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Actor training and emotions: Finding a balance

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Actor Training and Emotions

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Finding a Balance

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ABSTRACT

Actor training is a challenging and personally confronting course of study during which students can undergo intense emotional upheaval. Australian conservatoires and vocational drama schools teach acting students to access and expand their emotional range as part of their professional skill repertoire. A variety of methods and techniques are used to assist and enable them to accomplish this. Sometimes, student actors are requested to tap into personal memories, which can have severe emotional repercussions. Many exercises in other areas of training can also be very emotionally confronting. Finding a balance between having emotions available for use in acting work and avoiding being negatively affected or overwhelmed by them can be a precarious path.

This research investigates the broad pedagogical positions held by a select group of Australia's leading drama schools towards the emotional aspects of actor training. It examines the range of stresses particular to acting students during their training, and what facets of their course may contribute to this pressure. The study explores how students' emotional issues are handled by theatre instructors and the institutions in which they teach, and inquires whether current staff members feel they have the training and resources to deal with this aspect of the acting programmes. The project examines acting students' exposure to training practices that may carry high emotional risks, and whether the drama schools have strategies and policies in place to safeguard students' mental and psychological wellbeing. It also examines whether emotional boundary management can be formalised in the actor training setting and where duty of care responsibilities lie within this complex environment.

The research draws on the knowledge of experienced theatre practitioners, teachers, psychologists and drama school graduates. It aims to contribute to actor training pedagogy by focusing on what is considered an under-

discussed and under-researched element of drama school training. By exploring ways of implementing change, it is anticipated that the study may play a part in ensuring a healthier and emotionally safer environment for actor training.

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Date……………………………………….

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DEFINITIONS

Some of the key terms used in this study are defined as follows.

Drama school   A vocational conservatoire institution that delivers a fully accredited programme and whose primary focus is to train actors for the industry. 'Acting school' and 'drama school' are used interchangeably.

Teacher   Teacher and instructor are the titles used to refer to all those who teach acting students in any area. Most teachers involved in this study are senior lecturers; some are professors or associate professors. All are referred to as teachers.

Acting teacher   Those teachers who specifically teach acting skills in the drama school environment (as opposed to voice, movement or other areas of actor training).

Director   The title given to the overall head of a drama school.

A director   The title of a person who directs dramatic productions.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

NIDA   National Institute of Dramatic Art

WAAPA   Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

VCA   Victorian College of the Arts

QUT   Queensland University of Technology

INTRODUCTION

> Unlike the ancient actor who could remove the mask, commune with it, honour its power, and, in essence, ask permission to return to his own life before respectfully placing the mask on the wall, the modern actor is often wrenched out of the moment. Since this communion is no longer a standard part of the process, each acting teacher should ask: Did I draw my student into something without providing a pathway out? (Barton, 1994, p. 113)

Background and Scope of Study

Training to be a professional actor is a time of great change and re-assessment for the individual. It can involve a breaking down of old habits, resistances, preconceived ideas and inhibitions, to allow student actors a wider and more flexible range of choices and skills. It can also precipitate a critical time of stress, confusion, personal conflict and sometimes trauma during a rigorous training programme. Acting students learn how to represent different characters and to adopt diverse personae. In so doing, they often face central issues of who they are and what they are bringing to their work. In classes and rehearsals they are constantly asked to take risks, overcome fears and break through 'boundaries'. The aim of this study is to examine the day-to-day experiences of the staff and graduates of selected Australian drama schools in relation to accessing and balancing emotions—particularly heightened emotions—and the safeguards in place within the actor training environment.

Embarking on the actor training process can be a delicate and sometimes hazardous operation, especially considering the sensitivities of many of the creative people attracted to working in theatre. The links between mental illness and creative achievement have long been the subject of research. Arnold M. Ludwig (1995) documented numerous accounts of artists who had not managed the impact of their creative working lives on their personal lives, indicating that:

> Those who delve inward and use emotional experiences as the raw material for their creative output are more likely to experience the double-edged sword of creative activity. While the creative process lets them master and channel their painful experiences through the power of their expression, they sometimes cannot contain the emotional forces unleashed through their probing. (p. 175)

The stereotyped 'artistic temperament' and the relationship between creativity and bipolar disorder has also been an area of intense research. Psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison (1993) made a strong case for the existence of a remarkably high incidence of bipolar-spectrum illness among artists in comparison to the general population. In her study on artistic temperament and manic depressive illness, she found that artists experienced heightened sensitivity to emotional extremes and that a greatly disproportionate number of writers and artists were depressed, suicidal or manic.

In the actor training environment, it can be extremely confronting for young people entering drama school to face up to their limitations and weaknesses in the face of a very competitive profession. Acting students are encouraged to develop a knowledge and critical awareness of self (National Institute of Dramatic Art [NIDA], 2015b), bringing into play a range of self-esteem and self-awareness issues. Students can sometimes assume they are more talented than may realistically be the case, or, alternatively, they may need enormous encouragement to have faith in their abilities. Part of the actor training process is to encourage students to take risks, push beyond boundaries and expand choices—all of which may bring into play deep, personal issues. This PhD study explores the many areas of acting training that may cause particular stress or anxiety to students during their training, and gauges how these areas are managed by the drama school institutions and their staff. Given this focus, however, it is important to acknowledge that emotions are an essential component of an actor's skill repertoire and not of themselves a negative element. That emotions arise during actor training is to be expected, and this fact underlies the subtitle of this thesis: 'Finding a

Balance'. The key factor from this study's perspective is that emotions are a very complex field requiring special attention and careful management, and it is in examination of these emotional aspects that this study is based.

This research also examines the role of teachers in the actor training environment and their capacity to cope with the many complex student issues that arise in this setting. American theatre instructor and director Susanna Burgoyne (1991) suggested that individual staff members in actor training institutions are expected to deal as best they are able with the emotional and often very deep experiences that can occur when students are encouraged to explore their identities in order to 'inhabit' roles. In part, I have taken on the challenge of testing the validity of this observation within a selected group of Australia's drama schools. Of particular interest to this research is whether Australian teachers are expected to rely on their own resources, or whether there are specific strategies in place for the management of these kinds of emotional episodes in students.

Those involved in the training of actors need to be responsible in their care of students, according to leading Australian researchers in the field Ross Prior, Ian Maxwell, Marianna Szabó and Mark Seton (2015), who maintained that actor training is an "area of the performing arts where scant regard has been given to the occupational hazards of the job other than physical workplace health and safety matters" (p. 59). They contended that comprehensive information and relevant skills need to be provided to equip drama school graduates to manage the occupational vulnerabilities and risks associated with their work as professionals. Prior et al. asked pertinent questions in regard to how young actors are trained to deal with moving in and out of potentially distressing 'worlds' when playing roles, and whether contemporary actor training adequately prepares them for these transitions. My research also asks these questions, but does so specifically within the select group of Australia's drama schools in order to explore how teachers there perceive these aspects of the training and how they manage the consequences.

Seton (2006) argued that the majority of Western acting schools are committed to enabling actors to be intentionally 'vulnerable', and asked what price the students pay for this vulnerability when they use their own experiences as tools for role playing. Cheryl McFarren (2003) similarly interrogated the wisdom of training techniques that intentionally enable students to tap into trauma as a resource for the development and enactment of characterisation. The research of Seton and McFarren complements the trajectory of this enquiry in asking challenging questions about acting students' welfare and how it is safeguarded within actor training institutions. The area of welfare is the foundation of the current interrogation, and has a natural progression to important duty of care issues for both teachers and drama schools, which become a pressing line of examination.

This PhD research investigates the issues of emotional and psychological safety within the context of a select group of Australia's leading vocational drama schools. The schools selected are:

- the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), as part of the University of New South Wales in Sydney;
- the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), as part of Edith Cowan University in Perth;
- the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), as part of the University of Melbourne in Melbourne.

The emotional and psychological safety issues which are investigated include whether staff members at these schools are trained to deal with the emotional areas of actor training, and goes on to evaluate how much responsibility the drama schools take when programming emotionally 'high-risk' courses. It outlines how actor training in these schools evolved to its current state, before examining how student actors are currently taught in the participating drama schools—especially in regard to emotional access. This study examines why instances of 'emotional overload' occur, and whether

some classes or exercises are more likely to trigger these episodes than others. It co-ordinates information generated from staff interviews about how each staff member deals with these occurrences, and considers psychologists' suggestions about how these student emotional issues might be dealt with in the drama school setting. The institutional strategies and responses to these emotional issues are also gauged.

The overall intent of this study is to provide a springboard for further discussion and possible change to ensure the psychological safety and wellbeing of students and teachers alike in drama training workplaces. In the past, there have been many instances of actors recalling their training as traumatic; one is the well-known American actor Patti LuPone, who attended one of her country's most esteemed schools, Julliard:

> School was incredibly hard. We were all psychologically ripped to shreds. We had to rebuild character, confidence, and emotional stamina. Some of us made it and some of us didn't. In my class there were attempted suicides and mental institution lockups. The pressure and the competition were intense, but I grew as an actor because I was tested, not because I was supported. . . . I spent four years there, and it was one of the most painful experiences of my life. (2010, p. 50)

While this kind of experience may be shared by some, there are undoubtedly many others for whom drama school is a very positive experience. This study focuses on particular aspects of actor training, but it is important to acknowledge that being involved in drama making can have enormous strength-building benefits for participants, including confidence and self-esteem, the ability to collaborate, communicate, empathise and appreciate other points of view, to name just a few.

Within the three Australian drama schools selected for this research, changes constantly take place and practices and policies are modified from year to year. However, while the pedagogical ground continues to shift, by and large traditional actor training practices continue within these institutions. This thesis is not a comparative study, and thus does not make comparative judgements between institutions or instructors. Its focus is the current general

practices of actor training in Australia's top drama schools, with emphasis on the emotional aspects of the courses. The study explores the kinds of emotional dilemmas that face both students and instructors in the field, examines some of the emotional management strategies that may be effective, and offers recommendations where applicable.

My own background places me in a unique position to investigate this conjunction of issues. As a trained and experienced actor, theatre director, teacher and drama therapist, I have worked in actor training environments my entire professional life. An undergraduate arts degree majoring in Theatre and a postgraduate Diploma in Education from the University of Western Australia, actor training at the London Drama Studio, a master's degree in Drama Therapy from California State University Los Angeles and a Director's Fellowship awarded by the Western Australian Arts Council have all informed my knowledge of the environments under study and provided a background with which to analyse the data collected. I have worked as an actor, director and in actor training settings in Australia, the United Kingdom, North America and Asia, where I toured, auditioned prospective students and was Head of the Acting department of Singapore's LaSalle College of the Arts. In all these environments, I have observed student actors deeply affected by their work and occasionally entering a state of emotional 'overload', leading to concerns for their psychological wellbeing.

When I began leading drama workshops, I was surprised at how quickly a simple theatre exercise could result in participants crying and becoming emotional. I came to understand the immense power of the drama medium, and determined that I wanted to be better trained in psychological areas in order to continue to teach and direct. As a result, I furthered my studies in psychology to complete a master's degree and qualify as a drama therapist. The issues around emotion and acting continued to be of extreme interest to me, and eventually propelled me to ask the research questions in this study. My personal experience has allowed me to conduct this research with more

than a theoretical interest, and my background has provided actor, teacher and therapist perspectives.

Aim, Significance and Impact

Aim

The aim of the study is to explore the role emotion plays in the actor training environments of a select group of Australia's leading drama schools. The term 'emotion' in the context of this research includes the deliberate use of emotions taught as a professional skill, as well as the expression of emotions that are often elicited as a 'by-product' of the training. The project aims to explore how prevalent the manifestation of these strong emotions is within the drama school setting and how these incidents are dealt with by the staff and the institutions. The research also aims to identify the particular stressors for student actors, how these affect their training and the implications of these effects for relevant duty of care issues. These issues are all evaluated by synthesising the available literature and examining the data provided by multiple interviews to assess the effects on both students and staff. The outcome of the analysis of this data is used to offer recommendations for improved protocols within actor training environments.

Significance

Emotions play an important role in actor training, and the delineation between the professional and personal use of a student's emotional life often becomes blurred. Actor training has the capacity to bring up deeply felt emotions, which can cause great distress for some students. If the emotional and psychological aspects of actor training are more openly acknowledged, accepted and discussed, then perhaps a preferable way of monitoring these

aspects of the training programmes may be implemented. Researching these issues, drawing attention to the potential dangers inherent in some drama school practices and suggesting alternative approaches can have enormous significance for the hundreds of students who undergo this type of professional training. Highlighting the importance of emotional safety guidelines can also significantly benefit teachers in the field, who are often similarly affected by stress. If changes and recommendations are adopted, it is possible that the entire acting profession will profit from these research findings.

Impact

The potential impact of this research may be far reaching. It is my contention that findings from this study can greatly contribute to the wellbeing of acting students undergoing training, as well as to the wellbeing of acting teachers, who may suffer from both stress and vicarious trauma. The findings may also benefit the acting profession as a whole, because changes to protocols on mental and emotional safety within the prominent drama schools have the potential to motivate and transform the entire acting profession's existing practices. By drawing attention to inconsistencies that exist in emotional stress and mental wellbeing procedures in current acting programmes, duty of care issues—which are the teachers' and institutions' responsibility—come firmly into focus. It is hoped that by highlighting this long existing situation the impetus for pedagogical change may be facilitated.

Innovation and New Knowledge

Taking the research inside the drama schools to explore the responses of teachers and graduates to what is taught and how it is taught provides a wealth of information and many interesting points of view. Opinions aired though rarely published build up a strong argument for the findings and bring an original perspective to research already undertaken in this field. The main innovation of this research lies in its situation at the so-called 'coal face' of

actor training in Australia and its involvement of the key participants in the discipline. This has brought a fresh approach to the subject that will contribute new knowledge to the area and add to the growing concern about some of the investigated practices.

Many of this study's findings may bring about change and advancement in the field. The findings include procedures to ensure that audition experiences of potential students are as anxiety free as possible, and the re-assessment of the intense conservatoire timetables with suggestions of possible alternatives. Some drama school practices are evaluated along with an analysis of factors that impact specifically on acting students and staff. The risks that some of these activities pose to participants are weighed up in the light of duty of care provisions. The recommendations that result provide provocative challenges for actor training institutions to address.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research investigation:

1. What stresses are particular to acting students in vocational actor training programmes?
2. How do Australia's leading drama schools manage the emotional aspects of actor training and what are the duty of care factors involved?
3. To what extent is there need for the management of emotional wellbeing to be an integral component of actor training pedagogy?

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 (The Training of Actors) provides background information for the research. It begins by tracing the origins of actor training, providing an historical description of its development, before summarising the content of the courses in the participating drama schools. It reviews core subjects and how aspects of the material and methods covered are capable of tapping into

students' emotions. This chapter then examines how emotions are experienced by actors in the roles they play and explores how students are taught to access these emotions as part of their skill repertoire. Various acting methods are acknowledged, including the work of Igor Stanislavsky, the 'Method' and numerous other more contemporary approaches, many of which are taught in the participating drama schools. A method of teaching people to access their emotions in a less psychologically invasive way, Alba Emoting, is explained and advocated as a possible addition to drama school curricula. Though I go into coding as a research method in Chapter 3, it is worth noting that in this first chapter I refer to specialist drama teachers (listed in Appendix C) who participated in this research via their coded identities in order for them to remain anonymous. Others not involved in the present research, but who have either published or been quoted in other research, are named.

Chapter 2 (Acting and Psychology) explores the interconnectedness of the fields of psychology and acting and how this important link manifests in actor training. It examines what research has taken place in the crossover of these two areas and where the research seems to have stopped short of fully exploring the issues. This chapter sets the scene for the entire research project by investigating how easily elements of actor training cross boundaries into emotional and psychological areas. The research is divided into three areas: the first examines how theatre has historically always been closely related to the therapeutic areas; the second reviews how psychology often uses drama as a therapeutic tool; and the third considers the close relationship between acting and psychology within the actor training arena, examining the area of emotional management.

Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) describes in detail the methodology adopted for this research, justifying the choice of a qualitative approach for this project. My professional background is outlined, and the possibility of researcher bias is explored in terms of reflexivity. The various elements of

the research design are specified and the range of research methods described, including those of historical research, interviews and narrative research. Details of the interviews and interview procedure are provided, leading on to a description of the coding process and the thematic analysis. Finally, the criteria for the choice of schools and the selected participants are described in detail.

Chapter 4 (Mental Health and Duty of Care) focuses on one of the study's core issues, that of duty of care. It summarises what is meant by duty of care in the educational environment and what risks may arise within the actor training setting. It examines how these risks are currently managed within the participating schools, and goes on to explore the kinds of mental health strategies that exist in these schools. It takes into account not only the legal occupational health and safety issues between institutions, teachers and students, but also the ethical duty of care between those in positions of power (teachers) and their students. The effectiveness of the counselling services provided is reviewed, and options that could possibly improve the systems are explored. The area of peer support is described in detail, including how drama schools can and do attempt to facilitate these schemes for their students. The institutions' student complaints and grievance policies are documented and evaluated in terms of their applicability for acting students. Finally, the open door policy, whereby teachers make themselves readily available to students, is acknowledged within the drama school setting.

Chapter 5 (Drama School Admission) describes the beginning of the actor training process—the audition by which students are admitted, or not, into drama school. As an integral component of the programmes, the numerous aspects and possible pitfalls of audition procedures are explored, including call-backs and selection criteria. The emotional aspects of this process are considered, as well as the difficulty of gauging the emotional stability of the applicants. The entry age of acting students has lowered in recent years, and

a majority of the students are now entering drama school straight from high school. This fact is evaluated in the light of the demands made on students by vocational acting courses and the many adjustment issues that these young acting students have to face, including feeling isolated from their support systems.

Chapter 6 (Acting Course Practices) describes some of the features of conservatoire training that can exacerbate the emotional and psychological wellbeing issues of its students. It examines a variety of drama school practices that currently occur, and how these affect students and staff, always keeping in mind the emotional focus of the research. The intense timetabling in the conservatoire environment is considered, including the range of student issues that can result from an all-day, every-day schedule. These include exhaustion, stress and the use of medication and drugs. Assessment of student work is another significant area of concern, and is reviewed along with the crucial topics of feedback, favouritism and criticism.

Chapter 7 (Student Issues) presents many significant acting student concerns which were revealed in the research and which impact on their training. These include confidentiality of information, body image, sexual orientation, and the shifts in learning habits brought about by generational change. These are all explored within the drama school context.

Chapter 8 (Areas of Emotional Vulnerability) examines particular areas of emotional susceptibility within the actor training environment. The risks involved in the playing of roles and the over-identification with characters are investigated, all within the context of what currently occurs in the participating drama schools. This involves the issue of 'closure'—that is, concluding classes, rehearsals and performances in such a way that participants are not left emotionally exposed. Consideration is given to the likelihood that these current practices may need re-examination.

Chapter 9 (Acting Teachers) surveys the vital area of teachers in the actor training setting. It examines the qualifications and training of those working in drama schools and confirms that, following the strong theatrical tradition of apprenticeship, it is actors who make up the majority of the acting teaching staff. The study inquires into what these staff teach and how they teach it, and analyses the premise that they tend to teach what they have been taught. The particular requirements of educators in this field are noted and the field of acting training pedagogy explored. The chapter goes on to examine the schools' dependence on large numbers of part-time and sessional freelance staff, and how this reliance affects courses and students. The significant pastoral care responsibilities of teachers in the actor training environment are acknowledged, along with issues surrounding professional boundaries. In addition, this chapter raises the phenomenon of the visiting 'guru teacher' workshops that are currently widespread in Australia and the potential impact of these on student actors and their training experience. Finally, the welfare of the teachers themselves is appraised and options are examined that may promote their future wellbeing.

The Conclusion brings together the findings in regard to each of the research questions within the context of the data provided. It discusses the implications of these findings, especially as they apply to any practical applications. The limitations of the research are discussed, along with general conclusions based upon analysis of the data collected, assessed and analysed over the course of the study.

CHAPTER 1: THE TRAINING OF ACTORS

1.1 Origins of Actor Training

This project is focused on the Australian conservatoire model of actor training, which predominantly borrows from the European 'Western' theatre tradition. This chapter examines how actor training has evolved over time, with particular emphasis on the historical context of today's practices. There is a focus on emotions and the role that learning to access a range of emotions—accurately, identifiably, deeply and quickly—plays in providing student actors with the skills necessary for their profession. Attention is given to the different acting methods used in the selected drama schools in order to set the scene for an exploration of teachers and teaching methods, and of student experiences and their wellbeing. This chapter concludes with an introduction to Alba Emoting, considered by its originator (Bloch, 1993) to be a less psychologically invasive method of accessing the emotions than most other acting techniques.

1.1.1 Historical Context

There has been a long tradition of actor apprenticeship in the culture of Western theatre by which students learn from their more experienced colleagues. This tradition has remained strong and been passed on through the generations (Hodge, 2000). Both in early Greek theatre, dominated by theatrical families of wealth and position, and in ancient Roman times, where actors were usually slaves of low status (Csapo, 2010), actor training was firmly rooted in the historical practices of apprenticeship and *learning by doing* (Prior, 2012). Prior (2012) suggested that it was likely that even Greek drama choruses were trained, particularly in the area of voice control. Although institutionalised actor training is largely a twentieth century phenomenon, John Harrop (1992) argued that its roots are as old as acting itself, dating from the beginning of the fifth century BC.

The apprenticeship system of actor training continued to flourish until the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when acting became "more professionalized" (Meyer-Dinkgrafe, 2001, p. 15), though by William Shakespeare's time apprenticeships had moved away from familial domination and towards a more professional exchange of knowledge and experience (Nicoll, 1976). However, apprenticeship remained the dominant method through which actors learned their trade until the nineteenth century, when Russian Konstantin Stanislavsky (1936/1980) became the first actor/director to investigate fully the process of acting and the creation of character and to publish his findings (Hodge, 2000). Stanislavsky devised a complete system of training so that tuition in the craft of acting became more formalised, and as a result "an explosion of interest in the power and potential of actor training took hold" (Hodge, 2000, p. 1). As a consequence, Western theatre practitioners began searching for different approaches and methods that could offer a range of techniques to advance the craft of acting. These are explored later in the chapter.

In Australia

Australian actor training has close historical links with training in the UK and the USA (Prior, 2012), although Australian drama schools do not have the same long history as their northern hemisphere counterparts. In the absence of drama schools, the apprenticeship tradition was adopted by young would-be actors who "learnt their craft by imitating" visiting English professional actors (Parsons, 1995, p. 18). Some older actors coached privately, but when American actor Hayes Gordon commenced teaching in Australia it led to the establishment of the Ensemble Theatre in 1958 and later a school, the Ensemble Studios (Prior, 2012).

Of the participating schools in this study, NIDA was first established as a private drama school in Sydney in 1958. NIDA has always been associated with one of its founding sponsors, the University of New South Wales, but

remains relatively independent (Hay & Dixon, 2015). The School of Drama was added to the already established VCA in Melbourne in 1975, and became a faculty of the University of Melbourne in 2007 (Murphet, 2011). In Perth, WAAPA was established under the auspices of the Western Australian College of Advanced Education in 1979, becoming an administrative division of the newly created Edith Cowan University in 1991 (Hay & Dixon, 2015). There are many other institutions in Australia that offer a bachelor-level degree in acting, theatre or performance studies, as well as numerous private drama schools. However, to delimit the research, it is the three nominated conservatoire actor training programmes that feature significantly in this study.

Is Actor Training Necessary?

Prior (2004), in his study of Australian and UK drama school practice, asked whether acting can really be taught, or whether natural talent replaces the need for formal drama training. He deduced that 'good' actors have 'talent' from the outset, even before they embark on formal training, but that most research on the subject advocates for the necessity of some form of training, while acknowledging that there are actors who have been successful without it. Renowned English actor Derek Jacobi (2013), for example, chose to go straight from Cambridge University into the profession, commenting that "drama school can teach you what your good points and bad points are, what you need to forget, and what you need to bone up on, but I'm not convinced it can teach you how to act; you can either act or not" (p. 111). Prior (2012), however, ultimately contended that talent appears to be the essential prerequisite for actor training.

Similarly, according to voice exponent Nigel Rideout, who taught extensively in both UK and Australian drama schools, "talent is an elusive quality that cannot be taught or learned. It seems to exist separately from skill, technique and knowledge" (1995, p. 13). He asserted that "the acquiring of skills is

largely the responsibility of the teacher, but the ability to act must be found within the student him or herself" (Rideout, 1995, p. 6). Regardless of talent or training, Andrea Moor (2013), in her study into contemporary actor training in Australia, resolved that a course that is not providing intense skills training to complement the acting methodology is short-changing the students on their experience and sending them into the profession under-trained.

Exploring the nature of acting talent, Seton (2007a) observed that, in drama school auditions, "both actors and any 'audiences', including institutional assessors, are 'invested' in and pre-'disposed' towards particular, habitual judgements of what constitutes 'good' acting" (p. 7). He suggested that, for teachers and potential students, the 'intentional desire' is to do whatever it takes to form or be formed towards particular practices, and that it is these specific practices that are recognised and experienced "as affective—that is, emotive and professional acting. I believe this is what actors and their 'audiences' seem to experience as 'it', 'talent', the 'x' factor" (p. 8). As explored in the chapter on auditions (Chapter 5), identifying this 'talent' is not always an easy task, which can result in a cohort of acting students often having a wide range of abilities. Regardless of the somewhat undefinable quality of 'talent', acting and casting agents tend to regard actor training as offering a valuable advantage in seeking employment opportunities.

1.2 Actor Training Courses

According to Barry O'Connor (2001), who mapped the actor training landscape in Australia, there are two identifiable streams in which training takes place: the private sector and the public sector. He argued that the private sector schools reflect single ideologies, while public sector schools are more eclectic and generalist in their programmes. In his view, the public sector is three-tiered: (i) conservatories; (ii) university drama departments; and (iii) technical colleges.

The participating institutions in this research, NIDA, WAAPA and VCA, all fall into the first category, that of conservatories. The programmes of these three schools have always been patterned on the conservatoire model of education, offering concentrated courses immersing the students in their chosen field of study. Duffy (2013) described conservatoires as "specialist institutions with a pedagogy that focuses sharply on the artistic, technical, professional and intellectual development of the individual student through intensive teaching in their single discipline" (p. 174). NIDA, WAAPA and VCA's three-year full-time training programmes all award a bachelor's degree on completion. NIDA calls this degree a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting), WAAPA a Bachelor of Arts (Acting) and the VCA a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre Practice).

These three drama schools view their courses as specialised, vocational training providing an "intense immersion in the art of acting in order for the graduate's skill-base to be technically ready to enter the professions" (Prior, 2004, p. 56). In contrast, most university theatre and performance studies courses provide grounding in subjects such as theatre history, performance theory, critical evaluation and research skills, as well as practical components where the focus tends to be more on independent learning than on in-depth skills geared towards the actor's craft.

NIDA, WAAPA and VCA currently describe their acting courses on their 2015 websites as follows.

NIDA

> The three-year full-time Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) is designed to provide students with skills and knowledge to work across theatre, film and television. In addition to learning voice, movement and music skills, students are introduced to a variety of acting methods and encouraged to develop their own individual approach. (NIDA, 2015b)

WAAPA

> Studying acting at WAAPA is an inspiring and all-consuming experience. The Acting course provides graduates with the skills and experience required to engage in professional theatre practice and contemporary screen work. The program trains students as a theatre ensemble. The ensemble develops performance skills in acting, voice and movement by exploring a wide range of works and performance styles, as well as through improvisation and devising original works. (WAAPA, 2015)

VCA

> Theatre Practice is an intensive actor training program where you will develop into an autonomous artist. . . . Collaborative practice is . . . integral to our training. In the first year you integrate imagination, voice and body skills and apply these in a range of performance contexts. The second year . . . you learn to work within a production process from conception through to rehearsal and performance. In the final year of the program you have developed your methodology as a working actor and employ it in multiple productions. (VCA, 2015a)

Each of these schools attempts to define itself slightly differently from the others. NIDA highlights its longevity and stellar former students, stating that its sought-after graduates are working all over the world. Its description of its course tends to suggest a practical 'toolkit' approach in providing its graduates with the skills they need to succeed (NIDA, 2015b). WAAPA tends to emphasise its ensemble approach, affirming that the programme "trains students as a theatre ensemble", suggesting complete immersion in the work (WAAPA, 2015, para. 1). The VCA has always prided itself on training independent artists capable of devising their own work; on this basis, it mentions consolidating a working methodology as an autonomous actor, suggesting an emphasis on theatre making (VCA, 2015a). In her comparative study of the schools, Moor (2013) maintained that one of NIDA's strengths has been its textual and vocal rigour; in contrast, WAAPA has achieved the most consistent results in terms of preparing actors for work in the different media, and only at the VCA has the process of education been a core tenet of the overriding course structure. While it is interesting to note these

observed differences, they do not affect or alter this study's focus of student wellbeing.

1.2.1 Course Content

Actor training programmes include the core subjects of voice, movement and acting techniques, with rehearsals and performances integral to the courses. The content and delivery vary from one institution to another. For example, Moor (2013) revealed that, although skills training was extensive at all three schools, skills classes at NIDA were reduced in third year and during rehearsal periods; WAAPA's students spent the most number of hours in skills classes, and still performed in a total of ten plays plus two major film projects over the three years; while the VCA clearly lead the way in self-devised and experimental theatre forms. The balance between classes, rehearsals and performances tends to vary constantly within these schools.

The acting courses include a range of subjects that differ from year to year and from school to school, and comprise a wide variety of areas from improvisation, singing, on-stage combat and circus skills to mime, tai chi and Alexander Technique. For example, NIDA informs its acting students that they can be exposed to a variety of physical theatre techniques such as biomechanics, contemporary dance, advanced acrobatics, Suzuki and Butoh (NIDA, 2015b). At WAAPA, emphasis may be on improvisation and impulse work (WAAPA, 2015), while at VCA elementary skills are taught in the use of such theatre elements as light, sound, costume, objects and digital technology (VCA, 2015a). It is anticipated that the skills learned in classes are put into practice in rehearsals and increasingly integrated into the theatre performances and short films produced by the students.

Acting, voice, movement, rehearsal and performance are core fields of study in Western actor training programmes. From the perspective of this study's focus on student emotional wellbeing, each of these areas has the potential to tap deeply into actors' emotions or trigger unexpected emotional release. It

is therefore important to give a brief overview of each aspect of the course to assess how emotions can arise in these disciplines, and how they may be resolved.

1.2.1.1 Acting

Acting classes generally comprise a variety of subjects, including basic theatre craft, character work, scene study, rehearsal etiquette, personalisation techniques and script analysis, as well as diverse approaches such as given circumstances, intentions, breaking dialogue into beats, goal setting and so on. Some of these areas are information-driven, while others include physical and emotional involvement. Many of the acting methods used in these drama schools are explored in more detail in Section 1.4 (Acting Methods). NIDA currently calls its acting classes 'Acting Studio' (NIDA, 2015b); WAAPA has several titles, including 'Introduction to Acting', 'The Actor in Ensemble' and 'The Professional Actor' (WAAPA, 2015); and VCA currently calls its acting subjects 'Acting' and 'Performance Making' (VCA, 2015a). Though their descriptions differ widely, the schools are all focused on providing their students with a range of acting skills and a broad base of theatre knowledge and awareness.

1.2.1.2 Voice

Voice is a specialised area of actor training that, like any dimension of the 'personal self', can readily expose vulnerabilities and emotions. Leading voice exponents Cecily Berry (2000), Kristin Linklater (2006) and Patsy Rodenburg (1997) all emphasised that voice is a core element of who we are, with Berry (2000) declaring that speaking is actually an expression of our inner life. They (Berry, 2000; Linklater, 2006; Rodenburg, 1997) all agree that part of their job as voice teachers is to enable the actor's voice to reflect truthful, emotional states.

1.2.1.3 Movement

A broad range of movement techniques is utilised in actor training. These physical components may include Vsevolod Meyerhold's (1969) system of biomechanics, Rudolf Laban's (1980) mode of expression through movement, Frederick Alexander's (1990) conscious movement techniques and the comprehensive somatic educational system of Moshe Feldenkrais (1990). These movement practices allow opportunities to experience different ways of 'being' and experiencing the body, as well as revealing long-held body patterns. According to Alexander Technique teacher Adam Bailey (n.d.), the release of these habitual body patterns can be accompanied by a release of unconscious material and emotional experiences stored in the body. Bailey acknowledged that people may experience deep emotions and memories from the past when they first commence a movement technique, and need a safe, grounded means of dealing with this material as it emerges, particularly if the movement evokes a trauma. Siobhan Fink (1990) similarly recognised that "physical expression through movement facilitates the evocation of unconscious memories, fantasies, and primitive ways of coping with traumatic experiences" (p. 18), suggesting that considerable attention needs to be paid to participants' wellbeing in any movement class.

1.2.1.4 Rehearsal

Rehearsals are where the skills being learned in classes are ideally brought together and tested in an environment that simulates a professional rehearsal room. Students are expected to abide by the many protocols that operate in rehearsals, such as strict start times and the understanding of stage management responsibilities (WAAPA Acting Standard Theatre Practice, 2014, Appendix 4, unpublished course material). It is also expected that students will contribute to discussions of the play and of their characters, and bring ideas, creativity and ability to their work 'on the floor'. WAAPA students are told that they are expected to engage with the research and contribute to

the development of the work in rehearsal and performance with precision and astute attention to detail so that their work enhances the entire production (WAAPA, 2015). When preparing for performances, students learn how to 'inhabit' roles and put into use their developing skills. It is often a time when they can feel judged and therefore exposed and vulnerable (Teacher O, interview, 10 October, 2012).

1.2.1.5 Performance

Performing in productions with the support of technical students and in front of audiences is an integral component of the actor's learning process. According to actor/researcher Moor (2013), a core belief in the training at WAAPA is that significant learning takes place in the process of productions. Seasons of up to a week are the usual running time for student productions, and sometimes they are performed in external venues or taken on short tours. It is in the performance of roles in student productions where 'role hangover' (Geer, 1993) is most likely to occur; this is explored in depth in Chapter 8. This phenomenon of 'role blurring' occurs when actors—particularly inexperienced actors—'carry over' their character's traits outside the theatre, which can negatively affect their personal lives (Burgoyne, 1991).

1.3 Acting and Emotions

So how do actors learn to access and use the range of emotions necessary to portray the characters they represent? If accessing myriad emotional states is integral to actor training, should the actor actually feel the emotions of their characters, or does this experience potentially reinforce or even perpetuate traumatic experiences? These questions continue to be at the centre of a long-standing debate into acting and actor training that can be traced back to French philosopher Denis Diderot's (1883) seminal essay, *The Paradox of the Actor*, considered the first analysis of the actor's process. In simple terms, Diderot maintained that an actor on stage exhibits a paradox because he can mechanically reproduce emotions in performance without

actually feeling them, and that the mind controls what is being portrayed by the body. This point of view was aligned with the Cartesian dualism dominating the Western thought of the time, and Diderot's application of this dualism to acting—seeing the mind and body in perpetual binary opposition—laid the groundwork for theories of acting and performance for the next two centuries (Hornby, 1992). Hornby (1992) argued that this dualistic model was based on logical deduction rather than actual experience, and that "to describe an actor as mechanical today would be derogatory" (p. 102). Nevertheless Michael Chekov (1953) was still insisting on the importance of what he called the actor's 'divided consciousness' well into the 20th century, maintaining it was crucial to the actor's creative process. Brecht (1972) also regarded dual consciousness for the actor as essential, and in fact wanted dual consciousness for his audiences as well. Meyerhold(1969), with his acting technique of biomechanics, where actors create characters by first employing external movements, believed that actors should learn to 'present' their characters without trying to 'become' them. Actor/teacher Terence Crawford (2011) expresses a contemporary perspective with his view that "dual consciousness onstage allows us to participate in the fiction while observing ourselves participating" (p. 126)

Phillip Zarrilli (1995) determined that in the twentieth century, the psychological realism associated with Lee Strasberg-based 'method acting'—stemming from interpretations of Stanislavsky's methods—meant that an increasing emphasis was placed on the need for the actor to actually feel emotions, rather than merely simulate them, as Diderot had suggested. Zarrilli argued that "What those emotions actually are is a matter of considerable debate: the question being the difference between 'real' (everyday) and 'imaginary' (theatrical) emotions" (p. 223). Hornby (1992) agreed that a major thrust of twentieth century acting philosophy had been to reject the mind–body polarity based on the Cartesian setting of mind and body as equal and opposite. Similarly, Meyer-Dinkgrafe (2001) stated that it

was widely acknowledged that "the twentieth century placed major emphasis on the actor's ability and methods of using emotions on stage to affect an audience" (p. 38). Internationally renowned director Peter Brook (1993) offered an even more complex view: he suggested that theatre is one of the most difficult arts because three connections must be accomplished simultaneously and in perfect harmony. These three connections are that between the actor and his inner life, that between the actor and his partners (co-actors) and that between the actor and his audience. According to Brook, this "means being in two worlds at the same time" (p. 32). Brook believed that actors are permanently forced to struggle to discover and maintain this triple relationship—to oneself, to the other and to the audience—but that their major obligation is to hold a balance between external behaviour and their most private impulses. Within the twentieth century Western theatre context of narrative-based theatre, Brook considered that the professional actor's unique ability rests with his capacity to capture "emotional states which belong not to him but to his character, without any visible contrivance or artificiality" (p. 71).

In basic terms, actors often describe their way of working as either 'inside–out', in which they first focus on inner experiences and emotions that allow them to lead the way into action, or as 'outside–in', in which the initial concentration is on externals, such as ways of speaking or moving. William J. Brown (2006) observed that both approaches sometimes end up in the same place, because stimulating the body tends to produce the targeted emotions; and that even though the 'inside–out' method is most prevalent in Western actor training models, it often leads to "powerful emotional experiences" (p. 2).

Elly Konijn (2000) identified three different models of the actor's relationship to the targeted emotions: 'involvement', 'detachment' and 'self-expression', which she associated with the acting methods of Stanislavsky (1949/1983), Brecht (1972) and Grotowski (1969) respectively. Konijn asserted that, even

though private and personal emotions not related to the character or craft of acting are "actually none of our business" (p. 144), they are in fact experienced by actors during performances. Similarly, Hornby (1992) understood that actors do not 'compartmentalise'—they do not think or feel and then act, but rather think, feel and act all at once, and with a growing degree of skill as the role develops.

Seton (2008) weighed into this perennial discussion by making the vital point that there is a prevailing notion that a conscious recognition of something as fiction means that the person can choose to remain unaffected by it. Seton maintained that it is assumed by many in theatre that by mental choice, even as actors embody and enact performances, they can 'distance' themselves from the process. Seton argued, in contrast, that "this, I believe, is a deluded attempt to re-impose a dualistic split between a purportedly rational mind and an irrational, impassioned body" (p. 3). Seton wrote that it has become evident over the centuries and across cultures that performed 'fictions' can and do have powerful, life-changing and sometimes society-changing consequences. He stressed that, while these performances may be fictions according to reason, our embodied engagement with them means that a story well told will impact us at an embodied, empathic level, whether we think of it as fiction or not.

While this mind–body dynamic continues to be debated within acting and actor training circles, it would appear from this research that the mind–body polarity has virtually given way to an acknowledgement of the integrated nature of the physical, mental and emotional aspects of our being. This shift is supported by Brown (2006), who argued that even though Diderot (1883) stated that the greatest actors were those who felt nothing at all while performing, the predominant view among contemporary actors is otherwise.

1.4 Acting Methods

According to Hodge (2000), the search for methodologies of Western actor training in the twentieth century precipitates debate around two key questions. First, could a single, universal system be achieved that could contain a complete method of actor training? Second, could the fundamental techniques of this one system be applicable in the creation of any form of theatre? The answers to these questions are still being debated, but based on the assumption that actor training is built upon current interpretations of past practices, Prior (2004) suggested that there are two basic approaches to actor training: systematic and eclectic. While the systematic approach focuses on one technique, all three drama schools in this study describe their approach as 'eclectic', because they introduce their students to a range of acting methodologies and ideologies in the belief that the students themselves will ultimately find a particular approach or combination of approaches that best suits them.

The acting teachers interviewed in this study all acknowledged that Russian director Stanislavsky's approach was the foundation of their work. Australian-based actor/teacher Crawford (2011) agreed, stating that "though some people wish it was not so, we are still in Stanislavski's shadow—for better or for worse—and it's foolish to pretend otherwise" (p. 5). American researcher McFarren (2003) concurred that Stanislavsky's system continues to dominate American actor training, especially at the undergraduate level. She made the point that even though Stanislavsky's ideas continued to constantly evolve in his lifetime, many teachers still replicate techniques from which Stanislavsky himself moved away. This was most famously demonstrated by Lee Strasberg's 'the Method' approach, which is still widely used in America today (McFarren, 2003). Controversially, the Method approach utilises emotional recall exercises that "[ask] actors to recall the sensory attributes of vivid, emotion-laden experiences from their real lives in order to create 'believable' moments on stage" (McFarren, 2003, p. iii). Stanislavsky was the

first in the Western world to really engage with the psychophysical aspects of acting and actor training (Hodge, 2000). These psychophysical aspects were similarly recognised by director Charles Marowitz (2007) when he stated that current understandings of the psychology of acting stem in large part from Stanislavsky, and that much of the latter's work still applies in acting techniques today. As the acting teachers interviewed in this study acknowledged that Stanislavsky underpinned their teaching, it is essential that some understanding of his approach is reviewed, although, as Moor (2013) observed, there have been so many interpretations of his work that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what can be attributed to him.

1.4.1 Stanislavsky

Although Diderot (1883) had documented a dualistic model of the inner (mind) controlling the outer (body) expression of feeling, it was Stanislavsky's incorporation of the psychological into acting methods that led to the emergence of a philosophy and vocabulary around the relationship of the psychology of self (i.e. of the actor) to the representation of character. Fink (1990) argued that Stanislavsky's "physical-affective approaches to psychotherapy and acting both attempt to strip away layers of defence, and as such seek an ultimate catharsis of confrontation with the self" (p. 15). One aspect of Stanislavsky's (1936/1980) training method—his 'psycho-technique'—encouraged actors to involve their own personal feelings and experiences in the creation of roles. He introduced improvisational techniques to assist his actors to find an 'inner acting' method—a 'conscious' means of accessing the 'subconscious'—thereby heightening the personal involvement of the actors in their performances.

By the time Stanislavsky was forming his views on acting in the first decade of the twentieth century, associationist psychology had become established: "one of the main subjects of the psychological research was the *unconscious*" (Whyman, 2008, p. 4). At the same time that emotions and the

subconscious were being investigated by Sigmund Freud, Stanislavsky was experimenting with his actor training methods and focusing on the idea of the inseparability of the mind and body, including how human behaviour was motivated by suppressed memories and unconscious drives (Benedetti, 1976; Freed, 1964; Whyman, 2008). As a consequence, the unconscious as a source of motivation and emotional power was systematically explored by actors and analysts alike. Stanislavsky was responding to the "urge in man to examine the workings of the mind, and like the work of all artists of his period, his work shows an enormous influence of the rise of the science of psychology" (Benedetti, 1976, p. 42).

Importantly, Stanislavsky continued to evolve in his understanding of actor training, and later demonstrated a shift in the development of his ideology from an emphasis on the psychology of the actor towards an emphasis on the actor's body (Meyer-Dinkgrafe, 2001). He came to understand that emotion could not exist without a physical consequence, stating that "in every action there is something psychological and in the psychological, something physical" (Stanislavsky, 1950/1988, p. 75). He also came to understand that focusing directly on feelings was not always a constructive means of using emotion, and that:

> An actor always remains himself whatever his real or imaginary experiences may be. He must, therefore, never lose sight of himself on stage . . . the moment an actor loses sight of himself on stage, his ability to enter into the feelings of his character goes overboard and overacting begins. (Stanislavsky, 1950/1988, p. 54)

Concluding that actors should not 'lose' themselves in their emotions on stage led Stanislavsky to what he considered a superior approach, which was for actors to direct their attention towards specific actions, from which the appropriate emotions would follow.

Former student of Stanislavsky and highly regarded teacher Michael Chekhov (1953) suggested that an actor must undergo an "extreme sensitivity of body to the psychological creative impulses" (p. 2), which could

not be achieved by physical exercises alone, but must also involve the psychological aspects. Despite this emphasis on psychology, Chekhov came out strongly against Stanislavsky's use of personal experience and emotion, arguing that this, in effect, bound the actor to the habits of the everyday self, which was not the way to liberate the actor's creativity (Chamberlain, 2000). Chekhov also argued that the emphasis should be on the character's feelings, not the actor's feelings, and that this "would enable the actor to transform into the character rather than reducing character to the personality of the actor" (Chamberlain, 2000, p. 81). Marowitz (2007) summarised the dilemma by contending that revising or discarding certain basic Stanislavsky precepts just acknowledged the 'Father of Psychological Realism's' own belief that in art the only constant is change.

Sharon Carnicke(2009) brings further insight to Stanislavsky's methods, maintaining that his probing of the actor's dual-consciousness during creativity puts the lie to a commonly held assumption that Stanislavskian actors lose themselves in their roles. Using the 1990's discovery of mirror neurons which activate in the brain when a person watches another perform an action, Carnicke asserts that it reinforces Stanislavsky's insight that empathy can be a more powerful prompt to creativity than personal emotion and "gives credence to his intuition that observing others is as good as observing oneself". (p.3)

Stanislavsky's system has been adopted and taught worldwide, transformed into a variety of different methods and approaches—and often misinterpreted or misunderstood. Yet Stanislavsky's profound influence remains the basis of the work of virtually every Western drama programme in the world.

1.4.2 'The Method'

'The Method' is an abbreviation of Stanislavsky's system called the Method of Physical Action, but represents a distinct tradition developed on the basis of Stanislavsky's original ideas. Evolving in the US, the Method became one

of the most popular and controversial approaches to acting and influenced generations of high-profile actors. Whereas Stanislavsky suggested in his Method of Physical Action system that there needs to be a conscious and subconscious relationship to acting, beginning with a physical action that triggers an emotional response, the Method placed an emphasis on 'truthful behaviour', where feelings must never be 'indicated' (Krasner, 2000). In Method acting, actors work from their passions and emotions; this is often referred to as working from the 'inside out'. For Method actors, the experience on the stage must be real and not suggested by external imitation, according to Krasner (2000), who considered that the purpose of the Method's most controversial exercise—affective memory—was to release emotions on stage by initially recalling emotions from the past that may be embedded in one's mind or body.

The Method system of acting was developed principally by teacher Lee Strasberg (1990), along with other high-profile teachers in what became known as 'the Group' at the now famous Actor's Studio in New York. One of the Method's top acting coaches, Stella Adler (2000), clarified after a meeting with Stanislavsky that he had abandoned the emotional (affective) memory exercise. As a consequence, she and colleague Robert Lewis revised their approach and concluded that the best source of true and appropriate feelings for actors is the lines and situations of the play. Lewis (1980) wrote, "If the actual stuff of the play arouses this natural feeling in the actor, he's home free. It means that he already has in his 'storehouse of feelings' some emotional references that automatically relate to the play" (p. 123). These charismatic acting teachers, Adler and Lewis, along with others including Strasberg, Uta Hagen and Sanford Meisner, dominated the New York theatre scene in the second half of the twentieth century; their influence is still felt today in the use of many of their exercises and approaches (Hornby, 1992).

However, the potential for actors and acting students to lose emotional control in exercises like the Method's affective memory can be very high,

according to theatre practitioner and scholar Ursula Neuerburg-Denzer (2008). Neuerburg-Denzer also argued that "this process is hotly debated for its effectiveness and not many acting teachers are willing to explore the technique in the undergraduate classroom for fear of psychological risks to the students" (p. 3). She stated that the idea that acting was about 'becoming' someone else was a legacy of the post-Method approach and a misunderstanding of the Stanislavsky system. Neuerburg-Denzer considered that the system itself was not really clear on how to train for an emotionally truthful performance, and that the techniques laid out in Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares* (1936/1980) were either based on recalling personal memories, on imagination or on imitation—but exactly how to shape or treat the remembered, imagined or imitated emotion was not discussed.

1.4.3 Other Methodologies

Since Stanislavsky first formalised actor training in Western theatre, numerous alternative approaches to acting and actor training have come into prominence. There is now an extensive range of methods and systems available to actors with varied manifestos, influences and outcomes. For example, German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht (1972) demanded a degree of emotional detachment from his actors, predominantly to highlight the socio-political and ideological origins of the writing. Polish director Jerzy Grotowski (1969) attempted to eliminate the obstacles between actors' 'pure impulses' and their 'observable expressions', maintaining that only by being vulnerable and eliminating the masks or 'blocks' could an actor experience truth. Raymonde Temkine (1972) described Grotowski's technique as every actor being "asked to plunge into his most subjective associations and memories, to admit and feel the pain of his most intense and unfulfilled needs" (p. 103).

While the contemporary actor training environment may have its foundations in the Stanislavsky approach, this PhD research indicates that teachers in the

participating drama schools experiment with many different acting methods in the course of their students' three-year training. Crawford (2011) suggested that a successful acting process would always be eclectic to some degree, "because attempting to be rigid, insular and singular goes against the grain of art" (p. 124). Crawford asserted that there is an implication that if a student attends NIDA, WAAPA, VCA or ACArts (Adelaide College of the Arts, where he is Head of Acting), that student will leave fully equipped to work in any corner of the industry, but "the fact is that no single method can equip you for that" (p. 8). Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) advised that her favoured method was currently the 'target' approach devised by respected UK director Declan Donnellan (2005). Donnellan extended Stanislavsky's ideas of character objectives by asking actors to address their actions to an external 'target'—that is, something outside of themselves. Donnellan resisted encouraging actors to look inside themselves for acting solutions, instead suggesting that actors' targets can be real or imaginary, concrete or abstract, but always there and always changing. Instead of trying to 'be' a character, Donnellan suggested experiencing a character's situation and subsequent reactions. The techniques of another well-known UK director, Mike Leigh (2008), were used extensively by Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012) who claimed that even though Leigh required in-depth study of the characters in his films and plays, his clarity on the principle of keeping the character and the actor separate, using such devices as talking about the former in the third person, was helpful in preventing student actors from emotionally over-identifying with their roles.

While US playwright and director David Mamet (1997) has always been outspoken about his distrust of psychologically-based work, he has not been adverse to 'personalisation' by having an actor relate to the reality of playing the action of a scene. On the other end of the spectrum, many contemporary exponents have no reservations at all about delving into the psychology of the actor. These include influential contemporary American acting teacher

Eric Morris (1988), whose system is taught at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Morris built his approach on a Stanislavsky-based exploration of the conscious and unconscious: "since the unconscious is where the greatest part of all talent lives, the process of reaching and communicating with it is totally explored through techniques that create a liaison between consciousness and the unconscious" (1988, p. 15). Morris maintained that many of his techniques work solely to connect the conscious with the unconscious in getting actors to recall emotional experiences, and that the real bonus of Stanislavsky's affective memory exercise is that it pries open the steel doors to the unconscious. In his own words, the exercise "is primarily used as a tool to re-create experiences from your past so that you can achieve the emotional results you need for the scene you are attempting to fulfil" (p. 78). Among Morris's numerous exercises, which he claimed help actors remove obstacles that stand in the way of their deep feelings, are those entitled 'Primal Moan' and 'Primitive Abandonment'.

> The work is clearly within the Stanislavskian tradition, but departs from it by insisting on emotional realism rather than emotional illusionism on self as focus rather than character. There is less of Stanislavski and more of Lee Strasberg in the Morris system. (O'Connor, 2001, p. 53)

One Australian teacher with experience of Morris's teaching methods is Dianne Eden, Head of Acting at QUT. Eden stated that she did not enjoy "having the American guru teacher make (her) cry" when she studied with Morris, but that the method seemed to work well for her students (Moor, 2013, p. 56). Having attended an Eric Morris workshop in Los Angeles many years ago, I declare some personal bias about his work, because I was dismayed at the seemingly flagrant use of participants' emotions in what appeared to me an exposed and unsupportive environment. Leonard Meenach, former head lecturer in acting at QUT, teaches the Morris technique, aiming for his students to "be secure in expressing the whole gamut of emotions with actors working on their anger, vulnerability and sexuality" (Moor, 2013, p. 55). He believes that this approach channels the

actor's 'demons'—the insecurities, anxieties and self-esteem fears that get in the way of performances—and that although it involves some 'emotional recall', it is more about personalising the character as closely as possible.

Another well-known US acting teacher, Ivana Chubbuck, visits Australia regularly to give workshops. Chubbuck (2004) contended that actors need to discover and understand their personal pain as an inherent part of the acting process. She proposed that her 'Chubbuck technique' teaches students how to "use your traumas, emotional pains, obsessions, travesties, needs, desires and dreams to fuel and drive your character's achievement of a goal" (2004, p. 1). The subtitle of her book *The Power of the Actor* is 'The 12-Step Acting Technique', which would appear to reinforce the 'acting as therapy' approach to her method. Chubbuck is an extremely popular acting teacher who attracts thousands of beginner, experienced and well-known actors worldwide.

As a result of his project to map trends in actor training, O'Connor (2001) advocated techniques that tend to "place the actor in charge of the creative process" (p. 59), and says that three of the processes taught in Australia— Lindy Davies' (1996) Impulse work, the Yat Malgram technique (Hayes, 2008) and the Eric Morris (1988) practice—"afford the actor the means to map his or her own performance . . . in an industry which is still dominated by the figure of the director, whether in theatre or film" (p. 59). While I might dispute that these methods do in fact place the actor 'in charge', it remains clear from this brief overview of acting methods that there are vast numbers and varieties of distinct methodologies that investigate the nature of acting and provide a diversity of skills to draw from.

While this study reveals that a wide variety of methods are used across the participating drama schools, the schools are, for the most part, dependent on the choices made by the current acting teachers. In interviews with the teachers, all acknowledged that they introduced their students to a range of acting methods—their choices seemingly dependent on which methods they

were familiar with or attracted to. In my early years as an acting teacher at one of the schools in this study, the Head of Acting wanted to standardise how the subject was taught and asked all the acting teachers to work from Robert Benedetti's book, *The Actor at Work* (2005). The experiment did not seem to work, primarily because teachers felt restrained being restricted to one approach—and personally I found that my teaching became formulaic and inhibited in the attempt to adhere to a fixed system. However, whichever acting method is used, the important factor from the perspective of this research is that when emotions are brought to the surface, in particular cases of extreme emotions, there is a risk to the wellbeing of the student actors. This being the case, where does the responsibility lie in the safeguarding of their wellbeing?

1.4.4 Alba Emoting

One of the questions I asked in my interviews was about an acting method called Alba Emoting. It is a technique that does not involve tapping into actors' pasts, and therefore may serve as some kind of emotional 'protection' for students studying acting. Geer (1993) argued that, in debating the ethics of training and directing, a higher value will need to be placed on training techniques such as Alba Emoting that are less psychologically invasive.

Alba Emoting is barely known in Australia, and is not used at all in the participating acting schools. Alba Emoting represents an alternative method to psychological techniques, including Stanislavsky's, for releasing, maintaining, and controlling emotional states on stage (Townsend, 2009). It was developed by neuroscientist Susana Bloch (1993), who asserted that the system provides actors with technical control of the expressive components of emotion, while allowing them to experience as much of the feeling component as they wish. Its goal is to project the emotion while not necessarily creating the psychological experience of the emotion itself, according to Bloch (1993), who regards re-creating emotions as one of the

fundamental challenges of an actor's work. She stated that actors can use their own emotions, but that these have their own "natural time course" (p. 2), and at certain points in rehearsals or performances actors need to move at will from one emotion to another depending on the dramatic situation. In such cases, the duration and change of emotional nuance needs to be perfectly timed and cannot follow a natural flow. According to Bloch (1993):

> One must understand that being precise about emotional states and understanding their expression and development has nothing to do with being "emotional" or "hysterical". I think this confusion and the practical consequences of emoting without control have created fear and avoidance in actors which prevent them from treating the subject overtly and objectively. (p. 10)

The Alba Emoting technique accesses real emotions through what Bloch (1993) called 'emotional effector patterns'—patterns consisting of respiratory-postural-facial combinations for anger, fear, joy, tenderness, erotic love and sadness. She observed universal patterns in these basic emotions, and through experimentation discovered that they could be induced through the conscious control of breathing rhythms, facial expressions and body attitudes (gestures and posture) when precisely executed (Townsend, 2009). Inducing emotions by initiating the precise patterns of the six basic emotions, Bloch's intention was to create a technique for accessing specific and repeatable organic emotions without bringing harm to the actor's psyche.

As I understand it, the Alba Emoting method is intended to enable actors to create and express genuine emotion easily on command and release the emotions at will. Once prototypical patterns are well identified, Bloch (1993) reported, it is possible to teach actors to 'play them back' by learning to reproduce them, and the possibility of inducing emotional states through controlled physical actions could assist people—particularly actors—to better recognise, express, and control their emotions. The official Alba Method for Emotions website (2015) claims that an actor can enter and leave an emotional state at will, and that students can learn to access emotion with ease while remaining psychologically healthy. The website also claims that

students can step into any emotion at any level of intensity on demand, and that Alba Emoting trainers teach the method with respect for the physical and emotional wellbeing of their students. Though Bloch's initial interest was in developing Alba Emoting for the actor, psychologists and vocational trainers have found the technique extremely useful, and it is now used comprehensively all over the world—as is her 'step out' technique for returning subjects to their 'normal' emotional mode (Townsend, 2009).

Although founded well over 20 years ago and readily available in the US and the UK, Alba Emoting is almost unknown in Australia, and only one of the interviewees in this study had heard of it. Freelance Actor/Teacher P (interview, May 30, 2013) had completed online training and was about to continue instruction in the US. In a follow-up interview (personal communication, 11 February, 2015), she confirmed that she now used the method in her own acting work and taught it in workshops. She described it as a form of physical patterning to create emotions and noted that, as far as she knew, she was the only teacher of Alba Emoting in Australia. The possibility of introducing this acting method into drama schools in Australia is suggested in the recommendations section of the Conclusion.

1.5 Summary

This chapter traced the origins of actor training and examined the structure and content of the actor training courses available at the three drama schools in this study. It explored the ways in which actors access emotions through various acting techniques, and surveyed a range of acting methods taught in drama schools, noting the enormous influence Stanislavsky has had in this field. Finally, it described a method called Alba Emoting, devised by neuroscientist Bloch (1993), which offers a different approach to actors using emotions in dramatic situations. The importance of suggesting a potentially safer technique like Alba Emoting for students to access their emotions is underlined when the close relationship between acting and psychology is

fully recognised. In many ways, it is this crossover of fields that is responsible for acting classes often slipping into therapeutic situations, and the ease with which some student actors can quickly become very emotional.

To take the investigation between acting and emotions further, Chapter 2 explores the intimate connections between the fields of acting and psychology from different perspectives. It summarises the research that has been done and areas where further research may be needed, including the impact of this connection in the actor training environment.

CHAPTER 2: ACTING AND PSYCHOLOGY: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The interconnectedness between the fields of psychology and acting/drama is an important and integral component of the emotional issues this study is examining within the actor training context. It is therefore important to first clarify what is meant by emotion and by trauma.

2.1 Emotions and Trauma

Emotions

This work does not set out to document all the possible physical and psychological repercussions of emotions that may be elicited by role play. Nevertheless, it does acknowledge the immense amount of ongoing research in the area and the implications of this research on actors and actor training. Theatre professor and historian Joseph Roach (1985) has maintained that "emotions are common to everyone's experience, yet are enormously difficult to define" (p.11). He went on to suggest that as theories have changed to fit new psychophysiological discoveries, substantially different answers have been proposed as to precisely what emotions are. Psychologist Klaus Scherer (2005) agreed that attempting to define emotions is a 'notorious' problem, and that measuring them in a comprehensive and meaningful way has been a constant challenge for emotion researchers in different disciplines of the social and behavioural sciences.

The complex area of emotions has indeed proved a multifaceted research area for experts in a variety of fields, including neuroscientist Antonio Domasio (1996), who developed what he called a somatic marker hypothesis. He theorised that emotions and their biological underpinnings are involved in decision making, thereby reinforcing the connection between

feelings and the body. This personalised embodiment aspect of emotions was reinforced by psychologists Richard Gerrig and Philip Zimbardo (2002), who defined emotions as a complex pattern of changes including physiological arousal, feelings, cognitive processes and behavioural reactions, made in response to a situation perceived to be personally significant. Supporting this view, psychologists Don and Sandra Hockenbury (2007) went on to define emotion as a complex psychological state that involves three distinct components: a subjective experience, a physiological response and a behavioural or expressive response.

It was Domasio's (1996) neuroscientific research which proved that feelings arise as the brain interprets emotions—the emotions themselves being purely physical signs of the body reacting to external stimuli. He observed how perceptual experience is constantly followed by changes at the physiological level and that feelings are actually mental experiences of body states. They signify, among other factors, physiological need (for example hunger) and specific social interactions (for example, compassion, gratitude and love). However it was the discovery of mirror neurons (Stamenov & Gallese, 2002) which led to the theory of embodied cognition, whereby an embodied approach to mental stimulation was suggested. This theory of embodied practice within the acting field was most recently interpreted by Ben Spatz (2015) who proposed that every kind of embodied technique—psychology, physical culture, religious ritual, everyday life—is now understood to be part of what brings an actor to performance and can therefore be understood as part of actor training.

The uncontrollability of emotions was an area observed by Domasio (1999) who, at the same time, acknowledged that people could be trained in the arts of emotion. This point was picked up by Margaret Wetherell (2012) when she expanded on the fact that actors can learn to exert wilful pressure over emotions in effective ways by maintaining, blocking and stopping embodied emotional flows. She recognised that this duality of affect—potential control

in contrast to potential lack of control—presented some major challenges for theory and social researchers. And, I would add, for actor trainers.

Overall, the strong interconnection between mind and body—in complete antithesis to Diderot's(1883) mind/body dualism hypothesis—is one of vital importance within the acting field. The emotions that can be experienced by actors when they embody and inhabit dramatic roles are of prime importance to the questions asked in this research.

Trauma

A definition of trauma and its psychological effects is as difficult to define as emotion, according to trauma specialist Lisa Lopez Levers (2012), because the effects of traumatic events are complex— reflecting the intricacy of the human beings who are exposed to them. However, the field of contemporary trauma studies and trauma theory is prolific in researching the manifestations of trauma. Susan Rubin Suleiman (2008) maintains that the consensus for researchers in the field is the definition put forward by pioneer, Judith Herman (1992), who determined that traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death, and that these events overwhelm ordinary human adaptations to life. Lopez Levers (2012) concurred, further explaining that traumatic events involve objective or factual situations, but the way in which people experience traumatic events is highly subjective—and that trauma theories must allow for the reality that people construct personal meanings from their traumatic experiences.

Suleiman (2008) clarifies that in a traumatic event the brain is not able to fully assimilate or process the event and responds through various mechanisms such as psychological numbing, or shutting down of normal emotional responses. Dissociation may also occur, resulting in the trauma not being remembered. The relationship of trauma to memory is where contested theories of trauma come into play with the idea of repressed memory or

traumatic amnesia being both supported and discounted by clinicians. However, what is important from the focus of this research is that there may well be acting students with repressed traumatic experiences, or traumatic experiences from which that they have chosen to distance themselves. Certain roles or acting exercises have the potential to trigger these experiences with emotional consequences— for both student and instructor.

The close and interweaving relationship between acting and psychology disciplines is now examined, first from the perspective of theatre, then from the psychological point of view, before reviewing how it is encountered in the actor training setting.

2.2 Acting and Psychology—Theatre

The worlds of theatre and actors and of psychology and healing have always been intrinsically interconnected. This point of view was expressed by psychotherapist E. J. Burton (1981), who argued that "very little of each pursuit will be irrelevant to the other" (p. 137). He asserted that, since both drama and therapy are concerned with the whole of life and its active processes, they will inevitably intertwine and organically function constantly as one. Sue Jennings (1981) similarly insisted that society has always needed drama for creative and ritualistic expression, and that most cultures have had a form of dramatic expression deeply rooted in their lifestyle. Koltai (1981) argued that the earliest form of therapeutic procedure was the dramatic action of the priestly man who rented his magic charm and engaged the sick in ritual interaction, and that this dramatic form has had many incarnations throughout human civilisation, with dramatic ritual and re-telling deeply rooted in the worlds of the sacred and the profane.

It would seem that theatre and its psychological effects have been acknowledged as far back as early Greek times, when philosopher Aristotle

(c. 335 BC/1812) was "the first to distinguish between the physiological and psychological components of emotion" (Fink, 1990, pp. 2–3). In fact, argued Jean Benedetti (2007), it was Aristotle who laid the foundation for the study of theatre and performance in providing the first comprehensive study of human emotion and social behaviour, which remained the dominant statement until the creation of individual psychology in the late nineteenth century. In an earlier publication, Benedetti (1976) suggested that early Greek drama enabled audiences to experience a release "by the kind of sympathetic magic between actor and spectator which is today commonly called empathy or 'in-feeling'" (p. 15). Aristotle (c. 335 BC/1812) himself proposed a concept of catharsis in his seminal text, the *Poetics*, which considered drama to be emotionally purifying for audiences as well as actors. This hypothesis was supported by psychodramatist Howard Blatner (1996), who surmised that in ancient Greece, drama was used as a ritual for evoking group catharsis.

Through the ages, the relationships between emotion, psychology, healing and drama in all its manifestations continued to intertwine. By the late sixth century, mime theatre represented emotion through movement and facial expressions, with religious rites and mystery plays giving way to more realistic performances with which audiences could better identify (Brockett 2007). Not until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did plays begin to reflect ordinary people's lives, with audiences encouraged to empathise with the characters and their situations. This development was described by Cesare Molinari (1972), who detailed how in sixteenth century Italy, *Commedia dell'arte* also reflected the life of the common man, while still using masks to assist in the representation of character. Its improvisational style encouraged audience participation and aroused a feeling of group catharsis akin to that experienced by earlier Greek audiences.

The golden era of Shakespeare continued this development of emotional engagement in drama, with Shakespeare's plays investigating what we now

refer to as the 'universal' human condition or experience. This investigation was followed by the naturalistic movement, which aimed to counteract the melodrama and pantomime of the late nineteenth century by reproducing dramatic narrative reflective of true-to-life-situations (Brockett, 2007). Later still, Antonin Artaud's (1938) "Theatre of Cruelty" in the early to mid-twentieth century challenged audiences to a sensory and visceral experience by offering them an opportunity to participate and physically release repressed hostilities by direct involvement with the actors, which, according to Brockett (2007), allowed them to commune more deeply with themselves and with their fellow beings.

Benedetti (1976) contended that this increasing interaction between audiences and those on stage is manifested in social satire and political theatre, which have been used throughout history as powerful tools for change. In Benedetti's own words, "The fundamental assumption of most contemporary theatre . . . is that the condition of the actor is to some degree recreated sympathetically in the spectator and that the spectator's condition may therefore be altered by this experience" (p. 14). This powerful ability of theatre to affect audiences on an emotional level was reinforced by Richard Courtney (1981), who determined that drama had always elicited healing through identification and release and, "increasingly, the professional theatre works for the personal and social adjustment of both actor and audience" (p. 1).

2.3 Acting and Psychology—Psychology

The last century has seen rapid growth in the study of human behaviour and in the increasing use of drama techniques for psychotherapeutic purposes. This trend was noted by Jacob Moreno (1972), who developed the field of psychodrama on the premise that the acting out of patients' problems and the resulting catharsis is therapeutic, not only for the patient, but often for the 'audience' and therapist as well. Moreno stressed that "learning by doing has

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been replaced . . . by spontaneity training and psychodramatic procedure, in which therapy and doing go hand in hand, one being an intrinsic part of the other" (1972, p. 152). Drama therapist Courtney (1981) expanded on this connection by taking the therapeutic uses of drama even further to include not only psychodrama and sociodrama techniques, but also theatre, dance, mime, movement, games, simulation and improvisation in both verbal and nonverbal expressions. Courtney affirmed that these approaches are now used in a variety of psychological methodologies, including Gestalt, Encounter and some behaviour group therapies, with dramatic play, creative drama, improvisation, role play, dramatic movement and theatre games becoming commonplace in many forms of therapeutic treatment.

Concurrently, theatre educators John Hodgson and Ernest Richards (1979) asked: "isn't the group therapy found in drama improvisation the activity which will replace psychoanalysis? It draws upon the subconscious; it is introspective and has the advantage of being able to be shared and extroverted" (p. 9). This view was shared by Courtney (1981), who considered that even though the three areas of theatre, education and psychotherapy were originally separate, they had grown together into "one organic field" (p. 5).

Fink (1990), a psychologist, entered the discussion by claiming that the access and control of emotions was central to the work of both the psychotherapist and the actor, describing drama therapy as a psychotherapeutic modality making use of theatre techniques and spanning two disciplines, each based on emotional adaptability. On the subject of actor training, Fink went further by recognising that just as numerous drama techniques are incorporated into both psychotherapy and education, the use of psychological techniques is an integral component of many actor training programmes. Fink observed that, just as the role of therapists and theatre directors or teachers is to guide and coach the client, or the actor, in mastering emotions, "the client, like the actor, is learning to use his or her

emotional repertoire in new ways" (1990, p. 8). This close connection between twentieth century psychology and theatre was advanced when Fink made an interesting association between French dramatist Artaud (1938) and the psychological field, stating that "both primal therapy and Artaud premise that the expression of repressed feelings is the cornerstone of authentic existence in the here-and-now" (p. 9). Fink simultaneously noted that most therapies and acting techniques do not fit into neat categories, but represent a mixture of thinking, feeling and doing approaches to emotion.

Meanwhile, theatre director Burgoyne (1991) observed that contemporary acting teachers were seeking to evoke emotional responses in student actors in order for them to 'inhabit' characters, in the same way that psychotherapists were seeking to evoke emotional responses in patients to affect personal change. According to Fink (1990), the main problem the actor faces is the control of emotions, and Fink determined that the main question of dispute among theatre directors and teachers was how these requisite emotions were to be generated. Fink asked:

> Should the director/teacher instruct the actor to start with feeling, thinking, doing techniques, or a blend thereof? . . . Though one discipline has therapeutic and the other creative, aesthetic goals, both use a combination of cognition, affect, and behavior in dealing with the emotions. (p. 6)

In preparation for a conference session entitled 'Theatre and Therapy', Barton (1994) interviewed and observed counsellors, therapists, mediators, and facilitators who work with group activities where turbulent emotion occurs frequently. He observed that many of the group therapies employed theatre-based activities and that many elements present in acting classes appeared in intensified form in the therapeutic settings. He also observed that group leaders constantly dealt with individual crises and potentially distracting outbursts, and that it is reasonable to assume that acting teachers might benefit from the experience and knowledge of therapists, who are constantly challenged in this way in the course of their work. Barton (1994) noted that

one of the primary areas where theatre and therapy tend to separate is in the question of whether or not it is appropriate for the good of the group to engage the emotion—or whether the person needs to be helped expediently out of it. He explained that in the group therapy sessions he studied, an individual emotional outburst was generally considered productive, and became the focus of the collective energy of all participants as part of the shared process. Such an outburst meant that the individual was 'working', action was taking place, and that the group was being presented with raw material for its collective exploration. Barton maintained that this also occurred in the theatre settings, but with less frequency, and that "most acting teachers would never consider guiding immersion into uncomfortable emotion without additional training" (p. 114).

In summary, a review of the literature would appear to support the link between psychology and theatre, even though "the stated goals of theatre and therapy are different" (Burgoyne, 1991, p. 7). Whereas psychotherapy is conditioned on contractual negotiation and agreement between therapist and client regarding psychological intervention (Read Johnson, 1981), in my professional experience any 'contract' between an acting teacher or director and their students would appear to be far less clearly defined.

2.4 Acting and Psychology—Actor Training

Although the actor training field may sit side by side by with the psychological, how this aspect is actually 'managed' in day-to-day classroom and rehearsal situations remains relatively undocumented. Researchers in the area invariably comment that it is a topic that is still largely overlooked and in need of further study and examination. There certainly appears to be little acknowledgement of psychology in tertiary actor training pedagogy, and at the three drama schools in this study there are no formal guidelines in place if situations occur when the psychological outweighs the creative—for example, Barton (1994) referred to incidences involving 'emotional overload'.

He commented that "we're doing theatre here, not therapy, is a statement regularly made in the classroom and rehearsal hall" (p. 1). The questions remain: how is it decided where theatre ends and therapy begins? and how qualified are acting teachers to differentiate between the two and deal with the consequences?

According to actor/teacher Hornby (1992), actor training and rehearsal techniques have often come to resemble psychoanalysis, and if the actor is required to show real emotions on stage and is typically inhibited, it becomes the job of the acting teacher or director to release him from his inhibitions. Hornby went on to describe how acting teachers or directors interrogate an actor about his emotional life, "often in the most intimate and intrusive way, reducing the poor individual to hysterics or uncontrolled weeping as a triumphant 'breakthrough' . . . emotional release was never the goal of actor training" (1992, p. 34). Israeli educationist Shifra Schonmann (2004) suggested that, although emotional episodes are not out of the ordinary in actor training settings and not exclusive to drama classes, the likelihood and potential for emotional 'overload' incidents to occur in the actor training sphere are higher than in other educational areas "because of the depth of the involvement that the activity requires from the participants and because of the nature of the dramatic action" (p. 1).

Even 20 years ago, Barton (1994) highlighted the contemporary failure to acknowledge the psychological elements of actor training by asking the 'hard questions' that we still ask today—and that this study examines in the context of emotional wellbeing for students and staff in three of Australia's leading drama schools. These questions are:

- What is the obligation of teachers and what resources are available for assistance when students experience intense and conspicuous trauma—what Barton (1994) calls "freaking out" (p. 105)—as a result

of an emotionally demanding activity or simply through a release occurring during breathing or voice or movement exercises?

- What are the limits to which students should be asked to summon powerful emotions possibly beyond their own control?
- What conditions prove most conducive to healthy exploration, recovery and support?

Barton (1994) maintained that these questions could not be dismissed with a convenient disclaimer separating 'art' from 'healing', and that many acting teachers felt insufficiently trained to handle such crises and feared students "becoming irreparably harmed due to an activity of their devising or an insensitive handling of a crucial moment in class" (p. 105). Answers to these questions are not easily found in contemporary Australian drama pedagogy, and one of this study's aims is to explore whether the major drama schools realistically confront the issues raised by these questions over 20 years ago.

2.4.1 Acting Aftermath

In her 1991 article reflecting on her experiences as a theatre director, Burgoyne potently described the fear felt by her cast of student actors portraying characters in her production of Arthur Miller's seminal play *The Crucible* (1953), because of the extent to which she encouraged them to engage psychologically with the text. Burgoyne was interested in the impact on actors of 'embodying' an author's world view, and the ethical responsibilities of directors who urge actors "to explore their own psyches in the process of creating a character" (1991, p. 1). At the time of the production Burgoyne did not anticipate the link she would discover between the rehearsal process of actors and their out-of-rehearsal emotions. Using improvisation exercises of the type taught in both Stanislavsky and post-Stanislavsky-based systems of actor training, Burgoyne (1991) led the cast in explorations of the "root causes of human evil" (p. 1) and encouraged actors to "seek personal analogies as a means of connecting with their characters"

(p. 4). By so doing, her rehearsal process "came to mirror the hysteria in the play" (p. 5). The emotions were not confined to the stage, and resulted in nightmares for some of the student actors.

Burgoyne reported 'psychological fallout' from the student production, and said that nothing in her training had warned her that acting might result in such emotional distress, much less prepared her to deal with it. She said that, though some theatre educators seemed aware of the issue, little research had been done, and possible psychological side effects on actors tended to be ignored in the theatre environment. In her article she queried the ethical responsibilities of directors and theatre educators towards actors who explore their own psyches in the process of creating a character and summarised: "Without full awareness of the potential psychological hazards inherent in actor training, it is easy for the director/teacher to make mistakes, as I did in directing . . . no-one had seriously warned me that I might experience such a phenomenon" (1991, p. 1).

Following up on this study, Burgoyne and fellow researchers Karen Poulin and Ashley Rearden (1999) discovered that boundary management programmes—where boundaries between actors and the roles they play are carefully differentiated—were still not being developed in the theatre profession. They concluded that it was definitely time "to bring the subject out of the closet and into the classroom" (Burgoyne et al., 1999, p. 11). They suggested that the theatre profession needed to address boundary management as an aspect of acting pedagogy, and that an ethical first step would be to incorporate discussion of boundary issues into the curriculum for acting and directing students. They also suggested that in the interest of developing guidelines for actor safety, more research needed to be done in the area. Although Burgoyne and her colleagues do not appear to have written further about these issues, their concerns have been taken up by Australian researchers Seton (2009), Prior (2015), Maxwell (2015) and Szabó (2015), with Seton maintaining that there are many physical,

psychological and emotional impacts on actors in training and in the workplace that need to be "more formally investigated, documented and disseminated to relevant stakeholders" (p. 63). In earlier research, Seton (2006) argued that student actors should be enabled to prepare themselves more judiciously for role playing, and that support should be provided for them in the cool down and aftermath of performances. Prior et al. (2015) also recognised that there needed to be more comprehensive and deeper awareness of potential physical, vocal and psychological hazards in actor training.

US researcher Cheryl McFarren (2003) examined neurobiological and psychological theories of trauma and the syndrome known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in relation to the use of actors' personal emotional experiences and memories. Based on her study, she contended that there were significant problems with the use of the affective (emotional recall) exercise as a tool with students of acting, describing it as having actors recall emotion-laden experiences from their real lives in order to create 'believable' moments on stage. She stated that it was the cornerstone technique of American 'Method' acting developed by Lee Strasberg, based on a precept of the Stanislavsky system of acting, and that it continued to have widespread use. McFarren (2003) concluded in this research that emotional recall exercises can trigger traumatic experiences because the residual effects of trauma may affect the function and perhaps even the structure of the brain in a lasting, possibly irreversible fashion. These changes to an individual's cognitive and emotional life would not be evident to an outside party such as an acting teacher until their effects became observable through problematic behaviour. McFarren stressed that student actors may have encountered all kinds of traumas, such as emotional abuse, physical violence or rape, and that memories of these kinds of traumas are impossible to control. When expressed, the resulting emotions have the potential to disrupt the ensemble

and divert everyone's attention from the task at hand onto the individual performer in crisis.

McFarren wrote that "The sensitive tasks of debriefing someone who has stumbled across a traumatic memory and of helping that individual integrate it into language are not those for which most acting teachers and directors have been adequately prepared" (McFarren, 2003, p. 173). She determined that even without the precondition of trauma, simply dwelling upon potent emotional occurrences in pursuit of an artistic end seemed a questionable endeavour with regard to mental health, and noted that psychological health care providers are trained to recognise dissociative behaviours, but that acting teachers and directors tend not to have such training. As already noted, even though the teachers interviewed in this research denied formally teaching 'Method' acting, they did acknowledge that the foundation of their teaching was based on Stanislavsky's work; further, WAAPA's Introduction to Acting course specifically states that it is founded on the traditional values of Stanislavsky and his philosophical descendants (WAAPA, 2015).

With McFarren's work in mind, Seton (2006) posited an extension of her research in considering how acting practices (training for, enactment of and debriefing from roles) affect actors' lives by using the term 'post-dramatic stress' as a provocative correlation with PTSD. He expanded on the subject by asserting that concerns about mental health and wellbeing were still taboo subjects in actor training and in actors' workplaces, and that it remained a significant area of neglect and culpability. The areas of inquiry I undertake in this study and the content of my research questions clearly indicate that I hold similar concerns.

2.4.2 Post-Performance

Theatre scholars traditionally focus their attention on the production itself, not on the 'aftermath', and certainly not on "the long-term consequences or follow through" (Schechner, 1985, p. 9). According to well-known US performance

studies researcher Richard Schechner (1985), post-performance is the least studied aspect of performance. In an earlier study of Asian theatre practices, Schechner (1977) cited numerous instances of post-performance cool downs, maintaining that rituals that bring about 'reintegration' were needed for closure because the performers often underwent profound changes in consciousness. Considering the focus of this research, it is interesting to note that in the history of Western theatre there appears to be little written about 'closure' practices, and similarly little emphasis on these practices at an institutional level. Neither is there information about safeguarding the wellbeing of performers post-performance.

The emotional consequences experienced by actors from the roles they play were examined by Geer (1993), who was concerned with problems arising from what Bloch (1993) called the 'emotional hangover'. Geer concluded that these subjects had been ignored by research, and that subjects dealing with the aftermath of performances—such as cool down and emotional hangover—were worthy of much more study. Geer (1993) argued that any performance event—whether it encompasses a production run over several months, an evening's performance, or a moment of rehearsal—can be thought of as a cycle that begins and ends in a quotidian, non-performance state. He argued that two parts of this cycle, cool down and aftermath, had been largely ignored in acting and actor training in the US, and that evidence from other cultures, other disciplines, and from within American theatre itself indicated that neglecting these portions of the performance cycle may have implications for the wellbeing of actors. Geer (1993) contended that there was a need to do more to ease this transition from stage to life, stressing that "in the final analysis we are dealing with nothing less than the wellbeing of performers" (p. 12). In regard to this aspect of actor welfare, Schechner (1977), Geer (1993) and Barton (1994) all experimented at different times and in different spaces with activities for creating what Barton called "an environment with sufficient support and outlets for regular expression of feeling so that a crisis

is less likely to occur" (p. 107). Barton (1994) suggested that acting teachers ask whether they had drawn their students into an activity without providing a pathway out, stressing that 'handling emotion can be built into the syllabus and initial discussion framing the course' (p. 109). In Chapter 8, I look in greater detail at how 'cool down' practices are not formally adopted by the participating drama schools or the profession at large.

In regard to 'emotional hangover', cool down and the aftermath of performance, Geer (1993) posited that there had been "little qualitative study and no quantitative research" (p. 11) to date. Despite these comments, there seems to have been little in-depth investigation into these areas since this statement was made. From the contemporary perspective of emotional management, David Orzechowicz (2008) studied how actors 'managed' their emotions on and off stage, while being surprised that "actors' feeling management and the conditions under which this work occurs had not been studied by sociologists" (p. 144). He acknowledged that theatre's rehearsal process and formal training gave actors advantages in managing emotions compared to many other social settings, but deduced that further research was needed to explore the strategies actors used to 'manage' feelings during a production. Seton (2010) has been at the forefront of researching many of these areas that arise when investigating the connections between psychology, acting and actor training, and in recent years has consistently called for "further discussion, debate and research about ethical accountability in training" (p. 18). Researchers in the field appear to agree that more study is needed into the impact emotions have on actors—and acting students—as is further discussion and debate about how these emotions can be better 'managed', and whether emotional boundary management can be formalised in acting pedagogy.

Having established strong links between acting and the psychological world of the unconscious and of emotions, how, then, is this territory dealt with in the volatile world of actor training? More specifically, how do Australia's

leading drama schools manage this emotional landscape? Chapter 3 sets out in detail how research into these areas was undertaken in the present study, what criteria were used and what particular research methods proved to be most suitable for assessing these factors within the actor training environment.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Qualitative research methodology was considered the most appropriate approach for this study. The parameters of this model were able to encompass data from multiple interviews as well as from a broad base of information. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (2000) described qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world and consists of interpretative material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). They discussed studying people in their "natural setting" in order to interpret phenomena "in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 3). Entering the 'natural setting' for the interviewees of this study—the drama school— enabled me, as researcher/observer, to gather information in order to appraise and evaluate the resulting material, thereby allowing the actor training world to become more 'visible'. If the importance of qualitative inquiry is for the study of human group life, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested, then in this study the group life examined was that of the personnel within the selected group of Australian vocational drama schools.

As sole researcher, I played a significant role in the inquiry, and was closely connected with the material under examination. Karen M. Staller (2010) described qualitative research as an umbrella term for a wide variety of methodologies for providing holistic, in-depth accounts that attempt to reflect the complicated, contextual, interactive and interpretative nature of our social world. The in-depth interviews in this research reflected all of these qualities within the drama school 'world' under study, and these factors were both relevant and applicable to this inquiry. In keeping with the qualitative approach, the interviews were 'semi-structured', following precisely the definition of this term put forward by Bloor and Wood (2006) as having a more informal, conversational character, being shaped partly by the

interviewer's pre-existing topic guide and partly by concerns that emerge in the course of the interview.

3.2 Researcher Background

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research not only acknowledges but emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality, the close relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situated nature of inquiry. My 'close relationship' with both the drama school environment and the focus of the study's subject matter was instrumental in choosing this qualitative research methodology as the most appropriate and informative one available.

With a comprehensive background in theatre and education, and considerable experience as practitioner, I acknowledge that my 'personal history' has been an integral component in the research process. I came to the inquiry with multiple orientations—those of actor, teacher, director and therapist. All of these roles informed and supported my research, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) when they called research "an interactive process shaped by (the researcher's) personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity and by those in the setting" (p. 6).

I have been employed as a teacher and director in both freelance and full-time capacities in one of the drama schools in this project and have personal experience of the other two. I came to the research with considerable knowledge and experience of the actor training landscape in Australia. This professional background has no doubt influenced my own educational training models. However, it was my first-hand exposure to actor training over many years that informed my decision to research the emotional and psychological aspects of the instruction. These issues have long been of interest to me, as has the pedagogical model that resulted in the practices described in this research.

My master's thesis, *The Role of Drama Therapy in Actor Training* (Taylor, 1983), explored territory similar to that covered in this research—that is, the overlapping nature of drama, psychology, therapy and actor training. A component of the master's research was to conduct a series of drama therapy sessions with acting students as part of their full-time acting course. These sessions involved the use of a Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), which concluded that the students made very significant positive gains in their level of 'self-actualisation' and 'self-awareness' during the course of the sessions. The suggestion was made by Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) in the present study that therapy sessions similar to those just described be incorporated into current actor training programmes. This proposal is expanded upon in Chapter 4.

I acknowledge that my long-held interest in, and experience of, the actor training field drove me to question how well the safety of student actors is safeguarded, which in turn led to this research. I was interested to investigate whether or not my concerns were supported by the data that emerged from the study. 'Caring deeply' about research topics is an expectation of PhD students, according to Jonathon Potter and Alexa Hepburn (2012), who also made the point that many doctoral programmes use qualitative research where overwhelmingly the interviewer and researcher are the same person, which could lead to bias. Potter and Hepburn's concerns touch on how potential issues of neutrality and bias are managed in qualitative methodologies. I recognise that my familiarity and background in these areas have provided a focus that may have influenced my interpretation of the findings. However, while acknowledging my position in the research process, I have also tried to be reflexively aware of prejudicial opinions and, where possible and relevant, present an opposing point of view.

3.2.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity entails that the researcher is aware of his or her effect on the process and outcomes of the research (Anderson, 2008). Anderson (2008) argued that, in carrying out qualitative research, it is impossible to remain 'outside' the subject matter, and the researcher's presence, in whatever form, will have some kind of effect. She affirmed that the design of the research project is of paramount importance, such that while the researcher did not deny some degree of subjectivity, a clearly articulated methodology assisted in maintaining a conscious, professional distance. Anderson also suggested that the guiding principle of reflexive research is induction, which goes hand in hand with researchers' awareness of the effects of their presence and influence on the subjects and the data. I understand induction to mean conclusions based on evidence rather than on deduction and discovery.

In arts-based research, where the self is often inescapable, Morwenna Griffiths (2010) stated that it is crucial that there is an understanding of the self and its place in the research, because "the person creating, responding to, working on, developing or evaluating performances, artefacts and practices is central to those activities" (p. 185). Griffiths continued that researchers need to be aware of the interaction between self and research at all stages in order to perform unbiased, trustworthy and transferable research. She contended that arts-based researchers are able to develop knowledge and ways of disseminating their research that inform the development of practices and skills in similar but not identical contexts, and are able to provide new understandings and creative insights, "often termed wisdom, sometimes professional wisdom" (Griffiths, 2010, p. 181).

Griffiths (2010) made reference to a case study where, partly due to the researcher's long-established relationships, he had ease of access to the schools where his interviews took place. She made the point that this access may not have been available to outsiders, and that even though the

researcher had pre-existing relationships with some of his subjects, which would have affected what they said, it also enabled them to communicate easily with somebody who thoroughly understood the context. I like to think that I similarly came to this research with some degree of what Griffiths calls 'professional wisdom', and that perhaps being relatively established in the field also gave me some advantage in gaining access to the drama schools and their staff members. I acknowledge that my professional experience also means that I may be subject to bias in regard to particular schools, teachers or acting methods, and I have attempted to be mindful of my responses and opinions at every stage of this research. It is interesting to note that Griffiths (2010) concluded by questioning whether it is ever possible to be a value-neutral observer, remarking that making the relationships, circumstances, perspectives and reactions of the researcher as clear as possible is one way of exercising academic virtue and removing bias. In the case of this research, I have endeavoured to make each of these areas 'as clear as possible' by stating my relationship with the interviewees, the circumstances in which the interviews were held, and by declaring throughout any strong perspective or reaction to the data.

3.3 Methods

The goals of qualitative research are to provide a detailed narrative description and holistic interpretation that captures the richness and complexity of behaviours, experience and events in natural settings (Kalaian, 2008). In order to provide such material, the following methods were used:

- Historical research (literature review)
- Interviews
- Narrative research
- Thematic Analysis

3.3.1 Historical Research

Historical research provides the critical contextual link of the past to the present (Lundy, 2008). To gain a deeper understanding of how actor training evolved to contemporary times, past practices were summarised and assessed, providing baseline information for the study. Insights into issues and policies were investigated using primary and secondary sources of historical data and research. Lundy (2008) contended that any contemporary issue is bound intrinsically with the social and historical milieu of the past. From this it can be deduced that what is taught in drama schools today is a product of practices passed down through time.

To better inform the study, an historical analysis was undertaken of research into the role emotion plays in acting and in acting methods. This generated an understanding of previous research and identified where it was felt there were gaps in the prevailing knowledge as it applied to the actor training environment. Lundy (2008) regarded this type of historical research as shedding light on a phenomenon through an in-depth examination of it. Examining background information on topics at the very core of this research provided valuable information in developing the study's focus.

3.3.2 Interviews

The purpose of conducting interviews with personnel closely involved with actor training was to explore current practices in regard to the wellbeing of the acting students. Fontana and Frey (2000) described interviewing as "one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 645). In an attempt to understand the ways in which staff at a select group of Australia's top drama schools manage their programmes, 32 open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The one-on-one interviews were carried out with a range of drama school staff members, freelance staff, graduate students and psychologists who

were involved with arts and acting students. No group interviews were conducted as I preferred to talk to the interviewees privately.

Interviews are most commonly used on the basis that they are the obvious way of doing any qualitative social research (Potter & Hepburn, 2012) and the interviews in this research provided the majority of data for this project. The interviewees were or had been closely involved in the actor training environment, and tended to hold strong personal views about the topics under examination. They were able to talk easily and freely about their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) speculated about researchers' attempts to make sense of the meanings people bring to their situation. As interviewees attempted to interpret their positions on certain subjects, this took on particular relevance when a variety of responses evolved from the same questions.

Time limitations on some of the interviews meant that I sometimes consciously stepped back into the role of listener and observer, enabling even more material to be shared. Lesley Noaks and Emma Wincup (2004) wrote about the principles of active listening and establishing rapport elements in interviews; in relation to these principles, my training in both counselling and journalism was beneficial in providing me with skills to conduct these interviews with relative confidence and focus. I felt comfortable allowing the interviews to stray from a semi-structured to an open-ended format, while still keeping in mind the time frame of the meeting and the core of the information being sought.

Some of the interviewees were known to me personally, though many were not. For those that were not, there was sometimes a short period of formality in the initial stages of the interview before a connection was made. For the most part, interviewees seemed to comprehend that I had first-hand experience of actor training, and as a consequence a kind of 'shorthand' developed. I did not promote my experience in the profession or express any

particular points of view, but it seemed to become clear during the interviews that I 'spoke their language', and a collegiate trust was quickly established.

Noaks and Wincup (2004) discussed the use of the open-ended interview to collect 'rich data', stating that "the keynote of such interviews is active listening in which the interviewer allows the interviewee the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings while bearing in mind the broader terms of the project" (p. 80). Some participants chose to commence the interview by providing details of their background and/or philosophy of actor training. Whatever the impetus for them to start talking, I was able to pick up on aspects of what they said with follow-up questions focusing on the areas I was most interested in for this research.

As was noted by Prior (2004), subtext and self-presentation issues will always be inherent in interviews, which are often coloured by people's agendas or concerns. The actor training and acting profession worlds are quite small nationally, so even though they were assured of anonymity, it is understandable that some interviewees tended to defend some of their department or school policies as a matter of course. Others spoke out remarkably directly and bluntly. However, it is acknowledged that what was spoken by the interviewees is what they wished to reveal, and what is therefore significant to consider. This principle of significance represents the 'biographical interpretative' method of Wendy Holloway and Tony Jefferson (2000), who commented on the legitimacy of this kind of research when they wrote:

> One of the good reasons for believing what people tell us, as researchers, is a democratic one: who are we to know any better than the participants when it is, after all, their lives? If we are prepared to disagree, modify, select and interpret what they tell us, is this not an example of the kind of power that we, as researchers, have that should be kept in check by being faithful to the voices of those we are researching. (p. 3)

The biographical interpretative method of Holloway and Jefferson (2000) has four principles: the use of open-ended questions, the ability to elicit a story,

avoiding 'why' questions, and the use of interviewees' words and phrasing—in other words, follow-up questions using the respondent's own words without offering interpretation. I also learned these approaches when training in counselling, and all four elements were used extensively in the interviews for this project. For example, I would begin with an open-ended question in order to encourage interviewees to begin talking freely, and then invariably would ask for examples of points they made in order to foster story telling.

While attempts were made to honour and give credibility to individual points of view, when group majorities expressed similar perspectives, which happened often, the research was moved forward by giving expression to these shared opinions and positions. However, attempts were always made to acknowledge alternative views, because I was cognisant that a constant balance needed to be maintained between objective data collection and the subjective story telling of the interviewees' narratives.

3.3.3 Narrative Research

Narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding experience, and also a research methodology (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Clandinin and Caine (2008) described it as "both a view of the phenomena of people's experiences and a methodology for narratively inquiring into experience and thus allows for the intimate study of individuals' experiences over time and in context" (p. 542). Clandinin and Caine stressed that narrative inquiry is marked by its emphasis on relational engagement between researcher and research participants, and that it aims to make meaning of experience through conversations and dialogue.

Elliot Mishler (1986) agreed with Clandinin and Caine's (2008) approach, and similarly stated that, rather than modelling the interview as a form of stimulus and response, the interview encounter might more fruitfully be viewed as an interactional accomplishment. The interviews in my research provided ample opportunity for a great deal of free-flowing and unstructured conversation,

especially by commencing them with an open-ended inquiry—for example, about the participant's overall approach to teaching or attitude towards the emotional elements of actor training. These open-ended conversations encouraged participants to relax and talk freely, and generally to take more 'ownership' of the interviews. Participants related stories to illustrate their opinions and spoke easily about their experiences.

According to Mishler (1986), the goal is to hear the respondents' own voices, and it is important to explore the extent to which empowerment allows or provokes this. Conversation as research was also discussed by Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann (2008), who described professional conversations as constructed in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and as involving "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p. 1). The inherent professional understanding between the interviewees and myself tended to raise the level of communication to that between shared practitioners. It also seemed to result in a level of trust and a use of shorthand in the conversation. As a consequence, the narratives provided a significant depth of knowledge and a generous sharing of experiences. This level of disclosure contributed significantly to the pool of information being collected.

Clandinin and Caine (2008) maintained that the most frequently used starting point for narrative research is the telling of stories, and that the methods most commonly used for this are interviews and conversations, or interviews as conversations. This approach was used to great effect with the participants in this study, as the telling of stories about acting students in the drama schools and particular examples of students' emotional reactions seemed to come quite spontaneously to the interviewees. The narrative enquiry, with its emphasis on storied lives and professional knowledge, is a qualitative research approach that brings "greater rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth" to inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 5)

3.3.4 Coding

The purpose of coding is to reduce data to broad, simple categories or common denominators that can help in the retrieval of data sharing common features (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Coding also helps to achieve the aims of thematic analysis by examining commonalities within a dataset, examining differences and relationships (Harding, 2015). However, the most important stage in the coding process, according to Sharon Lockyer (2004), is the development of a set of categories into which the data are coded. Lockyer describes these categories as potentially "theory-driven or data-driven, derived from research literature, or based on intuition" (p. 138). The 32 interviews in this study amounted to a large quantity of material, which I was able to organise and condense into smaller analysable units "through the creation of categories and concepts derived from the data" (Lockyer, 2004, p. 138). This qualitative coding method enabled easier retrieval of the material and for data to be identified, compared and interpreted. Ultimately, this coding method facilitated a systematic way to derive themes and conclusions based on the interpretation of the data.

William Gibson and Andrew Brown (2009) identified two types of code: *a priori* codes, created prior to research, reflecting categories that are already of interest before the research has begun; and *empirical codes*, derived after the data evidence has been collected. The coding for this research was primarily empirical and determined by a thorough reading of interview transcripts, identifying data points of importance and commonality. A few aspects of the study—for example, the introduction of the Alba Emoting method—were of interest before the research began, and were coded accordingly. Harding (2015) stated that, even when using empirical codes, it is likely that the researcher's prior knowledge of the subject will influence coding decisions to some extent, and I acknowledge that this could well have been the case in this study. However, he also said that it is almost certain that some issues and themes will emerge that were not anticipated from the

researcher's prior reading in the subject area, which was definitely the case in this study: for example, some of the student issues that arose were ones I had not identified prior to the research, but which emerged strongly from the interviews.

The topics and themes coded were chosen according to their relevance to the research questions and the study's overall focus. The interviewees had no difficulty expressing multiple opinions and attitudes, and could stray from the core topics, revealing wonderful insights in the process. As a result, some of what was recorded went beyond the central issues of the research. For example, some interviewees felt the need to expand on their professional backgrounds and how they had arrived at their particular teaching practices. This kind of information was not deemed relevant for inclusion for this study's purposes, which were to assess how they went about teaching their students and what they encountered. Their experience and knowledge of the theatre landscape, while interesting, was beyond the scope of this study.

During coding, any personal responses to the interview process and the data were noted. Theme headings were included in the transcripts where subject sections coincided with topics in other interviews. The subsequent retrieval of these common denominators meant that data sharing common features could be merged and analysed. As the interview material was progressively collated and compared, themes were generated and these assisted in helping to pinpoint the areas of most concern or interest. Core categories surfaced with repetition of subject matter within the areas under discussion. The approach allowed for acknowledgement of the complex nature of the investigation, while at the same time making possible the discovery of connections between the themes.

The anecdotal stories and information provided by staff and students became the backbone of the data. The interviews provided first-hand observations, experiences and opinions of the project's main protagonists, thereby

providing building blocks for a fuller picture of the training environments. Some interviewees who were no longer employed by their respective schools and universities were not opposed to their names being used. However, I chose to code all interviewees anonymously in an attempt to reduce bias and maintain a balanced presentation of the research findings. It also ensured that no unintentional identification or comparisons were made. In the acting and actor training milieu in Australia, many of the interviewees' associations to particular schools are well known, and it was important to have collective anonymity for the cohort. To that end, each of the interviewees was assigned an identifying letter of the alphabet and grouped according to whether he or she was a teacher, psychologist or graduate. A brief description of the interviewees, their qualifications and work experience is contained in Appendix A.

The heart of this research was the documentation of some of the current practices in the participating drama schools in regard to the emotional wellbeing of their students. The interview data was subsequently synthesised into findings and, as a result, recommendations and practical suggestions have been proffered, with possible implications for future institutional policy making.

3.3.5 Thematic Analysis

The process of creating summaries of interviews is often the first step in making sense of interview transcripts (Harding, 2015). Harding (2015) suggested that the use of the constant comparative method may be helpful for the researcher in identifying similarities and differences between cases in a dataset. In exactly this way, the responses of the participants were brought together through a process of qualitative synthesis, which assisted in exploring the issues under investigation at a deeper level.

In applied thematic analysis, theme identification is initially approached by asking what the interviewees are talking about that is relevant to the research

objectives (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). This method was rigorously applied to the segments of coded text lifted from their larger interview contexts. Guest et al., (2012) maintained that segmenting text, identifying themes and content coding are not distinct processes, and described identifying an instance of meaning in the text, noting its locus, and describing it. They discussed reviewing the analytic objectives, reading the text to be analysed, and indicating the kinds of meaning that the text may potentially exemplify. This grouping content at specified levels of meaning and interpretation is the basic task of coding, and was done in order for themes to emerge.

In this research, a variety of concerns expressed by both teachers and student graduates emerged as themes, primarily through repetition, as is acknowledged by the theme recognition technique (Guest et al., 2012). However, themes also emerged through comparison of opinions and practices, with similarities and differences being noted. Themes included the risks involved with many of the drama school practices and traditions. This led to exploring the strategies currently in place to deal with these risks, which developed into a major theme. Questions of duty of care were paramount to the examination of the data, and how these concerns are dealt with became a key premise for the study. Many drama school practices, such as timetabling and assessment and the complications that resulted from these practices, became recurring topics. These were able to be categorised into more personal concerns such as exhaustion, favouritism and competition. As the issues affecting the students emerged, several were grouped under umbrella themes such as 'emotional vulnerability' and 'mental health safeguards'. Themes are expanded upon in chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

3.4 Research Design

The different phases of this research systematically took place over a four-year period, with each phase allowing for progression to the next. Some

phases overlapped to a degree, but overall the design was undertaken according to plan.

Table 1: Phases of the Research

Phase 1 2012 Preliminary research	The research literature in the field was critically examined. Relevant research areas were collated according to their relevance to the topic. Note was made of areas needing further research and also areas where there had been lack of application of the research to the actor training field. The research proposal was presented and accepted and the Ethics application approved.
Phase 2 2012–2013 Selection of interviewees	Three of the major drama schools in Australia were selected as being central to the research project. The core staff members in each school were identified, along with a wide range of experienced freelance teachers. Psychologists who had experience in the arts field and recent graduates from the identified schools were also sourced. Letters of invitation were sent to the possible interviewees and interview times arranged.
Phase 3 2012–2014 Data collection	Multiple interviews were conducted in various capital cities. These were recorded and confidentially stored with the interviewees' identities known only to the researcher. Thirty-two semi-structured, one to two hour interviews were conducted across Australia.
Phase 4 2013–2014 Transcription and coding	The researcher transcribed the interviews, allowing for familiarity with the material. The data was coded according to the themes and topics that emerged and arranged accordingly.

Phase 5 2014–2015 Data analysis	A thematic analysis approach was applied so that the responses of the participants were brought together through a process of qualitative synthesis. This assisted in exploring a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation and in assessing how the themes and areas of interest that had emerged could best be analysed and reported on.
Phase 6 2015 Critical reflection and thesis writing	Attempts were made to evaluate, from a range of perspectives, the data that had been collected and analysed. This allowed for a process of critical reflection upon the material before writing it up and attempting to take into account any undue bias. A schedule was made to proceed with the thesis writing according to particular groupings of subjects. Some of the historical and research work had been completed during the proposal process. The substantial amount of data contained in the interviews was arranged according to the themes and subjects that had emerged as a result of the coding and analysis procedures. The order of importance of these themes shifted as the work progressed, and levels of significance became clearer. The thrust and through-line of the work eventually became well-defined as the different subject areas aligned. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the data analysis became the final chapter to address.

3.5 Context

The study focused on professional and vocational actor training for tertiary students in Australia, and concentrated on what are considered three of the leading actor training institutions in Australia:

- The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA),
- The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), and
- The Victorian College of Arts (VCA).

The criteria for the selection of schools were that the schools had to be:

1. A drama school in the conservatoire model with a strong reputation for training actors,
2. A drama school that offers a three-year vocational degree, and
3. A drama school that offers government and industry approved courses.

The high status and reputation of these schools meant that the views expressed by their staff members were particularly pertinent to the research and its exploration of teaching methods. Activities in these schools are consistently observed by the acting profession in Australia and overseas, and thus have considerable influence on the industry. Many graduates go on to become leaders in the entertainment profession.

> NIDA, WAAPA and the VCA are in the first rank of training schools: apart from their reputations, what distinguishes them from all other schools is that they audition nationally for their student intake by sending out teams to most major capitals across the country. (O'Connor, 2001, p. 49)

This research does not involve a comparative study of the schools, and they are mentioned by name only when their policies are already in the public domain; further, these references to policy are included only when helpful. Visits were made to each of the capital cities where the three schools are located, and representative staff members of each of the institutions were contacted ahead of time to ensure interview availability.

3.6 Participants

Consistent with qualitative epistemologies, whereby the researcher is obliged to view a broad dynamic of the participants as they interact in professional and/or personal environments (Jensen, 2008), the interviewees were selected in order that the study could take "a close look at the lived experiences of the participants" (p. 3). One-on-one, open-ended and semi-structured interviews were carried out with the following key interviewees:

1. Heads of Acting Departments
2. Acting teachers
3. Voice teachers
4. Movement teachers
5. Theatre directors
6. Psychologists
7. Drama educators
8. Graduate acting students

A phone interview was conducted with acting school applicant 'Helen'.

3.6.1 Participant Criteria

For the drama school staff, certain key individuals were approached at each school:

1. Head of Acting
2. Acting teachers
3. Head of Voice
4. Head of Movement.

Other staff approached at each drama school had to meet the following criteria:

5. Full-time status
6. A minimum of five years' teaching experience.

Other participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- For freelance staff: that they be working at, or have worked at, one of the three nominated schools.
- For graduate students: that they have graduated from one of the three nominated schools within the past three years.
- For older graduates: that they have graduated from one of the three nominated schools.

- For the psychologists: that they be experienced in their field and have some experience with arts, preferably acting students.
- For drama educators: that they be of senior lecturer status in their area at a university School of Education.

The overriding criterion in all areas was that the study collect data from the most experienced informants available, covering a wide range of areas.

3.6.2 Participant Roles

3.6.2.1 Heads of Acting Departments

The Heads of Acting Departments at tertiary actor training institutions are responsible for the overall philosophy, vision and teaching methodology of their courses and department. They are involved in choosing and supervising the department staff, and they report to the Director of the School on issues relevant to the wellbeing of their staff and students. For this research project, the aim for this group was to gain information and comment on strategies in place for student psychological safety as well as mental and emotional wellbeing.

3.6.2.2 Acting Department Staff

Acting department staffs include teachers of the different specialised fields of acting training programmes. The three main fields are considered to be acting, voice and movement, though many other areas are taught, including improvisation, dramatic literature and stage combat. However, each of the main three areas has a particular mode of operation, so from the study's point of view it was considered important to examine them individually. The stimulus and resolution of emotional issues can be quite different in each of these core subjects.

3.6.2.3 Theatre Directors

Theatre directors in the actor training environment lead students in the unique environments of the rehearsal and performance arenas. They are responsible for guiding a cast of student actors through the process of rehearsing a particular play over some weeks and taking it into performance. Directors are in a position to be most cognisant of rehearsal issues and of 'role blurring' or 'emotional hangovers' that can occur as a result of theatre productions.

3.6.2.4 Freelance Acting Teachers

Freelance teachers are those who are employed by the drama schools on a part-time or 'casual' basis, and usually work on short-term contracts. They constitute a large section of the staff at drama schools. Many of the interviewees in this research had taught or were teaching at other institutions as well as the nominated drama schools, so were able to contribute a cross-section of information. It was also felt that this group, not being full-time employees, may have been less likely to feel the need to defend the schools' policies. In recruiting the freelance teachers and directors for interviews, I relied on my own experience and contacts with people who were highly experienced and respected in the field, or who represented certain training approaches. I also sought out those who were currently active in actor training with their 'finger on the pulse' of the contemporary actor training environment.

3.6.2.5 Psychologists

Psychologists are employed by universities to provide free and confidential support to students who may be experiencing personal problems. This service has become an integral component of many educational institutions. The psychologists interviewed for this project had some experience with student actors and staff. Their views were sought in a variety of areas, including the possible impact of actor training techniques on students and the

major reasons acting students sought psychological assistance. Their opinions were also canvassed on ways of dealing with emotional distress and best practice methods for such occurrences.

3.6.2.6 Drama Educators

Drama educators are lecturers in the tertiary field who train students to become primary and secondary school drama teachers. It was considered useful to the research to investigate issues of similarity occurring in secondary drama and vocational drama training and to explore policies and approaches within the drama education arena.

3.6.2.7 Graduate Drama Students

Acting students who had graduated from one of the three nominated schools were interviewed. Recent graduates were chosen because they had graduated only two or three years prior to the interview, and thus had had time to reflect on their experience while still representing the current practices of the schools. Topics explored included how they had experienced their training, how it had affected them personally and suggestions about how procedures might be improved.

The older graduates were those interviewed teachers who had graduated from one of the participating schools themselves, albeit quite a few years prior to the interview. Questions about their student days were considered useful in gauging how policies and procedures might have changed in the interim. Interviewing current students was considered bordering on the unethical, as they were still in the middle of their actor training experience and unlikely to be able to express objective views.

3.7 Interview Procedure

Permission was obtained from the Director of each of the drama schools to assure relevant staff members that they were authorised to participate in the

study. A total of 32 participants were interviewed for the study, with the time and place of the interviews pre-arranged. For the most part, the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' offices during school time. Other interviews were conducted in the interviewee's or researcher's residence. The interviews lasted an average of one hour—some longer. I attempted to make the interviews relaxed and conversational, where participants could express their points of view openly and without fear of judgement. At no time was I hindered in my efforts to interview drama school staff, all of whom were accommodating with their time, despite busy schedules. The gender representation came out weighted towards males (20 males to 12 females), although this does not represent the overall gender breakdowns of staff at the three schools, which are, to a great extent, evenly balanced.

3.7.1 Consent

Each of the participants in the study was sent an email letter inviting them to participate in the research project. The letter briefly explained the parameters of the study and set out guidelines for the interview. All but one of the participants approached agreed to participate and, at the time of the interview, willingly signed a formal consent form based on a model provided by Edith Cowan University. A template of the letter of invitation can be found in Appendix C and of the consent form in Appendix D. The interviewees understood that the interviews would be recorded and later transcribed. They were also assured that the study was not comparative, and therefore opinions expressed by them in the interview would remain anonymous. They were assured that neither they nor their schools would be identified. Ethical issues were always at the forefront during collection of data for this project. Interviewees were assured of anonymity and their right to privacy was maintained throughout. Their names were coded from the beginning of the process and their recorded interviews transcribed and stored according to strict privacy conditions as set out in the Edith Cowan University ethics approval contract.

3.7.2 Interview Questions

As interviews were the main source of data gathered for this project, the nature of the questions was of utmost importance. The choice of questions was aimed to focus on the interviewees' areas of expertise, while exploring and illuminating various aspects of actor training and its pedagogy. An example of the type and range of questions asked in interviews is available in Appendix B. The questions provided therein indicate to some extent the form the interviews took and the overall structure that was adhered to. The questions were designed to open up the responses of the interviewees, while at the same time avoiding being leading or presumptive. The goal was to gain as much information as possible within the time frame, while keeping to the boundaries set by the research questions. For the most part, the interviews were relaxed and the interviewees open to unrestricted discussion of the topics. Further dialogue often took place for clarification purposes or to further illuminate a point being made, and participants were free to openly express their views on a range of relevant subjects.

3.7.3 Transcripts

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. In general, the transcripts ranged from 4,000 to 8,000 words per interview, depending on the length of time taken. I chose to transcribe the interviews myself, and as a result became extremely familiar with the subject matter and opinions expressed therein. This proved to be a useful tool when coding, as I was able to remember and identify the sources of particular points of view. Very occasionally, if a section was considered irrelevant to the study, it was carefully omitted and the omission section noted. As already confirmed, the anonymity of the participants was maintained at all times by assigning a letter of the alphabet to their transcribed interviews. The transcripts became the primary source of data for assessing the current situation in the nominated drama schools. As topics and themes emerged and were consolidated, I was

able to make a note of these even while transcribing the later interviews, and to tabulate the text with relevant headings. When collating material, I was then able to quickly scan the transcribed interviews and identify pertinent passages.

3.7.4 Supplementary Data

Drama school websites and prospectuses became sources of supplementary data. All three schools host significant and impressive websites, which have become increasingly more sophisticated and informative. These websites are the primary source of contact for prospective students, and were constantly referred to for updates because of their constant change and revision.

3.8 Summary

Qualitative research is by its nature 'creative and interpretive', and "qualitative interpretations are constructed" (p. 37), according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003). This being the case, the 'qualitative interpretations' drawn from the material collected in this study have been channelled to provide meaningful information about the complex phenomenon of emotions in the field of actor training, and how this issue is managed in the designated drama schools.

These qualitative interpretations have been arrived at using a clear methodological framework, including a rigorous data collection process with strict inclusion criteria applied. Interviews were transcribed and subsequent analysis of the data resulted in the identification of themes and subject headings.

These recognised areas are explored in the chapters to follow, and together represent a comprehensive picture of the role emotions play in the drama schools under consideration. One of the key issues to emerge from the research was that of duty of care; this subject is addressed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: MENTAL HEALTH AND DUTY OF CARE

This chapter identifies duty of care issues in the educational setting before focusing on the particular risks inherent in the actor training environment. It discusses strategies the participating drama schools have in place to assist with their duty of care responsibilities and assesses their effectiveness. These strategies include counselling services, peer support systems, student complaints and grievance policies and the schools' 'open door' policy. In any discussion about student welfare, it is important to identify duty of care issues as they pertain to both teachers and institutions, and to attempt to clarify what this accountability may mean in practice.

4.1 The Issues

Australian educational researcher Steve Holden (2008) stated that all educators have a legal responsibility for the students in their care, called duty of care. Holden defined duty of care as "the duty owed by a teacher with normal skills and attributes to take reasonable care of a student or students, and to avoid injuries to them which could reasonably be foreseen" (p. 19). A breach of duty of care while students are engaged in school activities constitutes negligence, according to Holden, who added that duty of care "involves a teacher, school or school authority taking reasonable care to prevent injury, but not a duty to *ensure* against injury" (p. 20). Holden referred to a 1980 High Court judgement that held that an education authority has a non-delegable duty of care to its students, citing Chief Justice Anthony Mason as saying that "the duty to take reasonable care ought to be substituted by a more stringent duty, a duty to ensure that reasonable care is taken" (p. 21).

Duty of care issues can be quite complex, especially considering lawyer Jonathon Rosenoer's (1996) statement that liability may exist even when a person has considered the possible consequences carefully and exercised

his or her own best judgement. Rosenoer further stated that negligence may be based on an act or a failure to act, and concluded that professionals and those engaged in any work or trade requiring special skill may be held to a higher, professional standard of care. This becomes a particularly difficult area to navigate considering the risks involved in some actor training practices and the parameters of what may be considered reasonable care.

4.2 Duty of Care Risks

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, research has suggested that artists may be at higher risk of mental illness than members of the general public (Schildkraut, Hirshfeld & Murphy, 1994) and that artists experience heightened sensitivity to emotional extremes (Redfield Jamison, 1993). Experience, anecdotal reports and findings from this research support the reality that many acting students do experience emotional and psychological difficulties during their course of undergraduate study. Although such difficulties may be influenced by many factors, findings in this research indicate that the acting courses at the conservatoire schools may contain techniques and experiences that can trigger excessive emotional outpouring for students. McFarren (2003) and Seton (2006) are only two of the many researchers already cited who question the wisdom of such training techniques. McFarren (2003) specifically interrogated actor training techniques that triggered prior traumatic experiences of student actors, or those that imposed new traumas on students in training or rehearsal contexts. Seton (2006) claimed that his term 'post-dramatic stress' was used "as a provocation to elicit further discussion in this crucial area of ethical accountability" (p. 18).

In the context of this discussion, Seton and Trouton (2015) suggested that teaching practices are ethically acceptable only if potential benefits justify potential risks, and that such benefits should include "a safe place for the vocalising of students' psychological, physical, social and aesthetic needs

and desires" (p. 3). They also asserted that in Australia, rates of mental disorder peak in the 16–24 year age group, with more than one in four young adults having an anxiety, depressive or substance use disorder. Seton and Trouton (2015) therefore maintained that current Higher Education teaching practices in arts training institutions should take into account the increased risk for mental health issues among these already sensitive and highly motivated young people.

In terms of student wellbeing and duty of care, it is reasonable to ask what would be considered 'reasonable care' in order to avoid or prevent perceived 'injury' in actor training situations, and to what extent drama schools should be expected to safeguard their students from emotional or psychological injury as a 'side effect' of their courses. Little attention has been given in the literature to detailed examinations of what constitutes 'best' or 'better practice' in drama schools, according to Prior (2004), which leads to the inference that standards of behaviour are relatively unexamined in this area of study. However, Seton (2007b) subsequently claimed that acting needed to be "freshly recognised as a social, embodied practice about willingness to affect and be affected by the other" (p. 13), while arguing for greater ethical accountability or 'duty of care' between teachers and students in actor training practices. He determined that there needed to be a conscious and frequently articulated acknowledgement that "teachers and students are participating in ongoing circulations of desire, power and resistance" (Seton, 2007b, p. 13), asserting that even though some training practices may feel appropriate in the short term, not all were going to be sustainable or renewable over the long term.

In a later article, Seton (2010) noted that students of acting and their significant 'audiences'—their teachers and fellow students—profoundly *form* and *are formed by* each other through their embodied interactions, leading him to argue that this "embodied formation . . . [required] appropriate and sustainable ethical training practices" (p. 5). In Seton's research, the notion of

vulnerability emerged as the quality most valued and required as "a gestural symbol of commitment to the discipline of acting" (p. 13), resulting in him stressing that greater duty of care was needed—in particular for those participating in simulated performances of violence. Seton maintained that such participants needed support in negotiating the inevitability of trauma, and that ethical and sustainable practices built into actor training would flow through to ethical and sustainable practices in actor employment. This questioning of ethical practices and duty of care comes long after Burgoyne (1991) queried the ethical responsibilities of directors who urge actors "to explore their own psyches in the process of creating a character" (p. 1).

In the present research, the importance of duty of care in the actor training environment was highlighted by Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) and by psychologist Darryl Cloonan (2008), who concurred that arts training institutions needed to be much more aware of the mental health concerns of their students. Cloonan claimed that duty of care was often interpreted in different ways within the trainee artist environment, and that many problems were left 'untreated' until far too late and often at a highly distressing stage.

An important question arises: to what degree do the areas of duty of care and ethical responsibility overlap? I would suggest that they are inseparable. In her interview, Head of Voice Teacher M (interview, 22 May, 2013) was adamant that her drama school was not fulfilling its duty of care responsibilities to its acting students, and proffered several examples. These included the curriculum design, which she felt left the students "so exhausted they are unable to access their creativity and imagination". This teacher maintained that student growth should happen incrementally and follow a clear progression, and that currently students were "pulled in so many directions they are left vulnerable and fragile and cannot function". Expanding on this viewpoint, this teacher (Teacher M, interview, 22 May, 2013) explained that the students were working on 'the Greeks' (playwrights) at the same time as on a Chekov play while simultaneously performing in

Shakespeare—which meant they only had time to learn lines and nothing else, and were not sufficiently involved in trust and ensemble work. In this situation, Teacher M stated, "You are not supporting the students when you work like this because you are not building safety nets and letting them know they have a support network". It is possible that if the emphasis on the programming of acting courses became more explicitly conscious of duty of care issues, then conservatoire training institutions could be encouraged to rethink their scheduling and perhaps even their curricula.

4.3 Managing Risk

Universities have specific policies regarding harassment and abuse, some as specific as never touching a student or mentioning someone's appearance (Barton, 1994). Barton (1994) commented that acting teachers needed to be certain that exceptions to such codes of behaviour were identified in the syllabus itself or officially approved. This is because, in the actor training environment, teachers are often required to become 'familiar' with their students—for example, perhaps touch and handle students' bodies in order to better inform their teaching. This can be a risky area full of potential misunderstandings. Teachers in all the performing arts areas generally know to ask permission of their students before touching them for instruction purposes and to contextualise the action, but to my knowledge there are no official guidelines or warnings about this practice specific to the drama schools.

Burgoyne (1991) reported that, after directing a student production, her experience led her to question the ethical responsibilities of directors and theatre educators towards actors. She stated that she had never seen an explicitly stated code of ethics guiding the training of actors, and suggested that "interdisciplinary dialogue on the ethics of actor training could help develop ways of working which are psychologically sound, as well as artistically effective" (p. 7). Interestingly, little seems to have changed since

that time, given that 18 years later Seton (2007b) suggested that it would be helpful if discussion were opened up on how the demands of actor training can be manipulated into a justification for what might otherwise be considered negligent, or worse, abusive behaviour—and then three years later anticipated that making "suggestions for further discussion, debate and research about ethical accountability in training and subsequent employment practices would have the potential to affect the status quo that preserves and sustains the current field in all its manifestations" (Seton, 2010, p. 18). With his colleague Trouton, Seton subsequently stated that "lecturer-practitioners have an ethical 'duty of care' to both identify the quality of different potential risks present in the teaching activity and subsequent assessment of the probability and severity of those risks" (Seton & Trouton, 2015, p. 4). Seton and Trouton suggested that teachers could design appropriate strategies for management and/or minimisation of risk, as well as an evaluation of the potential benefits of the learning. Their list of potential 'harms' in the psychological area of performing arts training includes feelings of distress, worthlessness, guilt, anger and fear.

My research suggests that there are no formal strategies in place in the drama schools in this study to deal with duty of care issues specific to actor training. Although there are, of course, broad university policies, it is primarily left to individual staff members to ensure that specific duty of care boundaries are maintained, and often those teachers are not sure of the parameters themselves. Achieving an appropriate level of duty of care by teachers, schools and institutions remains an enormous challenge for all stakeholders in the field of actor training. Taking into account the high level of emotional risk to which acting students appear to be exposed, the question has to be asked: what strategies are currently in place in the drama schools to counteract these risks? The following section explores the systems that have been established and examines their effectiveness.

4.4 Mental Health Strategies

Interviewed teachers in the actor training arena all talk about the high degree of pastoral care that forms part of the professional requirements of their job. Some say that playing the role of counsellor is unavoidable and, indeed, integral to what they do, because of the intense and personal situations that present themselves in classes and rehearsals. So what are the strategies currently used in the drama schools to act as safeguards of the mental and emotional wellbeing of their students?

4.4.1 Counselling

Each of the drama schools in this study is affiliated with a university and has access to on-campus counselling services provided by those institutions. UK psychologist David Petherbridge (as cited in Seton et al., 2012) commented that at the university level, professional support services generally had been longer established and had developed more of a 'duty of care' culture than any such services at the drama schools. My research indicates that the success of the university counselling services in treating trainee actors varies considerably from one school to the next.

Counselling Services

University counselling services offer free professional counselling to their institutions' students and staff. These services can involve an initial assessment of presenting issues and the development of appropriate therapeutic interventions; they may also include external referral. The drama schools affiliated with larger universities appear to have more resources and a wider range of benefits offered by their counselling services than those with smaller facilities. For example, one university lists thirteen counsellors and four locum counsellors on its staff, and offers a variety of additional psychological services such as workshops and training. Another university has only two counsellors on campus. All the counselling services offer free

short-term treatment with regular review and ongoing client management. Some services make clear how they respond to urgent appointments: one service has an instant 30-minute drop-in appointment facility for students experiencing a crisis. A 'crisis' is defined on the University of Melbourne's Counselling and Psychological services website as "something that happens out of the ordinary which causes physical and/or emotional shock when a person's thoughts, feelings, values, habits and even behaviour may change, temporarily or permanently" (University of Melbourne, 2015, para. 2). These kinds of experiences can happen to acting students during their training, and I have observed that sometimes they are dismissed by staff members as simply 'emotional episodes' or 'par for the course', and are often neither recognised nor treated as any kind of crisis situation.

Upcraft and Gardner (1989) argued that counselling services should be integrated with relevant personnel and programs, and incorporated into orientation procedures and interwoven throughout students' first-year experience. These researchers also suggested that counsellors should work closely with faculty members, administrative staff and those in academic units to make an impact on all aspects of student life. Subsequently, Barton (1994) proposed that acting teachers get to know the personnel at their university counselling centres and inform them of "the customs, traditions, expectation and standards common to the theatre arts" (p. 110). He stressed that university counsellors need to have a better understanding of the environment in which student actors study, and one option he suggested was that a trainee counsellor be specifically charged with becoming knowledgeable about the acting programme and standards within the department as part of his or her training. This staff member could then be the one to whom students in crisis were first referred, with some assurance of informed guidance, awareness and consideration of all possible options. Barton (1994) made it clear that without this knowledge and interface, counsellors risk advising emotionally fragile students to work out their issues

in acting classes, or suggesting that actors under stress leave productions in order to alleviate their feelings, without recognising the 'disastrous consequences' of such choices. As Barton put it, "The pressure, competition, unpredictability, suspense, and intense, ever-changing negotiation inherent in theatre even on an ordinary, comparatively low-stress day tend far to exceed those in other fields" (p. 110). Sarah Keeling (2003) subsequently advised that these co-operative efforts between students, teachers and counsellors would be especially helpful to the 'Millennial' generation of students (born after the 1980s), who were used to intensive attention.

Cloonan (2008) similarly argued that counsellors needed to be made aware of the particular pressures experienced by arts students, where learning is so closely bound up with student-to-student and student-to-staff relationships, because familiarity with the practices ensured better service. Petherbridge (as cited in Seton et al., 2012) also stressed the need to design very specialised support services within actor training institutions, in order that counsellors understand the institutional context of a drama school and the demands of the profession, of the curriculum and of the student's developmental 'journey'.

All of this suggests that it is highly advisable for drama school staff members to interact with counselling services personnel. Apart from the 'resident' counsellor at one of the schools, who seemed to be well known to the staff, few teachers at other schools appeared to have had any first-hand contact with the counsellors.

Resident Counsellor

At one of the participating drama schools, a university-employed counsellor commits one day per week to students from that institution. According to the current resident counsellor, Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013), this schedule was inaugurated some years ago because of awareness that the school's students were more likely than average to experience mental health

issues and needed specific support. Working within the drama school building, Psychologist A reported that his time there was always booked out and that students were allowed time away from their classes or rehearsals to have a counselling session with him with no questions asked. This is a refreshing change from the usual drama school modus operandi, where rehearsal time in particular is regarded as sacrosanct and almost no excuse for absence is accepted: "rehearsals missed are irreplaceable" (WAAPA Standard Theatre Practice 2014, Appendix 4, p. 4 unpublished course material).

It became very apparent during my interview with Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) that he understood the unique workings of the acting school environment and recognised the demands and stresses of the course. He commented that staff referrals had increased since his presence had become more accepted, and that students were also free to seek appointments outside of the designated drama school counselling day. Psychologist A also advised that his being aligned to the drama school had helped to better define boundaries for staff members dealing with students' personal issues. Interviewed staff from this school agreed that they readily advised students to take advantage of the 'in-house' counselling sessions, and welcomed and supported the opportunity to separate their teaching from pastoral care. It is interesting to also note that 'resident' psychologists are increasingly employed in the Australian dance industry as integral members of their teams (Australian Ballet, 2015). I am not aware of this happening with theatre companies in Australia.

Student Counselling Attendance

On another campus, it appeared that few acting students had taken on board information about the university counselling service, and that some were still not aware of it, even after graduating. Students are informed of the service during orientation, but none of those interviewed from this particular school

had utilised the service. "It was just not on our radar", said Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012), who admitted that she knew no one who had used the service in her time at the school. She acknowledged that the information had 'got lost' in the material they were presented with during orientation; this correlates with comments from Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) that acting students often do not absorb practical information at the beginning of their course because they are in a 'drunk on drama school' honeymoon period. Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) suggested that a reminder of the counselling services at the beginning of each year may have been useful.

Overall, staff from this school seemed more hesitant to advise students to seek on-campus counselling, and the resource seemed underutilised by performing arts students. Teacher Q works primarily with Aboriginal acting students and commented that on-campus counselling was not viable for his students:

> I've tried it and it does not work. I've never found a counsellor who can meet my students at their level. It's on the spot for them and if a meltdown is happening, it has to be dealt with right away. You can't ask them to come back next week because they run away. (interview, 31 October, 2012)

Teacher Q's students do have specific cultural issues that need particular knowledge and care, but this case still points to the limitations of the on-campus counselling service. These limitations were also highlighted by Teacher L (interview, 15 October, 2012), who revealed that if a distressed student sought counselling, she usually escorted them to the counselling services office herself because she had found from experience that "if a staff member is with the student, they tend to be seen more quickly". While this may seem disappointing for a counselling service that should be able to respond to crises and attend to clients in a reasonably prompt time frame, acting and other performing arts students make up a very small percentage

of the overall student population on this particular campus, which has only two counsellors for a student population of many thousands.

The difficulties encountered by acting students are often specific to their course and to the unique situations of their sometimes confronting work. Actor/teacher James Forsythe (1996) affirmed that life is often a series of frustrations and seeming failures for the actor in training, because what once seemed easy and natural can collapse under the weight of a conservatory training programme. Resident Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) trained in an allied arts area and appeared to comprehend the pressures and restraints involved in arts training. He understood that many personal issues can be triggered for students by the roles they play and the plays they work on. His observation was that many people in the creative arts seem to come from difficult backgrounds, and suggested that although theatre can be an 'escape' for these people, it is also very confronting once they embark on a formal course. This psychologist indicated that this was in part because formal training asks students to be more self-aware and to bring their emotions to the surface to use in their performances. He claimed that it is now part of the university's duty of care onus to provide specific support for such courses, because in years gone by there had been no psychological counselling assistance at all. Drama teacher and academic, Teacher I (interview, 23 May, 2013), agreed that in the past drama schools had been virtually 'a law unto themselves', and that there had not been the same sense of institutionalised risk management that occurs now that they are under the aegis of universities.

Student Preparation

How prepared are the students for the emotional rollercoaster that actor training can be? From the interviews with the graduates in this study, the answer would seem to be not at all. All graduates agreed they had no idea of the emotional demands and personal upheaval that would be involved.

Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) felt that the course had been very exposing, and that if she had been more fully briefed on the emotional requirements she may have been better prepared. However, other graduates suggested that it would be very difficult to prepare oneself for the kind of turbulence that can take place, because "you just have to experience it".

Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) suggested that an annual group session lead by a counsellor may have assisted her cohort in becoming more supportive, as well as alleviating the unspoken tension that seeking psychological assistance was a sign of not coping. In the past, according to Teacher A (interview, 21 May, 2013), if students were not coping they would be judged as "just not cut out to be actors". He felt that with increasing awareness of psychological issues, it was now more likely that staff could acknowledge that such students still had a contribution to make and that the onus was on the schools to create a safe environment where these students could find their strengths. In my role as a drama therapist, I was once asked to take a series of sessions with a fragmented group of third-year acting students who were not functioning effectively as an ensemble. Although the sessions were somewhat successful, I completely agreed with the student feedback that the sessions would have been much more beneficial and effective at the beginning of their course, not towards the end.

Teacher Referrals

When should teachers advise students to seek counselling? University staff members are generally advised not to become involved with students' personal issues, but the situation for teachers in the actor training setting can be quite different from most other academic environments. As already noted, it is not unusual for acting teachers to regularly experience students becoming emotional in class. Psychologist C agreed with many of the interviewed teachers that the expression of emotion need not be 'a problem', and can in fact be a sign of mental health: "We all cry, it doesn't necessarily

mean anything is wrong. Something like a death can trigger grief, which is quite normal" (interview, 12 July, 2014). However, this psychologist also contended that if it was an ongoing issue to do with a person's personality and way of operating in the world, then a counsellor would be the appropriate person to deal with it. He suggested that a teacher would have to deduce this need by interacting with the student on multiple occasions, or some cataclysmic episode would have to occur. Assisting drama school teachers to identify when to advise students to seek counselling is an important topic to include in a preparatory course for acting teachers; this is proposed in Chapter 9.

In summary, it would appear the even though the country's leading drama schools have access to free university counselling services as part of their support for acting students, the level of use and effectiveness of these resources, as well as the resources themselves, seem to differ widely from one institution to the other. The most effective system appears to be one where a counsellor is assigned to the drama school for a minimum of one day per week. Ideally, this 'resident' counsellor would have a comprehensive understanding of the rigours of arts training and the unique issues involved. It is suggested that counsellors could raise awareness of mental health issues with actor training staff and talk annually with each cohort of students about some of the issues that may arise as a result of their training. There could also be a weekly personal growth class for each cohort; this suggestion is elaborated upon in the next section.

4.4.2 Peer Support

The emotionally volatile atmosphere of drama schools would seem an ideal environment in which to establish peer support groups as described by Helen Cowie and Patti Wallace (2000): "peer support systems, whether formal or informal, tend to incorporate the use of basic listening skills, empathy for a person with social or emotional difficulties, a problem-solving approach to

interpersonal difficulties and a willingness to take a supportive role" (p. 10). However, simply encouraging students to give each other support leaves a lot to chance; it is not enough to depend on the spontaneous emergence of helpful support from peers (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi & Lagerspetz, 1999). Psychologists Salmivalli et al., (1999) discovered that young people were much more likely to offer help to their peers in distress if there was a system within which to operate.

Cowie and Wallace (2000) similarly claimed that sharing issues or difficulties with a peer, although not the same as a counselling session, involved the same ethical issues of confidentiality and role/relationship boundaries, and argued that students should have guidance in these areas. This was because peer support systems required that "the peer supporter should be skilled in communication, should be able to listen actively to another person, and should adopt a problem-solving approach to the other's difficulty" (Cowie & Wallace, 2000, p. 10). As a consequence, staff members need to play a significant role in the process by providing training in a supportive environment in order to ensure that "the non-punitive nature of peer support offers clear and genuine channels of communication amongst those involved" (p. 10).

Prior (2012) pointed out the lack of literature on mentoring strategies for beginning actors, and the fact that, in his observation, little or no formal mentoring existed in most UK or Australian schools. Although he may have been referring to adult-to-student mentoring, my research has revealed that the schools in this project are all attempting to implement some kind of peer mentoring system with their students. At one of the drama schools, the affiliate university has a well-established peer mentoring programme (University of New South Wales, 2015), which stipulates that peer mentors are experienced students who provide support to new students making the transition to university life. Mentors guide new students through the first crucial weeks at university, and are provided with comprehensive training to

ensure they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to support the new students. The feedback from those who mentored and those who had been mentored was extremely positive, and both reported it as an extremely rewarding experience.

This mentorship scheme is a university-wide programme, but the basics of it were implemented into its resident drama school by the school counsellor and staff in 2013 in order to establish the drama school's own course-specific peer mentorship scheme. This scheme involves assigning a first-year student to a third-year student to assist the new students in settling into the school. Psychologist A (interview, 21 May, 2013) commented that adjustment issues often arose in the first few months of the course because so many of the acting students were away from their home cities or states. The scheme helps novice students form a connection with fellow students who have been through similar experiences, and could assist in negotiating the acting school initiation. Psychologist A runs groups for the senior students in the first three months of the year to assist them with their peer support role.

Another drama school's affiliated university has an Arts Peer Mentoring programme that its acting students can tap into if they choose, whereas the third school has a version of the peer support system, known as the 'buddy system', which was instigated some years ago. Although the staff reported positively on this strategy, the interviewed students did not consider it successful. Graduate D (interview, 20 May, 2013) was clear that the system did not work for him when he was assigned a buddy in his first year, nor when he was assigned as a buddy in his third year. He thought this was because the system was too casual: there were no assigned times to meet nor nominated numbers of meetings to have, and students became busy, so meeting up with each other did not happen. Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) acknowledged that the buddy system was a great idea, but admitted that her cohort regarded it as a "white elephant" and that there needed to be a formal initiation and more guidance along the way. She

disclosed that she became stressed when she felt her third-year buddy did not talk to her, and then guilty when the girl to whom she was a buddy left the school for emotional reasons. These problems provide an example of how teacher support is essential in such systems. This student seemed to feel rejected as a buddy and then over-responsible for her buddy's emotional issues. It is apparent that this well-intentioned 'informal befriending' scheme clearly needs more operational supervision before it achieves the intended results.

Pairings

In the school where the peer support system was just being established, Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) acknowledged that it needed careful planning and that staff members were still assessing how best to pair up students. Pairing actors with actors helped with adjustment issues, because the new student could talk to someone who had negotiated and survived the first-year experience. However, being paired with a performing arts person from another course might give the new student a different perspective.

In the 'buddy system' school, the students were paired on the instincts of one of the instructors, Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012), who decided which third year might "get on" with which first year. She said she usually waited a month to get to know the new students before matching them with someone with whom they might have a connection or similar interests. However, as the first month is often crucial for new students needing guidance, it would seem preferable if they had some peer support at this time. Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) instructed the third years to initiate contact and be a person the first years could talk to. If there were problems, they were to refer back to her. From the interviewed graduates, it was clear that many of these pairings did not work, and Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) suggested it would have been preferable for

the first and third years to do a class together and see who 'organically' paired up. For this system to succeed, it would seem that more formal planning, training and structure is needed to help the buddies understand how they can fulfil their role.

Regular supervision is one of the corners of the peer support service, because it ensures the safety of the young people who use the service and of those who work as peer supporters (Cowie & Wallace, 2000). Cowie and Wallace (2000) maintained that supervision at this basic level usually requires skills already used by these professionals in other aspects of their work, and that "for the most part a supervisor will need the skills of listening, facilitating disclosure, focusing and providing boundaries and guidance in a non-judgemental way" (p. 125). At drama schools, training could be carried out with third-year students at the beginning of each year.

Benefits

In an evaluation study, all peer helpers reported without exception that they had encountered great personal benefits through their involvement in the scheme (Cowie & Wallace, 2000). These benefits included interpersonal skills, an increase in self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and a belief that they were contributing positively to the life of the school community. Teachers also reported that peer collaboration gave them greater awareness of their own emotional interaction with their pupils. One peer mentor (University of New South Wales, 2015) talked about the rewarding experience of helping new students move from feeling anxious and overwhelmed by their new university life, to being calmer and more at ease. Another said it was an invigorating experience that 'worked both ways' by building her confidence and communication skills while benefiting another student with an understanding of the university system along with support, care and guidance. One of the 'mentees' said it was very helpful having

someone empathise with a situation, knowing and understanding what they were going through.

It seems that a peer support system is an excellent tool for drama schools and has the potential to benefit student wellbeing greatly. However, peer support systems require careful planning and continuing supervision. There are resources available for the implementation and management of such systems, and it would seem extremely helpful for drama schools to adopt their own individualised peer support systems.

4.4.3 Student Complaints and Grievance Policies

It is important for all students to feel that there is a clear pathway to report to those in authority. The universities affiliated to the drama schools in the study all have processes for formal complaints and academic appeals in place, and make it clear in their policies that effective communication is of paramount importance when attempting to resolve difficulties experienced by students. For example, at the VCA, the University of Melbourne's Student Complaints and Grievance Policy (University of Melbourne, 2013a) states that the University is committed to a culture of openness and fairness and will follow transparent, fair and timely procedures for addressing complaints. It states that students will not suffer any discrimination as a result of raising complaints and grievances, which will be considered within specified and achievable timeframes. Some of the grounds for complaints include students being affected by improper or negligent conduct or by unfair treatment, prejudice or bias. The other universities in this project have very similar policies.

Although these formal procedures are necessary, due to the specific and unique circumstances involved in actor training, it would also seem vital to have more informal and easily accessible procedures for students to air their concerns. Reasons for this include the importance of maintaining positive relationships with instructors who teach them for the course's entire three

years, as well as the sometimes confronting and emotional incidences that may require immediate attention. Drama students need to feel that there are staff members who can listen and deal fairly with whatever is troubling them while it is occurring. The spontaneous reactions that actor training can elicit usually demand on-the-spot attention.

Representation

By and large, drama schools have dealt with representation issues in democratic and comprehensive ways—some positions being elected by the students and some appointed. Representation is addressed at many levels, from student cohort representatives to student representatives on school and university boards. It provides many routes for students to have complaints heard or questions answered. The hierarchy begins with each cohort of acting students electing a student to represent their year and speak on behalf of the class when issues arise. The representative's initial action would be to speak directly to the teacher or person deemed responsible for a particular student's or class's concerns. The best outcome is for an issue to be resolved at this level; if this is not possible, the next port of call may be the staff year representative. At two of the schools, a staff member is responsible for dealing with problems arising in that student year. If difficulties cannot be resolved at this 'grassroots' level, then staff and/or students can go to the Head of Acting and from there to the Head of School for resolution. Ultimately, the Directors of the schools are the last resort, and matters of student complaints are usually only referred to them if all other avenues of resolution have failed. There are, therefore, many avenues by which students can air their concerns before an official complaint is considered. It is important for students' wellbeing to feel that there is an established line of command for concerns to be fairly heard.

Drama School Grievance Policies

In my experience, acting students at drama schools tend to see themselves as separate from the university student body as a whole, and are probably less likely than other students to take advantage of the university's grievance and equal opportunity policies. For that reason alone it would seem advisable for drama schools to create their own procedures that can focus on the specific issues likely to arise in the drama setting. The representation chain outlined above goes some way to achieving that function.

In addition to the above outlined forms of representation, however, NIDA has gone further and instituted a drama-school-specific Non-Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure (NIDA, 2014b). This document is written along the lines of its university's policy, and states that it deals effectively, equitably and efficiently with complaints from students to NIDA and its staff. It is a very comprehensive document that seems to give credence to the particular difficulties students may encounter in courses, highlighting that "wherever possible, grievances should be resolved by a process of discussion, co-operation and conciliation, with the aim of reaching an acceptable outcome that minimises any potential detriment to ongoing study relationships" (p. 3). This last point is significant for acting students, who inevitably feel that any complaint about a staff member is going to have repercussions on their ongoing relationships with that person and affect their progress. No doubt with this in mind, the NIDA policy asks that students raise concerns as early as possible after the relevant incident has occurred and that, in the case of an audition or interview, that student applicants raise any grievance within one week of it occurring. It also states that grievances will be treated seriously, expeditiously and sensitively having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy, and offers the opportunity for all parties to be heard, including those who have had a complaint made against them. It ensures there is a proper investigation of the facts and that grievances are handled as close as possible to their source, although it acknowledges that

this may be influenced by the nature of the grievance and the complainant's wishes. It also declares that disciplinary action will be taken should it be found that the complainant, the respondent or any other person associated with the grievance has been subject to reprisal, disadvantage or discrimination as a result of the grievance—again, an area of great concern to acting students, who imagine their careers will be affected by making a complaint.

The NIDA document certainly attempts to deal fully with all aspects of grievance issues that may arise in the drama school environment. Nevertheless, it will always remain a reality that it is difficult for acting students to make formal grievances, and that complaints are far more likely to be dealt with in more casual and personal ways. In its Fair Treatment and Equal Opportunity Policy, NIDA (2014c) states that it is committed to creating a harmonious and productive work environment, free from discrimination and harassment, where staff and students understand and conduct themselves in accordance with the NIDA Code of Conduct (University of New South Wales, 2014), adding that NIDA treats all staff, students and potential students fairly and has open and transparent selection procedures. The other schools do not have such specific policies in place, but rather use their universities' policies to deal with formal complaints.

When enrolling in a NIDA course, students agree to abide by the Student Code of Conduct (University of New South Wales, 2014), which covers a range of rules, policies and procedures, including treating others equitably and with courtesy and respect, free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying. WAAPA gives acting students an Acting Standard Theatre Practice form (WAAPA Standard Theatre Practice, 2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material), which includes strict rules about attendance and behaviour in classes and rehearsals. It states that harassment of any person on the grounds of gender, race or sexuality is unacceptable, and that any problems should be addressed by talking to the person involved and

then the head of the course. The VCA has a university-wide Responsible Conduct of Students Procedure (University of Melbourne, 2013b) which similarly addresses treating staff and other students with respect and courtesy. Such documents can alert students to the schools' behavioural expectations, as well as the kinds of issues they may be confronted with, and may therefore assist in providing boundaries and guidance through the drama school journey.

In summary, all three drama schools acknowledge the importance of having clear lines of communication and access for their students to express dissatisfaction or discomfort with current practices and/or staff. Specific communication procedures have been put in place for the particular drama school setting, and students are given options about how to proceed with discussing or dealing with issues or concerns. Keeping it 'close to home' and making the process as unthreatening as possible no doubt alleviates the stress and anxiety acting students often feel when complaining about aspects of the course. Any procedure that encourages discussion with relevant staff without fear of a relationship breakdown is to be supported. While the affiliated universities all have well-drawn-up policies in regard to academic and equal opportunity grievances, drama schools have unique sets of circumstances within the universities. For this reason, it would seem advisable for the schools to draw up specific policies for hearing complaints and grievances.

4.4.4 Student Welfare Class

As part of my master's programme (Taylor, 1983), I ran a series of weekly drama therapy classes within a full-time acting course. The results were statistically significant in terms of the students' raised levels of awareness and general wellbeing. These classes were run along similar lines to group therapy, with strict boundaries and confidentiality guidelines. Many issues emerged that could be related directly to the students' work. For example,

one student was playing a role requiring him to become upset and cry, and was having great difficulty with this scene. In the course of my work with him, it emerged that he had always received strong messages from his parents that boys did not cry and felt he was never allowed to do so. As a consequence, that emotional part of him was locked away and not allowed access.

In the current research, Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) suggested incorporating a weekly class, similar to the one I have just described, into the actor training timetable. Its purpose would be to deal with students' personal issues, and it could be run like a psychotherapy group with strict boundaries, guidelines and confidentiality limits in place. The class might be given a title like Student Welfare or Personal Awareness, and would ideally be run by a psychologist or teacher with psychology training. This class could be a compulsory session, but not assessed—pass or fail would simply be based on attendance.

Several suggestions were made by Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) for the content of this class, including exploring students' capabilities to self-reflect, assisting them to become more aware of their strengths and limitations, investigating students' readiness to work on personal issues and looking at what was holding them back from doing their best work. Psychologist D proposed that there would be no 'good' or 'bad' issues, simply how capable and willing people were to work on any difficulties that arose and that may be interfering with their studies. She gave the example of someone growing up with very demanding parents, towards whom the child felt that he or she could never do well enough. In an acting environment where the student is constantly exposed to criticism, this could easily trigger strong reactions and even collapse.

Issues such as these need to be dealt with in a safe context. A weekly class as just described for each of the drama school years would seem a viable

solution to many of the concerns that have emerged in this study and, although not a universal 'fix', could certainly go some way in dealing with students' obstacles. Such a class could also alleviate, to some extent, teachers' significant pastoral care duties. In situations where issues are raised but not resolved for students during these sessions, students could be encouraged to seek further counselling outside of the group. Such a class could also engender strong group bonds and ensemble coherence, as well as foster peer support, effects that were seen in the master's project described (Taylor, 1983).

4.4.5 Open Door Policy

An 'open door' policy operates at all three drama schools. In educational environments, this policy usually refers to open teacher–parent communication. In the drama school context, it denotes that when staff members are not teaching, they are available to talk to students. In reality, there is a monitoring of the situation, and lecturers usually provide a list of times when they are available on their office door for students to sign up for appointment times. Interviewed staff members at each of the drama schools reinforced that their 'door was open' and that students were always welcome to discuss their issues with them. Movement Teacher T (interview, 21 May, 2013) explained that he 'literally' kept the door open at all times because he wanted students to feel that it was "a two way street". He felt that it was positive that teacher–student issues were more transparent now, adding that students could go online and give feedback about their teachers.

In my experience, teachers in drama schools are extremely generous with their out-of-class availability, and the atmosphere is usually familial and welcoming. Invariably, the student–teacher relationship in a drama school setting is closer than that in most other academic courses, and teachers often spend many out-of-class hours attending to their students. There is the

potential for student–teacher boundaries to become blurred, which needs careful monitoring and is discussed in Chapter 9.

Having summarised the strategies that are currently in place to look after student concerns, we turn to the question of what drama school practices and traditions lead to students requiring use of these safeguards. Are acting students at a higher risk of incurring emotional and mental hazards than other students? If yes, are further precautions required to protect these students? These issues are all explored in the chapters to follow beginning with the acting students' introduction into the conservatoire actor training environment—the entrance audition.

CHAPTER 5: DRAMA SCHOOL ADMISSION

To gain acceptance into the nominated drama schools, students must audition. This can be a daunting task at any age, and is sometimes quite traumatic for young actors just leaving high school and possibly lacking emotional resilience. However, the audition is an integral and necessary component of the acting courses. Therefore, this study begins at the starting point of the actor training journey: the entrance audition.

5.1 Auditions

In his book *The Way of the Actor*, psychologist Brian Bates (1987) claimed that when actors go on an audition or are interviewed for a role, it is a more stressful experience than most job applications because the job is so indivisible from the person. This may go some way in explaining why auditions can be so traumatic; however, from the beginning of an actor's career, auditions are a necessary part of the profession. The drama school entrance audition is no exception, and is always very competitive, thus adding to the already tense and emotional process. Well-known acting teacher Dean Carey (1998) recognised and acknowledged the intense pressures involved in drama auditions when he suggested that:

> The thought of auditioning for a panel of unknown faces, to share your "wares" in the hope that someone thinks you're worth something, takes many of us hurtling straight back to primary school standing awkwardly against the wire fence waiting to be chosen (or not) for the sports team. (Carey, 1998, p. x)

Physical responses to competitive audition situations were reported as "sufficient to provoke significant cortisol, arterial blood pressure (systolic and diastolic), and subjective stress responses" (Boyle, Lawton, Arkbage, Thorell & Dye, 2013, p. 1). Boyle et al. (2013) carried out an experiment with actors auditioning for a local production and concluded that audition exposure had a significant effect on stress ratings. In this instance, the audition context was a

group of participants auditioning in front of a panel of three for principal roles in an amateur production. The audition exposure was found to have a significant effect on the ratings of stress and arousal, as well as substantial changes in blood pressure. The degree to which participants were concerned about conditions of social-evaluative threat (negative judgement by others) was reported to be positively related to the engendered cortisol response— cortisol being a hormone released in response to acute stress. Interestingly, male participants demonstrated higher systolic blood pressure responses throughout. This study examining the physiological reaction to stress illustrates that in audition situations, where people feel exposed and judged in competition with others, bodies respond accordingly.

5.1.1 Historical

As an actor, I have had my fair share of uncomfortable audition experiences and have certainly encountered acting colleagues reporting on distressing stories of rudeness and ridicule at auditions. Professor of drama Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) described investigating UK drama schools in the 1980s and being shocked at some of the audition practices he encountered. He related that one well-known London drama school took an 'onion skin approach' to its selection process, believing in 'peeling layers' off its prospective students in order that they reveal their 'true selves'—with the first layer being quite literal in that auditioning students were asked to 'peel off' their clothes! The auditionees were then asked to step over the discarded garments and say the first line of their audition speech. Those who refused were dispatched and those who agreed to do it were retained to continue with similarly demeaning exercises. Teacher X said he was appalled: "This was supposed to be emotional release and finding your centre and all of that . . . but it was Stanislavsky, Strasberg and Adler gone berserk. The damage to the individuals was part of the process." He reported that there were other UK drama schools where similar approaches were part of the audition process at that time:

> It was a matter of survival for the students because these schools commenced with a large group of hopeful applicants and ended up with a handful. The survivors were supposedly the ones who were ready to take their place in the profession and there was no care for those who were discarded. (Teacher X, interview, 10 July, 2014)

I have never encountered equivalent anecdotes of drama school auditions in Australia being so radical. Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) himself experienced a much more humane audition procedure in Australia when he visited at about the same time as the above examples. However, former students and auditionee Helen (personal communication, 20 October, 2015) continue to talk about difficult drama school auditions in Australia that have left them feeling humiliated and distressed.

5.1.2 The Issues

In this research, there would seem to be two aspects to consider in regard to acting school auditions:

1. The amount of stress and distress that can be caused by the audition process, and an appraisal of ways in which some of this anxiety may be alleviated
2. If the acting courses are intense and rigorous and require students to be 'psychologically sound' in order to fully participate and take advantage of what they offer, how can this degree of 'soundness' be tested or judged in an audition process? How successful have selection processes been in the past?

To fully explore these areas it is expedient to outline exactly what the audition procedures entail in the schools in this study.

5.1.3 Audition Requirements

All three drama schools require applicants to audition for entry to their acting courses and a non-refundable fee is charged. In general, the minimum requirements for auditionees are that they will turn 18 in the first year of the

course, that they have completed their Higher School certificate or equivalent qualification and that they are proficient in written and spoken English. Similar but specific audition preparation requirements are made by the different drama schools. The following is the basic information given to acting course applicants by each of the schools on their respective 2015 websites.

NIDA applicants are required to prepare three short monologues that meet the following requirements: a classical one by Shakespeare that must be in verse or prose (not a sonnet or poem), a modern or contemporary one (from an Australian or international play) and a personal choice monologue that can be either classical or modern/contemporary (NIDA, 2015b).

WAAPA audition applicants are instructed to perform two pieces selected from the current acting audition pieces (available on the WAAPA website by August each year). One must be a classical speech, and the other a contemporary piece (WAAPA, 2015).

VCA auditionees are asked to prepare two pieces: one a Shakespeare monologue chosen from the Theatre Practice Monologues Booklet that VCA provides, and the other a three-minute original devised performance piece using the Theatre Practice Devised Performance Preparation information (VCA, 2015a).

For many years, the schools have specified the audition pieces from which applicants can choose, and provided approximately six possible speeches for each category for both male and female applicants. These selections are posted on their websites. NIDA now offers more individual choice and most recently suggested that students could choose their own monologues, offering extra guidelines about what constitutes modern plays and suggesting playwrights. They also remind applicants that their chosen monologues should be no longer than two minutes and that they should bring two copies of each to the audition. These basic audition requirements attempt to ensure

that auditionees think seriously about audition choices and prepare well for their auditions.

Other requirements vary frequently, but currently WAAPA applicants are asked to send a 300-word statement on why they wish to study at WAAPA and what they hope to do with their training upon graduation. VCA asks applicants to include a brief statement (maximum 500 words) about their interests and aspirations in relation to the course they are applying for. These student statements entail thoughtful application to complete, and may provide further information to the auditioners about the applicants and their maturity. Overall, the schools' audition requirements go some way in necessitating forethought and decision making by the applicants, and may discourage some who are not resolute in their acting intentions.

5.1.3.1 Additional Information

Schools now offer considerable information to applicants about how to prepare for the auditions, which gives applicants the opportunity to arrive better prepared and more cognisant of what to expect from the audition situation. All the schools remind the applicants of a variety of fundamental, common-sense requirements: for example, that they arrive an hour before their appointment so that they can be suitably prepared for the audition and interview; that the texts be prepared and memorised; that the entire play from which the piece is chosen be read and studied in order to place the speech in context; and that they wear suitable clothing. Some schools now offer even more personal advice. NIDA, for example, lets applicants know that they will be asked to work in bare feet, so not to wear closed-toe tights; and that while it is useful to test out their monologue on a friend, not to worry about acting coaches and not to let others tell them how to act it. VCA asks the applicants to use their natural accent and guides them towards choosing pieces within their age range and presenting their monologue in a way that shows understanding of the text and is simple and truthful. This advice is very useful

in helping applicants prepare appropriately for their audition and perhaps feel more secure about what they are presenting. It may even allow them to feel more 'in control' and relaxed. Providing detailed knowledge of the audition and call-back procedures may also save time for staff members in not having to constantly explain or repeat how the procedure works.

5.1.3.2 Audition Preparation

It was generally agreed upon by the interviewed teachers that the standard of auditions has risen, which was attributed to an increase in competition and greater preparedness. From professional experience and anecdotal reporting, it would seem that applicants are increasingly undergoing specialist coaching for their auditions. During the year, each of the schools offer audition preparation workshops intended to assist applicants in choosing and preparing monologues. It was suggested that these workshops may also assist them in learning "how to stay calm and perform for auditions" (VCA, 2015a). It would seem as though the schools are attempting to ensure that applicants come to the auditions as well-informed and prepared as possible.

5.1.4 Applicants

The majority of applicants who audition for the three major drama schools in Australia tend to be aged between 17 and 23 years. Even though the number of males auditioning has slowly increased over the years, many more females still apply, according to Head of School Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012), who determined that approximately two thirds of those currently applying to the school were females. Heads of the Acting programmes claimed that they attempted to enrol an equal number of male and female students because a gender balance worked better for their programmes. The competition to gain entrance to the schools is intense, as many hundreds of applicants apply to each of the three schools every year, but only about 18–20 applicants (approximately 3–4%) are chosen.

Applicants often audition for each of the schools in the same year, and many continue to audition in subsequent years if they are not initially successful.

The days when an individual wanted to be an actor as a sign of rebellion or artistic caprice have long been replaced by a culture of instant fame and celebrity, where minor luminaries of, for example, TV soap operas can demand disproportionate amounts of money and attention. Casting directors and agents reported to Moor (2013) that graduates now want to be stars rather than artists, and that there was concern that the schools fed that idea. The widening of the attraction and accessibility of an acting career is no doubt responsible in part for the large increase in drama school applicants, but it has also meant that audition procedures have needed to become more vigorous in terms of determining those for whom the desire to act runs deep. Several of the interviewed teachers—B (interview, 3 November, 2012), F (interview, 7 November, 2012) and P (interview, 30 May, 2013)—mentioned that the 'entertainment industry' now demanded younger 'talent'. Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) acknowledged that the average age of students in the course had dropped, adding, "We like our students to have had a gap year out from school but sometimes there are students who seem to have the talent and maturity to come straight into the course. Young people audition better now and many have had coaching." Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) remarked that even though very young people applied, in his experience it was the more mature students who survived the process better and were more often chosen. He claimed that he tended not to look at application forms until after a decision had been made so he did not judge on age or academic background, but on the applicant's readiness to undertake a rigorous acting course. Although this may be the ideal criterion on which to judge potential students, it should be noted that it is many years since this teacher took auditions, and in that time the actor training landscape has significantly changed.

5.1.5 Audition Procedures

Each school has its own procedure for holding auditions, and in some respects the methods followed can depend on the allocated staff. In some auditions, students are asked to perform their monologues straight away on the assumption that this is what they are most focused on when they enter the room. It also allows auditioners to determine the viability of the auditionee's likely selection, and therefore perhaps influence any subsequent discussion. In other auditions, staff members prefer to chat to the students about their backgrounds and aspirations before asking them to perform. Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) took the view that auditions were about trying to understand how 'grounded' applicants might be, how clear they were about what they wanted to do and what they understood about acting. In Teacher X's own words, "one of the fundamentals of auditions is that potential actors be treated with great respect" (interview, 10 July, 2014).

Personally, I have had feedback from auditionees indicating that the smallest consideration is remembered as helping make an emotionally tense event somewhat less so. Certainly, every remark and gesture made by the audition panel is assigned a positive or negative judgement. Seton (2007a) claimed that the very nature of the audition process was fraught with easily abused power play between auditionee and auditioner, and stories do abound of examiners who scarcely looked up from their desk or spent the entire audition writing or being distracted. Students have informed me that such behaviour is sometimes reported and discussed among young people on social media, which can have an impact on schools' reputations.

5.1.5.1 Group Situations

Whether initial auditions are performed on a one-to-one basis, in front of an audition panel or in front of a group of other applicants varies from school to school. In my experience, students tend to prefer the privacy of individual auditions because they are nervous and afraid of failing. However, auditions

in front of a group can also be of benefit, the rationale being that it is helpful to allow applicants to observe that others are also nervous and able to falter and recover. NIDA makes the process clear by stating that at the initial audition the applicant will perform two of the prepared pieces to the panel and a group of around 20 other auditionees, and may be asked to try new ways of approaching the monologues. The VCA also states that their applicants are asked to perform monologues and devised performance pieces within a group audition situation. WAAPA has stayed with individual auditions, but holds group call-backs.

Drama teacher Evette Henderson (2012) wrote online that one of her students who auditioned for 'the three drama schools' found it a somewhat gruelling but exciting process. Henderson reported that anxiety mounted dramatically as the auditions neared, and that the student actor found it extremely daunting to have to perform his piece in front of the examiner and 19 other applicants. Teachers K (interview, 22 May, 2013) and N (interview, 20 May, 2013) claimed that group auditions allowed students to see the quality of each other's work, to learn from it and sometimes understand why they had not been recalled, and perhaps set higher standards for their next audition. There is no doubt that it can be intimidating to audition before other auditionees, but if it is known ahead of time that this is going to occur then participants can at least prepare themselves for it. Schools have the right to choose their mode of audition procedure, and group auditions are perhaps a time-saving formula. However, for those applicants who fail spectacularly (and I have seen quite a few who have, for example, forgotten their pieces, or broken down and cried), it can be a humiliating experience.

5.1.5.2 Audition Protocol

Applicants are now told in auditions that if they have an issue with anything that happens they are to speak to the staff. This was affirmed by Head of School Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012), who acknowledged that

students may be hesitant to do so, particularly if they want to come back and audition again the following year. Teacher B observed, "There are so many issues that make it hard to police an audition situation, whereas full-time students are made aware of the grievance policy." NIDA also maintains that its audition process is informal and open, and Head of Acting Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013) asserted that, should applicants have queries about the procedure or what is said to them during the audition, they are told they should speak to a member of the audition panel before they leave. I can only surmise that this may occur if it is a query about the actual audition or the process, but it would seem unlikely that applicants would complain about how they were treated given that they are nervous, usually overwhelmed by the situation and, most of all, do not want to upset their chances of being selected. Nevertheless, a procedure that gives auditionees the right to express dissatisfaction with the process is certainly a step in the right direction.

5.1.5.3 Audition Feedback

The schools make it clear that due to the volume of audition applications, they are unable to provide individual feedback, and that the decision of the audition panel is final. Rideout (1995) affirmed that it was not possible for schools to give everyone reasons why they had not been accepted. Sometimes it is suggested by auditioners that an applicant apply again the following year if it is felt that they would benefit from a year's maturation. Members of audition panels often write down notes about applicants to assist in the ultimate selection process, but these comments are not intended to be passed on to the interviewees. Auditions are stressful for all, but for the overwhelming number of unsuccessful applicants they can also be demoralising. These applicants may have no realistic idea about why they have not been selected. I recall one student coming back four times to audition before it was decided that more direct feedback needed to be given to explain why he was not being successful. There is so little time to provide

guidance, but sometimes suggesting more training in a particular area or pointing out areas that need more work can be extremely helpful to aspiring applicants.

5.1.5.4 Time Allotted

As the number of applicants continues to grow, drama schools have had to assign more staff and more time to conduct their annual auditions. Auditions usually take several days to two weeks in the major cities, and two or three days in the smaller capitals. Schools send staff to cities outside their home base. The time allotted to each applicant has been reduced over the years, and for one-on-one auditions it is now approximately 10 minutes per person, enabling about six auditions to be processed each hour. The time allotted to the monologues has also been reduced, and preference is now for speeches no longer than two or three minutes each. This constraint leaves very little time for panel members to talk to the applicants, although staff members become very proficient at quickly assessing applicants' talent and potential. In my experience, members of audition panels attempt to treat everyone with respect, but if it becomes clear early on in the audition that the person is not going to measure up, then the conversation can be kept to a minimum. Audition sessions are always working against the clock—which of course adds to the pressure and tension for all concerned.

5.1.5.5 Staff

The Head of Acting and other members of the acting department usually sit in on most auditions. There are always at least two members of staff at every audition, and sometimes as many as four in the final stages. Always having two panel members can guard against accusations of bias or favouritism and allows staff members to confer. Sometimes there are two sets of audition teams operating in different cities at the same time. The staff members usually discuss each applicant and come to an agreement about which auditionees will move on to the call-backs. Voice and movement teachers

often have very specific requirements, and like to be included in the audition process so that they can guard against possible insurmountable difficulties in their areas. For example, Movement Teacher R (interview, 28 May, 2013) claimed she particularly looked at flat feet in call-backs because they could not be corrected and would have an impact on the training.

5.1.5.6 Ushers

Schools sometimes ask for volunteers from their current students to act as ushers during the audition process. These students are available to talk to applicants before they go into their auditions and answer questions. They usher the candidates in when the panel is ready and are there as a sounding board when the audition is over. When I was on audition panels, these ushers reported back that they had provided a shoulder to cry on if applicants left the auditions feeling they had not done well. This has proved a successful way of lessening—even to a very small degree—the extreme stress felt by some when they audition for drama schools. First-year students used to take auditonees through a warm up before their auditions at the VCA, but this practice has been discontinued.

5.1.6 Call-Backs

Each school has a system for shortlisting auditionees and selecting a few to go into the next phase of the audition process. This stage of call-backs, or 'recalls', becomes a status symbol in itself for some applicants, who take pride in, for example, getting to the 'second call-back' or 'call-backs for two schools', even if they are not eventually selected. Call-backs tend to be more rigorous than the original audition and are conducted in group situations with other recalled students. They can be quite fearful experiences for some auditionees. Helen (personal communication, 20 October, 2015) related that she felt observed and judged from the moment she entered the call-back room, from what she was wearing to how she prepared to present her monologue.

NIDA informs students ahead of time that after a morning session some students may be invited to stay on and present their third piece and/or rework an earlier piece. At the end of this session, the panel may then ask some students to attend a second audition that will occur on another day and may require additional preparation. WAAPA informs those auditioning in Perth that they should be available for possible call-backs at the end of the week of their appointment, and then later for a final call-back. Applicants auditioning in other cities are informed that they may be called back straight after the completion of their initial auditions. They are also told that the call-back may be filmed or recorded for panel review and assessment purposes. VCA applicants are informed that a few of them may be invited back for a short period to do some additional work. Some of these applicants may then be invited to a call-back audition. Detailed instructions for the call-back are given only to those applicants invited to attend, but they are informed that it may include a repeat performance of one or more of their pieces and participation in a workshop. It is always going to be a disappointing experience for the vast majority of applicants who audition and are not nominated to proceed to the call-backs—and little wonder that those who do proceed feel that they have already accomplished a great deal.

5.1.6.1 Call-Back Processes

Call-backs are usually day-long sessions in which teachers observe how applicants interact. NIDA specifies that its call-backs may involve redirection of scenes, improvisation, discussion on interpretation, musical and rhythmic tests, sight reading and singing, and that applicants may be asked to relate dramatic roles to their personal experience, to talk about their knowledge of and experience in the theatre and related media, and about their ideas and aspirations. WAAPA call-backs involve a group of approximately 30 students taken through a movement and voice warm up before engaging in group exercises and then being asked to 'work' one of their monologue pieces with

a staff member. Auditioners say they are testing for the students' flexibility and range while at the same time noting vocal and physical attributes.

Head of Acting Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012) considered that call-backs gave instructors some understanding of how students might function in the actor training environment, and that he and his team worked hard to find a balance between being critical and being supportive: "But how do you push someone and still make them feel safe? It is a constant negotiation and changes from person to person. Sometimes you get it right and sometimes you completely misread people." This teacher gave the example of how what comes across as arrogance in an applicant could sometimes be a front for insecurities and fears, and emphasised that behavioural patterns of the participants were usually going to manifest in some way during an extensive call-back process.

5.2 Selection Criteria

In the area of selection criteria, drama schools are now providing information to cater for the growing number of applicants and their queries about why they may or may not have been selected. Auditionees are often confused or unaware about what qualities they are being judged on or why they have been rejected. It would seem that the schools are attempting to assist in this regard by being more specific about their criteria.

So what are they looking for?

NIDA (2015b) states that it selects students who:

- demonstrate commitment, motivation and passion in relation to the arts, entertainment and related industries, to their chosen discipline, and to the course of study;
- provide evidence of their capacity to work creatively and imaginatively;

- demonstrate an aptitude to collaborate with peers as part of a creative process, demonstrate a range of knowledge, skills, technical abilities and/or problem-solving techniques relevant to their discipline;
- demonstrate cultural and contextual awareness;
- are articulate and communicate ideas clearly.

WAAPA (2015) applicants are informed that they will be assessed on acting, vocal and movement capabilities. They are advised that they may also be asked to improvise and/or sight read.

VCA (2015a) states that all auditions are judged by the same criteria and that, for the assessment of the devised performance piece, the audition panel examines the applicant's ability to:

- originate a self-devised performance piece that demonstrates experimentation and invention;
- sustain a high quality of performance craft throughout a devised piece;
- demonstrate an interest in and engagement with live performance as a form of creative expression;
- apply imaginative compositional, physical and vocal craft skills that illustrate the potential to respond to training.

Schools have been known to have lists of criteria for their auditioners to keep in front of them during auditions, although the interviewed teachers conceded that ultimately they rely on experience and 'gut feeling' when deciding whether someone is suitable for the course. While undertaking research for his thesis, Seton (2004) sat in on auditions for the VCA and was shown a list of selection criteria, which was not shown to applicants. His experience and 'reading' of auditionees' performances differed significantly from the panel's assessment, in spite of the written criteria, and differences in judgement were also evident between panel members when they disagreed with each other about the potential of an auditionee. The subjective nature of the art form is always going to mean that a performance is experienced differently by

different people, and how they interpret what they experience is also going to vary and be open to dispute. According to Teacher L, "sometimes you can't even specifically say what it is that registers" (interview, 15 October, 2012). Teacher L continued, "we look for someone who is 'trainable', so that obviously depends on their talent but also on whether they are receptive enough to be adaptable as well as adventurous, playful, generous, intelligent and creative."

In the call-back situation, staff tend to look for quite different qualities from those sought in the original auditions. "It's not necessarily about their talent, it's about their ability to train. You want to feel that you would really like to work with this person because they are interesting and challenging and exciting", enthused Teacher L (interview, 15 October, 2012). This teacher went on to explain that if the candidates seemed only concerned about themselves in the call-backs, and not interested in what else was going on in the room, then they were unlikely to have a very beneficial three years of training; the rationale being that if they were not comfortable in a group situation, they probably needed to train in a different environment. She also maintained that if an applicant could not take direction or accept a suggestion and translate it into action, then that behaviour was not going to be very useful either.

The intensity of these call-backs, in which applicants are worked quite hard, means that personal issues may arise and feelings come to the surface. This intensity represents an opportunity for the auditioners to observe which applicants are going to be able to respond well to high-pressure situations. Seton (2004) observed that until he undertook research he had not appreciated that most of those who audition were already significantly shaped in their acting practice by their experiences of drama in high school, amateur companies or private youth theatre courses. He commented that assessors expressed concern that many of those auditioning were already 'significantly formed' by their prior experiences, and that time would have to

be spent determining whether such habits could be altered through the training. The call-backs involved the auditionees in "some fairly personal, vulnerable work . . . and were used partly to see if certain auditionees could be *shifted* from former habits that were regarded as problematic" (p. 151). I have found this observation to be true, and know that a 'fixed' rendition of a monologue that the auditionee cannot change or play around with rings alarm bells for most auditioners, because it indicates a lack of flexibility.

5.2.1 Acceptance and Rejection

Almost all applicants who audition for drama schools are rejected—approximately 97%, according to Teacher B (interview, 11 November, 2012). This can be very hard on those who have determinedly set their sights on attending one of the 'big three' schools—especially if they have auditioned multiple times. I have encountered applicants who have convinced themselves that getting into the acting course will be life changing for them, and others who maintain that their whole lives have been in preparation for this moment when they will or will not gain entry to the course. With such self-imposed pressure and expectation, it is not surprising that many potential students come into the auditions tense and on edge, and if the audition does not go to plan, emotions easily spill over into tears and distress. Auditions only occur at the end of each year, so unsuccessful applicants must wait 12 months to re-audition. Being able to take rejection is considered part of the learning process in the very competitive acting profession. However, it is a hard lesson to learn, and I have known people who have carried their 'failure' to get into drama school with them for years. Therefore, how drama school staff inform applicants that they have not been successful is a vital step in ensuring that the process is as enlightened as possible.

Each school has a slightly different procedure in this regard. At one school, applicants are told they will be contacted by telephone if they are required for a call-back, and if they are not contacted it means they have not been

successful. The same procedure applies after call-backs. These waiting periods can be a very anxiety-ridden time for potential students, who sometimes wait days before they are contacted or realise that they are not going to be contacted. Unsuccessful students are eventually sent official notification by some schools, but this comes long after they have auditioned. NIDA (2015b) states that if applicants have not been invited to present their third piece at the initial audition, or have not been invited to a recall audition, or have not been asked to stay for the duration of the recall audition, then their application has not been successful and they will not receive any further communication regarding their application.

At one school, the 'cullings'—as auditionee Helen (personal communication, 20 October, 2015) named them—happened several times throughout the day. She auditioned three years in a row and said it was awkward and stressful waiting to hear whether her name was going to be called, watching people being dismissed and having to walk from the room.

Considering all the stages involved in the audition process, it is little wonder that successful students often feel that they have 'made it' just by being admitted into drama school. Whether it is kinder to tell an applicant immediately after an audition that they have not been successful, or to wait until later, is a hard call to make. It certainly merits careful consideration.

5.2.2 Emotional Factors

As cannot be overstated, the actor training courses are rigorous and intense three-year undertakings. The interviewed teachers and students all reiterated the advisability of being emotionally stable as a foundation for participation in the programmes. "The emotional demands of being an actor are considerable, so if you are not grounded personally and emotionally, then the burden of the training could tip you over", according to Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013), who insisted that "you are working at a level of intensity that you are probably never going to encounter in the industry". If students are

unstable, it is not unreasonable to assume that the training may trigger serious mental health issues. Crawford (2012) advised that acting should be approached with emotional stability, stating, "if you haven't got it, don't do it" (p. 157). Psychological stability is an enormous advantage, agreed Psychologist B (interview, 27 November, 2012) because it gives individuals a firm emotional base from which to creatively 'fly' but then return to a safe 'home', and this sense of psychological grounding is essential. This was affirmed by Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015), who commented that playing roles and getting 'into the skin' of someone else was quite a 'schizophrenic' profession. She maintained that this activity would only be safe if the person was emotionally secure, psychologically stable and clear about what role playing entailed: "Someone who is vulnerable and enters into another persona may find it difficult to let go and end up in a psychiatric hospital."

Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) insisted that students needed to be mentally and emotionally stable to participate in work with her, and that there had to be clear communication and an understanding that both parties were coming from a secure, psychological place. "Successful actors", according to Hornby (1992), "typically have a strong sense of identity which is why they can safely put it aside for a while" (p. 30). If being emotionally stable is the ideal foundation for drama school students, are there ways to assist audition panel members in identifying the psychological wellbeing of applicants in the audition process?

5.2.3 Recognising Emotional Stability of Applicants

Interviewed staff acknowledged that they relied on their experience, their training and their instincts to alert them to signals of inappropriate behaviour when applicants auditioned. These signals included candidates who had difficulty co-operating in a group or collaborative situation, or those who had a general feeling of fragility about them. However, signs of mental instability,

a condition that could inhibit applicants from taking full advantage of the training, were sometimes difficult to detect, according to Head of Acting Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012), who confirmed that auditioners were not permitted to ask applicants about mental health issues. Teacher D professed that observing applicants interact with others at a call-back session was a vital attribute for selection because it became noticeable if people tended to sit apart, were aggressive or did not comprehend what was being asked of them. However, the Head of Acting at another school, Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013), claimed that there was no way to judge the mental instability of the auditionees other than by being a keen observer of human behaviour. Only through experience could he tell if those auditioning were unstable or not 'centred'. He related that when he auditioned people he was not so much listening to their monologues—although he was also doing that—but he was trying to see who they were as human beings and asking himself whether he could spend three years of his life engaged in mentoring and developing them. He summarised, "If I feel that someone is arrogant or unstable then I don't want them here—not because I think they are unworthy but because I don't have the time and it might be detrimental to the ensemble—because it really is about ensemble training" (Teacher K, interview, 22 May, 2013).

Mental health issues were very prevalent at one particular time at the drama school of Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012). At this time, Teacher O said, there were multiple incidents of distress, breakdowns and even attempted suicides. She suggested that shortlisted applicants be given a medical health examination and that both their physical and mental health be taken into consideration in the selection process. In consultation with a medical doctor, she drew up a list of questions that asked applicants about their history of illnesses that might impede their training, including mental health. Although Teacher O considered this the ethical way to proceed, the

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practice was not adopted because it was considered too provocative and discriminative by some of the other performing arts staff.

Teacher O said she had been looking for ways to improve the audition process, because there were always some students who found the training too stressful and really struggled (interview, 10 October, 2012). If staff were aware from the beginning of any students dealing with specific mental and emotional issues, these issues could be taken into consideration in their dealings with them. Teacher O mentioned that applicants sometimes prepared themselves so thoroughly for the audition that when they subsequently arrived for classes, they presented quite differently. This same teacher conceded that, although staff interviewed everyone individually, sometimes decisions had to be made in a very short time about whether an applicant had "self-awareness, was stable, had a sense of humour, was confident—and looked like they would be able to handle the training". She considered that actors were "pretty cluey in terms of emotional literacy" and could easily mislead auditioners into thinking that they were better equipped at handling themselves than they were. Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) claimed that it was not that an applicant who was on anti-depressants would not be accepted, but that a conversation needed to happen around managing the depression and letting the staff know if there were particular problems, because otherwise the student might end up having a very difficult time.

This may well be the case, but as all the other interviewed teachers acknowledged, auditonees were unlikely to admit to having mental health issues or being on medication because of their desire to be accepted into the courses, and the fear that admission of this information would have a negative impact on their inclusion. The staff involved in auditioning also acknowledged that there were times when they completely missed mental health indicators. The result of this was that sometimes students were admitted to the course lacking the psychological stability to withstand the

demanding training. This had happened recently in one school where, during one of the first acting class exercises, a student broke down and was subsequently diagnosed as bipolar and left the course (Teacher C, interview, 7 December, 2012). As well as being very traumatic for the student, in a small yearly intake of 18 students it can also have long-term effects on the remainder of the class, not only on practical outcomes in terms of how the class is organised, but also on their emotional wellbeing.

According to this student's acting teacher, it was very difficult to predict this particular situation (Teacher C, interview, 7 December, 2012). Teacher C conceded that this girl's illness actually contributed to her being an extraordinarily exciting actor. In Teacher C's opinion, people are often attracted to acting because it is their way of coping with issues such as these, and even though this student was on medication, it was difficult to ascertain this in her audition. Teacher C said that in her experience, it usually became clear early in the training if students were not able to cope with the course; sometimes, they acknowledged that it was not the right programme for them and left. On other occasions the staff and students supported them in completing the course, and occasionally there were students with quite intense pathologies, which, once recognised, were the reason for them leaving. Psychologist B (interview, 27 November, 2012) confirmed that if someone was bipolar and not aware of it, then the stress of actor training could certainly trigger the condition.

Given that teachers cannot ask applicants about mental health problems, it was suggested by Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) that there were still subtle ways to assess their mental health. For example, questions could be asked about how applicants would react to disturbing news ranging from harsh feedback to the suicide of a fellow student. Psychologist D said she would then look for the capacity of the person to explore how they might feel or whether they questioned their role in the situation, rather than coming up with clichéd responses. Psychologist D stated that she would also

observe whether the applicants were emotionally solid enough to risk dealing with uncomfortable circumstances, or whether there was a narcissistic component in their personality, which could mean that they would be over-competitive in an ensemble environment. While these observations would certainly be extremely valuable in the drama school interview situation, teachers may need psychology training before they are able to effectively put them into practice. However, teachers involved in the audition process all say that the longer they have with applicants in auditions and call-backs, the more likely they are to accurately assess the qualities the students will bring to the training. "I guess through instinct and experience you pick up signs and warning bells go off that a person might not benefit from the training or function effectively in an ensemble", said Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012).

5.2.4 Selection Numbers

Historically, some schools have taken on more students than they intended to graduate at the end of the three years. After the joy of being accepted, students at such schools were then told at commencement that half of them would not be there the following year. Graduate F described an experience of this kind: "At the end of the year everyone would go in for an interview and we knew that some people would not reappear but literally leave by the back door . . . the sense that some people would be kicked out was steeped through the place" (interview, 23 May, 2013). Fortunately, this graduate's drama school training was more than 20 years ago, and this particularly competitive and stressful system no longer exists in this form. However, I have met actors who were 'let go' after their first year at NIDA and who, even if they had stayed in the profession, appeared to me to forever live with the feeling that they had not been 'good enough'. This suggests that the experience had been quite psychologically damaging with long-term effects.

Now that the drama schools are affiliated with universities, it has become important to graduate as many of the students as possible—preferably all— and staff generally work towards this outcome. This represents a more compassionate way of operating, even though the threat of being asked to leave is still very real for some students and the cause of some stress. However, students need to fail certain subjects for this to happen, and decisions are always open to appeals. Overall, it has become a fairer process than it was in the past. Teacher R (interview, 28 May, 2013) was adamant that "once we decide to take them on, it's one in all in . . . which is fantastic because in a training situation, changes in students' abilities can sometimes occur quite dramatically". Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) also admitted feeling a sense of responsibility to see students through to graduation once they had been accepted, but acknowledged that this was not the attitude of all staff members, and students were still occasionally asked to leave. Interestingly, casting agents expressed concern about the uneven standard of cohorts, and suggested that schools who culled their weaker students were doing the remaining students a favour by graduating a much stronger group (Moor, 2013).

5.3 Entry Age

A point that came up time and again in the teachers' interviews was that the average age of drama school applicants, and therefore of acting students, is getting younger. In the past, drama schools have preferred to audition and accept students over the age of 21 years. It was generally felt that students who had studied at university, undertaken travel or generally experienced life outside the school environment were more likely to be ready for actor training. This supposition was upheld by vocational drama schools for many years on the understanding that some degree of maturity was an important factor if students were to successfully undertake actor training and, presumably, be better prepared for the range of emotions and experiences required of them as actors. Due to the integration with universities and the

offering of degree courses, as well as changing industry demands, this age preference seems now to have been discarded by drama schools. They are now taking students straight from high school, provided they have graduated and that their auditions are of a high enough standard. The students themselves are keen to commence the courses as early as possible, so many undergo private coaching to ensure high standard auditions.

As a result, many issues can arise with students who may be too young to cope with the intensity of the courses. Cloonan (2008) suggested that "Students who undertake arts training are generally young and going through a complex process which blends personal and skills development in a large organisation bound by bureaucratic and other processes" (p. 2). At the 2012 Performance Studies International (PSI) conference, UK psychotherapist David Petherbridge (as cited in Seton et al., 2012) presented a paper in which he identified that drama students were beginning their training earlier, when they were less developmentally mature. He reaffirmed that while it was once more common to commence conservatoire training subsequent to completion of another undergraduate degree, more students now commenced training immediately after secondary school. Petherbridge was a former head of student support services at a UK drama school, and observed that these younger students were still learning how to leave home, move to a new city, live in and manage shared accommodation and form first sexual relationships at the same time as embarking on an incredibly intense actor training programme. These issues and many more were identified by my research and are discussed in subsequent sections.

The interviewed teachers in this study were all very experienced, and most had taught in drama schools for many years. They agreed that the dropping of the entry age had affected their courses because they found their students to be generally less mature, and therefore less able to manage the stresses of the course. Actor and Freelance Acting Teacher P (interview, 30 May, 2013) asserted that when she started out in the profession, it was understood

that no one could get into drama school until they were at least 21 years of age. Now students were being accepted at 17 and 18 years old and "they haven't developed independent thought . . . many of them have never been out of the country, never had a love affair . . . and the next thing is they are asked to play love scenes and tackle major texts. How does that work?"

5.3.1 'Adulting'

Acting Teacher/Director F (interview, 7 November, 2012) opined that as the average age of his students has become younger, a great deal of what he now taught was not just acting but 'adulting'. He used this term as a way to suggest that his role seemed increasingly "to help students grow up". He said he often had to talk to students about personal issues in order for them to understand some of the material in the plays and scenes they worked on. A recent production he directed was a well-known but controversial play in which the subject matter included abortion, homosexuality, rape, child abuse and suicide. Even though the play was about young people, the students in the cast had not confronted these issues, so open discussions about the subjects had to take place. He said, "I readily acknowledge that we are not just teaching acting, we are assisting them to mature." This same teacher explained that as the majority of the students were away from home, a kind of 'boarding school' mentality emerged, where the staff had to become involved with students' lives more than would normally be the case. However, staff members were not permitted to contact parents because the students were considered adults, and parents only ever became involved if and when the students wanted them included.

Accepted at 17 years old and straight out of school, Graduate C acknowledged that she did not have any "trauma or grief or broken hearts or any of those things in my life to draw on, and I always felt very young in my classes" (interview, 28 November, 2012). Graduate D also came to drama school straight from high school, and said that the further he got into his

training, the more he realised it was mainly about "growing up—from being a boy to becoming a man—that was the biggest thing I took from my training: 18 to 21 are defining years in a man's life" (interview, 23 May, 2013).

Another factor influencing the entry age of acting students is that the entertainment industry appears to be requiring more young, trained actors for television soap operas and other performance areas. Actor/Teacher P (interview, 30 May, 2013) believed that there was a push by some schools to graduate students by the time they were 20 years old, because the schools were now being run more like businesses and each wanted to lay claim to "the next big thing".

5.3.2 Isolation and Adjustment

The majority of the acting students in all three drama schools in this study are from out of town or from out of state. This large re-located student population occurs because these specific drama schools provide the training of choice for most Australian students pursuing acting careers. The students are willing to move cities and states if they are accepted into these acting courses because of the schools' reputations and the credibility of the training. Until recently, funding requirements for WAAPA's acting course meant that half of the students selected had to be from the institution's home state of Western Australia. The students who had a local home base were able to provide their cohorts with a sense of solidity and support, and their families often played hosts to the students from other states. However, this specification no longer applies, and has indeed never applied for WAAPA's Music Theatre course, where on average, according to the Head of Music Theatre, only about 10–20% of the students usually come from WA. Regardless of their home base, all of the drama schools in this study have high proportions of out-of-city and out-of-state students, which brings with it significant adjustment issues.

Away from Family

Family, schools and peers are the most prominent factors influencing adolescent health (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson & Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). These psychologists stress that social isolation for adolescents is associated with an increased risk of depressive symptoms, suicide attempts and low self-esteem. Feelings "of social isolation may influence psychological health in adolescents, but protective factors such as family connectedness, school connectedness, and academic achievement may also play a key role" (Hall-Lande et al., 2007, p. 265).

Being removed from their familiar environment can be extremely unsettling for young acting students, who have usually never lived away from their families before. It can become even more stressful when their chosen course demands total dedication and a complete commitment of time and energy. Difficulty adjusting to this new drama school milieu is often accompanied by intense homesickness and a sense of isolation. Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) reported that adjustment issues were the main reason acting students came to see him at the outset of their course. He confirmed that the majority of the students were from out of town and no longer had support networks available. Even for those students who were from the same city as the school, many moved closer because of the long and intense hours required, and they too found themselves in a new environment without their usual support systems. Psychologist A said that adjustments needed to be made in many areas—including being isolated from their friends and families and adjusting to the long hours and the pressures of the course, as well as to the high expectations the students impose on themselves.

Dropping Out

In the drama school environment, it is rare for acting students to voluntarily leave the course, because they have usually worked hard to be accepted and recognise the intense competitiveness of the field. Across the whole campus,

students were most likely to drop out of university in their first year of study according to Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013). Psychologist A confirmed that if students stayed for the first six months, the chances of them completing their course were much greater; this was similarly reflected in the drama school student population. The same psychologist judged the number of acting students leaving to be relatively small considering the intensity of the course. Psychologist A observed that, at the beginning of their course, acting students tended to want to please everyone and get approval from the staff, which could be very stressful. By their second and third years, they were usually more in touch with their own strengths and the reasons they had been selected: "There is intense competition to get in, but some of the students do come and see me because they are thinking of dropping out—so access to counselling may help in preventing them from doing that."

5.3.3 Peer Relationships

The close and constant contact that acting students have with their cohort means that friendships and alliances within the group tend to form quickly. Cohesive ties are formed that can last long after graduation. University orientation procedures and peer support systems go some way in assisting students living away from their home environment to make the necessary geographical and sociological adjustments. However, if new students do not make the developmental transition to having close friendships with peers, or if they feel alienated from their student group, they are undoubtedly going to have a difficult time with what may feel like debilitating feelings of isolation. As Hall-Lande et al., (2007) concluded, "adolescence is a time of particular psychological vulnerability to the risks associated with feelings of social isolation from peers . . . close relationships with peers are consistently associated with emotional wellbeing in adolescents" (p. 267). It is also claimed that adolescents who report lack of social support and feelings of isolation may engage in self-harming behaviours, such as suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Spruijt & de Goode, 1997). The graduates in this study

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referred often in their interviews to the degree of encouragement and/or competition they felt from their peers, indicating the importance they placed on peer support. Certainly the issue of strong support networks continues to be a major concern throughout the three years of the acting programmes.

5.4 Summary

Auditions are an integral component of Australia's top drama schools, and can be intense situations for those seeking acceptance into acting courses. The audition process demands considerable emotional investment by the participants, and can result in stress, distress and, for the lucky ones, elation. Being an essential part of the programmes, auditions require as much attention as all other aspects of the courses when it comes to ensuring the wellbeing of the participants. As applicant numbers have increased, the procedures of all three drama schools have shifted in order to accommodate this growing volume. The increased numbers have increased competition and, as a result, the quality of the drama school auditions also appears to have risen. Most students now take private coaching and/or attend audition workshops given by the drama schools before they audition for the courses. Drama schools are becoming more specific and demanding of their acting course applicants. However, they are also providing more information and practical assistance to aid in preparation. Changes in social norms and a better understanding of the effects of emotional distress seem to have resulted in applicants generally being treated with more respect and consideration than has sometimes been reported in the past.

The following procedural points have emerged as important to note:

- Providing as much information as possible for applicants allows them to come to auditions better prepared. This gives them greater chances of success and may also assist in decreasing anxiety.

- Ensuring that auditions are as interactive as time allows assists applicants in feeling they have been seen and heard and that the auditioners have responded to them as individuals.

- Providing helpful and informative ushers—for example, current students—to guide the applicants in and out of auditions can be a supportive addition to the process.

- Allowing adequate time in call-back situations allows staff to observe applicants working with others and acquire more information about their suitability.

- Ensuring that the rejection process—which is what the majority of applicants experience—is enacted with as much understanding and consideration as possible. More discussion needs to take place about how best to inform students if they have not been successful.

- Identifying applicants who may not be sufficiently mentally or emotionally stable to embark on actor training. This is a complex area, and staff members could benefit from some psychological training to better carry out this aspect of the selection process.

The past few years have seen drama school age averages drop, and as a result, students are now considered comparatively less mature than previously, and perhaps emotionally more vulnerable as well. Undergoing a confronting, challenging course like actor training is likely to present emotional and psychological challenges.

A high percentage of acting students are living away from their families and support systems, often for the first time. The relationships they form with their school and with their peers become of paramount importance; a supportive environment is crucial if students are to maintain a degree of emotional and psychological stability. Given this situation, peer support, staff support and institutional support would appear to be vital. The next chapter explores factors that affect student wellbeing and the actor training practices that affect the physical, emotional and psychological welfare of the students.

CHAPTER 6: ACTING COURSE PRACTICES

6.1 Introduction

An actor's job involves delving into the myriad possibilities of representing the human condition and, in so doing, often becoming vulnerable to emotional risks to the actor's own wellbeing. This is the nature of the occupation, and by default, acting students are similarly exposed to these challenges, as well as to the unique pressures of the training environment. The Australian Actor's Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015), undertaken by the University of Sydney and the Equity Foundation (Australia), aimed to identify the key areas that threaten or enhance actors' wellbeing through their vocation. The study concluded that actors need the support of family and friends after emotionally and physically demanding performances, while acknowledging that those very networks can be strained by the stress of their work. It also found that Australian actors reported significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress than Australian adults in general.

This significant degree of exposure to psychological hazards for those working in the theatre was identified some years ago by Alice Brandfonbrener (1992), who acknowledged that actors needing to convincingly portray the emotions of their characters and temporarily taking on the personality traits of these characters was "for some a positive experience, but for others the process can range from difficult to unbearable" (p. 101). Brandfonbrener also recognised many other health risk factors in the lifestyles of those associated with the theatre, including sleep deprivation; poor dietary habits; excesses of caffeine, tobacco and alcohol; and a higher use of street drugs than encountered in musicians or dancers. Brandfonbrener acknowledged that, while these habits were not condoned by peers, the lifestyle was sustained by an attitude of 'live and let live' unless the situation approached an emergency level, and as a consequence many actors failed to seek help when treatment might have been appropriate and

efficacious. This reluctance in seeking help was similarly identified in the Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015). Previously, Seton (2006) had acknowledged that while stress, trauma and vulnerability, in sustainable measure, are inevitable and integral to life and performance, they require "intrapersonal and interpersonal negotiations in order for lives to flourish" (p. 4).

Certain accepted aspects of the acting profession have been questioned by Prior et al., (2015), including maxims inculcated in drama schools and professional practice such as 'the show must go on', 'whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger' and 'survival of the fittest'. It was suggested by Prior et al., that these may be doing more harm than good, even though it is understandable that actors fear losing both work and the respect of their employers and peers if they do not 'soldier on'. However, actors could risk the possibility of further complications and more serious, debilitating stress or injury by simply tolerating or trying to hide or deny such health concerns. Prior et al., (2015) queried whether this habit of self-effacement and self-denial in regard to wellbeing is "something that might be reconstituted in a healthier way within the teaching and learning environment of a drama school" (p. 64). This research concurs that the 'soldiering on' ethic is still very much part of the drama school credo. Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013) spoke of being told to "just deal with" the fatigue and stress of the acting course, and of students being made to feel they were fortunate to be there and that they should just cope with the workload and "make the most of it".

Given these identifiable tendencies in actors and acting students regarding their wellbeing, this research examined the particular issues confronting student actors during their training. A range of areas pertaining to the welfare of those undertaking vocational actor training emerged, and these are examined within the context of the course practices. However, it is first necessary to outline some of the training praxis and the context in which these practices take place.

6.2 The Training

The tradition of a conservatoire course is that it offers intense practical training alongside academic study and individual tuition. Conservatoire training is a holistic model with a strong vocational focus, which teaches the range of skills deemed necessary for a career in the performing arts. Prior (2004) argued that inherent in the use of 'vocational training' as applied to actor training is an expectation of a creative outlet; process and product have developed as the two components of actor training. Prior maintained that it often comes down to a balance of 'knowing' versus 'doing', and that throughout the relevant literature on the subject, the value of practical experience and the gaining of technique is both assumed and made explicit. Actor training is still embedded, Prior believed, in its practical origins of apprenticeship, practice and refinement.

When attending acting classes as part of his thesis research, Seton (2004) was struck by how much of the actual teaching in acting classes was orientated towards practical example and application of technique rather than theoretical ideas and concepts. The theoretical versus experiential balance has been long debated in actor training settings. Playwright and teacher David Mamet (1997) infamously argued against intellectualising acting, as did actor and teacher Phillip Zarrilli (2001), who disputed that 'traditional' ways of knowing about acting serve either the actor or tutor well within drama school contexts. Conversely, Richard Brestoff (1995) insisted that it is "vital for actors to understand how their craft evolved and in what tradition they stand" (p. xiii). Conservatoire training places the emphasis firmly on the 'learning by doing' approach, leading to questions about what elements of this experiential methodology impact on student wellbeing. This chapter examines some of the actor training practices in more detail to explore the pressures, stresses and triggers that can affect student actors and initiate the strong emotional responses that sometimes occur. The kinds of responses

referred to are those that would be considered unusual or out of the ordinary in average student classrooms or environments.

6.2.1 Emotional Episodes

When these emotional occurrences occur, the interviewed drama school teachers and directors all acknowledged they were not trained to deal with such episodes, but had learned to do so through experience, and tended to act from instinct rather than any understanding of best practice. As veteran teachers, they were not overwhelmed when confronted by emotional 'meltdowns', and offered a combination of different approaches used to manage emotional students. The approach used depended on the individual student, the trigger for the distress and the nature of the class or rehearsal. The teachers all agreed that it was not advisable to allow other students in the class to comfort or congregate around the student who was experiencing the heightened emotions. Some teachers preferred the student to remain in the room, while others felt it best for them to take time out and exit the space. Teacher L (interview, 15 October, 2012) acknowledged that sometimes she did not ask highly emotional students what was happening or what the trigger had been, but encouraged them to take the emotions they were experiencing into their work: "If it is appropriate I tell them to channel the emotion into the text, and that can be an exciting moment because they are learning to engage the emotions within the structure of the language or character they are playing." Other teachers did not support this approach at all. Advising the student to visit a counsellor seemed a last resort for most teachers, and was an option only if emotional episodes were an ongoing occurrence.

According to Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015), emotional episodes need attention if they prevent a person from functioning or are so extreme that they "kill creativity". She mentioned that teachers need to observe whether students are having repetitions of emotional episodes around the same kinds of issues, or emotional reactions that prevent them

from taking risks, being curious or wanting to learn. If any of these are the case, then there is usually the need for some kind of psychological resolution for that person.

Considering that such emotional episodes do occur within the actor training environment, this study investigated some of the practices within the conservatoire environment that can affect the general wellbeing of the students.

6.3 Timetabling

Rigorous conservatoire timetabling has long been a tradition in arts vocational training. Timetables at tertiary drama schools in Australia generally reflect a concentration on skills acquisition in the mornings followed by rehearsals in the afternoon with the assumption that the skills being taught will be put into practice in the rehearsal setting. First-year students tend only to have classes before being cast in productions in their second and third years. School regulations at each of the schools state that students must attend every timetabled session for every subject, except in cases of certified medical conditions or when leave of absence has been formally approved in writing by the Head of Acting.

Acting students have a daily timetable that involves a minimum 9 am to 6 pm schedule, with rehearsals, classes or performances sometimes programmed in the evenings as well. Early morning tutoring or weekend activities can also be part of their course activities. This intensive teaching schedule, along with an expectation of long hours of personal practice, has always been regarded as vital to achieving high standards in students' specialist fields, according to Duffy (2013), a UK researcher in performing arts education. Duffy affirmed that in the conservatoire environment, a single-minded, dedicated focus was expected, and that timetables were always full.

In my experience, students tend to say they enjoy this intensity of learning and react negatively if it is suggested that any teaching areas be curbed—an observation supported by the interviewed teachers in this study. However, the intensity of the timetable and of the work comes with consequences. The most obvious is that students become extremely tired as they struggle to fulfil assignments and preparation, while at the same time trying to remain alert and creative in class. Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) agreed that acting students undergoing long, taxing days with challenging and often confronting activities sometimes found the stress overwhelming. He commented that students' physical and mental health suffered as a consequence of these intense programmes and that there were times when the students' level of exhaustion was so exacerbated that they experienced emotional breakdowns. He posited that these issues represented "an inherited tradition because these courses have always been run like this and it is just accepted that this is the way it is done".

6.3.1 Historical

There has long been a tradition of drama schools adopting crowded timetables, according to Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014), who worked as Director of several drama schools and was involved in many accreditation processes. Teacher X maintained that hours for the courses were kept "phenomenally high" in order to differentiate them from university drama courses. This teacher claimed that the conservatoire model for training actors remained in place even when drama schools came under the aegis of the universities that had their own ideas about scheduling, costs and the other factors that drive timetables. However, Teacher X asserted that the schools had managed to "hold out" based on the belief that a certain number of hours were required to achieve certain outcomes, so that the acting students' weeks were still "loaded up", making these courses very expensive to run. At one of the UK schools where this teacher was Director, the first two years were teacher-intensive but the third year was a professional production

house model without much teaching at all: "The basic philosophy was that there is too much teaching and not enough learning, so we always tried to ensure there was plenty of time for students to breathe easy."

According to Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013), the top drama schools were intent on maintaining their reputations and student outcomes, and this seemed to result in the assumption that the harder the students worked, the better actors they were going to be. Until recently, it had even been difficult for drama school students to have an hour off to see him for a counselling appointment.

The drama schools' 9 am to 6 pm, five days per week timetables rarely seem to be questioned—except occasionally by universities, who seek fewer teaching hours for economic reasons. When Duffy (2013) set about transforming the curriculum of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, she reported that she experienced considerable fear from those in the more traditional disciplines such as instrumental performance and acting. The teachers in these areas were anxious about the potential dilution of the perceived 'conservatoire mission' and of relinquishing control of the student's learning journey, revealing that the master–apprentice model was still very much a feature of pedagogy. Prior (2012) discussed acting as a discipline that involves long hours to become 'habitualised', and that current university timetables and systems are generally not sufficiently flexible to allow for this.

Drama schools are certainly unique environments compared to other courses within universities, especially in regard to timetabling. However, from a stress management and psychological point of view, these schools give acting students less access to coping mechanisms, according to Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013), who stressed that because of the long and inflexible hours, acting students were usually unable to join interest groups or participate in much physical activity outside their course. Australian researcher Carmel O'Regan (2012) argued that universities needed to

understand what their student cohorts expected and required from their study experience, because if students could not structure their timetables to balance reasonable activities such as work and family commitments, then the timetables would not allow the students to be successful nor address their sense of connectedness and belonging. The time-consuming demands of actor training timetables and the all-encompassing commitment demanded by the courses mean that it is unlikely acting students could achieve the balance referred to by O'Regan, as they have little flexibility for periods of independent practice or outside activities.

6.3.2 Time Frames

Hours: The hours at drama school are akin to a full-time job in that they are all day every day every week of the semester. While students often revel in the all-consuming immersion in their art form it can, as mentioned by many of the interviewees, also mean that they sometimes become tired to the point of exhaustion. Hours are often extended due to extra tuition or rehearsals, and although some restraints have been imposed on rehearsal hours (e.g., an 11 pm finish for evening rehearsals), there is still the unspoken creed in the arts that in creative areas you work for as long as you need to.

Class Times: Class times can vary in the different drama schools, or even within the same school, but are generally one and half hours for each subject period. This often leaves no breaks in between classes and students rushing from one class to the next. Voice Teacher M (interview, 22 May, 2013) maintained that one and a half hours was an inadequate time for her to work in depth and bring 'closure' to the session and that in schools in other countries where she had taught, classes were always a minimum of two and sometimes three hours.

Semesters; Drama schools align their semester dates with those of their affiliated universities and schedule 32 weeks per year. Within the schools they allocate their own teaching and examination weeks. Acting

Teacher/Director W (interview, 27 May, 2013) highlighted that her drama school had 16 teaching weeks in a semester, in comparison with the 12-week teaching and four-week assessment and essay writing periods for other courses at her university. However, one recent improvement in her school had been the introduction of a morning free from classes for the acting students. This time was called Independent Practice, and the expectation was that students would prepare work at home. The schedule of 32 teaching weeks per year was questioned altogether by Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014), who queried why drama students had to 'disappear' (during holiday breaks) for 22 weeks, when the course could instead be "more spread out and relaxed". This is not an option within university calendars and agendas.

6.3.3 Production Turnovers

Rehearsals and schedules for student productions are condensed and fast-moving. Drama schools usually have about six or seven performances of each production before moving on to rehearsals for the next show; it is a quick and intense turnaround. Lack of adequate time for productions is always an issue, according to director and Head of Acting Teacher D: "We're on a treadmill, we finish a production one night and a day or so later we begin the next one—sometimes jumping from a tough contemporary play to a classic like Shakespeare" (interview, 31 October, 2012). Teacher D recognised that there was insufficient time for the students to fully discuss the production, process the experience and reflect on it.

Voice Teacher M (interview, 22 May, 2013) was adamant that students could not have an emotional life on stage "if their personal emotions were exhausted". Interestingly, even famous actor Meryl Streep reportedly played so many roles in student productions during her Yale University theatre course that she "became so overworked that she developed ulcers which led to her contemplating quitting acting" (Longworth, 2013, p. 8). All of the graduate students acknowledged that they had never worked harder than

when they were at drama school. Graduate B (interview, 24 May, 2013) commented that she was exhausted and stressed the whole time, especially when there were classes during the day and performances at night. The short and intense rehearsal and production schedule turnarounds can obviously result in exhaustion for both students and staff.

6.3.4 Options for Change

Drama school timetabling needed serious reviewing, according to Teacher H (interview, 2 June, 2013), former head of a Music Theatre department. Teacher H contended that in his discipline, students had to focus on acquiring a range of different skills (acting, singing and dancing) in a short space of time, and he was always aware of how exhausted they were. My own experience corroborates this teacher's concerns, as in my time working in a Music Theatre department, students often had to find time for singing lessons before 9 am, in their lunch break or after 6 pm, and scheduling the three disciplines into the timetable meant that classes were always conducted at a frenetic pace. Teacher H (interview, 2 June, 2013) experienced similar courses in the US, where he reported that classes were held during the day and rehearsals in the evening. Although it was a longer day, he said, it meant that classes could be staggered so that there were often long breaks or late starts, which enabled students to consolidate their learning and have time to prepare work. However, Teacher H said that his suggestion of experimenting with this schedule was met with strong opposition from staff at his drama school.

Movement Teacher R (interview, 28 May, 2013) agreed that there was complete overload in acting schools, saying she was "trying to help students create new neural pathways which takes time and rest—they need breaks so that things can happen in the unconscious. There is no need for them to be so busy." She suggested that teaching only two subjects per year at a deeper level in a whole variety of applications might be more instructive. Another

option was proffered by Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014), who successfully introduced a 9 am to 9 pm timetable in a UK drama school in order to space classes out and avoid rushing from one to the next. All the interviewed teachers admitted the courses were intense but asserted that the students needed to develop a robust constitution—while also conceding that the students' level of exhaustion often took away from their capacity to work at their best and could lead to emotional vulnerability.

University timetabling is "a complex, territorial and constraint driven beast that involves significant changes to staff practices when seeking to alter how timetabling is conducted" (McCollum, 1998, p. 241). McCollum's UK-based research found that timetable changes needed to be project managed for optimal success, and that there was a requirement for continual assessment and evaluation both internally and externally of what teachers do, how they do it, and why, in order to keep timetables relevant and effective. In my experience, drama school timetables seem to be particularly 'territorial', with teachers always feeling pressured and in need of more time to accomplish their work with students—a sense sometimes spurred on by the schools, which have a tendency to project the idea that there is almost too much to teach and learn. Teacher W (interview, 27 May, 2013) agreed that none of the staff ever willingly gave up any of their allotted time and that all the teachers tended to try and fit more into their programmes. Paradoxically, most of the teachers also felt that the courses were overloaded.

These issues of timetabling do raise the question of the need for drama schools to constantly reassess and re-evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of each subject in their programmes. McFarren's (2003) research on American drama schools came to the conclusion that there was a "lack of agreement among those who train actors" (p. 8), and in negotiating changes in her conservatoire style institution, Duffy (2013) suggested that there was a "basic fear of change in what has been hitherto a conservative culture" (p. 175). She claimed that many of her colleagues were very

challenged by the idea of a more collaborative model for learning in the performing arts because it was not what they had experienced in their own master–apprentice conservatoire mode of training. It would appear that, although teachers in acting schools manage an intense workload, they have a fear of change and a reluctance to relinquish any of the aspects of conservatoire training—including the intense timetable.

6.3.5 Student Exhaustion

The impact on the students of this full and comprehensive drama school timetable is significant. As Prior et al. (2015) remarked "conservatoire training typically involves long hours and the consistent physical training of voices and bodies, much like that of an athlete" (p. 68). Unlike students in other courses on a university campus, acting programmes invariably have no free periods in their timetables and no weekdays off campus. I know of many occasions when students have been asked to sacrifice a week of holidays to return to school early for extra rehearsals. This time intensive programme is often exacerbated by students having to help pay their way through their courses with part-time employment. Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) admitted he was aware of some student days extending to 12 or 15 hours and resulting in exhaustion. "From a stress management and psychological point of view, the lack of flexibility and long hours gives acting students less access to coping mechanisms that other students have and results in significant stress."

Taking time out is not an option for drama school students because, as Rideout (1995) points out, one hundred per cent attendance is compulsory:

> You will be told on your first day that the only acceptable excuse for absence is if you are dying or dead. The joke is serious. Feeling sick, tired or whatever is simply not good enough. In one day you could miss the realisation and information that might mean a giant leap forward for you. (Rideout, 1995, p. 59)

The catchcry from all the interviewed graduates was that they were exhausted virtually the whole time they were at drama school. Graduate B (interview, 24 May, 2013) said she often arrived at school at 9 am and sometimes did not finish until after 11 pm because of scenes to prepare or assignments to do. She remembered a time in her second year when she expressed a desire to leave and "just be normal again"—but that students were told that the rigour of the course was to prepare them for the 'real world' of the profession.

This 'preparation for the real world' is the rationale drama schools have long given as justification for their extremely demanding training programmes. However, actors in 'the real world' know that if they are fortunate enough to be working at all, it is going to be extremely unlikely they are going to have two acting jobs at the same time and be working day and night. It is also doubtful they are ever going to work as hard as they worked at drama school where the schedules are unrelenting and are rarely replicated in the profession where strict working hours and conditions are generally adhered to. It is usually impossible for acting students to have relief away from these stressful conditions except during vacation breaks.

6.3.5.1 HALTS Syndrome

The strategy Teacher R (interview, 28 May, 2013) adopted for trying to ensure her students took care of their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing, was to talk to them about what she called 'HALTS Syndrome': Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired and Sad! She maintained that this combination of issues could easily happen to students participating in intense drama school courses and had in fact happened to her. "When people are over working, becoming exhausted and not eating properly, they can start to spiral down into a deep abyss." Her common-sense advice to students was to ensure they ate well, had enough sleep and avoided substances that were going to impact on their training. 'They have all day classes and when they

are in a production they are often here till very late. There is a lot of illness and we have to be vigilant and try to be responsive.'

Certainly in the drama school environment, 'HALTS' syndrome' is a likely scenario for students living away from home and with intense timetables and workloads. These students are invariably undergoing a range of adolescent issues, which are often highlighted when participating in a course that questions who they are and what they are bringing to their work. Teacher A (interview, 21 May, 2013) considered that guiding his own children through adolescence had greatly assisted his growth as a teacher, and was adamant that drama schools needed to teach their students "self-sufficiency and safety". Although it would seem that many teachers do give their students advice about health and wellbeing, teaching them the lifelong skills of 'self-sufficiency and safety' would certainly be a welcome addition to the drama school ethos.

One of the schools in this study now has class-free performance weeks for third-year students in order for them to focus their energies on the production, whereas formerly students attended classes during the day and performed at night. As has been my experience, most of the teachers related that even though students complained about being exhausted, they also loved the intensity of the courses and resisted passionately if it was ever suggested that any component be removed or cut back. This is, of course, a natural response to having something 'taken away' that they believe could have an impact on their competency as actors. If the timetable is to be reduced to allow for a more relaxed learning experience, it would need to be implemented at the beginning of the year as a *'fait accompli'*.

6.3.6 Stress Periods

Over the course of the three-year acting programmes in this study, there appear to be consistent patterns of times when the rigours of the course have

more impact on students than at other times. This can result in students being more emotionally vulnerable and sensitive during those periods.

6.3.6.1 Second Year Blues

All the interviewed graduate students agreed that the second year of their course was the most challenging and difficult for them. "Everyone at drama school says the first year is the longest, the second the toughest and the third the most fun—and that was absolutely true for me" said Graduate D (interview, 23 May, 2013). In second year, she said, the newness had worn off, patterns of interaction had established themselves, progress seemed slow and graduation was still far in the distance.

In second year, the acting students work on public productions for the first time, so they have to learn to juggle their classwork with rehearsals and the extra workload a production entails. Head of School Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012), confirmed that particularly stressful times did occur within the three-year course, and referred to a 'locked in the tunnel' feeling that students reported experiencing in their second year. Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) agreed that second year was the hardest and most stressful for her: "I have said it was the worst year of my life. I was told that when you're in second year, the first years think they are better than you, the third years think they are better than you and all the staff think you need to try harder—and it felt true!" This student recalled that it was the first time the students had worked on roles and productions as well as the stress of working with 'outside' (freelance) directors, so feelings were very volatile and overall it was a very emotional time.

6.3.6.2 Week Three Tension

According to many of the interviewed research subjects, another time of particular emotional vulnerability for students tended to be in the week of rehearsals prior to production week. Rehearsals are generally conducted over about three weeks, followed by a production week and then the

performance week. Production week is an intense period when all the elements of the production come together and actors are asked to take a back seat so that the directors and their colleagues can co-ordinate the technical and design components of the show. This means that the pressure is on in the final week of rehearsals to have some degree of finality about acting choices and some indication of the level of performance that is going to be required in front of audiences. According to Teacher/Director B (interview, 3 November, 2012), tension and emotions tend to bubble over in this week if students feel they have not sufficiently 'accessed' the characters they are playing or are not playing them as they had imagined. It is a particularly stressful time for students because they also know it is often their last opportunity to work on elements of their roles with directors before the production moves on stage and the directors' attention is drawn to other aspects of the show.

6.3.7 Medication and Drugs

6.3.7.1 Introduction

One of the side effects of the demanding and stressful timetable can be that some students feel the need to resort to medication and drugs to survive the pressures of the course. Research has found that the use of 'study drugs' appears to be even more widespread in Australian universities than in the US and that Australian students may be leading the charge when it comes to using drugs in general (Mazanov, Dunn, Connor & Fielding, 2013). Australia's use of anti-depressants has doubled over the last decade and the nation is now the second highest prescriber of anti-depressant medications in the world (Carter, 2013). According to the Australian National Council of Drugs, the sheer volume and availability of a host of recreational drugs was providing a smorgasbord for a young generation, and the nation had the inglorious distinction of having the highest proportion of recreational drug users in the world (Carswell, 2014).

With these kinds of statistics, it is little wonder that teachers everywhere, including those in Australian drama schools, are reporting a rise in the number of students who are on medication or drugs of some kind—illicit or prescribed. Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) reported that because the use of anti-depressants had increased in the general population, this increase was reflected not only in drama schools, but across the entire university campus. He was aware that many mental health symptoms tended to present in early adulthood, so in tertiary institutions where the majority of the student population was between 18 and 23 years, this cohort was most likely to be diagnosed with a range of mental health issues. This psychologist acknowledged that over the course of their studies some students would develop a mental health illness and a percentage of those might benefit from medication, but in his experience students on medication were often not coping prior to coming to university. Psychologist A recognised that if students neither fulfilled the requirements of the course nor coped with its rigours, then medication might be the end result and their wellbeing severely jeopardised.

Health psychologists Mazanov et al., (2013) reported that it was clear that Australian university students were using substances to increase their performance at university, and that one in 12 university students misused prescription stimulants to try to obtain better grades. These researchers were particularly concerned about students taking a cocktail of drugs by mixing stimulants and depressants—a stimulant to try and improve their performance, and then a depressant such as Valium to bring them back down—which is a dangerous cycle. Dr David Paperny (2011) determined that for adolescents, anxiety was the most common psychological condition, and that few sought care for it even though the anxiety symptoms could be a precursor of depression and substance abuse.

6.3.7.2 In Actor Training

WAAPA's Standard Theatre Practice (2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material) states that illegal drug taking in drama school is forbidden, and that any student coming to class having consumed any sort of alcohol or mind-altering drug is liable to instant dismissal. Drug use among acting students was talked about a great deal by staff, according to Head of Acting Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012), who conceded that it was impossible to know what drugs students were on in class. He had thought that the rigour of the course would mean it would be obvious if acting students were consistently on drugs, but admitted he had been surprised to learn in retrospect that students had been using drugs during their course. Students have also related drug-taking stories to me *after* their graduation, and I well remember one talented student being asked to leave when his drug taking became out of control and he was consistently late or absent from class and not fulfilling the requirements of the course.

Teacher R reported that polarity in student behaviour was how drug taking manifested in her movement classes (interview, 28 May, 2013). She related that there were usually one or two people in a class she continually checked in with to see 'which person' she was addressing that day: the one who was ready to work or the one who was tired because they had chosen to take or not take medication. She said she always tried to "address that part of the person's brain that still wants to go on the actor's journey", and that even though students sometimes provided a certain amount of disclosure at the beginning of the course, they were not obliged to do so. Teacher R felt that sharing more personal information could help teachers better understand the situation and facilitate a student's progress, because teachers now had a raised level of consciousness in regard to students who seemed depressed or were on medication.

Medication is an issue for both staff and students, according to Head of School, Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) who acknowledged that he knew of a number of people from both sectors who were on anti-depressants for a variety of reasons. He felt that a more critical factor with students was lack of sleep, anxiety and resorting to sleeping pills. Teacher A (interview, 21 May, 2013) mentioned having students with severe depressive illnesses going through episodes that were difficult for them and for the staff to navigate: "In the past they would have been dismissed and told they were not cut out to be actors, but now we try and establish an environment where they can find ways to express themselves creatively."

6.3.7.3 After Actor Training

The Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015) found that 80% of the actors in the study were active users of either legal or illegal drugs. The study also suggested that actors actively self-medicated in response to both the general, long-term pressures of their work and lives and the acute burden of demanding roles. In his book on the psychology of the performing arts, Glenn Wilson (1985) discussed performers attempting to alleviate their anxiety with alcohol, marijuana or tranquillisers in order to get through performances. He concluded that the long-term side effects were very detrimental, including losing the 'fine edge' of performances, even though the performers themselves usually felt they had done well because the drugs diminished their judgement. It also meant a dependence on drugs was likely to be established, which could lead to 'state-dependent learning', where a dissociation between learning and recall means that memory problems with lines can arise. Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014) explained that the deadening effect of medication often meant that patients did not get to a solution for their problems, and admitted he had not been successful working with clients on drugs because patient insight into the behaviour was needed and drugs often prevented that from happening.

6.4 Assessment

How students are assessed, what they are assessed on and the objectivity of assessments all emerged as significant areas of concern and sometimes distress for acting students. Psychologist Cloonan (2008) pointed out the marked difference in the assessment of arts-related subjects, which in the case of acting often ambiguously examined the extent to which a performance went to the 'truth' of a character. Cloonan compared this to other subjects such as "the study of basic biochemistry or Japanese history, where a more impersonal body of material is either mastered or not, shown by performance at competitive examinations and/or progressive submission of essays" (p. 5). Cloonan commented that to his knowledge there were few parallels to the atmosphere of continual analysis, almost surveillance, by peers and teachers in the arts training environment. Students had come to him with concerns about the subjectivity and group-nature of assessment, as well as a lack of clarity over what was assessed and what was not.

To better understand the cause of this distress, it is necessary to examine the assessment policies in the drama schools where the primary mode of learning is experiential and, as a consequence, assessment is constant and continuous. In almost every class, every day, students are asked to 'perform' in some way that is measured and critiqued with daily feedback. NIDA (2015a) has an assessment system in place that states that students are provided with assessment feedback throughout the courses and at specified stages during the course to assist them to make satisfactory progress through the individual subjects and the overall course. WAAPA's (2015) acting course documentation makes the point that students are given feedback during their classes as well as after significant assessment events such as productions or projects. It states that guest directors also give feedback on the acting students, their rehearsal process, performance and, if applicable, their audition technique. WAAPA's Standard Theatre Practice (2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material) talks about class work

being the basis of the training and that much of the assessment being done by teachers is on work done in class. It stresses that classwork feeds into projects and production work and is integral to the ongoing assessment procedure. VCA outlines its assessment components (University of Melbourne, 2015) where it talks about transference of skills into performance, professional attitude and commitment, and practical assessment of assigned tasks. Attending 80% of all scheduled classes is considered a requirement in these subjects.

All subjects in drama school courses are mandatory and course regulations state that a student must pass every subject prescribed in the course in order to complete the requirements and to graduate. End of year fails are the exception as this can entail a student having to leave the course. Repeating subjects is difficult due to the complex structure of the timetable and generally students cannot progress until all the previous year's prescribed subjects are passed. Subject teachers are responsible for determining whether or not students have achieved the necessary standard for their area and Heads of the Acting courses oversee the overall assessment in consultation with the teaching staff.

According to NIDA's (2014a) assessment policy students are required to "immerse themselves in a co-operative group environment and to adopt a disciplined approach to their work and tasks" (p. 1). It also states that as part of assessment tasks, students must "observe punctuality, display reliability, and demonstrate their acceptance of industry procedures and practices, their respect for others, and an understanding of their place and role in the collective creative process" (p. 1). Students are required to acquire and exhibit a high degree of professionalism in the performance of their assessment tasks and a failure to meet the required standards may constitute grounds for failure.

It would seem that the schools have attempted to officially set out clearly how assessments are made and on what grounds and criteria. They even make it clear that any student in jeopardy of failing is given ample notice, both verbally and in writing, and that constructive feedback is provided by the staff to maximise a student's chances of passing whichever subject is in question. NIDA (2015a) students who are at risk of not making satisfactory progress are identified by the relevant teaching staff and asked to meet to discuss the remedial action that may be taken. A 'Performance Improvement Plan' is developed for them, which includes monitoring strategies and ongoing review dates. Similar processes are followed at the other schools where attempts are made to evaluate along the lines of the affiliated universities' assessment policies. In my experience core acting department staff usually go to great lengths to bring a student up to the required standard rather than have them fail and leave the course. However, it does happen from time to time and the fear of being asked to leave can remain an area of extreme anxiety for some students.

Given these detailed assessment policies, how does this translate to the actual classroom and rehearsal setting? Seton (2004) observed that the practice of assessing students' abilities in acting classes was to invite students to attempt a certain task with their bodies/minds with minimal or absent preparation or rehearsal. "Subsequent to the experience of 'success' or 'failure' (as determined and recognised by the teacher), there would be a more detailed and explicit discussion to account for such success or failure" (p. 144). The example Seton gives is of a student being asked to perform a complex movement task with no prior guidance or experience on the main stage of a theatre in front of other students. He discusses the dynamic of public and authoritarian surveillance of success or failure in learning each new acting skill as the kind of constant assessment that forms the pattern of the teaching practice. In my experience this is the model in all drama schools where it is commonplace for acting students to be asked to 'jump in' and

demonstrate whatever area or skill is being worked on at the time. Often there is little or no preparation and this immediate exhibition of their level of competence is considered an effective way to learn. They are judged on their attempts even though the origin or relevance of the exercise may or may not be discussed. Seton (2007a) witnessed on a regular basis how an acting teacher set up students "for initial failure and discomfort in acting tasks, until the moment they 'got it'—then there would be applause and a sense of euphoria/relief that another student has 'passed' through this early stage of initiation" (pp. 5–6). In Seton's case study, he suggests that although feedback was invited in acting classes, it was always clear that the teacher determined the way things were to be perceived and interpreted. Brestoff (1995) similarly asserted that evaluations were made more difficult by the fact that most actor training was 'ahistorical'—meaning that the students were rarely told how the exercises they were doing evolved, or from what traditions they came and that individual acting classes were given without much reference to the context of actor training as a whole.

6.4.1 Written Reports

Not only are students given verbal feedback daily, but at the end of each production and of each semester, written reports attest to the students' competence and progress. While in keeping with university criteria, reports are invariably individually designed by the different departments to best fit their needs. A pass, a fail, or a pass with a 'needs improvement' category is one such simple format, with space usually provided for a range of classifications that may be applicable to the particular subject being assessed. The schools give written evaluations after each of the two semesters and these evaluations are individually discussed with the students in interviews with the full-time staff. Staff members interviewed for this research said that assessment interviews allowed staff the opportunity to clarify specific areas that students needed to focus on and to frame how the training might best address those needs. WAAPA (WAAPA Standard Theatre

Practice, 2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material) states that written assessment from all the teachers (both full-time and part-time staff) is received by students twice a year but that the mark for each unit is decided by the full-time staff only. Prior (2012) commented that acting departed from academia because universities traditionally favoured product-orientated grading, which was not particularly useful in actor training, adding that whereas universities were about scepticism and critical analysis, acting was much more about trust and feelings. "High emotional intelligence is the ambition of the actor—difficult territory for universities to grasp. Therefore, this has particular implications for how acting is nurtured and the role of the actor trainer" (Prior, 2015, p. 206). The uncomfortable fit between academia and conservatoires crystallises in this area of assessment and becomes an understandable area of concern for those being assessed in the actor training setting.

6.4.2 Self-Assessment

The need for self-assessment as a lifelong learning activity that should be nurtured in all areas of study is advocated by leading Australian researcher, David Boud (2000), who encourages teachers to focus more effort on strengthening self-assessment skills in their students. He argues that assessment needs to meet the specific and immediate goals of a course as well as establishing a basis for students to undertake their own assessment activities. "This means that it has to move from the exclusive domain of the assessors into the hands of learners" (p. 151). In my observation, self-assessment practices appear to be quite widely used in drama schools with students often asked to express how they felt an exercise or scene had gone before external comment of their work takes place. Similarly, during group feedback sessions after productions (Chapter 8) students are asked to give appraisals of their own performances before staff members give their assessments. This can contribute to building up the students' sense of empowerment and hopefully lessen their dependence on external feedback.

However, specific guidance is needed in the area of self-assessment according to David Nicol and Debra Macfarlane-Dick (2006) who emphasise that "intelligent self-regulation requires that the student has in mind some goals to be achieved against which performance can be compared and assessed" (p. 200). These researchers state that in academic settings, specific targets, criteria, standards and other external reference points help define goals and that feedback should be information about how the student's present state of learning and performance relates to these goals and standards. It may profit the actor training arena if these guidelines for self-assessment were applied because I have often experienced students being unnecessarily negative and derogatory about their performances, which can be counterproductive. In general, self-assessment skills would seem to be a practice that could strengthen student confidence and serve actors well in their future professions.

6.4.3 Feedback

In 2003, various performance training institutions in Australia were asked to 'define' the performing arts in a Performing Arts Scoping Study commissioned by CREATE (Culture Research Education and Training Enterprise). It was found that participants in the study believed that while competency standards might be developed for 'hard' skills, such as production and technical skills, it would be difficult to establish standards for the teaching and assessment of 'vision' and 'creativity' in performance. Overall, the complex and subjective nature of assessing the performing arts was strongly reinforced, which speaks volumes to the subjectivity of attempting to assess acting students according to set criteria or 'established standards'. Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013) concurred, opining that the interpretation of an art form like acting was always going to be subjective and that "the issue of rightness or incorrectness can be problematic in any artistic training". He admitted that it was not until his third year that he was able to think more independently and analytically about the feedback given to him.

Agreeing or disagreeing with assessments made by teachers is an ongoing emotional issue for students in the drama school arena, particularly if students do not respond well to the inherent ambiguity of the assessment.

Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) commented that acting students become accustomed to receiving constant feedback on their work in an atmosphere of continual analysis, adding that "acting students receive daily feedback and criticism whereas the average university student might get a little red ink at the bottom of an assignment every 3 or 4 weeks". Hardly surprising then that this psychologist found that many of the students who came to see him were undergoing a crisis of confidence because they had taken criticism personally or were having difficulty coping with the constant evaluation. Psychologist A said students often felt that teachers were only being critical and not giving positive feedback when it was warranted. "However because actors 'are' their art it is more likely that they are going to take the comment personally. We are always trying to teach people not to 'be' their work" (Psychologist A, interview, 24 May, 2013). This refers to the premise that unlike musicians, for example, who play an instrument or visual artists who generally produce 'external' artworks, performing artists inhabit or 'are' their art. As a result, they often have difficulty separating themselves as individuals from the work they produce. Harrop (1992) talks about actors being their own instruments and in training all the time by constantly absorbing experiences.

Psychologist Cloonan (2008) argues that it cannot be stressed too strongly that in the arts' learning environments, assessment becomes a strong reflection of self-worth and resentment is only natural if inconsistent, subjective or dismissive assessments are made. Cloonan goes on to say that when remarks and judgements are passed on students' voices, abilities, originality, appearance, choice of subject or style, by implication it is a criticism of the students' entire potential as a creative artist. Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) agrees, that when receiving feedback about work

that involves students' bodies, voices, 'beings', it is naturally difficult for young people not to take the criticism personally. Cloonan (2008) expands on the subject when he says that trainee artists constantly have to face direct, often devastating discoveries about themselves and their talent, and the assessments are often confronting, subjective and conducted in a very competitive environment. "This atmosphere of constant scrutiny, a feeling of surveillance, of public exposure, of naming and shaming, creates an extremely intense hothouse atmosphere in which weakness cannot be admitted to oneself or to others" (Cloonan, 2008, p. 3).

However, practical learning experiences and assessments are a guiding principle of conservatoire training, and instructors in drama schools are required to comment on or appraise virtually everything a student does 'on the floor'—be it in a classroom, a rehearsal studio or on a theatre stage. It is demanding and time consuming on the part of the teacher but has long been part of actor training tradition. It is therefore understandable that occasionally an unconsidered remark 'slips out'. It is also a reality that some teachers are better at giving balanced and more tactful feedback than others. "All too often the less skilled, albeit well-meaning trainer or drama tutor will take the role of critic and express his or her own opinions of the performance in unhelpful ways" (Prior, 2012, p. 206).

Education professor Dai Hounsell (2003) asserted that it has long been recognised by researchers and practitioners that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development and that we learn faster and more effectively when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing, and what we might need to do in order to improve. However, after surveying university students, he reported that while feedback was widely valued by students as a crucial aid to their learning, their experiences of getting feedback from their tutors was uneven, often unrewarding and on occasion confidence-sapping. This was similarly reflected by drama school graduates in my study who often disagreed with feedback they were given and sometimes felt demoralised by

it. According to Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) the deliberate 'break them down to build them up' and 'only the strong survive' strategies in drama schools were comparable to army training procedures. He contended that even though this tough 'old guard' regimen was now the paradigm of the past, some of the traditions lingered on, and constant criticism was one of those elements that created a crisis for many acting students. In Psychologist A's opinion there was a degree of insensitivity in this pedagogical process because giving instant feedback ignored the widely varying needs of artists immediately after a presentation. Prior (2012) insisted that good acting teachers never 'put down' their students and that even though they may demand hard work, they will never humiliate or belittle. How well students do in acting course subjects (apart from perhaps dramatic literature and theatre history) is not dependent on written assignments or definitive right and wrong answers. It is based on teachers' opinions and often just one teacher's opinion for each subject. Although teachers may strive to be objective and keep performance outcomes in mind, they are often undoubtedly influenced by prior held opinions and/or biases, so assessments are often perceived by students as a reflection of this and of being in or out of favour, which I discuss in the following section.

Any assessment strategy in drama schools is going to have its flaws because the judging of performance can never be an accurate science. Renowned arts education advisor Ken Robinson (2001) remarked that at the right time and in the right way critical appraisal is essential, but at the wrong point, it can kill an emerging idea. While I have certainly witnessed many drama school teachers and directors give acting students constructive, thoughtful and insightful feedback, I have also heard my fair share of confusing and unnecessary personal remarks. Students often take these comments to heart so a teacher's quick and unconsidered response can cause considerable distress. Seton and Trouton (2015) suggest that it is worthwhile reviewing the ways in which some assessment practices are convened, in particular the so-

called 'critique' when a student artist's work is displayed, publicly, for critical evaluation and assessment—often as an oral evaluation by discussion between peers and teaching staff. Seton and Trouton propose that it is in this arena that personal and professional hurdles, concerns and challenges can be affected directly and for this reason this phase of the teacher's toolkit and methodology deserve careful reflection—especially because young people in the arts seem to be a group that is more highly sensitised towards critique and criticism. If building up acting students' confidence and sense of self-worth goes hand in hand with their training, then considered and helpful criticism would seem to be an essential component of their instruction. Principles of good feedback practice (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) include encouraging positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. It would be advantageous if teachers working in actor training could be coached in feedback procedure with these principles in mind, which is suggested in the proposed preparatory course for acting teachers (Chapter 9).

6.4.4 Course Content

The curriculum for each of the drama school courses is the responsibility of the individual schools and their affiliated universities to determine, abiding by criteria set by accreditation bodies. However, acting is a complex area of study in which to nominate learning outcomes and specific criteria. To complicate this situation further, many of the nominated subjects in the degree courses now come under generalised 'umbrella' names: for example, at NIDA there are subjects currently called Acting Studio, Performance and Ideas, and Acting Disciplinary Collaboration; at WAAPA: the Role of the Actor, The Dynamic Actor, and The Actor in Ensemble; and at the VCA: Acting and Performance Making, Performance Practice, and Concepts and Creativity. These are headings under which a wide array of different areas can legitimately be taught in order for them to incorporate a large and shifting range of material. The material covered and the aims and outcomes nominated can also be described in quite general terms within these courses.

For example, VCA's (2015) outcomes for their course are listed as: to develop a command of performance skills including acting, voice and movement, consolidate a working methodology as an autonomous actor and develop the artistic skills to contribute to the meaningful evolution of theatre.

These wide-reaching outcomes can accommodate particular bodies of knowledge brought in by different teachers, or specific skills being passed on by freelance teachers. In my experience, a significant shift in content can occur from one year to the next depending on who is teaching the course. I have written acting course curricula and accreditation documents, and am aware that descriptions allowing for change within courses are a positive way to avoid being too prescriptive about how subjects are taught. This openness means that teachers can have a wide canvas on which to work with the combination of methods and material they are most familiar with. Conversely, however, this openness may bring about a blurring of aims and objectives and allow courses to wander 'off course', which can affect students in many and various ways.

One of Prior's (2012) priorities for a successful programme was that it must consist of a very sound curriculum that has been constructed with the students' skill development kept primarily in mind. Prior argued, "This may sound obvious but all too frequently content choices can be made in arbitrary fashion without sufficient justification being made" (p. 217). The schools in this study all provide their students with an 'eclectic' range of approaches and techniques in all their subjects, an approach supported by Brestoff (1995), who commented that no single system can possibly contain all that might be helpful to actors—who, he maintains, must gather whatever tools they can from other sources and continually evaluate their own progress. It would appear to be necessary for the schools to find a balance between a solid, core curriculum that can be reasonably assessed, while at the same time taking advantage of areas offered by a range of teachers and different approaches.

6.4.5 Favouritism—and Out-of-Favouritism

Though favouritism is a much discussed issue in educational institutions, there are still very few studies on the topic. Education researcher Ismail Aydogan's (2008) study into favouritism in the classroom suggested that it is one of the most important factors affecting instruction and thus student success. Aydogan asserted that the notion of fairness is at the heart of any ethical encounter or relationship, and that favouritism interferes with fairness by giving undue advantage to those who do not necessarily merit this treatment. He listed a variety of factors that can influence teacher favouritism, including gender, success, status and physical appearance, and reinforces that positive relationships between teachers and students helps students become more successful and motivated.

In the drama school environment, staff and students work in intimate and challenging ways, and their relationships tend to be more intense than those that exist in most other educational settings. The full-time staff and many of the freelance staff teach the students continuously from their first year of study through to their third-year graduation. If the relationship between a student and staff member is 'not working', it causes a great deal of stress. Cloonan (2008) described students' dismay at hearing other students being greatly praised, and thus, to their way of thinking, themselves disparaged. Graduate D (interview, 23 May, 2013) said that it became increasingly clear during his training which students were favoured "you could almost assign each actor to a particular lecturer as 'their kind of actor'". This graduate felt pressured to adopt a particular acting methodology in order to please a certain teacher, which he found very frustrating. At a different school, Graduate B (interview, 24 May, 2013) admitted that she was a favoured student and that came with its own set of pressures of expectation and peer judgement. Fellow students can be resentful if they perceive a student constantly being asked to perform tasks or being given large roles. A gifted and charismatic teacher/director with whom I once worked created both

scapegoats and firm favourites in each of the student years and often in each production. It was an extremely uncomfortable situation for everyone involved—favourites and non-favourites alike—as well as for the staff who attempted to modify these obvious biases.

The level of stress experienced by students who perceive that they are out of favour with certain teachers was confirmed by Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013), who reported that it caused considerable emotional upheaval and often brought students to counselling sessions. Friction between students was also very stressful for his clients because they were obliged to work with each other in small groups for the entire course: "There is no getting away from each other in an acting school" (Psychologist A, interview, 24 May, 2013).

Teachers interviewed for this study claimed to be very aware of the sensitivity of students in regard to student/teacher relationships and of accusations of favouritism. Head of Acting Teacher U (interview, 28 May, 2013) acknowledged that students often came to see her regarding favouritism issues. She had observed it at work and had been a victim of it herself but did not think there was an answer to it other than building up students' emotional resilience and encouraging them not to be beholden to approbation. Movement Teacher R (interview, 28 May, 2013) admitted to feeling humiliated when it was brought to her attention that she tended to favour the boys in her classes—because only then did she realise it was true. She had since paid special attention not to do so. Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) claimed that acting teachers often created a world of their own where some students become favourites and fiercely loyal and others remained peripheral and were never accepted into the clique, adding that "emotional tension always goes on in these classes and has nothing to do with the training of an actor". He was referring to the complex dynamic that is invariably in play between acting teachers and acting students that can often lead to emotional distress and friction.

A different point of view was expressed by Voice Teacher V (interview, 28 May, 2013), who contended that the entertainment business was built on favouritism and that actors who are favourites are the ones who get the roles. This teacher also affirmed that he had been accused of favouritism, and acknowledged that with 20 people in a room he did tend to focus on those who were most engaged with what he was teaching. He acknowledged that he had been forced to become more aware of this behaviour, and now attempted to work with everybody in a class, even though he did not necessarily believe that it was always the best way to work.

> When there are so many variables you choose the people who can perform an exercise well because you want to make a point—and in a voice class, it's difficult to make a point with someone who doesn't have the facility with text. (Teacher V, interview, 28 May, 2013)

Although this approach is understandable in the pressurised atmosphere of a class, as Prior (2012) proposes, a great teacher is one who wants to get the best out of every single student, not just the most talented or appealing ones.

6.4.6 Casting

Accusations of favouritism very often surface most strongly and emotionally in regard to the casting of productions. This is a particularly sensitive area for students, who all yearn for good roles and often feel their 'real' talent can only be demonstrated by the playing of such roles. If they judge the casting to be unfair or due to favouritism, there is usually a great deal of emotional upheaval. Group discussions about casting among staff members can very often counteract teacher favouritism and bring about results that are more even-handed. However, the casting of student productions remains a volatile area where students invariably perceive preferential treatment, particularly leading up to graduation and their entry into the industry.

The WAAPA Standard Theatre Practice document (2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material) states that students sometimes feel aggrieved about their roles, but that casting is done by the acting staff "with care and

considerable discussion" (p. 4). NIDA (2015b) has chosen to address this volatile subject directly on its website, where it states that the casting of all NIDA undergraduate productions is undertaken following discussions with the director and the acting staff, with the final decision taken by the Head of Acting. It goes on to say that casting seeks to balance the educational requirements of the group, the requirements of the production, the appropriateness of a particular student for a particular role and, as far as possible, the achievement of a fair and even distribution of roles over the year. No doubt all the drama schools attempt to cast with these criteria in mind, but, as Cloonan (2008) remarked, "the potential for misconstruction of staff behaviour is very great" (p. 6).

6.4.7 Competition

Another area related to assessment and favouritism that creates tension for acting students is competition among their peers. According to education researcher John Martin Rich (1988), competition can cause considerable stress, engender shame in defeat and is a source of envy, despair, selfishness and callousness. The endemic philosophy of drama schools and of acting teachers everywhere is to encourage a collaborative, ensemble atmosphere in classes and rehearsal rooms, because this is the ideal environment for actors to do their best work. WAAPA even describes its acting course as "training students as a theatre ensemble" (WAAPA, 2015, para. 1). According to Benedetti (1976), acting is a team activity, and part of the discipline of training is learning to work with fellow actors because "you can develop the highest level of individual technique and never participate in the full artistry of the theatre if you remain incapable of working effectively within the creative ensemble" (p. 26).

The noble aim to create an open, generous atmosphere in classes and casts is regrettably not always achievable. Movement Teacher R (interview, 28 May, 2013) claims that each cohort had its own 'personality' and that even

though students progress through the course as an ensemble, some groups are more harmonious and homogenous than others and the balance is often a minefield. Other teachers acknowledged that they discouraged competition but that it was always present, especially in third year when the students had to individuate and consider their careers in a solo framework. These comments are consistent with the psychologists who reported that peer competitiveness was one of the issues acting students constantly brought to counselling sessions.

Michael Billington (1973) talks about how the structure of the entertainment industry forces actors to be competitive and self-absorbed while at the same time requiring them to be capable of subordinating themselves to the demands of an ensemble. Prior (2012) also refers to the paradox in actor training whereby there is tension between the demands of the individual and those of the ensemble. WAAPA's Standard Theatre Practice (2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material) states that although the profession is highly competitive, students and actors are profoundly dependent on each other's support, so students should watch their fellows perform with a "sympathetically critical eye" (p. 2), being aware that reactions can inhibit other students. This requires considerable maturity from the students, and the reality is often not always in keeping with this ideal.

Cloonan (2008) agreed that "trainee artists are continually thrown together in an intense, competitive manner" (p. 3) and certainly all the interviewed acting graduates felt that the undercurrent of competition ran just below the surface in their school experiences. Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013) declared that a degree of competition was ever present at his drama school, which was the most intense social environment he had ever encountered. Performing in front of 17 other class members always made Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) feel emotional and vulnerable. "They are all watching you, judging you, observing you, so if you fail you are failing in front of all these people." This graduate went on to say that her student year was

not cohesive because the competitive element was always present and the division was intensified by teachers having favourites. She gave an example of an exercise at the beginning of her training when students were asked to tell a significant story from their lives. She felt the atmosphere quickly became very competitive as each student tried to outdo each other with stories of being raped and of fathers dying, which made for a very overwhelming experience, especially as she had just left school and felt she had no intense experiences to relate.

Competition can be considered a natural, human trait in this environment where students want to 'outdo' each other or impress their teachers, directors and fellow students. There is inevitably competition in the casting of productions and certainly in the course's final showcase, which becomes a particularly competitive event as the students vie with one another in the hope of securing a good agent or being noticed for future work. Competition can of course be a motivating factor and is certainly one that actors have to contend with in the profession. However, in actor training programmes it can be inhibiting if students feel they are working in an environment that is too judgemental—and may prevent them from achieving their full potential.

6.5 Summary

6.5.1 Timetabling

In the light of twenty-first century best practice and duty of care perspectives, it is worth considering ways in which drama school schedules could be more sympathetic to the general physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of students.

The following questions can reasonably be asked:

- Is the strict conservatoire training schedule still the best model for drama school training?

- Does the intensity of the programmes necessarily result in better trained actors?
- Would some flexibility in the programming allow for a healthier balance encompassing knowledge and skills?
- Are there ways in which class times, hours per day, hours per week and length of semesters can be reassessed in terms of efficiency and productivity?
- Are there ways in which drama school schedules can be better adapted to ensure the emotional and psychological wellbeing of their students and staff while maintaining skills standards?
- Is it possible for school and university authorities to allow drama schools more scheduling freedom to adapt around their specialised needs?

6.5.2 Student Factors

Acting students appear to be overtired and often exhausted for the majority of their training. Drama schools may do well to assess whether their acting courses need to be so intensely programmed and whether their graduates could be as well trained with a more relaxed timetable. More time for reflection and integration of skills may be an undervalued and underutilised commodity in this environment.

There would seem to be recognisable stress periods in the actor training programme during which students can feel more pressured and emotional than at other times. Two apparent examples of these periods are the second year of the course and the final week of rehearsals for productions. It would seem prudent for teachers to have awareness of these particular periods of vulnerability and take them into account when dealing with their students.

The taking of illicit and prescription drugs by university students is a nation and worldwide problem, and is also frequently experienced within actor training environments. It is particularly difficult for students to function

effectively on drugs in the drama school setting because courses are rigorous, and interaction and performances of some kind are a daily demand. It is also likely that the taking of drugs by acting students may compromise their ability to access the range of emotions required by their training, dull their responses and affect their overall abilities. Students on drugs or medication present particular difficulties for actor training teachers who require active involvement, creativity and alert reactions from their pupils.

6.5.3 Assessment

In the mix of shifting approaches, changing subject titles and somewhat subjective assessment procedures, it is little wonder that students become anxious about how they will be evaluated and how their talent will be appraised. Many of the training areas lend themselves to interpretation and subjective evaluation. The fact that assessment procedures can contribute to the emotional distress of acting students would suggest that drama schools constantly need to examine ways to better appraise their students' progress and skill level. Two of the student issues arising out of concerns about assessment include favouritism and competition with peers.

When competition among acting students becomes intense, it can undermine the quality of the work and may lead to emotional distress and reasons for students to seek counselling. Attempting to create a collaborative, non-judgemental ensemble for each group of students is the preferred way of fostering talent, and one that the schools continue to strive for. Avoiding favouritism and explaining casting decisions are strategies that might assist in achieving this goal.

There are many other areas of concern that affect acting students during their training and that were raised by both graduates and teachers in their interviews for this study. Chapter 7 explores these issues.

CHAPTER 7: STUDENT ISSUES

Acting students have a variety of concerns that affect their studies and their general wellbeing. Many of these concerns emerged during this research, and some have already been addressed in the previous chapter. Other concerns include the issue of confidentiality, the focus on physical appearance and body image, the part played by sexual orientation in coming to terms with their identity and the learning differences brought about by generational change. These factors all seem to play a part in some students' actor training experience, and are examined in this chapter.

7.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an attribute strongly associated with trust, which in turn greatly contributes to the sense of a safe environment. In psychotherapy circles confidentiality is an essential component of this trust according to Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014), who stressed that for students participating in group activities it should be clearly stated at the beginning of each session that disclosure about personal issues was to be kept within the group. This psychologist suggested that this procedure would be helpful in nurturing the group dynamic because it would be distressing for acting students if they felt disclosures were not going to be held in confidence. It would probably mean that they did not feel safe and, as a consequence, may hold back in class activities.

From this research it seems that when students are asked to divulge personal information in class exercises or rehearsals, strict rules about confidentiality are not always set in place. Yet it is only reasonable to assume that if students need to feel uninhibited about responding to exercises or discussions in a free and open way, it is imperative that they feel their contribution will not be judged or discussed outside of the room. Instruction to restrict the sharing of personal information appears to be infrequent and left

to individual teachers. The interviewed graduates said it was 'understood' that disclosures were not to be discussed outside the class, but reminders were rarely given and there was no way to enforce it.

These kinds of confidentiality concerns come up repeatedly in the drama school setting and are talked about by students in counselling sessions according to the interviewed psychologists. Head of Acting Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012) revealed that he conducts a powerful exercise involving students' personal stories early in their training. One year it was reported that personal information from this exercise had been discussed at a social occasion and he admitted the fault was his for not stressing that the information stayed with the participants in the room. This kind of inappropriate disclosure is always going to be a problem when dealing with highly personal information in such a close-knit and intimate community as a drama school.

Graduate B (interview, 24 May, 2013) talked about an exercise in the first week of her training where members of the class were asked to reveal their "deepest, darkest secrets", which presumably was to assist the new students to 'open up' and feel free to express themselves. Asked whether there was a 'boundary of confidence' introduced Graduate B conceded "yes, but we were just young first-year students, so of course we were going to talk about everyone's business. Now I'll always know things about people I'd rather not know." Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) remarked that even when boundaries were set, she still felt exposed due to the class dynamics, because her group did not always get along, which made her feel vulnerable.

This kind of sharing without due diligence can be distressing for many of the students who usually feel obliged to disclose personal information when requested and are then vulnerable to having it known or discussed outside of the session. Seton (2004) talks about the need for trust to develop within the student actor learning community as participants share common challenges

and shifts in values, beliefs and experiences. He goes on to discuss the deepening sense of vulnerability as teachers and students negotiate these changes with each other. It would seem that both this trust and the sense of vulnerability need to be carefully monitored and safeguarded.

7.1.1 Safety Barrier

Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014) admitted that although it is extremely desirable to have a group agree on confidentiality when personal information is being exchanged, it cannot be insisted upon. He recommended that at the beginning of classes involving personal disclosure, teachers make clear that it is expected the information will remain confidential, but that it cannot be guaranteed. The students would then at least have a little more choice about whether or not to reveal things they felt were too private. This kind of pre-exercise statement could work as a form of personal protection or safety barrier.

7.1.2 Choice and Permission

In the context of drama and vocational training Stevenson and Bates (1998) discussed the permission a patient gives to a therapist to include emotions in the therapy process, but when students come to role play they may have neither the experience nor the understanding to grant this permission in their drama classes. Stevenson and Bates agreed that they "needed to exercise considerable care when attempting to evoke spontaneous, authentic emotional responses (because) a program like this is not the place for the more intrusive techniques of psychodrama or gestalt therapy" (p. 49). In conducting their acting classes, these two practitioners were acutely aware of the dangers inherent in asking people to role play and of the strong emotional responses that could result. They insisted that it was important that participants gave permission for this kind of exploration to take place even though some in their classes may not have fully understood what was involved.

In the drama school setting there is very little room for acting students not to participate in activities, nor to choose not to disclose information being asked of them. It would be perceived as non-compliance and viewed dimly. Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) felt strongly that no one should be made to share confidences and that if acting students did not feel safe and were not given an option—then they should just make up a story! She also suggested that there were more subtle and respectful ways of approaching exercises, for example by inviting participants to remember a time when they were angry rather than forcing them to recall a particular episode. In acting terms this is equivalent to asking students to get in touch with 'an emotion' rather than having them recall an emotional episode that has happened to them.

The psychologists in this study all affirmed the importance of strict confidentiality rules with Psychologist D (interview, 27 January, 2015) describing other exacting rules she imposes in her groups—for example, not criticising, judging or laughing at someone's contribution and being clear about what constituted participant feedback. In my experience some drama school teachers do attempt to lay down similar guidelines when conducting their classes, but others do not seem to understand the importance of such parameters. Even though student confidentiality may be an imperative for the institutions, the nature of drama schools as centres of storytelling with sets of complex personal relationships, means that good intentions are not necessarily enough. Ultimately teachers need to constantly remind students that it is imperative to keep the content of their classes confidential and that information revealed in sessions is to stay 'in the room'.

7.1.3 Staff Confidentiality

Another confidentiality concern that emerged in interviews was that students often want to talk to one particular drama school staff member and frequently want the information they disclose to remain with that person. Teachers B

(interview, 3 November, 2012) and D (interview, 31 October, 2012) described the difficulty of students asking this of them and said they usually advised students that passing information on to other staff members assisted in a better understanding of the situation. The teachers agreed that "it's difficult when students ask you not to tell anyone else. Where does your responsibility lie?" Several of the teachers reported that they tried to keep students' confidences even when their behaviour was discussed at staff meetings. It is a problematic dilemma for teachers who ultimately need to decide what is in the best interests of the student

7.2 Body Image

The appearance of performers in the entertainment profession is of considerable importance and employment possibilities are undeniably affected by looks. Acting students are very aware of this and confront many of their appearance and body issues while still at drama school. This can be a challenging process for some students whose looks may not correlate with their projected image of themselves. They are often faced with having to recognise and accept the reality of their appearance and body type and how it may affect their chances of being cast in particular roles—for example, the reality of being more likely to be cast in character than leading roles can sometimes come as quite a shock. Although it is policy that staff attempt to spread roles as equally as possible across the productions, inevitably some degree of 'type' casting creeps in. For example, an overweight student may consistently be cast in older or character roles. This stereotypical image is then reinforced for the student whether or not it plays out like that in the profession. It is a sensitive area that can cause students much angst. After being short listed for one of the drama schools in this study, auditionee Helen (personal communication, 20 October, 2015) was told she did not have the right body type and was asked to commit to a 'nutrition plan' before she could be accepted. She took this as a reference to being overweight and found the request offensive.

I recently directed a second year drama school production in which a significant number of students in the cast were wearing braces. They were utilising their time at school to correct their teeth before facing the world of auditions. The braces often caused considerable articulation and speech difficulties as well as some degree of embarrassment. Production photographs showed the students reluctant to smile and reveal braces because, even at this early stage of their careers, students are aware that unflattering photos can appear on the internet for years to come.

7.2.1 Eating Disorders

Over-concern with body image and shape can lead to restrictive dieting and unhealthy weight control methods, which in turn may lead to potentially dangerous disordered eating behaviours according to Jillian Croll (2005). She observed that "given the overwhelming prevalence of thin and lean female images and strong and lean male images common to all westernized societies, body image concerns have become widespread among adolescents" (p. 155). Eating disorders are not unusual at drama schools and staff members are usually alert to the signs. It has tended to be more prevalent among dance students but acting students also suffer from this illness. It robs them of nutrition and energy and the impact on their work is noticeable. Teacher I (interview, 23 May, 2013) reported that as part of his involvement in the Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015) he was aware that body image and dieting practices were among the surveyed actors' main concerns, and Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) affirmed that many, mostly female, performing arts students had come to see her for counselling regarding eating disorders. This psychologist reported that these students were concerned about their weight and appearance, struggled with self-image and were usually very hard on themselves and striving to be 'perfect'. Psychologist D insisted that some of the pressure had also come from the teachers and told of a mature female student who had come to her in tears because she had been told by a

teacher that if she wanted to be an actor she needed to have surgery on her nose. The girl did not want to do this and was devastated. "When student actors come to schools they bring their 'own person' with them, whether they are big, small, tall or talk with strange accents. They don't all have to look like Angelina Jolie" said Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015), who complained to the board of examiners about this incident but no action was taken.

There is now a growing preoccupation with weight and body image in men as well as women according to Sarah Grogan (2008) who acknowledged that it is likely to lead to increasing problems with males' self-image and body satisfaction. Anecdotally, a female graduate who recently returned to her drama school observed that the body image issue appeared much more male centred now and that there was a strong gym culture and considerable pressure on the male students to build up their bodies.

According to Seton (2009) the blurring of boundaries between the personal and the professional, the private and public, the actor and the celebrity, the body the actor has in kilograms and inches and the transformation that is possible, all make life difficult for young people intending to become actors. Seton claims that dieting, bulking up, snipping, tucking and cutting the body are now common practice and that visible signs of ageing have become reprehensible, in part due to the media charting celebrity weight loss and gain. "A socially meaningful profession deserves dignity but I think there is much that is currently undignified about the profession" (Seton, 2009, p. 60). Seton argues that it is not enough to express body distress to counsellors in student support services and that pedagogy condones these societal pressures through its silence, precipitating the need for institutions along with the industry to be interrogated. He concludes that actors in training urgently need to debate and explore these issues so that students can talk about the specific histories that inform their concerns about their bodies. From my experience the staffs at acting schools walk a fine line between not

exacerbating the sensitive issue of body image with their students while at the same time assisting them to be realistic about the demands and preferences of the entertainment industry.

7.3 Sexual Orientation

Adolescent specialist Angela Oswalt (2014) has stated that sexual development is often confusing and anxiety-provoking and youths' gender identity and sexual orientation can constantly evolve and change during the adolescent period. Oswalt argues that this developmental process often involves 'trying on' and experimenting with many different identities, roles, and behaviours and that sexual identity and behaviour is part of this experimentation. She affirmed that throughout adolescence most youths question their sexual orientation but that it is considered normal to feel somewhat uncertain or ambivalent about sexual orientation because adolescents are in a process of learning to relate to peers as friends, as well as potential romantic and sexual partners.

In the drama school environment, these forging of friendships and love partnerships are inevitably played out with considerable intensity. The strong emotions that are part of such relationships can naturally affect students' lives and studies. To add to the stress of this already confusing time, exploring their sexual orientation can be quite disturbing for many students. Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) affirmed that she had many, mostly male, students seeking counselling regarding their sexual orientation, which sometimes caused them considerable turmoil.

As young people's sexual development continues to progress, most youths will eventually identify themselves as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or 'questioning' according to Oswalt (2014), who refers to sexual orientation as an internal, psycho-emotional experience. However, she makes it clear that if students decide they are homosexual or bisexual, research strongly indicates that this orientation comes with more emotional risks. The findings of

Psychologist Koji Ueno (2005) support this statement having concluded that adolescents with homosexual and bisexual orientations had higher levels of psychological distress than other adolescents. A national study of Australian adolescents by health workers Stephen Russell and Kara Joyner (2001) also provided strong evidence that sexual minority youths are more likely than their peers to think about and attempt suicide. These are important factors worthy of consideration when dealing with the wellbeing of the acting student population, many of whom are encountering these experiences during their training.

7.4 Generational Changes

The requirements and expectations of the learning environment are likely to be quite different for this new (Millennial) generation who exhibit unique characteristics from previous generations according to researchers Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000). The concept of generations and of a generational theory was first articulated by these researchers in an earlier book (1991) when they suggested that new generations can bring new attitudes, perceptions and beliefs to university campuses. In 2000 they introduced the concept of the Millennial generation referring to students born after the early 80s. Howe and Strauss suggested that as a group, Millennials are unlike any other previous youth generation because they are more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse.

Sarah Keeling (2003) went on to give the Millennial generation seven distinguishing traits: that they consider themselves special, that they are confident, team-oriented and achieving, but at the same time that they are quite sheltered, conventional and pressured by expectations. She said that these traits made this generation unique, and that in the university environment the expectations of Millennial students would prove very challenging for their lecturers. Keeling advises that academic staff members who are aware of generational patterns and tendencies would be more

effective working with their students than those who did not consider the unique aspects of each generation. One of the characteristics she notes is the amount of pressure Millennials are under and suggests that this pressure could result in them becoming stressed, depressed or engage in risky behaviours. Howe and Strauss (2000) report that 70% of these students worried about finding a good job.

Unemployment is a perennial and ongoing anxiety for those in the acting profession. Cloonan (2008) reports on students coming to see him for counselling with 'anticipatory depression' as graduation approached. He claims that the absence of defined career structures in the arts means that there is a constant and urgent need for continual re-motivation and development of emotional self-sufficiency in a crowded and competitive field.

7.4.1 Learning and Emotions

Technology has changed the way we communicate and resulted in altered teaching and learning processes. The current generation of students are considered technologically dependent, have grown up using modern technology as their preferred learning tools and are referred to as 'digital natives' by educator Marc Prensky (2001). Prensky posits that technology has changed the way students think and process information, which has affected the way they learn. The Barna Research Group (2009) supports this finding asserting that older adults tend to use technology for information and convenience, whereas younger adults rely on technology to facilitate their search for meaning and connection and that these technologies have begun to rewire the ways in which young people meet, express themselves, use content and stay connected.

This research reveals that these influences have also affected the way acting students are acquiring skills in the performing arts. The demographic of staffs at drama schools indicate they are primarily from the Baby Boomer generation (in their 50s and 60s) or Generation-X (in their late 30s and 40s).

Head of Acting Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012) considered that the way young people constantly interacted on social media cut them off from a lot of interpersonal learning. They texted rather than talked to people face to face and buried themselves in their headphones rather than looking people in the eye. This teacher considered that some of this had translated into young actors being more reluctant to reveal or access their emotions "and that is really difficult to teach. There are so many defences, so many mechanisms to protect ourselves from feeling." Teacher D said he had found that over the years some young actors had become less willing to acknowledge the depth of emotion that many plays required, which he determined was a huge problem for potential actors whose very art form demanded openness and a willingness to emotionally experiment. Teacher A (interview, 21 May, 2013) also had issues with the generational changes of his students' learning habits, in particular their "instant learning" with the use of Google and other information sources. "They access information before it's even out of your mouth, correct you or add something to the conversation, but they don't actually learn it because they know they can just look it up again next time they need it." This teacher claimed that learning was something 'felt' in the body, where the body connects with emotion and the learning goes deep into the psyche—and that students were not appreciating that kind of learning as a skill. "Sometimes when they tell me they have already done something I say that is what we do as actors, we repeat. That is what rehearsal is, it is repeating." It would seem that the instant result, quick fix tendencies of the Millennial generation find it difficult to commit to working methods that involve recapping and going over material to achieve a professional level of performance.

7.4.2 Entitlement

Drama school teachers have had to adjust and cater for a new technologically savvy generation of students who have high expectations of themselves and others. The interviewed teachers agreed that their students

have become more empowered to speak their mind and more informed of their rights than previous generations. This correlates with reports of the Millennial generation having more confidence in themselves and more willingness than previous generations to acknowledge the importance of their personal choices and actions (Keeling, 2003). Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) had experienced a strong proactive student collective speaking up for students' rights on his university campus and noted that students on the whole did feel more empowered. Similarly, on another campus, Head of Acting, Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012), found that students were now more aware of their rights and of being exploited, bullied or harassed and Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) admitted to encountering what she called 'over entitled' students, who complained and made suggestions about how things should be handled. She usually advised them that it was up to teachers—not the students—to best judge how to manage situations. This aligned with the viewpoint of Movement Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) who claimed that students were now very quick to make their complaints public because they felt they were on the same level as the staff: "there is a status evenness happening in Australia. The students seem to want to be on an equal footing with the staff." Prior (2012) similarly discussed the changing relationship between professional and student, and the shift to the student–teacher relationship as being co-practitioners, observing that this thinking seems to have come about through a growing mistrust of absolute professional authority.

Some of the interviewed teachers mentioned that they felt student 'entitlement' issues sometimes came from the fact that they were now paying considerable fees for their courses and were therefore conscious of getting 'value for money'. These findings all accord with Keeling's (2003) description of Millennials as having been made to feel uniquely special and therefore 'entitled'. However, the positive aspect of this generational shift was highlighted by Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012) who commented that

current students' confidence made them very resourceful and able to contribute assuredly to collaborative processes, which was a great asset in the performing arts.

7.5 Summary

The disclosure of personal material in classes and rehearsals, and the issue of confidentiality regarding this material, raised considerable concerns for some students. It would seem to warrant much more attention being paid to the setting of strict rules and boundaries around the area of confidentiality within the drama school setting

Body image and appearance are other areas of concern for acting students, who seem to be under particular pressure to conform to societal ideals of weight and beauty due to the importance their chosen profession gives to these matters. In addition, sexual orientation issues can prove distressing for some students, who may seek counselling to deal with these concerns.

Generational shifts mean that students respond to learning and educational situations differently from previous generations. It would seem that teachers need to be aware of these trends, and may need to find creative ways to adjust to changes in the communication tools and learning styles of their students. The use and overuse of technology may mean that students are not accessing their emotional range as easily or as deeply as they once did, which can present problems for potential actors and their teachers (teacher D, interview, 31 October, 2010). However, students' growing sense of empowerment means that they have the confidence to contribute and participate in activities in a more proactive way than they did in the past. This increased confidence and participation is well suited to contemporary styles of theatre that involve teamwork and collaboration.

A range of drama school practices and many of their consequences have been discussed in the last two chapters. Questions still remain about specific

areas in training where students may experience particular vulnerability to emotional distress. Chapter 8 explores some of these identifiable areas that have the potential to expose students to emotional or psychological risks.

CHAPTER 8: AREAS OF EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY

While this study is not intended in any way to be a psychological or psychotherapeutic evaluation of student actors, it would be remiss not to delve into the conditions of emotional vulnerability and what may be occurring when students have 'emotional episodes'. At its most basic, psychoanalysis is a framework for understanding the impact of the unconscious on thoughts, feelings, and behaviour and suggests that an emotional reaction that is abnormally intense is derived from something that has been previously repressed (Stuart-Hamilton, 2007). According to pioneering psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel (1945), emotional attacks occur when normal control of the ego has become inadequate through an abnormal influx of excitation and, as a result, previously blocked emotions may flow. Fink (1990) discussed how emotion involves affective, cognitive and behavioural processes in a complex feedback-loop system, with any one of these interconnected components having a potential effect on the system as a whole. These descriptions indicate the complexity of the factors involved when acting students have strong emotional reactions to particular situations, remembered incidents or unresolved issues.

In order to explore safeguarding against this emotional vulnerability experienced by acting students during their training, this chapter explores the important precautionary strategy of 'closure'—first in regard to classes, and then as it applies to rehearsals and performances. Later in the chapter, the significant areas of role playing and de-roling are investigated, before post-performance cool downs are reviewed and the closure processes of production seasons appraised.

8.1 Closure Practices

A particularly important practice I learned when training as a drama therapist was the necessity of 'closing' a session. Drama therapy is primarily

conducted in groups and it was considered imperative that sessions commenced with a warm up and were completed with a closure exercise. "Closure is an essential part of every session . . . it implies the tying up of loose ends, the restoring of the client to no less a position of strength than when he arrived" (Schattner & Courtney, 1981, p. 256). This is accepted general practice for most personal growth and therapy sessions. Closure allows the group a transition period to recognise that what has just transpired in the session is now complete, and that participants need to prepare themselves for whatever is to come next. In my training this was invariably done in the form of a 'coming together' group exercise along with a verbal reminder to leave what had just transpired 'in the room'.

Some of the benefits of closing rituals have been discussed by well-known psychodramatist (1996) and include assisting group members to 're-enter' the world outside the room, giving support to a participant who may feel particularly vulnerable and ventilating any 'unfinished business' that has come up in the session. Some theatre practitioners have attempted to incorporate closure into their work with Geer (1993) asserting that because actors experience emotional consequences from the roles they play, his participants are always debriefed at the conclusion of his sessions and sometimes given warnings before undertaking role playing in order for them to prepare for 'post-performance' reactions. Geer reinforces that many therapeutic and educational programmes use role playing as a tool and invariably participants need several debriefings to recover from emotionally intense exercises. He asserts that experts in related professions such as vocational trainers debrief their 'actors' after a 'performance' in order to prevent emotional damage. Geer (1993) describes how considerable energy goes into warming up, entering the life of the character, immersing one's self in the world of the play, and pursuing pathways for further, deeper involvement. However, at the end of the exercise, project, class, or performance, the process of dropping out, cooling down, debriefing, letting

go, or putting closure on the experience is often neglected, resulting in actors experiencing "emotional hangover" (p. 147). Barton (1994) agreed and maintained that while closure was certainly important at the end of full performances, it should also receive more attention throughout all areas of the curriculum, even minor classroom assignments.

Acting Teacher McFarren (2003) similarly noted that while very powerful teaching techniques were used to help students 'connect' and 'feel' the worlds of their characters, there was little if any training offered to help students cool down and debrief, particularly after enacting traumatic experiences of their characters. She added that there was often little, if any, consideration of the students' innate sensitivities that might, without the careful attention of the trainers, unwittingly place some at higher risk of mental illness. These researchers (Geer, Barton and McFarren) are all detailing situations that occur every day in drama training institutions. Actors are encouraged to enter into the emotional worlds of their characters or carry out exercises involving role play, and then given little or no assistance to return to a sense of 'normality'.

8.1.1 Class Closure

Closure practices are considered the preferred way to end group sessions (Schattner & Courtney, 1981), and one such closure practice is a debriefing session. At the completion of a class a debriefing session where feelings are discussed may bring some kind of closure to raw emotions—especially if the class has been intense or involved emotional responses. The value of this practice was reinforced by all the interviewed teachers in the study who agreed that in principle some kind of closure ritual was extremely advisable. Although a couple of the teachers said they tried to make a point of closing their classes with a formal procedure, the majority admitted that it rarely happened. Most expressed the opinion that it was primarily due to lack of time and that it was the first element in their classes 'to go'. Often when

intense and emotional episodes occur in actor training classes, students are simply released from the session to continue with their day's schedule— without any sense of resolution or finality. Many of the interviewed teachers acknowledged that they had experienced students arriving for their classes emotionally distressed about an incident that had occurred in a previous class. During her actor training Graduate E (interview, 27 November, 2012) acknowledged that she never felt 'psychologically safe' in her classes and that there was no sense of structure to them—meaning that there did not seem to be any formalised beginning to an exercise, the exercise then undertaken, followed by a conclusive end. As a consequence, she remembered not having assistance in feeling 'grounded' or of having a sense of control and balance at the end of some classes. "It was more like: here is the exercise, now off you go. People were left in free floating states of anxiety or worse . . . two students had nervous breakdowns during my training" (Graduate E, interview, 27 November, 2012).

Although many processes have greatly improved since this student graduated 20 years ago, it is still not an accepted, formal practice in drama schools that classes and rehearsals, particularly those involving the use of strong emotions, have a sense of closure or completion. 'Warm ups' almost always happen at the beginning of both classes and rehearsals and are recognised as bringing the group to a point of readiness for the work to follow—physically, vocally and mentally. 'Warm downs' or closure is the exception rather than the rule. Most teachers and directors admit to working till the last moment of their sessions and not allowing enough time to 'warm down'.

Barton (1994) identified that finding ways to end and let go after acting classes were as useful as finding ways to enter a role or exercise. He argued that actors got caught emotionally because all their energies were devoted to 'entering' and none to 'exiting' and that just as athletes and dancers understood the essential nature of the cool down in order to prevent stiff

joints and muscular pain, actors should consider a similar approach to emotion. Head of Acting, Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013) stated that even though his philosophy was that transitions were key in theatre—how one began and ended scenes, careers, one's time at drama school—he still had not developed formal strategies for closure procedures in his school in spite of being aware of their importance. The value of closing rituals was stressed by Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014) who insisted it was vital to deal with people's emotions at the time of their occurrence. He suggested that providing an empathic ending to classes could be as simple as asking people how they felt, whether they wanted to say anything before they left the space, or just coming together as a group without giving advice. These were all crucial elements of closing a session.

8.1.2 Performance Closure

8.1.2.1 Playing Roles

Before approaching the topic of performance closure, it is imperative to have an understanding of what role play can involve. It is highly likely—and expected—that strong emotions may be experienced during a rehearsal process and subsequent production. However, there is always a risk that actors—particularly young, inexperienced actors—may over-identify with the roles they are playing and 'lose themselves' in them. In Chapter 1, there was discussion of the various acting methods used to assist student actors to take on roles and learn to 'inhabit' characters in the worlds of plays. Drama therapist Read Johnson (1981) called role playing a process of identification in which part of the person assumes the identity of another personality, and that an actor will "often try to relate certain aspects of his own experience to that of this other personality in order to better impersonate it" (p. 51). Psychologist D (interview, 22 January, 2015) said she thought of acting as a kind of 'schizophrenic' profession where a person was getting 'under the skin' of another and carrying two personalities at the same time. This would be

safe if the person was psychologically 'solid' and had a clear understanding of what 'acting' was. However, if they were vulnerable and over-identified with the role, then it was possible to "end up in a psychiatric hospital". Judith Ohikuare (2014) writes about how sudden and often surprising deaths of talented actors sometimes inspires fear about the dangers of delving 'too deep' into roles and the sense that somewhere in the actor's psyche was the potential to forget himself when authentically getting into character. It is true that most actors need assistance in learning how to 'de-role'—meaning to step back psychologically from the role and put emotional distance between themselves and their characters. Geer (1993) claimed that psychologists, social scientists and psychodramatists all agreed that the single most powerful means for preventing damage to individuals engaged in any role-playing situation was awareness, and that role players needed to know in advance how the performance process may impinge on their ordinary lives.

8.1.2.2 De-Roling

When actors or directors speak of putting on or taking off a 'role' or a 'character', these descriptions need to be recognised as no more than ways of metaphorically labelling what is actually a complex psycho-physical-social process according to Seton (2008). This is an insightful observation on the nature of role playing as it reinforces how actors can and do become physically, psychologically and emotionally aligned to the characters they play. Seton categorically states that "it becomes a nonsense to speak of regarding a 'character' or a 'role' as a material object—like a piece of clothing—separate from the embodied life of a person in the context of performance" (Seton, 2004, p. 4). Across the three drama schools in my research it became apparent that the use of de-roling or closure strategies was left entirely up to individual teachers, which, in practice, rarely happened. In addition, Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013) stated that he did not feel it was an area dealt with during his training and, from a different school,

Graduate B (interview, 24 May, 2013) similarly agreed that she was not taught de-roling strategies during her training.

Head of School, Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) noted that because conflict was the basis of drama, many of the characters that student actors played inevitably did undergo stress of some kind within the context of their role playing. He accepted that if they identified too much with that stress then it was important that they take care of their physical and mental health by 'coming down' from the role. However, even though confirming that students needed to have assistance with the de-roling process, he acknowledged that there was no formal procedure or routine established around this practice in his drama school and that closing rituals were not part of general practice. Head of Acting at another school, Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013), also conceded that he had not instrumented any formal 'exit strategies' for performances. Teachers from this school confirmed that there were neither classes for students to learn about 'de-roling' nor an emphasis given to closure rituals. Another Head of Acting, Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012), while admitting it would be valuable to include techniques for assisting post-performance closure in the syllabus, said he did not feel he had the appropriate skills to undertake these procedures.

This situation in drama schools was similarly observed by Seton (2006) who stated that while acting schools were effective in shaping actors in taking on a role, there was far less guidance, if any, about 'removing' a role or debriefing after a season of performances. Seton considered that actors often prolonged the addictive, co-dependent and, potentially destructive habits of the characters they embodied, and his ongoing research examined how students manage the inevitable aftermath of performances and the vulnerabilities that remain poorly negotiated at the 'exit' point of any performance-making process. In a 2008 article he suggested that "some of the safety measures that have been created recently in the hope of removing

the possibility of injury fosters a denial of the inevitability, in creative work, of woundedness or vicarious trauma" (p. 7).

When enacting scenes for vocational training, Stevenson and Bates (1998) found it useful to distinguish between de-roling and debriefing. They maintained that both of these terms had a long and chequered history—from the battlefield to the theatre—and needed to be more tightly defined because the issues they raised were vital in both theory and practice. They tended to use the term 'de-roling' to refer to a careful, brief analysis of feelings aroused by the drama enactments that were still being experienced by the participants after the exercise had finished. They went on to define 'debriefing' as an analysis of cause and effect, which explored the appropriateness or otherwise of behaviour that had led to the strong feelings experienced in the drama—and may in fact include 'de-roling'. In the drama school setting the terms are used and acted upon slightly differently. Debriefing refers in the main to discussion about a performance and the sharing of experiences and ideas about it. De-roling is a letting go of the characteristics and feelings engendered by the actor in the course of playing a role.

8.1.3 Post-Performance Cool Downs

The value of physical and vocal warm ups has long been acknowledged and recognised as a vital tool for performing artists—and one that also assists cast cohesion. However, the value of cool downs is only just beginning to be explored. Artists are now being asked to think more like athletes in terms of allowing their bodies to return to normal. The Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015) found that almost 40% of those surveyed had difficulties 'cooling down' or 'shaking off' an intense emotional and/or physical role highlighting the questions Prior et al.,(2015) posed ". . . how are young actors trained to deal with moving in and out of potentially distressing 'worlds'? Does contemporary actor training adequately prepare these actors?" (p. 62).

Historically Schechner (1985) has long considered that Western theatre practitioners neglected the 'cool down' and 'aftermath' aspects of performance. Seton (2007a) reinforced that student actors needed to recognise the techniques they "are habitually attuned to taking into themselves as spoken words and textured characterisations" which may not always enable them to clearly debrief (p. 8). He argued that teacher-directors needed to support the wellbeing of both students and audiences as it is they who contribute "by their dramaturgical construction to the environmental context in which these powerful words circulate" (p. 8). Well-known Australian actor/singer Philip Quast was recently artist in residence at one of the schools in this study and, according to Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013), Quast impressed on the students that a cool down was equally as important as a warm up and that after a vocally demanding show, he would vocally warm down for half an hour. He maintained that just as particular vocal exercises were recommended for singers to 'cool down' their vocal muscles, and physical ones for dancers, so it was reasonable to assume that actors similarly needed exercises to participate in a cool down.

Geer (1993) reported that over half of the US acting teachers with whom he had spoken were concerned about 'de-roling' issues and some had instituted debriefings and cool downs in their teaching and directing. However, none felt that he or she had discovered 'the' way to accomplish a cool down. A few had used techniques immediately post-performance to help return actors to their pre-performance modes of being. Many of these simply involved the actors sitting together in a circle and quietly supporting one another or using the time to discuss the performance. The ritual of taking the costume off and leaving the character at the door was something that was talked about but rarely practised according to Graduate D (interview, 23 May, 2013) who thought it would be very helpful if the cast met up at the end of the performance and agreed to exit the play together.

Actors indicated that the 'cool down' was something entirely absent from their practice according to the Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015). Teacher/researcher I (interview, 23 May, 2013), who was involved in this wellbeing study, commented that a cooling down ritual had not yet been encompassed into professional practice and that actors who think nothing of coming together on stage 30 minutes before the commencement of a show to 'tune in' to each other, rarely want to come together at the end of the performance, no matter how minimal the activity. Teacher T (interview, 21 May, 2013) reflected a similar view to that of many of the interviewed teachers when he commented that most of the student actors would simply not stay back at the end of a performance.

For de-roling to occur as a matter of course, it would seem that actor training institutions need to fully recognise the importance of cool downs and designate a compulsory few minutes at the end of each performance to assist in the release of physical and emotional tensions associated with the performances. If this practice is established at drama schools, it is likely that graduates will take the practice into employment environments, eventually formalising this ritual as best practice in the general acting profession.

8.1.3.1 De-Roling at the Bar

Movement Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) made reference to certain Asian theatrical traditions, often ritualistic and religious in nature, where performers undergo massages to assist them in 'coming down' from a performance. If they are in a trance-like state, they are carefully brought out of it by attentive assistants. In the world of Western theatre it seems that performers just go to the bar and have a drink. This sentiment was reinforced by several interviewed teachers, including Teacher I (interview, 23 May, 2013) who maintained that the cultural norm and default behaviour for young actors to let off steam after a performance was "going for a drink", which was reinforced by the Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015),

which stated that high numbers of actors reported the use of alcohol as a means of unwinding after a performance—"going for a drink with colleagues after a show" (p. 108).

Dressing room discussion and banter sometimes helped student actors to transition from the play world into 'real life' according to Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013), who acknowledged that his fellow actors usually just dispersed. They knew they were supposed to leave the material from the play 'on the stage' or 'at the door', but it was not always possible or easy to do. During performances at his drama school Graduate A said the cast would arrive early to warm up and prepare but afterwards, even though there were students who often came off stage upset and emotional, there was nothing to assist them. On seeing a recent production at this particular graduate's former school, Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014) commented that one of the young actors who had just played an emotional scene, was still crying and clearly distressed during the curtain call, and ascertained that she may need future assistance in emotionally detaching from the role. This psychologist confirmed that if role play is involved in the psychological field, there is always a small ritual to help the person 'come out' of that role. It might be as simple as imaginatively shaking hands with the person they were playing and then with themselves or of asking the person to do an activity 'as themselves'. It could also be a small reflective exercise such as guiding the participants to 'being back' in their own bodies, which would de-mark the boundaries between the role and the next activity they were moving onto. These are traditional psychological practices that assist people in acknowledging they are now leaving behind the roles they have been playing. Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014) felt strongly that these debriefing rituals would be very useful for acting students and that introducing best practice standards around closing rituals would be strongly advisable "if you are role playing, or playing intense roles of some kind, there needs to be

assistance to move out of the role. It might only take 30 seconds but at least it addresses the issue."

8.1.4 Production Closure

Only one of the schools in the study holds regular debriefing sessions at the end of each performance project, with the intention of bringing some kind of closure to that production. The other schools hold end of semester interviews with the staff and individual students to comment on the performances. This can be quite a long time after the event, especially for students who may still be carrying issues related to the production. At the school where production de-briefs are held, staff and students sit in a circle and discuss students' strengths and limitations, successes and failures as they relate to the production. The students are encouraged to bring into the sessions some reflection on their own performances and experiences—what they learned, what they achieved, what they did not achieve, what they wanted to work on next and so on. The students are usually asked to make their assessments about their performance before the staff comment. From my understanding this is an attempt by the school to have the students self-reflect on and assess the production, bringing some sense of closure before embarking on the next character, the next production and the next set of potential issues.

8.1.4.1 Circle of Death

Post-production debriefing sessions were not experienced by the interviewed graduates in a positive light. Graduate C (interview, 7 December, 2012) admitted that students dubbed these debriefing sessions the 'Circle of Death'. She remembered leaving at least one session in distress and said most of the students had cried at some stage in or after the sessions because it was a very exposing experience. She acknowledged that peers were usually supportive during these episodes, but felt it would be preferable if staff provided comments about the performances first because students were quite guarded, feeling that their remarks could be "pounced upon".

"They certainly left a bit of carnage from time to time", agreed Graduate A (interview, 20 May, 2013). "You are kind of hauled over the coals in public. I think everyone always approached them with trepidation. The expectation was that it would be tough and if it wasn't, you felt that you had got lucky." For this particular graduate there was a feeling among the student body that the sessions were more for the staff to criticise than for students to offer any genuine self-reflection. He also felt that there was an expectation to talk only about their individual performances rather than the overall experience, the atmosphere in the rehearsal room, the calibre of their relationships with cast and director and so on. This graduate conceded that in this situation it was unlikely anyone was going to talk about having difficulty working with directors if they were in the room. It is interesting to note that both these students just quoted are extremely successful, high achievers who were well respected during their training and have gone on to work successfully in the profession and yet continued to feel quite fearful of these feedback sessions. Acting Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) conceded that it was inevitable there were tears and emotional reactions after these debriefing or 'post-mortem' sessions because it was a response to the feedback and criticism given—as well as being a time of release and 'letting go' for what was often weeks and sometimes months of a rehearsal process.

8.1.4.2 Timing

Acting Teacher N (interview, 20 May, 2013) commented that debriefing after a major production should not happen until weeks after it had concluded, when students were able to be more objective about the experience. It is true that immediately after a production students are often tired and emotional as well as being hypersensitive about both the production and their performances in it. However, it is also the time when the issues about the production are uppermost and perhaps needing to be shared. Even though drama students need to learn to accept criticism as part of the repertoire of

skills required in the acting profession, it should also be the schools' aim to provide appraisals without seemingly causing distress and trauma.

The director is usually the person closest to the production and most likely to be able to give balanced feedback. Directors can also explain why certain decisions were made or why actors in the cast were guided to make particular choices. However, debriefing sessions sometimes occur without the director present, which seems quite counterproductive. Sometimes directors are absent because they are on short-term contracts and not available at the end of the production season or because there is a clash of timetabling. Either way it would seem imperative that every effort is made to schedule debriefing sessions when the directors of the shows can attend. Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) acknowledged that staff had noticed that some guest directors were very hard on students because they were like 'gurus' who came in for a short time and had more freedom to be critical. The full-time staff had to work with students over a three-year period and therefore tended to 'water down' their criticisms and feedback because they had to maintain their ongoing relationship with the students. The reality as I have experienced it is that it is often difficult to find the right balance between providing 'constructive' criticism, while at the same time being helpful and supportive. To some extent has been covered in the section on giving feedback in Chapter 6.

In a vocational training setting, Stevenson and Bates (1998) discuss that in debriefing sessions after role playing, the barriers are usually down and there is an opportunity for both students and facilitators to confront each other and to rework and rearticulate some of their assumptions. However, they warn that debriefing sessions can be difficult and that tension can often block students from freely discussing issues.

> In our program it was important to allow students to think through, and process, the issues over a period of time . . . sometimes the drama tapped into strong but unresolved experiences from a student's past or

managed to challenge a deeply held belief. (Stevenson & Bates, 1998, p. 54)

Stevenson and Bates report how fortunate they felt to have an experienced, qualified counsellor on the team so that adequate follow-up could be provided. They argue that at the time it was necessary to make themselves available so that 'loose ends' could be dealt with and some students required a lot of individual attention in private sessions. Overall it seems that debriefing sessions have potential for closure, particularly if they are well planned, dealt with sensitively and managed with a great deal of expertise. All the interviewed teachers recognised the importance and health benefits of having some kind of 'closure' to all their sessions: the end of classes, the close of rehearsal sessions, the conclusion of performances and the finale of a performance season. However, in all of these areas it seems that closure practices are somewhat ineffectual or lacking altogether.

8.2 Boundary Blurring

In spite of Stanislavsky (1950/1988) himself turning away from his 'emotional recall' approach, the reality is that actors everywhere—including at drama schools—continue to draw upon personal analogies and experiences in order to relate to their characters and play them with, what they believe, is a degree of 'authenticity'. Seton (2006) questioned the price that actors pay for participating in this practice and acknowledged that while some actors move from playing role to role with apparent ease, others seem to 'live out' their latest role. When this close emotional connection to roles spills over into everyday life, it can result in actors experiencing what Burgoyne et al., (1999) called 'boundary blurring', recognising that "when the analogy involves emotionally distressing experiences, the actor may feel anxious about his/her psychological safety" (p. 8). Burgoyne et al.,determined that for boundary blurring to occur, emotional connection to characters seemed to be a necessary condition and that it could lead to emotional distress. They observed that many acting students were taken by surprise in the process of

character creation, yet remained silent for fear of being judged odd or incompetent for not coping when they experienced trauma as a result of embodying 'characters' and their fictional lives. "Many of the emotionally distressing experiences described by our interviewees happened relatively early in their training, taking them by surprise and resulting in confusion and sometimes self-blame" (Burgoyne et al., 1999, p. 1).

Psychoanalyst and actor Janice Rule (1973) discussed "living oneself into the part" (p. 54) for weeks or even months, making the separation of stage and home extremely difficult. Rule nominated two major causes for post-performance emotional problems. The first was matching personal experiences to character behaviours, when actors searched for similarities between characters' experiences and their own. The second danger lay in the fact that there was reinforcement both from the actors themselves and from those around them. Cast and crew reinforced the reprogramming by treating actors on stage and off as if they were their characters. Appreciation from directors or applause from audiences had the double effect of promoting character behaviours, eclipsing the ordinary behaviour of the actors. Rule maintained that the day-in and day-out process of steeping oneself in a character and taking on the colouration of the role, trained actors to become more like their characters and, consequently, less like themselves.

In her 1991 article, Burgoyne wrote, "it occurred to me that my theatre training not only had not prepared me to deal with the psychological fallout my actors were experiencing, but that no one had seriously warned me that I might encounter such a phenomenon" (p. 6). This PhD research posits that the boundary blurring effect is still vastly underestimated and its symptoms often ignored by teachers and practitioners. Some of the drama school teachers in this study acknowledged that occasionally their students 'held on' to aspects of the characters they were playing and it had to be pointed out to them. Teacher L (interview, 15 October, 2012) referred to it as 'slippage' and said that it was usually picked up by teachers when students' behaviour

started to mirror the characters they were playing. For example, some of the boys in her class had recently played tough, young criminals in a production and she noticed them being uncharacteristically aggressive in class, which she felt was a 'carry over' from the play. Many of the teacher/directors allowed that they had experienced 'boundary blurring' with their student actors on some productions—especially roles requiring strong emotional commitment. However, most did not seem to think it was a problem.

Acting Teacher N (interview, 20 May, 2013) acknowledged that if actors did not take time and space to separate themselves from their roles, then 'hangovers' could cause them to have extreme moods and difficulties in their 'real life' relationships. He suggested that actors needed to 'neutralise' themselves for their storytelling and that teachers needed to "help students differentiate between the space in the theatre and the space outside the door". According to Head of Acting, Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012), there was never enough time for students to process and reflect on their roles, which was one of the main reasons boundary blurring occurred. He recognised that his students did not have sufficient time to 'let go' of their roles before they went straight into playing their next character.

Two important suggestions were made by Burgoyne et al., (1999) regarding boundary blurring. One was that there needed to be more awareness made of the life/theatre feedback loop that operates in acting experiences, and also that a development of strategies for boundary control needed to be in place to give the actor the ability to choose how and when to 'blur'—and how to rectify boundaries. There does not appear to have been follow-up publications from these particular authors about the boundary blurring phenomenon and its negative impact on actors' lives, especially those of young actors in training. However, the condition is still encountered at drama schools and, to my knowledge, there are no specific strategies in place to counteract the phenomenon.

8.3 Recommendations for Closure Practices

It is suggested that a first step would be to factor closure practices into the timetabling of courses for class, rehearsal and production sessions. As for the closing rituals themselves, there is no mystique about them, nor extra training required to implement them. Closure exercises can be as simple as an improvised 'group choir', a mirror exercise, a group hug, a brief discussion or feedback session and many other such simple procedures. They serve to allow individuals time to come together as a group and assist in bringing some resolution and conclusion to the activity that the group has been involved in.

Even though regular 'closure' of classes, rehearsals and performances appears to be notably absent in the participating drama schools, some of the teachers and students still made mention of an occasional practice. The following discussion presents some of the examples that emerged from both the research and interview processes of this study. They are simple but effective strategies for teachers to attempt some kind of resolution for their students and assist in the process of 'letting go' of role playing. The following brief descriptions elucidate the ease with which these techniques can be applied.

CLASSES:

- Students return to the same space and configuration they occupied at the beginning of the session and repeat the same opening activity. Similarly, students can stand back from the central space and find the simple impulse of walking, running and standing that they started the class with. This creates a cyclical sense and an appreciation of stillness and returning to oneself. Barton (1994) argued that an effective pathway is often a simple step-by-step reversal of the process that has just occurred.

- Borrowing from a technique introduced by Dean Carey (2012) at the Actor's Centre in Sydney, every class begins and ends with a group clap. With students in a circle there is a 'clap in' to start the class and a 'clap out' at the close of the class. In this ritualistic moment students are encouraged to acknowledge what has happened, what needs more work, and then to 'move on'.

- Students return to a circle about 10 minutes before the end of a session and are asked to breathe deeply, reflect on what has just occurred, and give or listen to feedback. They are reminded to leave any issues inside the room before moving on to their next class—a letting go process (Psychologist C, interview, 10 July, 2014).

- Students create for themselves a little individual song or dance that they can perform at the end of every class, rehearsal or performance. Over time, this enactment becomes associated with finality and of 'letting go'—and can also be a moment of sheer fun (Graduate A, interview, 20 May, 2013, from a freelance teacher's suggestion).

- Movement classes conclude with a physical warm down, which can be as simple as a spinal roll or a loosening up movement to release tension (Movement Teacher T, interview, 21 May, 2013).

- Students do not speak at the end of a class, but write in their notebooks their observations from the session. This can become a small moment of reflection before rushing to the next class (Teacher W, interview, 27 May, 2013).

- The separation between actor and character is maintained by using the phrase 'going into character' and then 'coming out of character' whenever role playing occurs. Taken from the practices of UK theatre and film director Mike Leigh, the character being played is always spoken about in the third person (Teacher D, interview, 31 October, 2012).

PERFORMANCES:

- Students can be encouraged to slowly and ritualistically take off their costume after a performance and carefully place it back in the wardrobe, while acknowledging that they are now letting go of the character who wore it. When they 'de-robe', they are leaving the character on the rack and letting their body close off to the character in order not to take the character out into the foyer with them (Teacher G, interview, 24 May, 2013).

- Cast members are requested to find a small object or talisman related to the character they are playing and have it on them during rehearsals and, if possible, performances. At the conclusion of the sessions, they ritualistically put it away. Symbolically, this ritual can assist in 'walking away' from the character (Graduate A, interview, 20 May, 2013 from a freelance director's suggestion).

- A short guided visualisation is conducted at the end of a performance (or scene study) whereby actors 'visit' their characters, thank them for allowing them to be part of their existence, say goodbye to them and return to their own 'consciousness' (Psychologist C, interview, 10 July, 2014).

- The class or cast are brought together after a performance and, with the use of deep breathing exercises, are talked through a 'letting go' and a 'reconnecting' with their centre process. Some directors have particular sayings they use—for example, that they will see the cast 'on the other side'. Bloch's (1993) 'stepping out' procedure involves deep breathing cycles and the performing of simple actions, such as wiping their face with their hands, stretching and changing posture.

- Cast members are asked to come together and nominate a 'best thing' (about their performance) and a 'ready for' (next goal) after every performance. (Teacher G, interview, 24 May, 2013)

8.4 Summary

This chapter examined the strategy of closure in regard to classes, rehearsals and performances, as a precautionary approach to safeguarding the emotional vulnerability of acting students. Even though interviewed teachers acknowledged the benefits of this strategy, the research revealed that closure practices are not used routinely in the participating drama schools. The issues around role playing and de-roling were explored, along with the phenomenon of boundary blurring, with the finding that de-roling practices were rarely used and that post-performance cool downs were never formally carried out in the drama school environment. As a result, boundary blurring, where students continue to embody the characteristics of the characters they are playing, is likely to continue to occur throughout their training and perhaps into their acting careers. The chapter concluded with a summary of some of the closure practices that emerged during the research.

A great deal of what I have discussed in this chapter and in this study is dependent on strategies and processes, including closure rituals, being instrumented by individual teachers, So who are the teachers in drama schools? What are their backgrounds, and how did they come to be teaching in this rarefied environment? Chapter 9 focuses on the various aspects of this important component of the research, exploring the many roles the teachers themselves are expected to fulfil in the drama school setting.

CHAPTER 9: ACTING TEACHERS

This chapter examines the training and qualifications of teachers working in the drama schools participating in this study, before exploring their backgrounds as actors themselves, and how this background affects the training they provide. The chapter then investigates the reality that a very large component of the staff at these schools are comprised of part-time and freelance staff members. It queries the effect this has on the training, before examining in detail the employment of freelance directors. The chapter goes on to explore the different roles that teachers in acting schools are often called upon to fulfil, including that of surrogate therapist, before considering the current 'guru teacher' workshop phenomenon. Finally, the important question of teacher welfare in this environment is surveyed. The chapter concludes by presenting proposals for a preparatory course for teachers outlining possible content for such a course.

> Actor training is a deeply personal and vulnerable business. The teacher has the ability to open the young actor's imagination, emotional life, sexual awareness, intellect, and personal awareness. In the process the same teacher also has the ability to crush the actor, leaving long lasting negative impressions that cross over into the actor's personal life, affecting self-esteem. (Moor, 2013, p. 17)

Moor (2013) continued on from this assertion to add that the one thing a young actor needs is a healthy sense of self, so it is imperative that teachers of actors are capable of nurturing their students through these developments in the craft. This is a considerable responsibility, and yet is consistent with Prior's (2012) claim that the post-apprenticeship actor training system empowers the acting teacher as the vital link in the preparation of the actor within formalised institutionalised training. He concluded that acting schools are only as good as their actor trainers, and, therefore, institutional reputations can shift; this conclusion aligns with Rideout's (1995) statement that drama schools are only as good as their current staff and students, who can have the most positive and also the most devastating effect on each

another. High-profile WAAPA graduate Hugh Jackman (WAAPA, 2014) recently stated that the foundation of his *alma mater* was its teachers, which is no doubt a sentiment expressed by many drama school graduates who understand that the quality of the teaching they experienced was of the utmost importance in their training.

9.1 Training and Qualifications

Members of the teaching staff in Australia's leading acting schools have traditionally been comprised of expert exponents in their particular field across acting, voice, movement, improvisation, singing, direction or other related areas. The tradition of employing practising artists has remained even though the amalgamation of the drama schools under the umbrella of universities has meant that academic qualifications are now taken more into consideration than previously. In the past, students graduated with diplomas from these drama schools but as all of the courses have now been upgraded to bachelor degrees, Teacher N (interview, 20 May, 2013) made the point that ideally teachers needed to have a higher degree. In the conservatoire environment however, teaching applicants' reputations and experience in their art form is still likely to hold more sway in the selection process. In keeping with the apprenticeship tradition, it remains an area where experienced practitioners are deemed more desirable as teachers than those with academic and/or teaching qualifications and there is no requisite for teachers in tertiary acting schools to hold teaching qualifications. According to Prior (2004) the accreditation of teachers should be a significant issue for actor training and "particularly pertinent is the issue of formal training qualifications" (p. 68). He stresses that the quality of trainer practice in our drama schools should be given closer attention, primarily because credentials remain based on an acting teacher's experience as an actor and not on explicit understandings of pedagogy—and that without explicit education in this regard, actor training remains vulnerable to "hit and miss" (p. 6) approaches to best teaching practice and student needs. This situation

is modified to some extent by university unit surveys that seek student responses to teachers and to subjects taught, the results of which are passed on to course co-ordinators and then to the drama school Director. Head of School, Teacher D (interview, 3 November, 2012), stated that if there was consistency in the responses he would attend to whatever issue had been raised, but acknowledged that students were usually reticent to report on any teacher behavioural issues.

The majority of acting teachers in the drama school environment have worked as actors themselves and many have graduated from one of the recognised three-year drama schools. They have usually participated in professional work in the entertainment industry before commencing teaching—sometimes to supplement their income. In the other specialist fields in actor training the criteria vary and teachers in the movement field have usually been dancers themselves or studied specialised forms of movement practice. In the voice area teachers undertake certified voice training. They may or may not have been performers themselves—but the vast majority of drama school staff members have had on-stage experience.

Prior (2004) made the distinction between teachers who have studied teaching in some capacity, and those who have come directly from the industry, and teach according to how they were taught. In the arenas of theatre and performance, this represents the long tradition of experienced actors passing on their skills through informal coaching or apprenticeships. Drawing from Prior's (2004) argument of a perceived separation and in-built hierarchy in actor training between the 'academic' ('theoretical' or 'intellectual') and the preferred 'practical' model (largely derived from experientially acquired knowledge), an interesting question emerges, and has already been raised in the sections on timetabling (see Chapter 6), about how a critically enhanced programme with more academic rigour and perhaps a little less emphasis on intense practical elements could affect the emotional resilience of the students.

Moor (2013) weighed into the debate when she suggested that acting teachers can only teach what they themselves have an acquired 'experiential' understanding of.

> If the teacher is teaching a preparation method, they need to have experienced it themselves in a professional context, as an actor, and been alerted to the strengths and weaknesses of that particular process. If the teacher is making demands of the actor in terms of how they should perform, the teacher must have experience in the delivery of professional theatre in a contemporary context. (p. 120)

However, Moor (2013) did acknowledge that experiential understanding was just a part of the prerequisites for strong teaching and alone may not prepare the teacher for expert tutoring. She recognised that the way a teacher entered the work (that is, through being actors themselves) might not suit all students who may have different learning modalities to that of the teacher. She also accepted that some practitioners may not necessarily possess the wherewithal to assist young actors in making appropriate choices in the learning environment. Nevertheless, she still claimed that the ability to teach acting should be derived from a deep experiential understanding of the process of acting, gained by reflection *on* the process and reflection *in* the process. She believed this could make the teacher more sympathetic to the realities faced by the student actor as well as giving them a greater understanding of the demands of working in the field.

Meanwhile, Brestoff (1995), followed by Prior (2012), have continued to argue for clearer pedagogy within the actor training sector, maintaining that teachers often simply resort back to the way they were taught, disempowering the trainee by following the prescribed approaches of others. Further, Prior suggested that literature in the field of actor training is largely confined to the discussion of acting methodology and not pedagogy, with the underlying assumption that "if you have *done it* then you can *teach it*" (2004, p. 58)—that is, if you have acted yourself, then it follows that you will be able to teach acting. The data collected for this research does not necessarily support this premise, and I agree with Prior's description of this approach as

very "hit and miss" (p. 6). As will be expanded upon in the next section, being a trained actor does not automatically result in the ability to transfer skills to others or to inspire students to creative heights.

In a recent article, Prior et al., (2015) suggested that acting teachers often rely on 'feelings', 'intuitions' and 'traditions' when making choices in their teaching approach and, while they may be seasoned practitioners, they are unlikely to have strong theoretical foundations for the processes of teaching and learning. Prior et al., claimed that many teachers struggle with recalling what it was like not to be an expert, and have difficulty making learning incrementally accessible and achievable in the rehearsal room. Theatre professor Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) stressed that the teaching of actors is a vocation and its own unique profession separate from that of acting. He was adamant that the idea that acting tutors merely teach between acting jobs had to be dispelled, because teaching actors is an area that teachers should wholly dedicate themselves to. Within actor training environments, practitioners continue to discuss the advantages of an experienced practitioner over a trained drama teacher—experiential versus theoretical—but in reality it is unlikely there is ever a very clear divide between logic and reason and intuition and creativity in particular individuals.

9.1.1 Teachers and Actor Training Pedagogy

One of the consequences of this experiential versus theoretical debate appears to be that books about actor training pedagogy have lagged behind other areas in the field. I concur with Prior's (2004) findings that, despite the countless books on acting techniques, systems and methods, as well as practical approaches and advice, there is surprisingly little written about actor training pedagogy. Prior contended that actor training often remains "a mysterious facet of the theatre industry due largely to the unarticulated understandings of pedagogical practices of acting tutors" (p. i). He speculated as to whether the field is in fact suspicious about intellectualising

the art and its teaching, and whether this anti-academic philosophy is present in drama schools today because it is akin to the *not doing*—that is, opposed to the experiential approach that the schools adopt. Prior commented that acting tutors are generally absent from actor training research and pedagogical practice: "Tutors, for the most part, are drawn from the practical side of the industry and in many cases may have little interest in research, especially *teacher research*" (p. 12). He concluded that the literature largely confines itself to a discussion of methodology and not pedagogy, and that few writers have actually addressed the teaching of actors, adding that "to date the pedagogical murky waters of actor training remain relatively uncharted" (p. 8).

These findings were reinforced by Moor (2013), who commented that although there have been some studies into acting training methods in Australia, most of the researchers involved worked as academics or as career teachers in acting training institutions, and did not have significant careers in the performing arts. Researcher Bree Hadley (2008) observed that in the Australian setting there was "a growing concern with the discursive and ideological frameworks in which actor training occurs" (p. 10), while Crawford (2011) remarked that NIDA had "failed to establish acting as a theorised practice . . . and that other schools have largely followed suit" (p. 125).

If, as Prior (2004) maintained, research tends to concentrate on acting methods and techniques rather than on the effectiveness of the delivery of learning, Seton (2004) similarly observed that in spite of the prevalence of texts on both acting techniques and the field of actor training, such texts were either peripheral or dismissed as being irrelevant to the practice of engagement between the teacher and the students *on the floor*. Seton investigated what literature and practices existed in the field of actor training that might offer some guidance for what he perceived were several areas of ethical concern and concluded that there had been "little scholarly literature addressing the presuppositions undergirding the formation and development

of artistically and economically recognisable and sustainable acting practices in Australia" (p. 5). He added that "in the first years of the twenty-first century, there was hardly any recognizable literature or documentation addressing ethical training practices in the drama studio" (Seton, 2004, p. 5). Even though some reflection and writing has surfaced, predominantly in scholarly theses, Seton (2010) still persists that these are rarely read or considered by acting students or their teachers in institutional contexts. What he did discover was a growing field of literature and documentation of emerging ethical practices in dance and music studios—but not for actors. He came to the provisional conclusion that, unlike musicians and dancers who were becoming very conscious that their quality of 'embodied experience' was crucial to their potential to have rewarding and sustainable creative practices, many actors were trained in unquestioning vulnerability to do and become whatever a director required, without questioning the impact it had on them as 'embodied' persons.

In summary, it would appear that there is little research and writing about pedagogical practice in actor training and what exists tends not to be by those practising or teaching the craft. Furthermore, it would appear that there is even less literature about ethical practices in actor training.

9.1.2 Actors as Teachers

Actor Crawford (2011) admitted that he started teaching acting with a few exercises and the philosophical moorings he had received from one of his teachers: "This is how most acting teachers start, with just a few tricks up the sleeve, and the fervent hope not to be exposed as an idiot" (p. 21). Crawford discusses how actors are influenced by where they trained and which regime of teachers was in place at the time, as well as by which theorists their teachers admired and "what rag-bag of exercises and philosophies they bundled together for our acting edification and confusion" (p. 8). Well-known Acting Teacher N (interview, 20 May, 2013) acknowledged that in his early

teaching days he bullied students until they had a catharsis (an emotional release) because he did not really know what he was doing and just replicated what had happened during his training. Now he claims his teaching relies on what he has read, observed, his own training, his experience of going to the theatre "and the book I read the night before is probably going to be what students get most of on the day"!

Moor (2013) raises the point that the question of effective teaching practice is a complex one that brings up issues of ethics, teacher training and communications training. She claims that if it were possible to develop an overall philosophy of how a course is taught, then perhaps both career teachers and practitioners could embark from the same core intent. The fact that most teachers were themselves 'initiated' into the same craft by the same tradition is reinforced by Seton (2007a), who suggests that it is understandable that teachers believe their students must be transformed through adopting the 'if it was good enough for me, it's good enough for them' philosophy. "The social dynamic behind the acting workshop is that acceptance of the teacher's practice—in the form of willing submission—will supply the student with three important and interrelated desires—ability, recognition and reward" (p. 2). If this situation is replicated in drama schools, it may well subjugate students' ability and power to speak up and be heard—or even to take care of their own wellbeing.

The long tradition in theatre of establishing credibility through the use of listing the names of high-profile actors with whom one has taught, studied or performed was commented on by Prior (2004). He alleges that credits are used to justify legitimacy or credibility and that, unlike academic credentials, the value of practical experience is viewed as paramount, including the legitimacy gained by 'famous' alumni. However, Prior protests, best teaching practice is so much more than the history of the teacher and that authentic teaching is reliant upon teachers having a clear understanding of the content and learning processes, and not just mimicking the methods of their

teachers. Although some applicants for acting teacher positions in drama schools have had teaching experience, it can be difficult in an interview situation to assess this vital ability to share knowledge and skills in meaningful and effective ways. It is often not taken into consideration until after their employment and subsequent exposure to students. Secondary school drama teachers complete specialised teacher training within a tertiary drama education programme before they are employed in their field. This is not the case for tertiary level teachers in acting schools.

A separate factor involved in the employment of actors as teachers is that drama schools gain prestige by advertising that they have 'working practitioners' among their employees. These actors/teachers are encouraged to continue their acting careers and the schools attempt to accommodate them taking part in professional engagements. Although this enables teachers to stay in touch with contemporary practice and reinforces their expertise to students, it can also be difficult to accommodate, especially if it is a full-time staff member, because it can cause disruption to teaching programmes and sometimes interfere with acting students' progress.

Prior (2012) asserts that institutions and appropriate government bodies would be well advised to respond to what appears to be a long overdue need to adequately equip actors who move into actor training as teachers. He argues that most participants in his research describe finding themselves 'thrown in at the deep end', unsupported and learning to teach on the job. I concur with Prior's assessment that there are no formal mentoring structures for teachers in drama schools and that, if it happens at all, it is initiated informally by the teachers themselves. Prior proposes that mentoring schemes could be made an essential part of a new teacher's inculcation into drama school and that new staff be supported in this way for at least 12 months. This idea was reinforced by Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014), who proposed a probationary period for first-time teachers that included mentorship and ongoing professional development. It is an admirable idea

although scheduling already busy, full-time staff to take on more responsibilities is always difficult to sustain. On the other hand, it would mean that students had less risk of being exposed to inexperienced, sometimes inadequate teachers and all the distress that can entail, which potentially also makes it a duty of care issue. Although universities and other institutions have code of ethics policies, a specific code of ethics for acting teachers has long been talked about but still does not exist in any formal document according to Academic and Acting Teacher I (interview, 23 May, 2013), who commented that the founder of the Actor's Centre in Sydney, Dean Carey (2012), had publically discussed the need for ethical practice in actor training and the need for a code of ethical standards.

9.2 Freelance Staff

9.2.1 Introduction

> Conservatoires still have a vocational rather than a research-led or "academic" focus, and we employ high numbers of visiting professional staff, many of whom work a small number of hours a week as specialist teachers. Our unusual and dispersed staffing profile brings particular challenges at times of institutional change. (Duffy, 2013, p. 169)

Full-time staff in the acting departments of Australian drama schools usually only number about four to six personnel. The remainder of the teachers and directors who deliver the courses are employed on short-term contracts. Experienced practitioners are engaged to teach or direct into the programmes for a certain number of hours per week over a particular number of weeks—sometimes for a whole semester or year. These freelance or sessional staff members are employed on the basis of having particular skill sets and/or experience in the profession. There is always a very high percentage of freelance staff in acting school programmes and these freelance lecturers, directors and visiting artists are a distinctive feature of conservatoire education. They contribute greatly to drama students' exposure to a range of different ideas, processes, understanding and expertise. The schools advertise this aspect of their courses stating that "students will have

the opportunity to interact with the profession and develop important contacts in their field" (NIDA, 2015b). One of the aims of the recently established Jackman Furness Foundation (2014) is to provide funds for visiting artists in order for acting students at WAAPA to experience working with a range of highly skilled, experienced practitioners. Duffy (2013) remarks that individual teachers are the main source of professional know-how and contacts for her institutions' students—as well as being expert technical coaches and artistic mentors. WAAPA states that the sessional staff members delivering specialist units will be industry professionals and specialists in their particular field (WAAPA State Theatre Practice, 2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material).

Although working with 'visiting' artists and teachers can be an enriching experience for students, it can also mean that students are sometimes exposed to inexperienced teachers and/or directors with unorthodox teaching methods and risky practices. There is no formal screening process for those employed on a freelance basis. They are invariably engaged by virtue of their reputation and expertise. The heads of each teaching area—acting, voice and movement—are usually responsible for recommending or employing the sessional staff in their particular area. In interviews for this research these department heads agreed that they attempted to employ professionals with whom they had worked, knew first-hand or who were "like-minded individuals . . . there is a duty of care to do that" (Teacher T, interview, 21 May, 2013). When Head of Acting, Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013), employed part-time staff he stated that he read their curriculum vitae and tried to observe their work at another institution but, in the end, employment often came down to relying on their reputations.

One of the disadvantages of large numbers of freelance staff is that they do not always have the same level of awareness of university codes and practices as the full-time staff and are sometimes oblivious to the behavioural standards expected. Former school Director, Teacher X (interview, 10 July,

2014), explained that most freelance staff were selected by the Head of Acting and were often not party to the philosophy that had been built up in the institution. He conceded that the administration had little control over the part-time staff that taught many of the courses and directed many of the plays. He even commented that "they come in, make a mess and go away!" Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) agreed to a point saying that "many freelance directors and teachers go on to their next project and just walk away from the mess—or the wonderful project—that they have created". Teacher I (interview, 21 May, 2013) similarly felt that some freelance staff members were not cognisant of the strict codes of behaviour that applied and had often "trained at a time when drama schools were laws unto themselves . . . with less institutional responsibility". In keeping with these reports, Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) confirmed that there had been occasions when freelance staff had 'crossed boundaries' with students and made them feel unsafe. This psychologist commented that guest directors did not seem as accountable as full-time staff and sometimes asked students to engage in unethical practices. In these instances, the students often felt afraid to speak out in case they compromised their careers, and the information about the inappropriate behaviour sometimes took weeks to filter back to the full-time staff.

Having worked in both full-time and freelance capacities, I am familiar with these various scenarios and understand that initially students tend to enjoy new teachers and the 'honeymoon' period that often occurs with them. However, it is inevitably the full-time staff members who are there to support the students if all does not go to plan.

9.2.2 Induction

So why are the freelance sessional staff members not more conscious of what is expected from them? Although there are contracts and, by default, university guidelines for them to follow, I am not aware of any formal

induction programmes for drama school freelance staff to orientate them to the university environment, and my enquiries revealed it was left up to individual departments if and whether they introduced freelance staff members to full-time staff. The guidance of freelance staff is an area that needs to be better managed conceded long time drama school employee, Teacher L (interview, 15 October, 2012) who acknowledged there were times when important information "fell through the cracks" because even though minutes of staff meetings were sent to sessional staff, sometimes delicate issues about students were not documented. As a consequence, the freelance sessional staff members were sometimes not prepared for the specific needs of some students. "It is up to the co-ordinator of each area to talk to the freelance staff regularly, but it is always problematic because they are only ever paid for the hours they teach and we never like to impose on their personal time" (Teacher L, interview, 15 October, 2012).

Lack of Supervision

Interviews conducted through the course of this research revealed numerous anecdotal stories of freelance sessional staff having conducted unorthodox or risky exercises, where students' deep and potentially uncontrollable feelings and emotions were triggered. Often these occurrences are not followed up by permanent staff members due in part to the temporary nature of 'the freelancers' who are often no longer teaching by the time the information surfaces. Graduate E (interview, 27 November, 2012) told of having a guest teacher in her first weeks of actor training who conducted what she now knows to be a rebirthing exercise. Rebirthing is a therapeutic breathing technique that can lead to emotional release. The graduate (who has since retrained as a psychologist) said it was extremely traumatic at the time and even though students complained, the teacher was allowed to continue teaching. Graduate D (interview, 23 May, 2013) related how a guest teacher was brought in for one afternoon to lead an emotional recall exercise, which

resulted in many of the students "confronting demons from their past" and becoming very emotional.

Although these stories highlight the negative aspects of employing freelance sessional teachers who may not be appropriately prepared or skilled at sharing their particular knowledge, it is worth noting that the majority of freelance teachers do excellent work with acting students and are sometimes the ones most remembered by students as having a real impact on their training.

9.2.3 Monitoring

The monitoring of freelance staff is not structured in any official way in drama schools. The co-ordinators of the acting, voice and movement areas usually employ the freelance staff members who teach into their areas and it is up to them to monitor these teachers. With a full-time teaching schedule themselves, it is understandably difficult for permanent staff to conduct supervision on a regular basis. In interviews they said they tended to rely on feedback from the students and often actively sought this out. Co-ordinators often leave some decisions about class content to the freelance person, but in my experience the material to be covered now tends to be outlined more specifically and then left to the freelance teachers to decide how best to reach performance outcomes. Movement Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) detailed that she was responsible for supervising about five freelance staff members at any one time, and would inquire of them and the students how the classes were going. She added that occasionally she would drop into a class until she felt a teacher was "sound" and then tended to leave them alone so they could teach to their strength. "I did have one teacher from a different culture who consistently made sexually explicit remarks. I explained to him it was not acceptable but he could not change his behaviour and eventually was not re-employed."

On the subject of assessing acting classes, Seton (2007a) asserted that monitoring is essential to any system and needs to have various apparatus for supervising its components or dynamics. He suggested that monitoring was most easily implemented when a voluntary collaboration existed between those in control and those being managed and that feedback was one way for a system to obtain information on how well it was carrying out its primary task. Seton suggested that positive feedback tended to increase the deviations and elaborations of output, but if negative feedback was either absent or uncontained, the system could lose self-regulation and experience disruptions at its boundaries. It would seem that in regard to the classes of freelance staff, more feedback of any kind would be helpful. Head of School, Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) admitted he did not have time to oversee freelance staff and was even remiss in monitoring his full-time staff's work. "The students usually come and see me if there are emotional or bullying issues. However, I do not think we should monitor teachers too much as it is like a shadow at the back of the room if I come in and observe."

My suggestion is that it would be helpful if freelance staff members had regular supervision and guidance and not be 'left to their own devices' because the needs of the students are paramount in this situation. Being included more in staff meetings and the overall programme could also assist part-time teachers in feeling an integral part of the school instead of remaining 'outsiders'—which can often be the case.

9.3 Freelance Directors

Each of the acting schools produces a considerable number of theatre productions every year as part of their programmes. Second and third year students each rehearse and perform in approximately five productions per year. This component requires many more directors than are on full-time staff, so numerous freelance directors are employed. The decision about which directors to use often involves a weighing up of those who have

considerable experience and reliable reputations, as opposed to young, dynamic directors whom, it is thought, may bring a particular energy and excitement to the projects. Sometimes it is assumed that older directors have more traditional ways of working as opposed to the freer, more contemporary approaches of younger directors. The potential for directors to provide future employment for the students is also a significant factor in choosing which freelance directors to contract. Teacher N (interview, 20 May, 2013) perceived that some directors were invited to direct in order to enhance the reputation of the school, and that even though they may have done good work in the profession, it did not always mean they had the skills the teaching institution required. Moor (2013) agreed that directors at the top of their field did not necessarily make good teachers "but could be more conscious of an appropriate end result performance fitting, or excelling, current industry standards" (p. 120).

Directors are responsible for what happens in the rehearsal room every afternoon for several weeks and for the whole of production week. Sometimes they oversee the performance week—but in many cases depart at this point, leaving the students to complete the run of the production on their own. One of the schools requires visiting directors to sign a pro forma agreement that sets out guidelines and expectations for the productions. It states that the full-time staff must be allowed access to rehearsals and also sets rehearsal time boundaries and other parameters within which visiting directors must work. At another school Teacher W (interview, 27 May, 2013) allowed that guest directors did not assess the students as much as in the past because they found that the standards they applied were often less reliable than those applied by full-time staff. The schools are obviously finding it necessary to create ways of balancing the use of the skills and expertise of visiting directors while accommodating academic and administrative guidelines.

Directors each have their own individual style of working and it is considered part of the student's learning process to adapt to directors' diverse processes. "Difference of approach is an important part of your training" (WAAPA Standard Theatre practice, 2014, Appendix E, unpublished course material, p. 3). Historically there has been a tradition in theatre of dictatorial, autocratic directors—and a few still operate in this way. Sometimes directors from other cultures have different standards for what is considered acceptable behaviour, which can cause problems and misunderstandings. Nevertheless, using a variety of different directors can bring an exciting mix into the drama school context. What is in question is the advisability of allowing some freelance directors to take control of productions and casts without ensuring there are safeguards in place to protect student welfare. There have been many instances of emotional intimidation and inappropriate behaviour reported over the years, borne out by me and by others interviewed and quoted in this study.

Australian actor/teacher Barry O'Connor (2001) highlights that acting students sometimes work with directors of film, television and theatre, "who may not understand the creative processes and requirements of the actor" (p. 50). Students can be very emotional about their roles and the rehearsal process, and with new and unfamiliar directors they are often vulnerable and wanting to please. Rehearsals have the potential to be highly charged environments—and often are. An in-built safeguard often lies with the voice and movement teachers who are assigned to work on drama school productions, although how often they attend rehearsals is usually left up to them. Movement Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) affirmed that on some productions she made a point of sitting in on guest directors' rehearsals to act as a restraining presence because she knew directors would modify their behaviour if she were in the room. Nevertheless, she had still witnessed shouting and abusive, demanding behaviour. This teacher claimed that when directors criticised students, the inference was often that

the students' abilities were insufficient, which meant they became very distressed. Teacher O explained that students occasionally reported instances of offensive or inappropriate behaviour by visiting directors and that one director was sacked for asking the leading lady to rehearse in his home. A tactic that Teacher O took particular exception to was when freelance directors aligned themselves with students against the full-time staff, which she claimed could be very damaging for the more vulnerable students and it often took weeks to "get them back on track". This view was supported by Graduate Student D (interview, 23 May, 2013) who experienced a "clash" between a guest director and the full-time staff where the students felt "caught in the middle" when the director brought her frustration into the rehearsal room.

A quite different view in regard to monitoring guest directors was held by Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012), who considered they had been employed for their experience and ability to execute a rehearsal and show. For that reason she did not monitor them even though she knew other members of staff disagreed with this position. She acknowledged that sometimes things went wrong, but that there were avenues of complaint for students. Head of School, Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) did not monitor visiting directors either because he considered it cramped their style and they felt as though they were being examined. He acknowledged that if there were problems he inevitably heard about it, and had fired one director because of the sexual innuendos he kept making to female cast members who complained. This teacher understood that students were very concerned with impressing their directors, especially if they were potential employers, and that "if sometimes there's a tough director I consider that is a different experience for the students to cope with. If it gets to the bullying stage I just don't employ them again".

I have observed this approach taken many times where, rather than upsetting the rehearsal/production schedule, the offending director is simply not offered

work again. To my knowledge no freelance director has ever been reported to university authorities and/or prosecuted, although I cannot vouch for this nationwide. In general the rationale of the schools and lecturers is that because the students will work with a variety of people in the profession, they need to "figure out strategies of managing high maintenance directors so that they survive, do not fall apart—and get to work again" (interview, Teacher C, 12 December, 2012).

9.3.1 Inexperienced Directors

Drama schools often like to employ young directors who are just starting to make a name for themselves in the profession. It is usually assumed that they will have an edgy, contemporary approach and connect well with the young students. It is also assumed that with their careers ahead of them these young directors may provide viable avenues of future employment for the students when they graduate. All of which may well be true. The down side of using young and inexperienced directors in this environment is that it can also lead to student actors being exposed to artistically and emotionally compromised situations.

Directing courses are run at all the schools in this study and at one time it became practice at one of the schools to give directing students a 'mainstream' production with the acting students. Providing directing students with the opportunity to put the skills they are learning into practice is of course understandable and desirable. However, because they are still learning their craft, they are often insecure and vulnerable themselves. As noted, students want directors to like and approve of them and as a result often feel powerless to protest. Graduate C (interview, 28 November, 2012) described a production with a directing student whom the students felt was out of her depth and did not know what she was doing. As a result, the students became emotionally insecure and complained to staff but were told that it was a difficult situation because the student director had expressly

requested that full-time staff not attend rehearsals. Staff chose not to monitor the production even though the students had expressed concern about the quality of the rehearsals.

Students usually love working with 'young gun' directors for the first three weeks according to Teacher A (interview, 21 May, 2013) because there is usually a lot of freedom in the room and they "get to play". Then, they often start to get stressed when the director is suddenly 'over prescriptive' because the show is not ready and opening night is very close. This teacher felt that some young directors were more interested in making a statement or a name for themselves with their productions than about the students' wellbeing. Graduate D (interview, 23 May, 2013) agreed saying that some of the young directors he worked with at drama school did not have the facility to work well with the cast and were just interested in "making a show". He said they seemed to forget they were working with students who were more interested in developing their craft. Ultimately it is of course advantageous that students have access to more than just well-established directors, but it may also mean that students' wellbeing is put at risk if inexperienced directors are not well monitored.

In the actor training setting there is an underlying assumption that 'anything goes' and an encouragement to 'take risks'. Students feel pressure to be seen as co-operative, so sometimes they distrust their instinct to resist a directive for fear of being perceived as negative. The 'saying yes to everything' culture is a philosophy common to most drama schools with the intention of encouraging students to be brave and to take risks. The approach is admirable and productive in most creative areas, but can also result in students doubting or questioning themselves when faced with activities or behaviour they find uncomfortable or emotionally distressing. The dilemma is whether it should be left to acting students to gauge whether the behaviour of a teacher or director is appropriate or not. Is it possible to have strategies in place that clearly articulate what is acceptable and not

acceptable in the drama school environment? Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) agreed that it should be possible but added that there were many difficulties in the way. "Let's call it bullying in the workplace. It is legislated against but it is very hard to police in many professional environments." A positive safeguard with student productions is that rehearsals are usually open to full-time staff members who are not involved in other projects and are free to observe the process.

9.4 Teacher as Therapist

> A continued connection is inevitable; both teachers and therapists are approached by those seeking to break through barriers and make progress. Both try to make participants feel safe but also move forward. Acting classes often do heal. Therapy often does enable actors to employ their instruments more productively. A relationship, however tenuous, will continue to exist. (Barton, 1994, p. 115)

The roles of acting teacher and therapist often become blurred in the cut and thrust atmosphere of acting classes and rehearsals. In this context, therapist refers to a person trained to assist people with emotional or mental problems, which can involve behavioural disturbances (Merriam-Webster, 2013). The interviewed teachers in this research readily admit to not being trained or qualified in psychological fields, but all agree they are often thrown into the therapist role because of the deeply emotional content of their work with students. Barton (1989) was adamant that acting teachers needed to recognise when the educational process, no matter how well intentioned, was heading towards therapy, and when a problem or activity had moved beyond the capacity of a class and become more of a counselling than a training issue. He maintained that acting teachers and therapists had distinct functions and one of the ways of clarifying the separation was for each to find out more about how the other worked. This study's interviewed psychologists all reinforced this view that teachers should not cross boundaries into therapy areas. However, according to Seton and Trouton (2015), teaching practices in arts training institutions involve power hierarchies that can accidentally

disrespect appropriate boundaries between the teacher–student relationship, and that sometimes this can occur because of adopting poor teaching techniques or oversights from up to 25 years ago where teachers themselves may have been violated, psychologically or physically.

Within the drama schools it seems very much up to individual teachers how far they go with 'counselling' their students and the responses from the interviewed teachers varied widely. Head of Acting Teacher D (interview, 31 October, 2012) readily admitted he had no skills in dealing with students when they became emotionally distressed and usually advised them to get guidance elsewhere. Acting Teacher N (interview, 20 May, 2013) was equally quick to respond that the roles of acting teacher and therapist were "wonderfully connected" and even though he had only studied a little psychology, he had acquired insight into human behaviour through secondary resources and did not hesitate to use whatever he knew. This aligns with Petherbridge (as cited in Seton et al., 2012) who asserted that the provision of pastoral care for acting students had traditionally been addressed by personal tutors and the insights and understandings of teachers overseeing the students' training. Many of the interviewed teachers in this study talked about how their approach to their work relied heavily on their own life experience and, in several cases, on their study of eastern philosophies. For example, some talked about studying and practising meditation, others felt that yoga and an understanding of Buddhism assisted them in their ability to teach and assist their students. According to Moor (2013), several of the WAAPA and VCA staff spoke to her of having strong Buddhist philosophy alignments. Perhaps the meditation application of mindfulness strongly advocated in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy could be an interesting angle for future research (Centre for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, 2015).

Overall it was generally agreed by the interviewed teachers that in the actor training setting teachers needed maturity and experience in order to deal with

many of the issues that invariably arose. Teacher F (interview, 7 November, 2012) acknowledged that students shared things anecdotally with him all the time even though he made it clear he was not a therapist and that there were counsellors on campus. However, when students experienced difficulties like being overwhelmed by the course or troubled with nerves, they invariably wanted to talk to him about it. He said he had been called at home on weekends when students were depressed or even suicidal, and as a result became more aware of their personal details than would be the case with teachers in other educational areas. This teacher said that because he was not trained in psychology he tried not to give them 'answers' but some of the students refused to go to counselling—like one recent graduate who had anger management issues but would not seek help.

Teacher A (interview, 21 May, 2013), who conducts individual teaching sessions with students, acknowledged that he talked to them about his own depression because he felt that when actors had stage fright, it was often due to anxiety and depression in a different guise. Although he preferred his classes did not turn into therapy sessions, he conceded that it was very easy for them to do so. He taught students to meditate before rehearsals and performances but knew that students really needed to find out what worked for them in regard to their anxiety and fears.

9.4.1 Professional Boundaries

Knowing the difference between needing to act as a therapist and just being a supportive ear would be a helpful distinction for acting teachers to make, according to Clinical Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014), who advocated being supportive rather than 'therapeutic'. Movement Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012) commented that she made professional boundaries very clear with her students and became annoyed when other teachers did not. "I tell students that I do not go to the pub with you, I am not your friend and I am not your counsellor." In the voice area the boundaries

between teacher and therapist often blurred, according to voice Teacher M (interview, 22 May, 2013), who spoke about a prominent international voice teacher who she said always encouraged students to cry in her classes, which voice teacher M thought was neither appropriate nor necessary.

Acting Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) acknowledged she was sometimes uncomfortable trying to assist students with their work because "it probably is a psychological investigation—and I'm not qualified to go down that road". However, she maintained that her instinct told her that emotional repressions came from students' pasts, so it was an area she broached and talked about with them. Teacher C related that some students "jumped on board" and took it very seriously as a key to their development. Others sought professional assistance in unblocking repressions that had come about through trauma or chronic conditioning. Nevertheless, teacher C felt strongly that exploring repressed emotions could open up areas for student actors to investigate and sometimes they wanted to divulge personal issues to her. Being available for that kind of disclosure became part of her role and at those times she acknowledged that the teacher–student boundary was probably crossed.

When asked about the close boundaries and crossovers between acting teacher and therapist, Head of Acting, Teacher K (interview, 22 May, 2013), having worked as both a therapist and acting teacher, declared "truthfully I think they are the same thing". He further explained that when working as an acting teacher he was not "doing therapy" or "curing" the students. He told his students that the fundamental thing blocking them from a fruitful career was themselves, and that was what he wanted them to work on. When they commenced the course he asked what they considered their "Achilles' heel" and told them solving that problem was their work for the next three years. He believed there was usually one core thing holding them back and if they could exorcise that flaw, then they had the possibility of becoming incredible actors. He was not counselling them on their personal lives or having classes

in self-worth or training them in how to feel better about themselves— although he hoped that would happen as a result of their acting school training. Being one of the few instructors qualified in the therapeutic field, this particular approach may work for this teacher, but be problematic for other instructors who may question whether 18 years olds are capable of identifying the particular weakness in their psyche holding them back.

McFarren (2003) acknowledges that acting teachers are neither trained nor equipped to recognise hyperarousal and dissociative responses in students and are not able to help process traumatic experiences if they arise so that the students are not left with harmful residue. Voice Teacher L (interview, 15 October, 2012) confirmed that her training in no way prepared her to deal with students' emotional reactions arising out of her work, commenting that there was no tertiary training for the teaching of adult actors. Actor/Psychologist B (interview, 27 November, 2012) argued that ideally acting teachers should have at least an understanding of the fundamentals of stress management. The advice that 'resident' Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) offered to drama school teachers as part of his role on staff, was not to be the students' counsellor, psychologist or best friend, but to be empathetic and refer students to the appropriate people to get help. He also advised not to be too prescriptive or directive and not to make too many assumptions about what might be good for the student, because it was not helpful for teachers to take on a parental role or step outside their knowledge base. His recommendation was the same as Psychologist C's—that is, to "lend a supportive ear" to students rather than offering advice, trying to solve their problems or entering into some kind of therapeutic relationship with them.

It would seem, however, as though teachers in the actor training environment could greatly profit from some basic therapeutic skill training. Although not currently recognised as an essential requirement in the field, it is suggested

as a component of a preparatory course for teachers described at the end of this chapter.

9.5 The Guru Teacher

There has long been a tradition in actor training of teachers who set themselves up as 'all knowing' and whose leadership can be extremely charismatic and dictatorial. This teacher-centred approach where the instructor is the central authority figure is generally known by acting instructors as that of the 'guru teacher'. According to Prior et al., (2015) the whole notion of revered actor trainers and elite drama schools reinforces hierarchical structures that may be open to abuse. Prior et al., assert that it is possible to witness questionable training practices in actor training today where the power and control that many actor trainers either wittingly or unwittingly exercise seems evident—and where students are taken into traumatic psychological states without adequate support. Many of the current acting teachers have themselves been through a guru-based system where the acting tutor was all powerful according to Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014), who theorised that because this method had value for them, they transported it into their classrooms and repeated the pattern. Teacher X insisted that under this system, the more dependent the students, the more successful the programme. Teachers M (interview, 22 May, 2013) and C (interview, 7 December, 2012) insisted that there was no place for the guru-style approach in the drama school environment even though there was "a lot of ego involved in actor training". They agreed that abuse from lecturers or directors was hard to legislate against and needed to be monitored by the schools but that the older practices were dying out because of greater psychological awareness.

This style of 'guru' teaching has tended to be prevalent in drama schools in the past and some of its disadvantages were identified by the Centre for Teaching Excellence (University of South Carolina, 2014) as being that the

knowledge is controlled by the instructor, there is one-way communication, it promotes passive learning and is not necessarily conducive to critical thinking. This is clearly not the approach that best practice teaching would advocate in the actor training environment where creativity and interaction are paramount.

9.5.1 Break Through or Break Down?

Currently in Australia there is a prevalence of high-profile acting teachers—mostly from the US—who fly in for short periods of time to give privately operated acting workshops and classes. Following are quotations from the publicity for their workshops held at 16th Street Actor's Studio in Melbourne: Ivana Chubbuck: "How a person dealing with pain and trauma overcomes and wins, by using that pain as a fuel. This is what I teach" (16th St Actors Studio, 2015, para. 1). Larry Moss: "Everything I'm teaching you about acting has one aim only: to fire you up emotionally and behaviourally so that you can give a vivid, involving, and memorable performance" (16th St Actors Studio, 2015, para. 1). Elizabeth Kemp: "The workshop is Method based . . . infused with exercises inspired by the dream work of Carl Jung. The work is deep and integrated with imagery used from your own subconscious—symbols of your dreams" (16th Street Actors Studio, 2015, para. 2).

Many current (and graduate) students from the major acting schools attend these workshops in their semester breaks. This situation has affected the actor training environment, where it is has been referred to by some of the teaching staff as 'the guru phenomenon'. Among those teachers who have attended these workshops as observers, Teachers B (interview, 3 November, 2012) and N (interview, 20 May, 2012) reported that the sessions were delivered with almost evangelical zeal and that emotional breakdowns were commonplace. While readily acknowledging that some good work may be accomplished in these workshops, all the interviewed teachers in this study felt that this celebrity style of teaching encouraged a sensation-seeking

adrenaline rush of emotion in the participants, which was not necessarily of use to student actors in the long term and established false expectations of the actor training process. The drama school teachers experienced students returning to classes after attending these workshops with the notion that they had to emotionally break down in order to feel they were making progress. The teachers were also critical of situations where students were left emotionally exposed and fragile after working with the 'guru' teacher who would then fly out of the country with no support system in place for those attending the workshops.

Head of School, Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012) reported that some of his students who attended the workshops had found it very cathartic and came back to school convinced that they had been "transformed". However, his staff did not experience any difference in the students' acting work. Other teachers corroborated this assessment saying their students reported feeling as though they had experienced an "emotional makeover"—but the teachers were unable to detect any real shift in their acting abilities. Attending these guru-type workshops was not the "magic bullet" student actors hoped for according to Teacher C (interview, 7 December, 2012) who contended that they rarely contributed positively to the students' acting skills. "It takes ten years to become a decent actor, not five minutes or a weekend. One needs to consistently practice the art form." Teachers from the different schools all agreed that the dynamic, cathartic emotional reaction that may be elicited in short workshops was unhelpful in the three-year courses where they worked with the students every day.

> Guru teachers will always have an attraction because they fly round the world doing intensive two or three day demonstrations which can be very impressive to an untrained eye. Breaking down somebody is not how you train someone over a three year period, especially if it involves some kind of verbal or emotional abuse. You can't conduct a teacher–student relationship like that over a period of time . . . and I don't believe it builds up the strength of the individual. (Teacher C, interview, 7 December, 2012)

None of the interviewed teachers felt that the 'guru workshop' phenomenon was helping their work with students and that the students took this extreme emotional experience as a kind of benchmark for what constituted a breakthrough in their acting ability. This belief in the efficacy of catharsis made it more difficult in the day-to-day teaching environment where slow, hard effort was actually going to bring more lasting results. One student developed the notion that unless he was in an emotionally traumatised state he was not performing, according to Teacher S (interview, 29 May, 2013), who observed one of the workshops himself and related that after a threatening, punishing and bullying teaching style session, the leader would then tell the student that he/she needed to be in analysis.

The general consensus of all the interviewed teachers was that these guru-style workshops were exploitative and often mislead the students into feeling they had achieved something quickly, whereas the drama school approach was more inclusive and transparent as well as offering a wide range of experiences. Teacher W (interview, 27 May, 2013) concluded that a narrow methodology, as often promoted by the guru teacher, was unlikely to serve the students well in the long term. The popularity of guru type drama workshops will no doubt continue for some time and it will always be up to individual students to decide whether to attend or not. A positive perspective is that world-renowned teachers are being brought to the students' doorstop and some may benefit from their experiences with them. However, it makes sense for drama school staff to be cognisant of the emotional impact these courses can have on their students in order to deal sensitively with the consequences.

As already noted, teachers in acting schools are required to play many different roles within many different scenarios, which can be very wearing and brings up the important issue of teacher welfare. The next section examines what happens, and perhaps what needs to happen, to better safeguard the wellbeing of the teachers in this environment.

9.6 Teacher Welfare

> It is my experience that the best drama teachers may appear brave, but their constant existence in the uncertainty of spontaneous drama leads them to doubt their abilities. It is no wonder that good drama teachers in schools are subject to quick burn-out. (Courtney, 1995, p. 185)

9.6.1 The Issues

Teachers in the drama school environment work every day with students in a close, personal and interactive way, which is sometimes capable of eliciting deep, emotional responses. It is a very different situation from lecturers in most other disciplines where information is relayed from a podium or students are sitting in desks taking notes. When students become emotional or distressed in actor training classes, the teachers have duty of care responsibilities. Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) asserts that in dealing with these issues, acting teachers need as much psychological support as their students. This psychologist is aware that, unlike other university departments, if particular students are especially challenging to work with in drama schools, teachers usually have no option but to continue working with them over the whole three-year period. In his psychologist role he often worked as an extra resource for the staff by advising them how to best handle the students they are concerned about or think might be 'at risk'. Also, each year he gave a brief talk to the drama school staff about students' potential mental health issues and how to identify and deal with students' emotional issues, but did not feel it was adequate preparation because he had observed that teaching methods in the smaller schools like drama were not always as transparent as those in larger institutions.

Psychologist A (interview, 24 May, 2013) was very aware of the pressures on drama school staff and advised that there was access to counselling for staff members through an employer programme at his university. This is an important reminder that it is as vital for staff to nurture their mental stability as it is for the students, in order for productive and mature relationships to be

fostered between them. Head of School, Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012), conceded that it was often forgotten that most of the acting staff are artists themselves and need approval and acknowledgement for their work, adding that they are often in the firing line of students' frustration and anger. I have both observed and experienced the brunt of acting students' frustration. In debriefing sessions in particular, students often feel under scrutiny and can lash out in verbally violent ways. In a state of anger, many students are not capable of hearing feedback as anything other than personal criticism and the tendency is to blame staff members. These situations are very uncomfortable and upsetting for teachers. At one feedback session I attended, an acting student was so angry with the director he tore up his report, verbally abused the director and adopted an extremely offensive and threatening manner. Perhaps if stricter and clearer parameters were laid down for both students and staff when feedback is given, such incidents may be better controlled.

Working with people who are constantly 'losing it' is very wearing and the possibility exists of teachers becoming "vicariously traumatised" according to Psychologist B (interview, 27 November, 2012). If a student bursts into tears in a standard class Psychologist C (interview, 19 July, 2014) commented that the teacher would probably have little idea how to deal with it and may even rush outside to seek assistance. However, acting school teachers are expected to cope regularly with emotional students. Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) expressed the view that many of the acting instructors with whom he had worked actually accepted traumatised students as the 'norm', which he felt was a problem in itself.

Working in the drama school setting can be an all-encompassing occupation often completely dominating teachers' time and energy. As already outlined, the pace of activities is intense and the demands are considerable and constant. The same long hours that have been reported for students (Chapter 6) operate for staff as well, who are also often required to return or

stay on in the evenings and weekends to attend rehearsals and performances. Just as students complain of being overworked and overtired, teachers similarly describe the same conditions. Heads of Acting expressed they were overworked to Prior (2012) who suggested redefining their role so that they were relieved of either administrative or teaching/directing responsibilities—with obvious cost implications. It is unlikely to happen. The workload, as with any teaching job, also includes report writing at the end of each semester and for each production. Most full-time teachers teach across all three years, which can amount to a considerable number of reports, all of which usually require detailed comments.

9.6.2 Support Strategies

Full-time staff members need to have ongoing professional development in handling behavioural issues according to Teacher O (interview, 10 October, 2012). She affirmed that staff would benefit enormously by having at least an hour per week committed to a debriefing session, where staff members could discuss their emotional and psychological needs as they related to their jobs. Teacher O envisaged these sessions for all the full-time staff in each department, but emphasised that having a good facilitator who understood the work environment was paramount. She did not necessarily see university psychologists as the answer because they were often young graduates themselves who did not fully comprehend the drama school setting. It also made seeking assistance and support a pathology, which she did not feel was the case.

Rideout (1995) suspected there were few drama schools where staff met at regular intervals to co-ordinate their ideas and discuss their students. Teacher X (interview, 10 July, 2014) agreed, saying that more time for reflection and mutual support would be very beneficial because acting tutors tended to only meet when discussing administrative topics and sometimes found owning up to personal issues to be a sign of weakness. Teacher X

maintained that meetings would need to be skilfully managed by a trained facilitator for them to be productive oand "of course people would have to want to participate, but even counsellors understand that they need their own counsellors". In his university psychology department setting Psychologist C (interview, 10 July, 2014) talked about weekly meetings with his colleagues to discuss problems or issues they may be having. They found it very supportive and helpful because a small group of colleagues who understood the environment was an ideal support group. He thought it would be a very positive way of looking after teachers in the drama school setting. Currently drama schools do not cater in their timetables for any dedicated time and space for staff to share their issues in a supportive environment.

There also appears to be little collegiate support for teachers across the different drama schools. Moor (2013) pointed out that while there was peer dialogue in the broader field of drama studies, there was little if any engagement from teachers of the acting programmes in the schools in this study. She maintained that this was apparent from the lack of a conference targeting these schools specifically and the lack of published material reflecting active discourse between the schools. Suggestions for improving teacher welfare that emerged through this research are listed at the end of the chapter summary.

9.7 Preparatory Course for Teachers

Teachers and psychologists involved in this research project were asked about the feasibility of a short course to prepare teachers for the very particular demands of the professional drama school environment. All agreed that such a course would be of considerable assistance, particularly in regard to dealing with students' emotional issues brought to the surface by their training. Barton (1994) has long maintained that acting teachers would benefit from the knowledge and experiences of psychotherapists who were constantly challenged "by individual crises and potentially distracting

outbursts" in group therapeutic settings (p. 106). A short course for teachers would be supportive for the staff as well as beneficial for the students according to Psychologist B (interview, 27 November, 2012) who considered it would enhance teaching practices with useful skills. She said it could also aid the mental health of staff members since they were vulnerable to trauma themselves by working with people in emotional distress.

A concentrated course for the acting school's teachers would need to be designed and facilitated with knowledge and experience of the environment according to Teacher B (interview, 3 November, 2012). He told of a previous professional development attempt that had not worked because it was not structured to deal with the very particular needs and concerns of the actor training courses. Teacher D (interview, 3 November, 2012) was aware that the culture of young people had dramatically changed and that teachers were in danger of becoming 'dinosaurs' unless they kept up with new strategies and more sophisticated approaches in the psychological areas. He reinforced that emotions were the actor's currency and that a course taught by people who knew more about the emotional areas would be extremely beneficial. Voice Teacher M (interview, 22 May, 2013), confirmed that it was always valuable to have more understanding about how human beings functioned as she dealt with the whole psychological and physical being of her students, while Acting Teacher C (interview, 21 May, 2013) agreed that it would be useful to have specialised training because teaching acting was "a complex job and some of us are stronger in some areas than others. I've never met a teacher who's got it all—including me." She noted that the "life experiential element" was extremely valuable and that being a parent and experienced actor had enabled her to be a better teacher. "You are teaching in an art form with broad parameters because our soul is our instrument . . . if someone is really suffering and struggling in a role, then I put myself in that position and solve it that way—from the inside out." This can be a perilous emotional procedure because this teacher is indicating that she herself 'inhabits' the

emotional state of a students' character in order to assist them play the role. As well-known drama educator Dorothy Heathcote (Heathcote, Johnson & O'Neill, 1984) commented, drama teachers are risk takers.

9.7.1 The Content

Psychologists interviewed for this project were asked what a preparatory course for drama school staff might look like. The following were some of their suggestions but are naturally just the beginning of what could be a concise but comprehensive training manual:

- More awareness of psychological issues and practical techniques for managing them
- More cognisance of the impact the work can have on students
- Recognition that some students may have suffered abuse and how this can impact on their work—often with little provocation
- Strategies for dealing with incidences of 'emotional overload'
- Assistance in recognising which emotional situations can be handled in class and which should be referred to specialists
- Fundamentals of stress management
- Developing awareness to recognise when student actors have ceased making useful emotional connections for role playing and when it has moved into dangerous or unhelpful areas
- Training in how to read and tune into students' moods and dispositions
- Advice about observing boundaries and not becoming students' counsellor, parent or friend
- Recommendations on not stepping outside their area of knowledge and becoming too prescriptive with advice to students
- Advising that students be given choice when it came to disclosing or sharing information about themselves
- Discussing and determining the most effective 'de-roling' practices
- Best practice on giving constructive criticism and feedback

Interviewed participants agreed that a short training course devised specifically for those teaching in the area of actor training would be highly advisable and could assist in preparing teachers for the heightened emotions expressed by students during their training. Ideally the course would be prepared by both psychologists and teachers familiar with the pedagogical demands of actor training and of the likely demands on the students' future lives as professional actors. The programme could provide basic skills in both identifying and dealing with mental health and emotional issues. Current best practice in these areas could be discussed and determined. A preparatory course for full-time and sessional staff could help set limits about what teachers and directors can do if highly emotional issues arise with drama students in their care.

9.8 Summary

The emphasis in the employment of teachers in vocational acting schools tends to be based on their reputation and experience in the acting profession. In the changing landscape of Australian drama schools becoming affiliated with universities, an appropriate balance between academic qualifications and teacher training—combined with professional experience—may assist in ensuring that a degree of proficient and acceptable standards is upheld in this field. It is the acting students who encounter the impact of untrained teachers and unsupervised tutelage.

High numbers of freelance staff are part of the drama school teaching profile. These teachers add a rich dimension to the educational mix, but this research indicates that they are not always cognisant of the requirements of the university environment, the drama school philosophy or the codes of conduct required. The monitoring of freelance staff employed at drama schools is not formalised, and there exists a risk that students may be exposed to inappropriate or bullying behaviours from this substantial component of the acting school workforce. Such contact can lead to

emotional distress and mental turmoil. In spite of the existence of official channels of complaint, there are a great many elements in play that discourage acting students from following this course of action.

It would seem that in regard to freelance staff, the following proposals could be instrumented in order to better safeguard student safety:

- That written contracts be entered into that set out expectations of behaviour in regard to university guidelines and drama school codes of conduct;

- That subject curricula taken by freelance staff be formally discussed and comprehensively outlined with the appropriate full-time staff member before commencement of employment;

- That full-time staff be designated time in their schedules to observe sessional staff working with their students;

- That a timetable be used in order to ensure a comprehensive full-time staff presence in rehearsals taken by freelance directors;

- That this study's proposed preparatory drama school teachers' course be made available for freelance teachers and directors; and

- That freelance staff be paid to attend occasional meetings with the full-time staff in order to communicate issues and concerns and be more accepted as an integral member of the school staff.

While it is acknowledged that some of these recommendations would have an impact on schools' budgets, the benefits to the wellbeing of staff and students would seem to make them a pressing requirement.

Teachers working in drama school environments often experience close and personal relationships with their students. This intimacy can lead to a blurring of roles between that of teacher and that of counsellor or therapist. Prior (2012) declared that actors should feel challenged by their training, not by teachers playing with students' minds as amateur psychologists. All the psychologists interviewed in this study advised against acting teachers

overstepping boundaries between teacher and therapist roles. Nevertheless, instances continue to occur where 'playing therapist' becomes unavoidable for many of the drama school teachers, who are frequently confronted with student actors wanting advice and support beyond the usual teacher–student relationship. It would seem that teachers need to be constantly aware of how easily and how often these situations occur, and continually define their educator's role clearly and decisively, both for themselves and for their students.

High-profile 'guru' teacher acting workshops have become part of the actor training landscape in Australia. Many current drama school students attend these workshops, often holding up their experiences as benchmarks of real, in-depth acting work. Some may even have been psychologically damaged by the work, and return to their acting school courses in an emotionally fragile state. It is often up to their full-time acting teachers to deal with the fallout from these workshop experiences. The interviewed acting teachers doubted that there were long-term benefits to the acting abilities of the drama school students attending these workshops.

In drama school environments, staff need considerable support in order to maintain their health and wellbeing. Suggestions for improving teacher welfare that emerged through this research are:

- A preparatory psychology-based course as a prerequisite for teaching in drama schools as part of the institutions' commitment to staff development;
- Other professional development opportunities specifically for performance-based teaching staff, which could assist with some of the unique elements of their educational environment and also enhance collegiality among staff;

- That full-time staff be provided with a facilitated hour per week to share and discuss their personal challenges in dealing with the intense atmosphere of actor training;

- That a counsellor from university counselling services be assigned to the drama schools for a minimum of one day per week. This has already occurred at one school and proven to be fully utilised, greatly appreciated and extremely effective in dealing with mental health as well as emotional and behavioural issues;

- That drama school staff be encouraged to participate in interschool dialogue and become more engaged in the wider drama and educational fields;

- That the considerable excess hours worked by staff in the drama school environments be acknowledged with days off in lieu and other privileges; and

- Reflection on the extent to which there is a culture within actor training institutions that considers it a weakness for teachers to talk about students, or themselves, presenting with emotional issues.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The aim of this research has been to investigate the many and complex roles that emotion plays in the training of actors, and to explore the balance between the use of emotions and the safeguarding of emotions within this environment. The thesis initially provided a broad base of information regarding the establishment of actor training as a formalised discipline, before summarising the current literature and giving an overview of the selected major drama schools in Australia, and the particular practices unique to their conservatoire training model. This overview informed the investigation in regard to the specific stresses incurred by acting students in the drama school setting and how these pressures can affect their training. Also under consideration was how students' emotional episodes are handled by drama school staff, with the intention of exploring factors implicated in both student and staff welfare in regard to their emotional and psychological wellbeing within the parameters set by this research.

The focus was on examining the day-to-day experiences of the staff and graduates of the drama schools in relation to accessing emotions—in particular heightened emotions—and the safeguards in place in the actor training environment. The numerous interviewees selected to participate in this research fulfilled this aim by providing a significant depth of knowledge and understanding of actor training and by generously sharing their experiences of the drama school environment. Their honesty and frankness afforded a range of information and opinions that has brought an innovative contribution to the body of research in this area. I want to acknowledge that the majority of teachers I have encountered in acting institutions are dedicated individuals who care deeply about their chosen arts field and about their students. In no way does this study intend to demean the committed

work they do, but simply to focus on the areas that could affect pedagogical change and enhance duty of care concerns.

My long history of theatre making and teaching, my experience of acting and of actors, and the understanding that has developed of the profound effects of role playing and the 'inhabiting' of characters, have all been instrumental in creating the foundation for embarking on this research. Drama as an enacted story telling art form has had a long and significant history, and the nurturing of its practitioners would seem to be an integral component of safeguarding its existence. Worth noting is that emotion is not only a natural manifestation of feeling in acting and in the actor training context, but is also a necessary component of good mental health. My focus in this study has been on whether students are exposed to practices that encourage emotions to surface without due diligence. I have set about this research with the intention that it may result in a healthier, more responsible environment for both students and staff.

The Research Questions

The following questions guided this investigation:

1. What stresses are particular to acting students in vocational actor training programmes?
2. How do Australia's leading drama schools manage the emotional aspects of actor training and what are the duty of care factors involved?
3. To what extent is there need for the management of emotional wellbeing to be an integral component of actor training pedagogy?

Most chapters in this thesis contain empirical findings specific to the content of the chapter and are to be found in the body of the work and in the summary sections. Although the findings all relate to these research

questions they are here synthesised in order to directly address each question.

Empirical Findings

Question 1: What stresses are particular to acting students in vocational actor training programmes?

In regard to question 1, it became apparent through the period of the research that there were a range of pressures and stresses inherent in the acting programmes that were significant factors in students' drama school experiences. These were noted and examined according to their contexts and their management within the schools.

Some of the issues that arise for acting students during their training are specific to the exacting requirements and demands of their course, while other stresses are common to many adolescents—although the rigorous and confronting nature of the conservatoire acting programmes seems to intensify these experiences. This appeared especially true in areas such as body image, criticism and favouritism. The dropping of the average age of drama school students and their resultant relative immaturity was of concern to many of the interviewed teachers, psychologists and even the graduates. A high percentage of acting students are from out of town/state and are usually away from home for the first time. Their youth appears to accentuate the sense of isolation they feel and their adjustment to their new environment, all of which adds to anxiety and stress levels.

The complexity of objectively assessing an experiential art form like acting, along with continual appraisal of their work, often tends to make acting students feel unfairly criticised or censured. Assessment of the coursework was exposed as an area of real concern for the students who receive constant feedback throughout their course. Comments on their work were often perceived to be an area where objectivity was questioned and where

favouritism played a part. This caused particular angst for the students and was the reason that many of them sought counselling.

The sense of competitiveness among students was also an area revealed as having a significant effect on the drama school experience, indicating the advisability for schools to create a collaborative, ensemble atmosphere. The maintaining of confidentiality played a part in this rivalry as students expressed concern about their confidences being kept within their group. A worrying trend resulting from these confidentiality issues was the apparent lack of choice available to students in revealing sensitive material about themselves in classes. These are all delicate situations requiring concerted efforts to address.

It became clear that the impact of the rigorous conservatoire timetabling in drama schools resulted in students being overtired and often exhausted throughout their training, which tended to lead to physical and emotional problems. Other areas of difficulty that emerged were drug and prescription medication use and the learning and behavioural characteristics of being part of the 'Millennial' generation, with both factors greatly influencing the training. The insular 'hothouse' drama school environment where students encounter the same teachers (and cohorts) for their entire three years is in part responsible for the intensity with which some of these issues and emotional reactions are felt, as there can be a tendency to escalate concerns resulting in them becoming major problems.

Question 2: How do Australia's leading drama schools manage the emotional aspects of actor training and what duty of care aspects are involved?

Question 2 focused on the core issue of the research—the emotional aspects of the training—while appraising the proficiency and efficacy of the schools' existing strategies that aim to safeguard the wellbeing of their students.

The accessing and expression of deep emotions required by actors during their training necessitated an investigation into the close links between the disciplines of acting and psychology. Research has indicated that it is, in part, this symbiotic relationship between the fields that explains the power of drama to tap into the unconscious and into the emotional worlds of actors. In particular, it elucidates why acting students can sometimes respond in deeply emotional and unpredictable ways when exploring their limits as actors. It became apparent during the course of this research that how these emotional episodes are handled within drama schools was an important component of the study. It was therefore necessary to explore the various acting methods used to tap into and expand the students' emotional repertoire and to ascertain which ones are currently in use in the schools. The risk of using 'emotional recall' type exercises—where actors are asked to tap into personal emotions and stories—was highlighted. Even though the interviewed teachers claimed that 'the Method' technique where this exercise is prevalent is not taught in the schools, they did acknowledge that Stanislavsky, who originally devised this exercise, formed the foundation of their work. Formalised or not, students continue to use their own emotional memories as a fall back mechanism, and their 'inhabiting' of roles in this way can have significant consequences.

Whether actors identify with the emotions of their characters is a much debated topic but research tends to indicate (Geer, 1983; Seton, 2004) that actors are emotionally affected by the roles they play and the stories they play out. Some of the many and various ways that student actors are affected by their emotions as part of their instruction has been explored in this study and consideration given to areas deemed important for safeguarding student vulnerabilities. One such area is 'closure', a ritual for ending a session in such a way that students can leave in a relatively 'safe' emotional state. Another area was 'de-roling', a closing ritual that assists actors to de-identify with their characters after role play. In mapping out the historical

development of actor training to provide a foundation for what is taught today, research revealed that even though there is documentation of eastern theatre practices taking great care of their performers, particularly in post-performance periods (Schechner, 1985), there does not appear to be a record of similar traditions in Western theatre in regard to safeguarding its actors. In this same vein it would appear that even though all the teachers in this research understood and appreciated the concept of closing rituals, it is not given precedence in daily practice and similarly de-roling rarely takes place after rehearsals and virtually never after performances. One of the serious results of this absence of de-identifying with roles is the phenomenon of boundary blurring whereby students can carry over character behaviour into everyday life resulting in emotional distress (Burgoyne et al., 1999). Whether these 'safety' practices of closure and de-roling are adhered to or not is dependent on individual teachers and directors. It became apparent during the research that there is no formal institutional directive or policy regarding these procedures. Similarly, when incidences of 'emotional overload' occur—that is, when students become excessively emotional and/or distressed during classes or rehearsals—interviews revealed that individual teachers are expected to deal with it "as best as they are able" (Burgoyne, 1991, p. 8). There are no guidelines in place for best practice in these situations, which all the interviewed teachers acknowledged happens quite often. A significant shift in pedagogy would seem necessary for the practices of closure and de-roling to be incorporated into actor training and for safety procedures to be instrumented regarding 'over-emotional' students. It is suggested that these closure and de-roling practices be perceived in the light of institutional policies on duty of care and, ultimately, what is best practice for the wellbeing of students and staff.

The area of emotional stability for prospective students is difficult territory and the research indicated that the interviewed teachers all agreed on the necessity for acting students to commence their training from a solid

psychological foundation. How to assess this psychological stability, especially during the audition process, evolved as an area in need of further consideration. Auditioning for drama schools and the inherent emotional stress involved when approximately 97% of the applicants are rejected, has proved to be not only a valid component of this investigation but also a possibility for future research. Entry auditions are an integral and necessary component of drama school procedure and what emerged is the incumbency on schools to design processes in order for the hundreds of students who apply to have as positive an experience as possible.

What occurs in drama schools is heavily dependent upon its teachers, so the importance of the staff cannot be overstated. Most acting teachers in drama schools are trained actors who tend to teach what they have been taught (Prior, 2012). Whether what is taught is in accordance with best practice guidelines is by and large left to individual teachers. It has been noted that drama school teachers are generally absent from pedagogical research and that the subject of practitioner versus academic: experiential versus theoretical continues to be debated. Prior (2004) highlights the 'hit and miss' outcomes of assuming that if you have worked as an actor then you can teach acting, the results of which can have significant repercussions on students—as can the schools' dependence on freelance sessional staff detailed in this study. The lack of formalised monitoring of 'casual' staff can create difficulties, in particular because some of the freelance teachers are often not familiar with drama school philosophy or university codes of conduct. The wellbeing of the teachers themselves has also been given due consideration as they too can be similarly exhausted by the intense timetable and emotionally over-extended by 'vicarious trauma'—being adversely affected by student distress. There are numerous areas that affect all those in the actor training environment, and the data in this research indicates that there is more the drama schools could do to manage these elements and ensure greater safety for those involved.

In regard to the duty of care issues it became apparent throughout the research that there are areas regarding the psychological safety of the students that require close scrutiny and more clarification is needed regarding teachers' and schools' responsibilities as they pertain to acting students. If acting students encounter psychological or mental health difficulties as a result of their training, what are the duty of care implications for teachers and their employer institutions? This study determined that the drama schools and their affiliated universities considered their duty of care obligations fulfilled primarily by provision of counselling services on the university campuses. This is a free service offered to all students but only on one campus has it been recognised that drama school students have a heightened risk of requiring these services. As a result, a psychologist has been appointed to that drama school one day per week. At the other schools in the study the particular needs of the acting students and the intensity of their courses are not afforded any special treatment. This may in part account for the fact that the counselling services at these universities appear to be underused by the acting student population. The interviewed teachers and psychologists also advised that for sessions with acting students to be effective, counsellors need knowledge and understanding of the confronting nature of the acting courses and of the particular pressures on the students. This appeared to be put into practice by only one of the schools in this study.

In spite of coming under the umbrella of their affiliated university's policies on harassment, abuse and other issues, the particular circumstances that apply to drama schools may need to be identified and given specific attention regarding codes of behaviour. One school has addressed this to some extent by creating its own non-academic grievance policy and procedure document (NIDA, 2014a). The data in this research would seem to indicate that this approach could be taken further by all the schools so that the staff/student relationships that are characteristic of most performing arts areas—relying as they often do on physical contact and one-one-one tutoring—can be taken

into account. A drama-school-specific policy would serve to protect both staff and students. In general, the drama schools' student complaints and grievance policies within their universities give drama students access to register complaints but, as outlined, it is particularly difficult for them to do so given the intimate nature of their courses and their dependence on the ongoing relationships with their teachers.

Question 3: To what extent is there need for the management of emotional wellbeing to be an integral component of actor training pedagogy?

Emotional management factors were an ongoing theme in the data collected for this research, which seemed to indicate that there is a distinct need for certain practices to be introduced into actor training courses to assist the emotional wellbeing of its students. The degree of emotional and psychological stress encountered by acting students as part of their training has been outlined in this study in some detail. It clearly points towards the recommendation that more emotional management strategies be introduced into these courses as part of accepted practice. Benefits to the students in terms of closure and de-roling practices have been well documented and would indicate that they need to be a more integral component of drama school policy if they are to be adopted as safe and necessary elements of the programmes. Barton (1994) stated that defining emotional boundaries can be built into syllabuses and initial discussions framing courses and in that way can create a sense of limit and safety for students to better handle their emotions. He maintained that 'disengagement' (from characters) should be taught in the basic curriculum as a simple survival technique for actors who have "gotten emotionally stuck" (p. 112), and that teaching students this ability to disengage (or de-role) provides a safety net that can help actors take greater risks in their work.

Numerous possibilities have been suggested in this research for building management strategies into actor training including a commitment to peer support groups to provide support and guidance for students. This system requires endorsement by the institutions and guidance by staff members if it is to be successful. The readiness of drama school staff members to interact with their students has been acknowledged through their adoption of the 'open door' policy whereby students can meet regularly with staff members on a one-to-one basis. This could no doubt be better acknowledged by the institutions as being of considerable assistance to their students.

Teachers' welfare is also of the utmost importance and it goes without saying that if teachers are particularly stressed, it impacts on their students. The long hours and intensity of the courses applies to them also and although they have access to the university counselling service, it is suggested in this study that regular collegiate group sessions be established to provide practical and moral support. It is also proposed that a preparatory course be designed for all teachers in the vocational drama school setting in conjunction with professional development and wellness training sessions that may already be offered by some of the universities. These strategies can better prepare teachers in actor training for some of the intense emotional and psychological issues that arise during students' training.

Limitations

This study was never intended to be an in-depth comparison of the ways in which the courses at the participating drama schools are run, nor was it meant to be an in-depth study into precisely what is taught or how it is taught in each of the programmes. The purpose of this research was to focus on the emotional elements of the courses, what emotional factors are set in play for students during their training and how these crucial aspects are dealt with within the institutions. As a result, there are no doubt various relevant details

pertaining to the organisation and management of the particular schools that have not been taken into account.

Although the accreditation of acting teachers was raised in this discourse, it was not in the study's agenda to assess the current teachers' specific qualifications, nor to recommend any particular course of action. Neither was it within the study's scope to physically observe teachers teaching—nor to advocate a change in teaching styles. A further limitation was that the research project did not set about to analyse in any detail the various subject curricula: that is, what is taught, what the course features are, what learning outcomes are involved and so on. Neither was every acting technique or exercise assessed in regard to its possible emotional impact on those using it. Many of these syllabi aspects may have introduced factors that could have had an impact on the research questions. Nevertheless, the study has garnered a comprehensive overview of the drama schools and their current practices and brought to light several areas that could certainly benefit from further examination and research.

Recommendations for Future Research

An examination of the curricula in the major drama schools in Australia would provide interesting and helpful information—in particular in regard to the subject of acting. To investigate what is stipulated in syllabus documents in relation to what is actually taught in the acting studio would offer helpful insights for policy makers. In addition, documenting how the subject is assessed, the criteria used and how each course varies from one institution to the other is also an area that could enlighten future teachers and syllabus writers. A comparative study to gauge how the craft of acting is taught in Australia and whether there is any 'Australian' perspective to the instruction may elucidate how widely the material taught varies from one school to the other for what is ostensibly the same degree. Furthering this, a longitudinal study of the emotional and psychological effects of actor training on students

during and after their training would provide valuable data for the designing of courses and the inclusion or exclusion of certain practices based on efficacy.

A comprehensive and detailed examination of duty of care factors as they apply to actor training is warranted, and represents a research area that could better clarify responsibilities in this regard for teachers, schools and universities. A study incorporating the comparison and contrast of institutional pedagogy as it relates to long-term graduate emotional resilience could have a significant impact on the performing arts industry in Australia and beyond.

Many other areas could also be opened up for future research, including the interrelationship of therapy and acting teacher and the extent to which teachers are equipped to take on this unofficial role; the impact of professional theatre directors bringing professional environment expectations into a university setting; the impact of the guru teacher on industry and actor training institutions; and the role that 'boundary management' could further play as an aspect of acting pedagogy.

Implication for Practice

It is anticipated that the observations and conclusions in this research could be applied by the staffs of the schools and universities that manage actor training courses in Australia. Based on the analysis of the data collected through the course of this study, it is my contention that the suggestions for safer actor training procedures warrant being put into practice with some urgency. As many of the graduates of the participating schools become leaders in the different fields of the performing arts, any revised safety practices they encounter at drama school may well then be adopted by the acting profession at large. In this way the profession could take on more responsibility for the care of its members. These observations are in keeping with the conclusions of the Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study (Maxwell et al., 2015), which stated that actor training should systematically address aspects of actors' wellbeing including the maintenance of psychological health. This

research reinforces the necessity for such action and provides comprehensive findings to justify investigation and change.

Summary of Recommendations

The following are recommendations in some of the areas explored in this thesis as suggested by the research findings.

DUTY OF CARE

It is recommended that if the programming of acting courses became more explicitly conscious of duty of care issues, then perhaps conservatoire training institutions might be encouraged to rethink their scheduling, and even their curricula. If incidents of 'emotional overload' as reported in this research could also be perceived in the light of institutional policies on duty of care, more specific strategies and procedures may be instrumented to ensure the wellbeing of both students and staff.

In the area of on-campus counselling, the research suggested that it was highly advisable for drama school staff members to interact with counselling services personnel, allowing counsellors insights into the unique pressures of actor training courses. It was also revealed that the most effective counselling service appeared to be that of a 'resident' counsellor appointed to the drama school for a minimum of one day per week and ideally having an understanding of the rigours of the courses and the unique issues involved. It is also suggested that counsellors raise awareness of mental health issues with actor training staff and talk annually with each cohort of students about some of the issues that may arise during their training.

A weekly personal growth class for each of the student cohorts is suggested as a viable solution for many of the concerns that are aired in this study. Led by a psychologist or a teacher with psychological training, these 'student welfare' classes could assist students with many of the issues that arise for them during their training. The classes could deal directly with students'

psychological wellbeing, and would reap enormous benefits right across the schools. It would be an economical and positive way for institutions to acknowledge the specific emotional and psychological concerns that arise in acting programmes—and to pro-actively do something about it.

Although the universities have peer support systems, it would appear extremely helpful for drama schools to adopt their own individualised systems. A peer support system is an excellent tool for drama schools and has the potential to greatly benefit student wellbeing. These systems need careful planning and continuing supervision, so while it is always difficult asking teachers to take on extra tasks when their schedules are already full, it is suggested that teachers could take on this supervisory role in rotation throughout the year. The peer support systems need guidance and a point of contact for students to give feedback, but the bonus may be that if a peer support service was working successfully, teachers could reasonably expect a lessening of requests from students for private tutorials/discussions.

While the affiliated universities all have well-drawn-up policies in regard to academic and equal opportunity grievances, drama schools have unique sets of circumstances within the universities. For this reason, it is recommended that drama schools draw up specific policies for student complaints and grievances that take into account the unique circumstances of the actor training programmes.

ADMISSIONS

Observations were made in regard to factors that could assist applicants with their drama school entrance auditions. These included providing explicit information on what is required and about the audition procedure, allowing sufficient time to interact with auditionees and attempting to refine and 'humanise' the rejection process that the majority of applicants experience. The vital importance of providing a supportive peer, staff and institutional environment for young, incoming students was noted.

SCHOOL PRACTICES

This research revealed that acting students appear to be overtired and often exhausted for the majority of their training. It is recommended that drama schools examine whether their courses need to be so intensely programmed, or whether a more relaxed timetable would result in equally skilled graduates. It is suggested that some flexibility in the programming that allows students more time for integration of skills and reflection may contribute to improved physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of both students and staff.

The lack of choice available to students in revealing sensitive material about themselves in classes, and the resultant anxiety about confidentiality being maintained, indicates that the schools would do well to address these areas in clearer, stronger terms than currently seems to be the case.

ACTING METHODS

The research examined a variety of acting methods used by teachers in this study's drama schools, and discovered that Alba Emoting was a method not used by any of the participating schools. It is suggested that Alba Emoting be examined as a viable alternative to some of the methods currently used in drama schools, many of which are capable of activating unwanted emotional issues. Alba Emoting offers a disciplined method by which to reproduce emotions and reputedly comes with the capacity to put emotions aside when required. This makes it highly suitable and beneficial for students learning to access and control their emotions as part of their acting skill repertoire. The lack of uptake of this training option at the local level may be indicative of the practice of acting teachers tending to teach as they were taught and choosing methods with which they are familiar. However, training in the Alba Emoting method could prove to be ideal professional development for staff in order for them to present students with an entirely different way of contacting and using their emotions in performance. It may well be time to introduce the Alba Emoting method as an option in Australian drama school syllabuses.

CLOSURE PRACTICES

The research revealed that the areas of closure, post-performance cool down, de-roling and boundary blurring were all greatly in need of more attention, research, discussion and policy making in drama schools in order to pursue safer pathways for student actors to prepare for their craft. It is recommended that these practices be perceived in the light of institutional policies on duty of care and, ultimately, best practice for the wellbeing of students. These practices then may well be adopted as integral components of drama school practice.

TEACHERS

It is suggested that a preparatory psychology-based course be established as a prerequisite for teaching in drama schools and as part of the institutions' commitment to staff development. Teachers in the actor training environment would greatly profit from some basic therapeutic skills training, and although not currently recognised as an essential requirement in the field, such skills are suggested as a component of this preparatory course for teachers.

It is also recommended that full-time staff be provided with a facilitated hour per week to share and discuss their personal challenges in dealing with the intense atmosphere of actor training. This would assist in enhancing collegiality among staff and, as an extension of this recommendation, it is suggested that staff members be encouraged to engage in more interschool dialogue and become more engaged in the wider drama and educational fields.

Finally, it is recommended that freelance sessional staff members have more regular supervision and guidance and not be 'left to their own devices', because this risks compromising the needs of the students, which are paramount in this situation. Being paid to attend staff meetings and included more in the overall programme could assist part-time teachers in perceiving

themselves as integral and vital parts of the school, rather than remaining 'outsiders', as can sometimes be the case.

General Conclusion

This thesis has offered a perspective on the role emotions play in actor training. The research has examined the particular stresses incurred by acting students during their training, and how the emotional aspects are managed by the selected group of Australian drama schools. It has weighed up the need for better emotional and psychological safeguarding of the students and presented recommendations for drama schools regarding the employment of more emotional management strategies.

The weight of the findings indicates that acting students may experience considerable stress during their training, some aspects of which may not always be taken into consideration by the administration. Students are continuing to be asked to participate in practices that may pose a risk to their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Although some of these risks have been signposted by other researchers (Moor, 2003; Prior, 2015; Seton, 2010), this study has gone inside three of Australia's major drama schools to investigate in depth what activities are conducted by the teachers and what the teachers themselves think about the emotional risks to their students. The outcomes of this research provide a persuasive case for drama schools to institute better safeguards for the emotional wellbeing of their students and to introduce strategies for the implementation of these safeguards.

Researchers in this area have cautioned for years about the potential risks of many of the actor training practices outlined in this study. On numerous occasions, it has been recommended that discussion and dialogue between staff members and between schools take place in order to remedy some of the concerns. The results of this research support Seton's (2010) contention that training practices require ethical review and renovation, and reinforce his argument that ethical practices in the acting industry need to be embedded in

the training environment of acting schools. This research similarly confirms Seton's concern that there are not enough forums (either scholarly or professionally) in which these issues can be constructively reflected upon and debated. Australian researchers have been proactive in asking that actor training practices be reconsidered and reshaped: Seton (2007b) invited conversations with teachers, students, scholars, practitioners and all other participants in the field of performance, while Moor (2013) encouraged acting teachers to talk openly about *how* they teach as well as *what* they teach, in order to share the successes and challenges confronting modern actor training in Australia. Most recently, Prior et al., (2015) highlighted the need for actor training institutions to initiate and facilitate deeper discussions, arguing that teaching staff, support staff and industry partners should enter into conscious dialogue with each other about ensuring a healthier interplay between students' developmental needs, course expectations and workplace culture.

Ideally, it would seem that a coming together of practitioners and teachers working in vocational drama schools on the one side, and academics and researchers in the drama field on the other, might minimise the divide between 'doers' and 'thinkers'. Only then is it likely that a consensus will be achieved on sound actor training pedagogy and its implementation in the schools. Until that occurs, it is unlikely that all the issues around student actor wellbeing can be fully addressed and instrumented into curricula and training institutions. May this research play its part in the appeal for this important dialogue to take place, and may it encourage actor training institutions to systematically address, develop and implement safe practices for their students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A—Interviewees

TEACHERS

A   Musical director, singing coach, pianist, actor and writer who has worked with many high profile actors in his forty years in the teaching and entertainment professions.

B   Associate professor, Head of School, programme director, theatre and film director, acting teacher, actor, writer. Thirty five years experience and qualifications in various performance fields.

C   Coordinator of Acting programme, teacher, highly accomplished and well-known actor in theatre and films for forty years.

D   Head of Acting and Directing programmes, teacher, director, writer. Directed 150 productions over a forty year career.

E   Coordinator of Drama Education and drama lecturer in the School of Education. High school drama and tertiary drama education experience.

F   Coordinator of Acting programme, trained actor and director, acting teacher and experienced director. Thirty year career.

G   Highly accomplished teacher, director and writer. Taught in each of the drama schools in this study and in many others around the world. Creative director of his own actor training school. Written books on acting and had a distinguished 40 year career.

H   Experienced music director, former Head of Music Theatre course, teacher, musician and theatre professional for more than 40 years.

I   Associate professor, performance studies academic, theatre researcher and writer. Directing graduate of one of this project's drama schools.

J   Freelance actor, director, and teacher. Active in the contemporary Australian theatre scene and works as a freelance director on student drama school productions.

K   Head of Acting, background as actor, choreographer, director and producer. Significant accomplishments in the fields of theatre, education and training in Australia and the US.

L   Head of Voice, accomplished actor and qualified voice teacher. Worked as voice trainer and consultant across various fields over a thirty year career.

M   Head of Voice and described as one of the world's leading acting, voice and speech professionals. Taught at prestigious international schools and is a Lessac certified teacher—a holistic approach to voice and body training.

N   Former Head of Acting, actor, director and teacher for more than 40 years. Graduated from one of the drama schools in the study and subsequently taught many of Australia's leading actors there. Continues to teach at his independent school.

O   Head of Movement and a movement specialist with many theatre companies. Trained in movement and performance in France and Australia and had an accomplished thirty year career.

P   Freelance actor and teacher with 35 years' experience in film, theatre, television and radio. Trained in New York. The only teacher of the Alba Emoting method in Australia at this time.

Q   Aboriginal Theatre course co-ordinator. Twenty year involvement with Australian contemporary indigenous theatre and performance. Trained teacher and director of numerous productions.

R   Head of Movement and Physical performance. More than 30 years' experience as a teacher, performer, devisor, dramaturge and artistic consultant.

S   Actor, director and teacher with over 35 years' experience. Has performed with all the major Australian theatre companies and taught acting at one of the study's drama schools for many years. Continues to act and teach on a freelance basis.

T   Head of Movement. Thirty years' experience as a national and international instructor of acting, stage combat, clowning and fight direction. Has directed and given master classes all over the world.

U   Head of Acting. Worked as a freelance actor, director, performance-maker, dramaturg and actor trainer in Europe and Australia for 20 years before focusing on actor training the past 10 years.

V   Head of Voice. Trained and worked as an actor before taking intensive training in voice studies in Australia and other countries. A qualified teacher of the Alexander technique, has a private practice for professional voice-users.

W   Acting teacher. Artistic director of an independent theatre company and active in the theatre and academic environments. Graduated from one of the drama schools in the study and works as an actor, director and dramaturg.

X   Professor. Education consultant. More than 30 years' experience in arts and education. Former Director and CEO of various Arts colleges and drama schools in Australia, the UK and Asia. Researcher and writer.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

A   Registered psychologist and trained ACT (Acceptance and Commitment) therapist. Private consultancy. Expertise in working with clients in creative arts fields. University psychologist/counsellor.

B   Clinical psychologist, PhD. Many years' experience specialising in anxiety disorders, depression and self-esteem issues. Primarily Cognitive Behavioural Therapist. Drama school acting graduate with experience in the acting profession.

C   Clinical and educational psychologist. PhD. Former head of university psychology department. Doctorate in educational psychology with a focus on creativity Psychodrama director, post graduate clinical psychology study. Psychoanalytically orientated.

D   Clinical psychologist. PhD with psychoanalytic, psychotherapy orientation. Specialist in eating disorders and early attachment. Forty year career as university psychology department lecturer, counsellor and in private practice.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

A   Graduated from drama school in 2008 and has since been cast in several plays and films of national significance. Named one of 'the ten next big names in stage acting' his first year out of drama school.

B   Graduated from drama school in 2010 where she was consistently cast in lead roles. She has since been involved in numerous theatre productions as well as an award-winning short film and a web series.

C   Graduated from drama school in 2010 where she won several awards. Was cast immediately in a national production and virtually been in work ever since establishing a busy and successful career in theatre and TV.

D   Graduated from drama school in 2010. Acquired a top agent and had a number of theatre, TV and short film roles since launching himself into the profession.

E   Graduated from drama school in 1988. Established herself in the acting profession and was cast in a number of theatre roles before retiring from acting to study psychology.

F   Graduated in 1990. Specialised in the directing course but undertook many classes with the actors. Has since established successful career in directing and academia.

G   Graduated in 1983. Had a productive acting career before becoming well-known as a teacher and director and establishing his own acting school.

Appendix B—Interview Questions

A sample of questions asked during interviews:

<u>Teachers</u>

Is there a particular method, or methods, you use in your acting classes?

What factors or theories have most influenced your methodology?

Can you talk about how you go about teaching students to access their emotions for use in role play?

Are you familiar with a method for accessing emotions called Alba Emoting?

How important do you consider students' emotional availability to the work?

In your experience how often would students have emotional 'release' episodes in your classes when they become upset and perhaps emotionally distressed?

What is your method of handling these episodes when students' personal emotions come to the surface? Do you feel qualified to deal with them?

Is there an accepted school-wide procedure to follow in such instances? Do you think there should be?

Do you find that there are specific exercises or practices that tend to illicit these 'emotional overload' responses?

Do you think some basic training in emotional and psychological areas would be useful in your teaching?

What would be the circumstances for you to refer a student to counselling? Do you do so often?

What do you think are some of the particular stresses on acting students today? Can you talk about these?

Do you end your classes/rehearsals with a closure practice? Do your students participate in closure rituals at the end of their performances?

Have you experienced the phenomenon of 'boundary blurring' with any of your students? How is it dealt with?

Are you responsible for any of the freelance members of staff? How do you go about monitoring their work?

Considering the intensity of the course in which you teach, do you think your basic needs are looked after in this environment? What could be improved?

<u>Psychologists:</u>

At what drama school/university do you practice?

Are arts/acting students amongst your clients?

Are some of their issues different from the general student population? If so, in what way do they differ?

Could you identify any particular concerns arts/acting students might seek help for?

Are you aware that it is not unusual for acting students to break down emotionally in class?

How would you suggest teachers handle these episodes?

What would be best practice for dealing with students for whom emotional and perhaps traumatic events have been triggered?

Can you talk about how a safe environment is created?

How do you think sessions involving role play and emotional commitment should be concluded?

Can you talk about providing choice to clients/students in regard to personal disclosure?

What kinds of verbal contracts should be in place when teachers ask for personal disclosure from students/clients?

Can you talk about the area of confidentiality around personal disclosure?

Do you think university counsellors would profit from more understanding of the demands of vocational acting courses?

Do you think there is more universities could do to ensure the psychological safety of their acting school students?

Graduates

What drama school did you graduate from and when?

How do you feel overall about your three year training experience?

Can you talk about the emotional areas of your training?—about how were you taught to access emotions?

How did you experience the theatre practices and exercises around tapping into emotion?

Did you or your fellow students ever experience emotional distress in classes or rehearsals?

How were these episodes handled by the teachers? and by the school? Could they have been handled better?

Do you remember participating in exercises that involved personal disclosures? Did you feel comfortable about this?

How were issues of confidentiality handled around these areas?

Was your cohort of students supportive during your training?

Were you involved in any peer support groups? How did that work?

Can you talk about any 'closure' practices you were involved in at the end of classes and productions? Were they effective?

Theatre Educators

In secondary school drama and drama teacher training programmes, are there policies in regard to handling students' emotional issues when they arise in class?

How do you train your student teachers to handle emotionally distressed students?

What is your feeling about professional actors teaching in vocational drama schools?

Appendix C—Information Letter

Leith Taylor

WAAPA at Edith Cowan University

2 Bradford St

Mt Lawley

WA 6050

Dear……

I am currently conducting research for a project entitled ***Actor Training and Emotions: Finding A Balance*** as part of a PhD study through the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) at Edith Cowan University in Perth. I am working under the supervision of Associate Professor Maggi Phillips and Dr Renee Newman. The project will explore the relationship between actor training and emotions and the ways in which instructors and drama schools manage this aspect of the training.

The study involves conducting individual interviews with experienced staff members in the different subject areas of actor training in three leading drama institutions in Australia—NIDA, WAAPA and the VCA—as well as some graduate students. You are being approached as your work place (name) has agreed to participate in the project

These interviews will take approximately 40–60 minutes - and would only extend longer with the mutual consent of the researcher and the participant. It is envisaged that all interviews will be conducted in the work environment at a time that is convenient to the participant.

Participants are selected by the researcher according to their experience and area of expertise. The interviews will be audio recorded (with the consent of the participant) and all information provided by the participants will remain confidential. The recording will be transcribed, coded and individual

identifiers will be removed. During the study the recording and original transcriptions will be stored securely with any copies being erased or destroyed. All data will be appropriately deleted at the conclusion of the project. Participation in an interview is voluntary. Participants in this study will need to consent to their involvement and may withdraw their involvement and consent any time during the research phase of the study.

In terms of reporting the results of this research project, it is anticipated that the results will be of interest to drama training institutions. This being the case, it is likely that the research will be reported in a thesis document and research findings may be presented at conferences and published in journal articles. In all instances, individuals who participated in the study will not be identified.

I attach a consent form for your perusal which, if you agreeable, can be signed at the time of the interview. If you require further information about the research project, please contact me on 08 93833198/0438383319 or staylo29@our.ecu.edu.au.

If you have an concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at Edith Cowan University on (08) 63042170 or research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

I am most appreciative of your consideration in this project.

Yours sincerely

Leith Taylor

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of ECU

Appendix D—Informed Consent

Individual Interview

Research Project: Actor Training and Emotions: Finding a Balance.

Researcher: Leith Taylor PhD Candidate

email: staylo29@our.ecu.edu.au   tel: 08 938 3198/0438 383 319

Supervisors: Principal Supervisor: Dr Maggi Phillips

email: maggi.phillips@ecu.edu.au   tel: 08 93706129

Associate Supervisor: Dr Renee Newman

email: r.newman@ecu.edu.au   tel: 08 93706950

Address: WAAPA, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford Street, Mt. Lawley, W.A.

I …………………………………….consent to participate in the individual interview component of this study and

- have been provided with a copy of the participant Information letter
- have read and understood the information provided
- have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction
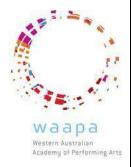- am aware that if I have any additional questions I can contact the researcher or supervisors

I understand the information provided will be kept confidential and that my identity will not be disclosed without my consent.

I understand that I can withdraw from further participation at any time during the research period without explanation or penalty.

I consent to an audio recording being taken of my interview and freely agree to participate in the project. (Please strike out if consent for the recording is not given).

Signed: _____ Date: /   /

**BACHELOR OF ARTS (ACTING)
ADVANCED DIPLOMA OF PERFORMING ARTS
(ACTING)**

STANDARD THEATRE PRACTICE 2014
REVISED FEBRRUARY 2014

**YOU MUST RETAIN THIS DOCUMENT AND
REFER TO IT DURING YOUR TRAINING**

ACTING COURSE

The course is a preparation for entry into the world of theatre, film, TV and radio and seeks to instill an attitude towards the hard concentrated work that is the foundation of professional life. Students are made aware of their gifts as well as their shortcomings and are given strategies to overcome those shortcomings as the training proceeds.

Theatre is a shared experience and it is urged that the act of giving as well as taking lies close to the heart of all acting. The individual student draws confidence from the group and in turn contributes strength to it. Classes and rehearsals are times of exploration and experimentation that help to build your confidence as a performer. A wide variety of professional skills are taught within this framework of particular tuition and common work. At the same time the student's knowledge of theatre arts is enlarged and a comprehensive background of the literature and history of drama is provided.

The actor's physical tools are the body and the voice. Actors require a trained and flexible body to be able to meet the demands of many sorts of production. A majority of those who begin training possess only a limited command of these tools. The basic exercises remove bad habits and release the tensions that frequently cause them. Once the tensions are released the long process of specialised training commences.

The development of craft skills forms the constant background to all other work. Text study and rehearsal widens progressively in range and increased complexity. Our aim is for the actor to be technically adept and have an informed outlook that will free the mind and creative imagination.

TRAINING

1. CLASSES

1.1 Attendance

We are a teaching/training institution, and we achieve this through classes. Attendance is compulsory for **ALL** classes.

Anyone who misses classes is not fulfilling the course, and not preparing themselves for the needs of the industry. This applies to **ALL** classes.
It should also be noted that the absence of one, for whatever reason, impairs the work of all.

1.2 Punctuality

Punctuality is an essential industry skill. Lack of punctuality at WAAPA may cause you to be locked out of class, which means you are marked absent.

Email the Acting Department School Officer on a.pinsent@ecu.edu.au by 8.30am for any absence or lateness. An phone call/voicemail message to 9370 6421 will also suffice. Also

notify a fellow student to ensure the message reaches the staff concerned. However "ringing in" does not make absence acceptable. Any absence because of illness **MUST** be validated by a doctor's certificate.

1.3 Conduct

a. Come to class suitably prepared with requisite books and notes and in appropriate clothes and bare feet for Movement and Voice. No boots are to be worn unless as a choice in a class on character. No jeans.

b. If the tutor is late, begin your own warm-up or work-out, either individually or as a group.

c. Much of your learning derives from the insight gained from watching others. Therefore if you withdraw your energy from the focal point of the class at any time, you destroy the working environment.

Do not talk, text, read, prepare the next class, eat or lie down while the class or meeting is in progress.

Do not draw attention away from the content of the class by holding a private conversation with or massaging another student.

d. Students (and actors) should watch their fellows with a **sympathetically** critical eye.
Be aware that your reactions can inhibit other students. Although the profession is highly competitive, by the same token we are profoundly dependent on each other's support.

e. It is **essential** that class and rehearsal time at the Academy be used to **dare** and to **fail**, not just to repeat past (ie safe) successes.

f. Anyone coming to class having consumed any sort of alcohol or mind changing drug is liable to instant dismissal. It is against University policy and in that state you inhibit the work and are a possible danger for the rest of the group.

It is a University rule that you are not to eat or drink anything in the class and rehearsal rooms except for water.

g. If you wish to drink from a personal water bottle, be mindful not to disrupt yours or anyone else's concentration and process. Do not walk off the floor to drink water. Do not share water bottles.

h. Toilet breaks should be taken between classes. Classes commence on time and finish ten minutes before the allotted time to enable this.

i. Classrooms and dance studios are used by students in other courses. *It is a matter of health and safety that you do not walk around the campus bare foot, and that the shoes you wear into class must be clean.* Always leave rooms in a tidy state. You must be mindful of other people who use the space.

j. Many course activities require close physical contact between people. Good personal hygiene is extremely important not only in consideration of others but also for your health and well being.

k. The course is very demanding and students need to adapt to changes in life style that will ensure good general health. Your stamina and cardio-vascular fitness are your responsibility. Please maintain both your physical and vocal fitness.

l. Harassment of any person on the grounds of gender, race or sexuality is unacceptable.

m. How to address problems: Talk to the person involved and if that doesn't work, talk to the Head of the course. Address difficulties concisely, clearly, and if possible, calmly and you should get a good result.

n. Personal life and relationships must take second place to any professional commitment. Apart from a close bereavement or great personal distress you should not ask for exceptions to be made for you.

o. Personal likes and dislikes of others are irrelevant to your working habits. *Professional practice means creating appropriate relationships with colleagues*.

2A. REHEARSAL AND PRODUCTIONS

a. Rehearsals start at the time stated. Do not arrive breathless or still eating at the call time. Warm-ups must be completed, rehearsal costume put on, props checked in order that the first word is spoken and the first movement made at the time for which you have been called.

b. Once called, ensure you are easy to find for the duration of the rehearsal call, even if the director is not ready for you. It is infuriating to lose time while Stage Management search for an actor.

c. Courtesy and sensitivity to other performers applies in rehearsal and performance as in the classroom. Be quiet and considerate as you enter and leave the space. Assistants and guests of the director should be treated with the same respect as the director.

d. It's important to work on improving and refining a character, but immediate rejection of an offer, even (perhaps especially) your own, can be very draining to the energy of rehearsal. Take time to consider, process and try new ideas. Big, bold choices give you, your partner and the director more material to play with. Every choice should eventually bring you closer to the text.

e. Every director will have a different methodology and way in which they wish you to work. Difference of approach is an important part of your training, not a disruption to it. You should have your lines down when required by the director.

f. You are usually welcome to observe the rehearsal if you are not called but you need to observe with a supportive energy. It is unprofessional and inappropriate to give directorial notes (or 'coach') to fellow students. This applies whether you are in the rehearsal room, outside it or anywhere else. Your focus should always be on improving your own work and the best way to help a fellow actor is to be a better actor for them to work with.

g. Your Stage Manager (SM) is the main means of communication for a production. They should be aware and you should make them aware of anything that influences rehearsal, production or performance. When working 'off book', call for 'line' from the SM when required. The SM is usually the only person who should give lines. It is your responsibility to re-check your script during the rehearsal process to maintain accuracy of the text.

h. Personal belongings should be kept out of the rehearsal area unless required for the scene. There should be no food or drink (including coffee) in the rehearsal room and you should always wear appropriate clothing and footwear for rehearsal.

i. A good actor makes maximum use of rehearsal time - working on the script, recording director's notes and your own notes, collating research and learning lines - even when not on the floor. The rehearsal room is a creative space and any behavior that detracts from the focus and energy needed to work well should not go on. This includes sleeping, talking and reading anything that is not directly related to the work in the room.

j. Out of state travel is by permission only and never after the play is into the production weeks.

k. The designer and director for the current and following show should be consulted before you make any major changes to hairstyle or hair colour.

l. Rehearsals missed are irreplaceable. Theatre, film and television all work to deadlines, and your absence stops the whole industry group from working. In the unlikely event that you are too ill to come in, your SM should be notified as soon as possible.

m. Always bring a pencil (not pen) and an eraser to rehearsals and classes so that you can mark the script. Find a way to carry pencils so notes given on the floor are taken, when necessary, immediately. You should make your own notes of blocking changes, not rely on the SM to give you your blocking. Immediately after the show scripts must be returned to the library cleaned and reusable.

n. Students occasionally feel aggrieved about their roles in the production programme from time to time in third year, guest directors may even audition students for roles in a production. Casting is done by the Acting Staff with care and considerable discussion. If you are unhappy, talk to us—but finally you must play as cast.

o. Murmurs of discontent about the production during rehearsals and performance undermine your work and the functioning of the ensemble. If for example you feel under-challenged, use the time to set new goals eg watch the actors with the load overcoming the challenges before them. "There are no small roles only small actors."

p. The success of rehearsals depends on skilful and sensitive communication. Don't be afraid to express your views in terms of what direction your character takes but remember that the director in the end must make the final decisions; that designers have thought through their decisions etc. and that bringing the play to life in performance is a sensitive collaborative process.

q. Smoking adversely affects others. It is essential that actual smoking be minimised in rehearsal and performance. It is acceptable for staff to intervene and comment on the smoking.

r. If you are required to undertake any activity that is potentially harmful to your voice or body you must consult the relevant Voice or Movement tutor. Do not seek assistance independently without informing them.

2B. PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE

a. You must sign a call sheet when you enter or leave a venue. This is a legal requirement of your work and is done for your safety.

b. At some point in Production Week there will be a fire drill. This will happen for every play you work on, even if it is in a venue you have worked in before. It is important to take the fire drill seriously and to listen to your SM.

c. Warm-ups are the responsibility of the individual and people like to prepare differently, however if a group warm-up is called it is important for the rest of the company that you are there.

d. Respect other actors' own method of preparing for performance. Your behaviour before, during and after a performance, especially if you finish your on-stage work early, greatly affects the company and the show.

e. You should seek permission of the SM to enter the stage space, especially after the 'House is Live'.

f. You must be at a venue before the half-hour call at the **VERY** latest. The 'half-hour' is actually 35 minutes before show-time, as every call (half, 15 minute, 5 minute) runs in line with 'Beginners', which is 5 minutes before 'Curtain Up'.

g. You must not appear in public after the half-hour call.

h. You should never appear in public before the end of a performance, even if you are no longer required on stage. You should never appear in public in costume or make-up, even after a show. This is an important part of the experience of a play for an audience.

i. You are generally required to supply your own make-up unless something specialised is required.

j. It is your responsibility to check your costumes and props before a performance, do not ask an ASM to do it. You should not touch or play with anyone else's props or costumes.

k. Don't eat, drink or smoke in costume or on stage.

l. It is unprofessional to consume alcohol or drugs before or during a show or between a matinee and an evening performance.

m. The full-time staff of the Acting Department, retain the right to recast any acting student rehearsing or performing in a first, second or third year production due to unprofessionalism, such as punctuality, inability to learn lines or behaviors that impede the production.

n. **Participation in the 'Showcase Tour' is by invitation only. These invitations will be extended to 3rd year students at the assessments interview at the end of the first semester.**

3. ASSESSMENT

You will receive written assessments from all your teachers (both full-time and part-time staff) twice a year. Part-time staff make a significant contribution to discussion of your progress through the course, however the mark for the unit as a whole is decided by the **full-time staff only.**

If you have received two fail marks in the production unit, you run the risk of being failed in the unit. You will also be asked to prepare **a verbal self-assessment.**

In those cases where we perceive a student may be in danger of not succeeding at the end of the year, we are required to give students clear and unequivocal warning when we believe he/she is failing. This will be in the form of a letter towards the end of each semester.

There are two major areas for assessment, the *Undesignated Unit* and the *Designated Unit.*

3.1 Undesignated Units

If a student receives a Fail grade (F) in an undesignated unit s/he is not automatically excluded from the course, but **cannot** be graduated until s/he successfully completes the unit at the level which s/he has failed.

Thus, if a student fails in year two Voice/Practice Vocal Skills in Performance, s/he **cannot** do year three Voice/Apply Vocal Skills in Professional Roles and Situations until s/he has successfully completed it at year two level.

This makes for considerable problems in our particular course because, unlike some academic courses, it is impossible to work some units at one level and others at another,

first because of timetabling difficulties and second because of the holistic nature of the course structure.

In practical terms, then, there are few options for a student failing an Undesignated Unit other than repeating the year or withdrawing from the course.

A third possibility is that extra work or projects over the holidays can be assessed at the start of the new academic year and if the student has 'caught up', s/he may be admitted into the next level. Such a solution is solely at the discretion of the staff concerned and the Board of Examiners.

3.2 Designated Units
A Designated unit is one which, if the student fails, means that the course is terminated. There are five designated units in the Acting course:

Year 1 ACT1002 The Role of the Actor; ACT1006 Integrating the Skills of the Actor (*B.A.*)
Year 2 ACT2001 The Actor in Ensemble; ACT2005 The Actor in Performance (*B.A.*)
Year 3 WAAPA00016 Perform in Professional Stage and Media Productions (*Adv. Diploma*)
ACT3001 The Professional Actor (*B.A.*)

Here all skills are brought together away from the classroom into a competency based industry environment. Students work with practitioners from all theatre trades and a paying audience. Therefore the student who has failed a designated unit, even though they have passed all other units, may be unable to complete the course.

Professional Etiquette
It should be noted that in first, second and third year the production units include an assessment on professional etiquette. This grade includes professional practice such as your contribution to the ensemble, focus, attendance, punctuality and attitude to learning. Importantly, professional etiquette covers not only the standard of your professionalism in rehearsal and performance, but also the professionalism surrounding other theatre and WAAPA events. This includes all activity associated with our course - fund raisers, opening nights, the foyer, audience behaviour, dressing rooms, film sets, classes, guest speakers and when representing WAAPA off campus and so on. Any behaviour **not appropriate** to these events will be noted and will contribute to the professionalism grade.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

You may experience many phases of excitement, disenchantment, exhaustion and discovery in this course. Always try to retain the memory of **WHY** you came to drama school, and recognize that **YOU** are responsible for your own learning, progress and development.

It is not the responsibility of staff to coerce you into learning. Maintain your own discipline of homework, preparation and warm-ups; keep an open, enquiring and receptive mind in classes and rehearsal; thereby you will gain the greatest benefit from the course.

Frequently students need to find casual jobs to support themselves. A part-time job should not disrupt the teaching or production programme in any way.

Students are **not** to undertake any outside professional or amateur acting engagements during first or second year (including holiday periods).

Professional acting employment in third year will only be considered on a case by case basis. In most instances we advise against students seeking to perform professionally prior to graduation. Approval is at the discretion of the staff.

Actor/Agent activity is not allowed prior to the third year showcase/graduation. Representation can only be sought in exceptional circumstances with staff approval.

As a matter of professional courtesy, discuss with the teaching staff any outside training courses you are considering doing.

Interviews are not to be given to the press without permission from the Head of the Department. No recorded material from classes or performances is to be posted on any social media.

You must pay tuition fees by the due date or you will not be eligible to attend the course.

We do not as a staff feel the need to explain the transaction between us and any student. The group should assume that if an individual is for example, having trouble fulfilling our code of practice, that that person is being dealt with and a contract between them and staff has been put into place. What may appear as unacceptable/unfair treatment from the outside is in fact being resolved through the proper channels. Remember any student is welcome to discuss any issues with the staff.

You must ensure that your current address is lodged with Student Central (level 1, Building 3) and the Departmental School Officer. Change of address forms are available from Student Central and the Departmental School Officer.

Class work is the basis of the Academy's training; we are a school. Much of the assessment is done by teachers on work done in **class**. A significant part of that assessment consists of students' performance against industry standards of punctuality, attendance and presenting work **on time**. These aspects play a critical part in whether students are deemed to be passed or failed in a unit or component of a unit. Classwork feeds into projects and production work and is integral to the ongoing assessment procedure.

Your attitude, attendance, participation and communication are all essential for the effectiveness of the course and the community of WAAPA.

Any breach of this document affects the assessment of your designated unit. Failure to comply with this code of practice may result in you being asked to leave the course.