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COMPLETING THE CIRCLE: THE ACTOR'S COOL DOWN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
(Theatre Pedagogy) at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

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By Anna K. Kurtz, M.F.A. Candidate

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Major Director: Barry Bell
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Physically, vocally, and physiologically something happens to the actor in rehearsal and performance that can impact the actor's everyday life. Practitioners have described this as boundary blurring, emotional hangover, and post-dramatic stress. Even acting as a profession can breed stressful situations for the actor. Actors can combat the blurring, the hangover, and the stress through awareness and process. As a part of process, actors warm-up to prepare their bodies and voices and to transition from real life to stage life. An often ignored aspect of process, but no less significant than the warm-up, is the cool down. After researching the acting experience and the cool down, I introduced several student actors to the cool down during two productions and a workshop. Through these practical experiences, this research, and numerous

interviews, I have compiled exercises to facilitate the transition between the acting experience and everyday life.

Introduction

The Perfect Storm

When I was a junior at Creighton University, I was cast in the role of Alma Winemiller in Summer and Smoke. The circumstances surrounding the rehearsal and performance of this play in regards to the show, the role, and my personal life all combined to create an unstable experience. I had just spent three months doing summer stock in an isolated area in northwest Nebraska. The small company formed an incredibly tight bond amid an idyllic landscape of mountainous buttes, buffalo, and luminous constellations that can only be seen and appreciated far from city lights. Cut off from most “civilized” society and technology, it was a small haven with the outer world forgotten. Being ripped from that world and put back into the real one was extremely jarring. As I tried to regain my footing, my grandfather died. Directly after the funeral, I started my junior year of college; I could not be with my family to mourn him. Upon returning to school, I was immediately cast as Alma, a girl who desperately wants something and fails to achieve it in the end.

The emotion of leaving my theatre family as well as my grandfather’s sudden death combined with my immersion into Alma’s downfall led to a deep depression. Unable to deal with the realities of my own life, I sank deeper into Alma’s. It was the first time I truly felt one with a character. The line between her life and my life became blurred. I retreated inward, never took a break from working on the character, and shut myself off from friends, family, and faculty. I

would arrive at the theatre hours before rehearsal to practice her manner of speaking and her walk. I wanted to be present in her world, on stage, in relation to the set. I barely got to know the other cast members; I was always focused on Alma and the performance. I never went anywhere without my script. The turmoil of my personal life flowed into the character, and the tragic journey of the character fueled my personal depression. Rehearsing and performing the role each night left me in a black cloud that I could not escape even when the show ended. I find it ironic that the synopsis on the back of the script calls it “a play that is profoundly affecting”.

At this time I had no understanding of process; I had nothing concrete in which to root myself. I was too absorbed by the circumstances of my life and the role to get perspective, to see that I needed help. In playing this emotional role during such a tumultuous time, I needed guidance to separate myself from the role. I do not know how I finally managed to shake the depression. After a few months I started to look back and realize in how bad a state I had been. Luckily, I was able to move past the experience with the knowledge that I would not let it happen again.

The Thesis Project

Although an extreme case, the deep connection between Alma and myself and the way this acting process negatively affected my life is a part of what Burgoyne and Poulin refer to as “boundary blurring” (158). With this thesis my goal is to examine this issue of actor/character blurring, to find methods of conquering and perhaps preventing such instances from happening to my students, and to acquire information that will make those students aware of the precarious line between everyday life and rehearsal/performance that we actors can walk. In the first chapter, “The Impact of Acting of Actors”, I will look at the acting experience in performance, in

rehearsal, and in life; specifically, what happens to a performer physically, emotionally, and physiologically when grappling with a role. In chapter two, “Combating Boundary Blurring”, I will examine the two major ways I believe actors can turn the potentially negative effects of being an actor into positive ones. In light of the actor’s experience, in life and on stage, the actor must be aware of issues with “boundary blurring” and develop a process. Inherent in this process is the concept of the cool down. In the third chapter, “The Cool Down in Practice”, I examine the implementation of my cool down research as a director/teacher in practical performance situations on two productions: Apartment 3A and Henry V. I also look at a workshop on cool down techniques that I conducted at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Atlanta, GA. In the final chapter, “The Cool Down Exercises”, I explain in detail the various cool down techniques I have discovered through my research; techniques I hope to apply to my own directing and teaching experiences in the future.

The fuel for this thesis is a combination of my own personal beliefs in regards to acting supported by research. While I recognize that not all actors face issues of “boundary blurring”, I also recognize that it is an issue for many actors, an issue that must be addressed. Although I believe there can be a natural blurring of lines between actor and character when acting, I also believe actors must have both professional and personal lives; there must be some separation between their stage life and real life. Also, whether operating from an outside-in approach, an inside-out approach, or a combination of these practices, the basic, physical entity of the character is the actor: all physical expression of character comes through the actor’s body. No matter the method, something inevitably happens on stage to the actor. Furthermore, in my opinion, theatre is heightened reality. There is an expulsion and transfer of great energy when

performing live, onstage, for an audience. While I cannot name in exact terms what that energy is, I do know that an actor must, with precision and to her full power and potential, employ her emotional, physical, and mental faculties at one time, for an extended period of time. Something “other”, something heightened, something powerful happens onstage, something that must be processed and something from which the actor must cool down.

Chapter 1

The Impact of Acting on Actors

Practitioners have employed numerous descriptions in reference to actors and the acting experience: Artaud referred to actors as “athletes of the heart” (133), Stephen Wangh modified this description when he titled his book, An Acrobat of the Heart, and Kirstin Linklater has referred to actors as “emotional warriors” (Barton 105). These analogies imply the potential for the actor to have an intense emotional experience. In addition, actors use the physical self when creating a role. Patsy Rodenburg describes the actor’s body as a “vessel” for the work (66), while Peter Brook describes the body as “a working source” (Schechner 27). Often times teachers refer to the actor’s body and voice as the actor’s instruments. While pianists have the piano and artists have their paint brush and paints, the actor has just himself or herself. As Emmanuelle Chaulet states, “They cannot hide behind a work of art; they *become* the work of art” (XXIV).

While some describe the acting experience in terms of emotions and others in terms of the physical self, Joseph Chaikin combined these aspects, referring to the acting experience onstage as having “presence”. Chaikin states that “[The actor] offers his voice and body to the material which has been fully understood and given meaning” (21); furthermore, “[the actor] has suspended his personal protective armor and is without what we know to be organized identity” (26). The actor, through the full use of body and voice, through the opening up of self and the stripping away of “protective armor” becomes something other, something more than

who he or she is in everyday life. The actor has an experience on stage and reaches a new and heightened state of being: a state of presence.

Presence, body, voice, emotion, athlete, instrument, heart, vessel, source, warrior. All of these words point to a similar idea: a visceral, powerful, heightened experience for the actor on stage. In other words, something happens to an actor on stage. In order to fully understand this “something”, theatre practitioners and scientists have written books and conducted studies through which they explore the acting experience. According to this research, the outcome of the acting experience can have negative consequences for the actor physically, emotionally, psychologically, and physiologically. No matter how science or acting practitioners study this issue or attempt to describe it, the acting experience can affect actors in performance while on stage, in the rehearsal room, and in their everyday lives.

In employing terms such as instrument, emotional warriors, and presence, practitioners emphasize two facets of the acting experience: first that as the actor employs the self, the acting experience can be physical, and second, that as the actor effectively portrays the character’s journey, the acting experience can be emotional. According to science, the experience can also be physiological. In these onstage, heightened moments of stress, adrenaline or epinephrine permeates through and can affect the body:

as epinephrine circulates through the body, it brings on a number of physiological changes. The heart beats faster than normal, pushing blood to the muscles, heart, and other vital organs. Pulse rate and blood pressure go up. The person undergoing these changes also starts to breathe more rapidly...Sight, hearing, and other senses become sharper (Harvard 4).

Any actor waiting in the wings for an entrance on opening night knows this feeling. According to Dr. Elly A. Konjin this physiological reaction can happen on stage during the performance as well.

Dr. Konjin wired several actors during a performance in order to monitor heart rate. While a human pulse at rest beats about 60 times per minute, just before a parachuter jumps, the parachuter's pulse extends to 140 beats per minute. During a monologue of this theatrical performance, one of the wired female actors reached a pulse of 180 beats per minute (11). Konjin found similar results in other actors. Intrigued by these findings, Konjin conducted an extensive study aimed at the discovery of what happens to actors on stage during performance, especially regarding emotions. More specifically, do emotions experienced on stage by the actor coincide with what the character should be feeling in certain moments of the play? Through the implementation of an extensive survey questionnaire distributed to working professional actors in the Netherlands and America, Konjin hoped to answer this question.

In the survey, the actors were asked to reflect back on the emotional details of one scene from a show in which they had acted. The actors were asked what emotion had been intended, what emotion had been felt, and to what extent that emotion had been felt. Konjin put possible stage emotions into four categories: the private person (the actor) feeling private emotions (the actor's emotions), the actor-craftsman feeling task-emotions ("the emotions actors experience as a result of performing their acting tasks in front of a critical audience, or with the demands arising from the theater situation" (Konjin 17)), the inner model reflecting intended emotions (what emotions the actor hoped to portray), and the performed character in regards to character-emotions (the emotions felt by the character) (33).

Konjin was most intrigued by task-emotions, believing that the emotions actors felt on stage correlated with the carrying out of acting tasks in a live theatrical setting rather than character emotions. She hypothesized that the task-emotions were assimilated into the actor portrayal of the role; the results affirmed this theory:

When character-emotions portrayed by actors during the performance were compared with the emotions of actors just before the performance, it again became clear that the two have little in common. The emotional experience of actors during a performance can therefore be interpreted as (mainly) related to the *acting tasks*, even when prototypical emotions are involved (135).

In other words, Konjin found that the emotions felt by the actors on stage during performance corresponded mostly with pre-show emotions, the excitement and adrenaline, rather than what the character felt during the course of the play.

Konjin openly admitted that difficulties surrounded the attainment and analysis of the data from the dissemination of the survey (by mail), to the validity of the target population, to the limitations of language when describing emotion, and to the fact that the actors were reflecting back on a past experience (147-149). However, while several problems existed with this study, it asked questions in an effort to compile concrete, scientific data regarding the acting experience in performance. Konjin recognized that in these heightened moments the actors had an experience. Through this study Konjin hoped to open the door not only to further research but also to the discussion of what happens to an actor on stage. This would then hopefully lead to the development of a theory that could benefit the working actor, that could contribute to the health of the theatre professional. According to Konjin “to develop an acting theory it is vital to

demystify acting” (163). Konjin was initiating the research, working with the distinction of applied technique in rehearsal to the actual experience in performance, which is infused with task-emotions, distinct to performance situations. In a sense, she hoped to spark other studies, studies that could bridge the gap between the rehearsal stage of theatre and the performance stage, which possesses the unique element of task emotions.

On the other hand, as the difficulties of administering this survey and analyzing this research show, defining the actor’s experience, especially with regards to emotion, in concrete terms, is not an easy task. An American actor, in response to the survey, expressed this difficulty:

While I appreciate the effort in collecting this data, I fail to see how an objective survey like this can provide true insights into the creative process of an actor/artist. Many questions cannot be answered by multiple choice, but need detailed, subjective response since creativity/acting-moments are incredibly complex and not subject to pinning down like a captured butterfly. They are fleeting, layered, highly transitory- wrapped in the wholeness of one’s being (114).

The acting experience is a subjective one, reliant on each actor, the play, the performance, the audience, and numerous other factors. As Burgoyne and Poulin state, “the impact of theatre is a complex process involving many interweaving factors, both in terms of circumstances within and outside the production” (163). The nuances of a live performance change on a night to night basis; so too does the actor’s experience. Even practitioners of acting and theatre have difficulty clearly pin-pointing the experience. As previously discussed, acting can produce a heightened state, the description of which often results in the analogies previously listed: athlete, vessel, warrior, instrument, and now butterfly.

Furthermore, employing language such as “emotion” increases the difficulty. Emotion is a concept debated about in both the theatre and science worlds. Scientifically speaking, numerous theories and books exist about the question, what is an emotion? Konjin states that “Everyday notions about what emotions actually are often differ from scientific or psychological definitions” (151). Furthermore, what happens to an actor on stage and in rehearsal, what emotions are produced, and where those emotions come from is a debated topic in acting. The varying opinions on this topic have resulted in numerous acting methods and techniques. However, Richard Owen Geer, in his research of the acting experience and role-playing, found one commonality among practitioners of acting and science: “While the models of Kaplan, Aaron, Rule, Schechner, Burgoyne, Jenkins, Ogden-Malouf, and practitioners of role-playing may differ, they agree on one problem: persons playing roles may be emotionally affected by the roles they play” (Geer 151). Whatever happens on stage, through that experience, through the use of the physical self and the effective portrayal of the character’s journey, the actor can be affected by the experience.

Suzanne Burgoyne and Karen Poulin refer to this as boundary blurring. Concerned for the emotional safety of her students, Burgoyne, with the help of Poulin and Rearden, conducted a study investigating how performance affected actor’s personal lives; “the impact of acting” (157). They conducted interviews with actors at various levels of acting training:

Overall, our respondents reported two major types of potentially emotionally distressing boundary blurring. In the first type, the actor’s personal life may take over in performance, leading to the actor’s loss of control onstage...conversely, the actor’s

character may take over offstage, with the actor carrying over character personality traits into daily life (Burgoyne 161).

While at times the actors found this blurring to be positive, they also reported the harmful tendencies of this blurring; as Burgoyne describes it, the “potentially emotionally distressing boundary blurring”. For Susanna Bloch this blurring is “emotional hangover”. Her concern for this effect resulted in her formulation of Alba Emoting, a technique to trigger emotional responses not through emotional memory or given circumstances but through the somatic or physical elements of emotion. Mark Cariston Seton from the University of Sydney also addresses issues of blurring and hangover. He has coined the term “Post-Dramatic Stress”. Though employing different terms they all point to the same issue: the potentially negative after effects of reaching a heightened state in performance.

These potential after-effects of acting, the boundary blurring, emotional hangover, and post-dramatic stress, begin in rehearsal. While performance has its physical and emotional trials, rehearsal and class time are not void of actor experience. Rehearsals can possess their own physiological, emotional, psychological, and physical experiences. After all, the rehearsal is where the actor develops the character, tests technique, and makes discoveries. Throughout the rehearsal process--table work, blocking, etc.--the actors and the director explore characters, circumstances, and relationships. David Hlavsa describes this process in his book An Actor Rehearses:

This is what we've been doing all along: all our invented circumstances, artfully constructed relationships, and imaginative analogies are lies we fabricate in order to

create a feeling of emotional engagement with a fictional world. By consistently and repeatedly feeding false data into the system, we alter our internal ecology (89).

The actor looks for various ways to effectively portray the character in each moment of the play; exploring a way into the character as well as determining what works and what does not work. A word spoken, action acted, or image crafted can have a profound affect on the actor in rehearsal as well as in performance.

However, dangers to the actor go beyond rehearsal and performance. Around the time Konjin conducted the emotion study, Dr. Alice G. Brandfonbrener wrote an article in which she referred to actors as “the forgotten patients”. Dr. Brandfonbrener discussed acting not only as a profession that can be physically, emotionally, and psychologically unhealthy, but as a lifestyle as well:

Many actors and actresses live a hand-to-mouth existence. Seeing the doctor is rarely part of their adult experience...They frequently are uninsured...Many will show up in a distant city to do a show with an open run of weeks to months. This means they are away from their usual support systems, including medical care, significant others, friends, pets, and their own beds, customary diets, and exercise habits...The work schedules of all theater people are characteristically brutal (101).

Such situations can lead to immense amounts of stress for actors. Therefore, actors experience stress not only in heightened doses on stage but also in their daily lives. “Research suggests that prolonged stress contributes to high blood pressure, promotes the formation of artery-clogging deposits, and causes brain changes that may contribute to anxiety, depression, and

addiction” (Harvard 4). Prolonged exposure to stress, a given circumstance in the acting profession, can lead to deterioration of health in actors.

In performance, actors must contend with the intensity of the experience as well as task emotions. In rehearsal, actors must experience the detailed physical and emotional discovery and enactment of character. In life, they must handle the stress of the profession. Each performer will experience these issues in his or her own way; some to a great extent, others not at all. Each actor’s experience depends upon the individual. Seton states that “the perception and manifestation of trauma and stress are particular to each individual. One cannot presume that the technique or a text will impact all participants in the same way” (4). These experiences will affect actors differently; the resiliency of some will allow that actor to move beyond the bounds of the theater space and into her real life with no lasting effects. Another actor may suffer “emotional hangover”. Beyond the debate of emotion, stress in the acting experience can cause the actor great harm. Actors can combat the potentially unhealthy lifestyle and profession of acting through the development of a complete actor’s process and through awareness of boundary blurring.

Chapter II

Combating Boundary Blurring

Rehearsal, performance, and the acting profession can breed complex, stressful situations for the actor. Mark C. Seton states that while the “stress, trauma, and vulnerability” of the acting experience can negatively affect actors, they are necessary, unavoidable aspects of acting (3). However, the actor can limit the negative effects, especially with regards to boundary blurring. According to Seton, these aspects simply “require intrapersonal and interpersonal negotiations in order for lives to flourish” (4). It is possible for actors to live successfully and healthfully, to thrive as an artist and as a person. Burgoyne and Poulin discuss two ways that actors can counteract the negative effects of boundary blurring and enhance the positive effects: “1) awareness that the life/theatre feedback loop may operate in acting experiences, and 2) development of strategies for boundary control that give the actor the ability to choose how and when to blur and re-clarify boundaries” (162). Actors must be aware of the potential harm blurring can cause. For many actors this awareness can come from training and can be facilitated by the acting teacher. Actors must also develop “strategies for boundary control”. In other words, they must develop a process, taking specific, personal action against potential dramatic stress, especially with regards to the often neglected aspect of process, the cool down. Through awareness and process, actors can take control of the work, the acting experience, and their lives.

Process

The concept of process is known to and practiced by many actors. Most actors develop personal techniques designed to give them the ideal acting experience, the tenets of which vary for each actor, in rehearsal and performance. Richard Schechner states that the acting experience is comprised of a seven part sequence: training, workshops, rehearsals, warmups, performance, cool-down, and aftermath (16). However, often these parts do not all receive equal focus. Schechner states “In Euro-America the emphasis is on training, workshop, rehearsal, and warm-up” (125). While the concept of process exists within the theatrical world, it does not exist in its entirety; the second half of the sequence has not garnered much attention, especially the cool-down and aftermath. In order for the process to be complete, I believe that more attention must be given to the cool-down, the way out of performance and into everyday life.

According to Stella Adler, the actor must move beyond the details of her daily life to focus on her acting life:

You must understand that while you're in this room you leave the outside world outside. You need all of *yourself* here. You don't need your father. You don't need your mother. You don't need your husband. You don't need your child. You don't care what happens in *The New York Times* (9).

Actors can reach this optimal state of presence in the space through a warm-up. As a part of process, it is a generally agreed upon concept that actors go through a warm-up before class time, rehearsal, and performance. The warm-up can be individually enacted, especially before

performance, and sometimes, especially in an academic setting in regards to class and rehearsal, carried out by the ensemble.

Stephen Wangh, has dedicated a significant portion of his book, An Acrobat of the Heart, to the study and successful application of the warm-up. He defines the role of the warm-up in acting as

a bridge between the conditions of mind, body, and voice you have been using in everyday life and the conditions of mind, body, and voice you need in order to act. The nature of that bridge depends on who you are and what your particular voice, body, and psyche needs today, so no two actors are likely to need exactly the same warm-up...so even from the same actor there is no such thing as *the* right warm-up to do every day (36).

In other words, the warm-up is different for each person, each class period, each play, etc. However, the outcome is the same: the warm-up focuses the actor and physically, mentally, vocally, and emotionally prepares the actor for whatever work they will do on that day.

Having properly warmed-up and prepared herself, the actor is ready to work, rehearse, or perform. This work may contain a variety of physical, vocal, and emotionally jarring discoveries or experiences. After several hours, the rehearsal or performance ends. At this point in the process, what happens to the actor? It seems logical that if an actor must warm-up in order to be fully present in the acting space, she must also cool down in order to be fully present in her life. However, as Schechner states, “little work has been done on the cool-down, at least in the Euro-American tradition” (125). Although this statement was made roughly twenty years ago, those seeking published research on this issue, will find that it still holds true. However, the cool-down

is a necessary aspect of process. In order to complete the acting experience, in order to lead a full life onstage and offstage, an actor must incorporate the cool-down into her acting process.

In his book Between Theatre and Anthropology, Richard Schechner divides performance into two categories: transportation and transformative. Transportation performances return the performer “to their starting places” while transformative performances change the performer. Actors playing characters in a theatrical production, according to Schechner, typically have a transportation experience; they begin the show in one state and must return to that state after the performance. In order to reach that state of equilibrium after the show, actors must cool down. “What the cool-down does is return the performer to an ordinary sphere of existence: it transports him back to where he began. Acting, in most cases, is the art of temporary transformation-- not only the journey out but also the return” (125). The incorporation of the cool down gives the actor a complete acting process; a beginning, a middle, and an end to the work.

Schechner also states that over the course of the show’s run, after many transportations, the performer can be transformed:

I want to point out that if a change occurs within the performer, or in his status, it happens only over a long series of performances, each of which moves the performer slightly...Thus each separate performance is a transportation, ending about where it began, while a series of transportation performances can achieve a transformation (125-126).

This transformation can lead to positive results for the actor. Although, as previously mentioned, Seton has coined the term “post-dramatic stress” in reference to the possible negative effects of the acting experience, Seton also recognizes the potential for positive effects, for transformation:

“I believe we, who are teachers of performance, can find ways in which vulnerability (and its inevitable traumas and stresses) can become a transformative process rather than treating vulnerability as something that has to be either defended against or denied” (4). With transformation is the potential for personal growth. This coincides with other positive aspects of the acting experience: a theatre artist’s great capacity for empathy; the Magic If, walking in the shoes of the character, understanding the world from someone else’s perspective. The acting experience can provide many opportunities for an actor to learn about herself and her surroundings. However, as previously quoted, these discoveries “require intrapersonal and interpersonal negotiations in order for lives to flourish” (Seton 4). In order to receive the full benefits of the experience, in order for this transformation to yield the positive effects, the experience must be dealt with properly. The actor must come to terms with and learn from the acting experience through the implementation of the cool down.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, something can happen to an actor physiologically, emotionally, and physically during rehearsal and performance. A recent article published by Harvard Health Publications states three ways to counter stress. The first is the relaxation response: “deep abdominal breathing, focus on a soothing word (such as peace or calm), visualization of tranquil scenes, repetitive prayer, yoga, and tai chi”. Also, physical activity can ease stress: “exercise, such as taking a brisk walk shortly after feeling stressed, not only deepens breathing but also helps relieve muscle tension”. Lastly, having social support also combats stress: “Confidants, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, relatives, spouses, and companions all provide a life-enhancing social net” (5). Such activities can be incorporated in to the cool down,

which, as a part of the actor's complete process, can assist the actor in sorting out discoveries, combating stress, and transitioning back to her real life.

Although process is a concept recognized as part of the acting experience, for many in theatre, it is not recognized in its entirety. During rehearsal or performance, as they warm-up and then work, actors begin a process, a cycle; it is important that they complete this cycle with a cool down. In order to come back from the transportation, to successfully assimilate the effects of a transformation, and to combat the natural stresses of the acting experience, actors must include the cool-down as part of their process. However, process is only one part of understanding and working against boundary blurring; process comes out of awareness.

Awareness

When Konjin conducted research about actors and emotion and when Burgoyne and Poulin studied how acting impacted the actor's personal life, both were attempting to raise awareness. Richard Owen Geer states that "psychologists, social scientists, psychodramatists, all agree that the single most powerful means for preventing damage to individuals engaged in any role-playing situation is awareness" (156). Through awareness actors gain control over their process. This awareness begins in the classroom with the assistance of acting teachers.

As previously stated, Seton sees vulnerability and stress as inherent, necessary aspects of the acting experience contributing to actor transformation. However, while defining the transformative power of performance in positive terms, Seton also implies that without help, the "stresses and trauma" of acting can prove negative for the performer. In order for the transformation to be a positive one, an actor must be guided through her process, thereby allowing the acting process to contribute positively to the growth of the actor rather than hinder

not only her personal life but the next performance in her career. Seton states, “I believe we, who are teachers of performance, can find ways...” (4). In other words, awareness of boundary blurring begins with acting teachers and practitioners. It is their responsibility to facilitate the transformation and to guide the development of process. This is a responsibility of training that many teachers and practitioners need to take seriously.

While the actor cool down is not something universally and openly discussed in the theatre world, and while scholarly research is limited, it is something of which numerous teachers are aware. In one of the few articles concerning acting and cooling down, Dealing with Emotional Hangover: Cool-down and the Performance Cycle in Acting, Richard Owen Geer found general agreement among many practitioners: “Surprisingly, well over half of the acting teachers with whom I spoke are concerned about such issues, and a number have instituted debriefings and cool-down in their teaching and directing” (153). Research conducted for this thesis yielded the same result. Of the numerous practitioners and teachers with whom this issue was discussed, only a few stated they never found it to be an issue.

A great concern with regards to awareness, process, and the cool down seems to be for young actors who are training to be professionals. Several of the studies mentioned in this document were initiated in part because of teachers’ concerns for their students: Burgoyne, Seton, and Geer particularly. In the training stage of actor development, actors can learn how to take their lives and careers into their own hands; what exercises, techniques, and process best suit their needs. They learn to rely on themselves. Awareness of the issues that can arise from the acting experiences begins with actor training and the acting teacher. Awareness leads to the creation of complete process, thus setting the actor on a healthy life and career path.

Chapter III

The Cool Down in Practice

I have spent the last year researching the actor's experience on stage and various cool down theories and methods. In conducting this research as well as several personal interviews my ultimate goal was to incorporate the exercises I discovered or personally devised into a practical, rehearsal situation. I first began the practical implementation of cool down techniques during the rehearsal process for Apartment 3A in the Shafer Street Playhouse at Virginia Commonwealth University during the fall semester of 2010. I hoped to expand on this experience by incorporating what I had learned from Apartment 3A into a second directing project, Henry V, which also took place in the Shafer Street Playhouse at Virginia Commonwealth University. This process occurred at the beginning of the spring 2011 semester. I further developed and refined these cool down exercises for a workshop I conducted at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in March of 2011.

I would like to take this moment to recognize the fact that I am speaking from an educator's perspective. In implementing these techniques and ideas, I hoped to instill in my student actors a process that they could carry into the professional world, where it is up to the actor to personally carry out their own process, thus taking the health of their lives and careers into their own hands. Furthermore, I wanted to emphasize the idea that each show, each actor, and each rehearsal need to be handled on an individual basis because all shows, actors, and

rehearsals do not require the same process or cool down. I had hoped that by compiling and sharing with my students a variety of exercises they could then to adapt their process to any situation.

Sharing the concept of the cool down with student actors in these three situations has assisted me in refining my general understanding of the cool down and its importance within the acting experience as well as various cool down techniques. These experiences illuminated certain difficulties in attempting to implement the cool down, especially in rehearsal situations. Because of the insight provided by the students involved in these experiences, I will now be able to adjust how I introduce and handle cool down practices with each unique cast and class.

Apartment 3A

In directing Apartment 3A, I worked with 5 student actors ranging in age from 19-21: four men and one female. New to cool down techniques, rather than incorporate a variety of exercises, I chose to concentrate on two aspects. The first was journaling, which, coupled with the routine this activity offered, seemed to provide a successful rehearsal and performance release. The second cool down technique, which used cell phones, was something of my own devising.

The Journals

The actors knew going into the process that journaling would be a requirement; they had agreed to the activity on the initial audition form. Furthermore, they understood that I would be reading the journals at the end of the process. I asked each actor to purchase a notebook that could solely be used for rehearsal journaling during this process. While all five actors participated in the activity, only four turned their journals into me at the close of the show. I will

refer to them as Actor 1, Actor 2, Actor 3, and Actor 4. At the first rehearsal I expressed my hope that journaling would help them process any discoveries they made during rehearsal as well as transition back to their daily lives.

The journaling process was simple. After each rehearsal and performance, each actor took a few minutes to write down anything that was on his or her mind. They were instructed not to plan, just to write. After a few minutes of writing, I would ask the students to switch out of this type of writing; they were asked to write what they were going to do for the rest of the evening after they left rehearsals. With these instructions I hoped to help them process whatever discoveries had been made, whatever work had been done, and whatever immediate feelings existed within themselves; this could be character or actor related. Once they had gotten their initial reactions out on paper, a written exorcism in a way, the second portion of the journaling was designed to help them focus their attention back on their life outside the rehearsal/ performance space. They were instructed to write about what they would do after rehearsal: how they were getting home, who they would talk to, what activities they would carry out, etc. In this way whatever lasting effects of the character, rehearsal, or performance that still existed could be dispelled by the actor purposefully being conscious of herself, the actor, and her life.

Apartment 3A demanded comedic, physical, and dramatic moments. There were emotional shifts for the characters as well as several acting challenges, especially for Actor 1. I could sense the strain that Actor 1 underwent throughout the process of not only carrying the responsibility of the show but also trying to navigate the journey of the character. This struggle was reflected not only in Actor 1's journal entries but also in Actor 2, 3, and 4's journal entries. In their journals it is apparent that each night the actors needed a different writing release; some

nights they wrote “I” when referring to the character, and some nights they simply talked about themselves as the actor; sometimes they wrote of character frustration and sometimes of actor frustration. One of my favorite journal entries was when Actor 1 wrote, “Anna is a jerkface!” Sometimes, after pushing them beyond the bounds of their comfort zone, actors need to lash out at the director; that is another reason why having the opportunity to write after rehearsal is beneficial. Actor 4 found it helpful to address the journal entries to me beginning each one with “Dear Anna”.

After the closing of the show Actors 1, 2, and 3 shared their thoughts regarding the journal process. Journaling was a familiar and comfortable activity for Actor 1, who had kept a detailed personal journal for many years. While journaling was not something Actor 2 had done before, it was an activity that resonated with this Actor and something that this Actor will carry on with in the future: “Writing in the journal allowed me to leave things in the space. I got everything I was thinking out on the page and was allowed to move on from there. I have actually gotten a journal for my other classes and constantly journal now.” While Actor 3 willingly dedicated time to the journal process, writing was not something this Actor enjoyed. When asked whether or not the actor would continue to utilize journaling, this Actor stated, “To be honest, I would love to say yes and I think that I will certainly try to but I am not a writer and I hate doing it so journaling on my own just doesn’t seem like it will happen”.

I share these actors’ thoughts simply as an example of the difference between actors. I have previously stated that not all actors are the same; they do not all process information in the same way and some are more resilient than others. According to Actor 1, leaving the rehearsal/

performance work in the space had never been a problem. However, Actor 2 spoke of rehearsal life bleeding into personal life during past productions.

All actors need something different; perhaps this will vary from night to night or show to show. Someday Actor 1 may be struggling to leave the work behind and will remember the idea of the cool down, while Actor 2 may find, during a show in the future, that it is easy to leave the work in the space. All I hoped to do was make them aware of the possibilities so that, should the need arise, they would have something concrete to utilize.

In hindsight

In the future when incorporating journaling into the rehearsal process, I would take five minutes to have the actors journal before rehearsal in order to acknowledge where they are coming from and what they are bringing into the space. In this way, the process would be more circular; beginning and ending the rehearsal with the same activity would create a sense of ritual. Also with regards to journaling, I would perhaps guide the second part of the post-rehearsal journaling; have them describe in detail what they would do after rehearsal. The actors during Apartment 3A tended to speak in more general terms such as simply eat, sleep, or study. Furthermore, guiding this part of the journal process would assist the actor in focusing on himself or herself. Many times in the journal entries references to “I” became confused. The actors would journal as “I” when referring to the character and then immediately write as “I” when referring the themselves. In the future I will ask that they use their names when referring to themselves as actors.

Cell Phones

I reasoned that because cell phones seem to be a major part of most students' lives today, containing much more than the ability to speak with others, but also music, data, and internet access, cell phones serve as an important element of identity for the actor; who they are outside of the rehearsal/performance space. As part of warming up and cooling down, I instructed the actors to turn their phones off each time they entered the rehearsal space. They placed their cell phones in a specially designated bag. When they left rehearsal, after journaling, they could retrieve and turn on their phones just before leaving the acting space. The cast called this "The Cell Phone Bag" exercise.

Though a relatively simple exercise, "The Cell Phone Bag" seemed to have the desired result. When the actors had the urge on ten minute breaks to check their phone, they could not and therefore stayed rooted to the rehearsal. Actor 3 even found that he forgot all about the cell phone on several occasions, thus allowing the actor to be truly present in the space. Receiving the cell phones at the end of rehearsal, in my opinion, facilitated the transition from the acting space back to everyday lives. The actors seemed eager to turn on their cell phones in order to see what calls and text messages they had missed; they would all leave rehearsal, cell phones in hand, interacting with friends and family as they passed out of the rehearsal door.

Cool Down Difficulties

As a teacher/director, in order for these practices to be a success, it is important to instill early on within the cast a sense of passion for cool down techniques and for the complete process. Several times I found that focusing on the many elements of the show as well as cool down techniques was overwhelming. I would not always remember to tell the students to place

their phone in the cell phone bag or to journal after rehearsal. If the students are invested in the process, when the many show details threaten to overwhelm the director/teacher, the students can cool down on their own. This will further prepare them for their future careers.

The cast seemed invested in the process and usually would remember when I forgot, sometimes even asking me, “Where’s the cell phone bag?” Of course, for Actor 2 it became a game: “How long can I go without Anna realizing I did not put my phone in the bag?” Actor 2 made it four days in a row toward the end of the rehearsal process; Actor 2 noted this small victory in a journal entry. What Actor 2 did not realize was that in playing this game, my purpose for the cell phone bag was still being met. In deliberately making a choice to not put the cell phone in the bag, the actor’s mind was on the cell phone at the beginning and the end of rehearsal, thus taking the Actor’s consciousness away from the phone at the beginning and returning the Actor’s consciousness to the phone at the end.

Henry V

My intention in directing a second show a few months following Apartment 3A was not only to have an opportunity to direct Shakespeare but also to refine my use of cool down techniques. As with Apartment 3A, the students were asked on the audition form if they would be willing to partake in various cool down activities including journal writing. In the end, the few difficulties I had incorporating cool down exercises during Apartment 3A plagued Henry V on a much greater scale. The process, the cast, and the nature of the rehearsal schedule was vastly more extensive. Working on Henry V provided several hurdles for future consideration. It also solidified my belief that each show, each cast, each actor, and each rehearsal requires its own cool down and its own process.

The Process and the Problems

This production was a challenge on many levels, especially with regard to the intense and extensive rehearsal process. My co-director and I wanted to produce a Shakespearean play with students who had had little to no Shakespeare experience. Furthermore, we wanted to set the play in modern times requiring the use of modern military techniques. The first weekend of rehearsal was spent teaching the nuances of Shakespeare's language in what we called "Shakespeare Boot Camp". Iambic pentameter, antithesis, alliteration, rhetoric, and Shakespeare's many other literary devices were something some of the students had learned about in high school but something very few of them had put into acting practice. We felt they needed a weekend intensive to either brush up on or learn these techniques, which facilitate the performing of Shakespeare.

The second weekend was spent at "Military Boot Camp". The fight choreographer led the students through extensive military exercises teaching them how to hold weapons, hand made out of wood by the actors, and maneuver as a group. This not only taught the cast about military life and the stakes of war but also bonded them together as a unified group of actors. After both boot camps we utilized the first two weeks of rehearsal doing table work: going through each scene of the script looking for the devices discussed in the Shakespeare Boot Camp, making sense of the language, and paraphrasing each line into the actors' own words. This was followed by several weeks of blocking rehearsals. During these weeks, rehearsal time was divided among work with the vocal coach, work with the director, and work with the fight director. The process came to a close with tech week and opening night just six weeks of total work.

Maneuvering seventeen actors through this whirlwind rehearsal/performance process made it difficult to incorporate cool down techniques. We had divided the actors into groups based on their characters: The English Nobles, The Merry Pranksters, the French Nobles, and the French Speakers. Variations of these groups were continuously coming in and out of rehearsal. One group would be working on text, while another worked dialects and pronunciations, while another worked blocking. On some nights, an actor would be called for only one scene, needing to be at rehearsal for 45 minutes. Some nights I would not even come in contact with certain actors because they were working with the vocal coach, the fight choreographer, or the other director. Many times the students were working in several different rooms during one rehearsal; the rehearsal space became the entire Shafer Street Playhouse. Attempting to implement Journaling and “The Cell Phone Bag” would have interfered with the second phase of the process: rehearsal. Furthermore, I was not the only one working with the students. Employing these techniques nightly would have required my co-director, the vocal coach, and the fight director all helping to implement the cool down.

Time was also a factor in limiting the use of cool down techniques. During Apartment 3A, toward the end of the rehearsal process, it became more difficult to incorporate cool down activities. After being at rehearsal for four or five hours, working through the show, a long night of technical rehearsal, or a run of the show, the last thing the actors and I wanted to do was sit around and journal; we wanted to go home. In working on Henry V, this feeling was sometimes tripled. In working with students, we were on a definitive time schedule. By departmental standard we were not allowed to rehearse them past 11:00 PM. When working intently in rehearsal and having specific work that needed to be accomplished, sometimes we would simply

run out of time not only to complete the list of scenes needing to be worked on but also to lead the actors through cool down techniques.

The responsibility of holding the show together, accomplishing the work that needed to be done in each rehearsal, and keeping track of seventeen actors became too much; I was unable to fully incorporate cool down techniques. However, I had been very open with the students early on in the process about my thesis work and the actor's cool down. Also, four of the five actors who had participated in Apartment 3A were cast in Henry V. While I was unable to fully incorporate cool down activities, I was able to make the actors in the cast aware of the benefits, potential, and need of cool down practices. During rehearsals where all cast members were present--read throughs, run throughs, etc.--I made sure to utilize the cell phone bag as well as to gather the cast at the end of the rehearsal to conclude the evening's process. Sometimes we would take a collective breath thus leaving the work in the space. I would also verbally encourage the students to leave rehearsal behind and do something for themselves after rehearsal. In particular, I tried to stress this with the actor playing Henry. While teaching Shakespeare and making him performance ready won out over cool down techniques, I did make it a point at the end of each rehearsal to tell him to let rehearsal and the character go. I hoped to encourage him to go home and have some personal time devoid of character or text work, which could be picked up again the next day when he was fresh and ready to work.

Post-Mortem

While transitioning each night from life to rehearsal and back to life is an aspect of process and cool down, issues can also arise when the show closes and the actor must transition into a life without the show. In his seven part sequence, Schechner refers to this as aftermath.

The issue was first presented after the conclusion of Apartment 3A. In a final journal entry Actor 1 commented on lasting post-run effects:

I have been feeling an awful sense of loss since the show ended, though. To be honest, I'm still trying to figure it out. I felt amazing during the entire month of October. I felt connected, focused, inspired, and busy; I felt like what I was doing was incredibly important. Then it ended so abruptly that it left me feeling dejected. I feel like I still have all of this left over passion that I don't know what to do with. I feel angry when I think about how I don't have anything to show for all the work I did, and how maybe the whole thing was pointless. I'm mostly scared, though. It's really scary how fleeting what we do is. If every show that ends will leave me feeling like I have a broken heart, I'm not sure I'll be able to maintain a sense of peace with acting.

After hearing these comments, I began to wonder how I could facilitate this transition; if there was anything I could do or if it was up to the actor. I reconsidered these questions when working on Henry V. During the process I was ever conscious that I was not implementing many cool down techniques. However, having created a unique ensemble experience with the cast and realizing that they had formed a close bond, my new goal was to help ease the cast's post-show transition into a life without Henry V.

A few weeks into the Henry V process I remembered the theatrical practice of the "post-mortem", in which those affiliated with the show meet to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the show and the process. This seemed like an excellent way to help the actors move on from the overall process. Therefore, after the whole process was over, two weeks after closing night, we gathered the cast once more to hold a "post-mortem". We focused this post-mortem less on the

process in regards to the creative team and more on the actors' experiences. After closing night the actors quickly dispersed to greet their families. The post-mortem gave them an opportunity to reconvene as a group in order to reminisce about the experience and what they learned by participating in it.

While most of the post-mortem was free form, giving the actors an opportunity to discuss what they wanted, I did ask the actors one specific question: "What is one thing you would like to take away from your character and one thing you would like to leave behind?" I believe theatre can provide a transformative experience; there is always something for the actor to learn about himself or herself. In asking this question I hoped that the actors would take a distanced, objective look at their characters and at themselves thereby recognizing the conclusion of the experience and the need to move forward. Since the students were participating in this show for class credit, they were also asked to write a two page reflection paper, thus putting the experience to rest on paper. The remainder of the post-mortem was spent sharing stories, jokes, and audience feedback as well as eating. Unless I purposefully ask the actors a few months from now, I may never know if this meeting helped them transition out of Henry V and back into their lives or their next creative endeavor. However, the cast seemed to appreciate the opportunity to meet one more time and to officially lay the process to rest.

Henry V Cool Down Reflection

Directing Henry V and devising this process solidified my belief that each actor behaves and responds to the rehearsal/performance process in his or her own way. This is especially true for students in an academic setting. The cast consisted of seventeen actors ranging in age from 18 to 24. We had students at all levels of actor training, from Freshman to Seniors: theatre majors

who had undergone one semester of formal acting training and others who had completed almost four years of training. Some students, especially the younger ones, were learning how to orient themselves around a stage for the first time, were learning how to comport themselves in rehearsal, and were learning how to marry text work with action. Other actors, those more experienced or those who had a natural facility with Shakespeare's language, could delve right away into character and physicality thus needing to process a different type of information. Some students naturally seemed more resilient. For example, the actor playing Pistol, while throwing himself physically and emotionally into every rehearsal and performance, seemed to transition back into real life with ease, somehow finding the way for Pistol's energy to positively effect his after rehearsal/performance experience. I always saw Pistol on stage but interacted only with the actor off stage.

However, this process also raised numerous questions and challenges for further consideration. While I feel confident about the cool down work I was able to incorporate, in looking aback on the hectic rehearsal process, I wonder how I could have incorporated more into the day to day activities; how I could have understood and applied cool down practices for this diverse cast. Looking back on Henry V, I believe that teaching cool down techniques in conjunction with so many other new experiences would have been overwhelming for the actors. In order for the implementation of cool down techniques to have worked within this process, with its extensive rehearsal schedule and diverse cast, the actors would have already had to be familiar with the techniques. In hindsight, it would have been better if the actors had become accustomed to cool down techniques in the classroom or on a production of lesser scale before

attempting to incorporate them into this process. Therefore, the techniques would have been actor initiated rather than reliant upon me, the director/teacher.

Southeastern Theatre Conference

Having begun my cool down exploration in Apartment 3A and further expanded on my conception of process in Henry V, I began to assimilate my research and practical experience while preparing a workshop for the Southeastern Theatre Conference. During this preparation I began to see the cool down as part of a process that begins as soon as the actor enters the space for class, rehearsal, or performance. I entitled the workshop “Completing the Circle: The Actor’s Cool Down”. This was the first time I had sat down to examine all of the interviews and research I had compiled. I had one hour and twenty minutes in which to interact with the students taking my workshop. So much of the cool down work depends on the rehearsal/performance situation. The reason for the cool down is to come down from whatever physical and/or emotional work has been done in rehearsal; to assist the actor in reaching a state of equilibrium after working on a character. I wanted those taking part in the workshop to not just experience the cool down practices, which mean nothing without the warm-up and rehearsal work; I wanted them to experience first hand the benefits of a cool down that follows intense work. I decided they must experience the complete circle, the process in its entirety: warm-up, work, and cool down.

In my cool down work prior to SETC I had only dealt with actors who were all working on the same project. In the workshop, I would be working with actors who not only were playing different roles in different shows but also who did not know each other. The work had to be something from which each individual could benefit but also something that brought the actors together as a group, just as they would be in a true rehearsal situation. I also wanted the work to

be physically strenuous with the potential for some emotional outcome. I decided to lead the actors through a basic version of the Laban Movement Efforts: punch, slash, float, glide, press, wring, flick, and dab. In previous rehearsal situations, I had found this work to be physically demanding; I also found that it could lead to emotional discoveries of character. Furthermore, when coupled with music chosen to represent each Effort, the actors would be free to individually express their characters as well as to reach out to the others in the space; the experience could be both personal and communal, whatever the actor needed in that moment.

I first tested the workshop with several actors from the Henry V cast. During this trial run the actors helped me discover that an effective way to structure the cool down and to complete the process was to cool down using the warm-up exercises in reverse order; this truly completed the circle of the work. For example, if the warm-up involves the actor moving from work on the floor to work on the feet, then the cool down would begin on the feet and end on the floor. I employed this idea to seeming success at the Southeastern Theatre Conference. Please see the workshop outline in Appendix 2 for further information. The students involved in the workshop responded favorably to the work, having never before experienced or heard of a cool down.

In Conclusion

As Stella Adler states, all focus must be on the rehearsal room when actors are in the rehearsal room. While I believe actors' lives do not shut off when they enter the acting space, actors must acknowledge where they are when entering the space, what they cannot leave behind, and how they can absorb that into their work. The same goes for the work of the character at the close of rehearsal. It cannot all be left behind; some of it stays with the actor. Perhaps the actor leave slightly changed having learned something from rehearsal or

performance that benefits or changes the way he/she conducts himself or herself or thinks in everyday life. But even those discoveries need time to be processed, need time to be acknowledged. Just as a cool down after each rehearsal and performance will help the actor, so too does a cool down post-run. That cool down could be a communal cast process in the form of a post-mortem or perhaps the actor will find an individual or personal way to move beyond the show.

Through these experiences I am beginning to understand the cool down as part of a cycle; that the 'seeds' are 'planted' at the start of rehearsal. What I discovered is that while the cool down process does begin at the end of the rehearsal and performance, it is initiated at the start. The rehearsal process and performance process are just that, a process. They are circular, beginning in one place (the real world or the actor's personal life) and ending in that same place. The actor must go back to the literal place she has left in coming to rehearsal or performance; her personal life, thus reaching a state of equilibrium. The process of recognizing and embracing that shift comes at the beginning of rehearsal.

Class work, rehearsal, and performance, when considered as a whole process, has several steps. The actors and director/teacher must first transition from outside world to acting space, giving themselves over to the space. They must then warm-up their bodies and voices preparing themselves for the work ahead. Then comes the class work, rehearsal, or performance. The actors must then cool down in whatever way best suits the work that has been done. Finally, the actors and director/teacher acknowledge the conclusion of the day's work followed by transitioning back from acting space to outside world. When working with students, this cycle can be initiated by the teacher/director; however, as the students move forward with their education, they will

hopefully discover that they have the means to stand on their own, to carry out the transitioning process in their own way.

The goal of teaching students these techniques is to help them develop a complete rehearsal/performance process with a beginning, a middle, and an end; perhaps beginning and ending by walking through the stage door, or perhaps beginning and ending with whatever activity follows rehearsal or performance. With its dependency on complete process, student study of cool down techniques would best be facilitated through a series of workshops as well as during certain production and classroom activities. These practices are something actors must adopt into their understanding of what it means to be an actor, an artist, and a person. In stressing the importance of the process, hopefully, they will come to take on the responsibility themselves, carrying it into the professional world.

Chapter IV

Cool Down Exercises

Though my research of cool down techniques, which consisted of reading articles, speaking with numerous professionals and practitioners, and practically applying exercises during Apartment 3A, Henry V, and a Southeastern Theatre Conference workshop, I have been able to define numerous cool down exercises, thereby solidifying a complete sense of process within the acting experience. The exercises I have compiled can be carried out by a teacher/director in correlation with a classroom/rehearsal process or by an individual. There are exercises for various class/rehearsal/performance experiences as well as images and practices meant to appeal to artists trained in various acting techniques. Several are described in the practitioner/creator's own words. As I move forward in my own professional life as a teacher and as a director, I hope to refine these techniques as I incorporate them into my classroom, rehearsal room, and performance experience.

Alpha and Omega

Clearly book-ending the beginning and the end of each rehearsal/performance is one way in which teachers and directors can establish a sense of a complete process. Teachers, directors, and actors can emphasize the beginning and the end of each class, rehearsal, or performance by establishing an activity that starts work time and concludes work time. Doing the activity at the start and repeating it at the end provides a clear signal to those working when it is time for the

work to begin and when it is time to leave the work behind. Continued use of this book-ending could establish a ritual for the group thereby reinforcing the idea of process. According to Robert Barton, “Rituals allow freedom of emotional expression within the safe outline of procedure” (112). Within the ritual students can safely and freely give themselves over to the exercise. Rituals emphasize the fact that within this ritual, time, and place work is done; it is safe for actors to give way to the exercises. Barton goes on to state that “Sometimes simply having students return to the same space--the place on the floor, the circle, the line, or any other configuration--and then reviewing, prior to releasing, the experience may be useful” (113). When the ritual is over, the work is done. Actors may leave the work within the confines of the ritual and move on in their daily lives.

Janet Rodgers, Head of Performance and Voice and Speech at Virginia Commonwealth University, has established the use of a chime as a means to step in and out of class as well as “to get an idea of the energy of the group and to bring the energy into one unit”. Rodgers has always been interested in what makes a group of people work effectively together. When discussing this issue with a colleague in Lilydale in upstate New York, that colleague stated, “If everyone is on the same page and has the same goals for the class, then there’s a greater chance that it will really work.” The chime is Rodgers way of putting everyone “on the same page”:

I try to chime out just as we chimed in at the beginning because I feel that stepping in and stepping out, just as it’s an important part of the archetype process, it’s an important part of what we do in acting, and so it’s an important part of what we do in leaving all of our problems behind and really stepping in to class, doing the work, and then stepping out and going back to our regular lives.

The chime brings the group together to remind them they are all there for a common purpose: the work of the day.

Rodgers' Chime:

The group gathers in a circle at the beginning of class/rehearsal and at the end. The instructor sounds three chimes. When the last sound of the final chime has faded, the group breaths together.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are an indelible factor of today's society in regards to communication and entertainment. Through texting, phone calls, email, and the internet, cell phone users can connect to the world. Personal information, music, and photos can all be stored on and accessed from cell phones. I do not think it is illogical to say that part of each cell phone user's identity is tied to their cell phone. People in today's society do not turn their cell phones off very often. They remain constantly available. By turning their cell phone off for an extended period of time, people are literally cutting themselves off from that type of communication, from friends, from family; this disconnects the person from the outside world, which is at one time terrifying and freeing. When actors make it a point to purposefully turn their cell phones off and also make it a point not to check that cell phone on any breaks in rehearsal, they are committing themselves to the space, to the work, and to their fellow actors; they are putting their personal lives aside and choosing to communicate with those in rehearsal, class, and performance. Turning their cell phones back on at the end of the rehearsal is a way for the actor to acknowledge the transition back into their real life; they are making themselves once again available to the outside world.

The Cell Phone Bag:

The actors and the director/teacher (unless a stage manager is not working on the production) turn off their cell phones and place them in a designated bag or box before class, rehearsal, or performance. They then leave their cell phones in the bag for the duration of the process. The actors and director/teacher take their cell phones out of the bag after rehearsal and turn them on before leaving the space.

Transitioning from Character to Actor

In some rehearsal/performance situations, the director can act as the facilitator of the journey from character to actor. The first exercise regarding this transition, “Introductions”, comes from Josh Chenard, Assistant Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. The exercise assists in the shift in actor focus from actor to character at the beginning of rehearsal and from character to actor at the end of rehearsal. The second exercise, “Journey Back to Self”, comes from Lionel Walsh, Director of the School of Dramatic Art in Windsor, ON, Canada. Walsh implements several activities including the one below, an exercise of his own devising, because he does not want his actors “to be carrying around the burden of their characters' lives in their own personal life”. Professional teacher, actor, and director Flloyd Kennedy sometimes employs an exercise she co-designed with drama therapist Andrew Dawson. This exercise, “The Chair Exercise”, emphasizes the separation of character and actor. According to Kennedy, they discovered that “this helped the actors to adjust their emotional states, while also clarifying for themselves (and everyone else in the room) what their attitudes were to the work, to their characters, and to themselves”. Furthermore, especially when working on physical characterizations and character movement, I have developed an exercise that connects actors

back to their bodies, “The Actor Walk”. The actors focus on their own distinct movements; the characteristics that define their walks, movements, and physical habits.

Introductions:

At the beginning of rehearsal the actors walk around the space. They begin to interact with each other as their characters, introducing themselves by their character’s name. At the end of the rehearsal, the actors once again walk around the space; this time they introduce themselves by their own names, not their characters’ names.

Journey back to self:

Lionel Walsh describes the exercise as follows: “I will coach them back to their own everyday life as they walk. First to let go of the imaginary circumstances by seeing the actual room in which they are walking, hearing the real sounds, smelling the space, even touching things if needed; second to let go of the character by spying back on what they did as an outside observer and making mental notes about their work and their plans for the next rehearsal/performance; and, third, to let go of the whole by focusing on their plans for the rest of the day, imagining themselves actually doing the activities--this is an ‘actor’s real life future beat’, if you will, that helps them let go of the play”.

The Chair Exercise:

Floyd Kennedy describes the exercise as follows: “The exercise requires two chairs, side by side, in the middle of the floor. Each actor takes a turn at sitting first in one chair to express: ‘This is what I have in common with my character’, then in the other chair to express ‘This is where I am different from my character’. Then they would return to the first chair to say ‘This is what I want to take out of this room from today’s work’,

followed by, ‘This is what I am going to leave in this room, so that I can work on it when I return’”.

Actor Walk:

At the start of rehearsal the actors move about the space noticing movement characteristics. They are asked to exaggerate one or two of their more prominent movement features and to remember those features for later. At the end of the rehearsal, after some other cool down exercises, the actors are once again asked to walk around the space and to notice their movement patterns. They are then asked to remember the prominent movement features of earlier and to exaggerate those features. If the actor has a defining habit, such as hair twirling, it might be useful for the student to adopt that habit at this time.

Casting off the Character

As previously quoted, in his research of actors, training, and cool downs, Richard Owen Geer found that, although practitioners champion a variety of training and performance practices, they seem to agree in one area: “persons playing roles may be emotionally affected by the roles they play” (151). Susanna Bloch has coined the term ‘emotional hangover’ to describe the emotional after effects of reaching a heightened emotional state in performance. To combat emotional hangover, Bloch teaches stepping out in correlation with her Alba Emoting technique. Alba Emoting works with six basic emotions: joy, anger, sadness, fear, eroticism, and tenderness. In researching different emotional states, Bloch noticed similar patterns. She found “that specific emotional feelings were linked to specific patterns of breathing, facial expression, degree of muscular tension, and postural attitudes” (Bloch 124). Reproducing particular aspects of these

areas will trigger the desired emotion (127). Bloch's stepping out technique is meant to quickly free the actor of one emotional state so that the actor can continue in whatever way the role demands. In an interview with Geer, Bloch states that stepping out "removes the possibility of emotional inertia. Since one has activated the network, one is de-activating the network (personal interview)" (Geer 152).

Exercises with a similar mindset and focus as Stepping Out consist of the conscious removal of character as an outer element, garment, or mask. Stephen Wangh refers to it as "putting on work clothes" before rehearsal and then "changing into street clothes" after rehearsal (Wangh email). Dr. Aaron Anderson, during a lecture at Virginia Commonwealth University, commented that the clown's nose is the smallest mask while make-up is the thinnest. In the Introduction to the book Stage Make-up Uta Hagen writes that make-up is the "final dressing of the character which will enable him or her to perform the role as fully and as effectively as possible" (XIII). It is a part of the outer representation of the character. Whether aware of it or not, actors, by putting on make-up for a show, are putting on a character mask. Other types of mask work--clowning, half-mask, full-mask--deal with a more tangible representation of a mask; an object representing the character that can be removed once the work is completed. In distinguishing the difference between clowning and other mask work, Simon states that

Clowning is mask work--the nose is a partial face mask--but it is quite different from full-face and half-face masking. In the latter forms, you are encouraged to lose your "self" behind the facade of an "other". Clowning reveals profound aspects of your *own* personal, often called your "inner child" (1).

Whether losing yourself or exposing the self, the character or work that has been done concludes when the mask has been removed. Actors can capitalize on this image when cooling down.

Stepping Out for Alba Emoting:

According to Bloch, this exercise “consists essentially in ending each emotional reproduction by at least three slow, regular, and deep, full breathing cycles followed by a total relaxation of the facial muscles and a change in posture” (128).

Less structured Stepping Out:

Lionel Walsh describes this exercise as follows: “I literally ask my students to step out of the character as they walk through the space and shake her/him off physically. I will also coach them to use their arms and hands to discard the character into their back space, to do something silly to dispel the atmosphere of the scene/play” (Lionel Walsh).

The Veil:

Walsh also describes this exercise in detail: “This exercise was taught to me by Russian director and teacher Slava Kokorin. You imagine that there is a veil that is draped over you and hangs all the way down to the floor. This is the veil of the character or of the play. The actor walks off the stage and as s/he steps into the wings, he reaches down to the ground and lifts the imaginary veil up over her/his head and releasing it as he walks forward out of the veil”.

The Mask:

After rehearsal, as with the exercise “The Veil”, the actor can remove the imaginary mask of the character. Furthermore, while preparing for a performance, the actor can think of the make-up application process as building a character mask. Before leaving the theatre

and before mingling with family and friends after the show, the actor can consciously remove that mask, focusing on the removal of character as she does so.

The Energy Approach

In her book, A Balancing Act, Emmanuelle Chaulet has developed several activities dealing with the actor's aura and energy. Chaulet defines the potential negative effects of long-term performance in terms of phantom characters (my term, not hers), characters that do not leave the actor after a performance. After working on a role for an extended period of time, the actor may not be able to leave the character behind. For Emmanuelle Chaulet the answer lies in the energy system "composed of the chakras (energy centers), the aura (an envelope made of energetic fibers), and of many other elements" (38). Citing quantum physics, Chaulet discusses how the basis of all human life, all matter, and all existence is the combination of particle and wave; in its base form matter is vibration, energy. Through the chakras, "energy vortexes located in the body", humans are connected to "cosmic energy". She states that the chakras' "function is to breathe in and breathe out--or receive and express--the energy of the universe which we need in order to live, think, act, and feel" (50). She has labeled her method and theories "A Holistic Approach to Acting".

Each person and character has its own "vibration, frequency and quality" of energy connected to "cosmic energy" through the chakras. During performance the actor has tapped into new and different energy flows. The actor's energy after each performance must be cleansed in order to return the actor to her original state, her base energy flow. According to Chaulet, the experiences with this energy change are not all negative: "It is true that with each role an actor will gain a new layer of experience, a new outlook on life, a new skill, and should wisely keep

the strength and power of that new energy” (185). Chaulet encourages actors to keep hold of the positive effects of the performance experience and energy transfer, while purging herself from the negative aspects of the character after the run of a show; in order to fully accomplish this, the actor must conduct a cleansing: “What I recommend is removing the draining, negative pull, cleansing the energetic core, while still keeping the experience and the positive features of the character’s new energetic power” (185). Chaulet encourages actors to take part in a Chakra and complete character cleansing.

During a workshop held at Virginia Commonwealth University, Chaulet led the students through this cleansing asking them to think on a character they had recently played or a character from their past that may be lingering within. During the run of the show the actor is connected to the character through a chord of white light; however, if not properly cleansed post run, that chord turns black and prohibits the actor from functioning in a balanced state. After taking the students through the chakra cleansing, she had them focus on the black chord and visualize it being torn out, expelled from the actor’s body.

Character Cleansing:

Chaulet describes the process in her book:

“...actors first need to say ‘thank you for coming and dancing with me’ before they can say goodbye to the character which they have embodied. Mentally visualizing the departure of the character from their bodies, they can literally see it lift off their own self and go back into a cloud of thought forms. It will be like taking off the cloak--or invisible mantle of energy--representing the characteristics, features, and traits of the role that they have incarnated...I suggest then visualizing it transforming into a ball of white light, of

pure energy, which can be reduced to the size of a grapefruit, then to an orange, and then a bead. At this stage it is time to send it back to where it came from: the play. Visualizing the script or the book is generally helpful. You can imagine the energy simply reentering the pages where it was contained as a thought form” (186).

Journaling, etc.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, students need to process the work that has been done in rehearsal and performance. Stephen Wangh, Arts Professor at NYU and author of the book An Acrobat of the Heart, makes sure to provide post-rehearsal time for such activities: “I will suggest to students that they take several minutes after working just being with themselves, perhaps writing in a journal or sensing their bodies and remembering what they’ve been through. What is especially important is not rushing out into the ‘real’ world without taking the time necessary to put yourself back together” (email). This can come from having the actors journal, an exercise I am sure other directors, teachers, and actors have employed. The specifics detailed below were devised by myself but inspired by Julie Cameron’s “Morning Pages”, which are discussed in detail with the “Post-Run Blues” exercises. It can also come from an exercise devised by Grotowski, and mentioned by Wangh in his book, entitled “The Hunker”. Not all students find writing down their thoughts helpful, but they still need an outlet for processing their work; Grotowski’s Hunker exercise can assist these students.

Journaling:

In my opinion, the process of journaling after rehearsal can be whatever the actor needs it to be. I suggest taking a few minutes to write in stream consciousness in order to get down on paper what is forefront in the actor’s mind. I believe that eventually there should

be a conscious shift of focus from rehearsal to the actor's life in the writing. I ask my actors to write in detail what they plan to do after rehearsal.

The Hunker:

Wangh refers to this as “quiet time for integration” (email). In his book he states that “at the end of every exercise or training session, Grotowski counseled actors to squat in a “hunker,” allowing their arms and head to hang down while they digested the work. But this position doesn't work for everyone, especially those with short hamstring muscles. I myself sometimes kneel instead, sitting on my calves and putting my forehead on the floor. Some people just sit. What is important is that you allow yourself real privacy, taking a neutral position that permits you to compare how you feel now with how you have felt after other exercises. During this private time just permit yourself to feel what you are feeling and to notice what you are thinking” (Wangh 50).

Debriefing

When working on a workshop regarding the Actor's Cool-down for the Southeastern Theatre Conference, as earlier stated, several of my actors from Henry V gathered to assist me in working out the kinks. One of the students, who had been working on the cool down with me for several months, stated how he needed more than the physical and written portion of the cool down. After a physical release of character and experience a verbal release could also be helpful, especially since not all actors respond to the same activities.

In his book Dealing with Emotional Hangover: Cool-down and the Performance Cycle in Acting, Richard Owen Geer discusses role-playing in therapy situations in relation to actors developing a character in rehearsal and performance. He states that participants of role-playing

always undergo debriefing at the conclusion of the activity “to assure that the participants returned to their ‘real life roles’ at the conclusion of the exercise” (149). Though the purpose of role-playing in therapy differs from that of role-playing or playing a character on the stage, the effect of the exercise in both situations can be similar to that of the role-player; in both situations the role-players can deal with charged situations, emotional material, and use of the imagination. Not only is debriefing helpful in role playing situations but “according to communications expert William Starosta, group leaders who employ reality-imitating games are ethically bound to hold a debriefing as a means of returning their clients to pre-experience status” (149). Since theatre can act as a “reality-imitating game”, Geer suggests debriefing might be an effective way to transition students out of rehearsal/performance and into their daily lives.

I had the privilege of interviewing Mallory Minerson, a professional actress trained at the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts in Toronto, ON, Canada. During her career she has assisted the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary as a standardized patient portraying various patients in different medical situations. Her discoveries in regards to cooling down came from this work in which they would debrief after each day:

We discuss reactions we got from students, feelings we had, we cry, we laugh, and we leave feeling better...Our technical trainers there are very in tune with the fact that portraying a woman whose child has just died over and over again in an exam situation, and having to relive hearing that news and reacting accordingly sometimes 40 or 50 times in one day, is exhausting, both mentally and physically, and have always made sure we have space to talk and release whatever we are feeling.

She has carried this work over into her professional life as an actress.

The activity of debriefing can be executed at the end of each rehearsal or performance if that rehearsal or performance requires it. A type of debriefing can also happen after the completed run of a show. In the theatre world this is known as a post-mortem. David Hlavsa, in his book An Actor Rehearses, believes that students should gather two weeks after the show has ended so that they can discuss the process and product in an objective manner. He suggests that the cast “Start out by talking about the positive parts of the group’s process: celebrate the parts of your collaboration that [they] really enjoyed; compliment people who made everyone’s experience of rehearsal more joyous...Then spend some time discussing what parts of the group’s process did not go as well as [they] would have liked...and talk about how things could have been improved” (166-167). Hlavsa sees this as an opportunity to learn. As David Owen Geer states, “I do not wish to imply that all long-term effects of acting are negative. Many, as we know, are useful and positive. The point is to integrate them successfully into one’s life” (155). In my opinion, by analyzing and processing the experience in totum, the actors and creative team can not only learn but, also, finally put it to rest.

Debriefing:

At the close of each rehearsal and performance, especially those in which the actors have dealt with and experienced emotionally charged material, the actors can gather in circle and divest themselves of lingering feelings, their experience, their discoveries, etc (Geer).

Post-mortem:

Several weeks after the run of a show has ended, cast members can meet by themselves or with the director and creative team in order to discuss the rehearsal process and each performance. In an effort to officially move forward from the character, I ask

my actors to look objectively at their character. I ask each actor to choose one strength of the character that the actor has learned from and one weakness or negative facet of the character from which the actor wants to fully separate herself.

Post-Run Blues

Along with the post-mortem exercise, there are other ways actors can conduct a post run cool down. As previously mentioned, Schechner states actors experience some form of “aftermath”; a time in the actor’s process that also must receive attention. According to Julia Cameron in her book The Artist’s Way, “As artists, we must learn to be self-nourishing. We must become alert enough to consciously replenish our creative resources as we draw on them” (21). Cameron encourages artists to work on Morning Pages, an activity she has coined to help actors connect with their artistic selves and to overcome any artistic depression: “It is very difficult to complain about a situation morning after morning, month after month, without being moved to constructive action. The pages lead us out of despair and into undreamed-of solutions” (14). During the activity of Morning Pages, artists simply write three pages in stream of consciousness: no judgments, no thinking; just writing. Actors must learn to see post-run time as positive not as failure or as stressful. They can utilize it to regenerate their personal and their creative battery. Furthermore, between shows actors should find other creative outlets. According to Cameron, “As artists we must realize that we have to maintain this artistic ecosystem. If we don’t give some attention to upkeep, our well is apt to become depleted, stagnant, or blocked” (20). Downtime is not necessarily bad time. Geer agrees: “We, as instructors of acting, need to teach performance as a holistic discipline, a cycle that has its times of productivity and

rest. We should teach students to welcome the winter that follows performance as the time in which lives and creativity are fertilized by the harvest of performance” (156).

Julia Cameron’s Morning Pages:

According to Cameron, Morning Pages are “three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness...They might also, more ingloriously, be called *brain drain*, since that is one of their main functions. There is no wrong way to do morning pages. These daily morning meanderings are not meant to be *art*. Or even *writing*...Pages are meant to be, simply, the act of moving the hand across the page and writing down *whatever* comes to mind. Nothing is too pretty, too silly, too stupid, or too weird to be included”.

Other Exercises

There are several other concepts and exercises that I have worked with or researched that I think can be of great help to actors, teachers, and directors wishing to adopt cool down practices.

Warmup/Cool down:

If the director/teacher chooses to conduct a pre-planned, group warm-up and cool down, the director/teacher can begin the rehearsal with a specifically ordered warm-up and reverse the order of that warm-up at the end of the rehearsal. When I incorporate this exercise, I usually have my actors begin their warm-up laying on the floor so that they can check in with themselves and connect to their breath and voices. I then, usually, have them slowly work to their feet so that they can connect with the space and each other. I want to slowly draw their focus to their character. At the end of the rehearsal I reverse the

order of the warm-up. They move about the space in order to reconnect to their bodies and to acknowledge the acting space. They end the cool down laying on the floor in the same position in which they started the warm-up, thus focusing their energy and thoughts back on themselves. I like to play music during this time. This reverse warm-up can provide a natural arc and resolution to the process, completing the circle and giving the actors time to process as well as ease muscle and/or vocal tension.

Stretching and “Laps”:

Just as an athlete must cool down after a high endurance race, perhaps by running or swimming cool down laps or by stretching, an actor must cool down physically and/or mentally after a high endurance performance. Obviously, stretching is a good way to come down from a physical rehearsal. Also, actress Miriam Silverman likes to walk or ride her bike home after a performance. This physical activity coupled with the quiet privateness, allows her to process the information mentally and cool down physically before getting home (Silverman).

Socializing:

Socializing is perhaps one of the most popular cool down activities for actors; interacting with the cast or family and friends at a bar or restaurant after a rehearsal or performance. This allows the actors to experience something other than the intensity of rehearsal and performance with the cast; something separate from working on the show. Sometimes I have my actors dance to a song at the end of the rehearsal, especially a physical rehearsal or emotional rehearsal; the actors can cool-down physically or emotionally through the dance, moving their bodies in an unstructured, care free way, thus connecting themselves

back to their bodies. This also sometimes produces a much needed dose of laughter and sense of play: a release from the other work.

In Conclusion

No matter the extent of the experience or the acting techniques employed, in class, in rehearsal, or in performance the actor experiences something in mind, body, and voice. Whatever happens during the acting experience, whether it is emotional, physical, exhausting, stressful, exhilarating, all consuming, or an off night, if students and actors are aware that it is a necessity, as part of their process, to cool down, they can deal with their experience and move forward with healthy lives amid the acting profession. The awareness of such practices and the formulation of this process begins with their training.

Through this thesis project I have researched, documented, and crafted such resources in order to help my actors navigate the line between the acting experience and their personal lives. I want my actors to fully commit to the character in order to deliver a successful, effective portrayal. I want them to reach those heightened moments on stage and to achieve stage directions such as the one written in Apartment 3A on the third page of the script: “Annie shuts the door. After several beats of silence, she turns and slides down to the floor and cries” (7). I want them to be present and to be “emotional warriors”, “athletes of the heart”, a source, and a vessel. I want them to have resources and a clear understanding of process so that they can portray the journey of a character such as Alma Winemiller and know how to come back from it.

Working in the theatre can be a strenuous experience for the actor; it is demanding onstage and offstage. The development and execution of a complete process can combat this

strain. In making students aware of potential issues and giving them the resources to counter them, the control, the power has been placed in their hands. Instilling in them a sense of the complete process will hopefully help them lead healthy, whole lives as actors; actors who can fully give way to the rehearsal/performance experience and be fully present in their everyday lives.

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Appendix 1

Survey E-mail and Questions

I sent this e-mail and survey questions to numerous professional actors recommended to be my mutual acquaintances. Several responded to the e-mail and provided great insight into their own process and implementation of cool down techniques, several of which are quoted in the body of this thesis.

Dear Participant,

My name is Anna K. Kurtz. I am a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University pursuing an MFA in Theatre Pedagogy. I am currently conducting research for my thesis project entitled “Completing the Circle: The Actor’s Cool Down.” We as actors, directors, and/or teachers spend a great deal of time warming up in order to put our bodies and voices in the ideal creative state. We must be fully present. As Stella Adler states, “You must understand that while you’re in this room you leave the outside world outside. You need all of *yourself* here (The Art of Acting)”. While warming-up is greatly stressed in actor training, during my years as an actor, student, and now teacher, I have not encountered many practitioners who emphasize a cooling down process after rehearsal, class, or performance. With your help I hope to examine issues actors face in leaving the acting space and re-entering the outside world. I also hope to develop various exercises in which students can participate, activities that will stress and enforce the importance of taking time to process and cool down after rehearsal, thus encouraging them to develop their own process as they move out into the professional world. Your name was given to me by _____ who thought you might be willing to share your experience and might also see the benefit of this research as it pertains to the development of actor training and future professionals. If you have time to complete the attached survey questions, I would greatly appreciate your insight, thoughts, and wisdom on this issue. If you are interested in participating, please complete and email back to me your response by _____. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anna K. Kurtz
MFA Candidate Theatre Pedagogy
Virginia Commonwealth University

“Completing the Circle: The Actor’s Cool Down”
Survey Questions

- 1) Please detail your theatrical training especially in regards to performance.
- 2) Please describe you pre and post rehearsal/performance process.
 - a) Do you execute any kind of cool down?
 - b) How and when do you process your work?
- 3) If you do “cool down” after class/rehearsal/performance how did you discover this process?
 - a) Through your training?
 - b) By observing others?
- 4) If you do “cool down” why do you make this a part of your process? What benefits do you receive?
- 5) Have you ever found transitioning from the acting space to the real world particularly difficult?
 - a) If so, would you mind sharing any personal experiences and examples?

Appendix 2

Southeastern Theatre Conference Workshop Outline

Completing the Circle: The Actor's Cool Down Southeastern Theatre Conference Workshop March 3, 2011 Atlanta, GA

I. Introduction

- Heart Rate
 - Average heart rate: 60 beats per minute
 - Parachuter's heart rate: 140 beats per minute
 - An actor (during monologue): can reach 180 beats per minute
 - Clearly something happens on stage

- Warm-up to be in ideal performance state
 - Can we define what that is?

- A part of a process: Warm-up, Work, Cool Down
 - Want to return to equilibrium so we can transition into outside space
 - Want healthy actors

- During this workshop we will experience the whole process of Warm-up, Work, and Cool down.
 - With this workshop I hope to make you aware of the need to cool-down after any acting experience whether in rehearsal or performance; to process the experience and transition from acting space back into the real world. **To return your system and your self to equilibrium.**

II. Warm-up

A. Preparation

- Turn off your cell phone.
- Clear acting space
 - have water somewhere in the room
 - place a pencil and paper somewhere

- Write down what you are bringing into this space: where are you right now in preparation for this work?
- Sit in Circle
 - starting a process together
 - make eye contact
 - collective breath

B. Warm-up Exercises

Song: *Song of the Black Swan*

- Find some space in the room. Lay on your back with palms up.
- Breath in...out with a sigh.
- Breath in...siren.
- Listen to the music...let it gently rock you back and forth.
- Slowly work your way to your knees...keeping your head bent and loose.
- Work your way to your feet...roll up on vertebrae at a time

1) The Actor

Song: *The Mummer's Dance*

- Walk around the space
- focus on your walk, you the actor
- Notice one thing about how you walk:
 - do your arms swing, do you take long strides, etc.
 - Remember this for later

2) Others in Space

- Now make eye contact
- Smile at everyone you pass in the space
 - Do you know some of these people?
 - Are they all strangers to you?
 - Are you nervous around them?
 - Could you care less?

3) The Character

- Make the shift to character
 - As you look at others in the space repeat your character name to yourself.
 - How do you see others in the world of the play?
 - Do you feel superior or inferior?
 - Do you like to approach people or hide from them.

- Decide who they are to you in the world of your play.
- **Introduce yourself to these other characters as your character.**

III. Rehearsal Exercises

A. Space/Weight/Time

- According to Laban, in motion, you are in relation to space/weight/time

Space: Direct / Indirect	Song: <i>Map of the Problematic/Aspettami Tayatan</i>
Time: Sustained / Sudden	Song: <i>Siulil A run</i>
Weight: Strong / Light	Song: <i>Mystic's Dream</i> (start @ 2:00)

B. Laban Movement Efforts

-with each effort, can you think of a line or word of the text that matches this movement pattern? Say it out loud. Test it. Use the words: press with them, float with them, etc. If not, just say your character's name.

-maybe at some point you are trying to press, wring, etc other people in the space.

Song: *Marrakesh Night Market*

Press-- direct/strong/sustained

Wring-- indirect/strong/sustained

Song: *Kikuchiyo*

Float-- indirect/light/sustained

Glide-- direct/light/sustained

Song: *Knights of Cydonia*

Punch-- direct/strong/sudden

Slash-- indirect/strong/sudden

Song: *Dulaman*

Flick-- indirect/light/sudden

Dab-- direct/light/sudden

Song: *The Mummer's Dance*

Personal Exploration of character

IV. Cool Down

A. Journal

Song: *Suite Antique*

1) get water

2) go to your pen and paper

- Stream of consciousness journal everything that happened to you...don't think, just write.

- You the character, you the actor, any discoveries made...

- Begin to move your consciousness back to the actor

-Now think about what you are going to do when you leave this workshop; who are you going to talk to you? Where are you going to go?

B. Return to Self

1) Walk around the space

- Think about the walking characteristic that you observed about yourself. Over exaggerate it; back to normal.

- Look at the others in the space as you walk.
Introduce yourself to them.

- Dance Party: Song: *Send Me on My Way*

- Stop where you are in the space.

- Breath in...raise arms above head...bend over...hug knees
...stretch legs

- Roll up one vertebrae at a time.

2) Lay down on floor

- Imagine character leaving body...physically reach up and take off the mask, brush off, shake off...whatever image helps you.

- breath in...siren

- breath in...sigh

- Slowly come to a sitting position.

C. Circle

- sit in a circle

- what's one thing you want to take away from the work today?
- what's one thing you want to leave in the space?

- eye contact
- group breath

- go turn your cell phones on

V. Conclusion

Comments, questions, concerns?

- Not always easy for the director/teacher to help with this
- You as an actor must be aware
- You must develop personal techniques

Appendix 3

Southeastern Theatre Conference Workshop Outline

“Completing the Circle: The Actor’s Cool Down”

Anna K. Kurtz, Virginia Commonwealth University

Many actors spend a good deal of time warming up before rehearsal/performance. Often times this work is necessary in order for an actor to prepare his/her mind and body for the strenuous work at hand; after all, a person at rest has an average heart rate of 60 beats per minute, while an actor’s heart rate can reach up to 180 beats per minute while on stage*. In order to cool down after this emotional and/or physical “workout” the actor must develop a personal, post-rehearsal/performance process. What do you need after rehearsal or performance in order to reach equilibrium? In order to return to your pre-rehearsal/performance state of being? In order to process the work you have done so that you can transition from the acting space to your life outside the theater?

Suggested Cool Down Techniques**

Cell Phone:

Turn off your cell phone before rehearsal and try your best not to check it during rehearsal, even on breaks. Turning it back on after rehearsal will focus your mind back to your life outside the theater.

Ritual:

Begin and end the rehearsal/performance with a distinct activity, thus creating a ritual for yourself. This will provide a clear signal that the work should begin or end. Perhaps you ride your bike or walk to and from rehearsal, or perhaps you ring a chime at the beginning and end.

The Warm-up:

Repeat in reverse order the warm-up you did before rehearsal/performance. Book ending the rehearsal/performance may provide a natural arc and resolution to your process.

Physicalizing the Finish:

Do some sort of physical activity that signifies the transition from character to actor: shake-down, brush-off, remove the “mask”, pull the chord, etc.

Journal:

Immediately after rehearsal, or as soon as you can, write down any discoveries you made; get all of your feelings about the work down onto paper. This can be from the character's perspective or the actor's. If writing from the character's perspective, always transition back into the actor when writing. I usually ask my actors to write about what they are going to do after rehearsal; this helps move their thoughts beyond the rehearsal/performance space.

Socialize:

One of the greatest theatrical rituals is socializing after a performance; allow yourself time to interact with your fellow actors in a setting outside the theatre.

*Konijn, Elly A. Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage. Amsterdam, Amsterdam U P: 2000

**Some of these activities were created from my own personal experience and others were collected during interviews. A special thank you to all who contributed to this research.

Vita

Anna K. Kurtz was born in Sterling, IL on March 20, 1985, and is an American citizen. She graduated from Sterling High School in Sterling, IL in 2003. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance from Creighton University in 2007. During this time she attended the British American Drama Academy in Oxford, England, and worked for the Post Playhouse Repertory Theater. She taught Introduction to Stage Performance, Audition Technique, Shakespeare in Performance, and Effective Speech at Virginia Commonwealth University. Directing credits include Henry V, Apartment 3A, Hello Out There, and Almost Maine: Sad and Glad at the Shafer Street Playhouse, Dead Man's Cell Phone (Assistant Director) at the Hodges Theatre, and Polaroid Stories at Creighton University. She has performed with the Nebraska Shakespeare Festival and Richmond Shakespeare Festival as well as several theaters in Chicago, IL including the 16th Street Theatre where she played Tammy in the premiere of The Ascension of Carlotta.