

**TOWARDS THE *PERFORMER-CREATOR* IN CONTEMPORARY MIME, WITH
SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE PHYSICAL THEATRE OF ANDREW BUCKLAND
1988-2000.**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

ROB MURRAY

January 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The financial assistance of National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

UNDERTAKING

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted previously as a dissertation for any degree in any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. W. M.', written over a horizontal dotted line. The signature is stylized and includes a circled mark at the end.

25 January 2002

revised copy: April 2002

ABSTRACT

TOWARDS THE *PERFORMER-CREATOR* IN CONTEMPORARY MIME, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE PHYSICAL THEATRE OF ANDREW BUCKLAND 1988-2000.

Part one of this thesis investigates the conceptualisation of the *performer-creator* and its relevance in late twentieth century physical performance by examining some of the theoretical, but mainly artistic, traditions that suggest a movement towards this.

Chapter one tackles the question of definition, linking mime within a wider physical theatre phenomenon. Chapter two looks at the importance of mime training for contemporary performance. This requires a focus on selected theatre practitioners who have significantly advanced the development of mime training and performance during the twentieth century. Chapter three examines the issue of silence in mime and questions a potential liberation of the word and language in contemporary performance and consequently how this affects the role of the performer, particularly in South Africa. Chapter four investigates the figure of the theatrical clown and how this late twentieth century development is playing an increasingly important role in contemporary performance. Chapter five then wraps up part one by pulling the preceding chapters together and thereby providing a *working* conceptualisation of the *performer-creator*, locating it within an overall appreciation of contemporary mime.

Part two then tests the notion of the *performer-creator* by focussing on a case study through the investigation of Andrew Buckland to develop this idea. Andrew Buckland, and his work under the ethos of Mouthpeace from 1988-2000, provides a clear and unique example of this movement in contemporary South African performance.

Trained as an actor and in classical illusion-based mime technique, as well as many

dance forms such as ballet, contemporary and jazz, he has virtually single-handedly created and shaped a particular performance trend that is in line with contemporary international trends but retains a distinctive South African flavour. There is no space to attempt a definitive or exhaustive examination of his works, and nor is the intent to do so; rather, the aim is to draw from his work their essences that reveal his development as an artist: as both a creator and a performer.

CONTENTS

	page
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Part One: Conceptualising the <i>performer-creator</i>	
Chapter One: A Crisis of Definition	8
Chapter Two: A Living Technique	22
Chapter Three: Between the Teeth – The Demise of the Word?	41
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Clown	55
Chapter Five: The performer-creator	69
Part Two: Andrew Buckland and Mouthpeace 1988-2000	
Chapter Six: Theatre is dead! Long live Theatre!	78
Chapter Seven: South African well-being	88
Conclusion	98
Appendix A	100
Appendix B	103
References	109

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions in making this research possible:

Andrew Buckland: for giving of his time, inspiration and mounds and mounds of scraps of paper with doodles and drawings and god knows what else on them

My theatre colleagues: for inspiration, sweat, going the distance and all the challenges.

Juanita Finestone: for all the practical advice, endless debate and incredible support since I arrived at Rhodes.

My supervisors, Professor Gary Gordon and Ms Jane Osborne: for suggestions, advice and encouragement.

The staff of the National English Literary Museum: for incredible help tracking down articles and reviews anyone else might have thought long extinct.

Chester Müller, manager of Derevo Theater in Dresden: for help, video footage, press packages and future collaboration.

My folks, Mike and Rose Murray: for quiet but unabashed support throughout the years.

My sister, Shane: for insight, practical advice and the use of her computer.

My sister, Kork.E: for all the incredible support and interest over the years.

Darren Murray: for showing all of us that one just has to follow through on dreams.

Tom Schwarzer: for *that* letter, endless support and inspiration and for Through Blue tears.

This thesis is dedicated to Tink: for her passion, interest, inspiration, making it all worthwhile and showing me a future vision and the way of getting there.

“And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In a general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate – but there is no competition –
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.”

T.S. ELIOT, East Coker 1940

INTRODUCTION

Mime is dead! Long live mime!

Legend has it that at the end of the 1960s a renowned theatre teacher held a mock funeral in Prague, lying to rest the ossified body of mime: "this affected, corrupted form" as he saw it.¹ This teacher was Jacques Lecoq, whose name has virtually become synonymous with contemporary mime and physical theatre.² This symbolic burial of an art form is a perfect example of the contemporary attitude towards mime, as performers and teachers are moving away from a closed definition of it as a style that found its form only in the early twentieth century, towards a more open conceptualisation. It is worthwhile quoting Jacques Lecoq himself at some length:

Mime became ossified as soon as it separated itself from theatre. It closed in upon itself and only an emphasis on virtuosity could give it any meaning. In the end, French theatre rejected it completely, expelled it and viewed it as a separate art form. But miming is a fundamental human action: children mime the world in order to get to know it and to prepare themselves to live in it. Theatre is a game which merely extends this action in different ways. (Lecoq et al 2000 p 22)

Rather than viewing mime as a technique with no other end than of itself in virtuosity, contemporary mime seeks to amalgamate a rigorous physical training with a notion of 'play', in a process that finds its product in a wide alchemy of performance: clowning, classical mime, commedia dell'arte, dance, physical and visual theatre, object manipulation, acting and design. As Norbert Servos remarks:

Contemporary mimes are developing the same provocative élan as, a few decades ago, dance and physical theatre did. Borders between genres have been blurred; one can barely make out anymore where mime and acting end and dance begins. Any and everything goes, as long as it furthers expression. And it is barely possible to determine in retrospect who first influenced whom: Did Tanztheatre [sic] impinge on mime, or was it the other way around? (1999 p10)

This question of Servos' is an important and highly interesting one that is an investigation all in itself. What is more important for this investigation is a tacit link suggested between mime and physical theatre, one that will be explored in part one.

¹ Writer unknown, "Eloquent Bodies", *The Economist* 09/11/1999

² Through the work and exploration undertaken at École Jacques Lecoq in Paris, which opened in 1956, and the many past students now working in contemporary theatre and significantly influencing it.

What is evident with this new conceptualisation and attitude towards mime is that it “repeatedly finds itself in a crisis of self-definition” (*ibid*) – a crisis that makes it very difficult for the researcher to put down any concrete roots or foundations on which to develop an argument.

At the heart of this crisis seems to be that contemporary theatre performance, particularly mime-based work, is phenomenological by nature – performance exists in a specific space and time that is shared by the performer and audience. Each night, each performance, serves as a ‘ritual’ of sorts: “a collaboration between the infinitely variable energies of two performers [in *The Well Being*, in this instance] and the random collection of people who make up the audience and which is completely different every night.” (Andrew Buckland, final report 1999 p5) The performance cannot easily be written up objectively and therefore studied because the writer has been subject to that experience, and has engaged with that work – imaginatively, emotionally, or intellectually.³ Therefore, it stands to reason that any account of an experience is going to be affected by a very personal interaction with it. This subjectivity, or personal experience/interaction is one that bleeds right throughout the history of mime and particularly in current manifestations, as it is a phenomena happening *now*. Perhaps in a decade it will be easier with the advantage of hindsight, although then researchers will be having similar problems to ones now. It seems a vicious circle of indecisiveness occurs.

This could begin to account for why there is an apparent paucity of critical theory available to the researcher. However, it also begins to suggest something else that could be vital for our investigation in that practitioners are embodying the research, or the critical theory, within their working methodology. In short, current theory is being developed as this research is being written up, not necessarily in books and papers and academic theory, but in the rehearsal rooms, on the floor, on stages around the world. In other words, the rehearsal process embodies the research and performance is being seen as a legitimate way of ‘writing up’ this research.⁴

³ David Alcock: “It is readily acknowledged that theatre is an ephemeral medium and the difficulty of recording theatre performances, particularly those with a high somatic content and less reliant on text, is one of the problems which face academics and historians.” (in Blumberg and Walder 1999 p49) See also Alison Oddey 1994 on this problem of documentation.

⁴ This is a view held by Rhodes University in particular who have granted Andrew Buckland an associate professorship on this basis.

This is backed by what recent performance studies there are indicating a constant search and re-search for new and innovative physical languages in mime-based work (Rolfe 1981, Leabhart 1989, Mitchell 1999, Jenkins 1988 and 1994, Lecoq *et al* 2000). For the purposes of this study, this reflects a contemporary movement towards the performer playing a crucial role in researching, devising, developing and performing work and hence a new, or alternative, view of the performer emerges: no longer merely an interpreter of someone else's vision, the performer becomes the primary creator: the *performer-creator*.

This view is evident in contemporary physical performance in all its various forms. Although some crosscurrent and cross-pollination is unavoidable, for the purposes of this study, it is located mainly within the experience of mime-based performance:

As we examine mime from 1900 to the present, we discover that mime is not some precious and separate discipline quite outside the mainstream of theatre, but, rather, that it is again, as it used to be, a multifaceted form of expression which is at the heart of theatre – a theatre of the creative actor who determines the synthesis, movement, text, music, lighting and décor. (Leabhart 1989 p60)

All of this points towards a new awareness of the performer, and by extension the process of generating work as it does also the performer-director and performer-audience relationship. The *performer-creator* is not an entity in itself. The *performer-creator* is an idea or a conceptualisation, as Andrew Buckland says:

I think that's an idea – the actor-creator is an idea. All of us are that sometimes and sometimes we're not. I don't think that, you know "When I grow up I'm gonna be that"...The nature of that is enquiry; research. Also you're never one thing, you're constantly trying to find out [pointing to himself] 'what is this thing?' And because the world is changing and because you're changing, that relationship is changing, it's never-ending. (Interview November 2001)

In this, it is an attitude – a contemporary awareness towards the performer, and of the performer towards her work. This new awareness is the focal point of this research. It traces the development of contemporary trends and draws together disparate opinion and research (subject as much as it is to personal bias) in order to distil the essence of the contemporary trend towards the notion of the *performer-creator*.

Various practitioners make some reference to the 'actor-creator' (Marc Bauman, James Roose-Evans 1989, The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre and to some extent Jacques Lecoq et al 2000). In attempting to articulate the *performer-creator*, this study embraces Barba's usage of the 'performer' to mean actor and dancer, both male and female. (Eugenio Barba 1994) In this way, the research links mime to a broader idea of theatre in all its fields, as shall become evident.

There are a number of problems that face this study.

Firstly, the sheer size of the field that it occupies necessitates a selection of pertinent material and examples of practitioners. It is impossible to include a discussion of everything, therefore the intention is to provide a working conceptualisation of this phenomenon and thereby suggest further research.

Secondly, the form of this thesis is by its nature limiting to the focus of its study. While every attempt has been made to follow academic guidelines that regulate such research, it must be understood that occasionally some personal reflection, or interjection, is needed, as this research constitutes the second part of the process. The first part, completed in 2000, saw research documented in a way more applicable to this field: performance. That is not to undermine this thesis in any way at all, but it must be pointed out that limits imposed upon it result in an imperfect form.

Thirdly, it is of necessity that some investigation into the history of twentieth century mime takes place. This is problematic in that it results in a very Euro-centric viewpoint. This is, of course, somewhat applicable due to the fact that Andrew Buckland has been trained in predominantly European forms, but does not engage much with performance forms more indigenous to South Africa. That, unfortunately, is another study. For the purposes of this study, it is acknowledged that while physical theatre has become a visibly European (and now American too) practice, it is also a part of South African performance in a broader sense. As Professor Gary Gordon (artistic director and HOD of Rhodes University Drama Department) writes:

There are plenty of exponents of physical theatre in England and Europe, but this theatre practice has also been explored if not named in South Africa. The creators

and performers of Woza Albert!, Kwamanzi, The Hungry Earth, The Ugly Noo Noo, Homosexuals out in Africa and Take the Floor all utilise physical statements as an integral part of their work – the notion of addressing physicality is not necessarily new. Performance in South Africa is reliant on the physical and vocal skills of the performers. This approach has characterised black expression in South Africa where there has always been a close integration between “song, lyric, tone, rhythm, movement, rhetoric, and drama” [quoting David Copland 1985]. This is part of South Africa’s cultural heritage and now physical and vocal expressions are becoming an imaginative challenge for many current productions. (Inaugural lecture, 1994 p17)⁵

Consequently, there are many areas that a study of Buckland’s work could cover – not only mime, but also protest theatre, his interest in traditional oral performance (and links therewith) as well as his work with students and his work with communities. In the light of this study, however, discussion is of necessity limited to the scope of his work that embodies only that which is discussed herein with regards to the *performer-creator*. Therefore, contrary to aims stated at the beginning of this undertaking and indicated by the title, slightly more weight is given to the discussion of conceptualising the *performer-creator*. Discussion of Buckland’s work is offered as an example of this – a concrete example of what is discussed earlier. The definitive study of Andrew Buckland and his work (in as much as any study can be ‘definitive’) thus remains to be made in the future.

This is problematic in that it strikes something of a discord with the title of this thesis, thwarting expectation somewhat as suggested by its title. It is, however, a discord that cannot be avoided due to the unwieldy size of this research and the many disparate strands that need to be threaded together, compounded by Buckland’s resistance to labels.

Lastly, there is some concern over the use of the word ‘new’ that keeps cropping up throughout the research. Whilst sometimes legitimately part of a genre, or sub-genre (such as new circus, new dance, new mime and recently also new writing), the use of the word is problematic in that it suggests a complete break with what has preceded

⁵ To this list of South African performers utilising aspects of physical theatre in some way, Alcock adds Ellis Pearson, Ilse van Hemert, Susan Pam-Grant, the First Physical Theatre Company, Asinimali!, Egoli and You Strike the Woman, You Strike the Rock. (1999 p51) Mark Fleishman adds Jennie Reznick, Weird Sex in Maputo, Abamanyani and Prophets in a Black Sky. (1996 pp 177-179) Since their writings, there has been a significant growth in this field, in all its forms. What remains constant, however, is that still there are relatively few companies – First Physical and Magnet Theatre Educational Trust are perhaps the exceptions.

it. This is not necessarily the case – much of contemporary performance deals with issues of ‘dramatic renovation’ (term used by Jacques Copeau initially) to some extent. This does not mean only revising old forms, but finding within them certain echoes or resonance that practitioners deem applicable to contemporary aesthetics and fusing them together in some alchemical hybrid that suggests a ‘new’ form.⁶ Another problem occurs with the deconstruction of historical power structures. It is tempting to call whatever form emerges ‘new’, but that risks the danger of just swapping one ideology for another, creating a different version of a familiar problem. Rather than this, anything ‘new’ should perhaps be seen merely as an alternative – another point in a larger field that allows for a more open and equal dialogue of ideas and concerns.

⁶ Last year, part of our investigation into contemporary performance studies involved looking at the trickster: “Returns to archaic forms or leaps forward to new?” (facilitated by Andrew Buckland).

Part One:

Conceptualising the *performer-creator*

Chapter One: The Crisis of Definition

"The changing, tantalizing Bird of Pantomime has skipped and flitted its way throughout all countries for centuries, defying anyone to cage it for long within a definition. Many have tried to put salt on its tail; the Bird itself is confused and is heard asking quizzically: "Am I a noun, a verb, or a fad?" as it gaily hops from perch to perch, scattering joy with never a thought to the past or future." (Bari Rolfe 1981, p6)

In 1997, I had the rare and fortunate experience of watching the 50th anniversary performance of Marcel Marceau at the Royal Festival Hall in London. For this special appearance – his only British performance – the audience was treated to a selection of some of his best-known work, including "The Trial", "Bip the Lion Tamer" and "The Painter". Watching Marceau perform was an unforgettable experience: here was the legend of all legends in the world of mime theatre, now past seventy, and still delivering a masterly performance with precision and expert timing.

However, stepping out of the Festival Hall, I was reminded of a passage I had read on physical theatre. The reviewer had recently seen Siobhan Davies' Wyoming and before that, DV8's apocalyptic Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men, and she writes:

...as I made my way evening after evening to Dance Umbrella venues, (hardly sunsets, boulevards and the ballet) stepping over the homeless to exit from the underground station, winding a cautious route through dimly-lit, nervously avoiding the wasteland areas under overhead motorways... Wyoming [sic] seemed a long way from home and the preoccupations of the more inner-city based genre of British 'dance theatre' only too understandable, only too real. (Lesley-Anne Sayers 1988, review)

So too felt Marceau's poetic little sketches to me – generations removed from what contemporary life was all about. There is no doubting the genius of the man and the skill and awesome technique, but surely there is more to life, as to theatre, than that? Yet ask anyone today "What is mime?" and most will call to mind the silent, white-faced clown made so popular by Marceau:

...most people still picture classical pantomime, à la Marcel Marceau, that has defined the image of mime for decades: Little poetic stories, told in highly stylised gestures —endearing yet a bit removed from the times. (Servos 1999 p10)

Above all – *silent*. Maybe it is a sign of the times that contemporary audiences cannot deal too well with silence – the world is loud, packed with sound-bites, swarming with colour and incessantly moving towards an ever uncertain future.¹ What real place does the mime, walking against the wind, or creating imaginary walls and barriers, play? She becomes an anachronism, a cliché, a stereotype – part of our collective memory, something that we recognise and are glad to recognise (because then it no longer threatens us) but ultimately means nothing. Ultimately the white-faced silent mime seems caught out of place, caught out by time and therefore put out of mind.

What seemed searingly closer to the times, however, were performances by Russian anti-clown troupe Derevo at the 1998 London International Mime Festival and Edinburgh Festival, performances that perfectly embody director and head clown Anton Adassinski's programme notes: "No one style has priority on stage, the only thing that counts is the human soul." (1998).

Their production of The Red Zone, described as "butoh inspired circus at the end of the world" (programme notes), explodes the whole notion of mime performance by mixing dance, a veritable 'theatre of cruelty', performance art and the dark and sinister side of clowning.² The critics raged:

Amazing, stunning, beautiful, ugly. The list of adjectives to describe this show could go on. This is theatre at its most innovative...Derevo redefine the medium; using daring, risk, vulnerability, honesty and commitment, both physical and emotional, that

¹ J.G. Ballard, in his introduction to *Crash* (1973) writes: "The marriage of reason and nightmare that has dominated the 20th century has given birth to an ever more ambiguous world. Across the communications landscape move the spectres of sinister technologies and the dreams that money can buy. Thermo-nuclear weapons systems and soft-drink commercials coexist in an overlit realm ruled by advertising and pseudo-events, science and pornography. Over our lives preside the great twin leitmotifs of the 20th century – sex and paranoia."

² The Red Zone is a sensual sledgehammer; it opens with a ragged circus act of bungling clowns: knives and various implements of destruction criss-cross the stage in a frenzied juggling act; they are almost nonchalantly plucked out of the air or dangerously dropped. The smell of extreme violence is all pervading, but balances on a thin line of humour. Just as chaos is about to explode, the performers seamlessly break into a short line-dance, performed like the band playing on as the ship sinks and humanity slowly descends to hell. The stage is plunged into darkness and when illumination returns, it is as if Derevo has unscrewed their collective skull and all Goya's demons come pouring out. Short vignettes and interactions occur – a woman chases a man around the stage until, fed up, he kicks her back from whence she came, even right off the stage into the audience. A naked body is suspended upside down while two further bodies pass between them a glowing red orb that seems to float across the space. By the end of the show, the stage is drenched in a gelatinous substance that could be albumen, or afterbirth, or even K-Y jelly. The performers slip and slide as they desperately try to regain control over each other:

is rarely seen. ...Call it what you like – dance, movement, clowning, acting – this really is total theatre. (David Richter 1998, review)

In Edinburgh they change tack completely and present Once..., an almost pantomime fairytale of unrequited love “dedicated to the child living in us until we die” (programme notes).³ Again, the critics exalt: “Derevo’s *Once* is absolutely stunning. It’s the best of the best, not just of mime, its own genre, but the whole theatre-arts shooting match.” (Bonnie Lee 1998, review) And also:

It is, almost simultaneously, profound and dumbed down. These razor-sharp, flash-fast changes in tone and style are the genius of *Once* and to describe this as Camus meets the Keystone Cops would be flip but fair. ...This is one of the most committed performances you would ever hope to see and one that makes most acts look decidedly mediocre by comparison. (Peter Ross 1998, review)

If theatre, after Artaud, is indeed meant to furnish the audience ‘with the truthful precipitate of dreams’ and that humankind has forgotten “the slightest idea of a serious theatre which upsets all our preconceptions, inspiring us with fiery, magnetic imagery” (1993 p64), then it appears to have found its power with Derevo who embody completely the idea of ‘total theatre’.

It is tempting to place Marceau and Derevo on opposite sides on some form of spectrum and compare them in order to illustrate two disparate arguments for mime. While interesting, this is no doubt intrinsically false, as it sets them up in some kind of opposition against each other. Furthermore, it ignores Marceau feeling that his style came to trap him. It also takes no cognizance of the social and historical milieu that Marceau began his career in, and elevates Derevo into a superior position by means of their performance being more recent. The truth lies probably somewhere between the two and the positions that they occupy are merely two points in a much larger field than what is first noticeable.

³ Once... tells the story of an old man struck numb with love for a beautiful waitress. Enlisting the aid of a very pessimistic Cupid, the would-be suitor can only watch his love succumb to the attentions of a Nesferatu-like rival who steals her away to his palace of snow and ice. Thus begins the clown’s desperate journey to win her back, a journey that is expertly paced between laughter and tears. Once... comes across like Commedia crossed with a Salvador Dali painting – part rock-opera, part surrealistic fantasy, part soap opera, that carries the audience into a timeless void, an imaginary space between the underworld and Never-Never Land in a perfectly wordless tragicomedy.

If this is believed then what does become apparent is the incredibly diverse field of performance that this study is concerned with. This recognition then begs the question: what possible chance does one have to come up with some form of definition or conceptualisation for contemporary mime? Chances seem slim indeed.

However, what is perhaps most interesting, or worthwhile, is that it appears that mime is no longer bound to one style or form – hence the ‘crisis of definition’.⁴ Rather, it embraces an attitude towards making work – the contemporary mime performer is still highly trained in classical mime, but views it only as one of the many tools (or ‘toys’, as Buckland is wont to say) available to her. Consequently, there is a significant shift on the part of the performer and her process of creation that leads to a product that is not a known entity beforehand. The product is not a closed field or specified style or form known from the beginning of the creative process – rather, the product in some ways reflects the process by being shaped and formed as it develops. Thus, possibilities become endless, governed only by the performer and their relationship with the director, their own sensibility and physical imagination, and by the performer’s engagement in the process. Hence the focus of this research: the performer-creator, an alternative approach to training and to devising work. For, as Marc Bauman is quick to point out:

The best performances tend to affect their audiences viscerally and proceed from instinctive rather than intellectual motivation. The seminal force of this expressive art is dramatic action and so, at the heart of physical theatre, we find the actor. However, not an actor who merely interprets, but an actor who creates – that is, an “actor-creator”. (in Bauman Theatre Forums)

Perhaps more accurately one could say that it seems to be moving in that direction, just as audiences are slowly coming around to a deeper more enriched idea of mime than they have heretofore been exposed to.

In 1997 the Mime Action Group changed its name to Total Theatre Network, “...partly because there was no consensus on the meaning of the word ‘mime’.” (Dorothy Max

⁴ Not that contemporary mime shies away from illusion-based work at all. Certainly, the training is invaluable, if not crucial. Contemporary mimes can now choose how best to theatrically devise what they want to. They are not limited by style.

Prior 2001, p7) She asks whether it will be possible to achieve a clearer consensus on what exactly 'total theatre' is.⁵

The question must arise of whether this debate or crisis is necessary? Why the need to define what mime is? Max Prior admits: "What we're discussing is a living, breathing, mutating art form – not something carved in stone." (ibid) That is to say, mime has continually and consistently adapted and re-forged itself, from the beginning to current interpretation:

The word 'Mime' is like a phoenix on speed – constantly dying and being regenerated. Schools, companies and individuals begin with 'Mime', then lose the word because it is difficult to sell. ...Yet the art of Mime is the basis for all dramatic movement. (Desmond Jones 1995 p14)⁶

Max Prior continues, though: "definitions are important – not to pin a thing down so that it can no longer live, but in order to communicate and collaborate." (p7) This much certainly is true and clearly so – without communication and without collaboration, there can be no real movement, no development. It is precisely *this* that the art form needs. Western mime, the illusion-based style known largely as 'classical' mime has a very short history: Etienne Decroux, the so-called father of modern mime, only developed his corporeal technique in the first half of the twentieth century. That it has developed into an international 'look' is a remarkable achievement, mainly due to Marceau's efforts. Within that one style, however, there is little development, or tradition. Contemporary mime is plugging back into the bigger picture, the larger tradition: a 'living' tradition. Consequently, training undertaken for contemporary mime (involving as it does contemporary dance, ballet, gymnastics, classical mime technique, clowning, buffoonery, movement analysis, yoga et al⁷) moves away from being an end in and of itself but towards a 'living technique', such as that which Barba advocates (Eugenio Barba 1994).

Mime is that strange creature which all of us recognise when we see it – or do we?
And everyone agrees that it started 'way back when', only what was it? ... It is still

⁵ She admits she has no way of knowing, but what she wants to do is open up the debate. Her article is intended as the first of a series looking at the historical context and contemporary manifestation of Total Theatre. It will indeed be interesting to see where it goes from here.

⁶ For more about this, please refer to Bari Rolfe 1981; Thomas Leabhart 1989; Annette Lust 1998 or any number of the mime training books that offer a history by way of introduction.

⁷ This is just a selection of various training areas collated from various school and company websites as well as personal experience and teaching.

tempting to try to separate whatever one means by “mime”, this fluid, flexible, sensible art form, this kinaesthetic way of looking at the world, from dance or English panto or eurhythmic or mimed ballads or...Perhaps what is most important is that a definition does not close creative doors, that it always follows the artistic thrust and does not precede it to act as a formula or recipe. Instead of definitions let us hope for less “What is it?” and more “How does it stretch appreciation of movement and its effect?” (Rolfe 1981, p6)⁸

As much as this crisis of definition is not a new one to mime, neither is it new for theatre in the twentieth century. One of the most eclectic and exciting movements in the latter half has been the development of ‘physical theatre’: “one of the most significant trends in dance and theatre since the 1980s.” (Ana Sanchez-Colberg 1996, p40) Sanchez-Colberg writes that, at a basic level at least, the term has come to be used to identify

...an eclectic production commonly understood to be one which focusses on the unfolding of a narrative through physicalized events and which relegates verbal narrative – if at all present – to a subordinate position. (*ibid*)

Furthermore, she sees in the term ‘physical theatre’ itself, a “hybrid character” – one which is “testimony to its legacy in both avant-garde theatre and dance.” (p40)

This very hybridity (reminiscent of extant theories of post-modernism, post-feminism and post-colonialism⁹) and its extended ancestry has proved to be a headache for the physical theatre critic and scholar, just as contemporary mime (and mime throughout the ages) has proved. In her essay, Sanchez-Colberg tackles the issue of definition:

However, this study does not aim to arrive at a reductive classification of physical theatre. Rather it aims to show that what the genre defines is not only a set of stylistic features of a production which is bodily based, but rather one which extends

⁸ This suggests a conceptualisation of mime rather than a watertight definition. This is perhaps one of the answers for addressing the crisis, in that a conceptualisation encompasses a much broader area than a rigid definition and as such, this is what this research attempts.

⁹ I am aware that many of the central traits of these theories play a vital part in exploring aspects of physical theatre and contemporary performance, but that is another study all in itself. Or many studies – a short encyclopaedia, perhaps. For those interested, please refer to writers such as Barthes, Jameson, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, Lacan, Bhabha, Cixous and Kristeva for starters. Some mention and discussion is made on selected writers in the light of specific areas.

discursive practices within the relative and tense relationship between the body/text/theatre reality which goes beyond mere representation via the body. (p40)

Going beyond mere representation, the primary act of a body on stage (as both theatrical object and personal subject) is heightened. Within the loose boundaries that physical theatre encompasses, however, one is able to discern an apparent further split, a further 'double legacy'.

On the one hand is found a more 'dancerly' physical theatre (more abstract with or without a narrative that may or may not unfold in a logical manner), and on the other a more 'actorly' physical theatre (based strongly on a narrative that may or may not unfold in a logical manner).¹⁰ That there is such a range within what is called physical theatre surely points to backing up Sanchez-Colberg's claims of the double legacy. Both see the physical body, and by extension the performer, as central to the performance, even as 'text'. These two aspects are by no means final or conclusive – of course there is much interplay between the two.

The first aspect is perhaps best encapsulated through the work of practitioners such as Lloyd Newson and his company DV8 and Wim Van Der Keybus and his company Ultima Vez (both practitioners are compared and contrasted by Sanchez-Colberg) and, closer to home, Gary Gordon and his company the First Physical Theatre Company in Grahamstown¹¹. Gordon writes:

The First Physical Theatre Company is a testament of action - a declaration of intent amongst artists working in South Africa. It teases together the dynamic elements of theatre ... dance, music, mime, design, voice, song and movement collide or come together in an atmosphere that is exhilarating and always illuminating. (Gary Gordon, Artistic Director, September 1997, reprinted on the company's website:

www.ru.ac.za/firstphysical)

¹⁰ As mentioned before with regards to Marceau and Derevo, it is of course utterly foolish to split these up this way as they are not necessarily in opposition. It is done here just to eke out some of the border territory and disputes in order to achieve some kind of clarity.

¹¹ The development of physical theatre in this aspect has a long history, as Sanchez-Colberg suggests. Developments in modern and post-modern dance spurred it on, as well as groundbreaking work done by Pina Bausch in Tanztheater. I am not suggesting that all these practitioners share similar influences, but they have certainly emerged from a similar attitude to blending the supposedly disparate elements of drama, dance and design, among others. Each practitioner's form or style is their own unique conceptualisation. The impact of Bausch internationally towards blending forms has been phenomenal. For more information see Raimund Hoghe 1980; Susan Allene Manning 1986; Birringer 1991; Norbert Servos and Gert Weigelt 1984; and her website: www.pina-bausch.de

Physical theatre first came to the attention of audiences not only through the alchemy of disparate forms, but mainly through its bone-jarring presence, its athletic gravity-defying leaps, rolls and catches. This is not to suggest that this is all that physical theatre is about, but this is certainly how audiences first came to notice it. The danger of this is the perceived 'newness' of it all, with a carefully conceived and articulated artistic statement becoming a trend, or a fad and consequently commercialised. Many practitioners (especially the young who are attracted by the sound and fury) ape the external form without any consideration to the process undertaken by the aforementioned. Neither do they address the subliminal, sometimes explicit, political statements being made.¹² This rash of imitation has led to it being dubbed 'euro-crash', which, for some critics, came to be as empty as professional wrestling.¹³

The second aspect is perhaps most evident through the influence of École Jacques Lecoq in Paris.¹⁴ The lineage of graduates reads a little like a 'who's who' in contemporary theatre: Simon McBurney (Theatre de Complicité), Philippe Gaulier (École Philippe Gaulier), Ariane Mnouchkine (Theatre du Soleil), Steven Berkoff¹⁵, Avner "The Eccentric" Eisenberg, Julie Taymor (director of the West End smash hit 'The Lion King'), the late Carlo Mazzone-Clementi (one of the founders of The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre in Blue Lake, California) and many more. In South Africa, there is currently a growing awareness of the affect of Lecoq's methodology through past students that include Jennie Reznick (of Magnet Theatre Educational Trust), Ellis Pearson, Sue Pam-Grant, James Cunningham and Sylvaine Strike.¹⁶

¹² For example: the body and gender presentation and representation in society. In interview with Ilona Frege, October 1994, Gordon says: "One of the strongest things that seem to confront people when they see our work, has to do with gender. They see our treatment of women in particular as quite different, although I think it's our treatment of women and men, because as much as women do the supporting and sharing of weight, the carrying, they have another kind of strength and that's what we've been investigating. In the same way you're also allowing men to be sensitive, vulnerable and delicate." See also DV8's political issues in many reviews and articles on their website, www.dv8.co.uk.

¹³ This is another area demanding a further, different study. See Mary Brennan's article, "Eurocrash – the bane of Physical Theatre?" in *Dance Theatre Journal*, vol. 13 no. 3 1997, and Nadine Meisner, "Turning Towards New Territory?" in *Dance Theatre Journal*, vol. 12 no. 2 1995, for a good entry point.

¹⁴ The Jacques Lecoq School, founded in 1956, is an international professional school of mime and theatre based on movement and the human body.

¹⁵ Berkoff was not a full time student, but emphatically cites the influence of Lecoq on his work. See Berkoff 1997 and C. Rosen, online dissertation.

¹⁶ The training and philosophy of Lecoq and his school will be investigated in more depth in the next chapter, as it really does play such a unique part in contemporary theatre.

This is physical theatre in a much broader sense, and many of the above practitioners, in order to avoid the 'mime' tag, currently refer to their work as such. Physical theatre here is viewed as:

...the craft of building theatre through physical actions, characterization and stage composition. Physical Theatre uses as its primary means of expression movement, dynamic immobility [a movement itself], gesture and a variety of acting techniques. The context in which all of these elements are blended is determined by the message the performers wish to communicate... Sometimes their stories are linear, sometimes non-linear. Performers and companies have drawn inspiration from several performing arts disciplines including commedia dell'arte, Asian theatre, the silent film era, vaudeville, clown and circus skills, mime, pantomime, street theatre, improvisation, mask, puppet, avant-garde, experimental theatre and the visual arts. The truth is there are so many examples of performers and companies using physical theatre techniques that to limit their inspiration to the above-mentioned genres would be somewhat misleading. (Marc Bauman, performer and teacher, article "Physical Theatre" published on his website, Bauman Theatre Forums:
<http://www.geocities.com/Broadway/1723/>)

It is more within this company that contemporary mime falls – not exclusively, for as Servos wrote: 'anything and everything goes', but here it shows it is opening up to a far broader conceptualisation that includes much inter-disciplinary or collaborative work.

There has been an attempt to dub these developments as 'new mime'. In 1999, the London International mime Festival hosted Total Theatre's Critical Practice Debate on "What is the new mime?" Reporting on it, David Harradine, from *Fevered Sleep*, writes that he hoped he would be able to resolve for himself a struggle he encounters when trying to describe or define mime to anyone who has little understanding of it beyond Marcel Marceau.

The panel (including premier mime and contemporary practitioners such as Nola Rae, Jon Potter, David Glass and director of the festival, Joseph Seelig) found the term an exceedingly difficult one to pin down. (David Harradine 1999, pp18-19) Jon Potter, of Company Paradiso¹⁷, attempts a conceptualisation:

¹⁷ Very little information about them – apparently, Company Paradiso is a physical theatre company in Manchester. Like many other physical theatre companies, they hold training projects with the youth as well as creating work that is performed all over the UK.

...work that comes from a training of the body, that draws on the imitation of the natural and the world, work that often uses sensual means rather than cerebral means in its conception and execution; work that can celebrate complexity and difference, that exists between cultures, and that can touch our human spirits. If you have seen such work, that is the new mime. (quoted in Harradine 1999, p19)

At first glance this might seem immaterial; or, rather, stating the obvious. The features that Potter describes as being 'new mime' could extend anywhere in the gamut of contemporary physical performance – why specifically is this mime-related? Furthermore, there is a certain awkwardness whenever a word like 'new' comes into play. Nola Rae in particular states: "I don't think we can decide what 'new mime' is until we really know what 'old mime' is!" (Harradine, 1999 p19)¹⁸ In this she highlights one of the many problems facing such a categorisation: how new is 'new'? Questions arise that beg answers, which prove impossible at the present moment: how original or different is it in comparison to a perceived older form? Is it a helpful term at all? Ironically, given his status as an 'older', or dated, form of mime, perhaps the best response is given by Marceau himself:

I'm not a traditional mime at all. I have created something totally new out of necessity. We do not know exactly how the ancient mimes played. Precise instructions were never written down so it has been up to each new generation of mimes to create their own styles. (in Ben Martin 1978)

Although Marceau's belief that he created something totally new is questionable, he points towards the crux of this study that places the performer at the heart of the creative process. The performer takes what they have gleaned from history, but during the creative process develops a unique style – whatever that might be. This highlights the *performer-creator* as playing a decisive role in any current or future evolution of what might be conceptualised as mime. Recalling Bauman, "The seminal force of this expressive art is dramatic action and so, at the heart of physical theatre, we find the actor. However, not an actor who merely interprets, but an actor who creates – that is, an "actor-creator". (*op cit*)

¹⁸ Nola Rae is an internationally renowned artist in mime, dance, comedy and puppetry. She trained at the Royal Ballet School in London before dancing professionally in Copenhagen. She then turned to mime, studying with Marcel Marceau in Paris. In 1977, she founded the London International Mime Festival with Joseph Seelig. According to her biography, in 1990 she changed her style radically, and presented full-length comic dramas where one character (clown) would develop over the evening. See: www.nolarae.btinternet.co.uk for more details.

In this one can clearly see Leabhart's 'creative actor' and his belief that mime returns to being the very womb of theatre itself.¹⁹ What also becomes visible is an idea of the bigger picture of where mime is at today. Furthermore, also how it falls into a larger conceptualisation of physical theatre and consequently contemporary performance. This is so particularly in terms of style and the giant step that mime is taking (and has somewhat achieved) outside of its invisible box and into its rightful place at the forefront of contemporary physical performance:

...some of the most exciting work in this year's Mime Festival could be said to have very little in common with mime as it has traditionally been conceived. And I guess it is precisely in this fact that 'new mime' begins to locate itself: not as a rigidly characterised way of working that offers a stock of traits and readily classifiable ideas, but more as an artform in flux, a literal body of works in which physicality and feeling are increasingly highlighted and foregrounded, but in which other disciplines, multiple perspectives, and even (dare I say it?) the spoken word will happily find its place.
(Harradine, p19)

In the end, then, the question arises of what really is in a name? John Towsen writes: "Call it mime, new vaudeville, clown-theatre, movement theatre, or simply physical theatre, there is no denying that it has given our contemporary performing arts scene a much needed shot of adrenalin." (Towsen, 1987)

Dorothy Max Prior speaks longingly for the day "we will have no need to place the word 'total' before 'theatre' – theatre will be able to stand unqualified and to be recognised for what it is – an art form with myriad possibilities." (*op cit*, p7) Similarly, maybe one day the word 'physical' will not have to precede 'theatre' either. Nor, for that matter, will 'mime', 'clown', 'visual', 'devised' or 'action' have to play a defining role.

All evidence, though, points towards mime and theatre not being at that point yet. The continuing development and the evolution of mime suggests that, while it might never be possible, what has occurred has been a thorough investigation into what many have seen an 'ossified' art form. The movement towards the *performer-creator* strongly emphasises such investigation and thereby plays an essential role in revitalising mime, primarily in practice, for, as Adassinski states: "Theory is nothing

without practice.” (1998) Examination and investigation is needed to discover where one stands with regards to contemporary practice in order to communicate and offer a very personal viewpoint, one that plays its part in mime’s continuing evolution.

So although a definitive understanding of what contemporary mime is has not been reached, what has been explored is some of its larger scope and current interpretation. Rooted within the physical theatre phenomenon, contemporary mime provides an ideal opportunity to view and approach the performer as central to performance, in the notion of the *performer-creator*.

To sum up, then, and by no means exhaustive, what does one include when talking or writing about contemporary mime? To initiate her debate, Dorothy Max Prior offers these aspects for Total Theatre, and it is worthwhile quoting her at some length:

- A collaboration between performance space and everything that happens within it, including sound, movement and visual imagery.
- A performance mode that can be developed from any starting point: a picture, a written text, a song, an improvisation.
- An art form in its own right, not a branch of literature.
- A form rooted in physical expression – but not excluding the voice which is part of the physical body.
- Performer-centred. The performer in all his or her physical and metaphysical uniqueness as a crucial element of the performance text.
- A theatre that values the language of the subconscious and the archetypal, believing connection to the intuitive world of dream and fantasy to be as real as the relationship with the external world.
- An exchange between performer and ‘other’: co-performer, witness or audience. A shared breath. It happens here and now – no other time would be the same. (Max Prior, *op cit*, p7)²⁰

While this list may not be exhaustive, it is certainly exhausting in that it begs the question that highlights one of the limitations facing this study: can one afford to examine them all, systematically?

¹⁹ This discussion, however, is incomplete and shall be taken up in the following chapter when discussing the big players in 20th century mime.

²⁰ Max Prior knows this is not a complete list and invites suggestions, comments, additions etc. You too can contact her: editorial@totaltheatre.org.uk

For the sake of brevity and for the interests of this study dealing with the *performer-creator*, we hone in on the performer at the centre of it all. What is essential for this unique creature? In terms of mime, it seems the following fields must be explored: the use of mime training and its influence, the relationship that mime has with the written and spoken word, and the development of the clown as a central contemporary theatrical figure. The combination, or the alchemy, of these areas, it is felt, will throw a lot of light onto the growing awareness and importance of the *performer-creator*.²¹

²¹ These are offered in the spirit of my own personal research and what I believe are essential areas to investigate. I am aware that this might disregard other pertinent areas of study, but as Leabhart writes: "These chapters have been composed from material I have had at hand; anyone else would have seen this history with different eyes, and would have written a different book." (1989 pp146-147) So too must be the nature of this study.

Chapter Two: A Living Technique

"The art of the stage developed from mime, which is the representation of inner movements by visible outer motions. Mime is the stem of the tree that has branched into dance and drama." (Rudolf Laban in Bari Rolfe 1981, p116)

As already stated, contemporary mime appears to be plugging into a larger picture of mime, a broader conceptualisation where technique, although essential to training, does not become an end in itself. Rather, it becomes a tool, an entry point, the starting block for dramatic expression that finds its own particular style and form through the make-up of its performers and their theatrical agenda.

The *performer-creator*, the idea of it, is not a method; rather, it is an attitude towards work, a way of developing. To be a creative actor, an artist if you like, one needs to be ready, trained to the hilt but prepared to merge or morph that with one's imagination – one's theatrical, and above all, physical imagination. As Andrew Buckland says:

If we could construct an ideal training programme for them [the contemporary performer], they need to do everything...[they need] an awareness of control and an awareness of what the body is doing. And an unconscious or physical awareness of where the body is, without having to construct it. It's that thing of Grotowski's of the gap between impulse and expression – the impulse is there and the body is there as well...I think mime is almost the peak of those [techniques] because it's absolutely about control, a control of each separate part. Because then you are in a position to be able to transform the body, and transformation I think is key. (interview 2001)

The focus of this chapter, then, cannot become a mere historical account for the development of western mime. As interesting as this is, it has been done and probably done better by others.¹ For the purposes of this study, what is of more concern in building up the idea of the *performer-creator* is the phenomenon of actor training that relates to mime. Again, although some historical archaeology is necessary and unavoidable, one needs to keep in mind *how* it has affected contemporary mime, rather than what it is in too much minute detail.

¹ Thomas Leabhart 1989, for example. *Modern and Post Modern Mime* is practically *de rigueur* for anyone beginning to explore the wide and varied form of twentieth century mime. From all appearances in the article excerpted from her book, Annette Lust 1998 is likely to become another.

If one looks at the history of actor training, particularly in the twentieth century, one finds an interesting (and often recurring) angle with regards to the western world.² Alison Hodge writes that the development of actor training is “arguably the most important development in modern Western theatre making.” (2000 p1) Whilst actors and performers have been exposed to a history of *apprenticeship* and in-house training, the systematic tradition of performer training (so vital to Eastern performance cultures) only really begun to develop at the beginning of the twentieth century. (*ibid*)

This, she claims, was partly due to a growing awareness of training and its importance in the East, as it was to an intensive period of “objective scientific research.” (p2) In other words,

Western European practitioners began to search for absolute, objective languages of acting that could offer models, systems and tested techniques to further the craft. In this context, Stanislavsky was the first actor/director to fully investigate the process of acting and to publish his findings. His seminal texts (*An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character* and *Creating a Role*) came to be essential reading for many European and North American actors. (p2)

And so begins a long line of influential figures who have significantly influenced actor training, among them: Copeau, Meyerhold, Brecht, Artaud (though of course, Artaud never practically realised his vision but remains an important influence throughout and beyond the twentieth century), Strasberg, Grotowski, Barba and Staniewski.

For the purposes of this study, the development of the western tradition of mime in the twentieth century and its current manifestations is by and large the result of the work by four main people: Etienne Decroux (1898-1991), Jean-Louis Barrault (1910-1994), Marcel Marceau (1923-) and Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999).³

² This again, leaves out a whole body of work that links with global ancestry and practice. Although some allusion is made in this research to this, one has to continually remind oneself that this is primarily concerned with western practice. This is very problematic, especially as the study closes in on the South African situation, but by necessity needs to be.

³ The origins of mime, however, lie much further back – obscured by time and history. Annette Lust 1998 suggests (as many concur) that mime predates language and therefore can be traced back as far as one might like. According to her, records and documentation begin to appear with the first forms of written language with the Egyptians, Aztecs and Hebrews as well as ancient religious dance and ceremonies in China, Japan, India and Egypt. From these emerged the actor, who from word go was a

What makes them remarkable is not only that they each developed their own highly personal approach to mime, but also that they stem directly or indirectly from one main source: Jacques Copeau. (Bari Rolfe, in Bauman Theatre Forums)

Copeau sought earnestly to reform theatre from the impasse he believed it was reaching at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1913, he and a breakaway group of friends formed the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier on the banks of the river Seine. (Rudlin 2000, p55; Leabhart 1989, p19) This was a heroic attempt by a man not essentially of the theatre but more of letters (having been a drama critic for many Parisian magazines) who recognised within theatre a dreadful ossification and was determined, as an outsider, to do something about it.⁴ He thus set about not revolution, but what he termed 'dramatic renovation':

It is often said that I intend to break with tradition. The exact opposite is true. I am seeking to bring works closer to the 'true tradition' by freeing them from the contributions loaded on them for three centuries by the official actors {of the Comédie-Française}. The important tradition is the original one. (Jacques Copeau 1922, quoted in John Rudlin 2000, p55)

This idea of dramatic renovation is an important one for the *performer-creator* as it raises the inevitable question: how 'new' are new forms? Contemporary mime appears to be looking back, reaching into the treasure house of history to remould current practice.

The 'true' and 'original' traditions that Copeau refers to involved a return to the heights of Greek theatre, commedia dell'arte and the Elizabethan era. (Thomas Leabhart, 1989 p20) These are aspects that seem to rebound time and time again – Peter Brook sees in Shakespearian theatre a model for current theatre (see The Empty Space 1972), the Greek chorus and its use in tragedy fascinated Jacques Lecoq (see The Moving Body 2000) and commedia dell'arte is a much-used (and oft-

mime, dancer and singer. The first recorded pantomime actor appeared in 467BC. According to Leabhart 1989, that was 270BC.

⁴ According to John Rudlin, 2000, "In review after review he had pointed out the detrimental effects of the star system and its basis in commercial exploitation." (p55) Leabhart, 1989, writes that upon reading theatre history, Copeau was horrified to read of the swerve and vigour of Greek theatre and the golden Shakespearian age, whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century all he could see was a 'debased theatre' where actors expressed themselves primarily (and virtually entirely) through the voice – the rest of the body ignored and inexpressive. (pp 19-20)

misunderstood) genre that is regarded by many practitioners the world over as vital to their developing craft (see Lecoq *et al* 2000; Bari Rolfe 1981 and 1977; Dario Fo 1992; as well as www.dellarte.com)

The legacy of Jacques Copeau is due to the searing attack he initiated on what he called *cabotinage*, “a disease that is not only endemic to the theatre. It’s the malady of insincerity, or rather of falseness. He who suffers from it ceases to be authentic, to be human.” (Copeau quoted in Rudlin *op cit*, p56)⁵

To counter this malady, Copeau’s first steps were to strip away any external trappings that he felt the theatre no longer needed: hangings, plasterwork and finally even the proscenium arch. His aim was to have an entirely neutral space⁶ where he could go about his business of then stripping away all the useless habits and defence mechanisms from his performers: “a natural simplicity and spontaneity from his performers consisting of authenticity of gesture to impulse, well-spoken text and a sense of collective playfulness leading to a unity of dramatic purpose.” (John Rudlin *ibid*) In this can be seen many of the traits that contemporary companies and ensembles strive for.⁷ Also visible are the beginnings of a simplicity and spontaneity that Jacques Lecoq develops, amplified through the use of mask (something Copeau discovered almost by accident).⁸

Furthermore, one is able to start discerning the idea of a ‘zero point’, one that was to play an important role in the continuing development of mime:

Copeau felt that the ‘void’, this ‘state of unbeing’ followed by a ‘coming back to life’, was a model of what had to happen to the theatre as a whole, to each individual actor in his or her ‘renormalisation’ and in each performance. A sometimes painful giving-up of affectation, artifice and *cabotinage* had to precede a rebirth of sincerity, the discovery of the true and fertile source of all theatrical impulse, which would be manifested first in movement, then in inarticulate sound and finally in speech. In a

⁵ This issue of *cabotinage* always reminds me of Grotowski’s issue of dilettantism, or “touristic” behaviour (drifting about without any dedication or responsibility to craft) that Thomas Richards came up against so vividly in his work with his master. See Thomas Richards 1995 for more on this. However, a further interesting angle comes into play with Meyerhold, who (in “The Fairground Booth”) writes very enthusiastically about the *cabotin*, a “strolling player...kinsman to the mime...the histrion [actor]...the cabotin keeps alive the tradition of the true art of acting.” (in Drain 1995 p165) This argument will be taken up further in chapter 4.

⁶ Or empty space, Mr Brook?

⁷ See David Williams 1999 on Ariane Mnouchkine and Theatre du Soleil, and Alison Oddey 1994 on devising theatre.

sense, the traditional actor did die of the plague (of *cabotinage*) and a new one was born, through the struggle of study and improvisation. Behind the mask, the actor of smiles and grimaces died, and a new corporeal actor was born. (Leabhart *op cit* p29)

This idea of the new corporeal actor is one that resonates throughout the development of twentieth century physical performance and as such, is important to our discussion of the *performer-creator*. Grotowski led his performers through an intense process of eradicating their blocks that he called the *via negativa*: "The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction." (Grotowski 1984 p16) Barba leads his company in a search for the "bios" that underpins all performance.⁹ Through training undertaken for Butoh "the performer empties out her self (erases her ego, including gender) to embody another gender. The dualities of mind/body, and of male/female, are erased along with the erasure of the self." (Susan Kozel 1996¹⁰) Derevo strive to achieve a "zero position, i.e. the psychic state of most openness and emptiness without rational analysis of a situation and at the same time to be ready to react to the smallest impulse by partner, room or surrounding." (Newsletter, 1998/99) In mime, one learns the "double-zero" position, a point of readiness and alertness – being absolutely present; this is the essential still point.

However, all scholars tend to agree that Copeau found it far easier to strip the theatre bare than chip away at his performers.¹¹ Although retiring relatively early from active work with his school and company, it was not before he had significantly influenced the next figure in the development of mime: Etienne Decroux.

Decroux had been a pupil of Copeau's and had been marked deeply by his experiences. Convinced by the seed that Copeau had planted in him that the human body alone was enough to fill the stage, he developed exercises that he had learnt and perfected them, gradually codifying them into his "corporeal mime" form.

⁸ See Lecoq *et al* 2000; Harriet Rubin 2000 and Susan Brady 2000.

⁹ By *bios* (more specifically *scenic bios*) Barba is referring to a performer's presence drawn from life and its processes, as opposed to *logos* -- the speech or word as a creative ordering idea. Barba's belief is that by enabling *bios*, the performer attracts the spectator's attention before any meaning is transmitted. (www.odinteatret.dk) See also Eugenio Barba 1994.

¹⁰ See also J. Viala 1988; Lizzie Slater 1986; M. Rotie and S. Kozel 1996; and Ethan Hoffman *et al* 1987.

¹¹ For more information of Copeau's work, see Leabhart 1989; James Roose-Evans 1989 and Rudlin in Alison Hodge 2000.

This form was marked by his belief that “purism” was at the heart of humankind’s artistic endeavours:

The law of art is not addition but subtraction. ... Each art has its own territory. Pantomime and dance are opposites. Dance is abstract and based on music. Mime is concrete and based on life. Dance flows like a stream. Mime moves with the natural plunge and lunge of the muscles. Dance is ecstatic and vertical, Mime earthy and horizontal. (in Bari Rolfe 1981 p106)

It is interesting, therefore, to see his development of a more ‘abstract’ mime in the light of this. For him, mime was not the world of commercial art, of popular narrative-based pantomimes. Theatre remained nothing until the actor had undergone a rigorous immersion into herself and had trained her body to the point where it became an instrument capable of utmost articulation.¹²

According to Leabhart (1997), Decroux saw the world divided between two groups of people: those that stand (labourers, dancers, sculptors and some actors) and those that sit (university professors, critics, clerks and the majority of actors). (p17)¹³ To study corporeal mime, an actor would have to undergo a process considered gravely serious by Decroux – that is, making the art of the actor autonomous, total and complete:

Decroux aimed to find, through the body’s movement alone, a pure, autocratic expression of a complete dramatic form. To achieve this, he made use of exercises with a mask, because his aim was not as yet to perfect the dramatic art. In his words, “dramatic art, until it is an art, cannot become a better one”. Decroux believed that through mime, the actor could free himself from the ‘tyranny’ of the other theatre arts. Working unsupported, with nothing but air and silence around him, the actor could learn to centre in a medium which was complete...(Annette Lust, Total Theatre 1998)

For all intents and purposes, what Decroux bequeathed to mime and contemporary performance was that he made mime an art form. Whatever one might think of his more abstract form, or the very modernist tendencies he displays, one cannot escape

¹² In it too can be seen much of Copeau’s attack on *cabotinage*. The notion of purity is a problem, though. It has already been stated that some practitioners believe the reason mime died, as such, was due to this very separation. Contemporary efforts to regard mime as a much larger phenomenon disregard this notion.

¹³ How ironic, or perhaps prophetic, those words sound now as I bash away at this machine, trying to get a literary, logical grip on a living tradition.

from the fact that he codified the training of the body into a form that is still utilised today: the art of articulation (being able to move different parts of the body independently of each other, enabling isolation, rotation, inclination, tilt) and a dedication to the task of training.¹⁴ Similar ascetics such as Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba have been attracted to his training techniques. Barba has called him a 'hidden master', believing Decroux to be "perhaps the only European master to have elaborated a system of rules comparable to that of an oriental tradition." (quoted in Leabhart 1997 p16)

In that statement lies the importance of Decroux's legacy for the *performer-creator*. Although not an end in itself, the basic principles of corporeal mime remain the same today. It is perhaps *the* essential technique – what one does with it afterwards is entirely up to the imagination and sensibility of each individual performer, but the fact is it remains there, supporting the performer.¹⁵

Jean-Louis Barrault, a pupil of Decroux's, will forever be linked with the development of mime not only through his own work or his study with his master, but for the portrayal of Deburau in Marcel Carne's 1945 film classic "Les Enfants du Paradis" ("The Children of Paradise"), in which, incidentally, Decroux played his screen father.¹⁶

Barrault plays an interesting part in the development of mime and theatre in that he is often regarded as the "direct link between Artaud and the modern avant garde [sic]". (Innes 1992 p95) A link that was to bring about what probably was the first mention of 'total theatre', as it is known today. (Dorothy Max Prior 2001 p6)¹⁷

¹⁴ By all accounts, training under Decroux was no easy matter; Leabhart calls it "uncompromising...he advocated kinesthetic [sic] literacy, incorporated knowledge, knowing with the body things that can be known only with the body." (1997, *op cit* p16)

¹⁵ However, as much as it might be an essential training, it is by no means the only training. The *performer-creator* sees it as one of the many tools with which to develop her work.

¹⁶ This film dramatised the life of Jean Deburau, the French pantomimist who worked at the Théâtre des Funambules on the Boulevard du Temple under sanctions restricting the use of the spoken word. The film actually brings to life a fascinating aspect of the speech-silence debate through its main characters' interaction. The character of Deburau creates his own character in the film, Baptiste, who is a silent, whit-faced Pierrot. It was this character that Marceau saw his future in. Barrault meanwhile had already moved on.

¹⁷ That is, of course, leaving out any discussion of Wagner's *gesamtkunstwerk*. German opera composer Richard Wagner believed that the future of music, music theatre, and all the arts, lay in an embrace of Gesamtkunstwerk or total artwork; that, of course, is another study.

Working with Decroux, Barrault developed two different forms of mime – the first, dealing with imaginary objects and illusions, they called “objective mime” (as, apparently, it is still called by the French), and the second, dealing with emotional, physical and soulful states, they called “subjective mime”. (Bari Rolfe, in Bauman Theatre Forums)¹⁸ These are important for this research in that it is precisely within the collusion of these two states that there is some resonance for contemporary mime. As mentioned already, contemporary mime, although using the training of objective mime, turns away from it as an expressive or performative state on its own. With the development of subjective mime comes a whole gamut of performance opportunities that point towards current and future manifestation.

Dorothy Max Prior writes that a further interesting point appears with Barrault in that he was regarded by many as being the bright hope for mime in the twentieth century, but instead he turned away from it to encapsulate a broader idea of mime, mixing the corporeal form with speech (intelligible and unintelligible), strong visual imagery and song. (*op cit* p6) Apparently with performers virtually nude, they performed on a bare stage and created all settings and sound effects in what was one of his seminal works, “Auteur d'une Mère” (an adaptation of William Faulkner’s novel, As I lay Dying) in 1935. Prior writes:

It is interesting that even in its infancy as an art form, there was controversy about the use of the spoken word and other performance elements in corporeal mime. Then, as now, the argument about what does and doesn’t qualify as mime was a hotly debated subject. ... ‘Auteur d'une Mère may have incited fear and loathing in both the traditional theatre and new mime camps – but it inspired Artaud to observe: ‘...new relationships between sound, gesture and voice...what Jean-Louis Barrault has done IS theatre. (*ibid*)¹⁹

¹⁸ Rolfe writes that the two of them also created the stationary “walk-in-place” that has come to characterise far too much mime in the twentieth century. He continues that many of the other profile or stationary illusions developed from this. An interesting and amusing story is told by American mime Richmond Shepard, who travelled to Paris in 1956 to work with Marceau. Since he was unavailable, Shepard worked instead with Decroux who asked him one day to perform some of the “pantomime” he did. Shepard performed a short piece of walking, seeing something, jumping over a fence, seeing someone coming, jumping back over the fence and running away. After this, Decroux was livid: “Where did you get that walk?!?...I invented that walk in 1934. You’re all alike, the three of you – you think you know everything – you and Barrault and Marceau. None of you do it right. Barrault does it like **this**...[mimics Barrault]...Marceau does it like a clown, with his head waving...[exaggeration of Marceau]...and you can’t do it either. Three know-it-alls.” (1971 p134)

¹⁹ To be fair to Decroux, although he advocated a minimum of 30 years of silence before the corporeal mime start again to find a voice, Leabhart 1989 argues that in practice the truth was a different matter altogether. In fact, often he stated the need for further exploration into verbal mime, such as in Rolfe: “Language consists of arbitrary noises and symbols, which have to be learned. What we could use on

This, unfortunately, is going to have to be taken at face value because no visual material has yet been uncovered to back this up.²⁰ Furthermore, Artaud's observation is published in the original version of The Theatre and its Double (according to Sontag 1988), as well as the 1958 version Leabhart quotes from, but has now mysteriously disappeared from the book. (1993)²¹

Innes provides us with a description by Barrault of a pivotal scene in the performance – that of the mother dying:

Her eldest son is making the coffin. The wheezings from her chest fit in with the raspings of the saw. All the rest of the family, like an enormous jellyfish, contracts and relaxes in unison with the mother and the carpenter. The whole theatre is in death throes – a pump rhythm, an octopus rhythm, and all of a sudden at the climax of the breath: total stoppage. The mother's hand, which had been raised as when someone wants to look out into the distance, falls slowly in the silence, like a water level going down. Life is emptying out. The movement is prolonged throughout the body until the rigidity of a corpse is reached. (*op cit* p99)

Using a bit of imagination to picture this, it becomes clearer why Artaud found Barrault's work so exciting and why he wanted to collaborate with him. If the above description is part-ways true, then it is not a huge leap to see why Innes claims: "The aim was to regulate the spectator's heart beat by this driving pulsation through the skin" (*ibid*) and see how this more than echoes Artaud's belief that:

...this theatre where I control my own fate begins with breathing, and after breathing, relies on sound or shouts in order to reforge the links, the chain of a rhythm when audiences saw their own real lives in a show. We must allow the audience to identify with the show beat by beat. (1993 p101)²²

the stage is vocal mime, i.e., sounds like cries and sighs – only more developed – which are in themselves expressive." (1981 p107)

²⁰ Save for a demonstration by Barrault of his famous horse/man mime. ("Masters of the French Stage", video recording 1969)

²¹ Along with, incidentally, an essay on the Marx Brothers and humour. This will become more interesting later.

²² Artaud puts forward his belief in a very physical poetry also: "I maintain that the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language. I maintain that this physical language, aimed at the senses and independent of speech must first satisfy the senses. There must be poetry for the senses just as there is for speech, but this physical, tangible

It seems then that Barrault had gone some way to realising Artaud's vision. Although friends (Innes writes that Artaud introduced him to eastern mysticism), they were never to collaborate as they wished to, Artaud finding that Barrault "put in so much of yourself that in the end things got out of hand anyway. ...I WON'T HAVE, in a spectacle staged by myself, so much as the flicker of an eye that does not belong to me." (Letter to Jean-Louis Barrault, in Artaud 1988 p343)²³ The fact that they never got it together to work seems like an absolute missed opportunity in theatre's history as many scholars and critics believe Barrault has certainly come closest to achieving Artaud's legendary vision (and there is a long history of companies and practitioners who have claimed a direct influence by the mad Frenchman – with varying degrees of success).

What can be established from works like "Auteur d'une Mère" and later works such as "Rabelais"²⁴ is that they indeed suggest attempts at a total theatre, or 'pure theatre' (Barrault) – a theatre that embodies a larger conceptualisation of mime. What Barrault did was turn away from the objective mime characterised by 19th century pantomime (illusionist, dealing with imaginary things and substituting stylised gesture in place of words) as well as subjective mime characterised and developed by Decroux (metaphysical action and arduous research), and, enveloping Artaud's notion of a total theatre, he combined mime with acting and introduced a new approach to performing a spectacle.²⁵ In this way, it appears that he completely foreshadows later developments such as Grotowski's Poor Theatre, a large contingent of avant-garde performance by the many and varied collective alternative companies (among them The Living Theatre, Richard Schechner, Peter Brook et al) as well as the work of someone like Steven Berkoff: his performers creating both the scenic and vocal score for many of his productions.²⁶

language I am referring to is really only theatrical in as far as the thoughts it expresses escape spoken language." (*ibid* p27)

²³ Artaud, the certified madman that he was, contradicts himself wildly in this letter: first he claims Barrault exerted too much control and precision where he, Artaud, didn't believe in a 'watertight compartment' with regards to theatre, and then he claims he wants everything meticulously controlled and worked out to the nth degree by himself, a claim that is repeated often in Theatre and its Double.

²⁴ "Rabelais was again played on a bare stage with only ropes as any scenery and the performers presenting both character and environment, for example a ship where movements performed simultaneously suggested the pitching of the ship in the waves. See Barrault 1971 and Innes 1993.

²⁵ Leabhart writes: "It appeared that the revolution in acting that Decroux has recommended had taken a surprisingly short time to complete itself." He goes on to say that this one 'victory' would soon be erased by a 'counter-revolutionary trend' in the making of Les Enfants... which, as mentioned already, heralded in Marceau and a return to the silent white-faced pantomime.

²⁶ In 1999 I had the good fortune to play in Berkoff's The Fall of the House of Usher, directed by David Alcock, and The Trial, directed by Tanya Surtees. In the introduction to Usher, Berkoff writes: "When this play works one lives on the crest of a wave when all elements fuse into a dynamic whole.

Barrault, then, embodies many of the characteristics that are starting to be discerned in the progression towards a conceptualisation of the *performer-creator* – namely, that he took a formidable training and dedication to art (inherited from work with Decroux) and blended it with his own vision of what theatre should be. His connection with Artaud and the influence this has had on the avant-garde theatre (and thereby dance also, if we follow Sanchez-Colberg) makes him one of the first key players in what now is called physical, or total, theatre.

As for Marcel Marceau, there is little to say that has not already been said and said better before.²⁷ Furthermore, his place in the discussion of the *performer-creator* is doubtful. Marceau plays a paradoxical part in the development of mime in the twentieth century. On the one hand, no one can doubt his genius and artistry in performance, nor can they avoid his enormous following internationally. Marceau, it seems, virtually created an audience for mime through world tours and television appearances – particularly in the United States. Furthermore, he created, within countless performers, “the desire to become a mime”. (Bari Rolfe, in Bauman Theatre Forums) On the other hand, though, he has long been castigated for not developing his style beyond what he has already shown.²⁸

Perhaps the former hints at his real purpose here: by creating an international audience, he has set up a model for all subsequent mimes to either move with or rebel against. In short, he has created a mainstream, and without that (as history shows us) there can be no underground, there can be no movement or development.

For the most part, his critics see in him a dreadful backwards motion – rather than going forwards with mime and its then current state of development, he *chose* to

Music, light, shape and words, then one is transported into another world as an actor and I hope as an audience...The actors must be the house and its decaying fabric, must speak as stones and the memories of the house that are seared into the walls...Breath is the wind and the cry the wind makes as it twists itself through the trees in a storm. The atmosphere is our lungs and the forests and branches our vocal chords.” (1990 pp 37-38)

²⁷ See Ben Martin 1978; Leabhart 1989; Annette Lust 1998 and just about any mime training book one might happen to pick up.

²⁸ Mind you, this is said without ever having witnessed one of his ‘mimodramas’ created with his company or students. A normal Marceau performance begins with what he calls ‘pantomime of style’ (short little sketches that objectify technique: walking against the wind, climbing stairs, chasing butterflies etc) and continues with stories of Bip, the character he created (Bip at the Circus, Bip the Lion Tamer etc). Leabhart, though, is of the opinion that essentially there are no real differences between the two. (1989 p 77)

return to an earlier nineteenth century style of pantomime: romantic, wistful and above all, silent. Marcel Marceau chose to be silent.²⁹

What made him go backwards? It certainly doesn't seem that he was seeking dramatic renovation like Copeau (and to some extent Lecoq too) was. Instead, it appears that he saw in Barrault's performance of Baptiste a model for the future of his own performance. (Leabhart 1989 p82) However, what a lot of imitators of his form perhaps don't understand, is that although he looked backwards and brought old-style pantomime back to the stage, he did so by blending it with the "strong physical underpinnings he discovered in his studies with Decroux, adding to that basis the astute observations he made of Chaplin and Keaton". (Leabhart 1989 p 82) That training, apparently, has made all the difference, although the form was expressed in a very objective way. Leabhart writes:

The absence of words places the burden of the storytelling on the performer's movements, and these movements will, then, out of necessity, be mostly objective mime, illusionary techniques and counterweights which carry the meaning of the performance. As a result, the area of subjective mime, that part of mime that translates the internal movements of thought and spirit (sometimes considered to be 'abstract'), is more or less absent from most objective-mime performances. (pp 79-80)

This reliance on the objective mime to carry the story, or in some ways to 'explain' the story (like some overpriced charades game), if there is a story, is something the *performer-creator* is not about. Rather for her an invisibility of technique, a living technique – one that supports her, but is not a means or performance by itself.

In Marceau's defence, however, it does seem that he came to be somewhat trapped in this image:

I am a prisoner of my art. People do not want to see me speak, or use props or appear as a character other than Bip or the stylized [sic] mime I have created. They are uneasy with a Marceau that is unfamiliar. (Marceau, in Martin 1978)

His genius will outlast him, though, and people will still come to think of mime in relation to his white-faced clown struggling against imaginary walls and objects. It is

²⁹ One must wonder what would have happened to mime if he had chosen instead to go with a more

hardly surprising that contemporary performers choose to call their work by other names – physical theatre, visual theatre, devised theatre, total theatre; Marceau is larger than life. He has, in many respects, become mime's touchstone. According to Bari Rolfe, he teaches by imitation, that his students must continue by way of imitating his technique, for this is the only way an art form will continue. (Bari Rolfe, in Bauman Theatre Forums) Although Marceau is quick to point out that they must then develop their own characterisations and developments, the propagators of his style play a lessening part in the development of mime, as it is known today.³⁰

Dislodging the touchstone and reinvigorating the art of mime is the figure of Jacques Lecoq. He, perhaps more than anyone in the history of mime, had the broadest vision for this confusing, paradoxical but ultimately all-encompassing art form.

Like Decroux, Lecoq was essentially a teacher, sometimes a director and very rarely a performer. He is perhaps best known as a performer for the lecture-demonstration he periodically gave entitled "Tout Bouge" – "everything moves", a 90 minute 'performance' of a lifetime's observation of theatre as a place of incessant movement, body language and gesture. One witness of such a performance writes:

Lecoq, a thick-set figure in a business suit, strides on as a lecturer and then leaps out of his skin in a deliriously funny scene showing Columbine giving Pierrot the brush-off.

That is the last we see of pantomime blanche. Illustrating the body's three motor centres, he presents a spectrum of walking styles, from the cowboy to the mannequin, from Texas to Japan. There are internationally contrasted expressions of farewell (Italians embracing the visitor, the French shooing him away); and the timing of speech to handshakes. (Irving Wardle, newspaper review 1988)

Lecoq is unique. Although he contentiously claimed "I made mimes speak" (quoted in Leabhart 1989 p 90), his work is more geared towards an open mime that can incorporate the spoken word, architectural design, mask play and clowning. But more than anything, "tout bouge" – his is a theatre of movement.

vocal mime.

³⁰ Although, weirdly enough, classical mime of the Marceau variation has found a place in much Christian missionary work around the world. Todd and Marilyn Farley are a good example of this. (1991-1996)

There is no Lecoq 'style' – rather, Lecoq is concerned with a dedicated research into natural movement and how it is expressed within and from the body. Thus, his work is one of preparation. At the end of the two-year course at his school, students are prepared for their continuing development as theatre artists, but are not equipped with a technique but rather a “technique of techniques” to some extent³¹ – an attitude towards the performer as an essential part, if not the essential part, of creation. Here the emergence of the *performer-creator* can very clearly be seen. Simon McBurney, perhaps one of his greatest past students and founder of the very successful and influential Theatre de Complicite, writes:

What he offered in his school was, in a word, preparation – of the body, of the voice, of the art of collaboration (of which theatre is the most extreme artistic representation) and of the imagination. He was interested in creating a site to build on, not a finished edifice.

...When I last saw him, six months before he died...he said with typical modesty: 'I am nobody. I am a neutral point through which you must pass in order to better articulate your own theatrical voice. I am there to place obstacles in your path, so that you can better find your way around them.' (Foreword to Lecoq 2000 ix-x)

Here, in a nutshell, can we see and feel so much resonance in the development of our *performer-creator*. Rather than teaching a dead technique to be enslaved by, Lecoq prepares his students for creation – personal creation. By placing obstacles in his students' paths, it seems that Lecoq forces the student to come up with the answers and solutions to the various problems themselves, and in this way find their own theatrical life.

There are two main areas that Lecoq, and by extension the teachers that continue his work at his school, explored: *jouer* and *le jeu*. Roughly translated as 'to play' and 'play', the notion of these is lost a little in translation, but extends to the two principle features used in teaching: 'replay' and 'play'.

To stress the importance of play, 'replay' is used first to indicate the initial approach to improvisation work:

³¹ This phrase is borrowed from Eugenio Barba who refers to it as seeking the elementary: tracing a path between different techniques, aesthetics, genres and specialisations that deal with stage practices. See Barba 1994 and www.odinteatret.dk

We approach improvisation through psychological *replay*, which is silent. Replay involves reviving lived experience in the simplest possible way. Avoiding both transposition and exaggeration, remaining strictly faithful to reality and to the student's own psychology, with no thought for spectators, students bring a simple situation to life: a classroom, a hospital, the metro. (Lecoq 2000 p29)

This is set up so that no matter how much the situation is later exaggerated, or transposed into something else, the core of the situation (or 'motor' as Lecoq often calls it) remains anchored in reality. This is continued throughout the student's training, be it with nature (observing how the water moves on a lake, for example and then finding a corresponding physicalisation) or artificial (one of Lecoq's favourite exercises is to crumple a piece of cellophane up, let it slowly unfold itself and have his students observe the way it moves, and then find its corresponding movement in themselves) or even to words: the drive is towards simplification, to *simplify*.

This, of course, is true for much of mime training – in movements one looks for the essence of the movement, an economy of gesture, the least amount of energy needed for that movement, marked by a still point. But Lecoq seems to start with this, before physical training, to encourage his students to find the natural way of movement: "Instead of talking about the moon to a child, we both go out and look at it." (Lecoq, in Leabhart 1989 p 94) This is the language of *complicité*, of agreement with what's around one, reaction and communication. It is something that John Wright calls sharing the vision, or being in the same game as everybody else. (Paul Matthews 2000, p16)

Lecoq's way of simplification has been criticised, or commented on. Leabhart quotes student reactions to their training thus: "Lecoq strips you completely and gives you your true identity; for months I was on the verge of tears..." and "school is like sandpapering yourself all over. When you're all sanded down, you hurt, but you feel more". (1989 p95)³² But it should be stressed that Lecoq is not interested in

³² David Glass, one of Britain's premier mime and physical performers, adds: "A lot of the stuff I saw at Lecoq's, I didn't think was particularly good – party tricks, a lot of it was party tricks – and you laugh at it." However, this could be seen more in the propensity of theatre practitioners seeing something that works and incorporating it into their work, like Eurocrash, like the plethora of mimes after Marceau – but without understanding where it comes from. Shona Morris, another ex-Lecoq student, says: "The whole point about Lecoq is that there are no directors, so if a director is saying 'I use Lecoq's work', you just say 'no you don't'. Because, if you really used Lecoq's work you'd have a company, and there would be different directors thrown up all the time, and you wouldn't be resurrecting classics all the time, you'd be making new work out of that company." (Rieks Drijver 1998 p15)

psychological revelations, his aim is not to provide a therapy through theatre. "In any process of creation," he writes, "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." (2000, p18) Furthermore, he gives priority to the external world rather than the internal: "ego is superfluous. It is more important to observe how beings and objects move [because *tout bouge*], and how they find a reflection in us. ...People discover themselves in relation to their grasp of the external world, and if a student has special qualities, these will show up in the reflection." (p 19)

Play only comes later, when "aware of the theatrical dimension, the actor can shape an improvisation for spectators, using rhythm, tempo, space, form." (Lecoq 2000 p29) Here the actor, anchored in the reality or motor of the scene, can find the space to play, or react, to the external world – be it a partner on stage or awareness of space. The internal is suggested by the external, physical reaction. At the centre lies the essence. This process of shaping we can call *amplify*.

Play has another function, and that is, simply, 'joy'. To Philippe Gaulier, past student of Lecoq and now with his own school in London, finding this joy is paramount to any successful leader, or performer. Witnessing one of the workshops he offers for leadership, Harriet Rubin writes:

Pleasure is the great glue stick. When performers are having a great time – when they're in control of their own power, and they have access to the power of others – everybody knows it. If a performer is struggling or distracted or unhappy, you sense it instantly. You distance yourself from everything that performer says. There is complicity between leaders and their followers, the same complicity that exists between actors and their audience. "In a great performance, no one is outside the experience," says Gaulier. "Everybody shares it. It's intimate and joyful." A great performance is sharing a secret, a wink, a joke with the audience. It's the moment when you connect with your followers. Once that connection has been made, you can ask for whatever you want – and get it. And out of that, says Gaulier, will come an action, a future. (2000)³³

³³ "During the workshop on the "Jeu", the student will question himself: Is my pleasure immense when I play with the freshness of my childhood before a thousand spectators beneath two thousand theatre projectors, or not really so immense? If it's not immense, leave the stage. You won't be loved enough." (École Philippe Gaulier: <http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/lane/kba31/index.htm>)

This is something that Lecoq has instilled in Gaulier – for him too, the performer must ‘shine’, but in doing so, “develops a space around himself in which the spectators are also present.” (Lecoq 2000 p18) Not only the performer but the audience as well must receive pleasure from performance. They must be in the same game.

To achieve this joy, and to achieve this amplification, Gaulier calls for a larger-than-life playing: a “playing for the gods”, recalling early melodrama theatre where the performer onstage had to project her physical image and actions and voice all the way to the peasants in the balcony, the ‘gods’. (Harriet Rubin 2000) Quite literally, performers become again children of the gods: *les enfants du paradis*.

At the heart of Lecoq’s teaching, then, is an idea of: simplify and amplify. This thread follows through the teaching at Lecoq’s school, from the noble mask through exploring the *buoffon* (deformed characters who make fun of the world³⁴) to clowning, which lies at the end of his training and is perhaps the biggest legacy that Lecoq has bequeathed to theatre.

So, from neutral point through observation, analysis, reflection, mask work and to the grand styles of tragedy, commedia dell’arte, melodrama, *buoffon* and finally clowning, a student will emerge from Lecoq’s school ‘prepared’ to create theatre. This does not necessarily mean that they are ready for anything; more often than not their journey has just begun³⁵. What they have learnt, though, is a specific, individual attitude towards theatre and their place within it, their imaginative interaction. Lecoq writes:

The purpose of our teaching is to enable them to discover who they are, to be themselves. The neutral mask and the clown frame a student’s journey through the school, one at the beginning, the other at the end. As actors they will not retain these masks. They will venture out on their own creative paths, but the masks will have left their marks and their spirit. And the students will at last have experienced the fundamental reality of creation: solitude. (2000 p153)

³⁴ “The bouffon is a crippled outcast, a lame person, a legless or one-armed cripple, a dwarf, a midget, a whore, a homosexual, a witch, a heretical priest, a madman. He has not been chosen by the gods. He has been chased into the swamps and ghettos by the children of god in fact, who have seized the opportunity to announce that in view of the bouffon’s physical and moral ugliness, the father could not be a great artist of international fame. So his father was the opposite of God, his father was the devil Lucifer.” (École Philippe Gaulier: <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/lane/kba31/index.htm>)

³⁵ Avner “The Eccentric” Eisenberg remembers: “Lecoq didn’t allow notes in class. He told us that more important than how we did as students was how we used the work five years hence. He still looks over my shoulder as a bellwether. Even now, 25 years later, especially when I’m teaching, I have small revelations – ‘So that’s what he meant.’” (in Susan Brady 2000)

Here there are elements vital to the development of the *performer-creator*: a discovery of the self and a personal development of that discovery, to form their own opinion and their own way of making work. It is, essentially, up to them what they do with that which they have discovered. The end results of the process they undergo are limitless, curbed only by the limits of their own physical and emotional imagination.

Here can clearly be seen a broadening of the word 'mime'. No longer is it an end in itself, of being utilised to attain a particular style or 'look' in performance, but, as Laban and Leabhart state, it returns to the very root of theatrical endeavour: its 'womb'.

Mime, at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first, has shaken off a multitude of clinging definitions that never quite held it fast, and returned to what Lecoq calls an 'open mime' whereby it can grow in any direction it chooses:

To mime is a fundamental action, the foundation of dramatic creation, not only for the actor, but also for writing and for performance. For me, mime is central to theatre: being able to play at being somebody else and to summon illusory presences constitutes the very body of theatre. (2000 p21)

In this, it can perhaps be seen as nothing more than very good advice for theatre, knowledge that can be very useful to a performer's work, but knowledge that can be ignored or followed in the continuing development of the performer as a creative artist. (In this respect, similar to Eugenio Barba's idea of Theatre Anthropology – Barba 1994) Rather than merely being an objective technique that can find no end save that in virtuosity, it turns towards being included in a 'technique of techniques' – a living technique and as it develops, a living tradition. Lecoq writes:

Every precise definition of pedagogic method, from my approach to the great dramatic territories onwards, suggests the need for *combinations*. Only by going beyond the frontiers, passing through from one territory to another and overlapping them, can true creativity be nurtured and new territories come to light. The idea of 'pure' theatre is dangerous. What would 'pure' melodrama amount to? or 'pure' tragedy? Purity is death! Chaos is necessary to creation, but 'chaos' must be organised, allowing each person to put down roots and develop his own creative rhythms. (2000 p162)

The development of mime throughout the twentieth century can be seen as moving towards this, heralding in a new awareness of the performer as central to the process of creation and performance. In part dramatic renovation (linking mime back to its broader sense of place and understanding) and in part dramatic innovation (finding personal ways to dramatic expression through the utilisation of the body and the developing idea of a total theatre), this notion of the *performer-creator*, the idea or attitude behind her, is pointing the way to the future.

Chapter Three: Between the Teeth – The Demise of the Word?¹

We must apply ourselves to the text, forgetting ourselves, forgetting theatre, and lie in wait for the images that are in us, naked, excessive, and we should go to the end of these images. (Antonin Artaud, quoted by Roose-Evans 1990 p76)

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, and the start of the new, physically-based performers have played a key role in re-invigorating contemporary theatre practice. This has already been established. Much of this is due to practitioners viewing “mainstream, text-based, productions as static and visually uninteresting”. (Natasha Klugman 1997 p6) A common complaint is the dominance of the script and thereby the writer.² This dominance, in conspiracy with the director and the designer et al, places the performer right at the bottom of the creative hierarchy, in the position of ‘mouth piece’ for the words only, so to speak. In this, we are reminded of one of Decroux’s major contentions with theatre of his time: “Actors were expected to speak their lines more clearly but there was no emphasis on the role of the body as an expressive instrument.” (Annette Lust 1998, Decroux article, p16)

According to Ana Sanchez-Colberg, the development of physical theatre, in both theatre and dance, has seen the relegation of a verbal narrative (if at all present) to a ‘subordinate position’: “a mistrust of language to convey the condition of man-in-the-world, a language which aims to articulate, and thus contain, universal truths without questioning the material practices which give rise to that language.” (1996 p41)

¹ The title of this chapter is taken from both Andrew Buckland’s work, as well as the module studied during the coursework part of my MA in 2000. Acknowledgements to Andrew Buckland and Ms Juanita Finestone.

² In 1997, I applied for a job at the National Theatre in London to act as a secretary in the scripts department. One of the job descriptions was to receive and reply to incoming scripts. I was emphatically told that very few scripts are commissioned, but “obviously” if I came across a new script by Stoppard or Schaffer or Pinter, I was immediately to give them priority and put them to one side. I didn’t get the job. I mention it now because back then I was wandering the streets (with one and a half novels in my backpack) trying to sell a script or idea to just about anyone who had a few quid. Within a year or so from this experience, I was on a plane for South Africa again, and soon began drama honours at Rhodes University. Novels lie unfinished and unread, and, apart from a slightly abortive course in creative writing, I don’t write much in advance of any production. My eyes opened more to devising and creating work on the floor, inspired by Andrew Buckland as well as work with Prof Gary Gordon and Ms Juanita Finestone. I suppose for me the written text has become too stagnant – this notion of *the* perfect script seems arcane now. Some would see this I suppose as a reaction against the rejection I experienced...and while it has been tapped as a creative source (early work for Little Jackie Paper was actually derived from this personal story that later, thankfully, we abandoned for something that altogether served the story better), I prefer to call it enlightenment.

With the advent of umbrella terms such as physical theatre, devised theatre, visual theatre, attention is drawn away from the word and the verbal text; Steven Berkoff writes in his bibliography:

...it seemed so very important to liberate ourselves physically before we could deal adequately with the text. Text you could read loud or silent; it existed, but we did not exist and had to make ourselves exist theatrically. We had to make a signature and language that would express what the words had stimulated inside us and not just be a mouthpiece with resonant tones. (1996 p299)

However, that is not to say that the word has disappeared.³ Rather, "What these practitioners search for is a verbal language that complements the body-based vocabulary of their work." (Natasha Klugman *op cit* p6) Berkoff himself goes on to write about the beauty of the word and how it can stimulate and enflame performers and audiences alike.⁴ His plays, such as Greek (1980), East (1975) or West (1983) reflect this dualism – on the one hand they demand a stringent commitment to a heightened and precise physicality, and on the other they employ what is arguably some of the most violent and beautifully written verse in contemporary theatre practice within his doggerel Shakespeare crossed with street slang. There is also a great deal of language play within his work. One cannot help but think of the scene in Greek where the father and son fight with words:

EDDY: Hit hurt crunch pain stab jab

MANAGER: Smash hate rip tear asunder render

EDDY: Numb jagged glass gouge out

MANAGER: Chair breakhead split fist splatter splosh crash

EDDY: Explode scream fury strength overpower overcome

MANAGER: Cunt shit filth remorse weakling blood soaked

³ As can be seen with the development of contemporary mime advocated by Jacques Lecoq: "I made mimes speak." (*op cit*)

⁴ Doing so, he gushes: "There is a power in the language that allows you to play like a kid with fireworks. ...Language as energy, exuberant, raucous, dirty, sexy, bestial, offensive, lyrical; language as a sexual drive, language fuelled by eroticism, words meant to tease, excite and throw, hurl into the air, smash into the ears; language as rage, revenge for the milky, toady junk that has infected your ears for years; language as a self-portrait, as a means of speaking who you are; language as an assault weapon and language to vent to all the frustration in your life when the only thing you have left is the language in your skull. (1997 p159)

This continues until Eddy wins and the Manager, his father, dies. The waitress (who Eddy does not know is his mother) says: "You killed him/ I never realized words can kill." (Steven Berkoff 1989 pp116-117)

Not only does this display a ferocious theatrical imagination, but it also links the spoken word with the action as the characters let fly in a stylised mime fight – the words themselves, the sound of them, become weapons as deadly as instruments of destruction. Jacques Lecoq (under whom it comes as no surprise that Berkoff attended some training) writes:

Dramatic gymnastics [in which every gesture, attitude or movement is justified] also have a vocal dimension, for which it would be absurd to claim that voice can be separated from the body. Each gesture possesses its own sonority, or voice, which I try to help the students discover. The utterance of a voice in space shares the same nature as the execution of a gesture: just as I throw a discus in a stadium, I can throw my voice in space; just as I can aim for a mark, I can address someone who is some distance away from me. In the waves of the sea or in the bounce of a ball, just as in any other movement, gesture, breathing and voice join to throw a single movement. In this one movement, it is possible to throw out a sound, a word, a poetic sentence or a dramatic line. (Lecoq et al 2000 p 68)

In this can be seen the offer of an alternative to the 'talking heads' so deplored and derided in too much classical theatre. Body and voice become one; or, rather, the voice returns to its physical nature, something that Artaud always (fervently) believed in:

To make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language convey what it does not normally convey. That is to use it in a new, exceptional and unusual way, to give it its full, physical shock potential, to split it up and distribute it actively in space, to treat inflexions in a completely tangible manner and restore their shattering power and really to manifest something; (Artaud 1993 p35)

The question must be asked, then, of what the *function* of language is in contemporary performance. Catherine Lockerbie, literary editor and drama critic of The Scotsman, writes:

What is the proper job of theatre: to make us think or to make us feel? Feeling, of course, is of the utmost importance. The arts, it could be argued, are there to

enhance our emotions, to make us experience our innermost selves with an intensity not usually available in our humdrum, day-to-day lives.

Theatre, however, has something still more to offer. Theatre has words. Theatre has ideas. Theatre, chief among all the arts, has the amazing ability to speak to our brains as powerfully as to our hearts; to make us think, as well as to feel. (1998 p19)

Although Lockerbie is quick to point out that of course in themselves words cannot be enough, nevertheless we become aware of a certain clash between the word-as-thought and the word-as-action, if one might call it this. What is important about this clash is different ways of interpreting this for creating work. Which comes first – the chicken or the egg? The word or the movement?

Word-as-thought can be seen in the light of 'logocentrism' – an order of meaning, a search for foundations: order, logic, truth, reason, the Word.⁵ The second half of the twentieth century in particular saw a sustained attack on this old-fashioned and patriarchal notion – the Author duly lost his dominance and the word lost its grip as the closed signifier or all-important authority on the world. Susan Broadhurst, who outlines some of the generic traits of what she has called 'liminal' performance, perhaps best sums up what has evolved in place of the former:

Quintessential aesthetic features of the liminal appear to be hybridisation, indeterminacy, a lack of 'aura' & the collapse of the hierarchical distinction between high & popular culture...Other quasi-generic traits are experimentation, heterogeneity, innovation, marginality, a pursuit of the almost chthonic & an emphasis on the intersemiotic: that is, a signifiatory practice which involves such non-linguistic modes as those provided by the corporeal *gesta*, certain performances become a 'writing of the body itself' [quoting Derrida]...A certain 'shift-shape', stylistic promiscuity favouring pastiche, is signalled, together with repetition (a repetitiveness which foregrounds not sameness but difference), parody, playfulness & a delegitimation of authorial authority. (1999, p1)⁶

⁵ In understanding this notion, I am indebted to a series of seminars given by Dr Leonhard Praeg to the Honours students on Postmodernism in 1999; also Ms Juanita Finestone, Prof Gary Gordon and Michael Carlin throughout Honours and the coursework part of Masters. As before, I am very aware that certain philosophical theories have played a hugely important role in destabilising problematic positions of power such as logocentrism, but in the light of this research, that discussion is best held elsewhere. There will be some reference to it but this will of necessity have to remain on a more superficial level as we drive towards our focus. I leave the more academic discussion of the *performer-creator* as a post-modernist/feminist/structuralist/humanist to someone else, as no doubt it is being done or has been done in some form or another.

Although Broadhurst is attempting to fill a need for contemporary performance theory, it is perhaps pertinent to mention again at this point Adassinski's belief that "Theory cannot work without practice." (*op cit*) It has often been said that South African theatre makers spend too much time talking when they should be on the floor working. This notion is in particular emphasised by Andrew Buckland:

...if you spend enough time talking about theatre: theorising about it, discussing it and comparing it, you forget what it is. Then when you come to making it, you're so caught up in all this jargon – ways of seeing it and thinking how's this going to be described? Have I got a word to say what this is? How am I gonna say this...fuck, it just trips you, hey, it traps you." (Interview October 2001)

The importance of theory, or knowledge, or awareness of contemporary performance, is not being disputed. It is more what one does with this awareness. Obviously it informs one, it gives one a sense of discussion, a point from where to move. What is important for this study is an alternate awareness of the word and its function on stage. This shift introduces the idea of the word-as-action, and it is here that one begins to see a liberation of the word (the verbal text in its broader sense – corporeal, kinaesthetic literacy) as opposed to the demise of the Word (the authoritative voice on the matter).

This distinction, as problematic as it might be in terms of setting up an almost binary opposition (which one would like to steer clear of but it seems impossible to avoid), is vital as attention turns again to the *performer-creator*, particularly with regards to her role in contemporary South African performance, as the word-in-action is a primary, almost essential, element in the creative process.

South Africa has a particularly complex relationship to the use of the verbal text in performance (and unsurprising at that, with its 11 official languages – 12 with sign language), but it is one that highlights much of the current debate transpiring with performance internationally.

Mark Fleishman, director and teacher (Magnet Theatre and Educational Trust with Jennie Reznik, and at the University of Cape Town), sees in South African theatre a 'striking example' of a moving theatre in line with ideas proposed by Jacques Lecoq

⁶ By taking this and merging it with Dorothy Max Prior's outline mentioned earlier, a fairly comprehensive idea of contemporary performance in *all* its manifestations emerges.

in *Tout Bouge* that "the world is a theatre of incessant movement and to be true, the theatre, far from being simply an arena for recitation, must capture the movement complete with all its colour, rhythm and complexity." (in Davis and Fuchs 1996 p173)

His essay is intended to document evolving thoughts on the place of physical imagery in our theatre and focuses on the conflict that has been mentioned with regards to the word-as-thought and the word-as-action.

Fleishman recalls the climactic scene in Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* where, as a pupil riot continues outside (and offstage), a teacher and his student confront each other. Mr M, the teacher, picks up a rock in one hand and a dictionary in the other and compares them with Thami, his pupil. Fleishman sees in this a choice between the dictionary as a symbol of the word and the stone as a symbol of violence and destruction:

It seems to me that this choice between the word and the stone symbolises a conflict at the root of the creative process in the South African theatre. What a writer like Fugard, steeped in a tradition of literary dramatic writing, fails to understand about this choice is that it is not the stone itself that is attractive to Thami and the generation he represents. What makes the stone attractive is its process of *animation* [emphasis mine]: the gesture of throwing; the physicalization [sic] of the object. It is the introduction of the physical body with its potential for dynamic action which motivates the choice. " (*ibid* p174)

This is a fascinating and quite illuminating idea.⁷ Following Fleishman, in this scene what becomes visible is the distillation of the creative process and the idea of where it might heading – the physicalised word, the animated text, the physical image. It is also possible to start discerning how this is perhaps endemic of the international situation.

The physicalised word is not a radically new idea at all. After all, it is readily agreed that one of the actor's main jobs is to imbue words with life. But these are words written by someone else – a professional writer (in most cases). That is to say that a script exists that someone has slaved away at and the director, and by extension or perhaps declension the actor, has the job of marrying his or her vision with that of the

playwright and create the finished article through collusion of that. This could be called word-as-action, in some respects; however, what is more important is taking a few steps back – towards the very act of creation itself.

This is the unique and oft misunderstood area of work-shopped or devised theatre. Its relevance to the *performer-creator* is huge; to contemporary mime perhaps less so at first sight, but if we consider mime in the light of Lecoq's belief about miming being a fundamental part of life and coming to understand it, and theatre extends this game, then it is possible to discern a link that is appealing for this study.

What earmarks devised theatre as different from, or an alternative to, text-based theatre is the fact that it is generated from and by a diverse group of people: "A devised theatrical performance originates with the group while making the performance, rather than starting from a play text that someone else has written to be interpreted. A devised theatre product is work that has emerged from and been generated by a group of people working in collaboration." (Alison Oddey 1994 p1)⁸

The idea of collaboration is vital in this instance – each member of the group, no matter what role they play in creating the work, is involved and more than that, must take responsibility for his or her involvement. Oddey writes that there is a consummate freedom of possibilities for the group to discover, and the advantage of this is:

The process of devising is about the fragmentary experience of understanding ourselves, our culture, and the world we inhabit. The process reflects a multi-vision made up of each group member's individual perception of that world as received in a series of images, then interpreted and defined as a product. Participants make sense of themselves within their own cultural and social context, investigating, integrating, and transforming their personal experiences, dreams, research, improvisation, and experimentation. (p1)

The value of this can hardly be stressed enough for South Africa: from understanding one's own place in a multi-dimensional and cultural society one learns to experience

⁷ Although Fleishman is quick to point out that ultimately the choice is a false one: the word and the gesture are just two points in a larger field that includes many different positions and should not be reduced to two points on a binary opposition. (p174)

⁸ Devised theatre can start anywhere and from anything: the space, images, music, ideas, movements, text extracts, or a poem. Quite literally anything and everything goes.

another's viewpoint. From research to investigation, through the process of collaboration, comes a group identity. This is unmistakable, if the process has been successful in pulling its disparate members together.

What this can mean is that the group then *owns* the eventual product – it is a reflection of their role in society, it is made from and by them and they own it. The work no longer belongs to a mostly absent writer. There might very well be text – a writer may very well be part of the collaborative team, or the performers might work out their own text, but then they share an equal footing in that collaboration.

This makes it extremely hard for the scholar to investigate, as there is no text available; or, rather, there is a text but it is one that has emerged from the entire process. It is a reflection of that process, which becomes more important for the group than its final result. Devised work is primarily somatic; it has to be. Again the notion that attendance is compulsory – it is of necessity that the researcher or scholar be *present*, otherwise she misses the vital part of that process: the live ritual, the interplay between performer and audience, the performance itself.

This brings us to an alternative idea of 'text'. We've stated earlier that in many instances performance becomes a veritable 'writing of the body' itself. (Derrida) Any performance text that remains after the process becomes a map, a rough guide to the process that has been undertaken. Within this text, there is a notable absence – that of the definitive 'author' or single creative voice. Text becomes an interplay between different voices, inadequately expressed on the page. In this way a space is left open for interaction and some form of dialogue: as much as the audience must engage with the work in performance imaginatively, so too now must the reader, or researcher. Here one is reminded, in part, of Roland Barthes' words:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (1977 p146)

What does this mean, though, practically speaking?

Firstly, it gives the idea of the necessity of engagement between performer and audience, as much as it does performer and director within the creative process. This

is necessary because the audience must participate and 'fill in' the space that performers leave. This is true within all performance to some extent, but particularly so with mime.

However, this is mime that is not objective, where the audience is treated to an explicit 'peek-a-boo' by the performer or performers and must decode the work to establish what is going on like, as stated before, a game of charades. Returning to a more subjective idea of mime, the performance suggests emotional states that the audience might feel at a more subconscious level. Each involvement, though, each engagement by the audience, takes place on a very personal level.

Secondly, one sees within this some of the qualities of the *performer-creator* that have been spoken of: "Devised theatre is concerned with the collective creation of art (not the single vision of the playwright), and it is here that the emphasis has shifted from the writer to the creative artist." (Alison Oddey *op cit* p4)

Thirdly, not only might performance become a writing of the body, but text, if it is used, floats free of the ossification of having to play the 'author-god'. The verbal text becomes part of the performance text, dependent on presence and context – physical context – but not an end in itself; rather, words are crafted into the minute detail of score and sub-score that has somehow shaped the performance. By doing this, they reflect the process of arriving at the point of performance; in short, they reflect the early exploration by means of improvisation, which is itself a physical act: "Text is created through improvisation, a physical process in which gesture exists before and alongside words as an independent sign system. In performance the workshop play exhibits a physical quality with a pronounced gestural component which runs alongside and interweaves with the words of the text." (Mark Fleishman, in Davis and Fuchs 1996 p175)

This aspect has become almost a hallmark of South African theatre work, particularly (as Fleishman suggests) since 1976. However, this whole notion stretches back even further. Both Fleishman and Alcock (1999) emphasise a high somatic emphasis entering South African work from a predominantly black theatre perspective, bringing "its enriching traditions of oral literature, ritual and dance, all with a strong somatic emphasis, to bear on the dominant European forms." (David Alcock, in Blumberg and Walder 1999 p51)

One of the major players in twentieth century South African theatre was Barney Simon, who, along with Athol Fugard, forged their own 'poor theatre' long before Grotowski established his, and, more importantly, without the backing of the government that Grotowski had. (Mary Benson 1997 p7 and p63)⁹ Theirs was a poor theatre of necessity: instead of having a spiritual and ascetic goal of transubstantiation, or 'spiritual illumination', as to some extent we can discern from Grotowski, the South African version was a truly 'poor' one – performers often trapped by poverty and dire oppression. Furthermore, due to the political nature of so much of South African theatre making, particularly within the protest theatre genre, strict laws of censorship and continual harassment by the authorities necessitated a need to be portable, ready to pack up and move on in a moment's notice. The use of mime in these instances, relying on few props and mostly the performer on stage, greatly assisted this. Thus, again one sees mime at the heart of the dramatic and theatrical creative process.

Let us return though to the idea of word-as-action, for we seem to have drifted somewhat from it.

Another reason Fleishman suggests for the continuing presence of physical imagery, and the physical use of the word in creation and performance, stems from an influence of 'oral consciousness' – an influence that differs quite radically from a dominant literary tradition of word-as-thought or word as *logos*. Fleishman quotes Walter Ong who writes:

The oral word, as we have noted, never exists in a simply verbal context, as a written word does. Spoken words are always modifications of a total existential situation, which always engages the body. Bodily activity beyond mere vocalization is neither adventitious or contrived in oral communication [sic], but is natural and even inevitable. In oral verbalization, particularly public verbalization, absolute motionless is itself a powerful physical gesture. (1982 pp 67-68)

⁹ Yes, this is a great simplification and leaves out just about every movement in South African theatre before and after. However, this serves to remind us that what we are involved with here is the confluence of the western tradition of mime and South African culture. Fugard says: "The actor on the stage, around him space to be filled and defined by movement; around him also is a silence to be filled with menaing, using words and sounds and, when all else fails him, including my words, the silence itself." (in Benson p6) This suggests an awareness on the part of Fugard the playwright of the role of the performer and their interaction with the audience.

This is important as one further investigates improvisation (which incorporates text, though not necessarily) as a physical activity. The text is not 'closed', as a playwright might deem so, but essentially stays open and embraces Barthes' notion of text being a 'tissue of quotations', or a multi-dimensional space where many texts clash to present not a fixed entity but a space to move and, ultimately, a space for the reader, or audience, to engage imaginatively, emotionally and intellectually. The body is one text, orality another. More often than not, as we've seen, oral consciousness views spoken text as having a high somatic emphasis, or context, and here we start to see more clearly the idea of kinaesthetic literacy, the physical imagination, or, as the First Physical Theatre Company has so brilliantly put it: 'physical intelligence'.

This suggests a new way of creation, finding a starting point wherever one might – a starting point that is endemic of a particular groups' physical and to some extent psychological (and political) make-up. This highlights the need for a different process that to some extent confronts a more traditional approach that is dominated by a closed text, both literary (in the form of the written script) and patriarchal (in the form of the director):

Devised work is a response and a reaction to the playwright-director relationship, to text-based theatre, and to naturalism, and challenges the prevailing ideology of one person's text under another person's direction. (Alison Oddey 1994 p4)

Foregrounding the physical body and its conspiracy with the word, "The physical body in South African theatre is a source of primary meaning which constantly challenges the hegemony of the written word in the meaning-making system." (Fleishman *op cit* p175) In other words, by 'intervening in the body politic', it "challenges accepted forms and structures of theatre performance." (Alcock *op cit* p51) In short, it goes some distance to answering the call made by Artaud of 'No more masterpieces!':

Let the dead poets make way for the others. And we should be able to see that it is our veneration for what has already been done, however beautiful and valuable it may be, that petrifies us, that immobilizes us and keeps us from making contact with the underlying force, whether you call it mental energy, the life force, the determinism of exchanges, the lunar menses, or whatever you like. Beneath the poetry of texts there is a poetry pure and simple, without form and without text. (Artaud 1988 p255)



There is no suggestion of removing speech entirely from theatre – if anything, along with current developments in mime-based work, the spoken word (and vocal, or sonic, text) is experiencing a liberation, a freedom it has not enjoyed for awhile. What concerns this study is the word changing its perceived function of providing the *logos*, the exchange of information and thereby communication by rational and often stilted ways, where writing is seen as a “basic form of language”. (Ong *op cit* p5)¹⁰

In this arena, the body becomes a text in its own right – no better or worse than a verbal text, in fact very often intertwined (or set off against each other) with it. But the change in the verbal text towards a performance text that includes the physical can be seen in the light of Julia Kristeva's discussion of 'poetic language' (which echoes Artaud's ideas somewhat):

Language as symbolic function [language as 'nomination, sign and syntax'] constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother. On the contrary, the unsettled and questionable subject of poetic language (for whom the word is never uniquely sign) maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal object. (Kristeva in Kelly Olivier 1997 p104)

In other words, or, rather, in Dorothy Max Prior's words: “a simple gesture, a slow walk across stage, a tumbling clown, a puppet, a poem are all as real and truthful as the most astute dialogue-based drama.” (Max Prior *op cit* p6)

The playing field, so to speak, has been levelled. With the change of what is predominantly a masculine construct of the word-as-thought (the author, the authority) towards a more feminine view of word-as-action (the poetic, physicalised word as much as a writing of the body), we can discern an integral change in the process of creation for the performer. We find a similar shift in mime, away from a predominantly masculine, or Apollonian, form, towards a more feminine, or Dionysian, process of creation.¹¹ This change, from an Apollonian view towards a

¹⁰ Another new development in the perceived function of language is that of language play, or 'ludic' language. See David Crystal 1998 on this.

¹¹ Calling to mind Caliban's words to Prospero somewhat: “You taught me language; and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse.” (Shakespeare's The Tempest Iii)

more fluid Dionysian one, indicates a shift in the performer from one of interpreter only towards being the primary creator.¹²

Old hierarchies are dissolving and the usefulness and relevance of this for South African theatre is immense. Artaud writes:

The idea of a play built right on stage, encountering production and performance obstacles, demands the discovery of active language, both active and anarchic, where the usual level of feelings and words are transcended. (1993 p30)

This creates a tight focus on this study's primary concern, as it promotes the performer towards being *the* crucial element in the performance, both in creating and obviously performing work. In other words, it heralds the emergence of the *performer-creator*, embracing a more 'open' mime – one that extends the game of mimicking the natural world in all its movement towards that of theatre. David Alcock writes:

...work therefore intervenes in the expected abilities of the performer. The Deadly Performer (to use Peter Brook's terminology), who has become accustomed to trotting out the text, dressed in gorgeous costumes exhibited under glorious lighting and cradled in expensive sets, must give way to performers who can interact with technique and ideas, who can be critical and creative. They are intelligent performers rather than puppets who merely go through the motions. (1999 p56)

New ways of viewing and creating theatre, as well as performing, require a new concept of the performer. Oddey adds:

Whatever the specialist nature of an individual's role within a devising group, there has to be an overall flexibility, versatility, and integration between the often multi-talented members and their relationships or responsibilities within a company. The role of the performer/deviser usually requires involvement in several processes, which often include improvisation, research, and discussion. I want to suggest that these processes are commonly adopted as part of a company's devising methodology. (1994 p65)

¹² This notion is mentioned here only in passing, but will resurface when discussing *The Well Being* in part 2. See Leabhart 1989, Broadhurst 1999 and *The Well Being* final report to the National Arts Council for more information.

The *performer-creator* is a specialist, an all-rounded player who is able to integrate herself directly within the creative process, as much as she is first and foremost the primary vehicle of theatrical expression. In terms of the word, she must be able to physically embody the word, to play with it and seek out the strong somatic life it possesses before it is even offered as some link in the theatrical endeavour.

What can be said about the liberation of the word, then? We might be tempted to use a capital 'W' for the word-as-thought (the script, the author, the official text) and a lowercase 'w' for the word-as-action (the performance text, physical and verbal text as a map for performance but not an end in itself). Therefore, not as a last word, or, in other words, the final word (if we may say so in so many words), but with a sense of the sublime, a spirit of playful pastiche and our tongues firmly planted in our cheeks, in a manner of speaking, we say this:

The Word is dead! Long live the word!

In the beginning were these words...

Chapter Four: The Contemporary Clown

Few physical theatre shows are complete these days without at least a hint of an acrobatic, aerial, or clowning routine. With so many companies getting in on the act, do we have a new art form on our hands? (John Daniel 2000 p4)

The interfacing between theatre and circus has indeed become more and more prevalent in the last few years. Circus has reinvented itself, swapping animals for humans and creating an entire show around a dramatic (or theatrical) concept wherein versions of old routines are displayed.¹ One of the most theatrical of all circus acts is that of the clown.²

With the collapse of the hierarchies of high and low culture, and the opening up of the physical (and thereby theatrical) text, the figure of the clown is playing a crucial role in contemporary performance. Research into this ancient form as well as recent developments suggest a vital link between the clown and the *performer-creator*.

A crucial step in understanding the importance of clowns in contemporary life seems to manifest itself during Renaissance times and the notion of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the 'grotesque body'. The awareness of this, and by extension the idea of 'grotesque realism', points towards an alternative view of understanding society and human roles within it.³

John Docker argues that Bakhtin saw within clowns and fools, "representatives of the carnival spirit in everyday life outside of set carnival times." As physical beings, they present themselves (literally as body as text) in 'comic relation' to figures and

¹ See Cirque du Soleil in *Saltimbanco* (1994) and *Quidam* (1999). Now, places and organisations are offering BA degrees in circus theatre training. See www.circocomedia.com, headed by Bim Mason, as a very clear example. Circocomedia dub themselves the RADA of circus theatre and their tag-line is: "When tricks are not enough". Other companies and organisations: www.circusarts.org.uk (based in London), The Playspace in Australia: www.artmedia.com.au/playspac, Circus of Horrors (a heavy metal/goth/punk offspring of the legendary Archaos): www.circusofhorrors.com, Circus Oz: www.circusoz.com.au, Legs on the Wall: www.legsonthewall.com.au, Desoxy: www.netscape.net.au/~desoxy/, the 'mother of new circus': www.cirquedusoleil.com and in South Africa, our very own 'ordinary kids doing extraordinary things – Zip Zap Circus: www.zip-zap.co.za.

² Introduced initially by Philip Astley as a novelty to his displays of equestrian skill in the late 18th century. There is neither space nor time to go into a detailed history of clowning. For more information please see Joe Lee 1995; John Towsen 1976; S. Billington 1986; R. Findlater 1978; Thomas Leabhart 1989; Oleg Popov 1970; Bari Rolfe 1981 and Ron Jenkins 1988 and 1994.

³ There is a hesitancy to write that this is a new, or better, understanding. Without wanting to cast a judgemental view on the subject in question, it is offered up here as merely an alternative – but one that does resonate within society today, as well as theatre, the 'mirror' of the society it arises from.

statutes of authority – “the official, the high, the spiritual, everything that claimed authority and absolute truth”. (1994 p199)⁴

Consequently, the performer becomes the central figure in an unwritten but devised performance that actively, but subliminally, attacks these authorities and their legitimate power. Mark Fleishman, seeing within the notion of the ‘grotesque body’ pertinent echoes throughout South African performances that emphasise physical imagery, writes:

By refashioning and re-inventing the material body into extraordinary, often grotesque forms they subvert and parody aspects of the society and the world. The transformed body contains its own logic which can unsettle “given” social positions and interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structure the social body. (in Davis and Fuchs 1996 p179)

This aspect is one not only pertinent to mime and clowning, of course, but the whole gamut of contemporary physical performance. In the field of dance, New Zealander Carol Brown writes:

Dancing bodies are beginning to leak, to betray the illusion of a chaste, hygienic and contained body. A paradigm shift is occurring away from the model of the classical body as mark and model of a ‘fit’ body for dance and its concomitant aesthetics of impotence, through the incorporation of the previously disenfranchised body. A theatre for the disenfranchised body is one which exceeds the logics of domination of dance discourses which dictate a ‘proper’ body for dance. Instances of these pariah bodies are to be found increasingly in what is characterised as mainstream dance through the incorporation of atypical bodies: in the wrinkled skin of septuagenarian Diana Payne-Myers in DV8’s Strange Fish and Bound to Please; in the presence of children, tricksters and hustlers in Alain Platel’s Ballet C de la B’s, La Tristeza, Complice, Benadetje and lets op Bach; in the bloodied legs of Javier DeFrutos and Jamie Watton in Grass. (1999 p15)⁵

⁴ By ‘carnival spirit’, Bakhtin saw this as meaning physical emphasis being placed on “those parts of the body that are open to the world, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or by which the body goes out to meet the world. Its convexities and orifices, concavities and protuberances, apertures and offshoots, the nose, open mouth, breasts, potbelly, the genital organs, phallus, bowels, often appear in exaggerated, hyperbolised form.” (p 200)

⁵ Interesting also to note the use of comedy and clowning in Strange Fish, as Nigel Charnock plays the role of the inept party guest who tries so hard to be included but ends up alienating himself further, and in Bound to Please, as Wendy Houston (also playing the outsider) repeatedly fluffs her steps in a dance class and causes mayhem amidst the other dancers. The First Physical Theatre Company also investigates the idea of the body displacing the perceived order, both socially and within a dance

What this means is that with these figures, one can clearly see the performer at the heart of public debate, through the medium of the performance. This is a highly important notion to keep in mind when assessing the idea of the *performer-creator*, particularly in relation to the figure of the clown, as, within current manifestation, the clown, just as in Shakespearian and Renaissance times, becomes a prime figure of social commentary and contestation – one in direct contact with the audience.⁶ By highlighting the physical body in space and thereby using it as a means to address, or redress, notions of power, perhaps there is a movement towards the body being the 'real theatre', as Johannes Odenthal writes:

The process of civilization is deeply engraved in every single body. ...If theatre accepts the body in its anarchist power, if the body internalises the functions of theatre, then the stage can become a place for a society in change to seek identities. But as long as the body remains only an agent, as long as it serves as a vehicle for ideologies, then theatre moves inside a self-contained discourse which only reinforces the given. (1994 p3)⁷

Through the utilisation of clowning (and consequently comedy and satire, though not necessarily so, as shall be explored), theatre moves back into being 'popular' and as such can become again a very important space for public and social exploration and debate as much as it returns to a celebratory role in human interaction. The

context, through placing on stage performers ranging from their early teens to their late 70s in works such as *The Unspeakable Story* (1995) and *...they were caught waiting...* (1993). Clowning has appeared in some notable cases, perhaps most famously (or importantly) in the gravediggers' scene with Andrew Buckland and Craig Morris in *The Unspeakable Story*. Much of First Physical's work centres on the 'rebellion of the body' and a 'return of the repressed' – see Gordon 1994 (x2), 1997, 1999 and Juanita Finestone 1995.

⁶ Docker writes that David Wiles argues: "we should start noticing the important role of stage clowns as independent 'authors' in the creation of performances." (1994 p202) This is important in relation to the *performer-creator*, but remains a note as I have been unable to find Wiles' book, save for a reference: WILES, D: *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, Cambridge University Press 1987.

⁷ An important development in contemporary dance is that of integrated dance, wherein both abled and disabled performers meet to investigate ideas of the 'perfect' dancing body and thereby deconstruct traditional centres of power. Perhaps the best-known company is the British-based Candoco (www.candoco.co.uk). In South Africa, integrated dance is a new development, with groups such as the Tshwaragano/In Touch Integrated Dance Project and their performance of *Querist's Quire* (choreographed by Adam Benjamin, founder of Candoco) at the 2001 FNB Vita Dance Umbrella and Indaba, as well as in London. Another group is the Cape Town based Remix Dance Project Trust, who, in 2002, are expanding (under the facilitation of Nicola Visser, Tanya Surtees and Malcolm Black) to investigate the area of integrated theatre in this country. This development seems ideally suited for an exploration of the theatrical clown, and with this intent, I have been asked to collaborate with them to set up training modules in mime and clowning that will hopefully lead to performance.

development and the re-integration of the figure of the clown suggest that this might be happening and this in turn highlights the importance of the *performer-creator*.

Popular theatre is a much-abused term and very often is designated a lower status than tradition, or classical, or 'proper' theatre. However, as Dorothy Max Prior suggests: "the 'naturalist' theatre that is seen as the tradition is in fact an aberration that came into vogue for a couple of centuries in one part of the world. Our sort of theatre is part of a much broader picture – we could perhaps see ourselves as restorers of a theatre tradition rather than creators of a new form" (*op cit* p6)

This is a view that Bim Mason agrees with. In his book (in the main about street theatre and outdoor performance that includes some discussion about clowning), he writes how in the last few decades there has been a substantial change in attitude towards these forms of theatre. Furthermore, this change of attitude cannot happen in a vacuum, the development thus "demonstrates that there was a need which it fulfils and a role that may become increasingly important in the future." (1992 p9) Mason sees this development in the light of two great changes during the twentieth century: the 'democratisation' of art and the substantial transformation of performing arts by the development of technologies such as film, television and video. (pp 9-10)

With the emergence of film, theatre (according to Mason) suffered one of its biggest blows – it was nothing short of a disaster, save for those who were lucky enough to be able to transfer their art to the new medium.⁸ Not only was it cheaper to run after production costs, but the same product could be shown all over the country, even the world, and thus completely undercut theatre and music hall ticket prices.

Furthermore,

⁸ It comes as no surprise that within their ranks were figures destined to influence the so-called 'golden age' of silent film: Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Stan and Laurel Hardy et al. Many of these artists were versed in music hall and vaudeville and were able to adapt to the medium by their skill at physical comedy. What they were less able to do, aside from the notable exceptions, was transfer from silent film to the 'talkies' and many saw in this development the death of the more physical actor. Within this movement we can also discern the beginning of the dominance of the script and, just as in theatre, the demise of the performer and the power of the spoken word. A brilliant act of comic defiance and subversion occurs in Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1935), where the tramp is working in a restaurant as a 'singing waiter'. Chaplin's tramp had never spoken before and he was worried about the affect this would have on his substantial audience base. In the scene, the tramp cannot remember the words to the song he must deliver, so he writes them on his shirt-cuffs. These get lost in a hilarious scuffle and when he comes to sing, his partner tells him to just sing whatever comes to his head. The resulting song is pure mischief. Cocking a snoop at the 'talkies', the tramp sings a made-up language so reminiscent of Fo's *grammelot*, and one that demands physical presence to give it any context: "Se bella piu satore, je notre so catore./Je notre qui cavore, je la qu', la qui, la quai!/Le spinash or le busho, cigarette toto

The dominant theatrical style at the beginning of the twentieth century was melodrama – a popular style despised by critics for being sentimental, moralistic, two-dimensional and with a lurid undercurrent of sex and violence. In fact, not dissimilar to some modern movies. This style, disdained by the well-educated classes and no longer patronised by the working class, disappeared. Theatre was now to serve the more educated classes, a rut that it has failed to get out of. (p 10)

However, a theme that keeps recurring is the belief in the live aspect of theatre performance, that theatre exists in the unique and particular confluence between audience and performer. Theatre, throughout the twentieth century (in the field that concerns this study), has continually seen its affirmation in this simple, yet highly complex, relationship, and as such, has turned its back on the trappings of illusion towards a dependence on the presence and skill of the performer. This is heightened by an awareness of the physical proximity of the audience and attempts made to cross the 'barrier' of the fourth wall and make direct contact with the audience:

The proximity has meant that physical skills can be appreciated better and the performer can have a greater affect on the audience. ...The possibility of interacting has meant that improvising skills and the personality of the performer become more important. This, in turn, means that the writers lose their predominance in the creation of the work. (Mason *op cit* p11)

It is to their physical skill that performers return, and through this the corporeal and imaginative affect they have on the audience. Andrew Buckland explains that his type of theatre is difficult to make, it is "skills-based rather than money-based." (Jill de Villiers, newspaper article 1999) In relation to the clown, Jenkins sums it up thus:

Much of the public's fascination with contemporary clowns is rooted in their astonishing displays of sheer skill. ...In a high-tech society where people often feel overwhelmed by the impersonal pace of their environment, a simple act of individual virtuosity becomes a significant event, an affirmation of what a human being can accomplish without the aid of machines. (1988 xii)

However, like what has been discussed with regards to mime, it is not just that the performance is one of skill or virtuosity for its own sake – many times they seek to

bello/Ce rakish spagoletto, si la tu, la tu, la tua!" The accompanying panto/dance tells the story of a coy maiden and her swashbuckling would-be seducer. See David Robinson 1985 and Modern Times.

demystify their skill and in so doing, illuminate “the conflicts between ordinary people and the forces that victimize them.” (Jenkins *ibid*) The point is more that the skill acts as a liberating technique, whereby the performer is able to draw on a wide variety of highly developed technical wizardry in order to offer her artistic view of the world or a specific situation or story.

In doing so, there has been a return, in part, to the world of melodrama. This is not melodrama as a hackneyed or ham way of acting but rather the big themes in life, the absolute values: good and evil, hope and death, love and sex, family and state, morality and innocence. It is a process of “...discovering and throwing light on very specific aspects of human nature. Melodrama is not outdated, it is of today and is all around us...” (Lecoq et al 2000 p107)⁹ With the grand emotions in play, the aim (according to Lecoq) is to achieve a performance “powerful enough to move spectators to tears” (p105). This is something that Philippe Gaulier believes as well – according to Harriet Rubin, he “believes that once you hear or feel the power of melodrama in your delivery, it stays in your body. You don’t forget it. You remember how to capture the audience, how to catch its sympathy. Awareness of the body is intrinsic to assuming the full size of your humanity.” (2000)

It is possible to see within these ideas an echo of Peter Brook, who writes:

It is always popular theatre that saves the day. ...every attempt to revitalize the theatre has gone back to its popular source. Meyerhold had the highest aims, he sought to present all of life on the stage, his revered master was Stanislavsky, his friend was Chekov; but in fact it was to the circus and music hall that he turned. Brecht was rooted in the cabaret; Joan Littlewood longs for a fun-fair; Cocteau, Artaud, Vakhtangov, the most improbable bedfellows, all these highbrows return to the people; and Total Theatre is just a mix-up of these ingredients. (1990 pp 73-76)

⁹ The website of the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre reveals: “Most of what is presented on contemporary stages and screens can be traced directly to the three popular theatre forms Dell’Arte teaches – Melodrama, Clowning and Commedia Dell’Arte.” See www.dellarte.com. The link between Commedia Dell’Arte and contemporary clowning (as well as contemporary and classical mime) is one that is almost universally acknowledged and, although only mentioned here, really demands a study all of its own. For more information, see Oreglia 1968, Fisher 1992, and Rudlin 1994. Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, performer and founder of the Dell’Arte school in the USA, writes: “I do not pretend to have rediscovered *commedia* as it was in the Renaissance. In fact, that seems to me a shallow and limiting approach to *commedia*. But a kind of theatre that points out our human frailties and foibles in such an honest, unpretentious way, a theatre in which actors are skilful, perceptive, inventive, united, and generous, seems to me to be much needed today. In a world gone mad, who has more to say to us than the zanies?” (in Rolfe 1981 p198)

In the late twentieth century/beginning twenty-first, it is exactly this that theatre returns to again, it would seem. Stepping back into her pride of place, out of the circus and into the future, comes the figure of the clown.

There is a long and established history of clowning, which, while interesting and providing a fascinating counterpart to the development of mime, must by necessity be largely glossed over. What is important for the purposes of this study is how contemporary clowning interfaces with, and possibly greatly influences, the development towards the *performer-creator*.

The contemporary theatrical clown is a far cry from her ancestors, both from the jesters, fools and misfits that populate history as well as the clumsy stereotyped image of the red-nosed, baggy-panted and white-faced circus clown. Yet, in spite of this, stereotypes remain and elements of the abovementioned might still recur.¹⁰

What the traditional circus clown lends to this discussion is an examination of the two figures that have come to symbolise a typical clowning duo: the white-faced clown and his side-kick, the auguste.¹¹ Within this duality, one is able to discern some of the basic issues at play within a clowning act. Dario Fo, himself a great political clown, writes:

Clowns, like minstrels and 'comics' always deal with the same problem – hunger, be it hunger for food, for sex, or even for dignity, for identity, for power. The problem they invariably pose is – who's in command, who's the boss? In the world of clowns there are two alternatives: to be dominated, and then we have the eternal underdog, the victim, as in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, or else to dominate, which gives us the boss, the white clown or Louis, whom we already know. He is in charge of the game, he gives the orders, he issues the insults, he makes and unmakes at will, while the various Tonys, the Augustes, the Pagliaccios live on their wits, occasionally rebelling but generally getting by as best they can. (1992 p172)

¹⁰ Again begging the question: how new are new forms? The clown is not new to any degree – in fact she remains one of the oldest mythical archetypes. However, it is in the way that clowns are used, and the manner of enquiry, or research into them, that gives them their contemporary significance.

¹¹ Also known as "Louis" and "Auguste". See Lee 1995. The masculine is used here because traditionally clowns have all been male. That is now, fortunately, changing, with women clowns more than holding their place in the ranks of clowns. Angela de Castro and Nola Rae are perhaps the two best examples.

Within this one can see not only the basic underplay of power that characterises a clowning duo, but also an interesting relationship with the mime – literally between two white-faced figures. This might go some way to adding to the reasons why the white-faced mime has become so unpopular. Louis is the clown in charge, and as such (as Joe Lee explains) is the more quick-witted, verbal and intellectual figure. His position is one that stretches back throughout history and finds echoes within all the early manifestations of the trickster.¹² He is also regarded as being quite cruel, particularly towards his comic foil, Auguste.

Within this cruelty and trickery, and occupying the territory he does in the shadow land between light and darkness, male and female and good and evil, it perhaps comes as no surprise that the white clown has become the target of much hate in the latter half of the twentieth century.¹³ Joseph Campbell writes: “Universal too is the casting of the antagonist, the representatives of evil, in the role of the clown. Devils – both the lusty thickheads and the sharp, clever deceivers – are always clowns.” (1956 p294)

Could this be one of the reasons Marceau-influenced mime has also taken such a battering? It is a fascinating idea and one that should perhaps be looked at another time. It certainly seems that the change in contemporary clowning from traditional circus clowning is in some way parallel to the development in mime. Clowning is turning more towards the Auguste, by all accounts and appearances – a more subjective experience of the world, expressed through the body and imagination of the performer that has created her.

This big change in clowning appears to have manifested itself early in the twentieth century in the form of the ‘existential’ clown. Joe Lee writes:

¹² Christopher Vogler writes: “The Trickster archetype embodies the energies of mischief and desire for change. All the characters in stories who are primarily clowns or comic sidekicks express this archetype. The specialist form called the Trickster Hero is the leading figure in many myths and is very popular in folklore and fairytales.” (1992 p89)

¹³ Particularly on the Internet with pages and pages dedicated to anti-clown links, too numerous to mention here. Also prevalent in films that use the white clown to act as an underworld figure, or sinister predator – most famous probably being Pennywise in *It*; other films include *Spawn*, *Batman* and *The Crow*. There are also bands such as Insane Clown Posse and who could forget the clown make-up used by KISS? Much of the horror and fascination can perhaps best be seen in the figure of American mass murderer John Wayne Gacy, who used to dress as a clown and play with children, earning him the moniker “Killer Clown”. There is also, apparently, a subculture within pornography known as ‘clown-porn’. Interesting indeed.

The tramp is a true departure from shamanic clowning. His is not the world of magic sex changes, of death and resurrection, of tricking greater forces into compliance. His is the world of day to day misfortune with all its accompanying slings and arrows. Of making do with whatever the world presents and the discovery of the small miracles that open the world significantly. This is the world of existential clowning. (1995 p163)¹⁴

Apart from the heroes of silent comedy and the clowns of the circus who embraced this new conceptualisation (such as Grock, Weary Willie and Otto Griebing¹⁵), clowning started to reappear in theatre thanks mainly to the absurdist playwrights, as Martin Esslin suggests:

The age-old traditions that the Theatre of the Absurd displays in new and individually varied combinations – and, of course, as the expression of wholly contemporary problems and preoccupations – might perhaps be classed under the headings of: 'Pure' theatre; i.e. abstract scenic effects as they are familiar in the circus or revue, in the works of jugglers, acrobats, bullfighters, or mimes. Clowning, fooling, and mad-scenes. Verbal nonsense. The literature of dream and fantasy, which often has a strong allegorical component. (1987 p328)

Within this genre, the clowns acting out their rituals of waiting in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot cannot be ignored; neither can Hamm and Clov in Endgame. In this instance, one is tempted to see an echo of Artaud who emphatically states: "Practically speaking, we want to bring back the idea of total theatre, where theatre will recapture from circus, music-hall, the circus and life itself, those things that always belonged to it." (1993 p66) However, the fact that they were written becomes a problem for this study.¹⁶ What concerns this study more is in the devised process of creation, and to this extent, attention turns to the work done by Lecoq (and

¹⁴ The shaman (whom Lee calls one of the first performers) acts as a link between the human and the spiritual world. In his book he talks at some length about reflections of the trickster in the animal world – the snake, the coyote, monkey, snake, spider et al – as well as deities that divinely embody the trickster: Loki, Jesus, Hermes and Krishna. The shaman (whom Lee calls one of the first performers) acted as a link between the human and the spiritual world.

¹⁵ See Lee 1995 and Bari Rolfe 1981.

¹⁶ Beckett, although a master at writing a very pithy physical comedy, was fastidious about the presentation of his primarily literary plays – a decree continued by the executors of his estate. Lara Foot-Newton, however, somehow managed to get around this to some extent in her production of Godot at the 2001 Standard Bank National Arts Festival which she and her performers 'Africanised' somewhat. Perhaps the peach of exchanges happened when Seputla Sebogodi's Vladimir answered Lionel Newton's Estragon: "Yebo, Gogo." Foot-Newton, of course, had explored Beckett before with Buckland and Newton in Endgame, 1997.

continued by his followers and past students) since the 1960s in 'finding one's own clown'.¹⁷

Lecoq began this work by "investigating the relationship between the *commedia dell'arte* and circus clowns. My main discovery came in answer to a simple question: the clown makes us laugh, but how?" (2000 p143) To investigate this, he had one student after another stand in the centre of a circle and try to make the others laugh. Lecoq writes:

One after the other, they tumbled, fooled around, tried out puns, each one more fanciful than before, but in vain! The result was catastrophic. Our throats dried up, our stomachs tensed, it was becoming tragic. When they realised what a failure it was, they stopped improvising and went back to their seats feeling frustrated, confused and embarrassed. It was at that point, when they saw their weaknesses, that everybody burst out laughing, not at the characters that they had been trying to show us, but at the person underneath, stripped bare for all too see. We had the solution.
(*ibid*)¹⁸

The solution was a search for one's ridiculous side, which, as Lecoq is quoted in Leabhart, one must "recognize, bring out, hold up, publicly make fun of, and incidentally, make people laugh" (1989 p99).

All of this points towards a very personal approach towards theatre and herein can be seen a pertinent link between the clown and the *performer-creator*. There are many different facets, or manifestations, of the clown, but what each points to is a uniquely personal view and attitude not only to the world that the clown lives in, but towards theatre.¹⁹ This is an attitude that drives the developing conceptualisation of the *performer-creator*: aware of the world around her, she engages with it

¹⁷ A process that Jennie Reznick calls the most 'mystical' of all Lecoq's teachings. (In conversation)

¹⁸ As an exercise, I have tried this with students of mine this year and it is an excruciating business. People squirm under the intense pressure and the others laugh, but out of embarrassment – in some way identifying with situations from their own life when faced with a similar situation. The point of the exercise is driven home very clearly, though: upon reaching that point where they feel their utter foolishness and weakness, the students, almost down to the last one, present a hint of their clown through an unconscious movement or presence. It is also a very good exercise to get students to face their fears about performing and is certainly a bonding one, not to mention a pertinent observation that to be a clown doesn't necessarily mean one has to be funny or do funny things. It has a darker, more mysterious and vulnerable side.

¹⁹ Russian clown Slava Polunin (who has worked with both Anton Adassinski and Angela de Castro) outlines different kinds of clowns: the clown-child, the clown-anarchist, the clown-lunatic and the clown-madman. He says: "They are all very different but they all act according to their own logic." (in Emi Slater 1996/1997)

imaginatively and artistically, expressing herself with whatever means deemed necessary, or appropriate.

One of the advantages of clowning is the holistic nature it encompasses in terms of training. Here more than in just about every other theatrical form emphasis falls on a complete training of the body for the performer. The contemporary clown can no longer just be a physical virtuoso – she needs to be a highly trained actor as well, not to mention dancer, philosopher, and to some extent, psychologist. Dario Fo writes:

A clown's act is made up of a collection of elements from diverse, often conflicting, sources. His profession has much in common with that of the minstrel or the mime of Greek and Roman times, inasmuch as he employs the same means of expression: voice, acrobatic gesture, music, song and, very often, magic and numbers with animals. ...Because of the complexity and the sheer number of different skills a clown must acquire, it is clear that any actor who masters the techniques will be much the better for it, and not only in the overtly comic parts. It may horrify the purists, but they will have the advantage in the tragic roles as well. (1992 p171)

Horrify the purists it certainly does, as has been established already with Copeau's attack against *cabotinage* and Grotowski's against 'dilettantism'. The 'cabotin', as Meyerhold explains is "a strolling player; the cabotin is a kinsman to the mime, the histrion [actor], and the juggler; the cabotin can work miracles with his technical mastery; the cabotin keeps alive the tradition of the true art of acting. ...In order to bring Russian theatre from its own desire to become a servant of literature, we must spare nothing to restore to the stage the cult of cabotinage in its broadest sense." (in Drain 1995 pp 165-166)

'Return to the stage the cult of cabotinage in its broadest sense' – within that sentence lies a key to this discussion: the movement towards the *performer-creator* involves a restoration to the theatre of mime, clowning and physical performance in its *broadest* sense, not to become a museum to history, but to engage it with one's physical imagination and intelligence thus pointing towards future innovation. This is something that recurs throughout history, as is evident – it seems that as Brook says it is indeed popular theatre that saves the day. The argument against the 'cabotin' also implies somehow that the clown is inferior and passed up for a softer, or easier option. This could not be further from the truth: the development of one's clown is not an easy one, as Fo is quick to point out:

All too often I have seen actors trying to imitate clowns by doing no more than sticking a red ball on the end of their nose, putting on an outsize pair of shoes and squeaking in a funny voice. At best this is an exercise in sheer naiveté, and the result is invariably cloying and irritating. The only way to become a real clown is by long, energetic and dedicated work, and, yet again, by years of practise. You do not make it as a clown by improvisation. (Fo 1991 p171) ²⁰

However, like the *performer-creator*, it is nearly impossible to believe or imagine being able to become well versed in all the arts. That is a dream, an ideal. Yet, it stands to reason that the more one engages with different forms, the more one learns from disparate genres and the more one trains in various techniques, the greater one's conceptualisation of theatre is going to be. Consequently, the *performer-creator* has a broader range to draw from and thus create work tempered with (or enflamed by) her own imagination and, above all, attitude towards the world in general and theatre in particular.

There is another aspect of the search for one's clown that is important for this discussion: that is, the belief that looking for one's inner (or primary) clown is "primarily working towards self-expression." As Bertil Sylvander points out:

Finding one's clown isn't a matter of "learning to do funny things", rather it consists of discovering within oneself a clown as unique as each of us are.

Self-expression, which constitutes the basis of this search, requires first the creation of conditions that will allow a breaking free from inhibitions, a loosening of control, a letting go of creativity. All of which are basically the conditions need for play. As Winnicott (1971) says: "It is in playing and only in playing that an individual is able to be creative. (1984)

In other words, through discovering her ridiculous side and utilising it in her ridicule of social pressure, the clown "show[s] us that happiness is possible without necessarily conforming to the norms of beauty, of self-control and of logical intelligence extolled by the white clown. In destroying the myth of superficial appearances and giving us the right to be ourselves, the clown makes us (and the person playing him or her) feel

²⁰ Although Mike Finch (from Circus Oz) has this to say about Australians' natural positivism: "If you want to put on a clown show, for instance, even though it's seen as radical to put on a frizzy wig and red nose in Australia, people think, that's far out, great, go for it! But in Europe...people ask, 'which clowns have you studied?'" (in Anne-Louise Rentell 2000) It seems that even within clowning ranks there is a fair amount of elitism. Who is better? Who is right?

better about ourselves." (Jean-Bernard Nonange 1996) This transaction occurs in a dialogue of the imagination between performer and audience.

The person behind the clown is all-important for, as Lecoq writes: "The clown doesn't exist aside from the actor performing him." (Lecoq *op cit* p145)

The clown allows one (even *forces* one) to challenge one's own self-image, destabilising it and therefore oneself also. The performer is allowed to take a step to one side, to disentangle herself from her self-image and assert the positive aspects of the other side – the unknown side. Bonange writes:

Clowning is a state of playfulness, of being in play which we could call "being clown". Our work brings people to experience a child-like, naïve and fragile state...but also to experience its opposites through intensity and amplification. Listening and being receptive is central to this approach – which means one needs to stay close to one's physical body, to one's feelings and senses. ...We believe listening and receptivity are essentially elements in any creative and imaginative expression. Finding the clown within is not a mental decision but an inner attitude. (1996)

This is a view echoed within Lecoq's methodology where clowning only comes at the end of a two-year training period. All the work done up to that point prepares the students, it seems, for this very state of listening and receptivity:

Paradoxically, this brings us to a limit at the opposite end from the direction of most of our pedagogic methods. For months on end I have been asking the students to observe the world and allow it to be reflected in them. With the clown, I ask them to be themselves as profoundly as they possibly can, and to observe the effect they produce on the world, that is to say their audience. This gives them the experience of freedom and authenticity in front of an audience. (Lecoq *op cit* p149)²¹

This is a freedom and authenticity that is vital for the conceptualisation of the *performer-creator* as she moves from being an instrument of virtuoso skill towards a more open creative performer and no longer just an interpreter of someone else's work.

²¹ Not only that, but Lecoq feels that they will have had a deeper experience of life itself – a vital element of clowning, as it is for any creative act.

It can clearly be seen then the advantages that contemporary clowning gives to the *performer-creator*. That's not to say that the contemporary performer must of necessity be a clown, but the search for one's clown (as developed by Lecoq) is an all-important step towards becoming a creative performer in one's own right. Fuelled by a close relationship with the audience, backed up by an arduous training of the body as well as a thorough investigation of the effect of the world on oneself and the effect of oneself on the world, the *performer-creator* stands at the forefront of contemporary performance and physically embodies a challenge to dominant ideologies. Or, rather, the idea of the *performer-creator* feeds the performer, but it is one that encompasses a wide and disparate field of influence, drawn together in the personal.

This personal is finding its expression through the theatrical clown somewhat, standing as she does between chaos and order. Just as Lecoq advocates a need for organised chaos, so stands the clown, and it is through this that a deeper relevance is found for the *performer-creator*. As Anton Adassinski points out:

I will say what they say in Russia. There is one string between universal chaos and our planet, a string that is laughter. When you laugh, you connect again with chaos. Which is why when we find something funny the body suddenly moves in this uncontrollable way. The clown is the person who can pull the string and turn the universe upside down and show people there is another way to live, another magical reality. (in Ismene Brown 2001)

Chapter Five: The Performer-Creator

Throughout the course of this study, it has become clear that the performer is returning to the very heart of creative research in the process of devising, creating, rehearsing and performing work. She takes what she has gleaned from history but develops her own unique attitude and consequently style during this process. Thus, mime breaks out and away from its self-imposed invisible box and back into the wide-open debate that encompasses contemporary performance. No longer, then, is mime defined as a particular style or means of creating and performing work (a style earmarked by exclusivity and dubious notions of purity), but as a technique (one of many) it acts as a particularly useful, even vital, tool for the performer and hence self-expression. It goes some way to becoming a 'living technique'.

Following Leabhart, then, one can easily see the movement towards the conceptualisation of the 'creative actor' and how mime returns to being the very 'womb' of theatre itself, which completes (but does not reduce) the broad conceptualisation of mime as much as it posits mime within the larger sphere of physical theatre and contemporary performance phenomena. Again mime becomes an art form in flux, as it has perhaps always been, or perhaps always should have been.

This is not necessarily new mime, or new theatre, or any of the hybrids that it has been called, but a return to a much broader idea of mime and how it affects movement and thereby theatrical expression by offering multiple perspectives in what previously was considered a closed field. Leading the way is the performer, the subjective body itself, in the role as it is called here: the *performer-creator*.

No longer bound by style or crippled by silence, the *performer-creator* leads from the front by *doing*. She embodies (physically and emotionally) the collusion between objective and subjective mime, seeking to train herself in a living technique but then attempting to let that technique go in performance, for it to become invisible so that it acts as a tool for supporting the actions (and thereby the performer), but does not become an end in and of itself. Attention is drawn away from decoding the invisible silence towards engaging completely with the audience's imagination, where the performer as such 'disappears' (following Grotowski) and leaves behind the suggestion or the intimation of situation, character, or action: one the audience completes by their presence.

The *performer-creator* is something of a paradox – not only is she a specialist, a performer who has dedicated much time and energy towards perfecting theatrical skills, she is also the proverbial jack-of-all-trades, the *cabotin*, but one who has undergone some immersion into the ‘purity’ of an art form before coming out the other side again.

This starts to build a highly complex picture of the *performer-creator* and highlights much of its potential for the continuing development of contemporary mime. As too it does for the potential for the South Africa situation: either in an ensemble or solo work – the performer taking responsibility for the devising and creating of work. To date there is no training centre in South Africa that caters for the development of not only contemporary mime but physical performance in its broader sense.¹ For the most part, training falls into an old South African trap of going it alone: there are a significant (and growing) number of solo practitioners but hardly any groups, or permanent companies that sustain training and creating work beyond a project-to-project basis. This is incredibly problematic – if the notion of the *performer-creator* is to play any part in the development of South African theatre or achieve any of its huge potential, then something more permanent needs to be set up. Somehow the funding, or committed pioneers, must be found or naturally gravitate towards each other.

For this is the territory marked out by those groups that have made significant progress in this regard. The name of the game is research -- research into both the performer as self and all the genres and styles available for use as well as the fostering of a group identity, if there is a group or ensemble. This would lead to further research and developments in performance trends and ways of expressing work physically on stage. The *performer-creator*, or actor-creator, or even creative actor, is actively involved in research (as much as she is in re-search) that constantly addresses the very human need to discover new (or alternative) ways of performing, new ways of devising, new ways of showing work on stage. A word like ‘new’ is misleading, however – as this research has constantly shown. There is little new

¹ Although the Rhodes University Drama Department and First Physical Theatre Company goes some way to addressing this: Rhodes Drama likes to see itself in the light of a research centre for performance, although in reality is not quite there yet. And First Physical initiated the Professional Training Programme in 2001 – a development that will be interesting to monitor. The Zip-Zap Circus in Cape Town is another organisation/company that is intent in setting up a permanent school that

about contemporary trends by way of work and style truly different or unseen before. Rather, the performer displays a new or alternative embracing of older forms mixed with a temper of the times to give it something of a contemporary spin. This leads to a mixing of previously separate styles and disciplines where the performer is free to draw on whichever style or genre she deems necessary and in this way actively creates different syntheses of form, offering up a wider range of performance options and opportunities. This leads to a shift of awareness when considering the performer: no longer is she a mere tool or interpreter in the hands of a director who ultimately calls the shots and thereby still occupies the position of primary meaning-maker in the creation of theatrical work; instead, the performer herself is the core of the process and becomes instrumental in providing some kind of bridge or link that spans the disparate styles and offers them recourse to and with each other.

Thus one returns to the intensive awareness of necessary training.² Bauman writes:

There is one very important factor that links these genres, however. In each case, the performer must possess advanced physical acting skills to carry the craft on stage and effectively communicate to an audience. This would suggest that a high level of training is required beyond text analysis, scene study, scansion, and voice training. Our actor-creator is an image-maker and their qualities include those of a playwright, director, designer, technician and actor. They must have the ability to be both sculptor and sculpture. In short, our actor-creator must be an artist, and an artist creates. (in Bauman Theatre Forums)

The actual arriving at such a state is not as easy to encapsulate as it is to glibly write down. The *performer-creator* does not make the journey of creating and performing work any easier – if anything, it points towards a more complex conceptualisation, a harder voyage of training and discovery.

Furthermore, a new host of questions arise: primarily, is it possible for the performer to occupy all the roles that the *performer-creator* expects of one? Following Bauman, is it possible to be playwright, director, designer, technician and performer?³ James

trains participants in all aspects of contemporary circus-theatre performance. See www.zip-zap.co.za for more details.

² Although again, it must be stressed that the idea of the *performer-creator* is just an idea, an ideal. One does not grow up to become a *performer-creator*.

³ Question like this have plagued me for some time. Trained in theatre administration, theatre technical work, directing, acting, choreographing, mime, creative writing and physical theatre, I constantly occupy many different roles within any one production. On the one hand this is obviously beneficial as one can do just about everything and can therefore be highly flexible and self-sufficient. On the other,

Roose-Evans, investigating the rise of alternative theatre through directors and groups such as Grotowski, Brook and Barba, outlines Barba's concept of three essential groups: the first theatre (commercial and subsidised theatre), the second theatre (the established avant-garde where the actor is abandoned for directorial virtuosity) and the third theatre, which is "...that which confronts an audience with messages of an inner life. These messages are intuited by the spectator at a deeper level of knowing than that of the rational mind. It is a form of theatre that came fully into being with Grotowski, whose discipline Barba is." (Roose-Evans 1989 p 165)

Intrinsic to this form of collective theatre is a long and arduous process of creation, with Grotowski and Barba asking their actors not to play a character but "that he confront these characters within himself and offer the result of that encounter to an audience. Grotowski would have the actor be his own creator and not the servant of the dramatist." (p 166) Roose-Evans continues:

For the Third Theatre the question is: how can the organic actor (the actor who must create his own material) be his own matrix and, at the same time, shape the results into objective signs whose origin is his own subjectivity? For this is the essence of the new art and the new craft of the actor-creator. For this new actor of the Third Theatre there are, as yet, few signposts. Each group is compelled to carry out its own research. It is an heroic task and Barba says that only those driven by an indomitable need to create will be able to overcome the inertia that is satisfied with superficial results. (p167)

There are still very few signposts, now over a decade later. However, by all appearances, the emerging conceptualisation of the *performer-creator* could be going some way to providing just that. The questions, though, remain – particularly the performer being her own matrix: is it possible? The answers, as always, point to the enquiry, the search, research and re-search that each person or group is 'compelled' to carry out. Also, it is not so much a therapeutic enquiry into one's psychology, although that is a by-product, but more that (as Buckland states) "you

concerns do arise over quality of the work – if one is performing or still shaping performance but has one's mind elsewhere, say in worrying how the performance is taking shape or what the lighting plan is going to be, how present can one be? This keeps resurfacing in my life – one particular incident sticks in memory: in 2000, the Rhodes Drama graduation play was *Night Dream*, inspired by Shakespeare and directed by Buckland, Sheena Stannard and myself. I was also playing Puck, as well as the principal lighting designer. On the day of the lighting rig, an extra rehearsal had been called, and since I was wrapped up in cables and plans I was late for the run. Buckland burst in and with more than a touch of annoyance exclaimed: "What are you – a techie or a performer?!"

want to discover yourself by enquiring about other people." (Interview, November 2001)

This seems to indicate that maybe the question of being one's own matrix is a false one, or misdirected – after all, one of the steps of becoming an artist is, as mentioned already, an engagement with the world:

...it's not just about how does the world affect me. You're observing how does the world affect others...you spend your energy in that group focussing on the others; at the same time they're busy finding out about you and you learn from them what's happening to you. ... Instead of "ooh, I'm feeling this" and "I'm wanting that"...that's the disadvantage of doing work on one's own. I think it's fine at a more mature level, you know, but the more initial stages I think we need to be in that group situation. So that your focus is an enquiry on other people: what's this like for you? And only when you get that answer I suppose is when you start to formulate your own. (Andrew Buckland, in interview November 2001)

The self, though, is the beginning point, as Buckland continues: "You might be the start of the idea, but it can only be tested when you try to apply that in relation to others, that you don't limit your enquiry to yourself as the matrix." (Interview, November 2001) This does not preclude the presence of the director in the creative process at all, but it does make her an equal partner and not the sole, or final, authorial power.

The *performer-creator* does not, as such, exist; however, there is enough evidence of research and performance worldwide to suggest that contemporary work is turning towards its conceptualisation. Mime (as it has previously been known – the white-faced, silent performance more closely akin to pantomime) might very well be dead, but like a phoenix (following Desmond Jones) it rises from the ashes to return, yet again, to the very centre of theatrical work. It is ridiculous to think that by embracing the conceptualisation of the *performer-creator* mime has managed finally to answer its persistent crisis of definition. For the time being, the one we live in, it certainly seems to fit best now, as a working conceptualisation that does not attempt to reduce or limit its potential for affecting movement; but who is to say what the future holds. One thing remains clear, though, and that is as long as there is a vague need for theatre, there will always be artists intent on enquiry, investigating notions of form and style, as much as an investigation of the self, of the performer who returns to the

heart of theatrical expression and is not relegated to being just a mouthpiece or pawn in the hands of the playwright and director.

It is this search that characterises contemporary performance, seeking in an abundance of form and genre some synthesis or unique perspective on theatre.

The pitfalls of such a search or enquiry are many. Roose-Evans suggests that the creative process claims many victims with groups reaching a terminal cul-de-sac and therefore being forced into a position where they can no longer exist. Introspection is a particular danger: groups become so introverted that they stop working altogether. (1989 pp170-171)⁴ As what happened with Grotowski, some even leave the field of theatrical performance completely, although they might continue with dedicated research into performative rituals.

Success is another danger, as Marceau found out by being trapped within his own creation, much like the character he portrays who becomes trapped in his own masks. This is something that Buckland faces too: on account of his phenomenal success in this country and abroad, there is now a certain expectation on the part of the audience whenever he opens a new show.

These are dangers that perhaps cannot be avoided and every creative artist, working in whatever field she might be, faces many of these, in various manifestations, repeatedly throughout the course of her life. It seems to be one of those things that come with the territory. Perhaps the *performer-creator* can go some way to offering some respite however, for the performer is deeply involved in a continuous process of discovery, research and investigation. It never stops, just as the performer never stops developing and training, as well as becoming influenced by other people or genres. As Peter Brook suggests:

As you read this book, it is already moving out of date. It is for me an exercise, frozen on the page. But unlike a book, the theatre has one special characteristic. It is always

⁴ Roose-Evans continues that the first theatre is always open to new challenges – because it is out in the open and so can be responsive to prevailing winds of change and/or trends. Very often, the mainstream will incorporate much of the pioneering work done by avant-garde practitioners and temper it so that it appeals to a more commercial market. See Innes 1993 for more on this. With the Third Theatre, the difficulties are greater, for, as Roose-Evans asks: “...how can a tightly sealed hermetic group be open?” (p170) This is a similar danger that faces a group such as Derevo who are fanatically hermetic – their training and personal routine so “weird and absolutist that some accuse Derevo of being a little cult, revolving round Anton Adassinski, their 41-year-old charismatic leader.” (Ismene Brown 2001)

possible to start again. In life this is a myth; we ourselves can never go back on anything. New leaves never turn, clocks never go back, we can never have a second chance. In the theatre, the slate is wiped clean every day. (Brook 1990 p157)

This is something that Buckland believes very strongly as well. For him the search is all-important: having made the commitment to it once, the artist continually remakes the same promise and commitment:

So the whole thing about making theatre, being an actor, being a creative person, I'm sure one of the keys is trying to find meaning, trying to discover that there's never an answer that this is who I am, this is how the world is, and this is what the world means. You're just *learning to make a search*. [emphasis mine] And if you're doing it physically, the answers are much more tangible for a start and that's the key to any of your emotional answers or emotional reactions that you have is through the physical. And if you then, having stood back and seen all this funny stuff that's come out, say 'OK how do I craft this into something that will stimulate other people to ask the same question' or 'let's share this question' or 'let's do that with a sense of joy and the tragic side as well', you then, through the physical and through technique, are able to do that freely and in a way that makes people go "k-bhew!" [mimes his head exploding] There's something worth asking, I suppose. Because they don't see the technique, they just see the question. (in interview, November 2001)

This goes a long way to 'articulating the unspeakable' (term used by Gary Gordon) and is pertinent stuff for the conceptualisation of our *performer-creator*.

To be well-versed in most (or many) of the various forms that have congregated together under the flexible conceptualisation of contemporary performance (many performance genres in which mime has found a space) is obviously beneficial, obviously the ideal – but is it possible? What would one lose in training in many forms? What would one gain? How might one benefit from a purity of form? Is purity sufficient for the contemporary performer and thereby performance?

These are questions that arise and demand answers – answers that will arrive or slip frustratingly away as development continues. As with contemporary life, in contemporary performance, with its emphasis on diversity and multiplicity, demands an interaction with a number of paradoxical and often contradictory forms and influences. "Purity is death!" claims Lecoq, calling for the need for chaos, albeit an organised one.

The *performer-creator* could well be stepping into the breach of organised chaos – for now, she might be something of an answer, not the complete answer, or picture, but an alternative: a point to move from. Incorporating a prodigious training in mime, blended with the ‘double legacy’ of physical theatre, embodying a physical approach to creating work that does not disregard the voice as part of the physical whole and finding in the contemporary clown some point of physical, personal and imaginative departure, the *performer-creator* looks set to occupy centre stage in the continuing development of theatre performance, in whatever form she might take.

This begins to trespass on the shaky ground of faith – this becomes an opinion, a belief, one that cannot be entirely proven, but one that appears to be developing. As Lecoq writes:

...what brings them to the school? Why do so many artists, sometimes from the other side of the world, come to take my classes? Can they not find something to satisfy them in their own country? I often ask myself these questions, and the reply is simple: they are in search of truth, authenticity, a foundation which will outlive fashion. When they come with this aspiration, it is up to me to respond with complete honesty, and no hint of demagoguery. They need to be met with words of strength, a permanent reference point that will stay with them throughout their creative lives. (Lecoq et al 200, p163)

By all accounts, and from all evidence available, the notion of the *performer-creator* and the movement towards that conceptualisation, is doing just that. The rest is up to time and the continued spirit of investigation.

In South African theatre, the person who (perhaps more than any other) embraces the conceptualisation of the *performer-creator* is Andrew Buckland.

Part Two:
Andrew Buckland and
Mouthpeace 1988-2000

Chapter Six: Theatre is Dead! Long Live Theatre!¹

Andrew Buckland is unique: in South African theatre he stands head and shoulders above all other performers who have consistently and conscientiously worked to perfect their art by applying perhaps the greatest maxim applicable, that when one perfects an art form, one is merely starting one's apprenticeship. This is a recurring motif in Buckland's work, and is one that places him squarely within the framework that has been set up for this thesis.

However, that is not to say that he fits easily within categories – quite the opposite in fact. Although it is easiest and most convenient to call him a mime, that is a label that he would be rid of completely.² Not only is he a consummate mime performer, he is also an actor, dancer, director, choreographer, playwright, teacher and associate professor of the Rhodes University Drama Department. This is no small order and often Buckland "...seems to be living two lives, or even three or four. It cannot be easy being actor, lecturer, director, playwright, dancer, choreographer and father all at the same time. Maybe that's what makes an artist a truly creative one – when audiences never cease to be surprised by the different sides of one character – some perhaps revealed on stage..." (Nelleke De Jager and Montgomery Cooper 1993).

Labelling his work is an even taller order, as he confesses: "The style could be described as animated action theatre. It could be described as complete kak but labels aren't much use. I'm a bit pretentiously resistant to them." (In interview with David Alcock 1999)

This brings up an interesting paradox that permeates Buckland's relationship with theatre: on the one hand he is vehemently anti-intellectual, while on the other he imbues all his work with a keen intelligence and razor-edged awareness of contemporary practice. In his words:

I suppose that's what was really part of the joy of being away this year [2001, when he was away on sabbatical]– I wasn't having to continually question how I would describe it or how I would talk about it; I could just do it. Because that is enough, you

¹ Title taken from lectures delivered by Buckland at the Wordfest 2000 and National Schools' Festival 2001.

² Buckland has been likened to Marcel Marceau by the likes of Barry Ronge 1990. Another writer puts it: "To label Buckland a mime artist makes as much sense as putting a 'baby on board' sticker on a minibus taxi. ...[he] says: "I've never called myself a mime.'"" (Donald Paul 2000 p63)

know. It's enough of a description of what it is and what category it fits in. I've less and less interest in working out or creating arguments to say this is more like this or that's got elements of that – I don't care anymore. Not that I ever did, but I tried to. I think it can be destructive and it can stifle. Up to a certain extent it can be liberating and it can certainly, for people who are training as well, it can be really useful. Rather than run against the wall there, there's a door that someone's opened – check that. So that's really useful. By the same token, all that investigation and that discussion and that argument is also part of that expression of that enquiry and some people are really skilled at it, some people really love doing that but I don't. Anymore. (Interview, November 2001)

This makes it very difficult for any researcher to formulate an argument, and as such any research cannot be a review of literature. It demands an interaction with the subject and his work as well as a distance from it; this is a paradox that cannot and will not be satisfied here.³

However, as has been established already, there is much of a similar paradox running not only throughout mime history but within contemporary manifestation too. Mime is an extraordinarily hybrid field, and can be seen in the light of the phenomenon of physical theatre, which (returning to Sanchez-Colberg) has a further double legacy within theatre practice.⁴ Therefore, it stands to reason that there will

³ An interaction that must steer clear of one becoming a disciple of the subject as that is always a danger in this kind of work that demands a dedication to oneself as an artist and to continue discovering and investigating performance modes. Eugenio Barba says: "If anyone exists whom I can call my master, my teacher, it is Grotowski. He taught me my craft. His fundamental theories, his work process and his professional consciousness are still a challenge to me. You are a disciple as long as you recognise that your teacher has still something to give you, inciting you to further and personal growth. In this sense I am still Grotowski's disciple and will be so for a long time." (in Roose-Evans 1989 pp165-166) Again, this is an area that concerns me greatly, as I can see in my work the huge influence that Buckland has had on me. But he is not in the guru game, and certainly does not wish to be so, as much as I do not want to be anyone's disciple. I am working through all my influences, searching for my own personal style/methods/processes and believe that that is the journey, not to remain tied to one 'master', if you like.

⁴ Asked on his viewpoint on where mime finds itself, and whether it can still be called mime, or perhaps mime with a small 'm' rather than a separate art form in its own right, Buckland replies: "I think it feels like that to me, just from what I can gather from looking at programmes of mime festivals and all that – it's basically theatre. It keeps reminding me of that Leabhart quote that this is the "womb", that this is where everything starts from, like it's the poetry of theatre. The refined version of it. As a training mechanism and as a tool that one can use in performance to draw on if you've got a specific thing you need to say, then it's one of the toys to play with. But it's quite a specific toy, it's quite a powerful toy, I suppose is what I'm saying. But I don't think that ... what I think was a mistake that that white-faced, silent clown became the 'mime'. In fact mime was busy in everything else all the time, was busy being used in theatre all the time and then suddenly mime became that. And I don't think it ever was. The pantomime became the mime. And now what's happening more and more, it's being recognised as having a space in every performance genre. So now you can have a mime performance, pure mime – long live pure mime, silent mime or just gesture, but not necessarily. I think that now it's just one of those things we can play with." (interview November 2001)

again be questions left unanswered and spaces left for future research and innovation. These questions, unavoidable as they are, remain important and will continue to be so.

Placing Buckland within the physical theatre phenomenon is equally problematic, as he remains uneasy about such labels.⁵ He explains to David Alcock:

Physical theatre as a title is really an instruction to the audience or an invitation to the audience and the players to pay specific attention to the physical as a means of performance. The invitation to allow communication to happen in unusual ways – not always logical, or narrative or things which have obvious meaning. Perhaps the term invites people to simply experience at a purely visceral level what they see and hear. In this sense my work is not Physical Theatre in that it still needs to “make sense” to as wide an audience as possible. The love of stories as an element of popular theatre is something I seem to enjoy. (Interview 1999)

However, he does concede that it could be seen as physical theatre “In as much as it is intensely physical and much of the humour, characterization [sic] and ooh most everything actually relies on the physical. The voice is used more and more as a physical presence not just a conveyor of meaning.” (ibid) In terms of calling it that outright, Buckland is acutely aware of contemporary manifestation: “...I would hesitate to place it in the same category as dv8 or First Physical or other “physical theatre” companies who present their ideas in far more abstract form.” (ibid)⁶

Buckland seems to be highly aware of the dangers of limiting the scope of his work by placing a reductive definition upon it; yet, if he does not, he will always be regarded as the ‘mime guy’ – swapping one reductive definition for another. For some reason it is easier for audiences to swallow.

⁵ It is interesting to note, however, that when Buckland returned to Rhodes University to begin teaching drama in 1992, the same year that Professor Gary Gordon became head of department, reference is made to Gordon being primarily interested in contemporary dance theatre (“...concerned with a more holistic approach to the idea of dance in that it incorporates a variety of theatrical disciplines and interacts with contemporary issues. The polarity between theory and practice is being broken down through the experimental linking of the two concepts,” said Professor Gordon”, Gillian Redmond 1992) and Buckland in physical theatre (where “...the focus is drawn onto the performance itself and the physical capabilities of the performers to create mood without reliance on extensive sets and lighting.” *Ibid*). Buckland, though, refuses to be drawn on this issue and claims Gordon is more about physical theatre.

⁶ Although he is cognisant that now it is less exclusively dance, what with “people from Lecoq now call[ing] their stuff physical theatre.” (Interview, August 2001)

Buckland, though, has almost created his own style of mime in South African theatre by combining a western training and influence with his love for stories into a particularly South African performance aesthetic, which has resonance with much township theatre as well as traditional oral performance. He explains to David Alcock:

My training determined the way in which I use the technique but in fact the traditional African story teller uses mimesis or physical imitation as a central performance mode. However I didn't consciously go out to draw on that as a performance discipline. I merely made the happy discovery – "oh, it looks like I'm not so pathetically Eurocentric after all. The content is where the South Africaness lies. (in interview, 1999)

Recently, the closest he has perhaps got to conceptualising his style can be found within the programme notes for Makana (2001), where he says:

"If you can show it, don't tell it." We aim to take advantage of the theatre's great and unique gift of 'presence', both physical and temporal, and to create live 'Action Theatre' taking place in the here and now. (programme notes)

Again, there is the problem of any label or name becoming a catch phrase and as ever, Buckland is wary of limiting himself to such a description:

It's more to do I suppose with that idea of Brook's that the event of each performance is a completely unique experience and it's not you're recreating a play, it's like every night this event is experienced by different people. So to get that sense of action happening in the present. And also to get kind of taken from action movies, you know, in the sense that there is physical action...and the fact that it's the here and now, that's why temporal and physical, that I'm physically present in the present time together and that although it might be based on a script and on rehearsals that you've rehearsed, what you're looking for tonight is something new...something else. (in interview, August 2001)

This suggests that Buckland, as indicated already, sees mime not as an entity all of and for itself, but merely one of the instrumental (if not *the* instrumental) tools for contemporary performance. Mime technique is used to achieve the "freedom through the discipline." (in interview with Dali Tambo, 2001) This is very much in line with contemporary mime, as has been discussed earlier, and again points towards not

only mime being the “womb” of theatre (Leabhart 1989) but at the centre of mime stands the performer as a creator: the *performer-creator*.

Buckland continues outlining his creative process:

The play [Makana, in this instance] is not an attempt at the accurate documentation of the “facts” of the past. The work examines recorded stories of the period, mixed with with our own imaginations, and directed towards making theatre. The sources provide the basis for the process of exploring the meaning that these stories have for us as human beings today. And the exploration is carried out using the creative toys of the theatre, but at the centre of the work in the rehearsal room everyday, are the aims: *to tell a good story, to discover human truths, and make quality new theatre*. [emphasis mine] (Makana programme notes, 2001)

The above explains very clearly Buckland’s attitude towards making theatre and the importance of the performer in the creative process: the work is imaginative and not bound to stories or facts, but mixed with the performer’s own imagination to create an imaginative retelling of the story, a re-creation of the event that has contemporary relevance for an audience.

One of the most important points to keep in mind when discussing Buckland is that as a theatre researcher, his research is completely and consistently embodied in his work. That is to say (following Derrida) that his work becomes a veritable ‘writing of the body’ itself. Even more so, like the contemporary clown, Buckland’s work is on the edge where traditional hierarchies of high and low cultures collapse. Buckland is at once both scatological, satiric, childlike and sublimely profound:

There has been a limiting perception of Buckland as being a master of mime, Marceauan mime, and it’s true, of course, but it’s only one facet of his creative and intellectual portfolio.

“Noo-Noo” arrived on our stages, back in ’88, and it was to develop something of a cult following, proving it to be a watershed period for the versatile performer who, until then, had been among South Africa’s foremost actors, but not at the top of the heap, despite some noteworthy performances. With “Noo-Noo”, and, to a lesser extent, “Between the Teeth” as well as with his triumphant “Bloodstream”, Buckland created his own “heap” where he stood firmly on top. (MacLiam 1994)

Furthermore, returning to Dorothy Max Prior's reading of Julia Kristeva that a "simple gesture, a slow walk across stage, a tumbling clown, a puppet, a poem are all as real and truthful as the most astute dialogue-based drama" (Max Prior *op cit* p6), the development of Buckland's work, from The Ugly Noo Noo to The Well Being echoes closely the afore-mentioned movement from a predominantly masculine, Apollonian view towards a more fluid Dionysian process of creation and performance.

That of course is leaving out the words themselves, and it should not be forgotten that Andrew Buckland is a wordsmith par excellence – whether in a script that he wrote previous to any physical exploration or the play-script that emerges from the same. The words that he writes, however, as much as they resonate on the page, are nothing without the context of physical presence, of performance. As such, this links Buckland to what has been discussed already with regards to the place of words and the vocal text in contemporary performance and its significance for the *performer-creator*. Buckland writes:

The trend in Contemporary performance reflects a movement not toward the demise of the word but to its return and revival. A movement in truth away from indistinct, overplayed and meaningless references to phenomenon and towards a linguistically freer and more accurate 'context-specific' use of the verbal. In fact, it reflects the expansion and explosion of language into a new form [again that troubling word] which links it absolutely with the physical until there is no division between what we receive as visual and what we perceive as aural. That's what Between the Teeth did. It reviewed the way that the physical reflects on the verbal and how much the physical context of language is absolutely decisive in the specific meaning of the word. And is that not the ultimate test or purpose of language – to have meaning? To communicate meaning? So what started out as a denial of the Word, ends up as simply an affirmation of the Physical as such, and as a context for the verbal and aural." (MA coursework notes on Between the Teeth, 2000)⁷

Arguably, more than anyone else in South African theatre, though, Buckland's performance work and the process of conceptualising, creating and performing embodies his research – with performance (particularly with regards to his working at

⁷ Much of Buckland's work (particularly Between the Teeth) is stylistically remarkably similar to the work of Dario Fo, who received the 1997 Nobel Literary Prize for his contribution to literature and his championing of the oral performance tradition. Much of the made-up language in Between the Teeth is similar in effect to what one reads about Fo's delight in *grammelot*: "A method of producing the semblance of a given language without adopting real or identifiable words from that language." (Dario Fo 1991, p34) Amazingly, Buckland contends to never having heard of Fo until someone remarked how similar Between the Teeth was to some of Fo's work. (Interview, August 2001)

Rhodes University Drama Department) becoming a legitimate way of 'writing up' his research. A further writing of the body ensues.

As has been discussed already, this suggests a contemporary movement towards the performer playing a crucial role in creating and performing work and embracing the notion, or the ideal, of the *performer-creator*.

Perhaps the watershed in his career (and one that ties him very specifically to this discussion of the *performer-creator*) has been the creation and performance of The Ugly Noo Noo (1988). Although the ethos of Mouthpeace dates back earlier than that, with such work from The Mime (1981) to No Easy Walk (1987), it is with The Ugly Noo Noo that Buckland starts to really come into his own: as both creator and performer:

The Noo Noo [sic] developed as an expression of several different things. Firstly my frustration as an artist. I had been unemployed for three months after being on tour with Maciek [Schejbal – the percussionist Buckland worked with on No Easy Walk]. I was also starting to see myself as an artist for the first time - an artist with a point of view and a responsibility to myself to find ways of expressing it. Plus a frustration with the political situation, the clear link between violence and fear which was so much a part of everyday life. Not that I felt it too closely in my white suburb. So the play formed as a kind of spasm of action - technically the result of an established regime of training. The ideas once generated tumbled out and the more I did the more I felt I could do so it became a vehicle for me to try and push the bounds of performance and see what I could do if I tried to employ all the skills I thought I had and had yet to discover. I suppose it was also a conscious move towards virtuosity as a language. Not only for the message, but for me as a performer. How much of it was just ego development – who knows? (Interview with David Alcock 1999)

Self-deprecating aside, this tells a lot about Buckland's attitude towards making the work. His indication that it was a conscious move towards "virtuosity as a language" makes it slightly problematic for the *performer-creator*, as the argument so far has been one of moving away from virtuosity, but it must be remembered that this interview occurred in 1999, a decade after Noo Noo was first created and Buckland had been in consistent and continuous development. There is, of course, the further aspect that any solo work (such as Noo Noo) or ensemble work even (such as The Well Being), demands some form of virtuosity. If one trains for many years, one is bound to become a virtuoso – a master of one's art. What is perhaps more important

for the *performer-creator*, and the development of Buckland's work, is the artistic choice one makes to not dwell in such virtuosity. In terms of contemporary mime, that choice is away from mime being a stilted, limited form of illusion and silence, but sublimates the technique in rehearsal and performance. It remains there, supporting the performer – that is the liberation of technique: a living technique, as discussed earlier in this thesis. Buckland says:

The more you practice it the less you need to use it. ...And you might use one second of it, not as an exhibition of technique, but in order to take the story further. But already that little thing carries you, does so much work for you, [is] so kind of rich in meaning cos it's economical because it's so clear, then that's all that's necessary. It also gives you, as a performer, a sense of confidence – you've got a language, your body's thinking articulately. And what you're thinking is being manifested without having to construct it. It's this Grotowski thing about action. [The performer "burning away", leaving just the essence. See Grotowski 1984]...you're not thinking how do I act this – the thought is there and because your technique has lessened that gap there's a response. So you're in the moment, it's a spontaneous reaction. Maciek introduced me to jazz, a lot. He used to play it. That's what he was busy training for. And to listen to people improvise, it's there, it's on that fractal line – chasing and following at the same time. ...That...whew...I'm just jealous of that. ...Maciek was, you know, just aside from giving the structure of discipline and training, was about that attitude – take yourself seriously; if that's what you say you are and do then give yourself the opportunity to do it and do it well. (In interview, August 2001)

The debt Buckland continually pays to Schejbal is immense. He explains to David Alcock:

I think the difference came with THE UGLY NOO NOO because just prior to doing this work I had been on tour with NO EASY WALK with Maciek Schejbal and he had given me a few things to think about in his attitude to himself as an artist and to the whole notion of technique. If he spent a day in which he didn't practice for at least eight hours, it was a failure of a day. I saw the sense of it, (at last) and began to take on the responsibility for my own development myself. I think prior to this I thought; "Ag I'll just be so brilliant that someone is bound to notice and I'll be discovered" (!) In fact if I look at my technique in the early stages of NO EASY WALK it's quite embarrassing. And I really thought it was good. However, the way Maciek trained showed me the direction and so on returning to Joburg, I began a personal regime of training and a way of life not exactly Grotowskian, but with a much more focused idea about who I was as an artist. And what that required. (In interview, 1999)

This shift towards taking himself seriously as an artist is one that is vital for the movement towards the *performer-creator*. As mentioned already, the nature of the game is enquiry, research – both into who and what one is as an artist as much as it is into contemporary and ancient performance trends. The *performer-creator* is about responsibility – for oneself, for the world and for one's art. Buckland says:

...the whole thing about making theatre, being an actor, being a creative person, I'm sure one of the keys is trying to find meaning, trying to discover that there's never an answer that this is who I am, this is how the world is, and this is what the world means. You're just learning to make a search. (Interview with Buckland, November 2001)

As always, this remains an easier thing to write (or say) than to actually do. One of the aspects that makes working with Buckland so unique, according to his wife, is:

One of the reasons that it works is because I get straight to the point and don't mince my words. And he...there's so little ego involved, we're able to work very quickly very intensively because there isn't that sort of sensitive dynamic. Of course there are some sensitivities, I can't tell him it's all crap and he does hang onto stuff for a long time. I'll see something and my instinct is it's not working and his challenge is: let me make this work. And I resist and resist and resist, not because I'm making him work harder but I reject it until I feel it's working and occasionally we've got rid of ideas but occasionally he's worked so hard at it because he's loved the idea and I've felt it's not working and he's worked so hard to convince me that it's turned out to be really good. (Interview with Janet Buckland, November 2001)

It is this lack of ego (and consequent ease in the working processes) that singles Buckland out as a prime example of a *performer-creator*. As Janet Buckland explains, his focus is on the work at all times – leaving out any of the petty insecurities that might threaten working in such a way and thus avoiding many of the problems that face a movement towards the *performer-creator*, as indicated earlier.⁸

⁸ I believe anyone who has worked with him will agree with this – Buckland's focus *is* on the work at hand. As Janet Buckland testifies about the advantages of not having to waste energy on inflated egos or the like: "It takes a huge amount of your energy...if you think about being able to use all of that just on making the work, you don't actually realise it until you work with someone like that how you fast-track the work, and how much more energy you've got. It's so exciting...I'm sure you found that working with Andrew – it's about the work, it's not about anything else. You get results so much faster." (Interview, November 2001)

It is also this that prompts many colleagues and critics to write words such as:

...Andrew is deeply disciplined and radiates an almost Buddhist-like view of his world – his intensely private family life and the theatre. He speaks with passion, and little regret, knowing perhaps that he has the capabilities to smash any barriers. After all, he is one of the few South Africans to break through the Equity barrier and to steal the "torch" of theatre awards from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival...not to mention that it's for the third time. (De Jager and Cooper 1993)

Given the fact that the above was written in 1993, it comes as a pleasure to discover that nearly a decade later Buckland is still in such a state. His work has developed considerably, but at the core of the man remains a dedication to his art and to himself as an artist. This again makes him a perfect example (and one of few in South Africa) of the contemporary movement towards the *performer-creator*.

Chapter Seven: South African well-being

The creation and consequent development of The Well Being (originally created in 1999 by Andrew Buckland, Lionel Newton and Lara Foot-Newton) displays, perhaps more than any other Buckland work, many of the principles and ideas that make it a perfect example that highlights the contemporary movement towards the *performer-creator*. It represents something of the culmination of a decade's worth of research and development by Buckland, finding its form in a work that is presently still in development and slowly beginning to imprint itself upon this country, as well as internationally.¹

The Well Being tells the tragicomic story of a young woman: Flo Deluge (sometimes referred to as F'leau). Flo lives in a small village at the edge of a forest in a valley and, after she is brutally raped by the local preacher, becomes obsessed with digging into the ground – an activity that leads to her being outcast from her community and burdened with all their sins. After the valley is flooded, the humans flee the area, with Flo the only remainder – safe on the mound of soil she has dug up. After a love affair with a passing porpoise, Flo is left with child: a strange union between human and sea-creature. The floods subside, drought takes its place and the humans return to discover the only source of water left is the well that Flo has dug – water that she desperately needs for her child. The narrow-minded townspeople plot to get hold of her water and rid themselves of her 'disgrace' once and for all.

This play was created with the aid of funding obtained from the National Arts Council (NAC). Part of the criteria for funding was to submit reports to the NAC on the progress of the play's development and creation. Two such reports exist: the one a progress report written in March 1999 and the other a final report written in November 1999. They are (perhaps more than any other) the most essential documents to be studied when researching Buckland's work. Not only do they give vital insight to the creative processes, as well as Buckland's frank and incisive

¹ At time of writing, The Well Being is alive and well – booked to play three weeks in London in April and thereafter in Belfast, Brighton, potentially Manchester and returning to Europe. This after three years of performing at the Standard bank National Arts Festival, seasons in Johannesburg, Pretoria, KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and nationally. In 2001 it also premiered at the Edinburgh Festival, garnering rave reviews and capacity houses during its final week. Andrew Buckland now has Scottish fans: "This old guy stopped me outside the theatre," he says, "and said: are you Mr Buckland? I saw you in 1989 – you're the chicken that said 'fuck!' [referring to Foul-Mouth Eddie, the master assassin in The Ugly Noo Noo]" (interview, August 2001)

evaluation of the play at the time, but they emphatically substantiate and highlight the contemporary movement towards the *performer-creator*.

They do this by documenting the processes the company employed towards making the work, and as such highlight and emphasise all attention and importance being placed on the performer at the centre of the story. Although many theatrical and stylistic elements are similar to work performed before – specifically in partnership with Lionel Newton in works such as Bloodstream (1992) and Feedback (1995) – it is the extent that these elements are challenged, re-examined and ultimately pushed forward that makes The Well Being one of the shows that epitomises Buckland's standing in contemporary mime and especially South African theatre.

The work has as its origins a solo show created by Buckland in 1998: The Water Juggler (commissioned for the Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees). Buckland explains the initial image that led to the creation of this work (an image that the creative team would return to when devising The Well Being):

In the absolute centre of an enormous desert there is a well. At the bottom of this well there is a female water creature of some kind. Perhaps a mermaid. Definitely something which is absolutely dependent on water as an environment, and which would die in a short time if exposed to desert conditions. So she is trapped at the bottom of her well. Somewhere far away, perhaps on the other side of the planet there lives a man who is trapped on a desert island completely surrounded by water. The male figure dependent on the solid earth for survival and surrounded by the life-threatening miasmic chaos of the sea. The woman trapped in her dark damp miasmic chthonic depth and surrounded by hard, unyielding Apollonian and dry desert land. The process of making the play then emerged from asking relevant questions about this imagined state of things. How did the two of them get where they are? How do they get together? Do they want to? (Mouthpeace final report to the National Arts Council, November 1999 p6)

Already it becomes clear that some form of exploration into the differences and juxtapositions between the Apollonian and Dionysian worldviews are at play, although it must be kept in mind that this is written with the advantage of hindsight – nearly a year on after the creation and performance of The Water Juggler. However, these are ones that have been identified within this research as prime factors

indicating a movement towards the *performer-creator*.² Furthermore, although it is applicable to see the roots of this take shape within the creation of The Water Juggler it is only with The Well Being that the idea bears fruit.

Upon reading the two reports, it becomes clear that both Buckland (performer and writer) and his wife Janet (director) became highly dissatisfied with the work. One of the main reasons for this dissatisfaction came with a change of emphasis away from the central woman character that had piqued Buckland's interest initially:

...I had turned away from the woman's story, and she had become one of the supporting characters, or a kind of mythical mysterious presence in the story of Jerry Can-Do. Jerry served as a kind of anti-hero [a typical Buckland character]...[and] Fl'eau slipped more and more into the background, or rather became the mysterious and unknowable context or canvas on which Jerry's satirical story began to be played out. She remained the archetypal female mystery waiting to be discovered. (Final report to the NAC, November 1999 p6)

This, Buckland feels, resulted from his engaging a similar kind of rehearsal and creative process as many of his previous works. This process (as both he and Janet testify to in interviews and countless newspaper reviews) usually took the form of his working intensively on his own, producing the beginnings of the work, or the 'engine' or the 'kernel' (as Janet Buckland calls it) that sparks off the rest of the work. Regular showings ensue, but due to lack of available time, or the hectic schedule that the Bucklands invariably lead, the director is unable to be present for the entirety of the creative process. At first glance this might seem advantageous for the development

² "Nietzsche describes Apollo as god of the plastic arts, a shining, precise, master of sculptural appearance, illusion, and contemplation. Apollo gives measured restraint in the poetry of dreams, and creates representations of individuation. He is, in a sense, the father of all the gods of Olympus, the creator of each with their own particular deeds and mythology. Dionysus, on the other hand, merges the individual with a Nature that is beyond one's control. Dionysus can be savage, unpredictable, ecstatic, indestructibly powerful, pleasurable, a kind of primordial music that is beyond the mere phenomenology of representation. ... An Apollonian methodology...might strictly describe the specific task at hand without outside references. Imagine carefully crafting a fully functional vase in which to place flowers, and then forgetting to put in *living* flowers. Or maybe you put in the flowers, but were not able to *sense* when the flowers had gotten old, and in need of replacement. You could live in a society like George Orwell's *1984* (1949) or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) without ever knowing what it is like to *feel*." (R.H. Albright, MA; 1996-2001) The link to what has been discussed with relation to contemporary mime becomes obvious in that contemporary practitioners move away from utilising mime (illusion-based, objective mime) as an end to itself towards a more open, fluid and ultimately adaptable form that connects very strongly with mime returning to the "womb" of theatre. Extending the above metaphor, contemporary mime can perhaps be seen as the flowers, held in place by the practicality and crafting of a vase, but attention drawn very strongly to them and all they may signify. The vase is just what the word implies – a vessel, a tool. Similarly, mime and training in mime becomes a tool, one of many and a very important one, but a tool nonetheless.

of the *performer-creator* in that she is forced to rely on herself to devise and create work and thus take sole responsibility for it, albeit shaped eventually by an impartial eye, but the downside of such a set-up is equally easy to spot. Buckland writes:

By improvising alone the performer is often trapped into using only him/herself as a creative source. The same world-view, emotional platform, perspective will invariably surface. (*ibid* p7)

By articulating this, Buckland seems to be only too aware of the pitfalls surrounding the developing idea, or conceptualisation, of the *performer-creator* and consequently it becomes less of a surprise that he views it as an “idea” or “ideal” and not an eventuality, as mentioned earlier. This is very much in line with Roose-Evans’ misgivings about the ‘creative actor’, as discussed already, when he asks: “...how can the organic actor (the actor who must create his own material) be his own matrix and, at the same time, shape the results into objective signs whose origin is his own subjectivity?” (*op cit*) This is a question that dogs any discussion about the *performer-creator* and will doubtless continue to dog any future development.³

By returning to the initial image to create The Well Being, Buckland bears testament to his belief that the nature of the game of theatre making is one of “enquiry”. In this one can clearly discern much of importance for the development of the *performer-creator* in that he recognises an urgent need for the creative process to change, away from a stilted one where the solo performer is trapped in similar (and repeating) processes of creation, towards a more open, fluid, and ultimately Dionysian one:

So the beginning of the process of developing The Well Being involved going back to the story itself and bringing focus back to Fl’eau and her story. To again revisit the story from a feminine point of view. To stop trying to validate the story or make it acceptable by adding objects, things, clever bits of story line, puns, relevant political statements about the state of the world, funny characters etc in order to validate its presence on the stage but to trust the story and find ways simply to allow this story time on the stage to develop itself. (Final report, *op cit* p 8)

In doing so, Buckland recognized the need to “give up” responsibility for the work – not in terms of creating it and ultimately performing it, but for the form it would take:

³ This question, however, as discussed previously, might be somewhat misdirected.

The Well Being rehearsals began with nothing except the story which had been the basis for *The Water Juggler*. So under the quite brilliant direction of Lara we began to improvise ways of telling this story of F'leau Deluge. She and he actually having spent so much time working with Barney Simon are really skilled at constructing the boundaries of an improvisation and then at developing those as they happen. It was fantastic to work this way with people I trusted completely with the material and myself. I really developed this trust in Lara when she directed me in *ENDGAME* the previous year. That was a dark journey if I've ever had one and she was excellent. So I went in saying to her that I wanted another kind of play to all the others. I wanted something which reflected darker sides, which dealt with the tragic and the sad. I didn't want to make a work that necessarily went as comedy. (In interview with David Alcock 1999)⁴

In other words, this struck Buckland as letting go of the Apollonian structure somewhat and embracing a more Dionysian, feminine process – i.e. to enjoy the present moment of the workshop or rehearsal rather than focus on the resultant production.⁵ Similarly in performance to trust the drive of the story to let it unravel by focussing on and in the moment and one's reactions both as performer and creator therein. This involves giving up the responsibility to make meaning, but simply allow the story to tell itself: "the purer the expression of the story, the richer will be the form the story takes. The more resonances [sic] become clear, the more the story will be rich with archetypal images." (Final report p9)⁶

⁴ It is interesting to note that in 1999, when *The Well Being* first appeared on the Standard Bank National Arts Festival Fringe, it was billed as a comedy. By the next year, subsequent to further development and a change in the ending towards a darker, more tragic tone, the work was billed as theatre.

⁵ In this, one can see echoes of the contemporary clown who strives to always remain in the present, imbuing her work with a freshness, as if encountering situations, objects and other people for the first time.

⁶ From this it becomes clear that what Buckland is fascinated with is in creating contemporary myths. He explains to David Alcock: "Since doing *Feedback* and *Water Juggler* and *Well Being*, I have noticed my love of myths. If I look at the plays nearly all of them are attempts to create contemporary myths that have some basis in truth, some in imagination and always have place for archetypes and ideas to be developed from them. The potential of mythology to contain ineffable truths about humanity is very appealing. (Such is the level of my hubris)" (1999) A very good artist, musician and all-round genius friend of mine offered me this by way of agreeing: "The old cultures (by old I mean cultures that have been following the same social identities for a few hundred years) in the world – America, Britain, Germany, France, some eastern places – all have a common identity, they all know the same bar songs, they all learn the same nursery rhymes. Cultures establish their common ground by creating myths. America has the cowboy tales, the re-tellings of the civil war and their beloved founding father story. France has Joan of Arc, Germany has Beowulf, Faust... Britain has King Arthur. You get the idea. What Andrew Buckland is doing is creating New South African myths. Stories that are quintessentially South African, not because of stereotyping (like Leon Schuster), although he does indulge there a bit, not because of using overtly South African symbols (like Nelson, the flag and so on), but by making his stories have a feel, a sense that they could exist in the mind and memory of the

However, as much as Buckland enjoys the idea of this Dionysian approach, he realises that much of his preoccupation with it has come to him by way of afterthought:

The fascinating dance between the two seems to me to be an aspect of the work at the time. Although certainly none of this was expressed or even thought at the time. The point at the time was to play. To use the structure of the story and the character to create a framework within which to play; which is to disappear. (*ibid*)

He is also very aware of certain paradoxes within the Apollonian/Dionysian aspect; namely, what is the result of such exploration? He writes:

...what is the product of Dionysian theatrical work – a script? Which is nothing more than a formula, a series of signs, a structure for improvisation, a plan of action but not the actions themselves. It serves as a framework for play, as the rules of the game. The words on the page constitute the Apollonian dimension of the dynamic expression of the inexpressible which takes place during performance. The written words give tangible form, and therefore shape and structure to the impulse which would otherwise lack form and so lack lucid expression. (*ibid* p9)⁷

There is actually very little mime in The Well Being – mime in the sense of objective mime where the technique is the performance. The work becomes a dynamic interplay of characters and attitudes – each invested with a strict and precise inner musicality and rhythm completely its own. What mime there is, is sublimated – it disappears. The display of technique does not get in the way of telling the story at all. With this, Buckland's views and working processes are very much in line with contemporary practice: his fascination with new circus (or circus-theatre) can be seen in Circomedia's cry of 'when tricks are not enough'. This indicates a movement away

South African landscape. It always sounds crap to say 'social landscape' but when it applies, it doesn't sound so crap. His plays aren't set geographically, they kind of exist in all of the spaces between, they are set in the mindsets from Joburg through to the Karoo. They are mythical." (Tom Schwarzer, 2001) One of my favourite stories regarding The Well Being has always been Buckland telling of a performance in Tzaneen – if I remember correctly. He says that the locals in the valley had a particularly strong reaction to the characters and did not find the play too funny at all as it resembled their community too closely. The power of myth?

⁷ Within this, many of the beliefs and pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq can be discerned, as discussed already: "...miming is a fundamental human action, a childhood action: children mime the world in order to get to know it and to prepare themselves to live in it. Theatre is a game which merely extends this action in different ways." (Lecoq *et al*, *op cit* pp 21-22) Buckland, by his own admission, is quite fascinated with the work of Lecoq – one of his long-time dreams has been to study at Lecoq's school. One hesitates to say that Lecoq is a pertinent influence on his work, although there are many similarities that can be drawn.

from a masculine, Apollonian, virtuoso skill display towards a more feminine, Dionysian, world-view where the performer disappears and the story tells itself through her.

In this, one can hear again an echo of Grotowski's belief that:

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. (Grotowski *op cit* p16)

This disappearance is crucial to an understanding of Buckland's recent work and, as discussed, crucial also to the development of the conceptualising of the *performer-creator*. Yoshi Oida (whom Buckland admits to Alcock is his favourite reading material at that time) explains further:

For me, acting is not about showing my presence or displaying my technique. Rather, it is about revealing, through acting, 'something else', something that the audience doesn't encounter in daily life. The actor doesn't demonstrate it. It is not physically visible, but, through the engagement of the onlooker's imagination, 'something else' will appear in his or her mind. For this to happen, the audience must not have the slightest awareness of what the actor is doing. They must be able to forget the actor. The actor must disappear. (Oida 1997 xvii)

This idea is stamped all over The Well Being, as Buckland explains at some length:

The very Apollonian activity of building the water pipe and connector suit used in *The Water Juggler* was put aside in favour of more fluid, changeable (and Dionysian) theatrical mime images. These take apparent form only through action – through movement – through change, through transformation. Ironically it is the fixed point stillness which is a powerful creative agent in helping people's imaginations to give apparent form to non-existent objects. The seeming magic of mime is created by the dynamic interplay between parts of the body which are moving and others which are still. The success of this artifice suggests powerfully that all perceived form is illusion and is ultimately dependent on our decision to interpret certain physical signs as signifying this object or that. In mime performance the object is created, not in physical form but in the form of the gap it leaves; of the shape it takes up – the space it inhabits, the shadow it leaves. More importantly the object is perceived to be

present by the effect it has, physically, spatially and most importantly emotionally, on the life form which is relating to it. It creates a reality, not through presence but through absence. The audience "sees" the form of the object but it exists only in their imaginations. So the creation exists in the fluid, utterly individual and Dionysian, chthonic and miasmatic environment of the imagination of the observer. All is subjective. (Final report *op cit* p11)⁸

As is quite obvious from the above, this links Buckland very closely to the working conceptualisation established in part one of this thesis. It also goes a long way to describing how Buckland sees his work connecting with the audience and the absolute necessity that they engage with the performance, perhaps best summed up by one critic who writes: "There is a feeling of real communion, not only with the performers, but with one another, all brought about by the integrity of sharing a common response to an imagined experience. The effect is at once hyper-real & surreal...Buckland & Newton are like lenses that go unnoticed because you are looking through them." (Mary Jordan 1999)⁹

That is not to say that The Well Being has been without its critics – far from it. When the work premiered at the Market Theatre in 1999, amidst a storm of critical and public acclaim came two distinctively negative voices: Daryl Accone – "Andrew Buckland's original story has become the theatrical equivalent of paint-by-numbers: this is a plot-by-issues play. Rape, class, witchcraft, access to water, sexual & racial stereotyping: they're all here & more, in a narrative that is as inchoate as it is thuddingly [sic] linear & literal." (Star Tonight 1999); and Robert Greig – "The characters are stereotypes, maybe because the show is predominantly mime & action – 'physical theatre' is the trendy term for acting where characters neither speak much nor explore caricatures." (Sunday Independent 1999)¹⁰

⁸ Classical mime can be seen as an objectification of this miasmas: the performer as masculine, Apollonian doer. This is perhaps why many people do not like classical mime much anymore – the artist is seen as too smug, too know it all; what Buckland highlights is, rather than buy into a dated habit of making objects, the action is placed squarely within the realm of the audience's imagination.

⁹ One of the most important devices discovered and perfected by the company is the technique that came to be called 'morphing': "...the transition from one character to the next and the subsequent transformation at a physical, emotional, vocal, rhythmic and intellectual level from one character to the next took place in mid sentence and sometimes in mid word." (Progress report p 15) This technique has become one of the strongest motors that drive the story forward, reflecting as it does the ability of rumours (or 'skinner') to infiltrate a community and be warped. Through this, the character of Flo Deluge (who remains silent – unfortunately so, according to Buckland – throughout most of the show) is revealed: a complex picture of a complex character.

¹⁰ It would be pertinent and indeed interesting to hear what both of these critics have to say about the revised version of the show – if they have indeed seen it. Alas, this area has to, for the moment at least, remain silent.

Buckland, as ever, takes this criticism in his stride and admits that the original version of the story 'sold out' to a form of a Disneyesque ending – an ending that was subsequently revised and reworked into a darker, more tragic one. This has pertinent reference to the idea of the *performer-creator* in that, once a work is made and performed, the work does not stop there. It is just the beginning:

...always we are aware of our need to go back into rehearsal and begin again to reinvestigate ways of telling the story and of allowing it to form itself through our dedication to disciplined attention to technique [a living technique] and an openness to the rehearsal process. An openness and acknowledgement of and respect for the life of the play itself as something at once separate and inseparable from us. (Final report p17)

As such, the play is something of a work-in-progress, and will continue to be so. Each night of performance brings a new set of audience members, a new set of energies and consequently a new show. This affirms what Brook says that every day in theatre, the slate is "wiped clean" – a maxim that Buckland has clearly internalised and made his own.

This has by no stretch of the imagination been an exhaustive or definitive study of The Well Being.¹¹ Neither does it pretend to be. What is hoped is that through discussing pertinent areas, some areas of the discussion on the *performer-creator* have been drawn out and held up to light. For, essentially, that is what The Well Being does: it highlights, arguably more than any of Buckland's previous works, the performer at the centre of the creative and performance process. Consequently, The Well Being is regarded as an important milestone in Buckland's development as a theatre artist: there is a development of emotional commitment in terms of his work; an honesty that before he did not allow himself previously (as his self-admitted tendency to deal with uncomfortable or risky situations is to go for the laugh, the gag) – now we see him allowing the significance of the emotion or situation to play itself out, with the performer 'disappearing' in a sense. What remains behind is not the performer as a supreme virtuoso, but attention is drawn towards the story, the subject itself:

¹¹ Much detail has, of necessity, been left out. Buckland has perhaps better articulated much of this within the two reports submitted to the NAC. Even those, however, are no substitute for experiencing the play for oneself – of taking part in the unique communion of theatre and engaging imaginatively,

...in Feedback and Bloodstream I suppose you have an idea that gets translated into a clear, obviously satirical mode on stage. And characters emerge and some of them are really nice and some of them just serve the idea of satire or commentary, whereas The Well Being left that stuff aside. There wasn't the need to make funny jokes about issues and political points, to make political satire. (Interview, August 2001)

What is experienced instead is the fruits of a maturation of both the creative and performance process, finding its form in The Well Being to such an extent that:

...the change of tone of previous work, from one of cartoonish satire and comic commentary to one which includes situations, characters and portrayal of emotions which are closer to the tragic, encourages the sensation that the company is exploring new theatrical ground both in terms of style, content and the technical and emotional abilities of the actors. (Progress report 1999)

As such, it reflects Buckland's commitment to his art and being an artist completely, and this has great significance for the *performer-creator* in that it suggests a responsibility and dedication to one's form. Free from the limitations of a reductive definition of style and form, but employing strongly a living technique, and enabled to create innovative and exciting (not to mention popular) work, the benefits of such an awareness are enormous. This is theatre as play. It is based not on money, but skills developed, and techniques mastered and sublimated in performance.

It can only be hoped that more people take up the gauntlet that Buckland throws at his contemporaries' feet:

If we can keep proving that this kind of theatre can work, it will encourage the students to be as stupidly brave as us. (in interview with Jill De Villiers 1999)

emotionally and intellectually with the work, in a far more subjective way than mere words on paper could ever hope of achieving.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this thesis, attention has been drawn to the performer changing and adapting to the changing needs of performance. Furthermore, the movement towards the *performer-creator* highlights the central role of the performer in not only contemporary mime but current theatre manifestation in general – particularly performance that employs a heightened physicality (and by extension a heightened theatricality) in its expression.

Through this, mime is reaching something of a zenith in contemporary performance – clear of its previous manifestations where it found itself defined in very limiting, or reductive, ways. The development towards the idea of the *performer-creator* hints at the coming together of many disparate strands that make up contemporary performance practice: a liberating technique, a physicalisation (and thus also liberation) of the word and the rise of the contemporary clown.

This confluence is expressed most eloquently through the many companies discussed herein, and promoted through their work. This movement is also alluded to through the teaching methodologies and processes utilised at such prominent performance schools such as École Jacques Lecoq and the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.

In South African theatre, and particularly in contemporary mime, the movement towards the *performer-creator* is promoted and expressed most clearly in the work of Andrew Buckland during the last two decades and finding the height of such in the creation and performance of The Well Being:

...rather than buy into this habit of "making objects", the process moved towards using stage techniques which placed the action within the realm of the observer's imagination – an arena where there is no possibility of separating the other from the self. An acknowledgement that the injustice and pain we perceive in others, is merely a reflection of the same in ourselves. This constituted a move towards a more feminine view of change and growth. (Final report to the NAC 1999)

This shift in creating and performing work is reflected in the performer as well. In 1993, Buckland said:

The way theatre is going, one needs to be skilled in a greater range of things. I think theatre will start operating from smaller bases and the actor will need to know how to stage manage, direct, design and write as well. (in De Jager and Cooper 1993)

In short, the performer is considered the central creative force behind creating work. If this can be capitalised on and further promoted and developed, the benefits for contemporary mime (and thereby theatre in general), as discussed throughout this thesis, are enormous and could prove to see the continuing renovation *and* innovation of theatre.

The *performer-creator* remains an idea, though. It is not a tangible thing, or state of mind, but resides as a working conceptualisation. What happens in the future remains to be seen (as awkward as that is to write), but it is hoped that throughout this thesis enough discussion and indication has occurred to suggest its importance. As Eliot writes: "For us there is only the trying." For the *performer-creator* there is only the journey, the research, the enquiry.

There is no parting word that will suffice the spirit of this enquiry – the point that is made and remade throughout this thesis is that it must continue. That is enough. This is not an end.

So, to sum up: to get on top of this business, with dignity, to become a worthwhile man or woman of the theatre, the key is to work hard to acquire those elements of knowledge we have been discussing, and these come from study, from direct observation and from practice. In short, shun prejudice, avoid following fashion if you are keen not to end up on your backside. Be involved with your own times even when dealing with stories from other times. Reject definitions and classifications which purport to give lists of importance – in other words categories of the Aristotelian type, which would set up a scale of values with tragedy at the top, followed by drama, then comedy and so on down, down down to puppet theatre, acrobats and clowns. (Dario Fo 1991 p83)

The playing field has been levelled and the challenge is upon everyone involved in theatre: Mime is dead! Long live mime!

Theatre is dead! Long live theatre!

Appendix A

List of original works created by Andrew Buckland in chronological order

<u>The Mime</u> (1981)	Grahamstown and tour of Eastern Cape
<u>Stillborn</u> (1983)	State Theatre and Alexander Theatre Johannesburg as part of the first Pot Pourri festival
<u>Touchstones</u> (1984)	National Arts Festival
<u>Trip</u> (1985)	(an amalgamation of <u>Touchstones</u> and <u>The Mime</u> material performed at Wits university theatre)
<u>Pas de Deux</u> (1986)	Standard Bank National Arts Festival (Standard Bank Young Artist Award)
<u>Everything But The Shower Scene</u> (1987)	In collaboration with Soli Philander and Shawn Naidoo
<u>No Easy Walk</u> (1987)	Standard Bank National Arts Festival and Market Theatre and national tour.
<u>The Ugly Noo Noo</u> (1988)	Market Theatre
<u>The Ugly Noo Noo Trilogy</u> (1989)	Market Theatre
<u>Thing?</u> (1989)	Standard Bank National Arts Festival
<u>Listen With Your Eyes</u> (1989)	Collaboration with Tananas
<u>Between the Teeth</u> (1990)	Market Theatre
[Season with Theatre for Africa – 1991]	
<u>Bloodstream</u> (1992)	Market Theatre

<u>Feedback</u> (solo) (1994)	Standard Bank National Arts Festival
<u>Feedback</u> (with Lionel) (1995)	Market Theatre
<u>Myth Phalluth</u> (1995)	Standard Bank National Student Drama Festival
<u>Human Race</u> (1996)	Standard Bank National Arts Festival
<u>Noisy Walk</u> (1996)	National Arts Festival Fringe
<u>The Water Juggler</u> (1998)	Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees
<u>The Well Being</u> (1999)	Market Theatre
<u>Makana</u> (2001)	Standard Bank National Arts Festival

Note: this is by no means a comprehensive list of all the work Buckland has done – it is concerned with original work only, or work in close collaboration with other parties.

Appendix B

PANSALUNCH - Eastern Cape. Grahamstown 17 . 11 . 2001

performance text by Andrew Buckland

17 . 11 . 2010 (written on board)

Brothers and sisters in silence. We live in a time of danger and unprecedented threat to our principles and the integrity of our way of life, to our civilisation as we know it. We are at war. At war against the invasion and subtle subversion of all we hold dear by that most ruthless and demonic agent of chaos; the arts practitioner. In particular the arts practitioners who have organised themselves into a fearsome adversary to our will in the form of an organisation called Pansa.

On this day some nine years ago that insidious and dangerous body began to spread its subversive limbs into the Eastern Cape under the influence of that Osama Bin Laden of the Arts, Mr Mike Van Graan.

Before that fateful day the arts and their administration were safely in the hands of politicians, we were moving forward. We were on the right track. The major centres of noise and chaos and foolery, the state theatres; those dens of vice, and exhibitionism were successfully silenced, and darkened and closed. But then the devil's omnibus of Pansa rose like a venomous serpent from the steaming bog of the minds of the people and the demonic interests of cultural workers and artists, and everything went to hell.

Funding had been successfully reduced to a dribble and actors were being kept on the streets and out of gainful employment along with the musicians and graffiti artists and other visual terrorists who had haunted the galleries.

But then as the poisonous group of artists, committed to their continued existence took control of their fates we began to see a fearful change. It soon became clear that these cultural guerrillas were operating according to a very sinister and cleverly devised plan. The State Theatre in Pretoria, the Opera house in Port Elizabeth, the Market Theatre, the Nico Malan, The Playhouse and all the other wonderful monuments to silence and darkness and stillness began to rumble and quake as the cultural terrorists from Pansa began to set up training camps within them. Camps where they began to train whole companies of performer/facilitator/combatants. These were recruited from the regional groups and funded by their Pansa puppets in provincial

government. Within a couple of years these training camps had well trained companies which began to move out and infiltrate schools and set up cultural groups all over the province. No village, no town, no township was safe from these bands of roving players who spewed out their message of noise and colour and wild rhythmic movement all over the streets.

Our intelligence leads us to understand that these training camps are visited regularly and for extended periods by secret researchers working at the universities who spend their time exploring new ways and means of creating. Concocting their witchlike brews of new theatre and music forms, inter-disciplinary expressions, holistic cultural activities and other unspeakable acts of art.

And, typically their major target became our children's schools. No place of learning was safe from frequent, regular visits from these creators of chaos to expose them to the madness of performance and expression and debate and exchange and argument and discussion. Operating under cover of the blinding light of day, these groups of highly trained arts guerrillas are so skilled in their work that they teach no doctrine, no dogma, but leave a trail of song, dance and play and wild, unintelligible designs on the walls. Our sacred principles of silence and conservative caution became eroded as the school halls began to rock with the sound of laughter, song, dance and the walls became covered with strange and exotic patterns designed to corrode the long held beliefs of our past.

Before long the pupils began creating their own chaotic performances, song, music, dance and visual execrations. Every centre visited by the guerrillas began to establish a cultural centre which included a performance and exhibition space as well as training centre. Then on a regular basis the results of these invasions into our social fabric were celebrated, that's right celebrated, in that suppurating pustule on the face of the human race, the arts festival. Soon every province held an annual festival. These culminated in several travelling national arts festivals. In a year or two every village had several festivals a year celebrating everything they could think of.

Somehow, these devious fools from Pansa had managed to deflect government spending to the point that these festivals were government sponsored to the point that they became so popular that the private sector began to see them as viable marketing options and suddenly sponsors and funders were lining up to spend billions on setting them up at every opportunity. Dark days indeed.

And then the day when they invaded a most sacred arena. The ignorant and naive public was unaware and had paid no heed to our warnings. I have just returned from a sports ground where the national rugby team was involved in a test match against the Australian national side and the crowd refused to allow the players back onto the field after half time. Not because of the customary and satisfactorily dismal performance of the Springboks, but because they wished to know what happened to the hero of the play that was presented during the half time break. Can you imagine? A production of Macbeth involving huge puppets and projected images soiling the atmosphere of the national religion? The very fabric of our lives is being contaminated, polluted, defiled and poisoned by these septic performances on a grand scale. Sports fans are beginning to arrive up to 6 or 7 hours early for a big match in order to indulge in mass displays of music performance, parades and the like. A Bafana-Bafana match was abandoned because the crowd lost interest in the soccer match when they were distracted by an impromptu music performance in one of the stands by some school children who had been corrupted by a local branch of Pansa.

And now we learn from reliable sources that members of Pansa, the al queda of modern times, those agents of the devil are planning huge amalgamated festivals of sport and arts in the Eastern Cape townships

Our wonderful townships, which were previously so hygienically devoid of useful venues have become hotbeds of cultural activity. You cannot walk ten metres down a township street without bumping into a performance venue, an exhibition hall, a happening centre. Where you used to find a proliferation of corner café's and spaza's, now we find a hundred corner cultural centres. From an open window you could hear, "Johannes!, Ag pop down to the corner cultural centre and pick up a nice packet of poetry for your mum. She's not feeling well." Its nauseating.

And who used to be in charge of social upliftment? The politicians, who kept it well in perspective. Now? Under this new demonic influence, the people are building the venues and the roads to them and the sewage to service them themselves! The cheek of it. What are the politicians supposed to pretend they are doing with their time?

And where are all the street kids that brought such charm to our pavements? All of them every last one involved in arts ventures which are being seen by the hordes of tourists now flocking to see their activity. The country is overrun by mad Germans and Americans spending billions of

their filthy marks and dollars to see our children displaying themselves and their so called work in gaudy and vulgar examples of exhibitionism and self expression. It is rumoured that a world festival exchange programme has been established to cope with the explosion of world interest in these unsavoury events. Our artists are travelling the world, indulging in the growing disease of arts festivals and we are constantly under threat by invasion of international cultural guerrillas bringing their poisonous message of light and sound and movement, against which we stand so firmly. These festivals are creating impossibly high levels of social, cultural and international financial investment. We are inundated with images and ideas and communication with the rest of the world and our fabric of life is threatened. We must protect our way of life and to do so we must cover it, hide it and not expose it for refreshing gulps of global air.

Since the inception of this evil plan to open and expose and create. We have felt the influence on our daily lives. We are surrounded by the chaotic cacophony of debate and argument and song and laughter and the shaking of the earth with the stamping of feet. As you know, culture is to be nurtured behind closed doors and shuttered windows where it can be monitored and assessed so that its content and form will conform to the prescribed format.

Speaking of which, I must apologise for this format for our meeting. For the fact that it is uncomfortably close to the noxious act of theatre itself, as well as that highly subversive and dangerous practice of debate. But is it not a sign of the times that we are forced to use the vehicle of that against which we struggle in order to further that struggle toward darkness and silence and stillness?

And as to the whereabouts of the man who masterminded these ongoing acts of cultural aggression? Mike Van Graan hides out in the open brothers and sisters. Safe in the knowledge that he is always surrounded by that extremely dangerous and sinister life form; the active arts practitioner. Our agents can't get near him.

We are under attack my friends, to quote one of their number, by a conspiracy of clowns; funded by fools and operated by opera singers, performed by actors and doers. We are being played by the players.

Nevertheless, I urge you to strengthen your resolve in the face of this onslaught. Continue to draw the blinds, to muffle your ears, to still your limbs, to dull your minds and I urge you forward

in the struggle toward darkness and silence and stillness.

Note: This performance text is included to give some idea of where Buckland sees the future headed. It is, however, intended specifically for the launch of PANSAs (Performing Arts Network of South Africa) in the Eastern Cape, delivered in typical Buckland satirical style. Asked whether he sees this as an accurate vision, he says:

Only up to a point I think. It was just really in relation to how I think an organisation like that can help. But certainly my response to those state theatres, those places, they should be turned into schools. This country...that is what this country needs – it needs training institutions like that, with companies that come out of them and mature companies that come out of those. And that's where we'll start to shift cos we just don't have the places where people are trained. There are no companies that come out of that, we're still trying to create work with people that are trained disparately, here and there. And some people who are lucky. And those spaces are just useless at the moment. (Interview, November 2001)

REFERENCES

1. Bibliography

- ALBRIGHT, R.H. A View of Apollo and Dionysus, MA Boston 1996-2001
(<http://world.std.com/~albright/D.html>)
- ANDERSON, W.
and STAGEBERG, N. Introductory Readings on Language
(New York et al: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966)
- ARTAUD, A. Selected Writing edited, and with an introduction by
Susan Sontag; translated by Helen Weaver
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)
- ARTAUD, A. The Theatre and its Double, translated by Victor Corti
(London: Calder Publications, 1993)
- AUSLANDER, P. From Acting to Performance
(London: Routledge, 1997)
- BARBA, E. The Paper Canoe
(London: Routledge, 1994)
- BARRAULT, J-L. Rabelais : a dramatic game in two parts taken from the
five books of François Rabelais , translated from the
French by Robert Baldick
(London: Faber, 1971)
- BARTHES, R. Image Music Text
(New York: Hill and Wang, 1977)
- BENSON, M. Athol Fugard and Barney Simon: Bare Stage. A Few
Props. Great Theatre
(Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1997)
- BERKOFF, S. Agamemnon: The Fall of the House of Usher
(Oxford: Amber Lane Press, 1990)

- BERKOFF, S. Decadence: East: West: Greek
(London: Faber & Faber, 1989)
- BERKOFF, S. Free Association
(London: Faber and Faber, 1996)
- BILLINGTON, S. A Social History of the Fool
(Sussex: Harvester Press, 1986)
- BIRINGER, J. Theatre, Theory, Postmodernism
(Indianapolis: University Press, 1991)
- BLUMBERG, M. and
WALDER, D. (eds) South African Theatre As/And Intervention
(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999)
- BONANGE, J-B. "Clowning and the Imagination", translated by Vivian
Gladwell, in Pratiques Corporelles, December 1996
(sourced on www.aol.members.com/nosetonose)
- BRADY, S. "Looking for Lecoq", in American Theatre Vol. 17:1, Jan
2000
- BROADHURST, S. Liminal Acts: A Critical Overview of Contemporary
Performance and Theory
(New York: Cassell, 1999)
- BROOK, P. The Empty Space originally published 1972
(London: Penguin, 1990)
- BROWN, C. "Unpacking the Body", in Dance Theatre Journal vol. 14
no. 4, 1999

- BUCKLAND, A. "The Ugly Noo Noo", play-script published in More Market Plays, selected by John Kani (Johannesburg: A.D. Donker, 1994)
- BURKE, S. The Death and Return of the Author (Edinburgh: University Press, 1992)
- CAMPBELL, J. The Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York: Meridian Books, 1956)
- CRYSTAL, D. Child Language, Learning and Linguistics, 2nd edition (London: Edward Arnold, 1987)
- CRYSTAL, D. Language Death (Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- CRYSTAL, D. Language Play (London: Penguin, 1998)
- DANIEL, J. "Altered Images", Total Theatre 11/1 1999
- DANIEL, J. "Everything moves - Jacques Lecoq: A Tribute 1921-1999", Total Theatre 11/1 1999
- DANIEL, J. "Circus Theatre", Total Theatre 12/1 2000
- DAVIS, G and FUCHS, A. (eds) Theatre and change in South Africa (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996)
- DISHER, M. Clowns and Pantomimes (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968)
- DOCKER, J. Postmodernism and Popular Culture (Cambridge: University Press, 1994)

- DRAIN, R (ed). Twentieth Century Theatre: A sourcebook
(London: Routledge, 1995)
- DRIJVER, R. "Theatre of the Imagination", Total Theatre 10/2 1998
- ESSLIN, M. The Theatre of the Absurd 3rd edition
(London: Penguin, 1987)
- ETCHELLS, T. Certain Fragments: contemporary performance and Forced Entertainment
(London: Routledge, 1999)
- FARLEY, T. The Mastery of Mimodrame: An In-Depth Study of Mime Techniques second edition with accompanying video cassettes
(Colorado: Meriwether, 1992)
- FINDLATER, R. Joe Grimaldi: His Life and Theatre
(Cambridge University Press, 1978)
- FINESTONE, J. "The Politics and Poetics of Choreography: The Dancing Body in South African Dance", Masters by Coursework: Thesis, 1995
- FISHER, J. The Theatre of Yesterday and Tomorrow: Commedia Dell'Arte on the Modern Stage
(UK: Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 1992)
- FO, D. The Tricks of the Trade translated by Joe Farrell, edited and with notes by Stuart Hood
(London: Methuen, 1991)
- FOSTER, J. The Influences of Rudolph Laban
(London: Lepus Books, 1977)
- FREGE, I. "An Interview with Gary Gordon", South African Theatre Journal 9/2 1995

- GORDON, G. "Articulating the unspeakable: private sights, theatre sites and citing a physical theatre", unpublished paper delivered at Confluences Conference, UCT School of Dance, 1999
- GORDON, G. "Lessons and Mirrors: steps to consider in the education of the dance maker", unpublished paper delivered at Confluences Conference, UCT School of Dance, 1997
- GORDON, G. "Motion Arrested: Body Politics and the Struggle For a Physical Theatre", inaugural lecture delivered at Rhodes University 17 August 1994
- GORDON, G. "Physical Theatre: Weaving Together the Threads of the Curriculum", SAADYT Journal Winter 1994
- GROTOWSKI, J. Towards a Poor Theatre edited by Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen, 1984)
- HARRADINE, D. "What is the New Mime?" Total Theatre, 11/1 1999
- HARROP, J. Acting (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)
- HODGE, A. (ed) Twentieth Century Actor Training (London and New York: Routledge, 2000)
- HOFFMAN, E. Butoh: Dance of the Dark Soul (New York: Aperture, 1987) with commentary by Mark Holborn, Tatsumi Hijikata and Yukio Mishima
- HOGHE, R. "The Theatre of Pina Bausch", The Drama Review, vol. 24 no. 1 1980

- INNES, C. Avant Garde Theatre: 1892-1992
(London: Routledge, 1993)
- JENKINS, R. Acrobats of the Soul: Comedy and Virtuosity in Contemporary American Theatre
(New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988)
- JENKINS, R. "Jacques Lecoq: A Prophet of Gesture who Got Theater Moving", New York Times 18 March 2001
- JENKINS, R. Subversive Laughter: The Liberating Power of Comedy
(New York: The Free press, 1994).
- JONES, D. "Mime – a Phoenix on Speed", Total Theatre 7/4 1995
- KOZEL, S. "Moving Beyond the Double Syntax", Dance Theatre Journal vol. 13 no. 1 1996
- KLUGMAN, N. "In the Beginning was the Word...", Total Theatre 9/1 1997
- LEABHART, T. "The Man who Preferred to Stand: Etienne Decroux – Megalomaniac or Genius?", Total Theatre 9/2 1997
- LEABHART, T. Modern and Post-modern mime
(New York: St Martin's Press, 1989)
- LECOQ, J.
with Jean-Gabriel Carasso
and Jean-Claude Lallias The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre,
translated by David Bradby
(London: Methuen, 2000)
- LEE, J. The History of Clowns for Beginners
(New York: Writer & Readers, 1995)

- LOCKERBIE, C. "In the Beginning Was the Word", from the magazine of the Edinburgh Festival, August 1998
- LUST, A. "Decroux and the Art of Articulation", Total Theatre 10/2 1998
- LUST, A. "The Origins and Development of the Art of Mime" – an excerpted article by Annette Lust from her book From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond: Mimes, Actors, Pierrots and Clowns: A Chronicle of the Many Visages of Mime in the Theatre (Scarecrow Press, 1998), published on The World of Mime Theatre website: www.mime.info
- MacALOON, J. (ed) Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1984)
- MANNING, S. A. "An American Perspective on Tanztheater", in The Drama Review, vol. 30 no. 2 1986
- MARTIN, B. Marcel Marceau: Master of Mime (New York and London: Paddington Press, 1978)
- MASON, B. Street Theatre and Other Outdoor Performance (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)
- MATTHEWS, P. "Do the Wright Thing", Total Theatre 12/3 2000
- MAX PRIOR, D. "What is Total Theatre?", Total Theatre 13/2 2001
- MEGILL, A. Prophets of Extremity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985)
- MITCHELL, T Dario Fo: Peoples' Court Jester - revised and updated edition (London: Methuen, 1999)

- ODDEY, A. Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical handbook
(London: Routledge, 1994)
- ODENTHAL, J. "The Relevance of the Body in the Arts", editorial in Ballet International no. 8/9, 1994
- OIDA, Y.
and MARSHALL, L. The Invisible Actor
(London: Methuen, 1997)
- OLIVER, K. (ed) The Portable Kristeva
(New York: Columbia University Press, 1997)
- ONG, W.J. Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture
(Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977)
- ONG, W.J. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word
(London and New York: 1982)
- OREGLIA, G. The Commedia Dell'Arte
(London: Methuen, 1968)
- PAUL, D. "Andrew Buckland: L'Enfant Prodigue", in SA citylife, July 2000
- POPOV, O. Russian Clown, translated by Marion Koenig
(London: MacDonald, 1970)
- POSTER, M. The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context
(Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990)
- RENTELL, A. "What's New About New Circus?", Total Theatre 11/2
1999

- RENTELL, A. "Into the Dreamland", Total Theatre 12/1 2000
- RICHARDS, T. At work with Grotowski and Physical Actions
(London: Routledge, 1995)
- ROBINSON, D. Chaplin: His Life and Art
(London: Collins, 1985)
- ROLFE, B. "The Big French Four" (article presumed to have originally published in The Mime Journal, but date and issue unknown), published on Bauman Theatre Forums:
www.geocities.com/Broadway/1723/articlespage
- ROLFE, B. Commedia Dell'arte: A Scene Study Book
(San Francisco: Persona Products, 1977)
- ROLFE, B (ed). Mimes on miming
(London: Millington, 1981)
- ROOSE-EVANS, J. Experimental Theatre from Stanislavsky to Peter Brook
(London: Routledge, 1989)
- ROSEN, C. (Ph.D) "Creating the "Berkovian" Aesthetic – an analysis of Steven Berkoff's Performance Style", online dissertation: www.iainfisher.com/sbdis1
- ROTIE, M. and KOZEL, S. "The Reorientation of Butoh", Dance Theatre Journal vol. 13 no. 1, 1996
- RUBIN, H. "Boooooorriinnng!!!" Fast Company Magazine, issue 35 2000: <http://www.fastcompany.com/online/35/gaulier>
- RUDLIN, J. Commedia Dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook
(London: Routledge, 1994)

- RUDLIN, J. "Jacques Copeau: The Quest for Sincerity", article in Alison Hodge 2000
- SANCHEZ-COLBERG, A. "Altered States and Subliminal Spaces: Charting the Road towards a Physical Theatre", Performance Research Vol. 1 No. 2 1996
- SCHECHNER, R. "Julie Taymor: From Jacques Lecoq to The Lion King", The Drama Review 43:3 (1999)
- SERVOS, N. "Gorilla meets Bambi", Ballet International, Vol. 7 1999
- SERVOS, N.
and WEIGELT, G. Pina Bausch – Wuppertal Dance Theatre or The Art of Training a Goldfish
(Köln: Ballett-Bühnen-Verlag, 1984)
- SLATER, E. "The Rules of Happiness", Total Theatre vol. 8 no. 4 1996/1997
- SLATER, L. "The Dead Begin to Run", Dance Theatre Journal vol. 4 no. 4 1986
- SHEPARD, R. Mime: The Technique of Silence – An Illustrated Workbook
(New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1971)
- SIMON, B. Born in the RSA: Four Workshopped Plays
(Witwatersrand University Press, 1997)
- STEINMAN, L. The Knowing Body: Elements of contemporary performance and dance
(Boston: Shambhala, 1986)
- SYLVANDER, B. "Looking For Your Clown...And Finding Yourself", translated by Vivian Gladwell, in Art et Therapie 1984
(sourced on www.aol.members.com/nosetonose)

- TOWSEN, J. Clowns: A Panoramic History
(New York: Hawthorn, 1976)
- TOWSEN, J. "With Your Brains & My Body: The Future Imperfect of
Physical Theatre"
(from the text it suggests that this article was first
published in the Mime Journal, 1987, but no reference
can be found)
Published on Stephen LaFrenie's website:
www.mimeguy.com
- UNKNOWN Apollo and Dionysus – some views on Tragedy
<http://theliterarylark.com/apollo.html>
- VIAL, V. and
DUFRESNE, H. (eds) Cirque du Soleil, principal text by Sylvie Drake
(Québec: Productions du Cirque du Soleil Inc., 1993)
- VIALA, J. and MASSON-
SEKINE, N. Butoh: Shades of Darkness
(Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988)
- VOGLER, C. The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers
and Screenwriters
(California: Michael Wiese Productions, 1992)
- WAHL, S. Philosophical Diatribes Vol. 6
(<http://www.froyd.net/philo6.htm>)
- WARDHAUGH, R. Investigating Language: Central Problems in Linguistics
(Oxford: Blackwell, 1993)

WILLIAMS, D. (ed) Collaborative theatre: the Théâtre du Soleil
Sourcebook, with new translations by Eric Prenowitz
 and David Williams
 (London: Routledge, 1999)

2. Newspaper Reviews and Articles

- Darryl Accone, Star Tonight 25 February 1999
- Beverley Brommert, "Buckland makes for a memorable evening", The Cape Times 3 March 1989
- Ismene Brown, "Absolute Clowns", The Daily Telegraph, 16 January 2001
- Stephen Brown, review of "The Well Being", The Scotsman 10 August 2001
- Fiona Chisholm, "Andrew brings fame to Parkland Prawns", The Cape Times 21 March 1989
- Bianca Coleman, "Fairytale Well being a must-see", Cape Times Tonight 8 July 1999
- Diane de Beer, "Playing the moment in perfect harmony" (details unknown)
- Nelleke De Jager and Montgomery Cooper, "Buckland – from Shakespeare to bloodcell", Daily Dispatch 10 December 1993
- Jill de Villiers, "Buckland and Newton intend to excite us", The Citizen, 18 February 1999
- Jeremy Dowson, "Andrew Buckland is his own most severe critic", Argus Tonight 1990 (specific date unknown)
- Peter Du Toit, "Superbly crafted, subtle, sheer fun", Evening Post 21 April 1993
- Nushin Elahi, "Riveting play on meaning", The Citizen 23 November 1990
- Robert Greig, "Virtuoso juggling of familiar caricatures is amusing but totally confusing", Sunday Independent 28 February 1999
- Barbara Hollands, "Brilliant being", Daily Dispatch 5 July 2001
- Mary Jordan, "An imaginary journey into a state of grace", Business Day 10 March 1999
- Bonnie Lee, "Laughs and Tears in a Wordless Fairytale", The Scotsman 21 August 1998
- Frans LeRoux, "Andrew's ugly noo noo's a magic yes yes", Weekly Mail 19 January 1989
- Gillian McAinish, "Another magical, comic creation from Buckland", Eastern

Province Herald 5 July 1999

- William McEvoy, review of "The Well Being", The Stage 9 August 2001
- Garalt MacLiam, "Buckland Back", The Star 18 November 1994
- Mary Lynn Mather, "Developing dreams at The Studio", CUE 4 July 1999
- Mary Lynn Mather, "Fast, fluid and very funny", CUE 2 July 1999
- John Michell, "Buckland surprises, enthralls" (details unknown)
- Peter Mitchell, "On a rollercoaster ride with enthralling Buckland", The Natal Witness 26 April 1991
- Rina Minervini, "Using words with stunning power", Sunday Star 25 November 1990
- Rina Minervini, "Andrew strikes a blow for Prawn Power", Sunday Star 14 August 1988
- Benedict Nightingale, "Whole world in their hands", The Times 6 August 2001
- Peter Ross, review of "Once", The List Issue 340, 20-27 August 1998
- David Richter, review of "The Red Zone", Total Theatre 10/1 1998
- Barry Ronge, "Brilliant Buckland loses his sparkle", Sunday Times 1990 (date unknown)
- Lesley-Anne Sayers, "'Dance Theatre' at Dance Umbrella: From DV8 to Second Stride", Dance Theatre Journal 6:4, 1988
- Florence Short, "Fantasy-crudity poses a dilemma in 'Noo' satire", The Argus 3 March 1989
- Brenda van Rooyen, "Buckland's back, better than ever!"
- Janine Walker, "Buckland: comic clown and serious thinker", The Star Tonight 12 September 1996
- Irving Wardle, "Unearthly Movement at Large", The Times, 1 April 1988
- Ines Warson, "A genius in our backyard", Daily Dispatch 15 July 1996
- Writer unknown, "Eloquent Bodies", The Economist, 09/11/1999, Vol. 352 Issue 8136

3. Play-scripts

- Andrew Buckland, Between the Teeth (unpublished) 1990
- Andrew Buckland, Bloodstream (unpublished) 1992
- Andrew Buckland, Feedback (unpublished) 1995
- Andrew Buckland, Lionel Newton and Lara Foot-Newton, The Well Being (original and revised version, unpublished) 1999-2000

4. Interviews

1. Interview with Andrew Buckland: August 2001
2. Interview with Andrew Buckland: November 2001
3. Interview with Janet Buckland: November 2001
4. David Alcock interview notes with Andrew Buckland, uncompleted MA thesis, 1999

5. Video Recordings

- "Bloodstream" (at the Market Theatre) 1992
- "Feedback" (solo, at Standard Bank National Arts Festival) 1994
- "Feedback" (with Lionel Newton, in rehearsal at Rhodes Theatre) 1995
- "The Water Juggler" (at Rhodes Theatre) 1998
- "Between the Teeth" (at Hilton College Theatre) 1998
- "No Easy Walk" (at the Black Sun) 1988
- "Les Deux Voyages de Jacques Lecoq"
 - 1er voyage: le corps, le mouvement*
 - 2e voyage: le jeu, la creation*
 - Concept by Jacques Lecoq, Jean-Gabriel Carasso, Jean-Claude Lallias and Jean-Noël Roy
 - Directed by Jean-Gabriel Carasso and Jean-Noël Roy
 - Produced by On Line productions, Anrat, La Sept-Arte with the participation of CNT, 1999 – *translation by Tanya Surtees (2001)*
- "From the Heart to the Heart" – interview with Andrew Buckland on 'People of the South', SABC 2, 18 November 2001
 - Produced and directed by Dali Tambo for SABC 2
- Interview with Andrew Buckland on "Off Stage", SABC 3, 9 December 1997

- “The Liberated Body”, directed by Ilse van Hemert, produced by Grethe Fox, 1996
- “Masters of the French Stage: Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud”
Creative Arts Television Archive, 1969
- “The Mastery of Mimodrame: An In-Depth Study of Mime Techniques”
Featuring Todd and Marilyn Farley
Mimeistry, 1991-1996
- “Laughing Matters: Episode 1 – Visual Comedy” (from series transmitted on
SABC TV 2000)
- “The Umbilical Brothers” – clips of this Australian physical comedy duo in
performance (date unknown)
- “Cirque du Soleil presents: Quidam” – directed by David Mallet, 1999, shown
on M-Net 1 January 2000
- “Archaos Circus Spectacular” – (date unknown)
- “Cirque du Soleil presents: Saltimbanco” – directed by Jacques Payette, 1994

6. Schools, Organisations and Companies (websites)

- École Jacques Lecoq: www.lecoq.com
- The First Physical Theatre Company: www.ru.ac.za/firstphysical
- Marcel Marceau Foundation for the Advancement of the Art of Mime, Inc.:
www.marceau.org
- Ecole de Mime Corporel Dramatique and Theatre de l'Ange Fou:
www.angefou.co.uk
- École Philippe Gaulier: <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/lane/kba31/>
- The Desmond Jones School of Mime: <http://www.dilly2.demon.co.uk/>
- The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre: www.dellarte.com
- Derevo Theater, Dresden: www.derevo.org
- Total Theatre Network: www.totaltheatre.org.uk

- Footsbarn Theatre: www.footsbarn.com
- Theatre de la Jeune Lune: <http://www.jeunelune.org>
- Mummenschanz: www.mummenschanz.com
- Fevered Sleep: www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~fevered/
- The David Glass Ensemble, email: dge@virgin.net
- Nola Rae: www.nolarae.btinternet.co.uk
- Forced Entertainment: www.forced.co.uk
- Circus Arts Forum: www.circusarts.org.uk
- Circomedia, the RADA of circus-theatre: www.circomedia.com
- London International Mime Festival: www.mimefest.co.uk
- Mimos Festival in Périgueux, France: perso.wanadoo.fr/persona.grata/
- The World of Mime Theatre: www.mime.info
- Le Centre Du Silence (director: Samuel Avital): <http://indranet.com/lcds>

