

Creating with play

A practice led investigation into the uses and applications of play in the collaborative devising process

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Dedicated to Claire and Jerome Lai the people who taught me how to play.

An introduction to play

A prevalent understanding of the word *Play* involves its fun and recreational nature, as in: To 'play a sport; play the ball; play of light; play an instrument; play a movie or CD; play in a playground; or to play in solitude with imagination. In the realm of performance, play is not a leisure activity but a part of the work itself. As Murray explains, having a wonderful time is not the key to creativity and effective acting

'Rather, an ability to play is more about an openness, a readiness to explore the circumstances of the moment without intellectual 'editing', but within a set of rules or expectations germane to the style or form of theatre under investigation.'

(Murray 2003, p.50)

As Murray's explains how the performers' attitude to play creates play, we begin to understand that play is complex and being engaged in a *performative play*, that resonates with the creative qualities of *conventional play* (e.g. openness, responsiveness, spontaneity), is important to good performance. The *discovery* that results from play is what makes it central to human existence, as it allows us '...to connect with and interpret symbols and metaphors in a way which may allow us to connect with deeper truths about human existence' (Peacock 2009, p.12).

Performative play is an essential part of what makes the live performance alive because to play is to discover possibility in the moment.

But what do we mean by play, can we define it? And in what way do we use play in performance? We understand play better by engaging in play. Jacques Copeau took inspiration from his own children at play, and became the first theatre director and pedagogue to introduce the use of play to performance practice, at the beginning of the 1900's (Callery 2015, p.95). Reflective of this *conventional play*, Copeau explains the importance of developing our relationship with *performative play* in such a way that it is engrained into our being and engagement with the world (in Evans 2015, p.188). It is in this being and engaging that I, as well as many other practitioners, identify and develop play.

The Human Project are a physical theatre ensemble I co-founded with three other performers from my undergraduate degree at the VCA. Our mission is to examine the individual components of 'why we are the way we are' and push those components to their absolute limit, until they are forced to break or evolve. When devising new work we engage in performative play to allow for greater discovery when preparing, exploring and performing material. However, I find there is an absence of play in our process, a gap where play is lost in the stages of development and refining. (Ref Figure 1).

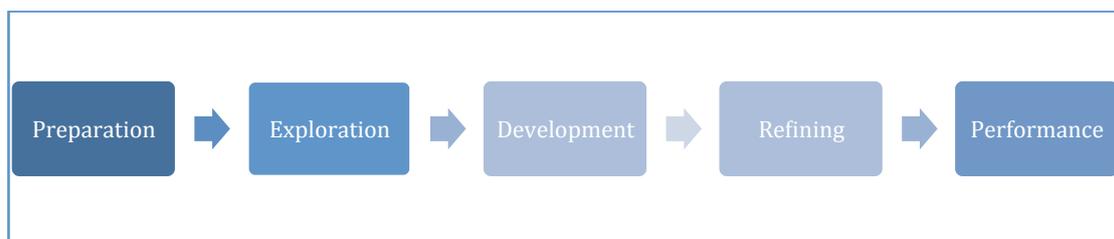


Figure 1: Five stages of my devising process

I call this gap the *Play-gap*. The *Play-gap* is due to a phenomenon I call *The Tunnel of Tension* (TTOT). In every collaborative devising process there comes a point where

the reality of producing a show impinges on the devising process, we go “Oh shit, we have to make a show and we don’t know what we’re doing yet!” and the ensemble becomes tense. TTOT occurs when this tension overtakes our bodies and minds and the only way we can progress in this state is to tunnel our vision towards a singular fixed idea of the outcome, rejecting all other possibilities (Chaikin in Evans 2015, p.187). The Human Project has gone into TTOT a number of times and every time we do, we lose play, the Play-gap is created and the performance outcome suffers. So why is this our reaction to the pressures of devising collaboratively?

Collaborative ensembles unknowingly enter TTOT because of the stigma around performative play that is derived from our understandings of conventional play.

Richard Schechner says that because of society’s preoccupation with and prioritizing of reality, play is viewed as rotten in the West (in Peacock 2009, p.12). When play is used poorly in theatre, especially in physical theatre, the work becomes self-indulgent and ‘a triumph of form over substance and meaning’, (Murray 2003, p.68). Therefore, when the reality of producing a show impinges on the devising process, we stop working with play because we deem it inappropriate in the context of developing and refining a performance. In the three main chapters of this research paper I will argue that in a collaborative devising process, we must create playful ways of developing and refining material. So that we avoid TTOT and do not create a Play-gap in our process, but expand our vision to the possibilities of the performative outcome, creating a genuine, lived, playful experience that connects the performers and audience.

Method for researching play

To use play and avoid TTOT and close the Play-gap, I had to explore how other practitioners articulate and understand play in their own practices. I have found that play begins with imagination and impulses.

Plato defined Paidia as a state synonymous with freedom and childlike joy (Caillois 1912, p.32). Aristotle defined Ludus as the rules, parameters and disciplines with which we govern ourselves (Caillois 1912, p.32). Schechner (2002, p.95) translated these two terms so that Paidia becomes ‘*impulses*’, Ludus becomes ‘*parameters*’ and all play exists on a spectrum between these two juxtaposing processes. Figure 2 demonstrates where the preparation, exploration and performance stages of the devising process generally sit on this spectrum. These ideas of impulses and parameters are the theoretical foundation for my method of research into play.

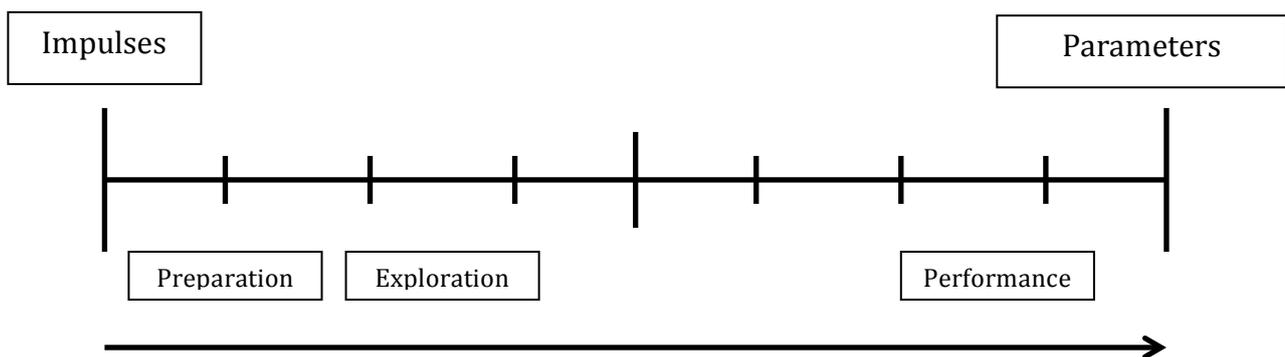


Figure 2: Where devising stages occur on Schechner's play spectrum

Imagination and impulse are overlapping ideas both of which refer to the body.

Alfreds (2007, p.350) describes two sources of imagination: the mind and the body. Yet Grotowski says:

“Before a physical action there is an impulse. Therein lies the secret of something very difficult to grasp, because the impulse is a reaction that begins inside the body and which is visible only when it has already become a small action. The impulse is so complex that one cannot say it is of the corporeal domain.”

(in Slowiak & Cuesta 2007, p.64)

By putting Alfred’s and Grotowski’s ideas together I have come to the belief that the imagination works through our mind and bodies, creating impulse. For example a ball is thrown towards me and I imagine through my mind and body what I can do with the ball. The body has an impulse to react, which becomes a small action, such as a kick or a throw. These impulses are the beginning of play, and are sustained as play by being in balance with parameters (Caillois in Schechner 2002, p.95).

Pierse (2006, p43) says that ‘To improvise productively with other people we need to agree on a set of principles which encourage play.’ I understand parameters as a changeable set of principles that encourage and guide impulses, motifs and even parameters themselves towards play and playfulness. Etchells described play as a state in which meaning is in flux and possibility thrives (in Murray 2003, p.67). I use the term parameter rather than rules in my work, because parameters build and guide rather than eliminate or limit, this way meaning can be in flux and possibilities can thrive (in Murray 2003, p.67). By implementing and manipulating the parameters with which we play, we can create a practice to generate and facilitate play in the

development and refining stages. This shifts the focus of my research, rather than looking at play as a whole I am looking at how parameters shape impulses and affect the play that occurs in this interaction. This gives me a tangible way of engaging with practical research into play, which I will then use to avoid TTOT and close the Play-gap.

The three modes of research

Nelson (2013, p.38-47) describes practice-based research in performance as the development of three forms of knowledge: ‘know that’, ‘know what’ and ‘know how’. By accessing these three means of learning I have developed a structure for my research, a parameter-based practice for play and a structure for the subsequent Chapters in this paper.

Nelson (2013,p.45) explains the ‘know that’ category of research creates distance from the lived experience of the work being researched to gain a more objective insight. In the context of performance practices *know that* is knowledge we gain by researching practices. This is mainly shown in Chapter 1 where I explain what I learned through literature research, and undertaking placements and workshops.

Nelson Explains (2013, p.44) ‘know what’ as knowledge founded in practise and reflection. In the context of performance practices *know what* is knowledge we gain by practising the practice. In Chapter 2 I show how I extended the terminology and principles of Chapter 1 into practise. I practised by facilitating Pulse Jams at the VCA and in the development stage of devising The Human Project’s third show 2.0 Contact.

Nelson (2013, p.42) describes 'know how' as practical knowledge. In the context of performance practices *know how* is knowledge gained by using the knowledge gained from know that and know what in a practical environment. I used know that and know what in the refining stage of a show to see whether these techniques could be sustained and extended from the development stage of rehearsals to the refining stage.

In doing this research I am not aiming to create a new technique, but adapt the techniques I have gained from the work of others by using each mode of knowledge. I gained multiple perspectives (Student, facilitator, researcher, collaborator and performer) and a deeper insight into the effective use of the practices of play and Pulse in the devising process.

Chapter 1: Creating play through pedagogy and parameters

I began to understand the development and application of parameters to transform impulses into play when I researched the pedagogical philosophies that surround play. I performed this research into practice through literature research and by undertaking placements and workshops.

The first placement I undertook was with Stephen Phillips, a sessional teacher at the VCA, teaching the Principles of Tanya Gerstle's Pulse. The second placement was with Scott Witt, a full-time movement teacher at NIDA, who teaches a combination of improvisation, mask work and clown work.

The workshop I attended was for training in the practices of Pulse under Tanya Gerstle and Hannah Liddeaux. The knowledge I gained from these placements and workshop, about how parameters shape impulses and affect the play that occurs in this interaction, gave me the base of my pedagogy. First, an introduction to Pulse.

What is Pulse

Pulse is both a practice and exercise, created by Tanya Gerstle, which creates a shared physical language between the performers of an improvisation ensemble through a set of parameters that encourage the development of play (2008, p.1). For example every pulse begins with the same four parameters: running, walking, falling and standing. Performers fill the space switching between these four movement, as this progresses new parameters are introduced, such as: 'be aware of the duets and solos', 'notice the topography of the space' (Gerstle 2008, p.72). Stimulus may also be introduced to the

pulse as well: a piece of text, a song, an image. Performers allow the new parameters and stimuli to affect their impulses, as these impulses build and bounce off each other the ensemble discover the dramatic potential and focus in on the stronger impulses. It is at this stage that Gerstle (2008, p.19) stresses repeating and sustaining the performers' impulses as action, to develop what she refers to as *recurring motifs*, a unit of action(s) that can be repeated and reinvented by the ensemble. When creating material with Pulse, these motifs are the beginnings of material. The exploration and development of actions by the ensemble that become a motif are called a pulse. This creates confusion, as that is also the name of the practice. I will always refer to the practice of Pulse with a capital, though at the start of sentences I will also include the word practice, and the action of developing a motif(s) as pulse(s).

By observing how the teachers expanded the use of parameters to guide and develop the impulses discovered during a pulse into play, I began to understand the potential of parameters in the developing and refining stages of the devising process.

Parameters take many shapes in the pedagogies and practices of different practitioners. Witt brings parameters from improvisation, clown and mask. The way he feeds these parameters is heavily influenced by the playful pedagogy of Lecoq, whereas Phillips and Liddeaux's practices are based on Gerstle's. The parameters Gerstle gives students are evolved from the principles of Pulse and her experience as a teacher and director influence her delivery of these parameters. What is common across all four pedagogies is the philosophy of the *non-guru*.

The Non Guru philosophy

All four teachers believe performers learn best through first-hand experience rather than being told, this is the pedagogical philosophy of the ‘Non-Guru’ (Gerstle 2016). Witt (2008) writes ‘I do not *give* knowledge, but rather it is *found* in the work of the class’. Murray (2003, p51) supports this, adding that ‘Profound and substantial learning only takes place when students have discovered the most important things for themselves’. In all classrooms I witnessed this non-guru pedagogy encourage discovery by the performers playfully exploring and creating in relation to the parameters set by the teachers. I believe this playful attitude was achieved because the students engaged in the question of ‘how’ rather than ‘why’.

Alfreds succinctly explains the how and its playful nature with

‘The how is the manner in which the actors play their actions (and therefore how they play the text). The how is open to change and totally in the actors’ domain... the how may alter, from the subtlest shift to the most radical change.

(Alfreds 2007, p.75)

Draffin (2015, p.90) explains that asking ‘why’ rather than ‘how’ fixes or limits the outcome of training. To work in a way conducive to play, we must accept a non-fixed outcome and allow ourselves to playfully engage in imaginative possibility. Because we do not judge the discovery, we consider how it works and what it achieves. By suspending judgment performers are more likely to avoid TTOT and close the Play-gap. Phillip’s and Witt achieve this suspension of judgment in different ways.

Observing pedagogy in placements

During my placements I re-engaged with the idea that imagination works through the mind and body, to create impulse. I focused on observing the different performative outcomes based on the ratio between the two units, mind and body, as well as how these ratios correlated to the balance between parameters and impulses on the spectrum of play.

In Phillips' pedagogy for teaching Pulse I witnessed a body-centred approach. In discussion with Phillips we agreed there was a ratio of 70% body to 30% mind in the impulses created (2016, pers. comm. 20 April). The main parameter he incorporated into his pedagogy to achieve this was tempo. Students in Phillips' classes work at pace that eradicates any sense of judgment toward parameters and the material outcomes of their work. This pace means students play readily and freely during class, sitting closer towards the impulsive side on the spectrum of play. However, most students were unsure how to apply the work they had experienced or how they had achieved it, even though Phillips' had abided by the philosophy of the non-guru and the students had produced material.

Witt's pedagogy for teaching movement combats this confusion by focusing on mind body cohesion, 50% mind to 50% body (Witt 2008). He does this by implementing parameters that force students to investigate different possibilities in their work through action. For example, one exercise required students to first learn a scene. Only Witt knew the parameters that would shape the performance of the scene. Every time the students performed the scene they would be actively trying to discover the unknown parameters set by Witt.

Any time a student stepped outside these parameters, they would be told to start the scene again. As the students explored and developed the scene to reveal the unknown parameters, they are engaged in a form of play that is not within the parameters but with the parameters themselves. It is this connection with both action and parameter that creates mind body cohesion. Though the material does not develop at the same pace as in Phillips' classes, the students discover a greater understanding of the practices they engage in. However, with these comprehensive skills he has to actively suppress judgments and frustrations with material that arise in his classes. Witt uses clown-based exercises to combat this. A clown has a childlike ability to believe in the unlikely things that the clown is seeing, doing and feeling; they do not judge their own or others impulses and actions for effect (Gillett 2007, p.278). By accepting every unlikely thing they see, do and feel without judgment, the students refocus on how they respond. By employing this practice Witt refocuses the ensemble to ask how rather than why and live in the moment of play.

Unlike Phillips', Gerstle and Liddeaux used Pulse as both a pedagogy and a practice. During a workshop lead by Gerstle and Liddeaux I witnessed a fluctuation between imaginative ratios of mind and body. Gerstle achieved this by actively shifting parameters according to the progression and needs of the ensemble's impulses, so parameters generate play, but are also developed in relation to play. In her workshop (2016) and her writing (2008) Gerstle primarily focuses on developing the impulses with a script. Meaning at some point in the rehearsal process Gerstle's work must use parameters to shape impulses towards a fixed outcome (the script). This is not a problem for a scripted/directed piece because the performers are not knowingly shaping the parameters; the director does this in response to the performers at play.

But in a collaborative process this creates a conundrum; on one-hand we must employ parameters in order to develop impulses into performance material. On the other hand once we begin to actively impose parameters onto the impulses, we begin working towards a fixed outcome and enter TTOT.

Maria Tufnell's writing on devising with improvisation expresses how the focus should be on '... recognising an emergent form rather than imposing one' (Tufnell and Crickmay 1993, p.196). So as the form emerges, the parameters that develop the form emerge simultaneously. To accommodate this simultaneous development of form and parameters Tufnell's practice involves a continual interplay between making and watching the material (Tufnell and Crickmay 1993, p.196). To overcome the problem of imposing parameters I incorporate Tufnell's practice of action and perspective, by fluctuating between Phillips' and Witt's pedagogies, and parameters begin to emerge simultaneously with form, avoiding the possibility of detting lost in TTOT and creating the Play-gap. To develop the techniques that sustain these fluctuations, I incorporated my research into the practices of play into the practise of Pulse.

Chapter 2: Applying play to training and practice

Students and alumni of VCA Theatre have led training sessions called *Pulse Jams* since 2010 (Phillips 2016, Pers. Comm.18 April). These sessions are an opportunity for attendees to train using Pulse, work collaboratively and explore material they are personally working on. Figure 3 shows how these Pulse Jams were run:

Figure 3: Original Pulse Jam Structure

Activity	Duration	Components	Process Stages
Warm up	30 minutes	Individual work	Preparation
Pulse	80 minutes	2-4 pulses	Exploration
Debrief	10 minutes	Group conversation	

I have been attending Pulse Jams since 2013, and noticed a key problem in these sessions. During debriefs I often put forward the question ‘How would you take that idea or motif you developed in the Pulse further?’ and usually the response was uncertain.

We could not learn how to develop the motifs further because the Pulse Jams were simply framed as training and not aimed at overcoming the Play-gap. To fix this I applied the knowledge from my research to the structure of Pulse Jams, so that Pulse Jams were no longer training but a means of developing techniques for overcoming the Play-gap. This created what Spatz (2015, p.163) calls a laboratory

environment. The laboratory is a space dedicated to exploration and discovery of practice. By applying and testing the strategies employed and adapted from my literature research and observations of Gerstle, Witt, Phillips and Liddeaux's practices into Pulse Jams I was able to develop Spartan Pulses. I combined these using an observation Gerstle made of Bogart's work.

When Gerstle discusses Bogart's use of limited time and prescribed ingredients she notes that it allows performers '... to abandon themselves and focus on existing in the world with the other elements. It helps them *be* and respond rather than feel pressured to *do*.' (Gerstle 2008, p.22) In order to gain experience and test theories in a limited time frame, I began facilitating Pulse Jams in a similar way, using short miniature pulses, called Spartan Pulses, that progressed in rapid succession.

The phrase Spartan comes from the idea of a Spartan style exercise workout, where fitness enthusiasts work in short intense bursts with minimal breaks (Randolph 2010, p.8). I incorporated the Spartan pulses into the Pulse Jam structure, so that Pulse Jams became a means of both practising and developing technique. Figure 4 shows what became the new structure of Pulse Jams.

Figure 4: New pulse Jam Structure

Activity	Duration	Components	Process Stages
Warm up	10 minutes	2 exercises	Preparation
Introduce stimulus	10 min	1-2 exercises	
Preparatory pulse	1-2 minutes	2-3 repetitions	Exploration
Explorative pulse	10 minutes	1 st cycle	
Discussion	2-3 minute	1 st development	Development
Developing pulse	10 minute	2 nd cycle	
Discussion	4 minute	2 nd development	

This structure was developed in the Pulse Jams themselves, and further developed by using the structure while devising a new show for The Human Project called 2.0 Contact. This show was about how the structure of atoms dictates that Human contact or touch can never occur, yet we crave human contact. Each motif and scene became a checkpoint along the path to responding to this challenge of how close we could get to each other. I was able to learn how this new Pulse Jam structure facilitated play in the devising process and avoid TTOT by developing this structure through these two laboratories.

How Spartan Pulse Work: in Pulse Jams and in devising

What I found with long pulses was that eventually play and thereby discovery would plateau as observed by Gerstle (2008, p.74). It is at this point in the pulse that motifs can either integrate (transforming into something new) or disintegrate. With Spartan Pulses we catch the play and discovery at its peak before it plateaus, the ensemble shares brief non-judgmental observations of what has just occurred. Then we begin another Spartan Pulse. When The Human Project began employing the Spartan Pulse in the exploration stage of the devising process, it allowed us to test a wider scope of stimulus at an expeditious pace and retain the multiple motifs that came out of each pulse. What was key to this was the moment of pause between pulses. These moments allow a rebalancing between the mind and body involvement in the imaginative process so that the impulse can be identified and made more readily transformable. I am using both Phillip's pace from his Pulse practices and Witt's reflection from his movement pedagogies to prevent the pulse from disintegrating or the need to go into TTOT.

Another key aspect of Spartan Pulses is introducing parameters incrementally. This came from Tufnell's practice 'Be specific and limit your material to get the most out of it' (Tufnell and Crickmay 1993, p.111). Limiting which parameters the performers play with in each Spartan Pulse, meant that the motifs are played within the pulse to the limit of the parameters. Once the motifs have reached their limits within the parameters the ensemble acknowledges it by finding an ending to the Spartan Pulse, and leaving the space as one group. Once a series of Spartan Pulses are completed and motifs have been fully fleshed we go into the second phase of my practice a discussion around parameters.

Creating active dialogue in pulse jams and devising

In this stage we progress from exploration to development and prepare ourselves for the possibility of encountering TTOT. In our first and second devised pieces, *The Human Project* and *The Human Project V1.1* (or V1.1), we prepared and explored performance material using Pulse and with play, but as we approached the development stage play dwindled and we found ourselves in TTOT. This occurred because we were unsure how to progress the parameters and allow the form to emerge from pulse simultaneously. Two primary focuses of my research in this stage had been how to frame feedback in an ensemble and how to evolve new parameters from the motifs and discoveries made. By engaging in Spartan Pulses and creating a dialogue around parameters we were able to overcome our inability to progress the parameters and form simultaneously.

When I facilitate discussions in Pulse Jams, I follow Witt's use of Lecoq's approach of giving observations rather than opinions (in Evans 2015, p.42). I start the discussions by asking 'what were the key moments for everyone?' to engage the ensemble in an observational and objective conversation. From this point we can begin to develop new parameters. An example of how this conversation develops is:

Me: What were the key moments for everyone?'

Person B: 'I liked it when Person A, did the motif with their arms above their head.'

Person C: Yeah that was really good

Me: What made that motif so striking?

By phrasing my observations as questions, I am directing the performer's conversation away from judgments like the gesture was 'really good', and towards the quality or characteristic that made this moment so key, focusing the ensemble's attention on how not why they played their actions.

Person B: It was the way they fixed their gaze in the gesture.

Person D: It reminded me of the stimulus.[REW10]

Me: Can we get person A to do this again?

Person A enters the space, and re-enacts the gesture. By collectively observing the action we are all on the same page. This is a simple but crucial factor because when performers do not re-enact their discoveries in conversation, too much of the conversation is wasted on what happened. By engaging in a physically active form of dialogue (*active dialogue*), dialogue becomes clearer and we can progress efficiently and playfully.

Me: What else is essential here and what can we afford to lose?

Person D: What is it without the arms?

(Person A drops their arms)

Person B: Can we see what it is when you face the other way?

(Person A faces the other way)

Here we use active dialogue to determine what is essential to the motif and expand it. In these moment I often witness the performers at their most playful because they are responding immediately to the observations of their ensemble with simplicity

(Johnstone in Evans 2015, p.195). The performers are not always aware of this playfulness as the thought is embodied in the physical action rather than spoken in conversation. This is key to the playful approach; the performer must engage in play to understand its function.

At this point I engage the ensemble with questions such as:

Me: What is it with the whole group?

Me: Can we use it to make a shape in the space?

As the ensemble enacts these variations, we actively discuss which options enhance the motifs and links them back to the stimulus. By testing these variations we develop new parameters for this motif. The new parameters that emerged as the motif developed are as experimental as the material itself. They serve to temporarily limit so that we can create a scene through pulse. One example of this is a series of sequences in 2.0 we called the ‘How To sequences’. During one of The Human Project’s pulses the motif of a reconstructed kiss arose. In this motif we deconstructed the components of a kiss, then reconstructed them to the components creating an abstract awkward kiss.

Two bodies approach each other

They make eye contact

They connect at the lips

They open and close their mouths, occasionally sucking, biting and licking

They break for air

How to kiss (Osmond 2016)

We took this small series of parameters that emerged from the Pulse and through Spartan Pulse and active dialogue created other self-sustaining motifs: How to hold a newborn; how to shake hands; how to choke; etc. To take these motifs further we began incorporate them into the performance structure in the process stage of refining.

This chapter demonstrates how the development stage of the devising process can be facilitated with play and without TTOT. By incrementally testing and building parameters, without a fixed idea, we build motifs through play to the point they can be inserted into the performance structure.

What also helped in the evolution of these parameters was changing the gearing our imaginative ratios of mind and body, giving us multiple perspectives within the act of play. This idea as well as other pedagogical techniques, manifested into Spartan Pulse and active dialogue. These were not only techniques that could facilitate play in the classroom but also the rehearsal room as they were developed in laboratory settings. The next stage of this research tests these strategies in the rehearsal room, to see how far these strategies progress into the refinement stage of the rehearsal process.

Chapter 3: Refining play into performance

During a collaborative devising process once we feel we have enough motifs to create a performance we stopped generating new motifs and begin working with the motifs we have. It is at this point we leave the development stage and fully submerge into the refinement stage.

In a scripted process we are working towards a fixed outcome, and therefore we begin to compress and focus on detailing performance in the refining stage. In The Human Project's previous two shows we struggled to refine material because we tried to use the scripted method of detailing performance when we used a collaborative devising method. In these two shows the refining stages took place as we sat at tables having long arguments over the best way to arrange the material. We were deep in TTOT because we could not create detailed performance with no script. We must allow form and parameters to emerge simultaneously, as established in Chapter 1 (Tufnell and Crickmay, 1993). Therefore, for 2.0 Contact, in the refining stage of the devising process I incorporated I attached this idea to the Pulse practice while interweaving of motifs into scenes.

Originally in 2.0 Contact we fell into the same trap of refining towards a fixed outcome that did not exist, which meant play was temporarily lost. From my research into the Play-gap during earlier devising stage, , we able to recognise our mistake and change tact. We began working with the idea that a performance structure could be a cohesive set of parameters that defines the shape of the performance material.

Normally, in a pulse based process the individual motifs are woven together to create

scenes, which are then arranged within a fixed structure (Gerstle 2008, p.75). By allowing parameters and structure to emerge together, I believed we could overcome the need for fixed structure, avoiding TTOT and closing the Play-gap. The theory was that parameters for a structure would emerge in the process of weaving motifs into scenes and that we could do this by engaging in active dialogue. Initially this worked, the following are some examples of the structural parameters that emerged:

There are always four bodies in the space

Performers must never make direct eye contact

Performers cannot touch until episode 2

Performers must work on a grid

These parameters were loose enough they could be applied to any motif, but strong enough that they remained constant in the performance, tying the individual motifs together. However, the process was still not playful, due to an overload of parameters.

Unknowingly, in our active dialogue we had not allowed form and parameters to emerge simultaneously. Structural parameters had emerged, but not in tandem with the material. There were no emerging motifs, we had simply woven together those we already had and each motif already had an individual set of parameters. With so many parameters, the lines between them began to blur and we could not differentiate what parameters were applicable when. Dialogue became confused and inactive because we were unsure how to play with all the parameters we had set. We were stuck on the parameter side of the spectrum of play and in a deeper state of TTOT, suffocating the

potential for play in the material. Eventually we had to stop trying to use parameters, and look at from a new perspective.

Turning parameters into structure

By restarting an active dialogue around parameters, we realised that the motifs and parameters were working in opposition. Old material was being refined while new structural parameters were still being developed. We had to stop creating new parameters and refine the ones we had into a structure if we wanted to refine the material. To aide this our dialogue became purely about parameters, to refine them to a point that was in balance with the motifs. In a way we were doing the direct opposite of a scripted process, refining structure toward set material. The first step for this was sorting the parameters to make sense of them.

We noticed that we had many small parameters, or micro-parameters, which helped with detailing material, but were so numerous they often contradicted each other. We also had many general large parameters, or macro-parameters, which helped create a structure but repeated themselves too often to be clear. We put the micro-parameters aside and focused on the macro-parameters.

With the guidance of Phillips, we compiled the many macro-parameters into a few, shown below, and created a flexible structure that contained space for scenes.

There is a reset in the space at the end of every scene

After 3 scenes there must be a collation of material

Each set of scenes explores a particular quality of contact

These four qualities are: delicate, penetrative, friction and forceful

Figure 5 gives us a visual representation of the structure created for 2.0 Contact. Each column is an episode based on one of the four qualities above. The show progresses down each column then on to the next column, creating a four episode cycle. Each episode contains four distinct scenes: experiment 1, experiment 2, experiment 3 and a collaboration of these experiments at the end.

Figure 5: 2.0 Contact performance structure			
<i>Delicate</i>	<i>Penetration</i>	<i>Fusion</i>	<i>Force</i>
Experiment 1			
Boxing #1	Move sequence #1 How to Contact #2	Slap	Tackle #1
Experiment 2			
1 st Touch	Probe Memory #1 Hand Hold	Boxing #2 Hand hold How to Contact #3	Tackle #2
Experiment 3			
Waltz + Kiss How to Contact #1	Move sequence #2	Memory #2	Tackle #3
Collation			
Alone #1	Move sequence #3	Gap	Alone #2

Once we established this structure the second half of our refining process was experimenting with how motifs could exist in the quality of the episode and which scene within that episode. In doing so we re-engaged with the micro-parameters. In a way we had reverted back to Gerstle’s method of putting motifs into a pre-set structure.

Playfully arranging material

The way this structure had been developed allowed for variation in material; we could put any almost motif almost anywhere in the structure and it would resonate within the whole piece. We could not work towards a fixed outcome as the structure allowed for too many other possible combinations. We had to discover what combination of material worked for us by engaging in play. But it was difficult for our ensemble to completely trust that we knew when we had found the right combination of motifs. We began to judge the motifs and argue about where individual motifs fitted, creating TTOT.

We had to stop ourselves from entering this mode by actively exploring how Motifs could fit into the structure, creating room for play. This was made easier by relinquishing our attachment to the micro-parameters of the individual motifs, relying on the fact that the micro-parameters would sustain themselves if they were essential to the motif or the performance.

Originally the micro-parameters had been the generative source of the motifs, but as the motifs fleshed out these micro-parameters had integrated into the motifs themselves. For example, in the *how to kiss* motif we knew that the parameters of the motif would sustain themselves because they were so quintessential to performing the motif (refer to chapter 2).

If a motif needed to be altered the strength of this flexible structure provided the support needed. This was proved during the season when an injury forced us to adapt

the show, by rearranging the motifs within the same structure. If we had focused on the micro-parameters of ‘Person A said it like this and never did the choreography like that’ we would never have been able to restructure the show. But by asking ‘How can person B say this and how can we make the choreography work for them?’ we were able to re-arrange the show overnight by using play.

The structure of 2.0 demonstrates that we do not need TTOT during the refining stages of the collaborative devising process. By refining a structure for material from the parameters we had, we created a structure flexible enough for motifs to still be moved and adapted if necessary. The gaps in this structure were filled by inserting a combination of motifs creating a scene, and in turn the structure will support and unite these scenes. We reduced the number of parameters by grouping them into microscopic and macroscopic to see how they related to structure and material.

Final analysis of play in the collaborative devising process

When the collaborative devising process is playful the performance outcomes are free, flexible and engaging. However, there is often a Play-gap in the developing and refining stages due to the stigma around play being foolish and unproductive. When we do not play we enter The Tunnel of Tension (TTOT). TTOT is a mind-set where performers aim towards a singular fixed idea to overcome TTOT. A Play-gap in the development and refinement stages of the process is created. This research is about establishing strategies for play in our practices to avoid entering TTOT, and eliminate the Play-gap.

To combat TTOT we consider the two aspects of play, impulses and parameters. These two forces work in juxtaposition to playfully shape impulses into performative material. Methods for investigating the relationship between these two forces was founded on the three modes of practice based research explained by Nelson: know that, know what, know how. I learned how to manipulate play through parameters by observing the pedagogies of Gerstle, Witt, Phillips, Liddeux and literature research. Incorporating the strategies of these practitioners into my practise of Pulse Jams I gained a greater understanding of their relationship to play and devising, this insight manifested into Spartan Pulse which I employed to confront the problem of TTOT in Pulse Jams and the devising process of 2.0 Contact. Like Pulse, Spartan Pulses facilitates play. Pulse does this by allowing parameters to evolve simultaneously and incrementally with impulses to create motifs. Spartan Pulses also rely on pauses between fast-paced pulses where active, clear and playful dialogue can occur. This allowed us to develop material playfully and without TTOT.

I tested this practice further by applying it to the refining stage of 2.0 Contact. However, in doing this we ended up with too many parameters, suffocating the possibility of play and we found ourselves in TTOT. At this point I was able to distinguish the differences between micro- and macro-parameters. By engaging in a physically active dialogue around parameters we were able to create a flexible performance structure that encouraged play, allowing the motifs of the performance to be freely rearranged and adapted.

In summation, while this research did not entirely close the Play-gap during the development and refinement stages of the collaborative devising process, it did give me strategies of play to get out of TTOT. This demonstrated that play can be applied to all stages of the collaborative devising process in some capacity and that although we may enter TTOT in our practices it is not a necessary evil. Rather, it is an indicator that we must look at the way we are working and create room for play.

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