop. Solo improvisations using the structure</td>
<td>Describe the flop's basic structure. Employ a defined structure in improvisation</td>
<td>Establish that despite pure clown performance being a possibility, its application as one of many elements in the rehearsal process is potentially a more universal use.</td>
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<td>15:15</td>
<td>learning.</td>
<td>of the flop. Discussion.</td>
<td>whilst still being receptive to all internal and external stimuli. Analyse</td>
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<td>colleagues' performances. Evaluate the value of the clown as a creative tool.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 -</td>
<td>Duo improv session: Clown.</td>
<td>Applying clown to the previous day's duo improvisations. Discussion.</td>
<td>Adapt a simple situation through characterisation. Examine how the clown affects</td>
<td>Performers should try to keep to the specificities of the original scene. Allowing the unexpected to take shape is not incompatible with returning to the exact same point of the scene's structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:15 -</td>
<td>Peer learning.</td>
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<td>the original scene. 'Listen' and react to other characters. Evaluate the</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:00</td>
<td>Group improv session: Status. Peer</td>
<td>Clown improvisation exploring status in clown performance. Compare</td>
<td>importance of structure in improvisation. Appraise colleagues' work and offer</td>
<td>As the Day 2 Improv, but in clown. Do not intervene if chaos ensues. Each participant must read Stanislavsky's chapter on 'Units and Objectives' for the following day.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learning.</td>
<td>different character portrayals and their statuses. Appraise colleagues'</td>
<td>valid criticism.</td>
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### Day 4 AM

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<td>Physical warm-up. Body</td>
<td>Physical exercises based on Pilates.</td>
<td>Increased strength, increased flexibility, increased stamina. Ensemble feel and</td>
<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group's proficiency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 -</td>
<td>Staging session</td>
<td>Two of the duo scenes will be chosen and each given a director. They must work towards an imagined performance using elements from the scene in its neutral mask, animals and clown forms.</td>
<td>Identify performance potential in improvisations. Recalling improvised material and repeat it in a performance context. Direct and being directed. Compare and contrast the processes of creating material and selecting material.</td>
<td>Students will be told that the selection of material produced and the creation of a final artefact is not the main focus of this workshop. It is, however, important that they understand how both phases work together.</td>
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<td>11:30 -</td>
<td>independent learning: Authors.</td>
<td>The assignment consists in creating a short sketch without words of no longer than 15 minutes without supervision. The performance should include a range of performance styles. The theme is <em>La Bohème</em>.</td>
<td>Select action points for storytelling. Interpret plot and characters in more than one way. Manage time effectively. Both lead and follow their peers when required. Develop a sketch with a defined structure of performance. Examine and value the director's role.</td>
<td>Everyone should perform, but there should always be one person not on stage, acting as director. Directors should always try to use the via negativa. No words or 'formal music' should be used.</td>
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<td>14:00 - 14:30</td>
<td>Music session (with piano)</td>
<td>Singing the part. The voice's neutral mask. Defining what exists in the score and what is thrust upon it by outside influence.</td>
<td>To examine what the score has to offer the performer. Differentiate what is there from what is thought to be there. Question any previous knowledge of the role.</td>
<td>Stress the importance of decharacterisation prior to characterisation.</td>
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<td>10:45 - 11:15</td>
<td>Independent learning: Auto-cours.</td>
<td>The assignment consists in creating a short sketch without words of no longer than 15 minutes without supervision. The performance should include a range of performance styles. The theme is La Bohème.</td>
<td>Identify performance potential in improvisations. Recalling improvised material and repeat it in a performance context. Direct and being directed. Compare and contrast the processes of creating material and selecting material.</td>
<td>Everyone should perform, but there should always be one person not on stage, acting as director. Directors should always try to use the via negativo. No words or 'formal music' should be used.</td>
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<td>Identify performance potential in improvisations. Recalling improvised material and repeat it in a performance context. Direct and being directed. Compare and contrast the processes of creating material and selecting material.</td>
<td>Everyone should perform, but there should always be one person not on stage, acting as director. Directors should always try to use the via negativo. No words or 'formal music' should be used.</td>
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<td>12:15 - 13:00</td>
<td>Performance: Auto-cours. Peer learning.</td>
<td><em>La Bohème</em> in 15 minutes. Discussion:</td>
<td>Describe the creative process. Employ a wide range of performance skills and styles. Self-reflect on what was successful and what could be improved upon. Design potential outputs for the outcome of this exercise.</td>
<td>Special attention should be given as to the types of project that could spring from this particular exercise. E.g.: Traditional <em>La Bohème</em> production vs. contemporary live-art installation in a Hoxton warehouse.</td>
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### Day 5 PM

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<td>To examine what the score has to offer the performer. Differentiate what is there from what is thought to be there. Question any previous knowledge of the role.</td>
<td>Stress the importance of decharacterisation prior to characterisation.</td>
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<td>Physical exercises based on Pilates.</td>
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<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group’s proficiency.</td>
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<td>10:45 -</td>
<td>Technique session: Commedia dell’Arte (Zanni)</td>
<td>Historic background. How commedia archetypes have influenced characters through the centuries. Basic commedia stylistic conventions. The Zanni’s stance, walk, run and rest position.</td>
<td>To identify the direct resonance of commedia in many operas. To identify the specific requisites of this style. To recognize Zanni in many other characters.</td>
<td>All of the commedia sessions will not insist in perfecting the technicalities of this dramatic territory. The main focus is on establishing how different archetypes can colour and influence the creation of a new character.</td>
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<td>11:30 -</td>
<td>Improv session: commedia dell’arte (Zanni).</td>
<td>Solo and duo improvisations. The Zanni in situation. The common elements that unite all the different Zannis. Performance scale. Discussion.</td>
<td>To employ all of the Zanni’s characteristics to the creation of a new character. To push the boundaries of perceived limits of human expression. To experiment with the structure and develop a new character that is given depth (instead of being stifled) by the archetype. Discuss the potential and the difficulties of the commedia process in general and the specificities of the Zanni.</td>
<td>The Zanni offers a perfect opportunity to insist students stretch their limits of expression. The bigger the range a performer creates in training, more options he/she will have to choose from when playing a character.</td>
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<td>14:00 - 14:30</td>
<td>Speaking the scene: neutral mask.</td>
<td>The division of the scene into units. Recalling the neutral mask exercises, students establish the scene's structure in its simplest form, devoid of all artifice and non-essential elements.</td>
<td>To define Stanislavsky's units and objectives. To identify them in the scene. To differentiate what in the scene is essential and incidental. To assemble the scene's most indispensable elements. To value the result as an x-ray of what keeps the scene together.</td>
<td>Students must resist the temptation of characterising from the outset. The first step, the one closest to neutrality, cannot be skipped if the decisions made for the character are to be the result of free will. Otherwise, any residual information would already condition what the character is to become.</td>
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<td>15:30 - 16:15</td>
<td>Improv session: characterisation.</td>
<td>Students are now asked to improvise on top and around of the solid, square and unemotional sequence of events established before. Clown and commedia are but two of the tools at their disposal.</td>
<td>To experiment through improvisation whilst maintaining the underlying structure firmly in place. To select external elements and evaluate their impact on the character during improvisation.</td>
<td>The aim of this sequence of exercises is to develop the character in different ways. From the same source, the students are to continuously experiment in different directions and keep generating material.</td>
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<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group's proficiency.</td>
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<td>10:45 - 11:15</td>
<td>Technique session: Commedia dell'Arte (Pantalone)</td>
<td>Pantalone's walk, age, posture, greed and lechery.</td>
<td>To identify the direct resonance of <em>commedia</em> in many operas. To identify the specific requisites of this style. To recognise Pantalone in many other characters.</td>
<td>All of the <em>commedia</em> sessions will not insist in perfecting the technicalities of this dramatic territory. The main focus is on establishing how different archetypes can colour and influence the creation of a new character.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 - 12:15</td>
<td>Improv session: commedia dell'arte (Pantalone). Peer learning.</td>
<td>Solo and duo improvisations. Pantalone in situation. Discussion.</td>
<td>To employ all of Pantalone's characteristics to the creation of a new character. To experiment with the structure and develop a new character that is given depth (instead of being stifled) by the archetype. Discuss the potential and the difficulties of the <em>commedia</em> process in general and the specificities of Pantalone.</td>
<td>Students should be prompted to pay particular attention to the tension between Pantalone's agile mind and his decaying body.</td>
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<td>characterisation.</td>
<td>and unemotional sequence of events established before. Clown and</td>
<td>structure firmly in place. To select external elements and evaluate their</td>
<td>different ways. From the same source, the students are to continuously</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>commedia</em> are but two of the tools at their disposal.</td>
<td>impact on the character during improvisation.</td>
<td>experiment in different directions and keep generating material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30 -</td>
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<td>15:15 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 -</td>
<td>Improv session:</td>
<td>Students are now asked to improvise on top and around of the solid, square</td>
<td>To experiment through improvisation whilst maintaining the underlying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:15</td>
<td>characterisation.</td>
<td>and unemotional sequence of events established before. Clown and</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10:00 - 10:45</td>
<td>Physical warm-up. Body conditioning.</td>
<td>Physical exercises based on Pilates.</td>
<td>Increased strength, increased flexibility, increased stamina. Ensemble feel and collective learning environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 - 11:15</td>
<td>Technique session: Commedia dell'Arte (Gli Innamorati - The Lovers)</td>
<td>The lovers' stances, their self-obsession, their vanity and their lightness of movement, voice and resolve.</td>
<td>To identify the direct resonance of commedia in many operas. To identify the specific requisites of this style. To recognise the Lovers in many other characters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15 - 11:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>All of the commedia sessions will not insist in perfecting the technicalities of this dramatic territory. The main focus is on establishing how different archetypes can colour and influence the creation of a new character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 - 12:15</td>
<td>Improv session: commedia dell'arte (The Lovers). Peer learning.</td>
<td>Solo and duo improvisations. The Lovers in situation. Improvisations combining different characters.</td>
<td>To employ all of The Lover's characteristics to the creation of a new character. To experiment with the structure and develop a new character that is given depth (instead of being stiffed) by the archetype. Discuss the potential and the difficulties of the commedia process in general and the specificities of The Lovers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 - 13:00</td>
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<td>This session conclude the short introduction to commedia, so students should be encouraged to reflect on what they learned and how it can be applied in professional contexts.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 - 14:30</td>
<td>Composition: filtration and sedimentation into 2 contrasting outputs</td>
<td>Revision of all the material created and selection of some of those elements, which together will form two contrasting outputs.</td>
<td>Recall material and contexts created. Evaluate personal methods of documentation. Select and apply diverse elements which, put together, construct a new character. Recognise there is no definite one way of choosing to play a character.</td>
<td>This is no definitive linear process and there might be the need to go back to creating material. Often, the process of composition reveals gaps that need to be filled with material that does not yet exist. This back and forth process should, however, be a conscious one.</td>
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<td>15:15 - 15:30</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 16:15</td>
<td>Composition: filtration and sedimentation into 2 contrasting outputs</td>
<td>Revision of all the material created and selection of some of those elements, which together will form two contrasting outputs.</td>
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<td>16:15 - 17:00</td>
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<td>Physical warm-up. Body conditioning.</td>
<td>Physical exercises based on Pilates.</td>
<td>Increased strength, increased flexibility, increased stamina. Ensemble feel and collective learning environment.</td>
<td>The warm-up will be repeated every day at the start of the day. It will evolve around a familiar group of core exercises, with new ones (or more advanced levels of the same ones) being added according to the group's proficiency.</td>
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<td>11:15 - 11:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>11:30 - 12:15</td>
<td>Composition: filtration and sedimentation into 2 contrasting outputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 - 14:30</td>
<td>Performance and peer learning.</td>
<td>Presentation of work-in-progress.</td>
<td>Recognize value in something before it reached performance stage. Critically examine what is presented and where it might lead. Formulate a clear direction in which to proceed. Critically appraise the work of one's peers, and having one's work critically appraised by them.</td>
<td>Reiterate the value of choice in the creative process and how dependent it is on a wide range of skills and on flexibility in the point of view from which to approach the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30 - 15:15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion.</td>
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<td>15:15 - 15:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 16:15</td>
<td>Performance and peer learning. Conclusion.</td>
<td>Presentation of work-in-progress.</td>
<td>Recognize value in something before it reached performance stage. Critically examine what is presented and where it might lead. Formulate a clear direction in which to proceed. Critically appraise the work of one's peers, and having one's work critically appraised by them.</td>
<td>Final exercise reiterating the value of ensemble work (to be devised according to the specificities of the group).</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:15 - 17:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion. Closing statements.</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2 (Ethics Review)

UPR16

FORM UPR16
Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please complete and return the form to Research Section, Quality Management Division, Academic Registry, University House, with your thesis, prior to examination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student ID</td>
<td>631315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Name</td>
<td>Jorge Manuel Reis Balça</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>SMPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Supervisor</td>
<td>Dr. George Burrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date (or progression date for Prof Doc students)</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Mode and Route</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of Thesis</td>
<td>When a Voice Is Not Enough: the existentialist opera performer as auteur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Word Count (excluding ancillary data)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRI Finished Research Checklist:
(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Delete as appropriate
**Candidate Statement:**

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):</th>
<th>FO:10/12 0066</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Signed:**  
(Student)  
Date: 3rd December 2014

If you have not submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered ‘No’ to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain why this is so:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signed:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Student)</td>
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</table>

UPR 16 (2013) – November 2013
Conditional Ethics Approval

26th September 2012

Dear Jorge,

I am pleased to inform you that the CCI Faculty Ethics Committee, based on the information you have provided in your initial application and your additional responses to our questions, has given your application for the study entitled The Opera Singer’s Body in Performance* (application date 06/07/2012), a conditional favourable opinion.

This means that the recruitment of participants for the workshop phase of this study should not proceed until your accommodation arrangements have been finalised. The details of these arrangements should be included in participant information, which should be submitted to the committee for review. At this time you should also submit to the committee confirmation of the insurance arrangements in place for the workshops, and any risk assessment you have undertaken of the location for the activities.

This can be submitted at any time during the course of your PhD prior to starting the participant recruitment. Please quote the approval number of this study when contacting the committee.

This opinion has been given for this study only, and any changes in the conditions of the study may require you to re-apply for ethical review.

Although the Committee has given a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies, as always, with the researcher(s).

Please note that the Committee reserves the right to re-review this application should any concerns be raised about it in the future.

Your ethical review number is CFO:10/12 0006. If you have any questions about this, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Powell
(Chair, CCI FEC)

cc: George Burrows

www.port.ac.uk
Final Ethics Approval

Jorge Balca

From: [email protected]  [email protected]  [email protected]  ericflan A
Sent: 36M45239:343; [email protected]
To: [email protected]
Cc: [email protected]
Subject: [email protected]

Sorry, a minor error in my previous email. You approval number remains the same but can have the "C" removed, i.e. FO:10/12 0066

Wendy

Dr Wendy Powell, PhD, BSc Hon, BA. D.C, FHEA, MBCS

Be Green! - If you are visiting Portsmouth, consider using public transport:
For train & bus times follow links on:
www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/greenportsmouth/greentravel/

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Wendy Powell <wendy.powell@port.ac.uk>
Date: 3 June 2013 20:41
Subject: Re: CC:10/12 0066
To: Jorge Balca <jorge.balca@port.ac.uk>
Cc: Sarah Eaton <sarah.eaton@port.ac.uk>, George Burrows <george.burrows@port.ac.uk>

Dear Jorge,

I am pleased to advise you that the arrangements seem to be in order and that we are happy that all ethical concerns have been adequately addressed. Your ethical approval number remains the same but our records will be updated to reflect the fact that you have met the conditions.

As before, please notify the committee if there are any significant changes to your research plans.

I wish you well with your project.

Regards

Wendy
Dr Wendy Powell, PhD, BSc Hons, BA. D.C, FHEA, MBCS

Be Green! - if you are visiting Portsmouth, consider using public transport:
For train & bus times follow links on: www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/greenportsmouth/greentravel/

On 10 May 2013 13-58, Jorge Balca <jorge.balca@port.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear Dr. Powell,

Following your letter of the 26th September 2012 stating the CCI Faculty Ethics Committee’s conditional favourable opinion, I am writing to you addressing the main concerns raised with my initial application.

- Participants’ accommodation: Communication has been established with David Goodwin (conferences@port.ac.uk), Commercial Manager of the UoP Conferences & Lettings, guaranteeing that all participants will stay at Burrell House during the course. With the possibility that some participants will not require accommodation in Portsmouth, the booking will be finalised as soon as recruitment is completed. The payment is the researcher’s responsibility.

- Insurance and risk assessment: These are covered by SCAFM’s standard policies. At the start of the course, Mr. Walid Benkhaled (walid.benkhaled@port.ac.uk), Production Manager at SCAFM, will ensure all participants are aware of the building’s Health & Safety details and requirements.

Please find the amended documents attached to this message.

Thank you so much for your time. I look forward to hear from the Committee as soon as possible.

Best Regards: