Thespioprudence

Australian film directors
and
Film performance

"How do our directors work with actors on performance and what is the dominant approach to directing actors in Australian film?"

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State of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:

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Abstract

"…we, directors and actors, put into practice the practice – we don't practice the theory. I think that if there is no theory of acting, at least there are theoretical laws that we may find, curiously enough, in all traditions of acting. It is true that the term "theory of acting" does not seem fundamentally wrong, but it seems always somewhat imperialistic and pretentious. I prefer to use fundamental laws which we sometimes know but then sometimes lose and forget. It is only practice that all of a sudden can make law or tradition rise to the surface. I will not say then that there is no theory of acting; on the contrary, there have been many of them. Of course, what interests me in these multiple theories are the essential laws that are common to all of them."

- Ariane Mnouchkine

(from "Building Up the Muscle" in *Re:direction* edited by R. Schneider and G. Cody, Routledge, London, 2002.)

I come to filmmaking from an actor's perspective and believe that the power of each individual performance is the key to audience engagement with a feature film. The technical aspects of filmmaking, for me, exist primarily to serve the story as revealed through the actors' performances. Because performance in film has been a neglected area of research, I set out to explore the different approaches to performance theory which might apply to film performance in an Australian context. In this dissertation, I have asked a number of key questions about how the director communicates with the actor to elicit the desired performance. I framed this thesis around one overarching question: What is the dominant approach used by Australian film directors when working with actors on performance?

This study reveals that many Australian filmmakers have been most influenced by a wide variety of approaches to working with actors, particularly because of the way actors are trained in Australia.

My interest in this project was partially triggered by my observation that many filmmaking students at QUT seem driven by the technical aspects of filmmaking. Given the complex demands made on actors, filmmakers who do not learn to speak the actor's language arguably fail to capitalize on their working relationships with actors. I have attempted to express my findings in plain English because the whole purpose of this project was to ensure that my findings would be of use to new filmmakers in a practical sense.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The primary aim of this dissertation is to investigate the approaches to directing film performance as practised by certain Australian film directors. Core aspects of performance in general, as well as the actor-director relationship in the Australian film industry, will be carefully considered. In particular, I have sought to answer one overarching question: "What are the key approaches used by Australian film directors when working with actors on performance?"

As there is no existing term to describe the theoretical aspects of dramatic/cinematic production in this context, I have coined the term "thespioprudence" to describe this area of study. In the course of my research, I read Ariane Mnouchkine's statement, as quoted in my abstract, relating to directors' and actors' practices and the search for essential laws that are common to acting.[1] The search for fundamental or essential laws and 'lores' of performance practice underpins this research and I have therefore extrapolated and linked the notion of laws and performance in my chosen title for this study. The title derives from the Greek "Thespis" (the traditional father of Greek Tragedy) and the Latin "prudens" (meaning skilled or experienced in, or having wisdom of). Accordingly, in the context as used here, the term thespioprudence is intended to embody the notion of the knowledge or skill of acting, for actors and directors alike, and corresponds with the similarly derived term "jurisprudence," which means "a system or body of law" or "the philosophy of law."[2] I most commonly use the term, thespioprudence, when talking about the lore associated with individual working practices of the directors discussed in this study. Because I have tried to deconstruct the essential nature and mechanics of how directors direct actors to achieve performance in the medium of film, it seemed important to find a single word to describe this much broader and critical notion.

The secondary aim of this dissertation is to provide insights to emerging directors about negotiating meaning with actors in rehearsals, thereby enabling them more effectively and creatively to draw upon the talents of actors.

Context

To some extent, this examination of the nature of directing film actors is inspired by my own experience of working with and observing trainee actors whilst studying at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). It is also informed by the insights I gained observing emerging film directors on five student films and during two secondments to the Australian Film Television and

Radio School (AFTRS). Other influences flow from my participation in intensive workshops on acting method and directing run by Joe MacColom, former acting and voice teacher from NIDA, George Whaley, director and former head of the directing department at the AFTRS, Lindy Davies, the current head of the drama school at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), dramaturg and actor Nick (Nicholas or Nico) Lathouris, writer-director-actor Norman Price, physical theatre artist and teacher Bridget Brandon, academic Patrice Pavis, Bill Pepper the head of voice studies at NIDA, and the head of voice from the Royal Shakespeare Company, Cicely Berry.

The status quo and the need for research

Very little has been written about the thespioprudence of Australian film directors and the actual techniques which they rely upon when directing actors for performance. Indeed, even at an international level, the body of work that addresses questions relating to film performance (in particular, the question of how such performances are shaped by directors) is quite limited. There is a need for greater in-depth analysis regarding film performance within the existing field of film theory and criticism, particularly in relation to Australian film.

The fact that so little has been written about the more abstract aspects of directing actors in film may be because academics and critics in the popular press have simply not asked the relevant questions. The latter tend to focus on film largely as entertainment, while the former tend to focus on textual, cultural and industrial policy issues. Indeed, given the longstanding film theory preoccupation with such issues[3] rather than on performance theory, the past neglect of this topic is understandable.

Furthermore, allowing for the ephemeral and sometimes unpredictable nature of performance (relying as it does on the individual psychology of different actors and directors), the creation of performance is a very difficult topic to discuss in terms of absolutes. James Naremore, a writer well versed in the field, acknowledges this specific problem in his key work *Acting in the Cinema*[4] and notes that there are significant conceptual problems in discussing performance in this context.[5]

The amount of carefully documented information available about both performance theory and the actor-director relationship in theatre contrasts quite sharply with the paucity of material in which film thespioprudence is discussed. This study argues that significant questions can be extrapolated about ‘film performance’ from the existing material dealing with performance methodology in theatre studies, although it is the theories of acting and directing which are

concentrated upon here. The issues and trends identified in such material are included here because they are fundamentally relevant in any discussion of both film performance and directing; in fact, some film directors surveyed in this study have a significant background in theatre directing as well.

Furthermore, I have attempted here to make an original and practical contribution to this largely ignored topic of directing film performances in Australian film. Although the existing research is very limited in nature, I have attempted to distil key issues from that research and have then tried to identify, compare and map dominant and emergent directing practice trends. The uneven amount of analysis relating to each individual director in this thesis is directly proportionate to the amount of existing material I have been able to identify, as well as what I have been able to generate from my own research, which included an original survey.

Scope and significance

In researching this thesis, I received responses from the following twenty-six feature film directors: Peter Weir, Donald Crombie, Richard Franklin, Carl Schultz, Baz Luhrmann, Rolf de Heer, George T. Miller, Mark Joffe, Stephen Wallace, John Ruane, George Whaley, Richard Wherrett, Peter Duncan, Pauline Chan, Ana Kokkinos, Shirley Barrett, James Bogle, Craig Monahan, Rowan Woods, Gerard Lee, Di Drew, Denny Lawrence, Daniel Nettheim and Michelle Warner. I conducted additional telephone interviews with George Ogilvie and Cherie Nowlan, and face-to-face interviews with Charles Chauvel's daughter, Susanne Chauvel-Carlsson, and the theatre director-teachers, Peter Kingston and Scott Alderdice.

Whilst undertaking my research, as the opportunities arose I attended highly relevant, intensive acting workshops with George Whaley, Cicely Berry and Nick Lathouris. As a result of an invitation which was issued in response to my survey, I also observed in rehearsal Michael Gow, the director of the Queensland Theatre Company (QTC). This added to my contextual understanding of this field, however, due to the length constraints which applied to this project I was unable to include any detailed analysis of these processes. While my survey is discussed in greater detail in the following section, my key survey questions are set out in *Appendix one*. Some of the respondents provided information in considerable detail, while others gave only brief responses. Accordingly, as noted, the extent of my discussion on each director differs dramatically in length. In some cases, I only had enough material to assess the directors' approaches in a cursory fashion.

A certain amount of the extant discourse regarding directing methodology, because of its complexity, is somewhat inaccessible to those outside the acting and directing fields. In order

to make this analysis of the directors' approaches more generally accessible, I have therefore included two tables in order to assist readers of this dissertation. Table A at the end of Chapter Three breaks down the elements of the methodologies discussed. Table B at the end of Chapter Five summarizes the directors' survey responses. Table A is intended to act as a prompt for the reader when assessing each director's practice by reference to each methodology, while Table B reflects the level of information provided in each director's response.

I originally approached fifty-two Australian film directors for assistance with this project. Twenty-six responded to my request: twenty-two by completing the survey on which I have based my findings, one (Peter Weir) by declining to complete the survey but, nevertheless, briefly summarizing his response by letter, two (Cherie Nowlan and George Ogilvie) by offering telephone interviews and one, (Richard Wherrett) by referring me to his recent autobiography for the relevant answers to my questions. For an elite[6] survey of this type, this response rate of fifty percent arguably is a good result. Some directors specifically advised that they were unable to assist due to filming or other work commitments. This included Bruce Beresford, Nadia Tass, Fred Schepisi, Gillian Armstrong, Jane Campion, Scott Hicks, Gregor Jordan, Phil Noyce, and Steve Jodrell. (The other directors I was unfortunately unable to access were John Duigan, George Miller, Chris Noonan, Alex Proyas, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Bill Bennett, Bob Ellis, Tim Burstall, David Caesar, Rachel Perkins, Ken Cameron, Emma-Kate Croghan, Stavros Efthymiou, Michael Jenkins, Samantha Lang, Alexi Vellis and Kate Woods.)

It is my contention that this thesis will contribute original research to the largely unexplored field of film performance theory and practice in an Australian context. Previously undocumented information about the way a number of both eminent and emergent Australian film directors work with actors is recorded here in significant detail. This thesis analyses this information and then highlights the links between key methodologies as practised by a wide-ranging selection of Australian filmmakers.

When one considers the actual number of feature films which have been made by Australia's better known directors, it is clear that most Australian filmmakers will only ever be able to make a limited number of feature films during their directing lifetimes. This is arguably largely due to the limited size of the Australian film industry, although even internationally regarded directors also often tend to be years between major projects. For example, the AFI-award-winning director, Ray Lawrence, has only made two feature films over some sixteen years, *Bliss* (1985) and *Lantana* (2001), while Peter Weir has only made thirteen feature films over some thirty years (as listed in Chapter Five). Because it would be rare for even the most eminent of our filmmakers to be working on film projects continuously at all times, I expected that I would

receive responses from a wide-ranging group of directors, including both working directors and those between projects, as indeed proved to be the case.

If this study serves its intended purpose and is accessed by trainee and emergent filmmakers, thereby enlarging their understanding of aspects of best practice when directing actors for film, then it has the potential to be an important contribution to the thespioprudence and development of directing praxis for the student filmmaker.

Research methodology

In this thesis, I have set out to explore a relatively uncharted research field by reference to previously disparate resources available about both established and emergent Australian film directors. I have sought to identify the performance matrix for film acting and perceived patterns of effectiveness[7] within that performance matrix, as negotiated by Australian film directors when directing film actors for performance.

While investigating the socially constructed nature of this director-actor relationship, I have attempted to organise my findings clearly and succinctly in the hope that they would make the otherwise often obscure directing-for-performance process "real and understandable."[8] Because the primary way that certain qualitative researchers investigate such a process is "through the experience of the individual people…(who) carry out the process,"[9] this undertaking, of necessity, required me to engage in dialogue with film directors who were (and are) performing some of the very activities I wanted to analyse and assess. In the tradition of the 'bricoleur',[10] I decided to engage a variety of research strategies, in the form of a rather complex yet complementary triangulation method, in order to more fully cover the field. For instance, I wanted to conduct narrative interviews and surveys, observe rehearsals if possible, reflect upon my own acting experience and refer to visual texts and relevant documentation while conducting my investigation. I specifically adopted a largely qualitative approach to my research given that it allows a certain openness to enquiry,[11] crosses over disciplines and readily accommodates a wide variety of research strategies of this type.[12]

Researching performance methodology in the Australian film industry poses a number of specific problems because of the complex connections between the social, cultural, aesthetic and psychological aspects of performance practice. This swirling nature of performance culture, where emotion and intellect intersect, is ill-suited to purely positivist and quantitative analysis. Therefore the qualitative methodology I adopted could be termed an interpretive, utilization-focussed approach. As is the practice in interpretive research, I set out to try to identify and assess what a variety of individual directors actually do with a view to understanding their

practice in a theoretical framework,[13] and I expected that valuable aspects of best practice in film directing could be extrapolated from this information. My findings will be utility-focussed, in that they are specifically targeted to assist new and emerging film directors.

In designing my survey, I considered the need for "total survey design"[14] and took account of the fact that it was important to be wary of my own epistemological and ontological assumptions about film performance and directing. Given that in the body of my thesis I specifically set out to try to explain in plain English notions of performance theory, which I myself have found to be often poorly explained and confusing, I came to the project looking for answers rather than with fixed ideas about what I would find. I decided to use a survey as my primary tool because surveys are excellent vehicles for obtaining systematic, representative and reliable factual and attitudinal information.[15]

The one area in which I did have a specific personal interest concerned the influence of genre on directors' and actors' work in terms of performance. I fully expected that it would be one of the critical issues for directors and I included two questions about this in my long form survey (questions 24 and 25). Surprisingly, I did not receive sufficient feedback to be able to draw any conclusions about this issue. Only two respondents, indicated they regarded it as a key factor in how they worked with actors on performance while another six agreed that it was a relevant factor.

One key founder of performance theory, Constantin Stanislavski, arguably adopted an empiricist approach to the way in which he documented his understanding of acting methodology in theatre. He meticulously documented facts about his acting company and their practices based on systematic personal observation. He moved beyond mere positivism, however, in that his observations were also qualitative in nature and were based on his close working relationship with his actors at The Moscow Arts Theatre. Furthermore, his work was influenced by many of his own subjective views on arts practice, given his own experience as an actor.[16]

Following Stanislavski, to an extent, my overall interpretative approach is influenced by some aspects of the paradigms of positivism and critical realism, in that I have deliberately documented facts about each director's working practice and have then tried to challenge critically certain of those assertions.[17] I have constantly engaged with my data, asking the question 'Is there a verifiable pattern in how directors work and how can it be explained?' Such a mix of approaches is common in researching communications and related fields.[18] Rather than simply trying to isolate aspects of cause and effect between directing and performance, I have tried to interpret how the individual film directors have framed their own methodologies and

how they express these understandings, considering layers of meaning contained in their comments.[19] I have drawn extensively on the comments made by directors in the survey I carried out specifically for the purposes of this dissertation.

In undertaking the research, I relied upon commonly used questioning strategies, including both open-ended and closed questioning strategies. My survey was a structured survey, but included open-ended questions to enable the directors to provide me with additional information where possible. I tried to avoid compound questions[20] and included some neutral non-leading questions in order to avoid suggesting particular responses.[21] In preparing my questionnaire, I considered the importance of standardization and the importance of framing and ordering questions so as not to set an agenda and guide responses. Whilst aware that survey error is more likely to be linked to the collection process than the survey itself,[22] I was cognisant that survey errors occur in a range of situations, including when the participants misunderstand questions, when a survey requires answers which are outside the participant's knowledge or accurate recall, when participants do not wish to answer questions accurately, or when the person carrying out the survey somehow causes bias in the way the question is worded or placed.[23] I was also cognisant that each participant's goals for answering a survey can vary greatly and can affect the response provided.[24] There is also always a risk that the person one approaches may not even be the actual person to complete the survey.[25] Considering the reputations of the directors assessed for this study, I did not consider that this was a likely risk.

Although I am aware of the difficulties with survey response rates,[26] I viewed a survey as the most appropriate way to contact directors as one expects that feature film directors, because of the demands on their time, might be more willing to respond to a survey rather than spend their limited time in an interview. From a cost point of view, given distance issues, the survey was the most accessible way for me to canvass directors for information on this topic. Furthermore, the participants did not need to complete the survey at a specific time and could give thought to answering the questions that I asked. It also allowed me to approach more people than I would otherwise reasonably have been able to approach for interviews. Moreover, I was able to ensure that each participant had the same background information about the purpose of the interviews and that they received questions in the same order, which is one way to try to standarize participation in surveys.[27] Interviewer effect was thus removed and the process was less confronting than is sometimes the case with direct interviewing.[28] While ideally I would have liked to also interview actors about their experiences of working with directors, the parameters of a masters project prevented my undertaking this additional activity.

Because survey construction is such a critical task, I read widely in the relevant field in an attempt to ensure that my survey investigated appropriate matters. Ultimately, I specifically

modelled my survey on a relevant study carried out by the American film director Tay Garnett,[29] a prolific Hollywood director, perhaps best known for his film *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946). *(See Appendix two).* As recommended in much of the literature on surveys,[30] I did a modest pilot survey before sending it. I initially tested it on Scott Alderdice (an acting teacher at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ)) together with one of his former students, actor Kelli Jones, and I refined my survey according to some of the relevant feedback. I then provided both a long and a short form survey *(see Appendices one A and B)* to the target directors in the hope that, if they did not have the time to respond more comprehensively, they might at least return the short form summary. The majority of directors responded only with the short form survey, which appears to have suited them as a matter of convenience. (Copies of all original survey responses are available for confirmation purposes). Despite the tendency with surveys for a poor return rate, the relatively strong response rate, is arguably due to the fact that I enclosed a detailed covering letter explaining my research and guaranteeing the use of the survey solely for my thesis (see *Appendix three A*). I also provided self-addressed stamped envelopes ready for use. At the time I began this project, the requirements relating to the ethical clearance of surveys were in a state of flux. I have since been advised that, on the basis of my 'informed consent letter', the project would nevertheless have been approved. (see *Appendix three B*).

Conscious that the craft of acting has changed enormously throughout history, I have drawn upon key phases of development in performance style and theory, while to a smaller degree, linking certain mechanisms producing relevant observable events (for example, performances and rehearsal activities) with the systems of meaning adopted by the particular directors. Although individual directors might not always consciously or objectively identify what is being revealed in their responses, I would argue that certain unstated assumptions about acting are evidenced by the survey responses and other interview material.

Analysis of both the responses provided by the relevant directors and other writings about their work suggests that film directors are continually constructing and reconstructing the framework for their directing projects, particularly in the case of long-practising directors. I have tried to assess how the various directors make sense of their own arts practice and have drawn explanatory conclusions from their statements.[31] In reaching my conclusions, I have to a very limited extent adopted a quantitative approach by considering, by way of content analysis, the prevalence of various directors' reliance on Stanislavskian notions. I have used this approach to assess the extent of a pattern of Stanislavskian influence on Australian directing culture.

Reflections on the research: limitations and possibilities

Because Australian film directors have not written extensively about the way they work with actors, it was not possible to undertake a textual or major content analysis approach to this research. I have not been able to locate any other similar surveys with such directors. So few relevant interviews have been carried out on this topic that I was unable to find much supporting material at all. Similarly, because of the sheer logistical difficulties associated with trying to contact the relevant film directors, particularly because the majority live interstate, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews, nor was it possible to undertake focus group research.

My research options were therefore restricted to what I could reasonably undertake: surveys, some interviews, reference to other relevant documents and limited observation activities. I have drawn briefly from the field of autoethnography in that I have reflected constantly whilst writing this dissertation on how my own experience of performance connects with the insights about Australian film directing culture[32] which have been revealed to me through my research.

Given the subject matter of this dissertation, the interrogation strategies[33] of surveys and interviews were the most obvious and important strategies to use in order to obtain the most critical information. While it would have been helpful to interview Australian film actors as well, this was simply not feasible. In order to contain the project, I limited my sampling process of film directors to feature film directors with at least one significant feature film credit (the exception being one new filmmaker). There are obvious difficulties associated with surveying only a proportion of the many film directors whose work would have been relevant to this project and I am well aware that there are major limitations to my methodology. Nevertheless, I have undertaken this original work in an attempt to add something of pragmatic value to the field of film acting studies.

The directors' surveys, which are in many ways qualitative in nature, were my primary data source. Part of my argument is based on what would be termed 'circumstantial evidence,' as I have also drawn certain conclusions on the basis of what a number of directors have said and done in other contexts, particularly in relevant interviews. This was important because some of the directors I most wanted to include did not respond to my survey, yet avoiding any discussion of their influential work seemed untenable.

Baz Luhrmann's assistant contacted me to advise that he preferred me to ask more specific questions, so I refined my questions to him based on my readings about his work. Only one respondent (who nevertheless completed the survey) made the comment that such surveys seem somewhat futile. At least five of the respondents, Richard Franklin, Di Drew, Shirley Barrett, George Whaley and Gerard Lee indicated their own significant interest in my research.

Like surveying, interviewing as a method of enquiry is universal in the social sciences.[34] While informal face-to-face and telephone interviews may have provided more organic and revealing interviews and deeper insights,[35] it was logistically impossible for me to organise mass "elite"[36] interviews given the difficulties contacting the relevant directors, all of whom reside in other states and are generally contactable only via their agents. With the two directors who responded to my survey approach by offering to do phone interviews, Cherie Nowlan and George Ogilvie, I still conducted their interviews by working through most of the survey questions. Because of the generous way in which they responded, both interviews did expand to be rather more like purposeful conversations.[37] Within the scope of this study, my survey was never intended to be quantitative in nature, so the qualitative component of the interviews did not skew the other results of the survey. Indeed, given the engaging nature of both interviews, these directors provided much more insightful information than was provided in the majority of surveys. The exception was Donald Crombie's lengthy and expansive written response to my survey.

Writings on research methodology suggest that while writing out questions is useful when interviewing, it is also appropriate not to standardize questions when one is undertaking "exploratory research"[38] as was the case here. I compromised by using my survey questions as a guide but responded 'extempore' during the interviews in order to probe more meaningfully where possible. Given my significant experience of interviewing clients in my regular work over fifteen years as a lawyer, I felt particularly confident of my ability to interview effectively. I was able to prepare fully for each interview, articulate the purpose of each interview clearly and develop rapport and trust in the interview situation very quickly.[39] My own experience of training at NIDA appeared to engender an environment of mutual respect in my interviews with George Ogilvie and Peter Kingston. My goal was to achieve a rapport of "warm professionalism",[40] (the ideal in interviewing) and I tried to be aware throughout the process of the importance of clarity and sequences in questioning and of the need to limit bias.[41] I felt that the fact that I had 'road-tested' my survey questions in a preliminary interview with Scott Alderdice assisted me to do this. On a few occasions during these interviews, I did offer a personal comment, but only where I felt that the circumstances were appropriate. I was aware that sharing a relevant experience in these circumstances, preferably in a captivating and novel fashion, can sometimes encourage a participant to reveal himself or herself more fully.[42] Although I was able to conduct only a few interviews, the material I obtained from them added valuable dimensions to the overall body of my dissertation.

I forwarded a copy of my typed records of interview to each relevant person to provide an opportunity for correction if required. Two interviewees, Susanne Chauvel Carlsson and Peter Kingston, responded by suggesting some alterations, which I promptly included in the final transcripts as attached in *Appendix four*.

Chapter Outlines

My thesis is set out according to the following chapter structure:
This chapter introduces the notion of 'thespioprudence', contains an overview of my chosen topic and explains the research methodology used. The limitations and scope of the study are noted. Chapter one also contains a brief explanation of my experience relating to my chosen research field and attempts to justify my choice of study area as one that has not been extensively explored.

Chapter Two contains a critical review of a significant number of primary writings and the associated literature in this field. This chapter also links the key writings to the arguments in this dissertation.

Chapter Three is titled "Directors and the Actor's Language". It explains key background topics including the history of the role of the director and the craft of acting as understood in mainstream Western acting. An understanding of the role of director is important because the way in which the director has developed has shaped the way directors negotiate meaning with actors. Particular attention is given to the acting theories of key figures, Constantin Stanislavski and David Mamet. The conflicting aspects of their two acting systems are discussed in some detail because I contend that variations on both of these systems figure prominently in Australian performance practice. Table A at the end of the chapter summarizes the relevant elements of each methodology.

Chapter Four expands into an explanation and assessment of the different approaches to directing actors, which are employed by a number of directors. To the limited extent possible, this chapter assesses the continuity and influence of the various directors upon their successors and colleagues in the directing industry, and is structured around key research questions including: How does training influence practice? What course of action does a director take when he/she has an ensemble of actors with different backgrounds and different methodologies or no training whatsoever? What rehearsal and filming practices dominate the way directors work with actors? I have attempted to classify the key approaches used by Australian film directors when working with actors on performance.

The director's own statements as revealed through their surveys conducted for this study are set out in some detail and the chapter is divided generally into three sections corresponding with the key questions considered. Each section is then internally divided into three parts, the first part dealing with key pioneer directors, the second part dealing with the New Wave directors and the

third part considering a range of contemporary directors of the Australian film industry. (The directors discussed have at least one feature film credit.) The chapter synthesizes and elaborates upon the information contained in the survey responses.

Chapter Five contains an analysis of the various directors' approaches and summarises my conclusions. Table B breaks down the elements of each director's working method.

In the following chapter, in accordance with the main purpose of a literature review, I have attempted to 'tease out' the threads linking past research and records with current relevant practice issues, with a view to identifying credible clarifications of directing methodologies.[46] This literature review is essentially both a map of trends in film directing for performance (and related practices), and a chronology of key writings in this field of thespioprudence.

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[46] Krathwohl. op. cit., p. 101.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

With a view to advancing the study of thespioprudence, this chapter provides a search of the available relevant literature on film acting and directing for commonalities in various directors working methods, in order to identify and reconstruct their meanings in social scientific language.[1] The dimensions I have identified will build on the existing body of knowledge about directing for performance in Australian film, key aspects of which are discussed in this literature review.

It must be noted at the outset, that relevant literature in the area of film performance is largely contained in two main clusters: firstly, the commentaries by experts in the field (most notably directors and actors), based on their own experiences; and secondly, in theoretical writings that seek to analyse particular aspects of filmmaking. When these latter works deal with performance issues, they typically deal with the topic in only a cursory fashion. One exception is James Naremore's seminal text *Acting in the Cinema*,[2] which contains highly theoretical discourse. Other related works, such as Patrick Tucker's *Secrets of Screen Acting*,[3] only treat in detail the technical aspects of film performance, not directorial methodology. Significant literature in the area of film performance in Australian film is even more limited, with interviews being the most prevalent source of published information.

The structuring of this review is problematic in that the existing research is so disparate in nature. Ultimately, the most practical solution is to structure the content of this chapter according to the occupation of the commentators. The clustered commentaries begin with works by and about influential theatre directors and acting teachers. This seemed an appropriate starting point, because the bulk of the discussions about performance methodology has grown out of acting studies, specifically in the theatre. Influential and relevant film directors are then discussed, starting with the key Russian filmmaker, Vsevolod Pudovkin. Tay Garnett, the Hollywood director who collated the first significant critical interviews on film directing, is featured because of the significance of his contribution in recording directors' working practices. Similarly, the modern English director Mike Leigh is specifically discussed because of his contribution to the development of improvisational film directing techniques. Literature (including video material) recording the directing practices of the Australian New Wave and more contemporary Australian filmmakers is then considered, and the review finishes by considering commentaries by certain actors and critics. At all stages I have tried to include in this review significant material that informs the main thrust of

the thesis: the methodologies employed by film directors in relation to directing actors' performances.

Theatre directors and acting teachers

As noted, much acting practice evolved in theatre circles before transferring into film practice. Hence there are a number of theatre directors and acting teachers whose ideas are critical background reading, particularly the actor-director-teachers Constantin Stanislavki and David Mamet, who will be discussed further in Chapter Three of this study. While Stanislavski's ideas formed the foundation for much of twentieth century acting practice, a major tension has developed between Stanislavski's system and a more contemporary American-based acting approach most commonly associated with David Mamet. Accordingly, the original works by Stanislavski (specifically, *An Actor Prepares*,[4] *Building a Character*[5] and *Creating a Role*[6]) and Mamet (*True and False*[7] and *A Whore's Profession*[8]) are core sources of information about their respective acting methodologies. The teachings and commentaries of their colleagues and related practitioners are also important primary resources.

Stanislavski's key works set out his findings and observations on performance, specifically his observations of working actors from the Russian theatre of his day.[9] These works do need to be read, however, in the light of more recent research reconsidering the accuracy of the early translations of Stanislavski's works. Stanislavski sought an inner truth in the emotions and feelings of the character as played by the actor, particularly through imaginative and motivated action, as detailed in his first text. In particular he argued that the actor must identify the character's goals and objectives, and work towards the character's overall or super objective as revealed in the play, by playing motivated actions and overcoming obstacles in the character's path. His related ideas about how the actor develops disciplined vocal and physical technique are then revealed in *Building a Character*. He believed that external form and physical detail were an "integral part of character, tied to motivation, action, and emotion."[10] His other writings deal with notions of aesthetics and craft. In order to understand two other acting methodologies, method acting and practical aesthetics, one must first understand Stanislavski's system.

American theatre directors like Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg went on to develop Stanislavski's ideas into what is now generally known as "method acting", an approach which draws intimately upon the individual actor's most profound personal emotions and experiences. Their work also must be considered if one is to understand the points of departure from Stanislavski's work in their approaches. While numerous commentaries on their approaches exist,

their personal writings and interviews, for example Clurman's *On Directing*[11] and Strasberg's *Strasberg on Acting*[12] are excellent starting points. In these works, each of these director-teachers describe systematically and in great detail, their thespioprudence, including the intense and psychologically-based processes employed in their respective practices. Strasberg was concerned with making performance "real" – from what is going on in the mind.[13] Clurman, through discussion and rehearsal tried to "stir the actors to a greater awareness of character traits"[14] and an understanding of options for motivations and consequences of actions. All his techniques were designed to lure and awaken the actor's subconscious.[15]

Another key figure in the early development of a more contemporary and alternative approach to Stanislavski's system, which came to be known as "practical aesthetics", was David Mamet's acting teacher, Sanford Meisner. A detailed account of his acting teaching claims that "the foundation of acting is the reality of doing."[16] Meisner acknowledged that an actor should "not do anything unless something happens to make you do it."[17] He argued that an actor's response must depend on another actor's action towards her/him. Performance in this sense was for him truthful and instinctive response in action. Of critical importance in this approach is the need for the actors to make specific their individual objectives and actions. Meisner acknowledged the work of Stanislavski and his associates as having had a profound influence on this work. He was careful to note that some of Stanislavski's ideas, such as "emotional memory", were ideas which Stanislavski himself later jettisoned after years of further investigation into the creative process of acting.[18] (Emotional memory refers to a process whereby an actor tries to recall a memory, focussing on the circumstances of the former experience, with a view to triggering the relevant emotional state experienced at the time of the original event for use in the current acting moment, a notion which was seized upon by other colleagues of Meisner's like Strasberg.)

Meisner adapted and used the Stanislavskian concepts of the character's "given circumstances", a practice whereby the actor explores the character's life circumstances in great detail in a search to unlock the character's motivations, and the "as if,"[19] a practice of 'particularisation' where the actor aligns personal responses to character situations. However, Meisner considered that his own system was very different. Given that 'practical aesthetics' is taught as one alternative acting methodology in Australia at NIDA, (the National Institute of Dramatic Art), as well as in other acting institutions, and is embedded in directing discourse (as revealed in this study's surveys, see Chapters Four and Five), an understanding of Meisner's approach is important, specifically as revealed in the work of his former student, David Mamet.

A very successful contemporary American film and theatre director and actor, David Mamet discusses his work with actors in his key writings, presenting in great detail his highly individual perspective on acting. Although much of his discussion relates to stage acting, he makes it clear that his key opinions also apply to film performance.[20] Attacking a great number of notions which have become commonplace in acting courses, he vigorously disputes any notion that the actor can become the character. The only Stanislavskian notion Mamet commends is the use of the "as if" approach because he considers other practices are superfluous to the core task. When the actors work through the 'as if' thought process, reminding themselves of experiences "something like"[21] what is happening in the text, it is a way to clarify and invest in the playing of the chosen actions. Mamet is adamant that it is only what one actor wants to do to the other actor that interests the audience. This involves each actor pursuing an objective in an attempt to get what he or she wants from the other actor, a process that he claims dramatically reduces rehearsal time. He argues that, overall, acting is like sport, a physical event, more akin to dance and singing than intellectual pursuits.[22]

Mamet's theories are best understood when read in conjunction with books like *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*,[23] a manual that grew out of the work of an ensemble called the Practical Aesthetics Workshop. This handbook explains the approach used by David Mamet and the members of the Atlantic Theatre Company who helped to develop practical aesthetics. The authors identify the actors' challenges and focus on ways an actor can seek to achieve truth in their performances. All the actions they choose to play must be related to what the characters want from each other, and their wants must clearly relate to the meaning of the scene as revealed in the script. Great attention is given to explaining how this technique might work through the actor's analysis of the scene and consequential physical adjustments made to play the character. The actor is specifically cautioned against trying to manipulate the emotional life of the character. Instead, the actor is advised that "every action will give rise to an emotional condition; (so) you won't have to work for it."[24] Because the techniques adopted in practical aesthetics are often confusing when discussed in isolation, and ostensibly are learned experientially, this handbook is extremely valuable because of the way it systematically explains the process.

The prolific acting teachers, Robert Cohen (Professor of Drama at University of California) and Eric Morris (the founder of the American New Theater), have had a significant influence in America (and through international workshops) on the teaching of acting and film acting. Eric Morris used Method-based notions to evolve an approach that is focussed on exploring and developing individual talent and truthful performance.[25] He has written extensively on the topic in his books *No Acting Please*,[26] *Being and Doing*[27], *Irreverent Acting*,[28] *Acting from the Ultimate*

Consciousness[29] and *Acting, Imagining and The Unconscious.*[30] Robert Cohen, on the other hand, utilizes the notion of interactive pursuit of goals and his focus is on "immediacy of action" and "the precise point where structured language meets unconscious emotion."[31] These ideas are explored in his books *Acting Professionally*[32], and *Advanced Acting: Style, Character and Performance*[33] and *Acting One*[34].

There are numerous other texts that trace the work of relevant teachers and directors. The most telling accounts seem to be the personal ones quoting intensely from actual workshops by people like Michael Chekhov,[35] Vasili Toporkov,[36] Richard Boleslavsky,[37] Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler[38] and Elia Kazan,[39] to name a few. While it is not feasible to consider all such works in detail, they do help to provide a general understanding about particular methods of acting, which have, in turn, influenced subsequent generations of filmmakers, both directly and indirectly. This has occurred because the essence of the craft of acting arguably is the pursuit of truth, irrespective of the medium in which it occurs. What in fact changes across mediums from theatre to film are the techniques used to accommodate the distance between actor and audience.

Commentaries by and about filmmakers

One of the earliest writers specifically focussing on film acting was the pioneering film director, V. I. Pudovkin.[40] He stresses that one of the fundamental aspects of film acting, as compared to theatre acting, where voice and gesture must be bold enough to reach the back of the theatre, is that the camera can capture the slightest nuance in intimate performances. Although perhaps self-evident on one level, this notion is constantly repeated in the literature about film acting. In describing his ideas about film acting, Pudovkin states that it is best to "consider those aspects of the actor's work common to both film and stage, and therefore inescapable in either."[41] He discusses in great detail what he sees as the common goal of the actor in each medium: a goal which might be described as the truthful and organic creation of parts. He further acknowledges the value of ensemble-based rehearsal. Pudovkin's writings, although very dated, are fundamental background reading for this aspect of directing because they introduce many of the core notions discussed by subsequent filmmakers. Furthermore, Pudovkin was one of the very few directors of his era who documented in detail his ideas on film directing with a focus on acting.

While there are many directors who fall between Pudovkin's era and the modern Western cinema, records of their directing methodologies in relation to acting are generally not extensive. Few add specifically to the body of work targeted in this review.

Moving forward to the Hollywood cinema, Tay Garnett's *Directing - Learn from the Masters*[42] documents what forty internationally renowned feature film directors have done (and do) in order to draw performance from actors. This work is so central to my research field that I deliberately adapted certain questions from Garnett's survey for my own, such as his questions about: the existence of 'technical' as opposed to 'instinctive' actors, casting processes, as well as questions on rehearsals and use of improvisation.[43]

Garnett's subjects placed only partial importance on whether or not actors had formal training. The majority of his interviewees favoured "instinctive" actors because of the surprises such actors can bring to a role. Some made the point that instinctive actors, through experience, also develop technique and thus bring both skill and creativity to their work.

Almost invariably, the directors interviewed agreed that good casting is vital to a film's success, many arguing that at least half their successes were achieved through strong casting. The majority of the directors did not simply rely on casting directors and most were integrally involved in the casting of all the parts, both major and minor. Many of the directors seemed to be looking for a type of face when casting. Few directors in his study placed vital importance on long periods of rehearsal, except where a scene involved enormous complexity and choreography, most preferring to rehearse either the day before the shoot or on the day of the shoot. Garnett's recording of such a broad range of film directing practices is the most significant work informing this dissertation and a copy of Garnett's questionnaire is attached and marked *Appendix Three*.

Much of the discussion of acting in the classical Hollywood cinema has focussed on "Method" acting. Elia Kazan, like a number of other Method practitioners, has certainly discussed his thespioprudence and application of the method on many occasions, from his interview in Garnett's book, through to his autobiography.[44] The directorial approaches of other directors like Edward Dymtryk[45] and John Cassavetes[46] through to Ridley Scott and Steven Spielberg[47] have also been documented, both in specific personal accounts and other commentaries. The seminal text by Cole and Chinoy, *Directors on Directing*,[48] contains some extensive, though dated, ideas about various directors' directing methodologies, but is a useful starting point for any study on directing method. More typically one finds that fundamental ideas held by directors, especially contemporary directors, are revealed in a haphazard fashion through their often quite limited comments across a number of interviews. For example, in *Directors Close-Up*, Steven Spielberg says,

> I used a very unfortunate word which is often misunderstood. In an earlier response where I said I was like a "method" director. And people say, "Ooh, the 'method.' What a horrible Stanislavsky term that is." That simply means that you let the environment and you let the circumstances around

> you and you let the immediate moment inspire you. You look for the inspiration. You look for all the mojos.[49]

Regrettably, Spielberg does not go on to discuss this issue in any further detail. It is this kind of one-off comment, which makes collecting information on individual director's approaches very difficult. This, in turn, makes identifying directing paradigms a complicated activity.

Given that improvisation is another key working method signalled by some Australian film directors surveyed in this study, Mike Leigh's very influential and individual practice is highly significant here. Leigh, an English director, develops his films working with small groups of actors, relying upon improvisation and building the scripts during months of rehearsal. Descriptions by Ray Carney and Leonard Quart[50] about Leigh's iconoclastic workshopping practice are most revealing, providing essential insights into what Australian film directors might mean when they talk about having been influenced by his ethos. Leigh's ensemble-based work is dedicated towards capturing the uniqueness and variety of human behaviour through a painstaking series of activities designed to create complex psychologically-motivated characters. Leigh starts with the actors making lists of people they know; then through discussion and the writing of back-stories actors move into improvisation and invention to create character behaviours and values. This process may take three to five months on some projects.[51]

Australian film directors

In recent published interviews, Peter Weir, Scott Hicks[52] and Mel Gibson[53] discuss aspects of the way they negotiate meaning with actors. Of particular interest are Gibson's comments about what he learned from other directors, such as Peter Weir, George Miller and Gillian Armstrong, when working as an actor himself. In a recent interview for a documentary on NIDA,[54] Gibson made other illuminating comments about his approach to casting and working with actors. Because of my inability to survey him directly, such material was a valuable source of primary information about Gibson's working methods. Peter Weir's and Mel Gibson's influence on other actors and directors made it critical to my research to include information about their directing processes. The same principle applies to my commentary in this chapter on the works of eminent Australian filmmakers Gillian Armstrong, Fred Schepisi, George Miller and Bruce Beresford.

The Australian Film, Television and Radio School filmmaker series of video interviews with Gillian Armstrong, Peter Weir, and Fred Schepisi, though dated, briefly touches upon aspects of the directors' early casting processes. Such a lack of detailed records of their early directing activities and thespioprudence makes it difficult to chart the evolution of their directing methodologies on

such matters. In Michael Caulfield's contribution to the series,[55] a number of the (then) young directors discuss their approaches to directing. The program documents a number of creative techniques used by other working directors such as Phil Noyce, George Miller and George Ogilvie when they collaborated on *The Dismissal* mini-series. Caulfield stresses the importance of the director and the actors reaching agreement about characterisation and about the central issues of concern in the film. This early training video stresses that the director-actor relationship involves a great deal of sensitive communication and negotiation. This idea is constantly repeated in the literature about film directing.

Sue Matthew's *35 MM Dreams*[56] is one of the few published collections of interviews with 1970s New Wave directors: Fred Schepisi, Peter Weir, Gillian Armstrong, George Miller and John Duigan. While the directors focus on their lives and their filmmaking generally, nearly all of them make some revealing comments about aspects of their casting and rehearsal process. (The specific relevance of these interviews will be elaborated further in Chapter Four of this study, where individual directors are discussed.) Unfortunately, these interviews were published in 1983, and the directors have developed their careers considerably since that time. It is therefore difficult to know to what extent each director's ideas have since evolved. While Fred Schepisi's pre-1992 work and experience has been the subject of a documentary, there is very little detailed commentary about his ongoing work with actors. The same limitation applies to George Miller and John Duigan.

In a relatively recent text, Julie James Bailey[57] interviews successful women working across the film industry in key creative and technical roles, including Gillian Armstrong. Although Armstrong states that she wanted to go to the AFTRS to "learn about working with actors", she actually says nothing about her work with actors from a performance standpoint. Fortunately, in *Second Take, Australian Film-makers Talk*,[58] she finally discusses in considerable detail practical aspects of her rehearsal process, providing extremely valuable information on her approach to the directing of actors, which is dedicated to creating relationships and motivated behaviours. (Her work is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.)

Adam McAuley's collection of interviews with Australian stage and screen directors similarly contains fresh commentary from other directors relevant to this analysis including Kate Woods, Michael Jenkins, Nick Lathouris, Bruce Beresford and Di Drew.[59] This is the most significant collection of interviews with Australian directors since Sue Matthew's 1983 collection of interviews previously discussed. Together with the film directors mentioned, eminent theatre directors like Michael Gow, Gale Edwards, Aubrey Mellor and John Bell are also interviewed. What is particularly significant across all the interviews is that while some directors identify more closely

with specific acting methods, they all appear to adopt diverse ideas about approaches to acting, and in turn, directing. Although they all acknowledge the importance of actor training institutions in terms of how this influences Australian acting, and therefore directing culture, many consider that institutional training is just one of many paths for actor training.

Jane Campion is one director who has been widely interviewed. Regrettably, as with some other leading directors, I was unable to interview her for this project. Thus I was forced to rely on existing interview material in my attempt to assess her directing methodology. In Virginia Wexman's 1999 collection of Jane Campion interviews,[60] Campion notes that her interest in the acting process was profoundly influenced by her upbringing with theatre actor-director parents. She stresses her need to allow actors to bring their own vision and suggestions to the characters and rehearsals, the final form of which can then be negotiated. She does not, however, discuss in detail any of her more specific technical work with actors. Even in the documentary about her work on *Portrait of a Lady*,[61] she does not really discuss this issue. Although she has been interviewed many times, there is a surprising dearth of revealing material regarding the detail of how she directly engages with actors on performance.

In sharp comparison, and despite being renowned for his preference not to analyse the work he does with actors, Peter Weir frequently does tend to discuss in some detail his techniques for directing actors, claiming that he opts for an instinctive approach to the process. In almost every significant interview he has given, Weir typically refers to aspects of his rehearsal and filmmaking process that demonstrate his techniques for directing actors. An example of this is contained in Nancy Griffin's coverage of how Weir developed the ensemble approach that enabled improvisation to be used to great effect in *Dead Poets Society*.[62] Furthermore, when interviewed by Paul Kalina,[63] Weir discusses his improvisation techniques adopted on the set of *The Truman Show*, techniques which were designed to help the actors further define and explore their characters. His willingness to both rehearse his actors in unconventional ways and to explore instinctive and psychologically-based ways of working makes him a critical figure in this study on thespioprudence.

Numerous *Cinema Papers* interviews with other significant Australian directors such as George Ogilvie, Baz Luhrmann, Bill Bennett, Stephen Wallace and George Miller include minor references only to specific techniques adopted by the directors in various projects. Some of these techniques include rehearsal activities like improvisation. For example, in Bill Bennett's *Kiss or Kill (1997)*, the actors had enormous freedom to improvise lines on the basis of a scripted outline.[64]

Commentaries by and about actors

While a number of Australian actors have been interviewed and have written about their acting techniques, this material is often disconnected from any discourse about how directors have worked with actors to achieve performance levels. Nevertheless, such commentaries still point to the influence of relevant performance theories upon the working practices of certain Australian actors.

For instance, Henry Szeps,[65] is one of the few Australian actors to have written about applying acting techniques. His assessment is written from an actor's point of view and arguably is more an outline of what actors do (and possibly what they seek from directors) rather than an indication of how directors direct actors in our industry. Szeps identifies and uses much of the individual actor's language. Given that such acting terminology (or what I have termed "the actor's language") is mentioned consistently throughout my survey responses, Szeps' work is informative preparatory reading and suggests how film and television directors might communicate more effectively with an actor.

Another accomplished actor and theatre director who has documented her ideas on acting methodology is Dorothy Thompson of Melbourne's New Theatre. She carefully documents[66] her own understanding of the Stanislavskian approach (an internal and external approach to acting), defining the various terms associated with his work, such as: given circumstances, objectives and actions. Pointing out that actors cannot 'act' emotions, she says:

> To sum up, the actor should try not to feel. The actor is a doer, always look for the doing word – the active verb – in which willpower is involved – this leads to the right kind of action. Emotion is the result of action. It is the product of reciprocity and interactivity between characters or within the character itself.[67]

As a core principle, Thompson claims that a director should not demonstrate when assisting an actor. In terms of working with other actors, she urges them to listen and react to each other and justify their actions so that the interaction on stage becomes clear.[68] Given the aim of this dissertation, this short and accessible book, which details a specific approach to Stanislavski in practice in Australia, is highly instructive background reading.

Perhaps the most influential actor-director-teacher relevant in this discussion in an Australian context is Hayes Gordon. He is one of the few Australian acting figures to document in detail his methodology, which is substantially 'Method-based'. Lawrence Durrant's book on Hayes Gordon,[69] together with Hayes Gordon's own writings,[70] provide an extremely detailed history of Hayes' work, which has influenced many Australian actors such as Nick Lathouris, Jack Thompson,[71] Reg Livermore and Lorraine Bailey. Gordon, a successful American actor, migrated

in the 1950s and established the Ensemble Theatre Company and training school in Sydney. His approach was firmly Method-based, having trained with Sanford Meisner and Robert Lewis of the American Group Theatre. Although his approach was all about the actor revealing the internal life of the character, he was also a proponent of skills-based training, including voice, movement, text analysis and theatre-craft training. His approach focussed on actions and the function of emotion in human interaction. Gordon aimed to "teach the actor techniques that help him/her to act truthfully rather than striving to create effects through the use of counterfeit gestures."[72] Gordon is an often-overlooked figure of the Australian acting scene yet his influence demonstrates that Method-based approaches to acting have impacted upon Australian acting culture. This is relevant in any discussion about film acting because of the 'cross over' of actors' work in Australia between theatre and film.

Other Australian actors such as Ruth Cracknell,[73] Gordon Chater,[74] Ray Barrett,[75] and June Salter,[76] have written biographies which provide some information about their personal rehearsal and performance experiences. These sorts of commentaries are also worth mentioning because they reflect aspects of other pragmatic and language-based performance methodologies of some Australian actors. In discussing work practices, they record oral history that reveals otherwise little known information about acting methodology as practised by this older generation of actors.

Similarly, in the posthumous collection of interviews and writings about his life,[77] Australian actor John Hargreaves imparts his philosophy about screen acting. Rather than acknowledging his NIDA training as the source of his film acting technique, he credits his early experience in Australian television as having equipped him to perform for the screen. Specifically, in this context, he acknowledges John Mellion's exhortation to use his eyes instead of his hands in screen performance. In essence, it seems that Hargreaves' approach was to assess the script carefully to discover the character's objectives, then in all his performances, he would fully commit to listening and thinking in response to the other characters. Such anecdotes reveal the subtle ways that arts practice is appropriated by actors, teachers and directors interchangeably.

The additional insights which can be gleaned from individual actors' accounts of their work and processes are particularly revealing, especially in the light of the globalisation of film acting. Because directors and actors often only touch on relevant performance issues in interviews and commentaries, another valuable primary source of information for this thesis comes from the commentaries of academics.

Works by critics

The American academic Richard A. Blum[78] argues that Stanislavski has been the dominant influence on American film acting. He examines why Stanislavski's ideas were absorbed by the American theatre and transformed into the acting system known as 'the Method'. After tracing the transfer of these ideas from theatre into film, Blum then attempts to analyse the Method's impact on American film, by referring to the numbers of directors and award winning actors associated with this Stanislavski heritage. This key work provides an excellent historical analysis of Stanislavski's influence in America, and presents a compelling argument for the proposition that Stanislavski's influence on American film acting has been enormous.

In writing about the Western acting worlds, the critics Alison Hodge,[79] Alan Lovell and Peter Kramer,[80] provide crucial information about the divisions which exist between the major approaches to acting and directing. Taking account of the cogent arguments in their books, there seems to be little doubt that a few key approaches, namely the Stanislavski and Method-based approaches, the action-playing based approach (practical aesthetics), and what I would call the text-based approach to performance (to be discussed in detail later), are the dominant approaches which affect industry practice taught in Western theatre schools. Improvisational practice is equally important but is generally used in conjunction with other methodologies, with some exceptions.

From another perspective, James Naremore's authoritative and novel account of film performance identifies a number of important influences in theatre history that have affected the modern approach to film acting, although he identifies significant differences between film and stage acting. A distinguishing feature of his analysis is that he assesses how actors communicate meaning through applying semiotics to acting,[81] and he discusses points that are typically neglected by other commentators. For example, he believes that the theatrical 'voice beautiful' gave way in film, not just because technical skills previously needed to fill the theatre were unnecessary in film, but because "certain types of ethnic speech…(are) romantically attractive" in film.[82] He also observes that film is not necessarily a naturalistic medium because the technical and blocking demands on actors make this impossible.

These notions are adopted also by some other critics such as Foster Hirsch[83] who argues that film acting is about adjusting scale and rhythm of performance because, unlike stage actors, film actors "do not have the luxury during performing of living through a story from beginning to end. They must emote in bits and pieces of time and often with their faces cut off from the rest of their bodies."[84]

Patrice Pavis, the eminent French academic who writes about performance methodology, noted in 1995 that the film actor's body has "barely been studied in semiology, narratology or theory of enunciation."[85] Likewise, Lovell and Kramer recently acknowledged that screen acting is elusive and therefore difficult to discuss, agreeing that it is "still a relatively undeveloped area of film scholarship."[86] They also argue that there is an "intimate relationship between theatre and film acting with performers, teachers, and ideas moving freely between the two media."[87]

Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe[88] explores in an extraordinarily detailed and scholarly fashion the historical development of different modes of acting. His work provides very informative coverage of non-western acting approaches, from Greek theatre through to modern Western and Eastern acting styles. Of particular interest is his account of the "pendulum" nature of performance style over the centuries, in which he argues performance shifts from naturalism to non-naturalistic styles in a remarkable pattern. Because it is vital to understand the different acting methodologies for the purposes of this analysis, Meyer-Dinkgrafe's account is an excellent reference.

These kinds of writings, while often discussing very specific and technical aspects of film and/or theatre acting, are beneficial background readings which better equip one to understand a much wider range of issues canvassed by directors when discussing their thespioprudence. They are essential reading in order to understand the way in which directors actually work with actors.

As already stated, an understanding of acting methodology is necessary before detailed analysis of the working approaches of the individual directors surveyed can be undertaken. The focus of this thesis is clearly on the Hollywood/Western Acting tradition, although it is acknowledged that there are numerous other approaches to acting, particularly in the Eastern acting tradition.

The following chapter contains an overview of the key acting methodologies which will be used for the analysis in Chapters Four and Five. At times, the differences between the methodologies can be difficult to grasp because of the subtle nature of the changes. For example, Stanislavski's system has been the basis for the development of the Method and Practical Aesthetics, yet it also incorporates imagination-driven activities (like improvisations) and detailed physical and vocal work on character creation and text delivery. The main acting methodologies which need to be understood for the purposes of this thesis include Stanislavski's System, Method Acting, Practical Aesthetics, Improvisation-generated performance, and Text-rooted performance where voice and language skills dominate. Some directors use a combination of approaches, taking the most useful activities and exercises from a variety of directing and acting practices. These trends will be examined in the following chapters.

[1] Norman Blaikie, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, Policy Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 96.
[2] James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988.
[3] Patrick Tucker, *Secrets of Screen Acting*, Theatre Art Books, Routledge, New York, 1994.
[4] Stanislavski, Constantin, *An Actor Prepares*, Methuen, London, 1937, reprinted 1994.
[5] Stanislavski, Constantin, *Building a Character*, Methuen, London, 1981, reprinted 1994.
[6] Stanislavski, Constantin, *Creating a Role*, Methuen, London, 1981, reprinted 1994.
[7] David Mamet, *True and False – Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, Faber and Faber, London, 1997.
[8] David Mamet, *A Whore's Profession*, Faber & Faber, London, 1994.
[9] Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski – An Introduction – The System*, Methuen, London, 1982.
[10] J. L. Crawford, C. Hurst & M. Lugering, *ACTING in Person and in Style* (4th Edition), W. C. Brown Publishers, Dububque, 1991, p. 260.
[11] Harold Clurman, *On Directing*, Macmillan, New York, 1972.
[12] Lee Strasberg, *Strasberg on Acting*, Creative Arts Television Archive, Kent, 1975.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Clurman, op. cit., p. 106.
[15] Ibid., p. 153.
[16] Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell, *Sanford Meisner on Acting*, Vintage, New York, 1987.
[17] Ibid., p. 34.
[18] Ibid., p. 79.
[19] Ibid., p. 137.
[20] David Mamet, *True and False – Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, Faber and Faber, London, 1997, pages 8,9,12,13,15,19,30,56,63,93 and 99.
[21] Ibid., p. 91.
[22] Ibid.
[23] M. Bruder, L. Cohn, M. Olnek, N. Pollack, R. Previto & S. Zigler, *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, Vermont, 1985.
[24] Ibid., p. 71.
[25] http://ericmorris.com
[26] Eric Morris & Joan Hotchkis, *No Acting Please*, Whitehouse/Spelling, New York, 1979.
[27] Eric Morris, *Being and Doing*, Emor Enterprises, LA, 1981 reprinted 1990.
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CHAPTER 3
THE CRAFT OF DIRECTING ACTORS

Introduction

If the director is to communicate with actors effectively, they must speak the same 'language of acting'. To learn this language of acting, both director and actor must understand the various relevant techniques and activities that make up the craft of acting, as explored in this chapter. This chapter elucidates in more detail than the literature review, the role of the director and how it relates to the actor's rehearsal and performance process.

I have included a table at the end of this chapter which summarizes the elements of key directing methodologies. This table is intended to be a useful cross-referencing tool for the reader when analysing the contents of Chapters Four and Five.

The emergence of the theatre director – an overview

Some knowledge of how the role of director has evolved in the West is a useful starting point for this analysis. From its beginnings in the earliest director-like role assumed by Ancient Greek poet-playwrights,[1] the formal role of the theatre director really emerged in the late nineteenth century.

The first director-driven system of rehearsals for actors occurred in Germany around 1866,[2] and over the last century, beginning with Stanislavski, the director, both in theatre and in film, has tended to dominate acting discussions.[3]

Stanislavski concluded that the "director's most important creative work was done with the actors,"[4] and his writings on acting technique and practice have continued to influence the way in which actors and directors communicate about performance both in theatre and in film. As theatre movements evolved, particularly under the influence of twentieth century naturalistic directors, Western drama theory developed, influencing both film acting and film directing practice.

By the 1970s in Australia, key theatre directors were acquiring significant individual profiles as various companies developed. This trend has continued, ensuring that many Australian theatre directors hold positions of considerable influence. Given that there is a tendency for actors in

Australia to work in film, television and theatre, it was inevitable that a transfer of experience should occur across these creative industries. In this sense, theatre directors such as Richard Wherrett, Peter Kingston, Gale Edwards, Aubrey Mellor and Michael Gow, have arguably influenced film actors and directors directly and indirectly by sharing through their work their knowledge of acting approaches, including their ideas on Stanislavski and Mamet.

The Australian film director: a profile

In the West, the role of film director is generally associated with perceptions of the Hollywood cinema, the Hollywood film director's role having been shaped by powerful studio politics, production imperatives (particularly those of the classical Hollywood cinema), the "star" system, and 'auteurist' practices over some eighty years. While Australian film directors have clearly been affected by some of these influences, these directors have also emerged under very different social and economic conditions, with arts practice in Australia being shaped also by certain British and European influences. The size of the Australian film industry, similarly, has resulted in there being a relatively small pool of regular working film directors.

According to their resumes, many Australian film directors have worked in commercials, film and television, although fewer have worked as theatre directors. Phillip Noyce has said that in Australia "we go from commercials to theatre to cinema to television."[5] Some film directors, like George Miller, have at times even sought out the assistance of notable theatre directors in order to learn more about the craft of performance.[6]

From the 1950s, when the Australian film industry was virtually non-existent save for documentary work, Australian filmmakers have gradually multiplied over ensuing decades. Due to Australia's more recent high level of government subsidy and sponsorship of the film industry, notably through training schools (such as the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS)) and sponsorship from film funding bodies, it has been possible over the last thirty years to become a film director in Australia by pursuing a streamlined career path as a film director. It seems that, in general, the new breed of Australian film directors who have been emerging from film schools have had a more focussed entry into the world of feature film-making compared with the directors of the early Australian film revival in the 1970s. Directors such as AFTRS graduates David Caesar, Samantha Lang, Alex Proyas and many of the directors discussed in Chapter Four of this study, reflect this trend. In relation to an analysis of how directors work with actors, this fact is significant because film school trained directors, as a result of their training, seem to possess greater awareness of various acting methodologies.

Certainly it will be shown that the more recently trained directors surveyed demonstrated both this understanding and a willingness to work with actors in a variety of ways.

The craft of acting: first studies

As already noted in the literature review, relatively little has been written about film acting methodologies, both in Australia and overseas. A study of theatre history, theory and criticism, however, does help to identify key approaches to acting generally, and it is argued here and in the earlier literature review chapter, that this material may inform film directors about the nature of directing actors.

Historical research provides some insight into the playing styles of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, through to the complex drama movements of the twentieth century. From the earliest times, one of the most significant recurring influences on performance style, particularly in relation to the size of gesture, has been the actual performing space. Genre, theme, character-typing, the purpose of the drama and the nature of the performing group itself have also been important influences on styles of performing. For example, Greek tragedy performed for an audience of thousands required very particular vocal and physical skills. The 16th century Italian Commedia dell'Arte open air performance was based on improvisation, physical skills, use of masks and use of stock characters. Eighteenth century English Melodrama relied on many of these same stock characters and highly developed gestus.[7] Drama movements and their counter-movements have been documented in many different cultures over several centuries, revealing that performing styles constantly change and evolve over time.

Corresponding with the widening interest in objective scientific research that occurred at the turn of the last century, the search also began for "absolute, objective languages of acting that could offer models, systems and tested techniques to further the craft."[8] Denis Diderot's *The Paradox of Acting*, published in 1830, was one of the earliest significant works that began "debate in Western Europe over the nature of the actor's process."[9] Diderot differentiated between two types of actors: one who acts immersed in the character's feelings; and the other who acts by careful imitation without emotional attachment.[10] Diderot dismissed the first style as feeble. William Archer's *A Study in the Psychology of Acting* published in 1888 extended the debate even further, because while Diderot argued that actors should be unaffected by their performances, William Archer argued that actors are in fact affected by what they do.[11] This is significant because he introduces a theme that has recurred ever since as part of the debate about

the best approach to acting: that is, the tension between emotional and instinctive acting and purely technical acting processes.

Throughout last century, following Stanislavski's ground-breaking work, acting collectives, theatre companies and drama schools further explored the process of acting and as the role of the director became more clearly defined and powerful, the opportunity arose for a more objective analysis of actors' work by directors to occur.[12] Simultaneously, individual actors working collaboratively with specific directors provided an enormous stimulus for such studies through very personally revealing improvisations.[13] These movements generally reflected a "widespread desire to develop new theatre forms."[14] Integral to these new movements were various theories concerning the duality of the actor's mind and body dynamic, and as noted, this issue has remained central to the ongoing debate about the actor's process ever since. A consideration of training school curricula confirms that this topic has, in turn, become a prominent feature of actor training.

Training schools

The creation of formal actor training schools in the Western world has largely been a twentieth century phenomenon.[15] Their emergence has patently generated even greater interest in a wide variety of approaches to acting within the performing arts milieu.

In the United Kingdom and the German-speaking countries, numerous traditional drama schools offer three/four-year or one-year postgraduate acting courses, with some part-time training. Courses traditionally include: acting technique, acting style, textual analysis and dramaturgy. Acting technique covers characterization, voice and movement studies including: clowning, mask work, improvisation, commedia dell'arte, stage combat, fencing, dance, mime, Alexander technique, martial arts, Feldenkrais, and autogenes training. Acting style covers Stanislavski, 'Method', epic, Shakespeare, period, and contemporary approaches. Most courses conclude with some units in musical theatre, acting in film, television and radio performance, theatre history and industry workshops. Some schools, especially in the USA, also include classes in Butoh and circus. Some acting courses are strictly associated with universities and focus more intently on theory than they do on performance.[16] Various UK schools include contemporary theatre practice and community theatre courses.[17]

A few American courses also prioritise the voice approaches of Kristin Linklater and Catherine Fitzmaurice, while in England the text-focussed voice and acting teaching and directing of

Cicely Berry and Patsy Rodenburg figures prominently. Cicely Berry's approach links the sound of words with their living context so that meaningful interpretation and truthful performance can be achieved by the actor, where emotion is released through the voice revealing the inner life of the character.[18] Her approach is designed to assist the actor to develop through relaxation, breathing and vocal freedom a truthful emotional connection with the text. Kristin Linklater also advocates relaxation and breathing in an approach designed to free the actor's natural voice.[19] Similarly, Patsy Rodenburg's approach is designed to connect the actor with heightened text through liberated vocal technique.[20]

In America, in addition to the formal drama, acting and film schools, it must be acknowledged that there are also many individually eminent acting teachers, following on in the tradition of Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, such as Robert Cohen and Eric Morris who arguably have had, and continue to have, a profound influence on their individual students in terms of their actors' understanding of acting for film. This trend towards the pre-eminence of the individual teacher is common in America, but is also something which has occurred in England, Australia and other Western countries.

In Australia, most formal actor training schools, certainly NIDA, the Western Australian Academy for the Performing Arts (WAAPA), the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), and the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) include similar subjects to American and European acting schools, although increasing emphasis is now being given to film and television acting. It appears that this is due to expanded opportunities for film work for graduates. NIDA currently provides training in acting method adopting a variety of approaches including Stanislavski-based work, practical aesthetics, Labanian technique etc. (discussed later in the chapter), giving great attention to skills-based training in voice and movement (including Alexander technique classes) and acting for the camera. The acting approach propounded by the head of VCA, Ms Lindy Davies, incorporates a strong focus on breathing and impulse work as the foundation principle for all work done by an actor.[21] Peter Kingston, former head of directing at NIDA and recently head of WAAPA, calls himself a "sub-Stanislavskian" practitioner, although much of his work has also been influenced by his experience of working with good writers. He says there are non-negotiable issues for actors – specifically the need to work within the character's given circumstances.[22] Scott Alderdice, head of acting at USQ, describes his approach to actor training as very much Stanislavskian at its core with a strong focus on skills development, especially along the lines advocated by Cicely Berry, Patsy Rodenburg and Kristin Linklater.

Berry, Rodenburg and Linklater are prominent British-trained voice teachers who give priority to the use of language as a basis for performance as outlined in their seminal writings: Berry's *Voice and the Actor*[23] and *The Actor and the Text,*[24] Rodenburg's *The Right to Speak – Working with the Voice,*[25] *The Need for Words: Voice and the Text,*[26] *The Actor Speaks: Voice and the performer*[27] and Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice.*[28]

A variety of approaches to acting are taught at other private acting schools in Australia. For example, the Actor's Centre in Sydney adopts an approach that is heavily influenced by American acting methods. The Central Actors Studio[29] in Sydney, on the other hand, provides acting classes which are based on the work of Uta Hagen of the HB Studio in New York, Doreen Cannon at the Drama Centre, London and Yat Malmgren, Laban's collaborator who later taught at RADA, the Central School of Speech and Drama and the Drama Centre.[30]

Specific theatre pioneers who have developed individual approaches to acting and performance include Constantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Jacques Copeau, Bertolt Brecht, Joan Littlewood, Sanford Meisner, Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Joseph Chaikin, Wlodzimierz Staniewski, Eugenio Barba, Philippe Gaulier, Jacques Lecoq, Tadashi Suzuki[31], Rudolf Penka, and Yat Malmgren. A consideration of the subjects studied at both actor training and film school training courses highlights the fact that most schools expose acting, directing and general drama students to the complex thespioprudence propounded by these leading practitioners. A 'trickle-down effect' resulting from actors and some directors moving between theatre and television and film work leads to a sharing of ideas between practitioners. Arts praxis (including discrete approaches to acting) percolates through and across disciplines, while at the same time, understandings of acting language and methodologies are dispersed extensively both nationally and internationally.

As one key way of assessing how Australian film directors work with actors, it is necessary to understand what distinguishes each particular acting approach and how these approaches might inform the director's work. What follows is an outline of the major methodologies currently practised by actors as relevant to the Australian acting scene.

Methodology 1: Stanislavski's 'System'

Stanislavski's system, as mentioned in Chapter Two of this study, is dedicated to truthful character creation, particularly from a psychological perspective. Accordingly, it is focussed on mental and emotional processes, although the physical portrayal of character is equally

important. Characters are viewed as being shaped by psychological goals and motivations, both immediate and long term in nature. Such objectives can usually be assigned to each line and unit of action, to each scene, and to the overall script or story. Characters are largely defined by their own given circumstances, including their age, gender, nationality, class, education, religion, family situation, marital status, and occupation, right through to the time of the day and locality in which they find themselves interacting with another character. The actor's job is to interpret the characters and their interactions, chart emotional journeys and research the characters' worlds.

The actor must identify what obstacles need to be overcome by the character in order to realise her/his objectives. The characters may never reach their goals, but it is the search for them that provides the map for the characters' journeys. This search usually involves some conflict for the characters and typically requires a change in the main characters' understandings of life. The system relies mostly on an ensemble approach where actors, through rehearsal, explore their character relationships and motivations.

Stanislavski's goal was to free the actor both mentally and physically. This enables the actor to "create a favourable condition for the appearance of inspiration by means of the will, that condition in the presence of which inspiration was most likely to descend into the actor's soul."[32] Because the psychological world of the character is explored so extensively and intensely, actors who use this approach to acting may experience such a total engagement with their character that they may appear to 'become the character'. However, it is the very nature of the individual actor's psychological experience that makes this a difficult aspect of performance to discuss in absolutes. Not all Stanislavskian actors will engage to this level of intensity, many focussing instead on 'playing actions' consistent with each character's goals. Actions chosen need to be ones that can be actioned by one actor on another actor, such as tormenting, convincing, shaming, and vanquishing. This sort of analysis gives the actors clear goals to work towards, and enables them to focus on truthful interplay with other characters.

Perhaps it was simply fortuitous that Stanislavski's work became available in America at a time of great theatrical growth and exploration. This approach to acting, focussing as it did on the 'goal driven character', was especially well suited to a filmmaking culture where the goal driven character existed as an essential feature of the classical Hollywood cinema formula. Stanislavski's focus on skills-based training also addressed issues relevant to dialogue delivery that emerged as sound films developed.

The critical transfer of Stanislavski's ideas occurred primarily after Stanislavski toured America with the Moscow Arts Theatre (MAT) in 1923/1924. The extent of this influence was so profound that it subsequently led to the creation of the American Laboratory Theatre (1924), the Neighbourhood Playhouse (1928), and The Group Theatre (1931). These groups continued to appropriate and develop Stanislavski's ideas in America in his absence.[33] While this work originally developed in theatre circles, it was soon adopted by American film actors, many of whom were also theatre actors.

A number of Stanislavski's former collaborators, such as Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, migrated to America and continued to propound his ideas, especially the idea of ensemble-based theatre practice, helping to cement Stanislavski's influence in the American acting scene. Vsevolod Meyerhold and Michael Chekhov were two of Stanislavski's students who also later developed their own working methods as actors and directors. Meyerhold retained some key aspects of Stanislavski's system including "justified actions and clear objectives for characters;"[34] however he also investigated the workings of the body (bio-mechanics) in more detail in his search for greater truth in performance beyond mere imitation. Meyerhold remained in Russia, although his influence extended outside its borders. Chekhov moved to England and later America, establishing influential training collectives in both countries. He retained the bulk of Stanislavski's system, although he also promoted the "personal creativity of the actor."[35] Perhaps it is because Stanislavski's system is so well documented with its tenets being so widespread that the system has continued to dominate the Western acting scene and critical analysis of performing methodologies.

Significantly, Stanislavski's ideas have been spread in Australia in a number of ways. Many actor training schools, as well as some film schools, have exposed students to Stanislavski's ideas. Actors, directors, academics and other theatre practitioners have also shared his approach through their work and arts practice. Given the influence of English, European and American actors, directors and teachers on the Australian arts world, particularly, over the last fifty years, it was inevitable that Stanislavski's system would be explored and adopted by at least some Australian actors and directors. Though it evolved in the theatre, the system's profound influence quickly filtered into film. Any critique of film performance theory therefore requires specific consideration of how Stanislavski's work has influenced the Australian film industry. As will be argued in the following chapters, Stanislavski's work has had a profound influence on the practices within the Australian film industry.

Option 2: 'The Method' and its variants

The American theatre of the 1920s was searching for a new energy and the system brought a new vibrancy to the theatre. As noted above, the Group Theatre was heavily influenced by Stanislavski, Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya, and it grew out of this push for a new approach to acting. As this approach evolved and became Americanised, a new variant of Stanislavski's 'System' became known popularly as 'the Method'.

The Group Theatre was formed under the direction of Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, and Cheryl Crawford.[36] Stella Adler, Bobby Lewis, Elia Kazan, and Sanford Meisner were also all associated with teaching the Method in the early days. Strasberg, in particular, went on to head his own acting school at the Actors' Studio, widely known as the Method heartland. It is critical to bear in mind that much of the work done in the name of Method acting still uses a number of Stanislavskian-based practices. Method acting has been used in both theatre and film, but arguably is specifically well suited to the special requirements of film acting.

Method acting has been described in a great variety of ways, and, because of the many people who have been involved in its evolution, it is quite difficult to define. For the purposes of this dissertation relating to film directors and actors, it is sufficient to summarise the key tenets of this approach to acting.

As with Stanislavski's system, the Method actor's primary goal is to reproduce recognisable reality. All of the actor's action must be psychologically motivated by a single overall purpose or super-objective, as well as by smaller objectives for each action. Objects play a key role for characters, especially as symbols.[37] Most importantly, in this approach, genuine emotion is highly valued. The original basis for this in Stanislavskian terms is most notably articulated in *The Actor Prepares*[38] and *My Life in Art.*[39]

For some Method practitioners, emotion can be released through a technique called 'affective memory', where the actor's own personality is the source for the creation of the character, especially the character's emotional core. The Method approach favours ensemble-playing and intimacy between actors is strongly encouraged. Improvisation is often used as a rehearsal technique and is sometimes used during actual performance to assist in keeping performances spontaneous.[40] To some extent, it can be difficult to see the difference between Stanislavski's system and Method acting. Arguably it is the Method's focus on the actor's intense emotional

engagement with the character, typically merging the actor's own psychology and life experiences with those of the character, which explains the difference.

The Method approach is best known for the emotional extremes sought by the actor, who will typically delve into her/his own life experiences seeking out deep and subconsciously rooted feelings, sometimes relying on complex techniques akin to psycho-drama activities. By tapping into their emotional memories, the actors may find the profound depths and levels of feeling they seek in order to create their characters. Accordingly, the Method actor's preparatory work and individual performances can be very emotionally exhausting and frustrating. This apparently makes Method acting a somewhat unpredictable vehicle for live performance, with actors sometimes left struggling with what they are trying to achieve. On the other hand, Method acting seems better suited to film than to theatre for two main reasons. Firstly, the camera is able to capture the subtlest of the actor's thoughts, which in Method acting may be extremely intense. While such performances might not be sustainable, given the 'stop-start' nature of filming, editing enables the director to edit out lapses in the actor's performance and link the best section from each take.

The Method approach prioritises 'instinctive acting', whereas Stanislavski valued both the actor's instinct and technical skills equally. This is not to say, however, that all Method actors value only instinctive acting. For Harold Clurman, the Method was about teaching an actor how to discover the "causes which lead to proper effects."[41] He enumerates three stages in the system's development: the use of the notion of affective memory; the use of the actor's own substituted "as if" to stimulate the actor's imagination and hence performance; and finally a concentration on action and physical problems.[42] Of particular interest is his dismissal of the association with the Method of a mumbling groping style of performance. Like Stanislavski, Clurman valued high levels of skill as far as the actor's diction and voice were concerned.[43]

Stella Adler was another major figure at the Group Theatre associated with Method acting. After furthering her understanding of Stanislavski's system by actually studying with him, she realised that Stanislavski had moved beyond what was called his early affective memory exercise. She then had a much publicized falling out with Lee Strasberg over the nature of their work being done in the name of the system, which had evolved into Method acting. Through her own teaching, Adler focussed on the actor using the imaginary circumstances of the play as the stimulus for performance.[44] For her, the actor's real work involved the actor understanding the character's given circumstances, physical actions and having an ability to release the imagination, although she did use personalisation exercises to assist the actor with the latter

task. Although she is called a Method teacher, her approach is very much Stanislavskian at its core. When commenting on the difference between film and theatre acting, Adler said: "It depends if you can act. I think that if you can act, you can act anywhere."[45] She is one of the most well known teachers of her generation and has influenced generations of film actors.

Another important teacher is Sanford Meisner. Although originally a member of the Group Theatre, Meisner's main work was subsequently undertaken at the Neighbourhood Playhouse, a school that still continues to promote his ideas in its training. While not focussing on emotional recall, Meisner did require his actors to engage in some substitution activities as an early part of rehearsal. In particular, a large part of his school's training involves an exercise he developed commonly referred to as the repetition exercise,[46] which helps to refine an actor's impulses. Actors in a scene "verbalise what they perceive in another actor" repeating this several times, observing each other's behaviour, instinctively noting changes with increasing insight, eventually improvising on the scene.[47] At the Neighbourhood Playhouse School of Theatre, training proceeds in three tiers: the repetition and improvisational exercises; activities to explore and develop the imagination to be used in emotional preparation; the acquisition of technical skills, specifically fencing, movement, Alexander technique, musical theatre, and, finally, audition preparation skills. Though originally aligned with Method acting, Meisner's work, unlike Strasberg's Method acting approach, has been distilled into an action-playing based approach, which has since become the basis of the development of practical aesthetics, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Unlike the other original Method theatre directors, Elia Kazan, went on to become a highly regarded film director. With Lewis and Crawford, Kazan established the Actors' Studio in 1947, where students could explore acting practice. Given the sorts of statements he has consistently made, it is arguable that he applied the same overall approach that he learned in the theatre in his work as a film director. Of particular significance as a film director was his approach to casting. He placed great importance on casting and cast by considering "the actor's inner possibilities."[48] He explored these possibilities by engaging with actors, apparently often over a meal, rather than through auditions. Kazan approached his work with actors through three steps: identifying what the character wants (which is used to create the character's spine); identifying the character's given circumstances, especially any opposition to their want; and then assisting the actor to translate this into action. Kazan's statement, "I will say nothing to an actor that cannot be translated directly into action" was something he held true throughout his directing career.[49] His major focus on the psychology of the actor is perhaps the most individual aspect of his interpretation of the Method.

One of Kazan's early collaborators, Lee Strasberg, another very influential acting teacher, became director of the Actors Studio in 1949, developing generations of American Method actors for film and television. He used exercises to assist the actor with "relaxation, concentration and affective memory,"[50] and it was Strasberg's obsession with affective memory that gradually saw him estranged from a number of his peers. The affective memory practices required actors to search out their own memories of emotional experiences, and through direction and rehearsal activities, such feelings as experienced by the actor were used to agitate feelings relevant to a particular scene being played by the actor. Although Strasberg also promoted the importance of actions and characterisation,[51] this emotional memory work was the most defining trait of his process and variant on the Method.

In her article "Lee Strasberg's Paradox of the Actor,"[52] Sharon Carnicke makes the point that, while Strasberg did not specifically promote Method acting as a set approach for film acting, he did reinterpret Stanislavski "in ways sympathetic to the cinema."[53] She argues that it was because of the unusual technical demands made of the film actor that Method acting as propounded by Strasberg was so successful. She stresses that the fragmented filming of shots out of scene order means that the film actor must pull performances out of the air on command. Performance can then be further reshaped through editing. Method acting as taught by Strasberg seems to have enabled actors effectively to create at will, at least for a minimum number of takes, useable moments of highly emotional performance.

Strasberg asked his actors what would motivate them to behave in the particular way suggested by the given circumstances of the scene. He "taught that actions are given to the actor by the director, as addenda to the script, having nothing directly to do with the words of the scene."[54] Strasberg's actors were not told to transform themselves into the character, but rather they were encouraged to "find characters within themselves, through 'substitutions' of personal experiences for the 'facts' of the text."[55] The camera could then record the truth of the performance as directed, even if the actor was responding to something other than text, and this could be used to create the total performance as reshaped through editing.

Eric Morris is a contemporary American acting teacher who has specifically adopted and adapted Method acting as part of his approach to the teaching of acting. His is a quest for truth in performance where exploration and the actor's unique contribution is core to the release of the "actor's unique statement."[56]

Method acting practice spread in Australia in a number of ways, particularly through the influence of the theatre actor-director, Hayes Gordon, at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney, who influenced a large number of Australian actors. While Method acting is certainly canvassed in most actor training courses in Australia, it tends to be taught exclusively by only a few acting teachers and ostensibly is not the dominant practice in Australia.

Option 3: Improvisational practice

Improvisation, the process whereby a performance is created in an extempore fashion, through spur of the moment characterization, dialogue invention, character interactions and scene construction by the actor/s (sometimes based only a loose idea; sometimes based on an existing story and character outline). Improvisation is a particularly significant aspect of Method practice, although it can also be used in Stanislavskian based rehearsals. Sometimes improvisation occurs under a director's guidance, but direction is not always required because improvisation is very much, at its core, an actor's tool for exploring and creating roles.

One of the key reasons it is valued is because it is a way to expedite acting process. Through improvisation, actors can take the basic Stanislavskian foundations of 'character' and 'motivation' and then develop the subtleties and complexities of the characters and the scenes quickly and imaginatively. It is greatly prized as a rehearsal tool in Australia, both for film and television, as is revealed in much of the relevant literature cited in Chapter Two, as well as in the surveys carried out for this project.

In Australia, improvisational practice is incorporated into most actor training courses and it is also included in AFTRS training activities, specifically through current workshops on the 'Mike Leigh Method' conducted by Rob Marchant.

Improvisation as a separate approach to acting remains an alternative and individual approach to acting, which is not necessarily aligned with either Method or System based acting.

Option 4: Brechtian Method

Bertolt Brecht's relevance in any discussion about film directing is minimal; however, given his significant influence on performance theory and theatre acting style over the last fifty years, some brief discussion of his work is warranted.

Brecht used theatre to promote social change. He strongly opposed the orientation of realism and naturalism toward 'suspension of belief'[57] and his style of theatre was typified by devices designed to break down illusions and de-familiarise the audience. In terms of acting, he objected to a statuesque performance style and illusionist conventions and, most importantly, he sought to "eliminate all emotion from the stage."[58] Brechtian actors do not attempt to attract empathy. Instead, they demonstrate, suggest and describe behaviour "rather than realistically create the inner truth of the role."[59] In this sense, their performance style is very much based on simple, though often bold, delivery. However they do require high levels of skill in terms of speech and movement.

Rudof Penka has attempted to synthesize Stanislavski and Brecht in a modern ongoing useage of these ideas for the theatre. While Brecht's influence in theatre remains significant, his importance in film, nevertheless, remains minimal. Lovell and Kramer argue that Brecht's ideas had little influence on film acting, stating that "no school of Brechtian actors developed to match the impact of the method - they didn't stimulate a sustained interest in problems of film acting."[60] In Australia, the teaching of Brechtian performance practice in actor training institutions seems to be mostly limited to the theatre.

Option 5: The Practice Propounded by Rudolf Laban

Rudolf Laban was a movement teacher and choreographer who worked with Joan Littlewood's English experimental theatre ensemble in the 1960s. Laban devised a complete system for recording human movement, and at the Littlewood workshop, acting parts were approached primarily through an analysis of body movement and improvisation.[61]

Laban's work was further adopted and adapted by Yat Malmgren and is taught at the Drama Centre in London. Yat Malmgren, in turn has influenced many other acting teachers, including Tony Knight at NIDA.

Under Laban's approach, the actor's goals are reflected in physical actions that are subdivided into four types of continuum: space, time, weight and flow. To these, broad effort actions can be applied: pressing, flicking, wringing, dabbing, slashing, gliding, thrusting and floating.

Laban tabulated his "basic movement principles to which all living matter conforms"[62] as set out in the diagram below. Actors can explore their actions (physically and vocally) using these

dynamics, sometimes by combining efforts,[63] and this activity can be can be used by the actor to create a character. The following table defines the key actions.

This diagram is not available online. Please consult the hardcopy thesis available from the QUT Library.

**Diagram of Laban's Dynamosphere [64]

While there is no evidence to suggest that this approach has specifically influenced film acting style, improvisation and movement analysis of actions in Laban terms are taught at many Australian drama schools, including NIDA. Arguably, this work has influenced how some Australian actors (and therefore directors) might explore their work. Nevertheless, it tends to be regarded as a rehearsal tool rather than a particular dominant acting approach in this country.

Option 6: British Restraint and a Focus on Language, Text and Technique

Sir Laurence Olivier is perhaps the best-known exponent of what is commonly identified as the dominant approach to acting in Britain. This approach is based not on an internalised approach to character creation, but rather on an external creation of character, from which the internal character objectives are subsequently manifested. It is text and language focussed. Further, Olivier once said that, although he felt that most film actors are interior people, he personally worked "mostly from the outside in."[65] This dichotomy is often referred to by writers on acting as the "inside/outside antithesis."[66] Working from the "outside in" is apparently common within British acting practice and the foundational element of this approach is "its basis in language."[67]

Carole Zucker has attempted to identify what is emblematic of British performance. She compares the "behaviourism" of the American actor with the "foundational element of British acting (which is)…its basis in language."[68] She found that British actors favour skills-based technique and acting which follows the emotional trajectory of the text.[69] Rigorous voice and movement training, ensemble work and an ability to analyse text (particularly for irony and nuance) are key traits of this British acting practice. As the actor Ian Richardson says, "the

trouble with doing it 'for the moment' is that you cannot maintain it."[70] Many British actors also appear to favour detailed preparation for the role (whether for film, television or stage), along certain Stanislavskian lines, with the actor carefully creating the character, including the character's voice, body language, personality traits and behaviours, from what exists in the text/script. The pervasive influence of voice teachers like Cicely Berry and Patsy Rodenburg also reflects the centrality of language for the British actor. Understanding of the technical requirements of film acting (like shot size) is also integral to the work of the British film actor.[71]

Creating the external shape of the character is very much a technical exercise in the British tradition. Olivier, for example, always looked first for the physical attributes when playing characters: "How would he (sic) walk? How would he talk to people? What would his posture be?" and so on.[72] Elia Kazan records in his autobiography an extremely insightful account of Olivier's approach to acting. He explains how he watched Olivier work through the pantomime of offering a chair to a visitor.

> He'd try it this way, then that, looking at the guest, then at the chair, doing it with a host's flourish, doing it with a graceless gesture, then thrusting it brusquely forward – more like Hurstwood that way? – never satisfied, always seeking the most revealing way to do what would be a quickly passing bit of stage business for any other actor.[73]

Given the onerous job faced by film actors in recreating moments repeatedly on a stop-start basis for each respective take, such a reliance on repeating "business" with props in order to refocus and revive a performance state would appear to be an approach well suited to film acting.

Bruce Beresford recently described the difference between English and American actors as follows:

> English actors seem to me to switch in and out of it easily, whenever they want. I've had English actors who will be off camera and in the middle of telling some joke, and you'll say, 'Look, I just have to shoot this'. And they'll say 'Okay', and you'll call 'Action!" and they'll go straight into some huge scene. They'll do the tears and everything, and they'll be absolutely fantastic. Then I'll call 'Cut!' and they'll say, 'And then the farmer's daughter says…' and just pick up the joke where they'd left off! Amazing. But most American actors can't do that well, I've never met any who did. They closet themselves away and try to 'be the character' all the time. But as far as the end results go, I can't say I've noticed any real difference; whatever they do, the good ones are always fantastic.[74]

Although such an approach is most commonly associated with British actors, it should be noted that some Hollywood directors have used similar ideas. For example, Howard Hawks rooted his films in physical action, "shaping his plots around events rather than ideas, and building his characters around concrete gestures and mannerisms rather than abstract inner motivations."[75]

The prominence of the approaches of voice teachers like Cicely Berry, Patsy Rodenburg and Kristin Linklater, which originated in England, is a notable feature of training at actor training institutions like NIDA, QUT and the USQ.

Given the enormous influence of English acting traditions on both actor training and the early development of acting in Australia in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, before the powerful influence of Hollywood film intervened, this skills-based approach to character development and performance remains an important influence, and is arguably one of the key approaches used by a number of practising actors and directors in Australia.

Option 7: Mamet And Practical Aesthetics

The notion of practical aesthetics has already been introduced in Chapter Two. This is a practice that involves one actor performing actions on another actor in order to generate a response from that other actor. David Mamet, the key advocate of this approach, considers that actors have for years,

> "been hiding in a ludicrously incorrect understanding of the Stanislavski System and employing incorrectly understood jargon as an excuse for not acting."[76]

He further argues that the "notions of objective, activity, moment, beat, and so on are all devoted toward reducing the scene to a specific action which is true to the author's intention, and physically capable of being performed."[77] To this extent, his work arises out of Stanislavski's work. However, Mamet streamlines the acting process of playing actions, with the actor being encouraged to develop strong skills in voice, movement and text analysis.

As in Stanislavski's system, the actor practising practical aesthetics must "find a way to live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances"[78] of the play or film story, and the actor must work out what is happening in actable terms, i.e. the actor must "give himself (sic) something physically doable that he has a personal investment in for every scene."[79] Actors are encouraged to prepare scene and character analyses carefully so that they can improvise whilst operating within the character's given circumstances. Playing actions, it is argued, is the one thing an actor can consistently do, although the test of the action must be in the other actor, because it is about making the other person respond to the action. The actor, in this system, is also encouraged to invest something personal in the action by reminding himself/herself of what the "actions means to you in simple terms."[80] The 'as-if' is not something the actor tries to play in the scene. It is purely something the actor uses to personalize the action and spark his/her creativity. While the actor cannot guarantee that he/she can relive an emotional experience in

performance, the actor can rely upon technique to create an illusion and thus be truthful to the scene.

Sanford Meisner's ideas, which have been incorporated into practical aesthetics have already been discussed in the context of his early work within the original circle of Method directors, however, as his own praxis evolved, he became a key contributor to what developed into practical aesthetics.

It seems that such ideas are canvassed in most Australian actor training institutions. NIDA, in particular, introduces this work as part of its first year actor training program. The Australian actor, Andrea Moore, has been one of NIDA's teachers of this approach from time to time. Together with Melissa Bruder and Tamara Lovatt-Smith, Moore has established 'Practical Aesthetics Australia' in Sydney, a network of practical aesthetics teachers who act like a wing of the Atlantic Theatre Company Acting School to teach practical aesthetics in Australia.[81] Nick Lathouris, one of Australia's key advocates of practical aesthetics, also occasionally runs workshops on this approach and has run such workshops for both the AFTRS and QUT in recent years. His extensive work as a dramaturg working with television directors has also helped to facilitate the transfer of these ideas to a wide variety of actors and film and television directors, including, for example, Kate Woods and Michael Jenkins.[82] Kate Woods, acknowledges learning a great deal from Nick Lathouris when working on practical aesthetics[83] and describes the work as follows:

> Nico Lathouris' work is about the moment. Nico's work seems to say "Fuck who the character is, what's happening to you *now?* What is the input you are getting right now? Forget about everything else". If you've done your homework, if you've studied your craft, if you've done all your groundwork you need to do on your character, then you can just deal with the moment.

Michael Gow similarly acknowledges the value of Mamet's and Meisner's work when discussing his philosophy on acting and directing for the theatre.[84] He considers that practical aesthetics provides the actor with a way to "release from your own ego" into "How do we do the work? What do we make together?"[85]

Thus, practical aesthetics is well known as one approach to acting in Australia through teaching, theatre, television and film networks. Whether directors rely on actors who work from this basis or whether they simply employ rehearsal and directing techniques using this philosophy, practical aesthetics clearly is an influential approach to acting and directing within the Australian film industry.

Other options: alternative Twentieth Century Practices

The Polish theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski, worked to develop psychophysical techniques which were concerned with "establishing the actor's expressive and imaginative freedom through the discipline of physical structure,"[86] each detail of performance being justified through both the actor's imagination and life experiences in the search for truth in performance. One of the most significant features of the work of a number of key modern twentieth century theatre practitioners, Wlodzimierz Staniewski, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba and Joseph Chaikin, is that they have often worked in collaboration with Grotowski and also on occasions with each other.[87] In contrast to Stanislavski's search for a single system of performance, they have recognised that there are many different approaches available to the actor and that different approaches will be appropriate in different theatres/cultural contexts.[88]

A number of Western theatre practitioners (such as Barba, Brook and the French theatre director Ariane Mnouchkine) have adopted traditional Eastern practices when exploring physical performance, including ways actors can enter a state of readiness for performance. Some, like Chaikin and Barba, have at times drawn on holistic physical activities such as martial arts and yoga when preparing the actor's body/mind.[89] Other physical theatre schools like the Jacques Lecoq Mime School in Paris and Philippe Gaulier's Mime School in London take a very vigorous approach to physical theatre.[90] None of these traditions translates simply into film practice. Rather, these approaches involve techniques that have influenced the rehearsal and exploratory work of many actors, as well as the practices of some directors such as George Ogilvie, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Summary

The establishment of formal training schools for Australian actors has provided opportunities for a range of global notions and practices to be expanded and shared in this country. As actors transfer backwards and forwards between theatre and film, many of the main acting theories developed in theatre have been adapted into film acting, with some modifications because of the specific technical requirements of film acting. Clearly, it is very difficult to identify in absolute terms which methodology, if any, is being adopted by individual actors and directors, because so many arts practitioners in the West have been influenced by a convergence of ideas from many sources. Stanislavski's system is perhaps the easiest to identify by reference to what an actor or director claims to practise.

In trying to assess the different categories of arts practice into which individual Australian film directors fall, and while acknowledging that there may be some exceptions, I have attempted to divide the directors into the following groups/typologies from the literature, in order to give a framework for analysis: (i) Stanislavskian practitioners; (ii) Method practitioners: (iii) proponents of practical aesthetics; (iv) improvisers; (v) text-based directors; and (vi) directors who adopt a hybridised approach to directing for performance. As gleaned from the survey, detailed descriptions of what the various directors discuss and acknowledge about their own practice will be analysed in detail in the following two chapters.

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APPROACHES:	GOALS: (What does it set out to do?)	STYLE: (What does it look like?)	PROCESS: (How is it done?)	SPECIFIC TRAITS - MOVEMENT:	SPECIFIC TRAITS - VOICE:	OTHER INDICATORS:
Stanislavski's System (This approach evolved out of the work of Constantin Stanislavski.)	To create believable characters who appear true to life, both in behaviour and emotion, and to engage the audience emotionally with the characters and their world.	Naturalistic or Representational style.	Psychologically motivated action-playing approach using given circumstances of character, wants, objectives, obstacles; Ensemble based work; Use of imaginary stimuli.	Recreation of naturalistic movement; Physical flexibility; Great attention is given to creating characters with individual physicality and habits.	Recreation of naturalistic character voices – accents etc. Highly developed sense of text, diction, vocal and physical flexibility.	Inside to outside approach – use of character objectives, obstacles and actions; Both the internal and external creation of character are important.
Brechtian/ Epic Theatre (This approach evolved out of the work of Bertolt Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble.)	To create believable characters (who from time to time also may be part-caricature), and to engage the audience intellectually in social and political debate and analysis.	Presentational or demonstrational style; Alienating/rhetorical devices are used in staging; There is a focus on gestus and props are very important.	Actors present text simply – demonstrating not emoting; Ensemble based work; Use of alienation devices: light, sound, movement, multi media, montage, song, piece to audience etc.	Strong use of choreography; song, lighting, set structures; Use of mixed media devices.	Challenging language based work requiring vocal dexterity because of complex text.	External shaping of character; Didactic nature of text; Focus on gestus and symbolism of props.
Practical Aesthetics (Mamet/Meisner) (This approach evolved out of the work of Sanford Meisner, David Mamet and the Atlantic Theatre Company.)	To create believable characters who appear true to life, both in behaviour and emotion, and to engage the audience emotionally with the characters and their world.	Naturalistic or Representational style.	Action based acting – incorporating responsive "action-playing" by actors; Use of verbed action-based activities and preparation exercises; Use of the "as if" approach – linking life experiences.	Naturalistic movement; Because of the focus on playing actions, physical acting is often integrally linked to strong physical action-playing.	Recreation of normal character voices – accents etc.	Inside to outside approach – with use of actions as key motivator; The focus is on what each actor is doing to the other when playing their action.
An Improvisational Framework (This approach is more akin to a workshopping tool and has not evolved out of the work of any one individual – it is often linked with physical theatre practice.)	This way of working may be adopted with a variety of goals in mind, sometimes incorporating all of the abovementioned goals. It can also be used to create an absurd and exaggerated world and may not seek to do more than simply provide the viewer with 'an experience' to interpret as he/she sees fit.	This may be naturalistic or demonstrational in style or may be a mix of both; (sometimes it relies on exaggeration). If it is used to create a script- then the subsequent rehearsals may rely on a mix of other acting approaches.	Ensemble development of character and dialogue; Use of back-story and other exercises, including a wide variety of theatre games and workshopping activities including text-building exercises.	Often very physical activity; Vigorous play with energy states and games.	Recreation of normal character voices – accents etc; Often more colloquial delivery; Sometimes greatly exaggerated 'character-type' vocal presentation.	Reliance on actor's intuition and experiences to shape character; Some use of clowning type activities; Often surprising unexpected action by actors.
A Text Based Approach (This approach has specifically evolved out of the work of many British actors, directors and voice teachers.)	To present truthfully the characters and the world of the script through carefully crafted performance, which engages both the emotions and intellect of the viewer.	Naturalistic or representational style.	Actors work to present the writer's story as it is written – simple approach to presentation of language but with great emotional engagement in the meaning; Psychological motivations are still important.	Naturalistic movement Major focus on language and vocal flexibility; Character development work begins externally and may or may not move into a heightened emotional state.	Recreation of normal character voices – accents etc; Considerable focus on the value of "the word" as scripted.	Outside to inside approach – with initial focus on the text leading to revelation of character; May facilitate ease with type-casting.
Laban's Movement – Based Approach (This approach evolved out of the work of Rudolf Laban.)	To present the essence of life through performance shaped by energy forces and energy states; Sometimes to engage the audience in political analysis.	This may be naturalistic or Non-naturalistic in style; (sometimes it is stylised via exaggerated movement and is demonstrational in style).	Use of structured actions and energy levels; Physical activity and movement focus.	Extension of action-based exercises; Extremely physically demanding activity; Complex use of actions and energy levels;	Sometimes linked with extended vocal activities.	Outside to inside approach - External internal movement – focus may still be on emotion. *Rarely used as sole approach in feature film acting.
Physical Theatre (This approach draws on commedia and clowning traditions as well as dance and mime practices.)	To present some aspect of experience or sense of the world; Sometimes to engage the audience in political debate or social analysis, often through exaggeration/ grotesque satire.	This may be non-naturalistic, surreal or grotesque in style and may involve overlapping of styles.	Physical activity and movement focus; Reliance on acrobatics, clowning, traditional character and mask work.	Extremely physically demanding and sophisticated activities; Use of props, puppetry, design features.	Extremely demanding physical and vocal activities.	External focus – not necessarily an intention to emote; *Rarely used in feature film acting.

CHAPTER 4
AUSTRALIAN FILM DIRECTORS
SECRET DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS?

Introduction

The foundations of current best directorial practice were established by generations of previous directors as they explored various directing techniques, selecting and adopting those approaches that proved most applicable to the Australian film industry. Directors seem to evolve their own practice over their working careers in two stages. They identify and appropriate work modes that have been successfully demonstrated by earlier directors and they then explore and consolidate these directing techniques into their own methodology. Even if they do not articulate their theories overtly, these influences become clearer upon analysis of their rehearsal techniques, anecdotal records, and their own admissions about their process. This chapter explores the organic connection between some key pioneers of the industry and certain contemporary directors who inherited this legacy, and their respective directing processes.

Unfortunately, in undertaking my research I was unable to access a number of important directors, yet some analysis of the work of pre-eminent directors like Charles Chauvel, Ken G. Hall, Bruce Beresford, George Miller, Fred Schepisi and Gillian Armstrong seemed critical to this analysis. Accordingly, I have included some commentary on their work and have, where necessary, relied on secondary research sources including published interviews and commentaries when discussing certain pioneering directors.

This chapter examines the thespioprudence of a selection of filmmakers who succeeded the New Wave directors and focuses on the working practices of my survey participants. Structuring this Chapter proved difficult because the survey respondents have very different levels of experience and background, and they all responded in varying degrees of detail. The first half of the Chapter generally focusses on more experienced directors, while the second half deals with the work of certain emerging directors and related arts practitioners.

In examining the influences and practices of the Australian film directors discussed, I have tried to structure this chapter specifically around the following three key questions: Does a director's own training fundamentally determine his/her own approach? What course of action does a director take when he/she has an ensemble of actors with different training backgrounds and different methodologies or no training whatsoever? What is the dominant approach to directing

actors in the Australian film industry? In answering these questions I have identified a number of innovative ideas and surprising insights, as explained by the directors themselves.

I have attempted to group and order the directors in a taxonomic fashion, according to whether they are pioneering, established or emergent directors. Within these clusters, I have given priority to the directors I interviewed.

After discussing the pioneering directors Charles Chauvel and Ken G. Hall I have considered the New Wave directors, Peter Weir, George Ogilvie, Donald Crombie, Richard Franklin, Carl Schultz, Bruce Beresford, George Miller, Fred Schepisi and Gillian Armstrong. An analysis of the work of the directors I have called 'the New Breed' follows and includes Baz Luhrmann, Cherie Nowlan, Mark Joffe, Stephen Wallace, John Ruane, G. T. Miller, Rolf de Heer, Peter Duncan, Ana Kokkinos, Rowan Woods and James Bogle. I have also considered emerging directors with only one or two feature credits including Pauline Chan, Shirley Barrett, Craig Monahan and Di Drew. A couple of film directors who do not fit neatly into any of these categories are then grouped together due to their unique significance as teachers and or writer/directors. This includes, George Whaley, Denny Lawrence and Gerard Lee. Consideration is then given to the most recent emerging directors in my survey group, Daniel Nettheim and Michelle Warner. A discussion of the work of related practitioners, the theatre directors Michael Gow and Richard Wherrett, dramaturg, Nick Lathouris and actor-director Mel Gibson concludes the chapter.

Consideration of these directors' methodologies revealed certain key findings. The most prominent and overwhelming finding in my research is that Australian directors generally display an openness to different ways of working. Many of the pioneering directors were self-taught in relation to the practical application of directing actors for performance, ostensibly because there were no options for formal study or training in Australia due to the small size of the local film industry. Even though this has changed over time with the advent of specialised film schools, which tend to provide specific instruction to trainee directors about directing actors from an acting perspective, the activities of their self-taught predecessors remain influential within Australian directing culture. As emergent directors consolidate their own preferred processes for working with actors, they too influence their contemporaries and add to the collective wisdom about directing which, in turn, influences the thespioprudence of other aspiring directors.

Many Australian film directors seem to be influenced by Stanislavski or Stanislavskian-like directing practices. However, improvisational approaches and the influence of practical

aesthetics are also being adopted as part of an evolving process. Australian directing culture is characterised by the significant attention given to casting by directors, as well as by their energetic development of strong acting ensembles during rehearsal and filming phases. (This includes workshopping and improvisational activities.) These features arguably have been present right from the early pioneering days of film directing in Australia, certainly at least from the era of the New Wave filmmakers. Not surprisingly, the formal training of directors is now emerging as a very important influence on the evolution of directing practice from a thespioprudential point of view. What follows is an analysis of each of these matters in greater detail, by reference to individual director's practices.

Does a director's own training fundamentally determine their own approach?

Introduction – Pioneers and the New Wave Directors

Two significant pioneering directors, Charles Chauvel[1] (1897-1959), and Ken G. Hall[2] (1901-1994), learnt about directing simply by doing it, and they paved the way for the directors who followed. Many of the later new wave directors similarly learned about directing 'on the job' in places like the Commonwealth Film Unit [CFU] and various production collectives. A few received specific tertiary training. Following on from the New Wave, increasing numbers of directors were able to take advantage of formal training opportunities offered through tertiary training institutions like the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), some training originally in related fields like acting. A few directors even studied overseas at schools as varied as the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) film school and the Jacques Lecoq School of Mime in Paris. In recent years, the pre-eminent film schools at the AFTRS, VCA and certain other university film courses have been providing tailored training to aspiring directors, although many still develop their directing careers largely by actually working in the industry.

It is critical to consider the training backgrounds of both Chauvel and Hall at the outset of this discussion because of their considerable influence on the development of the Australian film

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[1] **Charles Chauvel**
Filmography: The Moth of Moonbi (1926 d.w.a.) Greenhide (1926 d.w.) In the Wake of the Bounty (1933 d.w.) Heritage (1935 d.w.) Uncivilised (1936 d.co-w.) Rangle River (1936 co-w.) Forty Thousand Horsemen (1940 d.p.w.) Rats of Tobruk (1944 d.p.co-w.) Sons of Matthew (1949 d.p.w.) Jedda (1955 d.p.w.)[1]

[2] **Ken G. Hall**
Filmography: On Our Selection (1932), *The Squatter's Daughter* (1933), *Strike Me Lucky* (1934), *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1934), *Grandad Rudd* (1935), *Orphan of the Wilderness* (1936), *Thoroughbred* (1936), *Lovers and Luggers* (1937), *Tall Timbers* (1937), *It Isn't Done* (1937), *Let's Do it* (1938), *Dad and Dave Come to Town* (1938), *The Broken Melody* (1938), *Gone to the Dogs* (1939), *Mr Chedworth Steps Out* (1939), *Come Up Smiling* (1939), *Dad Rudd M.P.* (1940), *Smithy* (1946).[2]

industry and the directors who followed. They both absorbed and explored a wide variety of ideas and arguably set the scene for a trend which has continued ever since, whereby Australian filmmakers are willing to adopt, explore and adapt a great many different ideas when directing actors in terms of performance.

Charles Chauvel was essentially a self-taught director who learnt about filmmaking through observation and experimentation. Nevertheless, there were two key influences on his early development as a director: his experiences in Hollywood and his wife. Having spent time in Hollywood at the outset of his career, Chauvel was profoundly influenced by the Hollywood approach to filmmaking, and his great commercial successes, *Forty Thousand Horsemen* and *Sons of Matthew,* were Hollywood-like showcase films for their stars. An interest in acting was a core aspect of Chauvel's work, and throughout his career he collaborated closely with his actor-wife Elsa. Chauvel's daughter, Sue Carlsson, recalls stories of how her parents had to train and guide their actors through parts. Given his wife's stage acting experience, Chauvel reportedly tended to rely on her for such assistance, especially with the lengthy rehearsals on films like *Sons of Matthew* and *Jedda,*[1] and it is clear that she was also a great influence on his general directing process when working with actors.

An example of how Chauvel learned from his Hollywood experience is contained in Elsa Chauvel's book, *My Life With Charles Chauvel,*[2] where she reveals that Charles had introduced into his studio the Hollywood "off-set music idea to aid emotions."[3] Elsa recalled that for her first screen role which involved crying, an organ and violin were played in the background. Clearly, this type of activity marries with the approach to acting that relies on psychological emotional triggers to assist the actor's performance. It is significant to note therefore, that Chauvel's time in Hollywood, 1928-1929, coincided with the very time America was interpreting recently discovered Stanislavskian theory and practice. America had experienced the Moscow Arts Theatre (MAT) in action, published outlines of the 'System' had become available, ex-MAT actors were teaching in America, and young American actors and directors were applying their own understanding of Stanislavski's system to experimental theatre productions.[4] It seems reasonable to argue then that the sorts of ideas which Chauvel incorporated into his directorial practice, as exemplified in the previous paragraph, are consistent with the very practices adopted by early American Stanislavski devotees and that Chauvel's initial experiences in Hollywood did, in a very tangible way, profoundly influence the way in which he directed actors for the bulk of his career.

Like Chauvel, Ken G. Hall's initial training was obtained through the actual process of filmmaking itself. He was first and foremost a commercial filmmaker with a real acumen for

showmanship. There is no evidence that he developed a single directorial approach to his work with actors, although his prolific output, including his directing of eighteen full-length feature films between 1932 and 1946,[5] would suggest that he evolved and developed his ideas over that time. His experience was vast, ranging from his own time in Hollywood to observe film production early in his career, through his management of Cinesound Productions, to his later time at Channel 9.

As was the case with Chauvel, Hall's travels to Hollywood in 1925[6] coincided with the arrival of Stanislavski's ideas in America. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to demonstrate whether or not Hall was influenced by Stanislavski, although he did deliberately adopt a number of other Hollywood practices in promoting the Cinesound Studio and its company of actors and actresses.[7]

Hall has confessed that he began to learn about directing actors largely because of actor Bert Bailey's influence in marking up his script in *On Our Selection* (1932), with "direction marks plus business."[8] (Presumably this means blocking [choreography on or in the set] and props/action directions). When interviewed for an extensive *Cinema Papers* retrospective, Hall said that in that early period they all thought that actors should act the same both in theatre and film using 'the great gesture'.[9] Through his practical experience of directing films he gradually evolved his own ideas, which became focussed on directing action.

In his early collaboration with Bailey, Hall acknowledged that Bailey directed the actors, especially their dialogue, while he directed the camera and sound. Hall's early ability to work with an actor in such a collaborative way ostensibly reflects a willingness to try to work with actors from a craft based position, and this appears to have been his early training experience in terms of working with actors as a director.

Although Chauvel and Hall were both very much individualists in their approach to directing, the defining influences on their evolution as directors, in terms of their work with actors, arguably originated from their time in Hollywood and from their work with colleagues during the practical process of filmmaking.

The Australian New Wave saw the flourishing of filmmaking activity by energetic and largely informally trained young filmmakers, including Peter Weir[3], who is arguably Australia's most

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[3] **Peter Weir**
Filmography: Three to Go (1971), The Cars That Ate Paris (1974), Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975), The Last Wave (1977), The Plumber (1979), Gallipoli (1981), The Year of Living Dangerously (1982), Witness (1985), The Mosquito Coast (1986), Dead Poets

famous and internationally successful film director. Peter Weir's training occurred on the job at Channel 7, and then through his work in documentary making at the Commonwealth Film Unit, which he calls his film school.[10] He also participated in sketch reviews and made short films early in his career, even acting in one film.

Weir says of his earliest period as a director that there was always an extreme openness and spontaneity on the set, but that over time he adopted a more structured approach.[11] It is particularly clear that he has continued to adapt and explore new ways of working with actors throughout his career.

Weir is disinclined to analyse his work from a theoretical perspective, because he says the bulk of his work with actors is completely intuitive.[12] In her 1983 interview with him, Sue Matthews noted that "inspiration is central to Peter Weir's filmmaking: his approach is intuitive rather than cerebral."[13] Weir has maintained this view throughout his extensive career. Because of a lack of specifically relevant information and Weir's own caution in analysing his directing approach, it is not possible to say with certainty whether or not Weir's time at Channel 7 and the CFU have, in the long term, shaped his approach, which has evolved over a lengthy filmmaking career and has been very much an individual and unique approach to directing actors. At best, it is arguable that Weir's meticulous approach to investigating and creating the world of the film in minute detail, which greatly influences his rehearsal activities and the skills demanded of the actor when performing, particularly in period films, may have been influenced by his early experience in documentary work.

Weir's pre-production efforts and rehearsals, for example, tend to involve enormous amounts of research, preparation, discussion and improvisation regarding the characters and their world. He typically covers his office walls with relevant material/artwork and keeps a scrapbook in which he stores relevant images, which he perceives in advance may affect the look of the film.[14] His ideas about the look of the film profoundly affect his casting process. For example, of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Weir says that he found the look he wanted, a pre-Raphaelite look, largely only amongst girls from South Australia. The physical appearance he was searching for involved a look of "serenity, or innocence."[15] When casting the aboriginal elder Nandji in *The Last Wave*, Weir cast him simply on the basis of a quiet meeting, a meeting in which he was profoundly influenced by Nandji's look and strength of presence.[16] Weir also creates very detailed character back-stories, which he uses when working on character creation with the actors.

Society (1989), Green Card (1990), Fearless (1993), The Truman Show (1998), Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (2003).[3]

Although he has worked across a wide variety of genres in his career, Weir says that his approach to directing does not vary greatly simply because of genre. Rather, his goal is to "build an atmosphere on the set that is conducive to the performing of a scene."[17] It has been reported that his goal is to keep the technical equipment away and create an ensemble feel where anything can happen, "a powerful mood, a kind of 'super-reality' out of which the actors' responses will be both irresistible and inevitable."[18] Weir claims that his ideas in this regard emanate from his "tradition of ad-libbing and improvising."[19] (His early experiences with sketches and reviews ostensibly are part of this history.[20]) Weir also encourages this creative atmosphere off the set, especially on location where the cast and crew may be housed together to assist in building character loyalties and relationships. This practice is one that had been used years earlier by the Hollywood director, John Ford,[21] and Weir's exploration of similar practices reflects his willingness to adopt and adapt a wide variety of activities in order to build an ensemble feel on set. Weir's early training has undoubtedly influenced his evolution as a director, but it is unlikely that it has fundamentally determined his overall approach to directing film actors, which has evolved so profoundly over the last thirty years.

Donald Crombie[4], like Peter Weir, emerged as a filmmaker in the mid 1970s, having also previously worked for the CFU in the 1960s.[22] In contrast to many of the filmmakers discussed in this dissertation, however, he originally came from a theatre background, training in NIDA's early production course. There he learned various acting techniques – specifically those of "the various masters of acting techniques". He recalls that the emphasis at NIDA was on Stanislavski.[23]

Although he has read Brecht, Stanislavski and Strasberg, Crombie does not himself bring any particular approach to the set.[24] He claims that he probably follows the Stanislavksi method when working with actors "because inevitably in rehearsal we will be following the "Who am I?" "Where am I?" "Where do I come from?" "What do I want?" line."[25]

Script analysis is critical for Crombie and he studies it in detail, analysing it, breaking it into acts, "find(ing) the rhythms, the pacing, the dramatic crescendos."[26] He also places great weight on character analysis, claiming that he is probably more influenced by Stanislavski than by others.[27] He writes a history for characters – from childhood right up to the point where the

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[4] **Donald Crombie**
Filmography: Who Killed Jenny Langby (1974), Caddie (1976), The Irishman (1978), Cathy's Child (1979), The Killing of Angel Street (1981), Kitty and the Bagman (1982), Robbery Under Arms (1985), Cyclone Tracey (1986), Playing Beatie Bow (1986), The Alien Years (1988), Heroes (1988), Fear in Fun Park (1989), Heroes II: The Return (1992), Rough Diamonds (1994), Selkie (2000).[4]

script begins,"[28] although he also does expect the actor to do his/her own preparation. This focus on given circumstances of the character is very much a Stanislavskian trait.

In Crombie's case, it appears that his original training in theatre, where he was steeped in the craft of acting, has indeed profoundly influenced his approach as a director - he is actor-focussed and his method involves careful collaboration with actors to develop character. By his own admission, he uses the Stanislavskian method, which he learned at NIDA, in at least part of his key work with actors and accordingly, his NIDA training has had a marked influence on his later work.

George Ogilvie[5], like Crombie, also comes from a theatre background and is described in the Oxford Companion to Australian Film as someone who is constantly referred to as an "actor's director."[29] Unlike many Australian film directors, Ogilvie has himself worked extensively as an actor, teacher and director of theatre, ballet and opera. He trained with Jacques Lecoq in Paris and has taught at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. As a director, Ogilvie says he has been particularly influenced by actors, especially Mel (Gibson) and Bryan Brown. He acknowledges that he learnt by

> watching them – how they behave, what they take notice of, how they prepare, watching things like a walk.[30]

As someone with early performance training himself, he is a director for whom learning to communicate with actors has never been an issue[31] and he has often worked with both young and inexperienced actors. Not only has he worked across media and therefore influenced and been influenced by a wide variety of actors, but he is also unusual in having influenced a number of his directing colleagues as well. George Miller, for example, credits Ogilvie with having been a powerful influence on his learning how to direct actors. He found Ogilvie's ability to work with actors as an ensemble (even during filming), his capacity to take account of style and rhythm, and his notion of "seepage"[32] extremely valuable. Miller and the other directors on the television mini-series, *The Dismissal (1983)*, observed that Ogilvie's ideas of rehearsal and his capacity for workshopping with actors had a profound effect on the actors and the film performances.[33]

Ogilvie's ideas about how to work effectively with actors are discussed in more detail in the next section but it is clear that he has evolved many of his own unique processes for directing

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[5] **George Ogilvie**
Filmography: Lucrezia Borgia (1977)(Opera), The Shiralee (1988), MacAuley's Daughter (1988), The Last of the Ryans (1997), Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1985), Shortchanged (1986), Place at the Coast (1987), The Crossing (1990).[5]

actors. He considers that style and genre place different demands on the actor and believes that many varying approaches can be used for different work. There is little doubt that his own training as an actor has fundamentally influenced the way he works as a director, because he intrinsically understands the actor's process and the craft of acting, and this has shaped how he works with actors in film. Like Peter Weir, he works primarily to encourage the actor to find the freedom required for creativity and performance. For Ogilvie, the director's job "is to 'open the door' for the actor, and there are all sorts of ways to open those doors."[34]

Richard Franklin[6], like Don Crombie and George Ogilvie, also received formal tertiary training in his craft. More unusually, however, he is one of the few Australian film directors who trained as a filmmaker in America. Surprisingly, he says that when studying at UCLA in the late 1960s, he "learnt nothing of the actor's craft."[35] Instead, he later studied acting in depth privately through a crash course with Delia Salvi, and through his own study efforts, reading works such as the writings of the theatre director Harold Clurman, and Edward Eastey on Method. By his own admission, he likes the work of Harold Clurman, or at least Clurman's 'take' on the Method, but is open to whatever works for actors, preferring not to favour any particular approach to acting.[36] Rather than his original training at UCLA, it is Franklin's own experience of directing actors, together with his private efforts to learn about specific ways of working with actors, which have most influenced his processes for working with actors as a director.

Like many of the other New Wave directors, Carl Schultz[7] learned his craft on the job, although his approach to directing has "evolved over a long period of time, both from reading books on the subject, as well as from observing other directors (and) working with actors."[37] Having previously worked as a camera-man at the ABC for several years before he started directing, he says he had the opportunity to watch many directors at work in different situations with actors, which was extremely valuable. Indeed, he says,

> This I consider to be even more valuable than the many and varied theoretical approaches one finds in books.[38]

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[6] **Richard Franklin**
Filmography: The True Story of Eskimo Nell (1975), Fantasm (1976), Patrick (1978), Roadgames (1981), Psycho II (1983), Cloak and Dagger (1984), Link (1986), Beauty and the Beast (1987), F/X 2 (1991), Running Delilah (1992), Hotel Sorrento (1995), Brilliant Lies (1996),[6]Adventures of the Lost World (2002).

[7] **Carl Schultz**
Filmography: Blue Fin (1978), Patrol (1978), Goodbye Paradise (1983), The Dismissal (1983), Careful He Might Hear You (1983), Bodyline (1984), Bullseye (1987), Travelling North (1987) The Seventh Sign (1988), Which Way Home (1990), Young Indiana Jones Chronicles: Indiana Jones and the Mystery of the Blues (1992), Deadly Currents (1993), Curaao (1993), To Walk With Lions (1999) .[7]

His own views on directing actors, as discussed in the following section, appear to suggest that his original training has not specifically determined his overall evolution as a director as far as working with actors is concerned.

Tracing the Tide

Because they did not answer my survey, the rest of this analysis of the New Wave directors is based on secondary resources. The remaining directors to be explored include: Bruce Beresford, George Miller, Fred Schepisi and Gillian Armstrong.

Bruce Beresford[8] is part of the same revival generation of 1970s Australian filmmakers who learned about filmmaking 'on the job' and who has had an extensive career, working across genres and continents. There is no one aspect of his early experience as a filmmaker, however, which stands out as specifically shaping his overall approach to working with actors.

Beresford initially worked as a film and television trainee at the ABC after leaving school and then made his first feature whilst at Sydney University studying liberal arts.[39] Prior to the period in the 1970s when he began making significant Australian feature films, he was editor of a government film unit in Nigeria[40] (where he also directed plays) and he then had a lengthy stint as the head of the production department of the British Film Institute where he honed his understanding of script development and both produced and made a large number of films.[41]

Nothing specific about Beresford's early experiences stands out as having pre-determined his overall approach to directing actors and, in fact, it is difficult to specifically identify the key processes he uses when working with actors on performance. However, Beresford's directorial work has, uniquely amongst the directors considered for this dissertation, been very much defined and controlled by his strict storyboarding of every scene, and it appears that this was something he learned in the practical world of filmmaking rather.

Like Weir and Beresford, George Miller[9] learned about directing by doing it and learning from directing colleagues. While his early work on the *Mad Max* films was very action-focussed, he says there was not much scope for performance in the ones he directed.[42]

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[8] **Bruce Beresford**
Filmography: The Adventures of Barry McKenzie (1972) Barry McKenzie Holds His Own (1974), Don's Party (1976), Alvin Purple (1983), The Fringe Dwellers (1984), The Getting of Wisdom (1977), Money Movers (1979), The Club (1980), Breaker Morant (1980), Puberty Blues (1981), Tender Mercies (1982), King David (1985), Crimes of the Heart (1986), Driving Miss Daisy (1989), Mr Johnson (1990), Black Robe (1992), Silent Fall (1994), Last Dance (1996), Paradise Road (1997), Double Jeopardy (1999), Evelyn (2001), Bride of the Wind (2001), and Starring Pancho Villa as Himself (2003).[8]

[9] **George Miller**
Filmography: Mad Max (1979), Mad Max 2 (1981), The Twilight Zone: The Movie (1983), Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1985), The Witches of Eastwick (1987), Lorenzo's Oil (1992), 40,000 Years of Dreaming, (1996) Mad Max: Fury Road (2004 – in production).[9]

After *Mad Max*, Miller did a short acting course at The UCLA to learn more about acting.[43] It seems that the turning point for Miller came in 1982 during his collaboration on *The Dismissal.* He acknowledges that he was profoundly influenced by the actor-focussed work of the director George Ogilvie, despite Ogilvie's never having worked with a camera prior to that project.[44] Ogilvie oversaw the acting workshops and after observing them, Miller seized on Ogilvie's idea of "seepage". In explaining what he means, Miller says: "…it is all seeping into you, you attack it on many fronts, and come out with the group having, almost by osmosis, developed a collective focus towards the work..."[45] Miller says that that project was "all performance oriented...(and that) in the end what matters most is the performance, and how it serves the story."[46]

Miller also cites directing a short play as one of the critical things, which changed his approach to performance.[47] Right from the outset, however, Miller was engaged in filmmaking as a collaborative process with both directors and actors. He believes that "collaboration with your actors is one of the greatest tools you have, and it is always so exciting to watch an actor who can take a part and make it their own..."[48]

Fred Schepisi[10], in contrast to the previously mentioned directors, began his film career in the related field of advertising, but like many of his contemporaries he also learned about filmmaking simply through doing it, initially with documentaries, short films and television commercials. He joined the Melbourne arm of Cinesound in 1963, later becoming its manager, before buying its production facility in 1966 and renaming it as the Film House, his own production company.[49]

He did not adopt any specific approach to directing initially, relying instead on working with skilled actors like Arthur Dignam and Robyn Nevin who were of great assistance to him on *Libido*.[50]

Schepisi has worked with many experienced actors right from the outset of his career and has always worked with his actors in a very respectful and collaborative fashion, engaging them in

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[10] Fred Schepisi
Filmography: Libido (1973), The Devil's Playground (1976), The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (1978), Barbarosa (1982), Iceman (1984), Plenty (1985), Roxanne (1987), Evil Angels (1988), The Russia House (1991), Mr Baseball (1992), Six Degrees of Separation (1993), I. Q, (1994), Fierce Creatures (1997), Last Orders (2002), Picasso at the Lapin Agile (2003), Baseball Triple Play (2003), It Runs in the Family (2003). [10]

the process and gently guiding them towards what he wants - arguably in a fashion akin to George Ogilvie's notion of seepage.

There is insufficient material written about him, however, to assess whether his early experiences have substantially influenced his overall approach to directing actors over time. Given the fact that he did not receive any formal training in filmmaking and given the evolution of his three-decade career, which has been marked by a number of extraordinary and diverse films featuring a number of internationally renowned actors, it seems more than likely that his ideas have developed and changed over time rather than having been pre-determined by his early experiences.

Gillian Armstrong[11] was one of the first AFTRS directing students, having previously completed art school and film studies at Swinburne Technical College (now University of Technology) in 1971. She specifically acknowledges that she went to the AFTRS to continue to learn about filmmaking, and "to learn a lot more about working with actors."[51] She also credits Fred Schepisi, whom she had the opportunity to observe whilst working in a minor crew role in 1971, as a powerful influence upon her directing.[52]

From the outset, Armstrong's films (as discussed in the following section) have been characterised by strong performances by her actors. Armstrong has evolved her processes for directing actors over her directing career, learning from the many eminent actors with whom she has worked, constantly adding to the actor-focussed approach, which was evidenced so early in her career after her graduation from the AFTRS. Whether or not her Swinburne or AFTRS training has determined the sort of director she has become is difficult to assess. However, it is clear that right from the time of her early training that (a) she was committed to learning to work with actors in a way which respected the craft of acting and the actor's process and (b) she endeavoured to learn the actor's language.

While the directors discussed so far ostensibly were influenced by their early experiences in filmmaking and, for some, were also influenced by their formal training (which has provided some of them with a broader understanding of various key theoretical notions about directing actors), the unifying thread linking the evolution of the directing processes of this group of directors is that their directing tends to be most profoundly influenced by their actual 'on the

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[11] **Gillian Armstrong**
Filmography: The Singer and the Dancer (1974), My Brilliant Career (1979), Starstruck (1982), Mrs Soffle (1984), High Tide (1987), Fires Within (1991), Last Days of Chez Nous (1992), Little Women (1994), Oscar and Lucinda (1998), Charlotte Gray (2002).

job' directing experiences over time. This learning process operates on several levels: directors learn from their own individual experiments; they learn from pioneering directors and their individual directing mentors; they also learn from their immediate colleagues – both other directors and actors, and they also pass on the information they garner to aspiring and emergent filmmakers who may be following in their footsteps. The sorts of ideas and activities they learn about directing are sometimes systems-based practices and on other occasions they evolve unique and individual ways of working with actors on film.

The New Breed and Emerging Directors

Baz Luhrmann,[12] is the most eminent of the new breed of directors considered in this dissertation and has a very technical and informed understanding of acting methodologies (including Stanislavski), having trained at NIDA as an actor before becoming a director. Lurhmann's background is unusual in that he also worked with Peter Brook on the *Mahabarata (1989)* very early in his career. In his response to my survey, Baz Luhrmann acknowledged that his actor training at NIDA helped equip him to direct actors effectively. His films contain some extraordinary (and often highly stylised yet truthful) performances, which make extreme demands, both physically and vocally on the actors. His early training, in this sense, ostensibly has had a profound impact on his directing of actors where highly evolved technical skills are required of actors. Luhrmann said that, while it is not absolutely essential, it does help having had some extra years and experience in terms of finding a language to communicate with actors.[53]

Perhaps the most significant influence on his film directing which comes from his theatre background, in addition to his acute understanding of the craft of acting, (particularly in Stanislavskian terms given his NIDA training) is Luhrmann's ability to cross genres. In his key films to date, he has refashioned and relocated both classic drama and the Hollywood musical. His work mixes satire, musical, comedy and tragedy, relying greatly on extravagant art design, stylised choreography and caricature. Luhrmann has also directed opera, most notably his innovative production of *La Boheme*. This history makes him an intriguing director to consider in this analysis, because the styles of his works vary enormously and the technical skills he requires of his actors in terms of facility with language, movement and facility with style are considerable.

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[12] **Baz Luhrmann**
Filmography: Strictly Ballroom (1992), William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet (1996), Moulin Rouge (2001).[12]

Cherie Nowlan[13] worked her way into the film industry and has diligently acquired considerable knowledge about how to work with actors through self-training, including some short AFTRS courses, specifically writing courses. She claims that she comes at performance from a writing approach,[54] but she has also studied improvisation with Gale Edwards and voice with Bill Pepper. She worked around the filmmaking scene for some five years before moving into directing and in the early days she felt that she needed to learn what it was like for actors first-hand, hence her participation in a number of workshops.

She found Gale Edwards' improvisation classes highly instructive for her work, but was most profoundly influenced by Michael Gow. She says that sitting in on rehearsals with Michael Gow was for her "seminal". When she observed him at work directing an "impenetrable"[55] play, she noted that he did not discuss meaning. Instead he allowed "revelation of meaning through choreography, improvisation and props."[56]

Having only made one feature film to date, it is difficult to assess how her early training may have affected her evolution as a director and her work with actors, however, her understanding of technical aspects of acting craft and the value she places on her actor's technical proficiency in terms of their skills levels (as discussed in the next section), together with her ability to analyse text in discussion with her actors, her use of improvisation in rehearsals and the notion of revelation through props would appear to have grown out of what she has learned through her own training.

As one of the more experienced contemporary Australian film directors, Mark Joffe[14] began his directing career in television with Crawford Productions and is best known for his outstanding ensemble films such as *Cosi* and *Spotswood.* I was unable to identify sufficient information about his work to assess how this background has influenced his evolution as a director in terms of working with actors.

Like Mark Joffe, Stephen Wallace[15] also began his directing career 'on the job', as a documentary writer, production assistant and director at Film Australia, before moving on to

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[13] **Cherie Nowlan**
Filmography: Thank God He Met Lizzie (1997).[13]

[14] **Mark Joffe**
Filmography: The Great Bookie Robbery (1986), Night Master (1987), Watch the Shadows Dance (1987), Shadow of the Cobra (1989), Grievous Bodily Harm (1989), The Efficiency Expert (1991), Cosi (1996), The Matchmaker (1997), The Man Who Sued God (2002).[14]

[15] **Stephen Wallace**
Filmography: The Love Letters from Teralba Road (1977), Stir (1980), The Boy Who Had Everything (1984), Mail Order Bride (1986), Hunger (1986), For Love Alone (1986), Prisoners of the Sun (1991), The Killing Beach (1992).[15]

make features and direct television. He is regarded by actors like Bryan Brown as being very much 'an actor's director'. He identifies as a Stanislavski-based director, who has adopted a number of other ideas from other practitioners and teachers, and appears to have developed his approach to directing actors mostly as he evolved as a director.

John Ruane[16] is another very 'actor-focussed' director who responded to my survey. In referring to his film school acting classes held over half a day a week for one term he recalls the experience of "becoming ''rocks', chocolate melting in the sun etc."[57] Though noting that he enjoyed the exercises, he questions whether or not they have helped him as a director. He concludes that "[they] must have, I suppose."[58] There is no clear evidence demonstrating whether or not his training has determined how he now works with actors.

In contrast to film-school-trained directors like John Ruane, George T. Miller[17] (not to be confused with Dr. George Miller discussed earlier) credits his on-the-job training at Crawford Productions as his training ground. He has not studied acting in any depth formally and has learnt about acting techniques through private study and reading, finding the works of Stanislavski most useful, especially for "truth".[59] Nevertheless, where actors relying on that approach become 'a pain in the butt', he also relies on the work of David Mamet.[60] In Miller's opinion, "acting is ninety percent instinct and ten percent technique."[61] He found learning to communicate with actors was difficult at the outset, but says

> then I read *An Actor Prepares* and instantly understood. Now I need Mamet to deal with what I learned.[62]

It is difficult to assess, in the absence of other evidence, exactly how Dr. Miller's earlier work has affected his work as a director, although it seems that his own private study has been a significant influence on his evolution as a director in terms of how he directs actors for performance.

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[16] **John Ruane**
Filmography: Hanging Together (1985), Feathers (1986), Death in Brunswick (1991), That Eye the Sky (1994), Dead Letter Office (1998).[16]

[17] **George T. Miller**
Filmography: The Man From Snowy River (1982), Five Mile Creek Vol 1 (1983), The Aviator (1985), The Far Country (1986), Cool Change (1986), Bushfire Moon (1987), Les Patterson Saves the World (1987), Miracle Down Under (1987), Spooner (1989), A Mom for Christmas (1990), The Neverending Story II (1991), Frozen Assets (1992), In the Nick of Time (1992), Over the Hill (1992), Gross Misconduct (1993), Goodbye, Miss 4th of July (1993), Andre (1994), The Great Elephant Escape (1995), Robinson Crusoe (1996), Tidal Wave: No Escape (1997), Zeus and Roxanne (1997), Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1999), A Christmas Visitor (1999), Cybermutt (2003).[17]

Although Rolf de Heer[18] completed three years of directing training at the AFTRS, he (somewhat surprisingly), asserts that he never studied acting technique in any depth, save for a one-week open program course at film school. He does not favour any approach to acting, accepting whatever works for each actor. He regards his approach when working with individual actors as 'instinctive'.[63]

As a writer-director, however, De Heer's background does influence much of his work with actors. While he does not formally break the script into beats, units, or objectives, de Heer claims that he already knows the objectives quite clearly, and he does undertake other kinds of textual analysis in conjunction with the actor.[64] His background in this sense does pre-determine at least part of his rehearsal process, although, as stated, his AFTRS training does not appear to have determined how he learned to work with actors.

Like Rolf de Heer, Peter Duncan[19] is another eminent directing graduate of the AFTRS. Though he has been influenced by the Stanislavski tradition, he does not favour any one approach to acting. Most important for Duncan is the constant task of analysing objectives and obstacles.[65] In this sense, nevertheless, his training at the AFTRS has clearly influenced his overall evolution as a director in terms of the core work he undertakes with his actors.

An outstanding female director who emerged in the 1990s is Ana Kokkinos[20] who is known for the gritty, emotionally-charged performances by her actors. She believes that she learned about the actor's needs

> through the process of writing itself (constructive character, story etc.), through reading books about approaches, and through experience, trial and error.[66]

Trained at the VCA, Kokkinos regards her experience at film school as a "minimum introduction to working with actors."[67] Never having worked as an actor herself, she supplemented her training on this issue by her own study.[68]

AFTRS-trained Rowan Woods[21] considers that it would be folly to favour any particular approach to acting. Rather, he feels that one should "judge and cast an actor on their

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[18] **Rolf de Heer**
Filmography: Tail of the Tiger (1984), Encounter at Raven's Gate (1988), Dingo (1992), Bad Boy Bubby (1993), Epsilon (1995), The Quiet Room (1996), Dance Me To My Song (1998), The Old Man Who Read Stories (2001), The Tracker (2002), Alexandra's Project (2003).[18]

[19] **Peter Duncan**
Filmography: Children of the Revolution (1996), A Little Bit of Soul (1997), Passion (1999).

[20] **Ana Kokkinos**
Filmography: Antamosi (1991), Only the Brave (1994), Head On (1998).[20]

performance not on how they got that performance."[69] While he does break scripts into beats and units, as well as analysing character objectives and obstacles, he says this process is not strictly along Stanislavskian lines.[70]

His approach to casting has been profoundly influenced by his own experience as an actor at auditions, where he realised the shortcomings of the process and he believes that many otherwise talented actors perform badly at auditions. Accordingly, he tries to "see their past performances on tape or on stage, rather than treating the audition process as the be all and end all."[71] Woods' own experience as an actor and his training at the AFTRS arguably have equipped him to understand the language of directing from an actor's perspective.

Although he did not undertake formal training, James Bogle[22] has undertaken AFTRS short courses and otherwise trained as a 16mm first assistant director and camera assistant. He stands apart from his contemporaries on certain levels because of his extensive use of improvisation with his actors. He has taken much from the techniques of Mike Leigh[72] and employs additional story building and character development exercises in his work with actors. In general, he has evolved his own approach during his working career rather than being shaped by his initial training.

Even though Pauline Chan[23] also trained at the AFTRS, one aspect of her directing process which distinguishes her from most of the directors in this study is her extensive background and ongoing employment as an actor. After originally training as an actor in Hong Kong, she worked as an actor for ten years before turning to directing. In addition to studying Stanislavski and Mamet, she has also studied the Chinese traditional theatres and Chinese Opera.[73] While Chan does not favour any particular acting/directing approach, she does believe that there is a difference between instinctive and technical actors. She considers that

> instinctive actors are more natural in general, but that good technical actors can often hide their techniques.[74]

Interestingly, she believes that many directors are afraid of actors because she feels "they don't understand how the actors work."[75] Chan has an acute understanding, both theoretically and practically, of how directors communicate. She also has a highly evolved level of personal

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[21] **Rowan Woods**
Filmography: The Boys (1998), Dogwoman (2000), Chopper (2nd Unit director)(2001).

[22] **James Bogle James Bogle**
Filmography: Stones of Death (aka) Kadaicha (1989), Mad Bomber in Love (1992), In the Winter Dark (1998).

[23] **Pauline Chan**
Filmography: Traps (1994).

understanding of the technical skills which are involved in acting. It is clear that her original training firstly as an actor, and then as a director at the AFTRS have profoundly shaped the way that she has evolved as a director in terms of how she works with actors on performance.

Shirley Barrett[24] trained at the AFTRS, though as a writer/director, and has also studied acting technique in some depth. Her survey response shows that she judges David Mamet's approach as interesting and resulting in some great performances. However, she does not personally favour any formulated acting approach.[76] Although she is happy to allow actors to work through objectives, beats and so on, she has found that most of the actors with whom she has worked have been instinctive actors and "seem to leave (technique) behind and just jump right in."[77]

While Barrett herself does not work through the script analysis in the way many directors do, she admits that because she is usually the writer-director, she is very clear with her script and what she is trying to do. Nevertheless, she works through the script in discussion with the actors, often providing the actors with "a written character history if they request it."[78] Indeed, she finds that actors usually look to her to clarify character issues. Her background as a writer-director, together with her training at the AFTRS ostensibly have been defining factors in her development as a director.

Another AFTRS-trained director, Craig Monahan,[25] in contrast to many directors surveyed for this project, admits to being influenced by his acting experiences (in amateur theatre) and by his work on commercials and documentaries.[79] Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain sufficient other evidence to assess whether or not his AFTRS training has, in any significant way, pre-determined his approach to working with actors.

Di Drew[26] is a graduate of the AFTRS and has also worked there as head of directing. Having directed for the theatre, television, mini-series, telemovies and feature films she has also taught in the directing field at various times.[80] Drew is primarily interested in truth in performance and she considers that the same core things are required in all acting, irrespective of the medium involved.[81] When recently interviewed by Adam Macaulay, Drew was adamant that any career

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[24] **Shirley Barrett**
Filmography: Love Serenade (1996), Walk the Talk (2000).

[25] **Craig Monahan**
Filmography: The Interview (1998).

[26] **Di Drew**
Filmography: Five Mile Creek, Vol. 2 (1983), Right Hand Man (1987), Trouble in Paradise (1992), Hildegard (2002).[26]

in film directing is something which is constantly evolving.[82] While she clearly has a profound understanding of craft and technique, which she seems to have acquired very early in her career, she is a director who is constantly evolving and open to change.

Other directors

George Whaley[27] is a critical figure in this discussion because of his influence as head of directing at the AFTRS from 1995 to 2001 (where he also continues to run general courses on "Actorphobia") and as a former acting teacher at NIDA, where he taught such eminent Australian film actors as Mel Gibson, Judy Davis and Steve Bisley.

George Whaley originally worked as an actor and then as an acting teacher. His shift into filmmaking followed later and as part of that transition he undertook part time studies at the AFTRS.[83] Given his definite alignment with Stanislavskian methods, his original background as an actor has most certainly shaped his evolution as a director, and given his influence on his many students whilst at the AFTRS, his ideas continue to shape many emergent directors.

Denny Lawrence,[28] a writer-director, is one of the limited number of directors who has studied at both NIDA and at the AFTRS, as well as with Stella Adler in America. He currently teaches screen skills for Screenskills Australia, in addition to producing the highly acclaimed *MDA (2003)* for the ABC. Although he has been partly influenced by the Stanislavski tradition, to some extent breaking scripts into beats and units, analysing character objectives and identifying obstacles, he considers his approach to acting is very much his own individual approach.[84] Clearly his early training as an actor, however, has been a significant influence on his understanding of the craft of acting and has informed how he, as a director, directs other actors, while his writing background informs how he uses the script in the directing process.

Gerard Lee,[29] like Denny Lawrence, is another writer-director and he uses a mix of ideas when directing. To date, he has directed only one feature film, although he co-directed a short film, *Passionless Moments*, with Jane Campion, as well as co-writing her renowned first feature film

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[27] **George Whaley**
Filmography: Clowning Around (1992), Dad and Dave on Our Selection (1995), The Harp in the South (1999), Poor Man's Orange (2001).

[28] **Denny Lawrence**
Filmography: Archer's Adventure (1985), Emoh Ruo (1985), Warm Nights on a Slow-Moving Train (1987), Afraid to Dance (1989).

[29] **Gerard Lee**
Filmography: with Jane Campion - Passionless Moments (1983); All Men Are Liars (1995).

Sweetie. An AFTRS script-writing graduate, Lee is still anxious about calling himself a director because of his limited directing experience. He believes that

> there is a real need for the actor/director relationship to be cultivated in Australia, (saying) too many directors are obsessed with lighting, camera angles, camera movement, lenses etc. and not enough with the face.[85]

Although Lee studied at the AFTRS, this has not determined his overall approach to his directing of actors and he has evolved his process with experience. His background as a writer, as it is for so many other writer-directors, is critical in terms of his understanding of character, motivation and structure. He regards himself as someone who is still learning about directing actors for performance.

A 'new kid on the block', Daniel Nettheim[30] studied under George Whaley at the AFTRS. He acknowledges that Whaley was both a good directing teacher and an important influence on his own development as a director.[86] Not surprisingly, given this background, he favours the Stanislavski approach to acting and in this sense, his early training has clearly influenced his development as a director.

The final feature film director who specifically responded to my survey was Michelle Warner,[31] a young director who studied film at the Queensland College of Art and who is eager to explore new ways of working with actors.

Warner regrets the fact that her film course skimmed over acting technique and since graduation has attended workshops with people like George Whaley and Nick Lathouris in her quest to learn more about working with actors. She says that she admires good technical actors because she believes that a technical actor has "tools he/she can use (and is) more likely to give a consistent performance.[87] She credits George Whaley with assisting her to acquire an understanding of Stanislavskian ideas and the language with which to communicate with actors.

Mel Gibson,[32] the final film director discussed in this chapter, was not part of my survey group of target directors. While he has been out of the Australian acting and directing loop for many years and is very much considered a Hollywood actor/director, I have included him in this

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[30] **Daniel Nettheim**
Filmography: Fat Cow Motel (2002)

[31] **Michelle Warner**
Filmography: Mr Pumpkin's Big Night Out (1998).[31]

[32] **Mel Gibson**
Filmography: The Man Without a Face (1993), Braveheart (1995), The Passion (2003).[32]

discussion for two reasons. Given that he was initially shaped by both his NIDA actor training and his working experiences with Australian directors like Peter Weir and George Miller,[88] it is arguable that he remains a relevant figure in relation to this dissertation. Furthermore, he continues to maintain influence on certain emerging actors and directors, for example, as demonstrated by his ongoing support of NIDA and occasional attendances to talk with final year NIDA students.

His early training at NIDA and experience as an actor, both here and in America, has clearly informed his views on effective directing, however, he has also evolved his ideas about directing actors for performance, to take into account his own unique views about directing and the actor's individual needs.

The above analysis reveals a number of trends. Formal training rarely, of itself, fundamentally determines a director's overall approach to directing actors, although elite training institutions like the AFTRS and NIDA, which teach a range of practical directing processes, may provide a director with an extensive vocabulary for communicating effectively with actors as well as a framework for structuring rehearsals. It is more common for directors to learn about directing from a variety of sources across the continuum of their working careers. Some directors have, of course, been influenced in fundamental ways by one or two key mentors early in their careers and may be heavily influenced to follow a particular core approach to directing as a result. Mentors may be teachers at training institutions or may be colleagues. For example, George Whaley has influenced many emergent directors through his teaching at the AFTRS while George Ogilvie has been a primary influence on George Miller. Most importantly, it seems that many directors simply engage in focussed private study (whether through readings or through participation in workshops or classes) in order to address the gaps they identify in their own knowledge as they evolve, observing other colleagues (both actors and directors) and experimenting through their own work with actors.

What course of action does a director take when he/she has an ensemble of actors with different training backgrounds and different methodologies or no training whatsoever, and how is this reflected in casting and rehearsal phases of the directing process?

Introduction

Apart from a few directors noting that their work with completely untrained or child actors might warrant the use of an acting coach/dramaturg or extra rehearsal sessions, nothing in my research revealed that the directors dramatically alter how they approach directing the actors

from a performance point of view when the actors come from dramatically different backgrounds with varying levels of experience. What seems more important in this context is the wide variety of activities which are available to directors when rehearsing actors. Casting inevitably is considered a critical process by all directors and, surprisingly, only a few directors indicate a distinct preference for working with trained actors. Rehearsals are generally not structured around methodological lines to specifically suit the actors as such, although the directors themselves may well include certain of their own preferred activities in their rehearsals, such as discussion about given circumstances and improvisations that are designed to explore and develop both character relationships, as well as an ensemble feeling generally.

Given the uneven amounts of information which each surveyed director provided, the following analysis regarding how directors work with actors, from casting through to rehearsals, varies dramatically in detail. In some cases, I have only been able to summarise briefly the relevant directors' process.

Pioneers and The New Wave Directors

Unfortunately, I was unable to locate any records of how Ken G. Hall ran rehearsals or how he worked with actors from different backgrounds, although it appears from what has already been noted that he was open to relying on the skills and guidance of his key actors to develop the overall performances of the ensemble. In sharp contrast, much has been recorded about how Charles Chauvel worked with his actors, most of whom came from very diverse backgrounds.

When Chauvel started making films there was no available pool of experienced sound-film actors. This meant that he was forced to work with many inexperienced actors. His willingness to cast unknowns meant that he regularly had to adapt to the individual actor's needs. He worked energetically with actors to create both the physical experience of the life of the characters and the characters' inner emotional experience, and according to his daughter, it seems that Chauvel worked hard to develop his actors.[89]

Chauvel gave great attention to casting, casting not just for looks but for inner personal qualities in his actors, as was reflected in the extensive casting process he undertook for *Jedda*. This is an aspect of a casting approach associated with Method directors like Kazan.

Chauvel's daughter recalls that he "had the ability to allow people to develop their own style,"[90] such as when he allowed Chips Rafferty to employ his habit of ad-libbing, because Chauvel felt that it brought out the actor's best performance. Carlsson, on her father's recruitment of actors,

says that he really wanted to know who he was getting and that he looked for 'inner qualities' in actors. She observed that he had "an uncanny knack of finding and recognising the potential in people."[91] Overall, she felt that her father's casting experience

> was very difficult because at the time there was no ready pool of trained film actors: screen acting was very different compared with stage acting and radio work. In the early days, these were the only actors, but as good as they were they needed re-training because they were not prepared for the degree of realism screen acting required.[92]

Sue Carlsson claimed that Chauvel "needed actors who would look good – that is, have presence and physical looks"[93] and she stressed that he filmed screen-tests with full makeup. She noted that he used to go and see as much work as he could so that he knew who was available. She also stated that he would look for potential actors wherever he could, even on trains, and would sometimes offer screen-tests on this basis. Sometimes he simply left casting to the assistant director, depending on the role.[94] However, she says a "proper casting process was conducted for each film."[95]

Whenever Chauvel's actors encountered difficulties, it seems that his wife regularly stepped in to assist. She would take the actors away in order to help them calm down, do a little rehearsal, and then return to the set. It appears from Elsa Chauvel's history of Chauvel's life that there were many times when she was also assigned to coach child and untrained players.[96] This is noteworthy because, although Chauvel did not necessarily undertake these activities himself, he was clearly respectful of actors' needs and ensured that someone could help with such problems on set. In this sense, he worked to ensure an environment of security in which the actors could perform. This is a recurring theme in the approaches of directors who have inherited Chauvel's legacy. Describing her parent's work, Carlsson placed great emphasis on the fact that her parents:

> discussed every aspect of their films – every line – and would rehearse little scenes at home to see how it would sound.[97]

Despite her father's vision, however, she was aware that without the opportunity of working with trained/experienced film actors, he was sometimes unable to extract the performance he wanted.[98]

Chauvel valued rehearsals and used to schedule some rehearsals before shooting began. Carlsson recalls that the actors would take their parts home to rehearse. Rehearsal also then occurred on set before each scene and Carlsson says that typically there were many takes.[99] When speaking of her father's work with actors on set, she says that he was calm and patient with actors – although he also demanded a lot of his actors, especially physically. She asserts "his vision was always about the finished product."[100]

Chauvel's need to cast the right person meant that he devoted a great deal of time and effort to the casting process and he was not necessarily influenced by whether or not an actor was trained or experienced. Chauvel clearly directed his performers very carefully and his often untrained actors required considerable guidance at times. His way of working was very respectful of the actors' needs and he was open to incorporating an actor's own ideas and was also willing to adapt to the actor's needs to the extent possible. He sought truth in the performances and attempted to create and environment which would enable a high level of genuine emotional connection with the character on the actor's part. Most importantly, he undertook a great deal of preparation, exploring the parts himself before directing the actors and he was open to creative ways of exploring the directing process with the actors themselves, as is typical of so many of the directors who have followed in Chauvel's stead.

Part of Peter Weir's unusual approach to developing an ensemble with his directors has already been discussed. However, there are many other unique and creative aspects to Weir's directorial practice, which make him unique amongst his contemporaries, when it comes to working with actors from very disparate backgrounds.

One of Weir's key objectives is to ensure that the director/actor relationship is based on trust, and this sort of relationship is integral to his spontaneous and flexible approach to working with actors. Indeed, his approach has been described as a "method of working (which) would appear to be seat-of-the pants, if not downright haphazard."[101] This reflects Weir's preference for working with actors 'intuitively'. Indeed, he has said that what he is searching for is the moment "when acting is not acting."[102]

Whilst shooting *Dead Poets Society*, Weir incorporated some quickly scribbled poetry written by one of the stand-ins to enhance a particular moment. This demonstrates his belief regarding the need to search constantly for moments of inspiration through which to release the character and story of the film. Weir immerses himself in the culture of the film set; in *Poets*, he reportedly "strode about like some Scottish poet of another era in jodhpurs, riding boots and tweed cap."[103]

The Truman Show has become somewhat controversial because of Weir's 'schizophrenia exercise' – an activity he instigated where he and the actors would chat on set in character even when not filming. It began because a documentary was being made at the same time about the making of the film and Weir says that this stimulated the actors to write their own very detailed backgrounds for the characters.[104] This use of a created back-story is a practice that fits within

the type of work undertaken by Stanislavski to identify imaginatively and explore the notion of the character's given circumstances.

Furthermore, Weir's use of improvisational techniques has apparently been especially suited to his work with actors like Robin Williams, who is well known for his improvisational flair. Weir's inclination to build an ensemble atmosphere on his set has extended on occasions to his housing actors together on location. For example, while shooting *Dead Poets Society*, he installed the seven boy actors in rooms along one hotel corridor so they could get used to living and working together as an ensemble. His objective was "to create an atmosphere where there was no real difference between off-camera and on-camera - that they were those people."[105] Similarly, in the making of *Mosquito Coast*, he organised to take the cast on a family picnic to help them develop their character relationships.[106] This focus on ensemble-building is again very much like Stanislavski's approach.

Right from the outset of casting, Weir immerses himself in his projects. He tries to make the process "very informal, camera running all the time (and he'll) improvise."[107] For example, where actors are becoming blocked, he will improvise an interview with them, asking questions about their character's life and decisions. As for rehearsal, Weir will not rehearse prematurely, unless it is specifically requested by major actors. He dislikes very formal rehearsals with the taping of floors and says: "It doesn't all happen until everyone's in costume and props. The invented world, the magic world, it comes alive."[108]

From his early beginnings as a filmmaker on *The Cars that Ate Paris,* his collaborators have regarded Peter Weir as a director who is carefully prepared, extremely calm on the set, and, through his preparation, freed of distractions so that he can focus on the creative aspects of the film. Even as early as 1974, Weir worked with a crew which had developed quiet signal systems so that he could work with his actors while the crew was setting up, thus getting extra rehearsal time on the set after doing a brief walk-through for the crew.[109]

At his early meetings with Weir for *The Truman Show*, Jim Carey noted that Weir arrived with a "book that he had made from press clippings and pictures from magazines and anything that inspired (him) to want to discover …that feeling of wonder or mystery."[110] During pre-production on *Witness*, Weir took Harrison Ford to an exhibition of Flemish school paintings because these had heavily influenced his photographic images for the film,[111] and during filming, a technical adviser was hired to coach the actors on the various tenets of the Amish faith. These are the types of extra activities Weir adopts to inspire his actors in their preparation and many actors who have worked with Weir specifically acknowledge his talent for releasing

performance. Jim Carey said that when he was struggling with Truman, Weir was able to nurture the part out of him with words of comfort, praise and encouragement.[112]

Amongst the directors I considered, Peter Weir is unique in the way he works with actors, investing extraordinary energy into the rehearsal process with his actors. While I did not identify any evidence that he has mentored any of the other directors discussed, his contribution to the general thespioprudence within the Australian film industry is enormous.

Don Crombie, like Peter Weir, adopts a variety of activities when working with actors and has worked with a great range of actors, including inexperienced child actors and internationally renowned actors. The most significant trait of his directing approach is that his is an actor-focussed way of working. He maintains a calm atmosphere on set and says of directing that "it's really about coaxing, encouraging, and praising another creative person to do their best, perhaps to discover something they hadn't thought about."[113] Based on anecdotal evidence, it appears that he believes that although some directors see actors as coming from an alien planet, he feels very comfortable about working with actors himself. He believes that he learned about acting from his time at NIDA and by talking about the process with friends.

His key work revolves around identifying the character's journey with the actors. To help the actor connect with the character's emotional journey, despite the vicissitudes of scheduling, Crombie has developed an emotional graph which when used assists the actor (at least in his experience) to avoid peaking in the wrong place. He describes the graph as follows:

> …(It is) an emotional graph which lays out in the form of a graph (scenes 1 to 100 across the bottom and the 'intensity value' up the side) (and he works) through the script with the actor putting an intensity value on each scene… that way, when the actor comes to work, she (sic) can look at the graph and 'place' herself emotionally.[114]

Where possible, Don Crombie tries to schedule emotionally difficult scenes for a little later in the shoot when the actors are more comfortable with each other.

While he feels that improvisation is often useful when working with children, he has concerns that when used to the extreme, improvisation leads to banal material. Nevertheless, he has used improvisation in rehearsal and even improvised an entire film on one occasion. He does not use story/character building exercises; rather he finds it helpful to suggest real people as character types to the actors[115] and sometimes he asks actors to imagine particular images to help them connect with the emotion of the scene during the process.

Like Chauvel and Weir, Crombie's approach to rehearsal and working with actors is directed towards developing an ensemble and carefully, creatively and truthfully evolved characters.

As with Crombie, it is George Ogilvie's original theatre training which has been the primary influence on his work as a director, and although he also understands the need to vary his rehearsal practices to suit the needs of filmmaking, he is equally actor-focussed in his directing work. In relation to film performance, Ogilvie talks about the need for "seeing it in the eyes". In a 2002 Radio National interview, he noted that there is a very big difference between film acting and acting in the theatre, although in many ways he says his approach to creating the world of the character is the same for both.[116] He feels that actors respond spontaneously to their surroundings, the director, the other actors, the place they are in, and that

> their response is influenced through the things which are there – what they feel… and smell.[117]

Accordingly, central to his approach is the actor's preparation, and an emptying of the self. Indeed, his approach is quite unusual in this sense. When asked if it is akin to meditation, he says:

> it's not akin to meditation – they *are* meditation ideas. Meditation is vital. Usually, actors appear with fear, for example, fear that they're not going to do the right thing – they want to please you. They're afraid that they're not up to it, worried about how they'll manage – all sorts of things. But there is only the work (the words), and the approach is to deal with it with love and trust …this is the way to the word. ..(One) must empty the fear and have courage, go forward and not be afraid…It's about emptying – filling up is the preparation.[118]

Ogilvie does not seem to have a preference for working with trained actors but does consider that actors "either have talent or they don't."[119] In recounting how he has worked with young and totally inexperienced film actors, Ogilvie says that the only thing he wanted of them was for them "not to perform, and to be at ease."[120] Once the actor releases in this way, he believes that the talent then shows through. In relation to character work, he considers character in great detail. He looks at character backgrounds and asks "What is the world of the scene?" He says that a director builds it by asking questions about what it is like, where it leads, and he uses imagination exercises with actors to do this.[121]

Acknowledging that different scenes require different lengths of rehearsal time,[122] he says that on the set a director "must make sure there is enough time to walk and talk with the actor.... never confront(ing) an actor in front of the crew!"[123]

Ogilvie is aware that actors often work in different ways and acknowledges that he too varies his approach depending on material. For example, he says that if one were to work on Brecht,

there is only one approach and that is to "touch the props …and the feeling of life comes through the props."[124]

What is particularly clear about Ogilvie's film directing is that he gives priority to detailed character creation and caters for meditative preparation by the actor. He also prioritises creating an environment of trust and respect in which to work with his actors, which is emblematic of Australian directing in general.

Richard Franklin did not have the advantage of training first as an actor and admits that he was afraid of actors until he "learned their process."[125] Having also worked with a great range of both experienced and inexperienced actors, however, he has demonstrated a great ability to overcome barriers in his directing work with actors.
By his own assessment, he tries to adopt a mixture when directing actors. However, central to all his work is an understanding of ensemble work, the value of improvisation in rehearsal and an understanding of Stanislavskian-like notions of script analysis and character development.

In terms of casting, he says that his process has adapted over time. Relying heavily on the casting agent to select a couple of people for each part, he acknowledges that he "used to meet but not 'read' actors - concerned only for the personality dynamic."[126] Franklin now lets actors read and finds that they usually want to.[127] His goal is to put together a great ensemble, preferring actors with some theatre background.[128]

Like many other directors in this study, Richard Franklin sometimes uses improvisation and character development exercises during rehearsal. Nevertheless, he feels that the most useful activities for rehearsal are: "open collaborative discussion, multiple read throughs, (and) block(ing) key scenes."[129] Although he agrees that he sometimes breaks the script into beats and units and analyses character objectives and obstacles, he states that this really depends on the material. As for character analysis, he will sometimes generate character biographies in collaboration with the actors.[130] During filming, he likes to do a no-pressure read through, followed by a half-speed, stop-start run/s for blocking, and he also likes to "start shooting sooner than expected to force energy up."[131] When unhappy with an actor's performance, Franklin opts to ask questions, focusing on other actors "to relax the person with the problem."[132]

As for rehearsal, which he regards as the actor's process, he considers that he is just there "to facilitate this."[133] He does not like to over-rehearse, preferring "just enough to make it fresh on the day."[134]

Carl Schultz does not have a set process for working with actors from different backgrounds, preferring to just rely on "good sense and reason"[135] and adjustment as required. He has found that children sometimes have special needs, and in some circumstances he has used a voice coach/dramaturg to work with them. He has also used a voice coach with children and when working with actors whose natural accent was foreign to English. In his opinion, playing games with children can be extremely helpful, and without being specific he says that he sometimes 'cheats' to get the performance required when he works with children.[136] Of rehearsals, he says that he used to allocate one to two weeks to the process but now finds that "just as good (a) result can be achieved by my spending time with each actor separately."[137]

Schultz has no preferred theoretical approach to acting, nor does he have a list of things which must be done in rehearsal. He says that he simply prefers to spend time with his actors,

> one-on-one, early in the production/rehearsal period, and discuss all sorts of things related to the particular role; their attitude, and understanding of who that character is, what they want, what their personal, psychological motivators are But trying not to go too far into the abstract areas; it rather depends on the particular actor, as to how you move the discussion to keep it on the track you need it to go. [138]

For adult actors who are experiencing problems, he finds relaxation is critical to solving the problem. Surprisingly, he says that he has seen dramatic, in fact "miraculous" results by giving "a blocked actor "Bach's Rescue Remedie treatment."[139] Calm on the set is, in his opinion, vital when working with "tricky" actors, as is common sense.[140]

Schultz sometimes uses improvisation during rehearsals, although he "would never go into a film without well scripted dialogue."[141] Considering improvisation as just one rehearsal tool, he still likes to give actors freedom. Occasionally, he encourages actors to make up the whole scene on the spot[142] and says that such scenes can provide a "nice relaxed exchange, which has a freshness."[143]

Carl Schultz adopts many different techniques in his directing and believes that the early one-to-one period is particularly critical when working with actors as one is not yet distracted by the technical needs of the set or other cast egos.[144]

Prior to this phase, he keeps an open mind while casting, welcoming surprises where, despite the fact that a particular actor may not fit his envisaged physical/temperamental type, such an actor "still suddenly makes the role come alive, in some interesting and surprising way."[145] He believes that once casting is done, eighty percent of the character is defined.[146] While this only

leaves twenty percent for his direction, because of the subtlety of the whole process, he still feels that "twenty percent of adjustment, is still huge."[147] Although for him casting "is the single most important thing you do in directing,"[148] he also appreciates that a performance can be saved or improved through editing.[149]

Tracing the Tide

Bruce Beresford gives great priority to the technical aspects of filmmaking, which in turn dictates how he works with his actors to a large extent, and the backgrounds of his actors apparently tend to be a secondary consideration. The story, and hence the script, are paramount and then comes the storyboard. He "pre-plans and storyboards the entire film from beginning to end, working closely with the production designer and the cinematographer".[150] Once he has worked out the angles of all his shots, he choreographs the action to show the cameraman and the actors what he wants.[151] Apparently, while this approach is greatly appreciated by the crew, actors are more divided.[152] Beresford takes the view that while some actors believe that a laboured delivery is acceptable if it is part of their approach, he has found that as a director he must often find other ways to pace the film. If this is not possible through directing the actor, it must be done through editing.[153] He has worked with both international stars and complete unknowns. Some actors have acknowledged that this storyboarding approach provides structure, while still allowing collaboration and some improvisation. Other actors believe that Beresford should adopt more improvisation. When interviewed after working with Beresford on *Crimes of the Heart*, Jessica Lange said:

> We could have done something extraordinary if we'd worked out the whole history of those sisters. I suggested … once that we do some improvisational work. He got off on this thing about how he had known an actor who, in preparation for a part, liked to put on a clown suit and jump around and do bizarre things. Bruce couldn't understand how that connected with creating a character.[154]

Robert Duvall, despite winning an Oscar for Beresford's *Tender Mercies*, similarly found Beresford's approach oppressive. Duvall believed that it is his own decision what he wants to do with a character and he will only take direction if he agrees with it.[155] He rejected the storyboarding approach to directing:

> I resent any concept where the structure for the actor is orchestrated the night before and brought on to the set.[156]

It appears that his major criticism was that Beresford limited his capacity to improvise. Ironically, Duvall did improvise a key scene, which suggests that Beresford's storyboarding can absorb improvisation that serves the film.[157]

Despite some criticisms, Beresford himself argues that he respects the contribution and skills of good actors and recognises that great actors will move beyond mere imitation.[158] He is credited with saying that there are two types of directors:

> those who want to tell a realistic story with good acting – a sort of filmed theatre (they are sometimes called actors' directors), and the others who may or may not guide actors but whose primary obsession is to create an exciting pattern and rhythm of moving images.[159]

Beresford thinks he is both[160] and he claims that he welcomes creative input from actors, crediting many of the good actors with whom he has worked as having contributed significant ideas and interpretations to his projects.[161]

Casting is a matter over which Beresford has always tried to maintain strict control and he auditions widely to find the best possible candidate.[162] He considers that he has great instincts for casting and almost always knows immediately whom to cast when he sees the actors.[163] He says,

> Once you've cast the right actor for the role then it tends to be a bit of a pushover and you don't have to do very much at all. If they're cast right, they're enthusiastic about doing it, you're enthusiastic about them doing it – it just sails through. It only becomes hell if you've made a mistake in the original casting …[164]

Beresford's work with inexperienced indigenous actors in *The Fringe Dwellers* is testament to his ability to draw impressive performances from non-professional actors, just as his ability to help draw out performances from experienced actors is demonstrated in the Oscar nominations of Robert Duvall (*Tender Mercies)*, Sissy Spacek *(Crimes of the Heart)*, and Jessica Tandy *(Driving Miss Daisy).* Surprisingly, he considers that the younger actors are, the easier it is for them to learn about the technical requirements of film acting and he thinks they are easier to direct because they are more trusting.[165]

In a recent interview, Beresford discusses in more detail than ever before what he needs in an actor. Ultimately, he claims that he wants an actor with:

> that ability to inhabit the character they play, to essentially become the character" which he regards as a gift rather than something which can be learned. For him, the key is for actors to be "thinking as the character would think (and…) feeling the emotions the character would feel" because the camera will photograph what is going on in the mind.[166]

It does not seem, from what is recorded about how he works with actors, that the different levels of skill his actors bring to a film dictate a change in his overall process, although he certainly admires and often relies on the technical skills which trained or experienced actors have to offer. Overall, he has a very structured approach to running rehearsals and filming, which includes a minimum level of flexibility to cater for both the experienced and inexperienced actor.

George Miller, like Bruce Beresford, has worked with both international stars and large numbers of extras. It seems that he has always welcomed the creative input of actors and has been willing to make adjustments during the filmmaking process to accommodate actors' suggestions. His approach to ensemble filmmaking is one that encourages an organic development of both the characters and the action in his films.

While I was unable to find specific examples of his rehearsal activities with actors, his admission that he was deeply influenced by working with George Ogilvie and the fact that he has adopted Ogilvie's notion of seepage when working with actors, nevertheless reveals that his directing practice is based in an organic and creative actor-friendly process, which is designed to stimulate and free the actor in his/her imaginative process and hence performance.
Fred Schepisi once said that he looks for an attitude, a personality and a possible ability in the actor; he then has to have the confidence to bring it out of the actor.[167] Throughout his career, he has worked with a mix of novice actors (as exemplified by the child-actors in *The Devil's Playground* (1976)) right through to extremely experienced actors, including a range of both American and British international film stars including, Meryl Streep, John Cleese, Michael Caine, Donald Sutherland, Steve Martin and Bob Hoskins, to name a few.

It does not seem to matter what specific backgrounds his actors have, because he seems to work equally hard to develop a rapport with all his actors, taking time to talk with them on set. He claims:

> a lot of directing happens when you talk to them in the camper in the morning, while they're being made up, on the phone the night before, frequently while you're …joking…or whatever. Whatever way they like to relax you do it then – you bring up something or they bring up something.[168]

Schepisi spent a lot of time in rehearsal on his early film *The Devil's Playground*, especially with the boy actors, and he gave each actor "a very definite character and biography, a nickname and an attitude to other people."[169] During the making of *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978) he hired an acting tutor (a theatre director) to work specifically with the Aboriginal cast. As his film career has evolved, Schepisi has worked with increasingly more famous actors, however, he still seems to take time to address their needs and shape an individual working relationship with his key actors.

Schepisi, like Weir, focusses on back-story as one of the critical elements to assist an actor to develop his/her performance. This detailed attention to his actors seems to have been his practice throughout his filmmaking career. When speaking about working with Schepisi on *Six Degrees of Separation*, Stockard Channing said that he has a

> keen idea of what he wants in a performance…he's a very technical director…once you have the information, you're allowed as an actor to give him what he needs. He doesn't talk about too much motivation.[170]

Discussing the same project, Donald Sutherland confirms that Schepisi "doesn't tell you what he wants. He insinuates his ideas gradually."[171] This statement is particularly telling because it reinforces the notion that the acting process typically relies on the psychology of the actor and the ability of the director to work creatively within an imagination-based process.

Gillian Armstrong is a director with an acute understanding of the imaginative process used by actors who is able to draw out extraordinary performances from both technically brilliant, experienced actors and complete beginners. Although she has been interviewed many times, Gillian Armstrong has rarely discussed her work with actors from a performance point of view, until an interview in *Second Take*, where she finally discusses in considerable detail her rehearsal process with reference to *Little Women*. She speaks specifically about character motivations and period influences on each character's situation and relationships.

From her early days in film, Armstrong has given great attention to casting, believing that though it may not be ninety percent of filmmaking as some filmmakers suggest, it is at least sixty percent.[172] She uses improvisation in auditions,[173] as well as set pieces, and if possible she likes to see how actors will interact together before casting them. On *Little Women* she used two pieces, "something emotional and something funny, so that there's a contrast, two different sides of the same character."[174] She has found that it is important not to "kill scenes from the script" because she says scenes overused in auditions can later go dead both for the director and the actor.[175] One strategy she used in the casting process for *Little Women* was to have the script-writer draft little extra scenes for the characters, especially lesser characters, to explore in the audition process.[176] She says that this is a 'Steven Spielberg practice'.[177] She has adjusted this practice and now often uses a scene from an earlier draft of the script: "one which is longer, so actors have more time to get stuck into it (and so she) can watch them for longer," [178] particularly where period dialogue will prove testing for the actor.

Armstrong believes that there are three key things which need to be done in rehearsals:

> …you are trying to help the actors find their characters. You have a chance to do some blocking of scenes, which allows a director time to go away and think about how to shoot them in advance … and you are also building up a working atmosphere of trust and respect so the actors can then take risks.[179]

Because she finds that everyone struggles with the early rehearsal period, she works hard to try to get people to relax. This is a lesson she learned early in her film-school career on *Satdee*

Night when one of her actors was extremely nervous and started sneaking beers during filming, ending up drunk. She also understands "the need to always find a sympathetic crew,"[180] observing that it is helpful to allow the actors time to get to know each other without the actual pressure of the film-making process.[181] Where actors have had to spend time together learning other skills necessary for a film, (such as on *Little Women* when Christian Bale and Winona Rider learned to ice-skate over a two-month period), she feels that this can greatly assist the early development of this team spirit.[182] In the actual physical rehearsals, Armstrong tries to find a way to break the ice using activities like theatre games; for instance, getting a group of actors in a room, giving them a ball and have them toss it at each other while shouting out character names.[183]

Armstrong says that her biggest tip is to use dancing in rehearsals, claiming that this is "the most fantastic way of bringing actors together."[184] Accordingly, on the first morning of her rehearsals for *Little Women*, she, her assistant director and her choreographer set up dance classes (specifically involving some period movements) together with some singing classes with a number of actors. Armstrong says that this is how they "got the ball rolling on building a group feeling."[185] The singing, in particular, was necessary for the carol scenes and Armstrong believes that it was a great way to begin because the actors 'clicked', enjoyed each other's company and cared about each other, feelings which she believes showed on the screen.[186]

Speaking of her approach to rehearsals generally, Armstrong says that she starts rehearsals in a casual way, "talking about the characters, the story and what it's about."[187] She thinks acting is about 'doing'. For her,

> there is a point where people have to get up and actually start working out where they would come into a room and how they would react to another character in the room. Through the actual physical aspect of rehearsing, they can begin to behave like the characters.[188]

She then works on just as if she were rehearsing a play, questioning who the character is and what the character would feel or do in particular situations.[189]

Armstrong is sensitive of the need to introduce the crew into the rehearsal phase in such a way as not to disrupt the developing ensemble feeling. This is one of the reasons why Armstrong insists on hair and make-up tests, as she finds this is a great way for cast and crew to begin to relate.[190]

Like Bruce Beresford, Armstrong carefully plans her films using storyboarding,[191] while also remaining sensitive to the actors' needs, especially those of young actors. On *Little Women*, she knew that she could do only two or three takes of really emotional scenes. She therefore limited

rehearsal on certain scenes and planned them deliberately so that the actors would not be exhausted during the filming of these scenes. Leading into a crucial scene, Armstrong also felt it important to shoot the previous scenes in order so that by the time the scene was shot, the actors "would know exactly who their characters are and how much the sisters cared about each other."[192] Armstrong believes that is was the best way to preserve spontaneity and honesty in the scene in order to bring it to life. Her direction was simple: not to act, just to 'listen and react'.

Armstrong talks respectfully about the preparation work undertaken by the *Little Women* actors - reading, researching, meeting relevant types of people, having discussions with counsellors about death and so on.[193] Armstrong herself undertakes considerable research about character and period. For example, during the pre-production phase on *My Brilliant Career*, she carefully investigated the state of the Australian accent of the time and went to horse-riding classes with a key actor.[194] Of *Charlotte Gray,* she says, that she and "Cate … managed to meet some of the women who were the real Charlotte Grays,"[195] while the male lead "spoke to a group of former French Resistance fighters."[196] Given this immersive approach to her work, when the actors in *Little Women* made suggestions about certain possible actions based on the actors' instincts regarding the characters, Armstrong responded positively, incorporating such suggestions. Certain improvised gestures in the film she regards as moments of real inspiration. In re-shooting a crucial scene of *Little Women,* Armstrong adopted a Weir-like approach by playing stirring music to help Winona cry, turning it down as the actor proceeded into playing the scene.[197] Her embracing of the actor's contribution has been a hallmark of Armstrong's work since her early collaboration with Ruth Cracknell on *The Singer and the Dancer.*

Armstrong compliments skilled actors and respects the actor's capacity to be truthful as well as technically aware. In describing Cate Blanchett's work on Charlotte Gray, Armstrong says:

> She was always an incredibly gifted actor (…and) technically, she's completely au fait. She understands what the lens is doing. She says 'Do you want me to slow that move down?' She can do so much and still stay in character.[198]

The New Breed and Emerging Directors

Like Armstrong, Baz Luhrmann operates in the international directing arena and has a demonstrated ability to direct actors from very diverse backgrounds. As a trained actor himself, he is extremely au fait with the actor's language and has a detailed technical knowledge of acting methods. It appears that while Luhrmann operates from a strong Stanislavkian base himself, he also relies on many other approaches tailored to the individual actor's needs. Improvisation and respect for text are core aspects of his work and he has, to date, demanded

extraordinary levels of skill from his actors in terms of voice/language and movement/choreography. He also has a profound understanding of style and genre, and is able to steer his actors through the dangers which accompany such artforms to nevertheless, achieve truth in character and performance.

When interviewed for *Urbancinefile* after the release of *Moulin Rouge*, Nicole Kidman was very complimentary about Luhrmann's directing practice, explaining that he demanded six months of his actors for rehearsal including two hours of improvisation every day.[199] She also noted that he had her watch all the great musicals as part of her preparation for the role. Her own discussion of how she approaches preparing the 'arc' of the character indicates the influence of Stanislavskian notions in her approach to acting.[200]

Luhrmann has found each actor to be very individual in his/her own process, and because of this he sees that it is his job to "decode and understand the individual needs of each actor."[201] Identifying actor difficulties as usually being linked to their fear of the complexities of the role, he stated that he attempts to "disarm that fear in any way I possibly can."[202] Of casting, Baz Luhrmann says that his process is extremely thorough; trying as he does to ensure that he has seen every possible candidate.

Cherie Nowlan, like Luhrmann, believes in the value of an extensive casting process and she has been profoundly influenced by the experience of working with extraordinary actors, although she has worked with both inexperienced and highly accomplished actors. It is her belief that one can limit the opportunities for having difficulties with actors by working through a good casting process. However, where problems arise, she tries "to change the choreography in frame and their business."[203] She says that if this does not work, she will "get another actor to do something to them."[204] Right at the outset of casting she works out what individual actors will require of her and starts to plan her direction. She acknowledges how much actors help her. Indeed, she finds that seeing them work through scenes in the casting process often helps her to work out how to do a scene. She also does role-plays and, in fact, she personally plays out the parts with the assistant director and people from the camera team on location.[205]

As part of her own preparation, she likes to work through the script carefully, breaking it down into units, objectives and obstacles[206] Because of time and budgetary restraints, Cherie Nowlan's rehearsals are usually dictated by practical issues. She works through rehearsal talking about the screenplay, characters, and objectives. It is up to the actors to go away and work out their character beats and journeys, because she says she has hired them for their expertise and what they can bring to the project. Nowlan says she has

> no more need to know about needs of actors than F stops… the less I have to say the better. My conversations with actors are more to do with choreography and business.[207]

One of Nowlan's cautions is, "Don't imagine you're an acting teacher if you're not,"[208] and she points out that a director should stay out of the acting arena unless one is workshopping in a Mike Leigh fashion.[209] For Nowlan, the writer performs the role of dramaturg and sits in on rehearsals to help with questions. She is very open to working collaboratively with her key actors.

Nowlan regards line readings as amateurish and appreciates that actors do not like them. Accordingly, when it is the first time on the set, she does not tell the actors her view, rather, she describes what she wants. She has learned that her perception of what takes work becomes skewed on set, saying that trying to get different views can be difficult. She says that in her experience, if she gets fifteen or sixteen takes, it will inevitably be the first take which is right. She says that "what the actor has done instinctively in the rushes is right."[210] For this reason she usually says to the actor "I've probably got this already - please bear with me," when asking for further takes.[211] In accordance with what she learned from Michael Gow, she says that "choreography and business are always the first things I go to," because of how this allows revelation in performance.[212]

Nowlan works on performance once she says "action". Indeed, she says that one cannot know what an actor is going to do until this point. Citing Cate Blanchett as an example, she says,

> I never know what they're going to do until I say action. This was especially true of Cate Blanchett – I'd have no idea what was coming until that point and it was always a wonderful surprise.[213]

While Nowlan will use improvisation during filmmaking, she will replace lines only when necessary. This is particularly because of the difficulties improvisation causes during post production sound, where the absence of a script becomes a nightmare. Her interest in improvisation is "more to do with impro between words and lines."[214] Nevertheless, she encourages the process, finding that improvisation can help with choreography and allows about ten percent room for change.[215]

Nowlan understands that the filmmaking process can be very tiring for the actors, elaborating that it is important to support the actor's process by being respectful, keeping people quiet on the set and out of the actor's eye-line, and adjusting to the individual actor's needs on the day.[216] Hers is very much an actor-focussed process, which includes a variety of activities that are designed to help the actor explore the character and the action.

Mark Joffe, as previously noted, is best known for his films involving outstanding ensembles of actors. It is not surprising, therefore that he has no set preference for acting style, regarding the filmmaking process as a collaborative one. Relying on his instincts as a filmmaker, he encourages "flexibility, ambition and generosity within the whole team."[217]

He feels strongly about the need to test actors while casting. Acknowledging that casting is painful for the actors, he says that: "it is necessary to keep an open mind with regard to the potential of the actor tested."[218] He also says that a variety of readings highlight both the actor's and the script's strengths and weaknesses. No matter how bad an actor is, he believes that the casting process should be a supportive experience.

Joffe also ensures that rehearsals are a supportive experience for his actors, mainly because he wants his actors to be comfortable with each other, their characters and with him. He starts the process with

> early read throughs for general discussion about everything - eventually breaking down into specific scenarios later in the process…" this all depends on the actors involved - some require clarification rather than the need to rehearse or over-rehearse.[219]

He claims that it is essential that he is flexible and open to change, understanding that there is always potential to improve on the actual film set.

When working with actors who appear to have difficulties, he tries to cultivate a positive and encouraging atmosphere, specifically to take the pressure off such actors.[220] Joffe works on performance right from the outset of rehearsal, believing that this is the practical time for such work. Improvisation is an activity he is willing to allow during filming, but only if it does not feel or sound artificial. For Joffe, improvisation must not be overdone or obvious. Searching fundamentally for honesty and reality within the character, he believes that this is a good starting basis for improvisation.[221]

Stephen Wallace, as an actor's director, is also able to mould his process around the needs of his actors. He acknowledges that he has used Mike Leigh's method of improvisation in casting and he finds that this is particularly useful where the actual film is to be improvised. Believing that it is best to talk to actors before the casting session if possible, he asserts that it is important to follow one's "gut reaction" in casting.[222] Noting further that normally two scenes are required in casting, he likes to provide these to the actors three to four days in advance.

In rehearsal, he likes a general workshop followed by a long rehearsal and research period. He will use an accent coach, children's coach and even an acting coach if he deems that any of

these will be helpful. Where an actor seems to be having a problem, Wallace tries to analyse the problem and talk to the actor. He approaches personal problems in one way and acting problems in another. For any acting problem, he tries to break the particular issue down into parts, adding that "playing actions solves most things."[223] He finds that a common problem with performance is that the actor may simply be playing emotion. In his view, a director can elicit the best results by asking the actor in question to play actions on the other actor, and, although he acknowledges that this does not always work, he finds it can be helpful.

Wallace feels that allowing improvisation during filming can be good, if it is controlled. While he notes that its faults are that it is "repetitive and rambling, (he says) its virtue is that it can be spontaneous... unexpected and truthful."[224]

John Ruane has worked with extremely experienced actors like Same Neill, Peter Coyote and Nick Lathouris as well as with untrained novice actors. As with the majority of other directors considered, John Ruane believes that casting is everything, adding "what do directors contribute if not casting?"[225] He argues that

> seventy to eighty percent of what you're going to do as a director (is casting) – if the story works and the actor works you have a film.[226]

He has observed through the casting and the rehearsal process that both the director and the actors learn the story. Ruane's rehearsal process is one that he has developed himself. He considers himself "self taught,"[227] asserting that the best way to talk with actors is simply through knowing the script, "a process that continually evolves over the course of a production."[228] He uses questions irrespective of whether or not he feels he knows the answers, in order to engage the minds of the actors during rehearsal. For Ruane, it is all about listening, learning, weighing up ideas and then commenting. He starts his rehearsal process by gathering the actors together to read through and chat about the script. The following day, he chooses scenes to re-read and has the actors act them out. He then shares his own observations, avoiding over-rehearsing.[229]

Where an actor is in difficulties, he has found that "just talking" is the key. On some occasions, he believes that asking another actor his/her opinion can be helpful, but more typically, he and the actor in question simply talk through the problem and

> tell each other stories…work around things, then come back to the problem (and) the theme of the work.[230]

In his experience, getting an actor to perform a scene "over-the-top a bit then…pulling it back"[231] has sometimes been helpful. Like a number of directors, he employs improvisation

during filming only to a minor degree. He likes to address script and line problems earlier in the rehearsal process, and otherwise respects the script, which he says "exists for a reason."[232] Trust, good humour, storytelling and communication are the elements which he believes are critical in directing.

Ruane blocks scenes before they are shot and walks through each scene a few times, doing a scene at full speed once.[233] Ultimately, Ruane believes that the director's real job is to recognise when the right performance is being given. He says that respecting performers is the key to communicating with them effectively:

> I love actors, it's such a difficult job. I always let them try anything they like (even if I know the approach is wrong) because once it's done, performed like that everyone knows if that approach works. (He finds that) 8 or 9 times out of 10 the actor is right.[234]

He prefers exploration during rehearsal rather than on set.

As a writer-director, Ruane says all the character dialogue out loud himself. He also listens very carefully to actors in their castings, readings and rehearsals. Sometimes they improve on his dialogue and this helps him with re-writing.[235] For him, it is critical for the actor and director to "be making the same film" and his strategies are designed to ensure that this happens.

Noting that actors and crew are in a completely different space, he claims the director needs to be able to blend them together. For him there is no difference between stage and film actors, that "they're just people – approach it from story."[236]

Searching widely to cast his films, George T. Miller relies heavily on casting agents, and he likes to be shown a variety of styles for the role.[237] He does not care what approach the actors use, and is open to what the actors bring to the part. As with the other directors surveyed, he has worked with a wide variety of actors and has also faced the added burden of working on complex action scenes involving large numbers of extras. He considers acting a very technical craft and is very clear that his work with actors is shaped around a mix of set approaches.

Miller engages in detailed script analysis and makes a point of trying to fix script problems by drawing on the following three approaches: Linda Seeger's approach to creating unforgettable characters, John Truby's structure analysis, and "The Hero's Journey" viewpoint.[238] During pre-production, he also prepares a detailed shot-list and undertakes careful character analysis.

Apart from a set period of discussion (about the character, plot and backstory[239]) and a read through to "listen to the 'music' of the dialogue to ensure it's right,"[240] Miller prefers instead to

rehearse at the actual set/location. While he acknowledges that actors like to rehearse, budget constraints usually mean that early rehearsal is limited to a read through. He never uses improvisation during rehearsal, although he has found story-building exercises very useful. He also uses character development exercises, which he loves. Prior to the shoot, he welcomes actors' input into script changes, claiming

> I expect them to know their characters even better than I do. (He says,) I want them to breathe life into the characters.[241]

When discussing story and character with actors, he likes to discuss "the 'truth' of plot, and character 'logic', and how they as actors "can make things fresh and original by steering away from clichés."[242] He believes that style/genre influences performance and will discuss style with actors if necessary. In his experience, most actors already appreciate the differences.

Working on performance before and between takes, he never talks an actor through performance while the camera is rolling because he regards it as insulting to the actors.[243] When an actor is having difficulty, he tries a variety of approaches to solve the problem. Ultimately, he says that he "creates an ambience that rewards 'niceness' and punishes the egocentrics."[244] In essence, he encourages actors to go "that bit higher, faster, louder, softer or just take a chance."[245]

Rolf de Heer, in contrast does not favour any one approach to acting from a director's point of view and is eager to explore the actor's potential, accepting what works for the individual actor concerned. Although he says that casting determines eighty percent of character analysis, he also allows the actors (whom he credits as knowing more than he does) to help determine character. Again, like so many Australian directors surveyed here, casting is profoundly important for him, as is his preparation for casting which involves tasks such as viewing show-reel material. De Heer collaborates actively with the casting agent, taking a key role in the process.

Unlike a number of other directors who provide a specific brief to the casting agent, de Heer does not provide a specific brief. Rather, he talks with the agent, who contributes ideas and opens up his way of thinking.[246] He is influenced by whether actors have training, "particularly when parts are small, or actors unknown, or time is limited."[247]

De Heer has no single preferred rehearsal process, working out the process with the actors on each particular film.[248] In fact, he has found no clear patterns about how actors prefer to rehearse. The length of rehearsal for him depends on the project. However, he usually finds that he does not have the opportunity to rehearse to his satisfaction.

Although he may allow improvisation during filming if it seems appropriate, de Heer does not typically employ improvisation or character development/story-building exercises in rehearsal. He tends to use exercises only if the actors create them and want them.[249] However, he does encourage actors to participate in script changes, "from individual words, (and) sentences to the entire interpretation of the part."[250] Ideally, de Heer tries to assemble the entire primary cast together to discuss the project as early as possible for as long as possible. He says he has worked in this way for a minimum of half a day, or a maximum of three weeks. He does not plan such discussion sessions, finding that they develop organically. Blocking movement is something which he may do at a number of points.

For de Heer, scheduling is very important, and he tries to shoot as much as possible in sequence.[251] Improvisation during filming is something he is mostly happy to allow (though not always); sometimes he even encourages it for the exploration factor involved.[252] When asked about how he deals with blocked actors, he said "I don't have a list … I respond intuitively."[253] While he acknowledges that he was and sometimes still is occasionally afraid of actors, de Heer has found that with experience this fear has been overcome.

Peter Duncan, by contrast, did not find that learning to communicate with actors was difficult and he engages in dialogue with his actors at all stages of the directing process. He has been fortunate in having had the opportunity to work with some of Australia's most eminent actors very early in his career, including: Judy Davis, Geoffrey Rush, Sam Neill, Richard Roxburgh and Rachel Griffiths. Given the performances in *Children of the Revolution*, it would seem that Peter Duncan's approach is flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of acting methods.

Most importantly, before commencing physical rehearsal, Duncan says that the director "needs to form an agreement with the actor(s) on each detail of the character's journey."[254] Even at the outset of his casting process, he searches in conversation for an accord with the actor about character. He is specifically influenced by how well the

> actor takes direction in (the) test, (their) intelligence; light in and behind the (actor's eyes, and) how much the actor excites, inspires (and) invigorates (him).[255]

Before commencing physical rehearsals, he engages in long periods of textual discussion with his actors to reach consensus on character. Once he starts the formal rehearsal process, where an actor becomes confused or exhausted, he has found it helps to take a break and simply discuss something else, ultimately leading discussion back to the scene. He does like to include blocking of scenes in his rehearsal process and likes to also rehearse pre-lighting.

Ultimately, he finds that the way in which one best elicits a performance depends on the relationship one has with an actor.[256] Welcoming ideas from the actor right up to the take, however, he does not use improvisation with the actors during filming itself.

According to his survey response, Duncan has had easy dialogue with his actors right from the start of his career and he claims that clear communication is crucial. He says that

> clear, honest communication that enables (the) director and actor to walk on set with the same agenda is essential.[257]

Ana Kokkinos looks to all approaches for ideas about working with actors,[258] borrowing from a number of practices, depending on the project. She too has worked with experienced as well as undeveloped child actors. She believes there is a significant difference between a technical actor and an instinctive actor, and unlike most other directors surveyed, she does discuss acting method with her actors to ascertain what approach they adopt.[259] On the other hand, like most of the other directors, she is very involved in the casting process, providing her casting agents with detailed directions about what she wants and how to run the audition process.[260]

Kokkinos' own work in pre-production involves breaking up the script into beats, units and objectives, making key decisions about character and what she wants in her actors, and pre-planning the shooting schedule.[261] She attends to this during the rehearsal process, but, most importantly, she also emphasises "the ensemble and the experiential process."[262] Her preferred rehearsal process involves

> establishing the ensemble, then doing a mix of Stanislavski/Meisner around the text, exploring the text experientially and then progressively going through the text in a dynamic interactive way.[263]

During her rehearsals, she will typically discuss

> themes, character journeys, style of performance, relationships between actors/characters, scene breakdowns, actions, objectives etc.[264]

She also highlights matters of style/genre, as she does not assume that actors automatically appreciate these issues beforehand. She will do some blocking during rehearsals, involving the director of photography in the process.[265]

A variety of activities during rehearsal marks her particular style, including improvisation, story-building exercises and character development exercises.[266] In particular, she likes to use a "repetition/movement style exercise to work up a scene exploring a range of actions". When filming she 'finetunes' through "discussion - as most of the work has already been done in rehearsals."[267] Moreover, she does not use improvisation during a take and does not typically

give direction about performance during the take. Where actors are having difficulty finding motivation, she says that she tries to "re-affirm their beats (and) objective in the scene etc."[268]

Rowan Woods is an equally affirming director, coming as he did from an acting background himself and his films to date demonstrate his ability to work with a variety of actors across a range of genres.

If an actor appears to be having a dialogue or motivation block (or both), Woods relies on a number of

> tricks/techniques that divert attention or focus attention on the character objective and/or physical/external keys.[269]

Indeed, he says that there is an available "box of tricks - mostly commonsense, sometimes flagrantly left-field - depending on how desperate you are".[270]

As previously noted, Woods is open to a variety of approaches to acting, although he does analyse the script for objectives and obstacles and break it up into beats and units.

Whereas a number of directors have said that they work on performance all the time, right from the very outset of the project, Woods says that though he may do this, it is not always necessary and depends upon the individual "actor's command of the role and the scene."[271]

Although he has used/allowed improvisation during filming, Woods claims this is rare. He usually restricts improvising to the early part of rehearsals, or, where this is not available, to during the blocking of the scene.[272]

James Bogle, like Rowan Woods, places great emphasis on casting and takes a very active part in casting. To date, although he has not made many films he has worked with impressive actors like Brenda Blethyn, Miranda Otto, Richard Roxburgh and Ray Barrett.

He likes casting agents to brief the actors fully, using his language about how he sees the film, the sequence, the scene and the lines. His preferred rehearsal process involves exploring the heart of the character and the actor's thinking and his first questions (before script analysis) are always about character.[273] He has found a number of exercises extremely helpful during rehearsal. In particular, he likes

> to walk a group of actors in circles to see them move (and) play games: hat games, hand games, vocal games.[274]

When possible he likes to have a read through with the entire cast.

In an ideal rehearsal process, he would start with sharing stories - personal ones first, followed by discussion about what the characters are like, and how the actors read the characters. He likes to

> talk about the emotional intelligence and territory of the story and of the characters;…remind actors endlessly of what has happened to them to bring them to this point…(and) see that they have something in mind, something fresh to work with mentally.[275]

He then prefers to work through key scenes with each actor, and then in twos. Once actors are working together, they explore subtext. On location, after wardrobe and makeup, he will block the action.[276]

In his survey response, Bogle claims he does not favour any particular theoretical approach to acting, regarding the use of the terms "objectives", "obstacles" and "beats" as part of a common language, rather than part of any particular acting tradition.[277] Although he believes that some genres allow for more scope and a heightened sense of performance, he acknowledges that "the nuances of performance in terms of pacing, pitching and the tone of the performance are difficult to lock down."[278] He also claims that he tends to direct from instinct and with the 'touch quality' that fits the film, so that actors get a sense of the tone he wants.[279] Overall, he believes actors can give a great performance irrespective of their approach.[280] While he admits that he did find learning to communicate with actors difficult[281] he thinks that learning to communicate with actors is

> …about understanding the language of emotion...an honest language, about how people think and feel ...every actor is different and you need to have a special radar out for their emotional needs one hundred percent of the time.[282]

Bogle is not averse to actors adjusting the language of the script and is happy for them to alter it slightly to suit their personal needs. Insisting that rehearsing scenes in a particular order is very important because it "helps an actor shape the trajectory of a performance",[283] he considers that it is important to shoot

> key scenes to do with the beginning or the end … at times that makes more sense in the schedule, depending on the emotional content.[284]

Making the distinction between scenes that are more physical than emotional, he notes that physical scenes may require more rehearsal time for blocking. While some scenes may need to be rehearsed many times before shooting, he finds that others (for example, highly emotional scenes) are best not rehearsed at all.[285]

Despite the difficulties improvisation may cause for continuity, he sometimes allows this process during filmmaking. However, he always briefs continuity where "impro" is to be

used.[286] Acknowledging the complexity of working with actors, he uses a variety of approaches, including relaxation, for dealing with particular problems. Talking with the actor is critical for him where an actor is struggling to find motivation, although he observes that "some actors need to get themselves into a difficult frame of mind to do their best work." While he concludes that this is a bad habit, he finds that it is relatively common.[287] Whatever happens, he tries to remain supportive and focussed on making a good film.[288]

Like James Bogle, Pauline Chan also works through the script analysis process of breaking the script up into beats, units and objectives. She undertakes careful character analysis while making significant set decisions about characters and what she is looking for in her actors.[289] She also sets out her own "wish list" of actors and "character breakdown list" which she provides to her casting agent,[290] preferring to work with experienced professional actors.[291] While she has only made one feature film to date, she is an interesting figure in this study because she also continues to work as a film/television actor.

Chan understands that actors like rehearsal and specifically appreciate individual attention.[292] Preferring to use improvisation, story building exercises and character development exercises during rehearsal, occasionally she assembles the entire cast for discussion at the start of the rehearsal period. Typically she discusses "performance style, high and low points within the scene, the film, relationship between characters, and creative choices within moments of performance."[293]

While Chan finds that she needs to allow the actors some flexibility to alter scripted dialogue,[294] she is wary about untested improvisation dialogue because it can lack focus.[295] Finding that it is helpful to have brief reminders and chats with actors on set first thing in the morning, she works on performance before and between takes, not during filming. In order to help her actors, Chan thinks that it is important to work calmly and with good humour to relax them and to engage them in problem solving, especially on individual scenes. When necessary, she also designs special workshops for rehearsal to address actors' needs.[296] One of her directing tips is that trying a totally opposite way of delivering the same emotional scene can release the actor. Sometimes this can simply be to change the action or part of the dialogue.[297]

As already noted, Shirley Barrett does not favour any particular formulated approach to acting and is open to the creative impulses which actors bring to each project. So far, she has made small ensemble films using Australian actors of varying levels of experience. Casting is extremely important for Barrett and her role as writer-director gives her additional insights to her characters. She usually writes character breakdowns for the actors,[298] and she makes all the casting decisions, doing most of the screen-tests herself. Although she does note whether or not

actors have formal training, nonetheless, she has had some very good experiences working with very inexperienced actors. She says of casting that her most significant learning experience was:

> realising that not all actors do good screen tests, but this does not mean they won't be fantastic once they get the part… so it's really important to get to know actors, see their work etc.[299]

At the outset, she works through the script, usually in sequence, concentrating on specific relationships and combinations. After initial discussion and run-through, the actors then move into improvisations. This she finds invaluable, especially for freeing the actors. She has usually prepared "impro" ideas for the actors,[300] concluding that her most valuable tool is improvisation where the actors improvise various encounters not necessarily in the script but often pertaining to its context: "discussion and lots of improvisation provides a kind of "real" history of shared memories for the actors."[301] They then often go out on location and improvise.

As they get closer to shooting, Barrett moves to blocking key scenes on a dressed set. She tries to explain her preferred style of working early on so that everyone gets a sense of how it is going to happen. She also makes a real effort to assure her actors that they are her "dream cast."[302]

Once the actors are in rehearsal, Barrett finds they are thinking only of character. Although she likes to preserve the integrity of the script, she will allow actors in real difficulty to do at least one 'take' the way they choose. She tries to ensure the set is relaxed and that actors receive lots of reassurance.[303] Where she has been unhappy with the actor's work, she has discovered that a performance can often be saved through editing.[304]

Barrett has worked with dramaturg, Nick Lathouris, on *Heartbreak High (TV Series 1994-1999),* where many inexperienced kids were working as actors. She claims that Nick provided considerable support for her and the other directors by working with the actors every day in their spare time, providing them with lots of exercises, and helping them with difficult scenes. [305] Barrett notes that the directors did not have time to do it themselves and, in this sense, his contribution was very effective.[306]

Because she understands how vulnerable actors really are, she stresses that it is important as director to look after and nurture the actors. Her tip to the director is to

> just be as clear as possible about what you need … tactful when you don't like something. And try to make it fun![307]

To date, Craig Monahan has only worked on one feature film, *The Interview.* On that project, he worked with a small number of extremely experienced film and theatre actors including Hugo Weaving, Tony Martin and Aaron Jeffrey. Significantly, during the making of the film he broke rehearsal convention in a number of ways. Two weeks before pre-production, he got together with his three main actors to talk to police and read the script without plotting the action as such. He then brought the actors back for two weeks of pre-production, thus giving the actors much more time to work on their characters.[308] As a writer-director, he is au fait with the script and is willing to explore the text with his actors in a variety of ways. Like many directors, Craig Monahan does to some extent break the script into beats and units and analyses character objectives and obstacles.[309] He cautions that one can overtrain in this, warning against confining actors to this practice.[310]

For Monahan, casting is everything. Although he acknowledges that it is possible to cast actors with a view to transforming them, he believes that it is preferable to "find what you are looking for - i.e. 'character' in the casting."[311] This greatly improves the fun of filmmaking from his point of view. Monahan does not use a dramaturg or voice coach as he believes that the director should have the necessary skills to perform these tasks.

Monahan asserts that he works on performance "all the time,"[312] and considers that proper preparation should prevent the actors from becoming blocked. He does acknowledge, however, that editing can assist a director to cut around the strong performances, deleting weaker moments.

Improvisation is not yet a favoured process he uses during filming; rather, he relies heavily on the script. While he notes that he would need more experience in using improvisation to be prepared to try it in this way, in general, he regards improvisation as being something "for those without a story to tell or (who) are unsure of it."[313] For him, "it is called a script, rehearsal and acting."[314]

Di Drew is very intrigued by the actor's process and, like so many other directors, does not favour any one approach to acting, claiming to have been influenced by an

> eclectic combination of Method, Laban, T.A (transactional analysis) and good old instinct.[315]

Her directing process is aimed at assisting the actor to perform truthfully. To some extent she has been influenced by the Stanislavki tradition, and does break the script into beats and units, analysing objectives and obstacles, especially for the characters,[316] and this informs her work

with the actors. To date, the majority of her work has been in television although, as noted, she has also worked in theatre.

Unlike other directors, at times Drew surprisingly casts according to what she believes "the actor may not be able to achieve."[317] She dislikes what she calls "feel good" casting, which she thinks is too common. She looks to see "that the actor is flexible, creative and able to take direction. Drew never asks an actor to just read a part as she considers that this is of no value.[318] Improvisation is a tool she uses regularly during casting and rehearsals.

As for rehearsal, she begins with a read through, followed by discussion. With further discussion, she tries to find out how the actors like to work. In rehearsal, Drew explores the mechanics of the script with the actors, striving for familiarity between the actors. She also works with the story and scenes. Indeed, Drew notes that, in her rehearsals, there is rarely a proper performance. Including location visits in the rehearsal process, she also always attends make-up and wardrobe calls. On set, she continually lets the actors know whether or not a run is a technical run or one for performance[319] and performance is something on which she works with the actors right from the audition. Surprisingly, she says she has never worked with actors who have become blocked and given this, it appears that her eclectic approach works very successfully with actors irrespective of their background.

Other Directors

George Whaley, like Di Drew, has been head of directing at the AFTRS and has a strong track record of being able to work successfully with a wide range of actors. He considers that many directors, however,

> do not know how to communicate with actors. Instead they rely on the externals of composition, camera angles, lighting lens. [320]

He says that this is because it is much easier for directors to relate to the mechanics of the camera. Whaley believes that

> the arts and crafts of directing, especially those concerned with the director/actor collaboration are too often neglected,[321]

basing this view on the relevant stories repeated to him over the years by numerous actors and writers. He cites the "director's lack of knowledge of story and role"[322] as the key problem. At the same time he has endeavoured through both his own work and his teaching to identify the key questions which need to be asked by the director. Acknowledging that there are many valid approaches to this work, his personal approach is based on a flexible combination of the work of Stanislavski, Brecht and other skills based techniques (including Grotowski).[323]

In Whaley's opinion, the director's first job involves script analysis. Ideally, he believes that, where possible, a writer and director should collaborate during the final draft of the screenplay.[324] Whaley believes that the director must

> analyse the script in order to fully understand the story, characters, the context, background and circumstances of the drama, to extract meaning and detail and to determine the writer's objective – what the play is saying, the 'message' or statement.[325]

For Whaley, this methodical work is "intended to provoke the director's imagination."[326]

He says that the first step is simply to read the script or play and identify one's first impressions, preferably in one sitting. These can be tested later but should address

> images, behaviours, character details, themes, messages, anything at all which will assist your realisation of the script.[327]

The director should then re-read the play or script and identify the 'given circumstances'. This means, for him,

> the information provided by the writer about situation, relationships, character detail, conditions, background, attitudes, historical, social and political context,[328]

that is, anything useful to get to the core of the drama. He considers that this information is essential for later discussions with the cast and crew, especially with actors,[329] and can be used as a reminder. Whaley then recommends that the director research carefully and prepare brief and character-based synopses, and detailed character descriptions, specifically identifying character relationships. Whaley says that these are

> the most important and intriguing aspects of character for the director to explore, because the story is told primarily through character relationships and the relationships largely define the characters![330]

As an important aside, he cautions that physical descriptions of characters are often unimportant and should not unduly limit casting.

He asserts that the director should then identify the script's themes. After identifying the screenplay's overall action (usually linked to the writer's objective), the director should break up the script into parts identifying scene actions and unit actions. (Whaley does not use the Stanislavskian expression "beats"). It is his view that scene actions inevitably involve the scene being described in action terms regarding what each character is doing, often to others.

Accordingly, for him, scenes should then be broken into smaller units which are named "in terms of what the characters are doing and wanting."[331] The use of verbs is critical to this exercise. Where possible, these scene and unit actions are "written in terms of what the characters are doing to each other." Elaborating on this, Whaley states that

> they are psychological actions, not physical activities. Best options are strong verbs such as reassures, tries to identify, tries to dissociate, provokes, takes charge, ensnares.[332]

Like most directors, Whaley regards casting as a critical phase and "three-quarters of the job done."[333] He considers that the best approach to the audition process is for the director to provide the actor with several contrasting scenes that reveal different responses early, prepare opinions about the role, arrange for another actor to read opposite the one being auditioned. Relaxing the latter through brief conversation beforehand, he allows her/him to do it her/his way first, giving the actor breathing space to perform without rushing. Subsequently, he proceeds to direct the actor in different ways, for example, by changing the given circumstances or character objectives.

Although he respects the fact that actors will inevitably come from a range of acting traditions, and sometimes no tradition at all, as a director he adopts a very specific approach, which he believes will work towards ensuring that the actor's performance is truthful and engaging.

Denny Lawrence lists the following as essential elements of his rehearsal process: script analysis, playing action, changing action, and determining camera position. Although he has only made a few feature films, he continues to be a very influential figure through his teaching and producing role.

When actors become blocked during rehearsal/filming, he has found that non-verbal improvisation can help. He also claims that simple use of determining objectives and playing action is most helpful. When he is unhappy with a performance being provided, he negotiates a new approach with the actor, ensuring that no tricks are used. Improvisation is something he uses mostly during rehearsal, and, although he may allow it during the filming process, he feels that this does not happen often.[334] Overall, he contends that itemising the process of directing actors is somewhat simplistic, because of the complexity of the process and accordingly, his survey response was very brief.

Given that Gerard Lee's first feature involved only four experienced actors and three hundred local non-actors, Lee says that his main task on the project

> was to get them relaxed in front of the camera, and go from there: re-writ(ing), re-shoot(ing), re-cast(ing) on the spot.[335]

Lee does not consider that he studied acting technique in any depth at the AFTRS, nor has he ever worked as an actor. Accordingly, he does not favour any particular approach to acting because he simply does not feel that he knows enough about any of the methods.[336] As a writer,

however, he has engaged in much role-playing whilst developing scripts. Indeed, when working on *Sweetie*, he and Jane Campion worked extensively in this way. Although he clearly feels that he is unable to say he follows a particular approach, it seems from his process that he has been influenced by Stanislavski's ideas. He also values improvisation as a rehearsal tool to explore and develop character.

The most important part of preparation for him before filming is script analysis. He looks "for inner conflict and 'whimsical' motivation which has a moral question attached."[337] He always writes with others' input; indeed, he pays actors who think of new or better lines,[338] and he encourages actors to alter scripted dialogue. He is also open to improvisation during filming, within bounds.[339]

While Lee works jointly with the casting agent, he does not provide a specific brief to the agent, rather relying on the script to say what is needed. He has not to date discussed with his actors what method they use in the audition process; rather, he has observed that a lot of actors "seem vague about the process anyway."[340]

Claiming that he has never had a great deal of rehearsal time, he states that, in an ideal world, he

> would love to workshop – i.e. improvise parts until a more focussed depiction of the motive was stumbled on.[341]

During rehearsal, he likes to discuss motivations and use improvisation, story building exercises and character development exercises. One of the more useful exercises he has identified involves "placing the character in the situation or its opposite, or in the opposite role."[342]

Although he believes that film style and genre do affect an actor's performance, he does not feel that actors always choose well, tending to overdo the genre aspects. His preference is for actors to "do it straight (because) the dialogue should be enough."[343]

Agreeing that actors who cannot find motivation are a major issue for any director, Lee tries to deal with the issue through discussion. He says that he admires, respects and loves actors "no matter how good, silly, bad, weepy etc. they get."[344]

Daniel Nettheim believes that it is imperative for a director to be confident in casting. As a new emergent director, his directing process is still in a formative stage. As previously noted, he acknowledges that George Whaley has had a significant influence on the development of his directing practice.

Nettheim systematically works through the steps of breaking the script into beats and units, analysing character objectives and obstacles. In rehearsal, after a read through, he works through this process with the actors, also discussing their relevant personal experiences which may inform the work.[345]

On occasion, where he has found that actors are having difficulties delivering a performance, he turns to

> quiet discussion and problem solving, (working towards) identifying what is missing and finding strategies to solve it.[346]

As for the use of improvisation, he does use the process, but

> only when the dialogue (as written) is not naturalistic and the actor is having problems owning it.[347]

He will engage a dialogue/voice coach or dramaturg where he is working with children or an actor who is having particular problems.[348] His final words about the nature of directing are to remind the director that the key is remembering that actors are just people, and knowing how to talk to them.[349]

Although Michelle Warner, an emergent Queensland-based director, does not favour any one acting approach, she states that

> building trust and being approachable as well as knowing what you want is important. Actors should know that their comments are welcome and appreciated.[350]

She prepares a casting brief detailing necessary requirements like "age, build, ethnic background; if necessary quality (and specific requirements)."[351] Her rehearsals include script analysis and character analysis, discussion about character relationships, and she likes to get her actors up for floor-work early on in the process. While she does not use improvisation, she does allow some flexibility for actors to change lines where appropriate. Where actors are in difficulty she tries to be encouraging and talks through the problem with them. She admits that she found learning to communicate with actors difficult. However, she says that after attending a course with George Whaley learning about his Stanislavskian approach she finally knew how to talk to actors – because she had a common language to communicate with them.[352]

Although he is not part of my survey study group, the sorts of relevant comments Mel Gibson has made in certain forums seemed worthy of inclusion in this chapter because of his international experience, standing and influence as a director and actor.

In terms of his approach to casting, he seems to be primarily interested in talking with actors in order to assess them as people with potential to play a role. He recently claimed that he likes to

talk at length with an actor in the audition, finding out about him or her by discussing literally anything. He acknowledges that auditions are a very difficult process and he does not seem to place great weight on auditions.[353] During rehearsal, he engages in a great deal of conversation with his actors, discussing the characters and their dilemmas, both actor and director simply posing question after question.[354] He always undertakes a considerable amount of work himself in order to ensure that he knows "what each scene means, and why (he) wants it there."[355]

Like Weir, Gibson is prepared to respond instinctively whilst directing. If actors become blocked or are unable to give him what he wants, he avoids dictating to his actors. Instead, he will often just talk to them with a view to finding a meeting of the minds, which then allows the actor to return and perform. Being a trained actor himself, he has an understanding of the many approaches to acting/directing and the importance of the director and actor recognising each other's contribution. He respects different approaches to work and says: "there's no right way to do anything."[356] He describes one of his interesting techniques as something he learned from Peter Weir. He says,

> If you take a scene and … it seems lifeless or it's not working, you do it twice as fast as you think you need to...oftentimes that's when it comes to life.[357]

Based on the above explanations of the directing approaches adopted by a broad cross section of Australia's film directors, it is clear that there is no one approach to casting or rehearsal in the Australian film industry. What is clear is that casting is generally considered to be a critical phase of the directing process and most directors are willing to explore a wide range of activities as part of their rehearsal strategies. While a few directors indicate a preference for working with trained actors, the majority indicate that they are open to what individual actors bring to the rehearsal process. Accordingly, rehearsal strategies of script and character analysis and improvisation are key practices for the majority of directors discussed, even if only to a limited extent. Only a few directors use improvisation as their dominant rehearsal strategy.

What is the dominant approach to directing actors in the Australian film industry?

Pioneers and the New Wave Directors

Although both Charles Chauvel and Ken G. Hall were explorers of technique who pioneered very personal styles of directing, rather than being adherents to a particular methodology, their context for directing has arguably influenced the generations of filmmakers who have followed in their steps, particularly in Chauvel's case.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence to assess whether or not Hall was actually specifically influenced by Stanislavski's approach to directing. Hall acknowledged that, although he always had a flair for casting, at the outset of his filmmaking career he:

> didn't get many ideas of how a director worked on his people, because they didn't really work on them then...A woman showed emotion by heaving her breasts rapidly up and down, and that would have to cover almost the whole gamut of emotions from A to B.[358]

Of his early directing, Hall said that these early works were overplayed, but he argued that none of them had yet learned that the need in theatre to act and project to the back stalls was "the vast difference between the stage actor and the screen actor."[359] He revealed that he learned as the actors learned about pulling back the performance for the camera.[360]

This seems to imply a directorial search for a more truthful performance with a certain amount of self-direction being undertaken by the actors. Hall always kept a certain degree of respect for actors who otherwise might be regarded as "hams", because he said: "they're larger than life, they're here to create an illusion."[361] He cited in this class actors like Humphry Bogart, Edward G Robinson and James Cagney, attributing their appeal to their value as entertainers, people capable of transporting others "out of their mundane everyday lives (into) another, make-believe world."[362] Ultimately, Hall believed that the secret to filmmaking was pure action in the D.W Griffith sense of filmmaking. As he developed as a director, Hall's focus with actors was on action.[363]

While Ms Carlsson does not recall her father discussing Stanislavski's work, she does say that her parents worked for a "natural performance", to get the actors "in character." She claims that her father felt that the best actor was one who could lose him/herself in the character. By way of example, she referred to one occasion, when working on an emotional scene, he asked the actress to think of a personal event to help her evoke an emotional state.[364]

Irrespective of whether or not Chauvel was consciously influenced by Stanislavski's work, it appears that he was influenced strongly by his experience of working in Hollywood, and as already discussed, his time in Hollywood coincided with the spread of Stanislavski's ideas there.

Both Chauvel and Hall seem to have been willing to work with actors creatively in a variety of ways, incorporating certain practices akin to Stanislavskian-like notions, including a search for emotional integrity and truth in performance, and collaborative rehearsal processes. It could be argued they pioneered new approaches to working in Australia with actors in their search for more moving performances, particularly through their experimentation with style and casting.

This kind of willingness to explore new ways of working with actors, and a preparedness to work with actors on performance collaboratively, epitomizes both the work of Chauvel and Hall, and is emblematic of the New Wave directors who emerged in the 1970s.

As previously noted, Peter Weir is adamant that he prefers to work instinctively and does not like to analyse his work with actors. It is extremely illuminating therefore to consider the types of activities that Weir has undertaken with actors, as discussed in various published interviews. I would argue that Weir's approach (especially his ensemble approach and focus on mood creation) is very much like a Stanislavski/Method based approach where the character's imaginary life is central to the actor's creation of character. Perhaps Weir's belief in an 'intuitive' approach to working with actors makes most sense in the light of his profound interest in theories of myths and dreams.[365] It seems that, as previously discussed, many of the exercises/activities he uses with actors are designed to stimulate the actors' imaginations with a view to encouraging them to undergo a transformation in order to "be" the character.

Although he has worked across a wide variety of genres in his career, Weir says that his approach to directing does not vary greatly simply because of genre. Rather, his goal is to "build an atmosphere on the set that is conducive to the performing of a scene."[366] It has been reported that his goal is to keep the technical equipment away and create an ensemble feel where anything can happen, "a powerful mood, a kind of 'super-reality' out of which the actors' responses will be both irresistible and inevitable."[367] This notion is remarkably similar to Stanislavski's 'creative mood' as discussed in the previous chapter. Weir claims that his ideas in this regard emanate from his "tradition of ad-libbing and improvising."[368] Weir also encourages this atmosphere off the set, especially on location where the cast and crew may be housed together to assist in building character loyalties and relationships. This practice is one that had been used years earlier by the Hollywood director, John Ford,[369] and Weir's exploration of similar practices reflects his willingness to try relatively extreme activities in order to build an ensemble feel on set.
Peter Weir's use of improvisation and his reliance on spontaneity and inspiration on set are perhaps the defining features of his approach with actors.

A careful assessment of Weir's practices and ideas suggests that whether or not he has been consciously influenced by Stanislavskian practice, Weir does work in a similar fashion and has comparable goals in terms of the types of performances he seeks to draw from his actors. This is reflected by his focus on building an ensemble, his attention to detail in character creation, his imaginative exploration of the character's life with the actor, and his efforts to create a mood where inspiration catapults the actor's performance into a heightened realm of super-reality.

Ultimately, he has explored a wide range of rehearsal ideas and has adapted them into a new system which is very much his own methodology. In any event, Peter Weir, through his respective and collaborative work with his actors is very much an 'actor's director' who has made a substantial and unique contribution to the development of Australian thespioprudence.

While one might suggest that George Ogilvie's key focus on the character's given circumstances reflects a Stanislavskian approach to directing, Ogilvie specifically denies that he is a Stanislavskian practitioner.[370] However, his theatre background, including his time at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, obviously exposed him to a wide variety of ideas about how to work with actors, and he currently adopts a very non-prescriptive way of directing. It is difficult to categorise Ogilvie's approach, which is both very eclectic and individual, although he acknowledges that different styles of work require different approaches. For example, he says that if one were to work on Brecht, there is only one approach and that is to:

> touch the props …and the feeling of life comes through the props."[371]

Ogilvie is wary of elevating theories to the status of icons and does not favour any particular approach to acting/directing, acknowledging instead that there are many ways to work and that it ultimately depends on the individual actor and director. Indeed, he says:

> I've always felt that the theories become 'generalisations'. Actors either have talent or they don't: it's unique and personal.[372]

Although he acknowledges that he has known many people in his life who have been influenced by Stanislavski, Ogilvie says he's "never seen it actually (operating) during a performance."[373]

What is clear about his film directing is that he adopts an approach that gives priority to detailed character creation and caters for meditative preparation by the actor, something which is more reminiscent of Eastern acting styles. He also prioritises creating an environment of trust and respect in which to work with his actors, which is emblematic of Australian directing in general.

Don Crombie's training at NIDA places him in that category of film directors who have a highly evolved understanding of the craft of acting from an actor's perspective and a sophisticated appreciation of directing thespioprudence. This includes, as a matter of course, a developed knowledge of voice, text and movement as key elements of the craft of acting.

First and foremost, Donald Crombie understands actors. He believes that there is a significant difference between a technical actor and an instinctive actor. However, he is able to work with both. He says that the instinctive actor can "superimpose his/her instincts and creativity upon

the 'technical' base …(so that) suddenly a performance takes flight and soars without director or actor quite knowing what will happen."[374] Unlike many directors, Crombie readily acknowledges Stanislavski as his major influence. However, he has also combined this with a variety of other influences, including improvisational notions of directing.

Richard Franklin has demonstrated throughout his career a great facility for working with actors from very disparate backgrounds. This is exemplified by his early directing of such diverse actors as Stacey Keach and Jamie-Lee Curtis in *Roadgames* and his more recent directing of Carole Gilmer, Caroline Goodall, Tara Morice, Ray Barrett, Joan Plowright and John Hargreaves in *Hotel Sorrento.*

His formal training, his learning through the actual process of directing, and what he has absorbed from reading about his craft, all combine to enable him to develop a great facility for working with actors, as reflected in the sophisticated performances of his actors.

Ultimately, Richard Franklin does not favour any particular approach to acting, accepting whatever works for the actor. However, he does like the work of Harold Clurman, or at least Clurman's 'take' on the Method. The Method approach, however, is not one he considers well suited to film. He thinks it "involves too much lag time between takes" and is "pretty destructive to the psyche."[375] By his own assessment, his choice has been to adopt a mixture of approaches when directing. However, central to all his work is an understanding of ensemble work, the value of improvisation in rehearsal and an understanding of Stanislavskian notions of script analysis and character development.

Carl Schultz is very much a self taught director when it comes to theoretical ideas associated with directing, having read widely on the subject, and he places much more value on having learned by watching other directors at work during his early years as a cameraman and later through the actual process of directing himself. Hence, it is difficult to align him with any one particular theoretical approach.

While the detailed preparation in which he engages with his actors when working out character and motivations, particularly through discussions, might suggest that he has been very influenced by key aspects of Stanislavski, it is clear that he adopts many different techniques in his directing. He gives great priority to developing an environment of trust with each actor individually and he likes to give actors as much freedom as the role allows. He appreciates that rehearsal requirements will vary greatly depending on genre and says:

> It really depends on the type of story you are to tell, how much actual rehearsal time is needed. For instance, comedy, with a lot of snappy dialogue, would require far more, than action oriented drama.[376]

Most importantly of all, Schultz believes that a director must have a good script with which to work, and must believe in and fully understand the script in order to be able to lead the actors through the filmmaking process.

Tracing the Tide

Given Bruce Beresford's focus on both the text and the actor's internal monologue, Beresford's approach arguably can be regarded as hybrid in nature, linking certain Stanislavskian notions with his very individual style of storyboarding.

His desire to find the right actor who physically fits his idea of the character as well as his need to find an actor who demonstrates insight and attitude dictates his casting approach. However, as discussed, there appears to be some contradictions in how he works with actors, some actors finding his approach very inflexible and limiting.

He asserts that his interest in an actor's vocal ability relates to how it is interpreting the text and how it connects, truthfully, with the meaning and he says:

> I think when an actor is doing what they should be doing, they're interpreting someone else's life and bringing it to the rest of us with emotional truth; they're making it live, and they're doing it with emotional honesty.[377]

He says that he is "suspicious of actors who go on and on about character"[378] but he also acknowledges that it is essential for the actor to study the role and character's journey, so they understand how the character arcs through the script. This demonstrates that while Beresford may have been influenced by some of Stanislavski's ideas, whether consciously or not, his is very much a self-evolved approach to directing actors for performance.

George Miller considers that while good performers do not necessarily remember what they do from take to take or performance to performance, they "feel through the action to find how one moment leads organically to the next, so there is a continuity of performance."[379] If the writer has not made the progressions clear, he believes that the actor has to invent solutions for him/herself in order to make this happen.[380]

Miller's willingness to learn about the actor's craft under the influence of people like George Ogilvie demonstrates that Miller, as a director, has become actor-focussed and willing to draw

on meditation-like ideas of preparing the actor to perform 'in the moment'. As with most of his contemporaries, Miller's is an approach, which focuses on the inner workings of the character as explored and expressed by the actor through a variety of imaginative processes. Given Ogilvie's rejection of Stanislavskian practice, and given Ogilvie's profound influence on Miller, it is likely that Miller's approach to directing actors is also a hybrid approach, which cannot be ascribed to belong to any one theoretical framework.

Like Ogilvie, Miller and Beresford, Fred Schepisi is difficult to categorise in theoretical terms. Although his directing practice is clearly very actor-focussed and he places great importance on working with his actors as an ensemble, he does not tend to discuss his work in theoretical terms publicly. It is therefore not possible, in the absence of other evidence, to accurately categorise his directing approach. One might call it 'direction by insinuation' on the basis of Donald Sutherland's description of Schepisi's work, however, on balance, Schepisi is really best classed as being very much an individualist in terms of his directing process with actors.

Gillian Armstrong's admiration for individual actors is reflected in her actor-focussed approach to directing, which involves collaborative, detailed and imaginative exploration of the character and the character's world. At all times, she maintains a great respect for language and technique. Her key goal is to assist the actor to perform truthfully, much of her work reflecting a Stanislavskian-like ensemble-based approach to creating characters and scenes. She is a directing bower-bird eager to adapt ideas explored and successfully demonstrated by other directors, including both Australian and Hollywood directors. The detailed preparatory research on the world of her films and her painstaking character development as undertaken with the actor is emblematic of her very individual methodology.

The New Breed and Emerging directors

In 1992, Baz Luhrmann said of Paul Mercurio that "while he may not have read Stanslavski, he has a great understanding of the basics of acting."[381] Luhrmann himself appears to operate from a strong Stanislavskian base, although he also relies on other rehearsal activities which are focussed on the actor's individual needs. He says:

> I've found each actor to be individual in their process, for that reason I see that my job is to decode and understand the individual needs of each actor. If there are difficulties it is usually something to do with the fear they are experiencing because of the complexity of the role that is in front of them. What I attempt to do is disarm that fear in any way I possibly can.[382]

The highly stylised aspects of his films to date demonstrate that Luhrmann is able to adjust his processes as required in order to cater for the intensive rehearsal demanded for tightly choreographed scenes. It is his willingness to respond to actors' individual needs, which

arguably places Baz Luhrmann in the realm of the true 'actor's directors'. When asked if he believed there is such a creature, Luhrmann responded,

> I believe there is such a thing as an actor's director only in so much as a lot of directors have come from a technical background and so therefore they concentrate on cinematic technicality. On the other hand, a lot of directors specifically focus on guiding and helping an actor with their performance so, to this extent there is such a thing. I would consider myself a director who works very closely and methodically with the actors.[383]

Cherie Nowlan asserts that she has no preferred approach to acting, noting that every time she works with actors the experience is different.[384] does break the script into beats, units, objectives and obstacles, and claims that this is not because she has read Stanislavski, but because "it's logical."[385] She claims to come at performance from a writing approach.[386] Although she has read books on acting by Stanislavski and Uta Hagen (for example), she does not remember the content specifically; rather, she says "it somehow all comes out in my work."[387] This is a little like Schepisi's direction through insinuation.

Nowlan specifically acknowledges how much actors help her. Indeed, she finds that seeing them work through scenes in the casting process often helps her to work out how to do a scene. She also does role- plays and, in fact, she personally plays out the parts with the assistant director and people from the camera team on location.[388] She casts many drama school graduates, especially from NIDA, commenting that they are "amazing because their technique is to good"[389] and they are particularly well equipped to handle the repetition and gruelling nature of call backs.

Important influences for her have been Gale Edwards, Michael Gow, Dr. George Miller, and all her leading actors, particularly Cate Blanchett, Richard Roxborough and Francis O'Connor.

When asked about how she learned to communicate with actors, she states that she communicates effectively because "I don't talk to them really about acting or performance."[390] Rather, she talks about everything but that, creating an environment which is fun and actor-focussed where they can do their best work.[391] Indeed she says "you have to be friends" and take the journey with the actors during the film.[392] What she does with the crew is separate. On the day of shooting it is about her actors. Cherie Nowlan feels that she did not necessarily learn all these things, but rather that she did them "instinctively."[393] Her approach is eclectic, being a mix of many things, including apparently some aspects of Stanislavski, and given what she says about Michael Gow's influence on her, perhaps also to some extent Mamet and Brecht.

Mark Joffe's commitment to collaborating with his other artists during the making of a film, even to the extent of adopting a very supportive casting and rehearsal experience, is a key

indicator of how he approaches his work with actors. Discussion about roles and the script are part of his essential rehearsal process and he tries to be positive in all his interactions with his actors.

Searching fundamentally for honesty and reality within the character, Joffe believes that this is a good starting basis for improvisation.[394] Joffe acknowledges that many directors and actors have been inspirational to him by their final product. He cites actors such as Sir Anthony Hopkins and Judy Davis as being particular inspirations. It is difficult to categorise his approach, except to say that his is a very actor-centred one.

Stephen Wallace quite specifically acknowledges favouring a particular theoretical approach to acting - specifically, a Stanislavski-based approach. In the survey response, he also claims he uses transactional analysis theories (which he learned at the Actor's Centre in Sydney), Grotowski exercises, clown workshop exercises, Stella Adler theories, and much of George Ogilvie's, George Whaley's and Hayes Gordon's methods combined. As could be expected, he breaks his scripts into beats and units, as well as analysing character objectives and obstacles.[395] Admitting candidly that he found learning to communicate with actors difficult, Wallace realised that he improved only over a "long process of asking actors what I did wrong".[396] He specifically notes that he learned a lot from people like Hayes Gordon, Bryan Syron, George Whaley, Lindy Davies, Ross McGregor, Bryan Brown, Max Phipps and Gillian Armstrong.[397] Ultimately, Wallace says that directing is highly particular and idiosyncratic, a process which requires the development of a personal style and way of relating to others. For him,

> it doesn't so much depend on the technique but upon your patience and willingness to persevere and not accept what you don't want - but only the best the actor has to offer,[398]

a testament to his outlook as an 'actor's director'.

As already stated, John Ruane is not clear himself about whether or not his film school training has determined how he works with actors and considers himself self taught. What is perhaps more telling is the fact that as a writer-director, he is intensely focussed on the script and relies heavily on 'questioning' listening and weighing up ideas in his rehearsal work. His approach to directing incorporates three elements: a real willingness to work collaboratively with actors, a focus on text, and a certain pragmatism towards the craft of filmmaking. Arguably, his ensemble-based approach to character/scene development also reflects certain Stanislavskian influences in his approach to directing, although this is not something he himself would claim.

George T. Miller is open to working with actors who use different approaches, but like many of his contemporaries, key aspects of his own work reflect a Stanislavskian bent towards directing.

However, unlike the majority of other directors considered in this analysis, he is also very willing to incorporate some of Mamet's ideas. He relies heavily on script analysis and draws on the ideas propounded by Linfa Seeger and John Truby in his early preparation when he is evolving his own ideas about the characters.

Despite Rolf de Heer's tendency to regard his directing approach as instinctive, it is arguable from the earlier analysis of his directing strategies that his approach is a mix of text-focussed directing, improvisational techniques and some Stanislavskian notions. He finds it difficult to divide actors into technical and instinctive actors; rather he says that "one takes an instinctive, 'felt' approach, the other a technical, 'thought' approach. One lets it happen after preparation, the other makes it happen after preparation.[399] He is open to the different approaches adopted by actors and simply tries to work with them.

Communicating effectively with actors is something which he thinks comes through experience, however, through trial and error and through talking to actors about how to communicate effectively.[400]
Given his training, it may be that certain Stanislavskian notions have filtered into Peter Duncan's practice; however, on the face of it, as an emerging director he appears not to favour any single approach to acting.

As she has self-identified in the survey answers, the directing process adopted by Ana Kokkinos' is a mix of Stanislavskian and Meisner type activities.

Rowan Woods' approach is freely borrowed from a variety of sources. It seems that he regards the process of breaking up and analysing the script along the above-mentioned lines, as reflecting more a general language of acting. Nevertheless, given that it was Stanislavski who first used the relevant terminology in that sense, it is arguable that Woods, like so many other directors, has been influenced, at least to some extent, by that tradition. He is acutely aware of the technical demands placed on the actor and where possible, pushes for a dramaturg and voice coach if required.[401]

James Bogle's approach is arguably a mixture of Mike Leigh's approach and Stanislavski's system. As he has acknowledged, his primary influence is Mike Leigh's well-documented improvisational approach to directing. Although less common amongst the directors surveyed, this is an approach favoured by some Australian filmmakers, such as Bill Bennett, whose highly individual improvisational approach to directing was the hallmark of his 1997 Australian Film Institute Award winning film, *Kiss or Kill*, and was discussed in the feature article of Cinema

Papers Volume 116 that year. [402] Improvisation is also a recognised rehearsal tool and alternative directing method which is taught at the AFTRS as part of the full time directing course and occasional short courses.[403]

A Stanislavskian influence is clear in Chan's approach, although, given the many influences on her development as a director, hers is very much a hybrid approach. With her acting background, Chan's is an actor-focussed method of working. She believes that understanding the vulnerability of the actor whose work is instant and up there for all to see, "is the first step in communicating with them."[404]

While Shirley Barrett is also open to drawing upon a wide range of ideas as a director, given her experience working with Lathouris, and her admission of liking Mamet's approach, Barrett does seem to favour improvisation style rehearsals and appears to be more influenced by practical aesthetics than most other directors surveyed for this dissertation.

Although Craig Monahan's eclectic approach arguably does incorporate a mix of Stanislavskian-like notions, he does not favour any particular approach to acting and does not himself consider that he has been particularly influenced by the Stanislavski tradition, regarding every film as different, with the material determining the style and the performance.

As she has self-identified, hers is an approach which draws upon a variety of ideas, including core aspects of Method/Stanislavskian practice. As noted, she says that hers is an

> Eclectic combination of Method, Laban, T. A. and good old instinct.[405]

Other Directors

As a director, George Whaley asserts that his practice is to carefully prepare to collaborate and test ideas with the actors. He has learned that preparation equips the director for "a clear and concise communication with the actors."[406] Arguing that an understanding of action-playing "is at the centre of the actor/director collaboration,"[407] he claims this is essential to effective, clear and efficient communication with actors.

Whaley contends that the director must be able both to communicate with actors and to diagnose performance problems. Furthermore, while he feels that directors should understand the different approaches upon which actors rely, he specifically commends the director to learn the common Stanislavskian approach because, in his opinion, it works so well universally.

Denny Lawrence asserts that he has evolved his own approach to directing although he has been partially influenced by the Stanislavski tradition in the work he undertakes. His own extensive and varied training as an actor has also fundamentally informed his work and broad understanding of the acting process.

Gerard Lee acknowledges that communicating with actors is a difficult task and that, to some extent, he is a little afraid of some actors, though not all. He feels that he is still struggling with the task of communicating with actors, time and ability posing a problem. Surprisingly, he says that he does not know any directors who can really communicate effectively with actors about performance.[408] Given that he considers himself a "novice at directing", he asserts that he is

> only now beginning to see actors making choices...(he) can see the good ones take the unusual choice or the 'truthful' choice.

However, he muses:

> how they do that I'd love to know. When you ask them how, they go all fluttery. Do they know, I wonder?[409]

As they have self-identified, Daniel Nettheim and Michelle Warner favour a Stanislavskian approach to acting and this informs their work as directors. They both credit George Whaley as a significant influence on their development and understanding of how to work with actors.

Given Mel Gibson's training background at NIDA and his subsequent work both as an actor and director, it seems that to a reasonable extent he does adopt a Stanislavski-based approach to directing, particularly when working with actors in relation to the creation of the inner life of the character. It is significant that his perspective on casting seems more akin to a Method like approach because of the way in which he explores the individual actor's life experience and inner potential to play a role, a practice adopted by method directors like Elia Kazan.

Theatre Directors and Dramaturg

In turning to the final people surveyed for discussion, the theatre directors Michael Gow and Richard Wherrett, and the dramaturg-actor Nick Lathouris, it is important to explain why they have been included in this dissertation. From a practical point of view, within the scope of this study, it would have been difficult to extend any further with film directors. However, these specific practitioners have been included to demonstrate how the dynamic of drama practice moves between performing arts mediums. These figures represent a variety of fields including directing and/or acting in both theatre and film, as well as acting coaching and dramaturgy. However, the constant theme of their work is their actor-centred practice and focus on the craft of acting.

Although not a film director, Michael Gow[33] is a NIDA-trained actor, renowned playwright and eminent theatre director with some film acting experience. Accordingly, he has a certain influence upon both actors and other directors. He is included in this discussion because of this influence on other practitioners. Gow does favour a particular approach to acting - that is, the approach as espoused by Sanford Meissner,[410] typically referred to as 'practical aesthetics'. In particular, he commends directors to read David Mamet's book *True and False*. Given his training, he has been exposed to a variety of approaches to acting, particularly Stanislavski, and he acknowledges that he sometimes breaks scripts up into beats and units and analyses character objectives and obstacles.[411] If an actor becomes blocked, he always asks the actor what the character "wants in the moment in question."[412] He regards honesty as being critical when working with actors, and he works on performance constantly. He does not allow improvisation during performance, regarding it as a waste of time. As preparation for this study, I had the opportunity to observe him in rehearsals on *Fred* by Beatrix Christian for the Queensland Theatre Company in 2001. During that time, I noted that one of the outstanding features of his early phase of rehearsal involved the actors carefully reading the script together and clearly identifying all the character relationships.

Gow likes to work with both a voice coach and dramaturg, finding that it is helpful to have a couple of trusted people providing information and feedback. For him, the keys to good work are

> Respect, hard work and honesty. (He says that he learnt to communicate effectively with actors) simply by treat(ing) them like intelligent adults.[413]

While he favours Mamet's ideas, he clearly also adopts certain general Stanislavskian practices.

Like Gow, Richard Wherrett's[34] film work is minimal in that he only directed one feature film in his working life, his primary work being in the theatre. It is because of his major influence on acting culture in this country, specifically through his long-term work as artistic director of the Sydney Theatre Company, that I included him in my survey group. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete the survey and instead telephoned me in response to my survey letter, advising that he was about to publish an autobiography, *The Floor of Heaven.*[414] He said that this book would answer all my questions about his directing method. His autobiography reveals the extraordinary number of wide-ranging Australian directors and actors he has influenced and clearly identifies that Wherrett adopted a core Stanislavskian approach in his directing of actors.

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[33] **Michael Gow**
Filmography as actor: Stir (1980), The Boy Who Had Everything (1984), Short Changed (1986), Bulletproof Monk (2003).[33]

[34] **Richard Wherrett (1949-2001)**
Filmography: Billy's Holiday (1994).

Originally studying literature at Sydney University, it was through his teaching at the E15 Drama School in London in the early 1960s that he became fully exposed to Stanislavski, Brecht, Littlewood and Laban and the use of improvisation and games as tools to facilitate the creation of performance works, things he says are now almost universally taught in most drama schools.[415] He found a great difference in the ways English and American actors interpreted Stanislavski's theories, the Americans focussing on 'emotion memory' through method acting. Wherrett's view is that the

> 'method' perhaps serves magnificently the one great take needed for a movie, but not the coordinated, sequential, sustained demands of theatre acting. This requires technique.[416]

Although Wherrett views naturalism as the forte of film and television, theatre acting being free to be more theatrical and experimental,[417] he still considers that the same basic elements of acting apply to film and television and theatre. Wherrett adopted a Stanislavskian approach to his work and claims that the director "must ask the actors the key questions Who are you? Where are you? What is the time? What do you want? What are you doing? Where are you going."[418] Furthermore, he firmly believes that "some kind of firmly based philosophy about acting, one that can be readily practised, is necessary in good direction."[419] He says that Stanislavski's

> core arguments and theories remain as sound as ever one hundred years later. It is impossible, I believe, to act without practising Stanislavsky, whether an actor knows it or not.[420]

He greatly values technique in movement, voice and text analysis and passionately believes in the value of isolating 'units and objectives'.[421] Although he respects improvisation as a rehearsal tool, he cautions against wasting rehearsal time with unfocussed improvisation. He considers that its primary value lies in its use to help "connect the actor with a character distant in time and rank or (to) release a blockage between actor and text."[422]

As a self-identified Stanislavskian practitioner, Wherrett's relevance in this discussion should not be underestimated. Because of the sheer breadth and length of his directing and teaching experience, it is arguable that he has worked with more Australian actors, directors and acting teachers than any other directors discussed in this dissertation. Whether or not his ideas have been directly adopted by the people with whom he has worked, there is no doubt that such colleagues have been exposed to and informed by Wherrett's very clear directing methodology.

Like Richard Wherrett, Nick Lathouris,[35] although not a film director, features in this analysis because of the influence he has had through his work (in his case, as a dramaturg and acting coach) and because of his significance as a proponent and teacher of practical aesthetics. He has worked extensively as a theatre actor and has some experience as a film actor, having trained at NIDA in the 1960s. Significantly, he attributes the primary influence on his approach to acting/directing to Hayes Gordon. Lathouris's work as a dramaturg gained attention when he worked on the television series, *Heartbreak High (1994-9)* and *Wildside (1998-9).* Though credited as 'dramaturg' in the credits, his work has in fact been more like that of an acting coach for the various actors on these shows. His influence on both the actors and directors who have worked with him appears, from all reports, to have been considerable.

Lathouris says that

> directors in Australia don't focus on performance; they focus on the focus pull and avoiding muddy sound … they don't give performance any time.[423]

He believes that in film and television, where actors are given so little rehearsal time compared with rehearsals in theatre, having a workable method is vital for the actor.

While his approach to how acting works is very much linked to the work of David Mamet and John Cassavetes, it is surprisingly straightforward. Essentially, his acting approach is all about playing actions. The notion of character history and so on is irrelevant in his work. He says, as actors

> we are not the person; we're an outsider; we have the whole of it and must make a choice because without making a choice we can't *do* it.[424]

The actor must therefore choose a path and physically begin to do it.

For Lathouris, "acting is about *doing* something to other people to create an affect."[425] It is about affecting a "need or a want". Although in real life the dilemma for human beings is that we often do not know what we want, Lathouris says that his approach to acting "works on an assumption that as actors we need to decide on the character's want."[426] He further elaborates:

> I absolutely do not think in terms of feelings….it's not for the actor to discover the feeling…the discovery of feeling is what happens through the doing. It is not about pretending; it is about doing.[427]

Accordingly, he does not try to spend time on creating back-stories for characters, although he does place importance on the actor knowing the character's given circumstances. He disagrees

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[35] **Nick (Nicholas, Nico) Lathouris.**
Filmography (as actor): Mad Max (1979) Fair Game (1985), Georgia (1988), Jigsaw (1990), Father (1990), Heaven Tonight (1990), Death in Brunswick (1990), The Heartbreak Kid (1993), Gino (1994), and as dramaturg: Heartbreak High and Wildside.[35]

with some actors and directors who believe that the key to acting is 'play'; rather, he says that acting is a serious job which needs "adult things to happen."[428]

With the exception of certain great actors, he asserts that stereotyping to some extent is necessary in film because, unlike the theatre where there is a certain freedom in casting, film requires an actor to be suitably cast to match the essential aspects of the character - age, gender, context and so on. However, he feels that once cast, actors have extraordinary choices available to them about how to play the part.

His approach can be broken down into a number of steps. For him, this work needs to be undertaken by the actor, however, the director should also be able to work through this process with the actor, providing assistance and guidance in accordance with the director's vision of the project. In summary, the actor must:

> [1] work out literally what is occurring in the scene (this is done by describing what each character actually does, e.g. he/she says XYZ… he/she does XYZ… he/she tells A: XYZ);
> [2] work out what the character wants within the story (e.g. A wants B to admit he's got a problem…A wants B to move out);
> [3] work out what, as an actor, one is going to do to get the other person to respond (i.e. ask the question: What is it that I need to do to get the other person to do X,Y or Z?");
> [4] work at answering the question: "what does that mean to me?";
> [5] work through speed reads of the text familiarising him/herself completely with the words of the text, and
> [6] work with the other actors in the scene by collaborating to obtain responses and in return act off those offers, one after the other; repeating the last process many times until one is secure in the story and the impulses flow freely.[429]

Lathouris believes that the critical aspect of acting, which requires the actor's focus is for the actor

> …to keep attention fully on the other person watching for what is going to come next…(He says) we just work towards our objective (and) we always choose an objective which is beyond the end of the scene.[430]

He says that all the actor starts out with is the script, and it is with the script that all the preliminary work must begin.

Like most other performers, he places great value on relaxation, believing that one must be in a relaxed state in order to be able to respond to impulses which are vital in acting. He warns against prescribing responses, because so much of what human beings want, he says, is unknown; human beings have many deeper layers and only through their dealings with others are their real wants revealed.

Nick Lathouris does not ascribe importance to tight blocking and believes that technicians, as they start to see how great performances are released, can learn to respond to the actors when required and become more flexible during the film shooting process. He commends the value of rehearsals for the director because, in the end, he says they are much cheaper than other parts of the filmmaking process.[431]

Given the number of actors and directors he has influenced through his overall career and more recent work as a dramaturg, it is conceivable that this Mamet-based work is becoming increasingly important in the Australian acting scene. This is because of its influence in the television acting scene which will arguably, in turn, filter into film acting praxis. At the very least, it would seem important for any film director to be able to speak the language of practical aesthetics when working with actors who practise this approach, given its increasing relevance in the Australian acting scene.

Conclusion

Both Chauvel and Hall seem to have been willing to work with actors creatively in a variety of ways, incorporating certain practices akin to Stanislavskian-like notions, including a search for emotional integrity and truth in performance, and collaborative rehearsal processes. It could be argued they pioneered new approaches to working in Australia with actors in their search for more moving performances, particularly through their experimentation with style and casting.

This kind of willingness to explore new ways of working with actors, and a preparedness to work with actors on performance collaboratively, epitomizes both the work of Chauvel and Hall, and also that of the New Wave directors who emerged in the 1970's. I specifically addressed related issues in my survey, which was designed to assist in revealing the patterns of directorial practice in Australia. (A summary of the survey findings is included as Table B at the end of Chapter Five.) Whether or not the New Wave directors were specifically adopting the practices of Chauvel and Hall is uncertain; however, by tracing the New Wave directors' working methodologies, their ideas can be identified and placed in the context of dominant methodologies that reach back to such filmmakers as Chauvel and Hall, and look forward to later filmmakers' work.

The early pioneering and New Wave directors discussed in this study arguably have had the greatest influence on the development of directing praxis which developed during this period of time. Despite the fact that many of the new breed of filmmakers, for example, Pauline Chan, James Bogle, Craig Monahan, Daniel Nettheim and Rowan Woods all trained at the elite AFTRS film school where directing and acting methodologies are studied in some detail, what emerges clearly is that Australian directors, irrespective of their training and experience typically declare themselves prepared to work with actors from any background. These directors are open to the ideas and unique abilities of individual actors. As the key Australian actor training institutions also incorporate detailed study of acting methodologies from a variety of viewpoints, trained actors seem very well equipped to understand the language of performance when negotiating meaning with directors. It is noteworthy that directors like Cherie Nowlan and Mark Joffe admit to being profoundly influenced as directors by working with particular actors; hence the working methodology and training of actors is highly significant in terms of its influence on directors.

A summary of the surveyed directors' responses is contained at the end of Chapter Five. Upon consideration of each director and their various admissions made for the purpose of this and other studies, a pattern of trends and influences begins to emerge. On a more individual level, Peter Weir's extensive use of improvisation is a defining factor of his work, while a storyboarding approach shapes the way Bruce Beresford works with his actors. All the directors discussed, however, seem to place a great premium on casting and developing (in tandem with the actor) the inner life of the character by exploring the character's "given circumstances," (the Stanislavskian concept as detailed in Chapter Three). All the directors included in this Chapter employ a wide variety of rehearsal techniques, some using games and some relying upon relaxation techniques. However, all these directors (with the partial exception of Beresford) are committed to developing a supportive ensemble in which their actors can search for the best way to create their characters.

This analysis of the thespioprudence or individual working methodologies of my survey target group and other relevant figures reveals the variety of directing methodologies which currently influence the working Australian film director. The following final chapter highlights and synthesises the common themes in practice and attempts to identify and crystallise the dominant paradigm in film directing praxis in this context.

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CHAPTER 5
REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In this study on Thespioprudence, I have attempted to illuminate the theoretical approach to the directing of actors for performance of a range of Australian feature film directors. Specifically, I have categorised certain Australian film directors by reference to the characteristics of key acting and directing approaches as outlined in Chapter Three, with a view to identifying any dominant directing paradigms in the Australian film industry.

Previously, there has been a clear lack of critical reflection in this area of study. This dissertation attempts to explore this field and at the same time, explains certain theoretical acting and directing concepts in deliberately accessible language. I have coined the expression 'thespioprudence' because there was a need for a more precise word to describe this important, but previously neglected, theoretical notion.

Process

In undertaking my research, I adopted the multi-faceted qualitative research approach of the 'bricoleur', undertaking a major original survey of selected Australian feature film directors, conducting interviews of related arts practitioners, observing rehearsal activities of certain experienced and novice directors, participating in directing workshops, reflecting critically upon my own acting practice, analysing in depth acting methodologies and reviewing a wide range of literature in both film studies and the related field of theatre directing and acting practice. This methodology has been adopted in an attempt to illuminate the complex theoretical notions and praxis behind the directing methodologies adopted by a range of directors within the Australian film industry.

As previously stated, I have attempted at all times to filter out my own ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding acting practice, with a view to identifying directing practices and patterns as accurately as possible, given some of the constraints of the study.

There were a number of limitations on what I set out to achieve in this study. For example, I was unable to access a number of the most famous Australian film directors and my survey participants (who varied widely in experience and output) responded in widely varying levels of detail, some directors providing very little information at all. This made it very difficult to undertake a fully comprehensive, balanced analysis of Australian directing practice. One aim of this dissertation was to make a contribution to a greatly neglected area of arts praxis**,**

incorporating at the same time a detailed archival record of the working practices of twenty-six eminent Australian film directors.

My study centres on the findings from my survey, as described in Chapter One, which returned a reasonably high participation rate of fifty percent. I have brought together my survey findings in the table located at the end of this chapter (Table B). I have relied on both primary sources and other secondary sources (specifically published interviews in other forums) to justify my findings.

In previous chapters, I have demonstrated that there are many influences on the Australian film directing culture, including related English and American acting and directing practices. It is my conclusion, based on my overall findings, that Stanislavski remains the most significant influence in the local context.

Objectives

As stated in Chapter One, I set out to achieve very specific objectives in this dissertation namely to:

1. investigate directing approaches in the Australian film industry by reference to directors surveyed for this study, and analyse core aspects of performance in general, as well as the nature of the actor-director relationship in the Australian film industry;
2. extrapolate key aspects of performance methodology for film from the body of knowledge on performance methodology (concerning acting and directing) in theatre studies;
3. define the elements of key acting methodologies, taking account of historical developments in style and theory;
4. document certain directors' thespioprudence, including an assessment of: the influence of their early training; their actual directing practices for working with different groups of actors (particularly their allegiances to specific theoretical approaches to directing), and where possible to critically challenge those assertions;
5. identify the key approaches used by Australian film directors when working with actors on performance, and if possible identify whether or not any particular approach is dominant. This particular goal has involved the following:
    a. trying to interpret how the individual directors have framed their own methodologies while referring to layers of meaning in their own explanations of their working methods;

b. identifying, comparing and mapping links (to the extent possible) between dominant and emerging directing practice trends; and
c. identifying and explaining perceived patterns of effectiveness within the performance matrix for film acting by reference to certain mechanisms producing relevant observable events, including: casting, rehearsal activities and process, on set directing practices, and actual performances, where possible, and

6. articulate in accessible terms my findings about directing praxis for use by novice or emerging directors.

Goal 1: Survey and investigation of directors, performance codes and the 'actor-director relationship'

My first goal was achieved primarily through collating survey responses as detailed in Chapter Four, which includes illuminating revelations made by the directors themselves concerning the nature of the actor-director relationship in the Australian film industry.

My literature review incorporated considerable detail about various dominant acting methodologies both in theatre and film, and identified a significant amount of information about various directors' working methods. It specifically informed the detailed explanation, coding and summary of core acting methodologies as explained in Chapter Three, and foreshadowed some of the discussion regarding the director-actor relationship in Chapter Four.

Goals 2 & 3: Appropriation of a framework for the analysis of performance methodology and definition of key acting methodologies

Chapter Three addressed my second and third goals via an attempt at a detailed account of acting methodologies. Particular standard approaches to acting initially emerged in the realm of the theatre and were appropriated and subsequently modified, where possible, to fit the needs of film acting. I was able to extrapolate key questions for my analysis of the 'thespioprudence in film' from the subjects discussed in theatre studies on a regular basis, notably considerations of casting and rehearsal processes. Because of the different demands made of the actor in film, I considered some of the unique challenges faced by the film actor, including: blocking of the actor's physical action on set; the nature of directing which may occur during actual filming; the use of improvisation during shooting; and ADR (automatic dialogue replacement) practices.

In order to 'value-add' to this dissertation and to be 'user-friendly' at the same time, I compiled Table A (a summary of acting methodologies) in Chapter Three where I have described each

acting approach by reference to set characteristics including goals, style, process, movement, voice traits and other indicators**.** I argue that the key questions I have extrapolated from theatre studies in order to analyse performance for film can be justified because of the close relationship which exists between theatre and film acting practice. As demonstrated in this thesis, film acting is often performed by actors who have either originally trained in the theatre or at least may from time to time work in both mediums. Film actors also inevitably work with directors who themselves often cross between film (including television) and theatre working environments, so that essentially the same processes are often used in both the theatre and in film. Given that Western theatre acting had hundreds of years of 'lead time' in which to evolve and form, it was a natural progression for some of the same acting methodologies to be appropriated into and adapted for the film acting arena.

Goal 4: Documentation of certain directors' directing practice and critique of their allegiances

My fourth goal, that of documenting individual director's practices, is addressed in Chapter Four. This chapter incorporates detailed archival summaries of what certain individual directors reveal about their own directing practice, as revealed in their survey responses as well as through other secondary sources such as interviews.

As part of this chapter is substantially archival in content, it has proven difficult to challenge critically the directors' personal assertions about their own allegiances to particular theoretical approaches to directing for a number of reasons. A number of directors simply did not identify any particular process as being of core significance to their thespioprudence. Others freely acknowledge borrowing from a variety of sources. Of those who specifically did self-identify as practising predominantly one approach, namely Donald Crombie, Ana Kokkinos, George T. Miller, Daniel Nettheim, Stephen Wallace, George Whaley, Michael Gow, Nick Lathouris and Richard Wherrett, their claims appear to be genuinely based in an understanding of the relevant theoretical concepts. Sometimes, however, theoretical influences informing directors' practices may be revealed in certain unstated assumptions about their work, which can be inferred from their responses.

Goal 5: Identification of possible dominant paradigms within directing practice through interpretation of assertions and consideration of perceived patterns of effectiveness by reference to casting, rehearsal and on set directing practice, including the various ways directors approach working with both inexperienced and experienced actors

In trying to achieve my goal of identifying individual directing methodologies and assessing whether or not any particular approach is dominant, both the survey information collated in Chapter Four and my own attempts to identify links between the various practices form the basis for this analysis. I found distilling and tabling core aspects of various directors' praxis to be the most useful tool when trying to identify, compare and map dominant and emerging directing practice trends. I therefore used the correlated information in Tables A and B to quantify the commonalities and recurring methodologies in each director's 'thespioprudence'. I also structured the chapter around three key questions:

1. Does a director's own training fundamentally determine their own approach?
2. What course of action does a director take when he/she has an ensemble of actors with different training backgrounds and different methodologies or no training whatsoever, and how is this reflected in casting and rehearsal phases of the directing process? and
3. What is the dominant approach to directing actors in the Australian film industry?

I had originally intended to link certain mechanisms producing relevant observable events, including casting, rehearsal, on set directing practice and performances themselves with perceived patterns of effectiveness within film acting**.** However, this proved difficult because I simply did not have sufficient information about each director's practice to achieve this goal. This may have been because the survey questions did not necessarily encourage the detailed explanations I now realise, in hindsight, I needed to fully achieve this objective. Nevertheless, I was able to draw some conclusions about influences on methodology from some of the responses to the relevant questions.

At a more fundamental level, I was able to identify a number of specific and sometimes innovative activities that directors undertake through the rehearsal and filming process in order to assist their actors to produce the desired performances. I have, to the extent possible, indicated where these practices appear to have been learned from directing colleagues.

Goal 6: Accessibility of findings

One outcome of this thesis is that I have explored and collated my findings as clearly and succinctly as possible, in order to assist emerging/trainee film directors to better understand the actor's language and needs when both are working in film. As stated, Chapter Three explains a number of core complex notions about acting methodology.

By creating detailed tables summarising what I discovered to be the essential characteristics of core acting approaches as well as the directors' own statements about their working methods, it

is hoped that any novice director referring to the tables should be able to understand and assimilate a number of complex theoretical notions quite quickly. They may also be better placed to absorb a considerable amount of information from the models provided about ways one might approach the directing of actors for film, thus expanding their own developing thespioprudential repertoire.

Findings: matching the directors and methodologies

Despite an overall lack of identification with set methodological practices, a closer examination here of what the individual directors say they actually do when directing actors has revealed the considerable influences which dominant theoretical notions have had on the evolution of directing praxis in Australia.

In terms of what was revealed through my surveyed directors' responses, the most prominent finding is that the majority specifically considered their own directorial approaches very fluid in practice. Most also confirmed that they are very open to a variety of ways of working with actors in thespioprudential terms. For instance, Rolf de Heer and Richard Franklin clearly state to the effect that they are open to 'whatever works for the actor'. Surprisingly, as set out in Table B at the end of this chapter, only seven film director respondents directly identified themselves as being aligned to core acting/directing methodologies, including Stanislavski and Mamet-based practices.

In reaching my findings, I considered how the main theoretical approaches relate to the directing practices of the relevant directors in certain key ways. In my dissertation I have considered the influence of the following: Stanislavski's system; Method acting; practical aesthetics; improvisation-based practice; a text-based approach; Brechtian practice and Labanian and other physically-based acting methods. It must be stressed that such findings regarding the models used focussed on the responses by the surveyed directors, although some minor reference was made to the other directors as appropriate. I also have identified which directors have been especially influenced by formal Film School training.

Training

Twenty-two of my surveyed film directors (as well as Michael Gow and Nick Lathouris) were trained at film and/or acting schools (as indicated in Table B). This group may therefore be described as representing a technically informed group of practicing film directors in Australia. Eleven trained at the AFTRS, two trained through AFTRS short courses, four trained at other

film schools (including VCA, QCA and UCLA), and four trained at NIDA (two of these also training at AFTRS), and one at the Jacques Lecoq International School of Theatre in Paris. They generally demonstrated a clear understanding of various approaches to working with actors, although they do not necessarily favour a single approach to directing actors. Their collective directing ideas reflect the many theoretical paradigms permeating their work. These can be summarised as follows, for further clarification:

Influenced by Stanislavski

Donald Crombie, Daniel Nettheim, George Whaley, Steven Wallace and Baz Luhrmann favour a Stanislavskian approach in their work with actors and openly acknowledge this preference. Additionally, while both Ana Kokkinos and George T. Miller greatly value Stanislavski's approach, they also claim to rely on certain practices propounded by David Mamet and Sanford Meisner. Michelle Warner, a very new director, has also found Stanislavski particularly helpful in developing her own thespioprudence. Richard Wherrett too based his work on Stanislavskian principles. Accordingly, approximately a third of my surveyed directors admit to being heavily influenced by Stanislavskian practice.

As has already been stated, the traits of Stanislavskian influence include strong character development activities, careful script analysis into units of action, action-playing by actors consistent with character journey trajectories, and complex ensemble-based rehearsal activities, including imagination and improvisation activities. Respect for text and reliance upon a high level of technical skill in the actor's ability to handle text, language, movement, character-development and so on is also indicative of Stanislavskian practice.

Their stated goals and principles

Stanislavski's system promotes the actor's exploration of the character's 'given circumstances' and this is integral to George Whaley's and Donald Crombie's very detailed approaches to working with actors in identifying character circumstances and emotional trajectories. The careful consideration of the character's emotional journey and character logic is equally elemental in the work of George T. Miller. This is also true of Richard Franklin, although Franklin does not consider himself a Stanislavskian practitioner. Similarly, while not identifying as a Stanislavskian, but rather a method practitioner (practising a mix of ideas), Di Drew nevertheless advises that the questions that must be asked of the scene include "Who? What? When? Why? Who am I? What am I doing? Where is it? When is it? Why am I doing it?"[1] Despite the fact that Peter Weir rejects analysing his work with actors, Weir's complex

character and backstory development activities hints at Stanislavskian influences on his ideas about working with actors.

In addition to the use of the notion of 'given circumstances', another indicator of a 'system' influence is the use of particular terms like beats, units, obstacles, objectives and actions. Ana Kokkinos and Gerard Lee quite deliberately use this language – perhaps partly because of their writing experiences, while Donald Crombie, Baz Luhrmann, George T. Miller, Daniel Nettheim, Stephen Wallace and Michelle Warner use this language which arguably is core to a Stanislavskian approach. Although George Whaley uses the same ideas, he dislikes the expression 'beats', and talks more in terms of 'actions'.

While not identifying as Stanislavskian practitioners, Pauline Chan, Cherie Nowlan, Denny Lawrence and Rowan Woods do rely on the notions of beats, units, obstacles and objectives in a general sense as directors (in Nowlan's and Wood's cases, they say not necessarily because of Stanislavski). Richard Franklin sometimes relies on these notions, Mark Joffe and Craig Monahan occasionally do in passing, while Rolf de Heer, Di Drew, Peter Duncan, and Carl Schultz at least rely on the idea of identifying 'objectives' (and in turn 'obstacles'). Indeed, Peter Duncan claims that he is constantly analysing them. Only John Ruane and James Bogle say that they do not use these concepts.

Many directors surveyed appear to map the emotional journey of the characters as part of their directorial practice, notwithstanding they may not identify that their ideas in this regard are Stanislavskian in nature. For example, James Bogle acknowledges that he sequences and maps the emotional journey of the characters - something which I would argue originated in the system as espoused by Stanislavski. Similarly, directors with strong scriptwriting backgrounds like Shirley Barrett, Gerard Lee and George T. Miller inevitably plot character journeys in stages and naturally appreciate the value of character histories when working with actors on the character's emotion.

Casting

Stanislavskian practice does not dictate a specific approach to casting. However, what is clear is that any actor engaging in a Stanislavskian-based rehearsal process will require a high level of skill (for example, voice, movement and text-based skills) and a great capacity for imagination and emotional engagement with a part. Hence, one would expect that a good casting process in this context should require sensitivity to and understanding of the relevant character, capacity to

probe emotional and imaginative states, flexibility to take direction and some exploration of the actor's general level of technical skill.

Accordingly, the directors who indicated that they like to engage in discussion with potential actors during the casting process and explore character through improvisation and scene direction are arguably relying (albeit without explicit or conscious recognition) on specific activities and practices originating in the Stanislavskian system. For example, improvisation as part of the casting process, as practised by Di Drew and Stephen Wallace, reflects this trend. Other directors who prefer actors to be able to demonstrate flexibility in the casting process and use active rehearsal processes (James Bogle, Pauline Chan, Donald Crombie, Ana Kokkinos and Cherie Nowlan, for example), are also demonstrating the influence of the Stanislavskian tradition. Furthermore, consideration by the director of the actor's inner potential (equally important in a method acting casting process) is also consistent with this tradition. Only Craig Monahan specifically states that he looks for the character within the actor. Interestingly, this was also something which characterised the casting approach adopted by Charles Chauvel, according to his daughter's reflection on his practice.

Ensemble rehearsal

A definitive Stanislavskian practice involves the development of a strong ensemble. While none of the directors surveyed specifically talked about having been influenced by Stanislavski in this context, almost all the directors talked about how important it is to create a safe, relaxed, supportive environment where the actors are free to take risks in exploring their characters through their acting. Even if unarticulated as a Stanislavskian practice by these directors, it is evident from the survey findings (as summarised in Table B) that all the directors surveyed seek to develop a strong ensemble-based environment for filmmaking. Significantly, this trait was also prevalent in the commentaries of the non-surveyed directors discussed in Chapter Four. For example, Peter Weir's improvisation activities and his playing of music on set to enhance the creative mood are examples of this kind of devotion to the development of such an open environment where anything can happen.

Influence of Method

Only a few of the directors specifically referred to the influence of 'Method' acting on their directorial methodology, although none indicated any intense dislike for method acting. Di Drew uses it in combination with transactional analysis and Laban-based activities**.** Richard Franklin specifically mentions being influenced by Harold Clurman and Edward Easty on Method. Both Denny Lawrence and Stephen Wallace also admit to having been influenced by Stella Adler, a key player in the development of method acting.

The fact that many of the directors either talk about or hint at the need for both the director and the actor to be equipped to talk the language of emotion, as specifically mentioned for example by James Bogle, arguably suggests an openness to some of the ways of working one might expect of traditionally method-based practitioners.

Goals, casting, ensemble practice, improvisation

Because 'method' grew out of Stanislavskian notions in the first place, the goals of both approaches often demonstrate striking similarities, such as in casting and rehearsal activities developed in these methodologies. An exception, however, might apply to the extent of the use of improvisation in rehearsal and its prevalence in the actual filming process – such use of improvisation is much more prevalent in Method practice. Accordingly, it is worth noting again that extensive improvisation was an important part (though to varying degrees) of the rehearsal process of James Bogle, Shirley Barrett, Di Drew, George Whaley, Pauline Chan, Ana Kokkinos, Gerard Lee and Rowan Woods. George Ogilvie's meditation-based exercises arguably also fit within this framework, as does Steven Wallace's 'workshopping' process. Furthermore, the use of improvisation to varying extents on set is acceptable to a number of directors, including, Shirley Barrett, James Bogle, Pauline Chan, Donald Crombie, Rolf de Heer, Mark Joffe, Gerard Lee, Daniel Nettheim, Cherie Nowlan, Stephen Wallace. It is possible that this trend reflects a 'method' influence, with the directors allowing the actors to explore 'the moment' and link into their own emotional engagement with the character. Even so, none of the directors discussed these points in much detail. Hence, I am not able to argue definitively that there can be any more than a tentative finding regarding the use of 'method' as integral to these directors' thespioprudence.

Practical aesthetics

As with 'method' acting, few of the film directors explicitly identified a specific reliance on 'practical aesthetics' as informing their practice as directors. Only Ana Kokkinos and George T. Miller admitted to using this approach, although both said they used it together with Stanislavskian-based practice. Significantly, Miller stated that he finds the work of both David Mamet and Sanford Meisner useful in his directing process, while Kokkinos talked only about Mamet's influence.

Shirley Barrett also acknowledged that she finds practical aesthetics interesting, having been particularly influenced by the work of Nick Lathouris through his work with her as a dramaturg.

Both Michael Gow and Nick Lathouris openly acknowledge the influence of practical aesthetics on their practice.

Goals, casting, rehearsal

Although no other directors mentioned directly being influenced by practical aesthetics, it is possible that Mamet's and Meisner's influence extends to a larger number of directors because of the way in which practical aesthetics prioritises the 'playing of actions' as its core practice. Rolf de Heer, Denny Lawrence and Stephen Wallace all focus on the playing of actions in terms of how they describe their directorial approach. It is possible that this reflects such an influence. Di Drew talks in terms of 'verbs'[2], indicating use of an action-playing approach to directing. However, given that the notion of action playing originated in Stansislavski's system, arguably it is more likely that the tradition of action playing is so central to acting methodology generally that it permeates the whole of the Australian directing and acting industry, regardless of which philosophy these directors think they may espouse.

Only Ana Kokkinos specifically claimed to rely on Meisner's repetition exercise (as detailed in Chapter Three) in her rehearsal process. Otherwise, none of the director's commentaries about their casting or rehearsal activities revealed any practices specifically based in practical aesthetics. Nevertheless, a number (including Cherie Nowlan, Pauline Chan, George Whaley, Steven Wallace and Rowan Woods) mentioned the value of changing actions/activity to assist actors in finding performance. Again, this is equally reflective of Stanislavskian-based activities, so it is difficult to ascribe the source of this practice exclusively to one methodology.

Therefore, the extent to which practical aesthetics has influenced Australian acting and directing practices is still difficult to assess. However, the admissions made by two additional people surveyed for this dissertation, the theatre director Michael Gow and the dramaturg-actor Nick Lathouris, suggest that Mamet/Meisner based acting methodology is having a more profound influence in Australia than one might at first believe. Indeed, in Adam McCauley's recent collection of interviews with Australian film, television and theatre directors, a number of them talked about the influence of practical aesthetics on their work, including Michael Jenkins and Nick Lathouris, Michael Gow and Kate Woods.[3] Kate Woods, in particular, spoke about the influence that Nick Lathouris has had on the development of her ideas in this regard.

Improvisation

Despite improvisation forming a dominant approach to working with actors, only James Bogle among those surveyed embraces an improvisational way of working, adopting much of Mike

Leigh's work in his thespioprudence. As a sole approach to filmmaking, however, improvisation is extremely rare. It is mostly combined with other methods. The discussion concerning both Gillian Armstrong's and Peter Weir's creative and improvisationally-based activities demonstrates that improvisation is a very important tool in the film director's arsenal.

For Australian film directors, improvisation largely seems to have greatest value in the casting process and in the rehearsal process. It is used primarily to assist the actors in their creative exploration of a part and in the development of the ensemble through improvisational workshopping activities. The latter can be particularly powerful tools for exploring subtext and for quickly bonding actors into a team.

Improvisation is very important in the casting activities of Shirley Barrett and Di Drew, especially as a way of developing character relationships. For James Bogle, it is particularly important for the actors to be well briefed for the casting process so that they can come to the process with offers or ideas which are then presumably explored in the casting session.

In terms of the actual rehearsal process, Denny Lawrence finds non-verbal improvisation very useful to help blocked actors, while Gerard Lee likes to explore motivation through improvisation which he finds very useful for finding performances. Similarly, Baz Luhrmann also uses improvisation for helping blocked actors, this being an important and well-documented part of his rehearsal process.

The use of improvisation during the filmmaking process has already been mentioned as a tool which possibly reflects a strong 'method' influence. However, the majority of directors surveyed apparently do not use improvisation once filming begins. Instead, it seems to be something used only in exceptional circumstances by most directors. The same is true of the other non-surveyed directors considered in this dissertation.

Text-based approach

Because what I have chosen to call a 'text-based approach' is possibly better described as a way of looking at 'how to present/act the script', it is difficult to set out in detail the way in which this approach diverges from the other practices. As already noted, it evolved from the British acting tradition which relies on a very high level of technical competence, particularly in relation to skill with language, in the actor. It has a strong connection to language and the text is the primary vehicle for the story telling, in that the actor must be able to deliver text 'truthfully' and in an emotionally and intellectually connected fashion.

On many levels this approach is integral to both the work of Stanislavski and Mamet/Meisner, because it requires the actor and director to fully understand what the script is saying. At the same time, the actor must be able to reveal the truth and intent behind the words of the text.

Writer-directors, as suggested by the responses of the ones surveyed here (Ana Kokkinos, Gerard Lee and Shirley Barrett, for example), appear most likely to have a strong identification with the scripted word, but many other directors treat the scripted word with equal respect (assuming that the script is a well crafted document in the first place). Directors like George Whaley, Carl Schultz, Donald Crombie, Craig Monahan, John Ruane and Rowan Woods certainly fall into this category.

Casting, ensemble, rehearsal practice

I was not armed with sufficient information to be able to assess how strongly this text-based approach affects casting and rehearsal. However, directors like Donald Crombie and Gillian Armstrong who focus strongly from the outset on the text and character analysis would appear to be influenced by this tradition. So many directors rely on significant discussion during the rehearsal, particularly about the character's given circumstances and the story itself as is manifested in the text, that a respect for the language of the script is arguably a primary component of directorial practice, integral to the way in which Australian film directors work in any event.

The majority of directors surveyed indicated a willingness to work with a dramaturg and voice coach, particularly where accent work is required. This, too, reflects a general desire to ensure that actors' delivery of text is clear and authentic.

It can be argued that the British actor training tradition, with its focus on voice and text work, has influenced the way that Australian acting culture has evolved. The fact that voice training and text analysis skills are still an integral part of Australian drama schools' curricula presumably ensures that a high percentage of working actors in this country appreciate the importance of technical skill in these areas. As already noted, the ways in which artistic practice and technical skills percolate between the various participants in the acting/directing/performing arts teaching worlds in both film and theatre is likely to ensure that Australian film directors are, at the very least, aware of the value of such technical skills. This was, for example, specifically reflected in Cherie Nowlan's comments about valuing the training she received from Bill Pepper, the Head of Voice at NIDA.

Brecht, Laban, Physical theatre Practices

My findings show that these three approaches, which are generally associated with acting in the theatre, have only limited influence in film directing, at least in relation to those surveyed through primary and secondary sources. The relevant methodologies here tend to have only an incidental application in film, through their influence for instance, on physical exploration activities in relation to actions and props. George Whaley and George Ogilvie do both mention the relevance of Bertolt Brecht in their work and Whaley also acknowledges the influence of Grotowski on his work. Cherie Nowlan talks about changing the actor's physical business (or action) being important to help blocked actors. She likes to explore revelation through props; that is, the actor's handling of props can be a powerful tool for their exploration of action and can inform their character choices. George Ogilvie mentioned a similar idea. Rowan Woods asserts that in dealing with blocked actors he likes to extend physical activity and Di Drew clearly acknowledges that she likes to employ Labanian techniques in her directing work, that is, through exploration of physical actions and forces. Thus several directors would appear to explore a wide range of methods, and to have been influenced by many sources in their directing.

Innovation

It is clear that most film directors inevitably evolve their own personal methodology for working with actors. Denny Lawrence, for example, explicitly states that he prefers his own unique way of working with actors for performance. (He did not define what he means by this in his survey response). Other directors mention particular practices which they have found very helpful. For example, Donald Crombie uses his emotional graph when charting character development with the actors, Peter Weir uses music to rediscover the creative mood from rehearsals, Gillian Armstrong has the writer draft extra scenes for use in the casting process, and George Ogilvie uses meditation practices as an integral part of his rehearsals. Many directors have taken the practices developed by directing pioneers and then adapted them to suit the needs of their own particular actors and rehearsals. For example, George Miller has drawn upon George Ogilvie's ideas, including the process he calls 'seepage' (as previously discussed). On the other hand, James Bogle has drawn upon Mike Leigh's workshopping and improvisational practices, appropriating these ideas into his own working practice.

If the particular 'take' on practical aesthetics demonstrated by people like Nick Lathouris and the members of Practical Aesthetics Australia is considered a growing innovation in our acting/directing culture, the extent to which practical aesthetics is influencing the Australian acting, and by implication, directing scene is still in an evolutionary phase, and only time will tell how extensive its influence will be.

What is clear from an assessment of the various methodologies used by the Australian film directors in my sample is that they are almost always open to exploring new ways of working with actors and trying to accommodate actors' needs. Thus their thespioprudence is a dynamic, evolutionary process.

Key findings - a quest for 'truth' and Stanislavski's system

In the above analysis, I have focussed on the statements made by the surveyed directors. In making my final conclusions, however, I have drawn equally from the material concerning both the surveyed directors as well as the writings regarding other eminent Australian film directors discussed in the previous chapters.

As I stated at the outset, the explicit goal for most directors is a quest for 'truth' in their films. In achieving this goal, directors appear to rely heavily on what their chosen actors bring to the work individually, and then adopt a wide variety of approaches to assist the actor to make the character appear truthful and engaging through the performance. Quite simply, both Mark Joffe and Steven Wallace, for example, make it clear that truth in performance is the primary aim of their work with actors, while other directors like Peter Weir, Donald Crombie, James Bogle, Gillian Armstrong and George Ogilvie are willing to try a great variety of rehearsal activities in order to work with the actors to explore character and performance. Obviously the exact nature of this 'truth' is difficult to ascertain, requiring further probing and analysis beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is a recommendation of this study that this problematic notion of 'truth' in performance needs further definition and clarification based on in-depth interviews with the directors surveyed.

Of the directors who specifically discuss the work of Stanislavski, only Donald Crombie and George Whaley appear to accord particular priority to 'the system', although Gillian Armstrong's work with actors on character motivations arguably reflects the strong influence of Stanislavskian notions on her approach. Similarly, Daniel Nettheim, Peter Duncan, Pauline Chan, Ana Kokkinos, Steven Wallace, and Denny Lawrence adopt a number of what appear to be key Stanislavskian practices while Baz Luhrmann also acknowledges Stanislavski's approach. Gerard Lee and Cherie Nowlan have been influenced by many Stanislavskian ideas but appear to adopt a much more mixed, though psychologically based, approach to their work with actors. Peter Weir, Carl Schultz, George Ogilvie, George Miller and George T. Miller are all predominantly concerned with engaging the psychology of the actor in performance. Indeed, this is implicit in the approaches of most directors included in this survey.

Casting

Two key aspects of film directing most frequently highlighted by the directors under investigation here, relate to their active involvement in the casting process and their interactions with actors in the rehearsal process. Almost all the directors considered in this dissertation regard casting as the most critical aspect of what a film director needs to do to make a project succeed. This view mirrors the findings in Tay Garnett's seminal work, *Learn from the Masters*,[4] which reveals that, at an international level, casting is an essential component of a film's chemistry.

This focus on casting highlights its critical value for the Australian directors studied here, including the directors discussed who were not surveyed. For instance, this phenomenon is exemplified by the practices of directors like Peter Weir, Bruce Beresford and Gillian Armstrong, who all search extensively for the right actor and spend a great deal of time and effort during the casting process exploring the actor's suitability and capacity to carry the role. Armstrong's practice of having the writer draft extra character speeches for use in auditions is testament to the rigour of her casting process. In contrast, Mel Gibson, like Charles Chauvel, adopts an approach to casting, which is more akin to the Method approach. That is, he will try to find out about the actor's personal life to see if the actor has the personal experience and insight to create the role. Discussion is central to his casting approach, as it is for Stephen Wallace and also Donald Crombie. In contrast, many directors in this study, including Shirley Barrett, James Bogle, Pauline Chan, Rolf de Heer, Di Drew, Peter Duncan, Richard Franklin, Gerard Lee, George T. Miller, Daniel Nettheim, Cherie Nowlan, George Ogilvie, John Ruane, Carl Schultz and George Whaley, while they may engage in some discussion in the casting process, save the most significant discussions for the early parts of the actual rehearsal process.

Developing the ensemble and an environment of respect

Almost all the directors discussed in this study claim that they work hard to make the filmmaking process a comfortable experience for the actors by adopting an ensemble approach to the work. The directors deliberately protect the actors, providing respectful environments in which to work.

For instance, George Ogilvie places great importance on the use of meditative techniques in his preparatory work with actors while Gillian Armstrong and Peter Weir use music (as originally practiced by Charles Chauvel) to assist the actor's emotional engagement with a part. Weir takes this process further on some film projects through various improvisation-based activities, with actors encouraged to explore their role through role-playing for an extended period both on and off the set. Likewise, Fred Schepisi and George T. Miller spend considerable amounts of

time during rehearsal and filming talking with the actors. Baz Luhrmann says he attempts to disarm the actor's fear in any way he possibly can.[5]

Improvisation

It is reasonable to conclude from the evidence considered above that all the directors surveyed understand that performance is a complex psychological activity, which is often ephemeral in nature. This is reflected in the way many directors are prepared to use improvisation and other activities that engage the actor's imagination - for example by undertaking activities creating the character's history and back-story. The directors for whom this appears to be especially important are Peter Weir, Richard Franklin, Donald Crombie and Shirley Barrett. These notions, as discussed in detail in Chapter Three, are at their core very much Stanislavskian ideas.

It would appear that the major problem with improvisational acting in film is its effect on editing due to inherent continuity problems which arise. James Bogle alone relies heavily on improvisation throughout the filmmaking process, although many of the directors also claim they use it in rehearsal. This group includes: Pauline Chan, Di Drew, Ana Kokkinos, Gerard Lee, Baz Luhrmann, and George Whaley. George T. Miller alone indicates expressly that he does not use improvisation in rehearsal. Stephen Wallace adopts Mike Leigh's ideas in the casting process.

Innovation

Peter Weir's methods arguably are the most innovative activities of those practised by any of the directors considered in this dissertation. His approach is extreme in that he reportedly goes to great lengths to research and create a whole new world for his actors. His complex exercises, which he undertakes both pre-production and during filming, make him a unique director in this use of complex imagination-based activities. Like Stanislavski, the great proponent of the actor exploring the character's 'given circumstances', Peter Weir's approach ostensibly is grounded in a similar tradition, irrespective of whether or not he acknowledges this himself. While the notion of the character's given circumstances has been appropriated, expanded and morphed into a variety of practices by following generations of acting teachers and directors like Lee Strasberg, Elia Kazan, David Mamet, Peter Weir and Gillian Armstrong, its genesis arguably derives originally from the Stanislavskian model. Accordingly, Australian actors and directors alike owe much to Stanislavski and his followers in their practice.

George Ogilvie's adaptation of meditation activities to assist in the rehearsal process also stands out as one of the more unusual activities practised by the directors, while Weir's extreme improvisation activities both on and off the set, reflect his individual approach to creating the moment when 'acting is not acting'.

Text, language and choreography

Certain directors surveyed, including Shirley Barrett, Di Drew, Peter Duncan, Richard Franklin, Ana Kokkinos, Denny Lawrence, George T. Miller, Craig Monahan, John Ruane, Carl Schultz and George Whaley made it very clear that they require actors to be able to respect the script, as written, in their final performances. Interestingly, the writer-directors Shirley Barrett and Gerard Lee were willing to incorporate actors' changes to the script during the rehearsal process where appropriate. None of the directors surveyed specifically aligned themselves with the British tradition of working from a predominantly language-based starting position.

Another thespioprudential strand evident in the readings and the survey is that, of the directors considered, Bruce Beresford, John Ruane, Craig Monoghan, Rowan Woods and Steven Wallace are most concerned with text and having the actors prioritise the script in their rehearsal activities and in their actual performances. A number of directors are also increasingly willing to use the assistance of a dramaturg and voice coach. For instance, Shirley Barrett will use both, while Donald Crombie, Rolf de Heer, Richard Franklin, Gerard Lee, Daniel Nettheim, Cherie Nowlan, Carl Schultz, Stephen Wallace, George Whaley and Rowan Woods will sometimes use a voice coach. While some directors surveyed only use a voice coach for accent work (this includes James Bogle, Di Drew, Peter Duncan, Baz Luhrmann, George T. Miller, and John Ruane), this practice nevertheless reveals their commitment to detailed creation of the external manifestations of character, particularly through the development of appropriate vocal attributes of the character.

Gillian Armstrong and Bruce Beresford are slightly unusual in that they also devote great attention to their storyboards, which they actually use with their actors.

Furthermore, in terms of physical rehearsal activities, Gillian Armstrong's use of dancing to help actors create character relationships is quite novel. In relation to the physical direction of actors, only Di Drew specifically acknowledges Labanian practice as being central to her work with actors. Di Drew and Stephen Wallace specifically call on aspects of transactional analysis for use in rehearsal.

Practical aesthetics and future directions

Ana Kokkinos, Shirley Barrett, George T. Miller, Michael Gow and Nick Lathouris were the only directors to specifically mention the work of David Mamet as having profoundly influenced their work, although many of the directors were very well aware of the work of both Mamet and Meisner and seemed to respect that it works for many actors. The influences of the Practical Aesthetics Workshop (mentioned in the Chapter Three commentary about training schools) and practitioners like Nick Lathouris are yet to be accurately measured historically. However, comments by a number of emerging directors suggest that this influence is growing.

Many of the new breed of filmmakers - for example, Pauline Chan, Craig Monahan, Daniel Nettheim and Rowan Woods - all trained at the elite AFTRS film school, where directing and acting methodologies are studied in some detail. Despite this, however, what emerges clearly is that Australian directors, irrespective of their training and experience typically declare themselves prepared to work with actors from any background. These directors are open to the ideas and unique abilities of individual actors. As the key Australian actor training institutions also incorporate detailed study of acting methodologies from a variety of viewpoints, trained actors seem very well equipped to understand the language of performance when negotiating meaning with directors. It is noteworthy that directors like Cherie Nowlan and Mark Joffe admit to being profoundly influenced as directors by working with particular actors; hence the working methodology and training of actors is highly significant in terms of its influence on directors.

Does Stanislavski dominate – the final word

Based on the analysis of the various commentaries of the directors surveyed and assessed, the way in which the majority explore the character's 'given circumstances' by discussing character psychology, and rely on working with the actors' imaginations, suggest that Stanislavski remains the dominant influence on Australian film acting and directing, irrespective of whether or not they specifically acknowledge a debt to Stanislavskian ideas. This trend is revealed by the way in which most directors included in this study look at motivation and action when working with actors.

Irrespective of whatever approach a director adopts, this study has shown that it is crucial for directors to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the core acting methodologies in order to work most effectively with actors. What is also a significant directorial attribute is an understanding of any ways actors might be led through performance preparation in order to present 'truthfully' in their film performances.

Actors, it seems, tie themselves to one method or a combination of methods, depending on their training and experience, but directors operate under a different set of imperatives, governed by the global outcomes in "the film" (rather than a performance), and so are prepared to work pragmatically in relation to acting practice and theory. Ultimately, whatever works will generally be acceptable if it produces a positive result on film. Directors need to be fluent across a range of techniques and methods in order to be able to communicate with actors on their terms in order to be able to utilise the unique characteristics of particular actors.

It is claimed here that an understanding and articulation of the overall craft or thespioprudence of the directors surveyed and discussed in this dissertation will prove useful in informing directors both of conventional methods as well as new and creative ways of working with actors. As learning to speak the actor's language is integral to directing, film directors should aspire to understand fully the subtle variations in the different methodologies which are drawn upon by actors in their work. Aspects of the actor's work are often intangible and at the very least difficult to explain in accessible terms in the absence of a common theoretical language. However, the detailed observations and documented practices of a select group representing several generations of eminent theatre and film directors, as discussed in Chapter Four, are a worthy place for the emerging film director to begin his or her study.

One new area of potential research emerged through my examination of this area of arts practice. Only a few directors indicated that genre specifically affected the way in which they work with actors to achieve levels of performance, although the few directors who did indicate that this was relevant to their work, intimated that it could have a marked effect on how they direct. If this area were to be targeted for future research, then it would be beneficial for any study to assess how this affects both directors and actors in their practice.

The swirling nature of performance culture, where intellect, emotion, psychology and aesthetics intersect, makes it difficult to state categorically that one directorial approach dominates the Australian directing scene. However, perhaps more than any other practitioner, Stanislavski has provided the most fertile field for such study and clearly continues to influence Australian thespioprudence, both for directors and actors alike, as revealed in the commentary provided by the working directors surveyed for this thesis. For the novice director, the methods of Stanislavski and his followers can therefore justifiably be termed reliable models for the development of individual artistic practice.

For the emerging film director, exploring the creative process with actors, by utilizing and expanding upon the ideas and findings (summarised in the following Table) of former

generations of Australian filmmakers is most likely the best way to begin to understand and evolve exciting ways of working with actors and thus develop original and inspiring thespioprudence for the New Millennium.

[1] Adam Macaulay, *Don't Tell Me, Show Me,* Currency, Strawberry Hills, 2003, p. 29.
[2] Ibid., p.31.
[3] Ibid., pp 68-89, 199 & 169.
[4] Tay Garnett, *Learn from the Masters*, Scarecrow, London, 1996.
[5] Baz Luhrmann, Survey 8.8.2000.

Name of Director (& formal film school training or other 'apprenticeship')	**Self-identifying - with favourite approach**	**Use of -beats & units, objectives, obstacles**	**Approach to casting & seminal experiences in casting**	**Preferred rehearsal process elements**	**Use of voice coach & dramaturg [VC]–[DT]**	**Techniques for dealing with 'blocked' actors**	**Point of working on performance with actors**	**Useful techniques to elicit performance**	**Use of improvisation during film-making**	**Help at ADR**	**Easy learning to talk with actors**	**Influences & other comments**
Barrett, Shirley Melbourne Uni AFTRS	NO - though she finds Mamet interesting	NO – unless the actors require it – again a writer director, she already knows the script - she does do character histories	Open testing She is acutely aware that not all actors do good tests – she tries to be aware of their other work	Discussion about relationships – lots of improvisation - develop the ensemble	YES – she has worked with Nico Lathouris who is a very good dramaturg	Take a break – do impro's & return to notes from rehearsal - Relax & reassure the actors	Before the take - Ongoing process	Relaxation & reassurance	YES – but rarely	YES	NO	'Be nurturing, clear, tactful and fun'
Bogle, James AFTRS	NO - though he is influenced by Mike Leigh's work	NO – though he sequences and maps the emotional journey of the characters	Acting testing – he likes actors to be briefed so they can come with offers	Discussion re character and script - Storytelling Work in pairs on subtext – Blocking] - Impro, games & movement (3-4 weeks)	YES for accents	Talk about what brings the character to this point - Work privately with the actor	In emotional scenes during filming Otherwise – ongoing process	Discussion	Sometimes	YES	NO	'It's about learning the language of emotion'
Chan, Pauline AFTRS & Hong Kong school of dramatic art	NO	YES	Match the character - Develop trust - Have active rehearsals	Discussion – script analysis & character analysis (also re style) - Improvisation Roleplays & Workshops (2 weeks)	NO	Ask questions Help them – calm them - Run special workshops	Before and between takes - Ongoing process	Play opposite them – Change something in the scene or dialogue	YES	YES	YES	'Directors should try acting first' Be understanding and communicate
Crombie, Don NIDA CFU	NO Appreciates all approaches – some preference for Stanislavski	YES Also focus on given circumstances	Use an agent - Include discussion in process - Play opposite the actor - Allow enough time	Choose a work friendly environment - Have a read-through - Focus on text and character at the outset - Engage in script analysis (2 weeks)	Voice coach if necessary	Be sympathetic Take a break	Before take	Use character models - Refer to emotional graph re character's emotional journey	YES	YES	YES	NIDA actors

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De Heer, Rolf AFTRS	NO – whatever works for the actor	Objectives	Casting is 80% of the job - Collaborate with the casting director	Discussion - Organic rehearsal - Work with actions - Only use exercises if actors request them	NO - open to using voice coach	Intuitive response	Varies – before and between but not during takes		YES – sometimes	YES	NO – it took time	
Drew, Di AFTRS	NO – combination of Method, Laban, Transactional analysis	YES – objectives & obstacles	Extend the actors – Look for flexibility & ability to take direction; Use impro	Read and discuss - Impro	YES – if accents or work with children	N/A	From the outset		NO	YES	YES	Judy Davis
Duncan, Peter AFTRS	NO	Constantly analysing objectives and obstacles	Be in accord with the actor on the chracter - Inspire the actor	Discussion - Reach agreement on character journey	YES with accents	Have breaks and chat – lead chat back to the scene	Block through and rehearse before filming	Depends on relationship with actor – varies	Not during the actual filming	YES	YES	'Communicate clearly & honestly - Work to the same agenda
Franklin, Richard USC	NO Whatever works for the actor	Sometimes Also uses character biographies	His focus is on getting an ensemble together - Allow actors to read	Facilitate actors' discussion	YES Sometimes for TV	Listen sympathetically	As soon as possible – ongoing process	Ask questions - Focus on other actors - Relax - Distract	Rarely	YES	NO	Delia Salvi Harold Clurmann Easty on Method
Joffe, Mark Crawfords	NO	In passing – re the script	Be supportive in testing - Testing is necessary	Read through Break down & explore scenes - Use a comfy space	NO	Be flexible – reduce pressure	From the start of rehearsal	Positive atmosphere – encourage and take the pressure off the actor	YES	YES	YES	Judy Davis
Kokkinos, Anna VCA	Stanislavki and Meisner	YES She is a writer director anyway and knows the script intimately	Be active	Script & character analysis - Develop the ensemble - Apply Stanislavki and Meisner to text - Some improvisation (4-5 weeks)	Not yet	Talk and affirm the actors - Use other actors to help them	Before the take	Various ideas: - repetition exercise - movement/ - style exercises to work up a scene	NO	YES	YES	

Name of Director (& formal film school training or other 'apprenticeship')	**Self-identifying - with favourite approach**	**Use of -beats & units, objectives, obstacles**	**Approach to casting & seminal experiences in casting**	**Preferred rehearsal process elements**	**Use of voice coach & dramaturg [VC]–[DT]**	**Techniques for dealing with 'blocked' actors**	**Point of working on performance with actors**	**Useful techniques to elicit performance**	**Use of improvisation during film-making**	**Help at ADR**	**Easy learning to talk with actors**	**Influences & other comments**
Lawrence, Denny NIDA, AFTRS & Stella Adler	YES – "my own"	To some extent		Script analysis - Play & change actions - Determine the character	NO	Define objectives - Play actions - Use non-verbal impro	Before filming	Negotiate different approaches	Sometimes – useful during rehearsal Not during shooting	YES	YES	Stella Adler & Tyrone Guthrie
Lee, Gerrard University of Qld & AFTRS	NO	YES – motivations and obstacles	'The script should dictate casting' - handling 300 untrained extras was a notable experience – relaxation was the key	Allow time for full discussion - Explore motivations - Explore with improvisation - Use odd spaces for rehearsal	YES – as required	Discuss other ways of seeing things – negotiate & relax the actor – focus on the positive	Constantly	Exploring through making choices - Improvisation	YES	Some -times	NO	
Luhrmann, Baz NIDA	Stanislavski	YES	Thorough casting essential	Work closely & methodically with actors - Use improvisation	For accents as required	Improvisation	Constant exploration	Research, discussion, improvisation			YES	
Miller, George T. Crawford Productions	Stanislavski is useful – as is Mamet/ Meisner	YES - also character logic	Cast a wide net	Read through – discuss plot & backstory - Rehearsal on set/location - Storybuilding & character exercises - No improvisation	For accents as required	Support & encourage - Apply efforts	Before & during take	Reward actors - Appreciate good work	NO	YES	NO	Linda Seeger John Truby 'use the Heroe's Journey'
Monahan, Craig AFTRS	NO - material determines style	Sometimes – don't overdo	'Casting is everything' - Look for character in the actor	Positive environment (10 days + 14 days pre shoot)	NO – directors should be able to do this	Preparation at the outset is the key	Constantly	Sometimes fix in editing	NO – as yet - Remain script focussed	YES	YES	

Name of Director (& formal film school training or other 'apprenticeship')	**Self-identifying - with favourite approach**	**Use of -beats & units, objectives, obstacles**	**Approach to casting & seminal experiences in casting**	**Preferred rehearsal process elements**	**Use of voice coach & dramaturg [VC]–[DT]**	**Techniques for dealing with 'blocked' actors**	**Point of working on performance with actors**	**Useful techniques to elicit performance**	**Use of improvisation during film-making**	**Help at ADR**	**Easy learning to talk with actors**	**Influences & other comments**
Nettheim, Daniel AFTRS	Stanislavski	YES	Do not have doubts about who you cast	Reading & Discussion of -objectives -action -experiences	YES Especially with kids or if the actor is in trouble	N/A	Before filming	Quiet discussion - Identify problems and solve them	Yes – if problems with dialogue	YES	YES	G Whaley Remember 'actors are just people' – talk to them
Nowlan, Cherie AFTRS short courses	NO All actors are different	YES - but not necessarily because of Stanislavski	Goes to all callbacks – Wants actors who are committed, fresh and able to adapt	Discussion of play & objects – Rough rehearsal re character & business	NO Would be all right if necessary	Change character business – Get another actor to change their actions	All the time	Adjust to actor's needs of the moment – Choreograph business – Explore revelation through props – Have fun	YES	YES	YES	Dr. G Miller Gale Edwards Bill Pepper 'She does it herself first'
Ogilvie, George Jacques Lecoq	NO "Meditation" influences	Not applicable		Discussion re script & imagination exercises	NO	Stop & talk Ask questions				If needed	YES	Actors
Ruane, John VCA	--	NO	Casting is everything	Ask questions - read, chat, act out	NO unless for accents	Talking – sharing stories - Get actors to share opinions	On the day of rehearsal of the scene on the set	Talk it over - Try it 'over the top' and then pull back – Trust & communication	YES but it is limited – the script is important	YES	YES	Don Swebib John Clark Sam Neill
Schultz, Carl ABC	NO	Objectives – yes	Casting is 90% of task - Sometimes goes against what is expected	Develop rapport – Discussion – especially re attitudes, goals - (1-2 weeks)	YES Sometimes with kids or for accent work	Relaxation and Bach's Rescue Remedie	Ongoing process	Calming Games	Sometimes, but likes to start with well scripted dialogue	YES	YES	A good script is essential
Wallace, Stephen Commonwealth film unit (CFU)- Film Australia	YES Stanislavski & transactional analysis	YES	Give actors scene in advance - Talk with actors - Uses Mike Leigh's methods	Reading - Research - Work-shopping	Voice coach can be very helpful - especially for children	Talk over the problem - Take breaks - Play actions	During rehearsals	Play actions	YES	YES	NO – it took a long time	George Whaley George Ogilvie Stella Adler Lindy Davies Ross McGregor

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Warner, Michelle Qld College of Art	NO – but Stanislavski training has been helpful	YES	Take an active part – Prepare a casting brief	Reading & discussion Re character - Script analysis - Working up on the floor (3 weeks)	N/A	Try problem solving	Before lighting the scene – before the take	Link to discussion - Revisit rehearsal exercises - Do scene a few times	Not as yet	YES	NO	George Whaley 'Trust'
Weir, Peter CFU & TV	NO "Instinctive" approach only	No comment ----------→										←
Whaley, George Actor's Studio Melbourne & AFTRS part-time course	Stanislavski & some Brecht & Grotowski	YES (not 'beats') Focus on given circumstances	Run the casting session – Have discussions	Reading & discussion re script - Research - Visualisations & relaxation - Improvisation Get actors onto the floor	YES	Change given circumstances, objectives, activity - Improvisation	Before the take	Remind actors of earlier discussion	In limited ways only	YES	YES	'Respect the art of acting'
Woods, Rowan AFTRS	NO	YES but not re Stanislavski	Because of acting experience he looks at the actor's history – not just the casting showing	(4 weeks with 1 week on set)	YES – if necessary	Divert attention to the character objective & extend the physical activity	Constantly	Tricks & unusual questions	Rarely – mostly limited to early rehearsals	YES	YES	David Wenham Cate Blanchett
Information -												

other sources:												
Gow, Michael NIDA	YES Meissner & Practical Aesthetics - Some Stanislavski	Sometimes		Allocate time for rehearsal – quiet & relaxed process	YES – both	Ask what the character wants in the moment	Constantly	Honesty	NO	YES		Judy Farr GeoffreyRush Cate Blanchett Gillian Jones
Lathouris, Nick NIDA & The Ensemble	Mamet & Cassavetes	Motivations & actions		Explore what characters are doing to each other - "As if" analysis	YES		Constantly	Playing actions			YES	John Cassavetes Hayes Gordon
Wherrett, Richard University of Sydney	YES – Stanislavski	YES		Discussion & exploration	YES						YES	Work at the E15 School in London

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Appendix "1"

-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE
THE ACTOR/DIRECTOR RELATIONSHIP
DIRECTING METHOD IN AUSTRALIAN FILM
Rosalind Williams – QUT MA

PART A

1. Did you ever attend drama or film school or undertake other relevant informal training? Y/N
   Please give details:

2. If so, did you ever study acting technique in any depth? Y/N
   Please give details:

3. Have you ever worked professionally as an actor, either in theatre or film? Y/N
   If yes, please give details, including the length of time you worked as an actor:

4. Do you have any set views on the so-called "method" approach to acting?

5. Do you believe that there is a significant difference between a "technical" actor and an "instinctive" actor? Y/N
   If yes, please give details:

6. Do you favour any particular approach to acting? (eg. As espoused by Stanislavski, Brecht, Strasberg, Mamet etc.) Y/N
Please give details:

PART B

7. Please outline what you regard as essential preparation during the pre-production period with respect to the following:

Script analysis: (eg. Do you break up the script into beats, units and objectives?)

Character analysis: (eg. Do you make many set decisions about character and what you are looking for in your actors?)

Scheduling: (eg. Do you pre-plan the order in which you wish to rehearse and shoot scenes?)

Other preparation:

8. Do you work closely with the producer when making artistic decisions about each film? Y/N
If yes, please give details:

9. Do you often negotiate the re-writing of parts of the script? Y/N
If yes, at what point do you discuss such changes and how do you participate in the process:

PART C

10. Do you take an active part in the casting process or do you rely heavily on a casting agent? Y/N
Please give details:

11. What sorts of directions do you usually give your casting agents?

12. Please describe what you would regard as an *ideal* casting process:

13. When casting actors are you usually influenced by whether or not an actor has formal acting training? Y/N

14. When casting do you discuss acting method to ascertain what approach the actor adopts in his/her work? Y/N

PART D

15. Please describe your preferred rehearsal process:

16. Do you have a preferred type of rehearsal space? Y/N Please give details:

17. What do you regard as an ideal length of time for rehearsal?

18. Do you often get the opportunity to rehearse to your satisfaction? Y/N

19. On balance, how do you think the majority of actors prefer to rehearse?

20. During rehearsal do you use any of the following:
    Improvisation Y/N
    Story building exercises Y/N
    Character development exercises Y/N

21. Please provide examples of exercises that you regard as useful during rehearsal:
    [a] before filming

    [b] during filming

22. During rehearsal have you ever assembled the entire cast (excluding extras) to discuss the project? Y/N If yes, when would you try to do this and how much time would you usually devote to such discussion? Please give details:

23. Please list the sorts of things which you typically incorporate into your discussion about any project:

24. Based on your experience, do you feel that style/genre of a film significantly affects an actors performance?

25. Do you expect actors to appreciate such issues or do you discuss these issues during rehearsal? Please give details:

26. Do you expect actors to arrive at the start of rehearsal having already learnt the script? Y/N Does it often happen? Y/N

27. Do you ever encourage actors to participate in script changes? Y/N Please give details:

28. Do you ever use a dialogue or voice coach? Y/N If yes, please give details:

29. What importance do you place on quality sound recording, and do you have any particular views about limiting the replacement of dialogue?

30. Do you ever invite department heads or crew to any part of the rehearsal process? Y/N

PART E

31. During filming do you allow actors any flexibility to alter scripted dialogue? Y/N

32. At what point of the filmmaking process do you block movement (if at all)?

33. Do you involve the DOP (or other crew) in this process?

34. How much do you involve your assistant director in working with actors and eliciting performance from actors before and during filming?

35. At what point in the filming process do you work on performance with the actors – before the take or during the take?

36. Do you ever talk actors through action while the camera is rolling?
Y/N What effect has this had?

37. What techniques do you use to overcome blocked actors?

38. Do you have any standard exercises or approaches to working with actors on the set? Y/N How do you deal with the following:

Uncooperative actors

Nervous actors

Actors who cannot correctly deliver scripted dialogue

Actors who need to extend required skill levels

Actors who are too soft

Actors who cannot find motivation

Dyslexic actors

Otherwise difficult actors

39. Do you assist to direct the actors during the recording of ADR if it is required? Y/N What steps do you take to recreate atmosphere/the emotional state of the character?

40. Do you think many directors are afraid of actors? Y/N Please comment:

41. Do you ever use or allow improvisation during filming? Y/N Do you have an particular views on this practice?

42. How did you learn about the actor's needs?

43. Was learning to communicate with actors about performance difficult? Y/N If yes, how did you learn to communicate effectively with actors?

44. Please feel free to set out any other comments which you wish to make on the nature of directing actors:

DIRECTING QUESTIONAIRRE
DIRECTING METHOD IN AUSTRALIAN FILM

PART A
SUMMARY OF TRAINING/EXPERIENCE

PART B
THE ACTOR/DIRECTOR RELATIONSHIP

1. Do you favour any particular theoretical approach to acting? Yes/No
   Please give details:

2. If you have been influenced by the Stanislavsky tradition, do you break scripts up into beats and units and analyze character objectives and obstacles? Yes/No/Not applicable

3. If you have ever had any significant experiences in casting which have dramatically changed your approach to the casting of actors, please summarize those experiences and/or your approach to casting:

4. Please summarize what you regard as essential aspects of your preferred rehearsal process:

5. Do you ever engage a dialogue/voice coach or dramaturg? Yes/No
   If yes, please give details:

6. If you have ever had to direct actors who have become blocked during rehearsal/filming, are there any specific techniques which you found helpful when dealing with such a problem?

7. At what point in the filming process do you prefer to work on performance with actors?

8. Have you found any particularly useful ways of eliciting performance from an actor where you are unhappy with the performance being given?

9. Do you ever use or allow improvisation during filming? Yes/No
Do you have any particular views on this practice?

10. Do you assist to direct the actors during the recording of dialogue replacement? Yes/No

11. Did you find that learning to communicate with actors about performance was difficult? Yes/No
If yes, how did you learn to communicate effectively with actors?

12. If there are any particular actors (or indeed other directors) who have been important in your own development as a director, please feel free to make comments on how they influenced you to become a better director.

13. Please feel free to set out any other comments which you wish to make on the nature of directing actors:

The Questionnaire

Please answer all questions by their numbers, as fully and in as much detail as your time and inclination will permit. Rest assured, your views will be quoted verbatim unless you wish it otherwise.

1. What was your personal background (your vocation) before entering this field of endeavor?

2. What was your first position in the movie business? Were you an assistant director, a cameraman, an actor, a writer, a film editor, an agent, or other? Please indicate the steps that led to your directing.

3. What is your philosophy regarding your film: your aim or purpose in making it? Is there an underlying objective beyond providing entertainment?

4. In seeking a story on which to base a film, in what particular genre do you hope to find it?

5. Have you a preference as to the source of your story material: story or script written directly for the screen, a play designed for theatrical use, or a story (fact or fiction) intended for book or magazine publication? Please explain reasons for your choice.

6. In any of the above cases, do you prefer using another screen dramatist to prepare the actual shooting script, or do you choose to do that work yourself?

7. If you do use another scriptwriter, do you like to work closely with him (or her) as a co-writer, or do you elect to allow the writer to express his views fully, then ultimately do the final script polish yourself?

8. Does it please you to have all the action (business) worked out fully on paper before you start shooting, or do you prefer to improvise?

9. Is there one specific component involved in the creation of a film, which you regard as transcendent in importance: story, script, (or scriptwriter), star or stars, cast (as a whole), film editor, art director, or cameraman?

10. Do you work with a producer? If "Yes": what functions do you expect from him? If "No": would you care to explain?

11. Do you use a dialogue director, if only to save time by making sure that all the actors know their lines? Or, if you use one, is it because you feel that he brings other values to your operation? Kindly elucidate.

12. Do you like to have your writer or producer on your set while you are rehearsing or shooting?

13. Do you work closely with your cameraman prior to shooting: planning effective dramatic and mood lighting, predetermining every camera set-up for effectiveness dramaturgically as well as composition-wise, and in blocking out all camera movements in minute detail? Or, do you again prefer to extemporize?

14. How closely do you supervise the casting of your films? Do you pay particular attention to the proper casting of the more important roles, then allow your casting director to set the other parts, or do you maintain rigid control of setting the entire cast, down to the one-line bit parts?

15. In considering actors, do you prefer working with the seasoned "technician," or with the more "instinctive" type? Would you care to express your views toward the "method actor"?

16. Is it your practice, before rehearsals—even before the actor has had a chance to form his own image of the character or to absorb his lines—to discuss with him, in depth, your concept of the character or the relationship of that part to the play-structure as a whole? Or is it your position that, having chosen the actor, you would be better advised to let him exercise, uninhibited, those qualities for which you selected him, thus allowing for the possibility of his bringing to the characterization, a plus which is entirely his own?

17. Some very fine directors believe in long rehearsals, covering the entire script with the complete cast, as one would in a theatrical production. Others, perhaps equally talented, shun this method on the theory that "Too much rehearsal flattens out spontaneity." Many hold their rehearsals to a minimum, on the theory that by "shooting rehearsals" they avoid the possibility of leaving the player's best performance on the rehearsal hall floor. What is your view on this subject?

18. Do you insist that an actor adhere meticulously to the script—lines and business—or do you accept the position of some very able actors, that a slight change here or there, can damage nothing, but will enable them to bring more realism, color or effectiveness to the character being portrayed?

19. To what extent do you supervise the editing of your film? *Note*: I recall one director—one of the all-time great American Directors—who loathed viewing his own rushes. He preferred to allow his editor to make his own first rough cut. Then the director would move in and live with the film until a final editing was achieved that presented the picture to a viewer precisely as he had intended as he shot it.

Will you kindly express your views as to the importance of this phase of picture-making, and your individual approach to it?

20. How vital do you believe the musical score to be, as an adjunct in emphasizing the emotional, dramatic or comedic values of a picture?

21. Are you deeply involved in the preparation and recording of the musical score for your films? *Note*: Obviously we are not dealing with filmed opera or musical comedy at this point.

22. Do you exercise final control as to which scenes are to be scored, and which are to be played *a capella*?

Do you have a fixed rule by which you determine this for yourself? If so, would you care to elaborate?

23. We who have directed silent pictures are inclined, perhaps, to overestimate the importance of sound effects, particularly in action sequences. What is your viewpoint on this? To what extent do you participate in the recording and dubbing of the sound effects in your films?

Appendix 3 4

66 SINCLAIR STREET
KANGAROO POINT QLD 4169
[PHONE 073 8912523[H]/ 073 3581446 [W]]

4.7.2000

[ADDRESSEE]

Dear

RE: RESEARCH PROJECT

I am currently enrolled within the film and television school at the Queensland University of Technology [QUT] in a research masters degree and I write in the hope that you may be able to assist me with my research.

My thesis involves an examination of the dominant approach to directing method in the Australian film industry. I specifically wish to assess the ways in which Australian film directors (taking into account different schools of acting technique/method) communicate with actors about performance.

Based on my readings to date, it appears that very little has been written about the various approaches adopted by Australian film directors when directing actors.

Accordingly, I have prepared a questionnaire which I believe will inform my research. If you are willing to assist me, I ask that you complete and return the enclosed survey at your earliest convenience (in the stamped envelope enclosed). I note that I will need to receive responses by September. I would be grateful to receive whatever response you feel you can contribute depending on the other demands on your time.

I have tried to target directors who have made a significant contribution to Australian film over the last 30 years. I have also included some new Australian directors in order to cover changing trends in this area.

I feel the need to reassure you that I have a genuine and ongoing interest in this field and do not intend to simply shelve my findings. I originally studied arts/law at the University of Queensland and since graduating I have worked mostly in a community legal centre while continuing with various arts pursuits: directing some university theatre, completing a post graduate course at NIDA (voice studies) which involved an attachment at the AFTRS, and undertaking film and television studies at QUT. I have been interested in approaches to performance for some time, however, while making my first student film last year I became even more interested in directing method – hence, my project.

I appreciate that completing a survey is a time consuming task and I fully understand that you may be unable to assist me. I can be contacted at the above address or telephone number should you wish to discuss this matter with me. Alternatively, my email address is: < sunshineros@hotmail.com >.

I undertake not to use interview responses for any purposes other than my thesis without your written permission.

I take this opportunity to thankyou for any assistance which you may be willing to provide.

Yours faithfully

Rosalind Williams

FILE COPY

66 SINCLAIR STREET
KANGAROO POINT
BRISBANE QLD 4169
[phone 073 8912523 [H] or 073 3581446 [W]]

9.1.2000

MR GEORGE WHALEY
THE DIRECTING DEPARTMENT
THE AUSTRALIAN FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL
[MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY]
NORTH RHYDE NSW 2113

Dear George

RE: RESEARCH PROJECT

I am currently enrolled within the Queensland University of Technology's film and television school in a Research Masters degree and I write in the hope that you may be able to assist me with my research. My thesis involves an examination of the dominant approach to directing method in the Australian film industry. I specifically wish to assess the ways in which Australian film directors (taking into account different schools of acting method) communicate with actors about performance and relevant theoretical and technical aspects of filmmaking.

To date, it appears to me that very little has been written about this topic, specifically with respect to approaches to directing actors in the Australian filmmaking industry.

Accordingly, I have prepared a questionnaire which I believe will inform my research. If you are willing to assist me, I ask that you complete and return the survey (in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided) within four weeks if possible. If you do not have time to complete the survey but can direct me to relevant interviews which you have previously granted on this topic, I would be grateful if you could notify me accordingly.

I note that part of my survey is based on a collection of interviews by Tay Garnett in his text DIRECTING. Unfortunately, no Australian directors were interviewed in that book and only six of the questions asked actually concerned actor/director issues.

I am confident that my research will be invaluable if I am able to collect the information which I have targeted.

I realise that it is a time consuming task to properly complete a survey of this nature and I appreciate that it may not be possible for you to assist me in this way. I would be happy to supply tape recordings or arrange personal interviews where possible should you prefer an arrangement of that nature.

I undertake not to use interview responses for any purposes other than my thesis without your written permission.

I can be contacted at the above address or telephone number should you wish to discuss this matter with me. Alternatively, my email address is:
sunshineros@hotmail.com

I take this opportunity to thank you for any assistance which you may be willing to provide.

Yours faithfully

Ros Williams

Appendix 3B

Printed: Wednesday, 1 September 2004 1:54:02 PM

From : Wendy Heffernan <w.heffernan@qut.edu.au>
Sent : Tuesday, 31 August 2004 6:49:02 AM
To : sunshineros@hotmail.com
CC : b.haseman@qut.edu.au
Subject : Ethical Clearance

Dear Rosalind

I write in relation to the ethical clearance for your project, "Thespioprudence".

On behalf of the Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee I wish to advise that, at the time your research project was conducted, the research ethics process did not clearly articulate that some level of ethical review was required for all research involving humans.

Although no retrospective ethical approval can now be provided, the Chair requested I advise you that your project would have been considered and approved through the Level 1 (Low Risk) review process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me further if you have any queries regarding this matter.

Regards
Wendy

Wendy Heffernan
Research Ethics Officer
Office of Research
O Block Podium
Tel: 07 3864 2340
Fax: 07 3864 1304

FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW WITH SUZANNE CHAUVEL CARLSSON 15TH JUNE 2002 REGARDING CHARLES AND ELSA CHAUVEL

By Ros Williams

Introduction

At the outset of the interview, Suzanne and I discussed the importance of oral history. She agreed that it is an incredibly important record and noted that she has collected an enormous amount of memorabilia over the years – some of which her son Rick is collating. A display of her photographs was held several years ago but she has since donated most of them (plus other important documents) to the John Oxley library. She told an amusing story about having been a guest at a film festival where a film critic/historian told her she had completed various oral histories with persons associated with Suzanne's father. Suzanne said that she asked when someone from the archive was going to do an oral history with her and noted she was surprised that no-one from the archive had approached her as yet about doing one. The woman replied in words to the effect 'Why would we want to do that?' Suzanne said she replied that she "probably knew more about (her) parent's film work than anyone else, having listened to all their discussions at home about the work and also having traipsed about the set/locations with them. The critic then said in surprise something like, ' What? Know more than a film historian?' Suzanne said she was a bit taken aback but "chuckled silently to herself about it all." Suzanne mentioned that Michael Pate was an excellent person with whom to discuss her father's work and would probably be very willing to talk to me. She said she had a very good memory of her father's work from the 1940's onwards – especially from her childhood. She talked about being present at the Cinesound Studios where the capacity for film production at the time was extraordinary. She said there were internal film processing facilities where thousands of feet of film were processed each day – there were viewing rooms and the rushes could be viewed on the same day as shooting. She said, "it was an extraordinary experience."

I reiterated that as part of my study I have been looking at the way directors work with actors from a performance point of view and that I am specifically interested in the film acting qualities required to release performance.

Ros:

I asked if Suzanne could comment on aspects of her father's approach to casting.

Suzanne:

"Father looked for 'inner qualities'. It was very difficult because at the time there was no ready pool of trained film actors: screen acting was very different compared with stage acting and radio work. In the early days these were the only actors with any training, but as good as they were – they needed retraining because they were not prepared for the degree of realism screen acting required. For example, on the stage they had to project – in radio – they used their voices well but were not used to being seen. A little later there were some actors who had some experience from working on other films being made at the time - but there were still similar problems for some time. Each film was different because of the story and the roles – this affected how things needed to be done with the camera. A proper casting was conducted for each film and was made known publicly, as was the custom."

"Father had an uncanny knack of finding and recognising the 'potential in people' – e.g Michael Pate. At the time, Michael was probably unlikely for the lead – and he had only had one other role as an extra in *Forty Thousand Horsemen. Sons of Matthew* was screened at a small film festival at Rathdowney a few years ago, and while some of the acting is a little 'corney', I think that Michael's performance really has stood the test of time. Michael tells the story of his first audition – how he had no confidence and did a poor screen test – then my father told him to go out and 'come in again as if you own the studio and try again!' Dad could see the character/personality a little differently and saw in Michael what he was looking for in Shane. Dad showed him how to have self worth and confidence."

"Mother and Dad had to really guide people through parts from what I've heard – and had to train them. Mother had been a stage actress in South Africa and father left it for her and she gave rehearsals. Later, right through *Sons of Matthew* and *Jedda* there were lots of little on-the-spot rehearsals. In the silent days they could guide them through each scene during shooting. They were interested to find good actors but then they still needed development. For example, Peter Finch. His first star role was in *Rats of Tobruk* – he had been a supporting actor for Ken Hall and had done some Shakespeare on stage. Another one was Chips Rafferty – he still needed some guiding through the role too. Dad had the ability to allow people to develop their own style. Chips had a habit of ad-libbing – which father allowed – because it brought out the best performance. Betty Bryant, who was a newcomer, had a very beautiful speaking voice and I recall father speaking her through her scenes."

Ros:
I told Suzanne that I had read both her book and her mother's book, and that I am very interested in her mother's input. I asked her if she could tell me a little more about her mother's role in the making of her father's films.

Suzanne:
"Mother acted in *Greenhide*. Then when they were in San Francisco she had a leading role in a dramatic play "Mid Channel." She helped support them while dad studied film craft. After she stopped acting it was still a real partnership, but she took a supporting role. Father and mother discussed every aspect of their films – every line – and would rehearse little scenes at home to see how it would sound. In those days, without proper screen training they wouldn't necessarily get the acting they wanted. Sometimes, looking at the films now, the acting looks pretty corney, but at the time there was no pool of trained film actors and despite Dad's vision – he couldn't always get what he wanted from the actors."

Ros:
I mentioned that I had been reading Michael Cain's book about being a film actor and how he tells a story of the early microphones being hidden in vases of flowers until the sound technology improved and the actors still had to huddle in slightly stagey positions to project to the microphone. I asked if she knew much about those sorts of things.

Suzanne:
"Well the Australian technicians were marvellous because they were so innovative and used imagination – practically inventing everything they needed. Clive Cross worked on father's films and actually developed new sound equipment. At the time, most technology/equipment had to be imported from the US. During the war, however, ships stopped coming and they just couldn't get equipment – so two of the War Films were actually shot on old film stock using old cameras and they really didn't know if it was going to turn out. I remember seeing an old camera on set, which had a horseshoe hanging down from it. I always thought it was a lucky charm, but it turned out that the camera had a broken part and the horseshoe was just used as a weight. Another old techy called Alex Ezard is living in Port Macquarie (I think) and he would probably have interesting recollections of my father's work. Michael Pate – although he's over 80 now would also have details of dad's work on set and work with actors. Rick and I saw him when we were last in Sydney."

"Father needed actors who would look good – have presence and physical looks. He filmed his screen-tests with full makeup. The assistant director would do the first cull on a big project. For example, on *Sons of Matthew* people were in huge queues outside the old Cinesound Studios. Parents would either appear at our house with children and so on. Sometimes Dad would choose actors by watching other films."

Ros:
I asked about her father's temperament on set – noting that it seemed from my reading that he was very respectful of actors.

Suzanne:
"Father was excitable in many ways, however, on set he was calm and patient with actors – though he was a complex character. He expected a lot, and his demands were a bit hard because he did the hard yards himself. Sometimes other people did not have the same vision and found him a bit hard, for example Clive Cross, but dad's vision was always about the finished product. On *Sons of Matthew*, although it was a great adventure – it was also very hard and required athletic effort. In terms of casting, Dad really wanted to know who he was getting. Sometimes he would leave casting to the assistant director – depending on the size of the role. Sometimes actors would come to him – other times he would see them in films or in plays. He used to go and see as much work as he could so he knew who was available. He would look where ever he could. Mother was often embarrassed because he would speak to people on trains (he looked for good bones and facial structure); he would ask if they were interested in doing a screen test."

Ros:
I asked specifically about the experience of casting for Jedda (as I had read a little about it) and I wondered if Suzanne recalled much of how it was organised.

Suzanne:
"It was very difficult. They needed two aboriginal people for key roles. Everyone else was saying they were crazy. They went on a reconnaissance tour in outback Australia. On the trip father and mother were looking for localities and stories. Part of it is a true life story. *Jedda* is really based on three true life stories. They would nut out the script at campfires.

FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW WITH PETER KINGSTON 3.9.01 BY ROS WILLIAMS

**After completing a BA and being involved in SUDS (Sydney University Drama Society), Peter Kingston trained for 3 years as an actor at NIDA (the National Institute of Dramatic Art) in the 1970s and subsequently he went on to develop his reputation as a director of new Australian plays at the Griffin Theatre Company situated at the Stables in Sydney. He is particularly well known for sponsoring the early plays of Michael Gow - most notably the play *Away*. After a number of years as a freelance director, Peter subsequently became head of directing at NIDA before moving to WAAPA (the Western Australian Academy of the Performing Arts) where he was head of the acting school until 2002.

At the outset of the interview, given that I knew Peter at NIDA, we had a brief conversation about other students and I updated Peter on my travels since NIDA. I explained that I was trying to examine whether or not there is a dominant approach to directing actors in Australian film. I indicated that I was interested in finding out about Peter's ideas on directing and acting method and also about what he has observed on point in his time teaching at WAAPA and NIDA – especially in relation to camera acting training.

Ros:
How did you first learn about directing?

Peter:
I basically learned to be a director 'by doing it' - when I 'fell' into the Griffin theatre company. My colleagues provided my training – people like Penny Cook, Jack Ritche, Grant Frances Fraser and ~~Rosi Lessau~~ Rosemary Lenzo in the 1980s.

Ros:
What are important parts of your own approach when directing actors and how do you think systematically about acting?

Peter:
Before I went back to NIDA to teach, I was invited back to direct students. Both my training and my experiences have informed my approach to directing. My process is based on personalisation as distinct from characterisation. By characterisation, I mean physical adjustment; dialect; age; physical ability or disability – something to play - something that wasn't you, for example, a parent. Alongside the actors, I learned this at the hands of writers: Alma de Groen, Michael Gow, Stephen Sewell..... and Grant Fraser..... Because it was a chance to work with so many writers who were in the room and available, I had the extremely valuable experience of reconstructing scenes where they had the chance to explore dramatic ideas - not from theory but from what it was like and how it felt. That created my interest in the strength of ideas and how actors need to adhere to their given circumstances. These are the 'nuts and bolts'; they shape the word and allow you to create from the scene. These are the things that are non-negotiable: your bricks and mortar! It's here that the actor is determining their work, and the actor needs to be trained to analyse as well as be intuitive. They must move between playfulness and remaining accurate to text.

Ros:
Does WAAPA run an acting for the camera course?

Peter:
At WAAPA they teach film acting with the acting course. In third year, this includes participation in two thirty minute films which are fully completed. Gillian Jones teaches acting. We say there's no difference between acting for screen and stage and no different teaching is required....though film differs in that the actor's delivery is smaller, in respects. We give our students the opportunity to work with professional screen directors.

In directing for film there are separate requirements in terms of film performance, depending upon the size of the shot, the period, the action involved - though the latter two are also true of theatre. It's a continuum of varying scales and an appreciation of scale and size/shot.

On the screen, there's a wide range of scale from TV through to the great epics of Kurosawa. You must ask the question 'what are we looking at?' There's no such thing as screen acting - it simply depends on the set, the landscape, what mode one is working in. Perhaps screen acting requires internalisation because the cinema reads the actor so hungrily. I think it only works if it's the same process. In film acting, discontinuity is the name of game. The actor must remember a lot for the shape of the flow from one scene to the next. There's a circular difference in filming. One ~~should~~ rehearses scenes out of order all the time. This contrasts with the continuity of theatre where one is working in progression. Also, in a theatre performance one only gets one go!

There's a different scale of ingenuity required of the actor here. In film performance there is not so much to sustain in the same way, whereas the work of the stage requires more endurance and more physical stamina - for example, as in eight runs a week of a musical. The repetitive cycle of stage performance requires reinvestment on the part of the performer to create spontaneity and truth, hoping ~~for that of~~ the first time. I'm suggesting that this is not such a problem in screen performance, but the actor still has exactly the same ~~structure~~ to face. The work will ultimately be seen in sequence, so the actor has to put it into sequence in their mind while performing the various scenes. For this, they must refer to Stanislavski's given circumstances: 'Where was I?' 'Who was I?' 'What was the last thing I did?' This is the only way for the actor and director to understand and create the sense of flow the screenplay, and hence the performance, structurally requires.

Ros:
Do you favour any particular theoretical approach to acting – for example, Stanislavsky, Mamet etc?

Peter:
I'm a sub-Stanislavskian practitioner. I've been informed by everybody else on the way, just as other practitioners have been influenced by Stanislavskian ideas since he first wrote them down. 'Stan the man' simply wrote it all down - he saw what his theatre company thought was true and wrote it down.

Film can be often abstract, non-linear and grotesque. It's like finally the vision - or the perception of it - will make sense and we'll put more A with B and C and say it means something specific. We respond to meaning like that - we embrace all the elements, stimuli

and thought....Whether or not we're looking at a bun and a bug followed by a grandmother. If it's surreal we'll interpret it, and we'll do it because it's fun - because finding sequences and making meaning out of objects in space - a chair or a sideboard - is how we read them.

When I was teaching actors at NIDA, I taught through productions and scene-work. Working through a production is no different. You apply sensitivity and lead the company through the experience.

No one invented acting. The critical question is: 'what creates truth?' I absolutely will stand up and preach this! It's playing with the other person - for example, playing against a dreadful person with outrage - it's how I respond to you, not what I'm feeling. Actors perform actions! Even if I'm a dancer, I'm doing something to another - even if they are mechanical shapes - biomechanics are in operation...it's along similar lines. It's obfuscation to give it a new name.

Lindy Davis at VCA has got a system of acting which she believes is hers. On the contrary, I'm a bowerbird! Richard Wherrett taught me that 'no good work comes out of stress'. Actors must be in space where there is no unnecessary stress. It's about creativity and play - it's transactional.

Ros:
Well. How do you deal with actors in difficulty?

Peter:
I enjoy working with non actors, but one tends to experience problems with those highly experienced in amateur theatre because they tend to have bad habits. Many, many acting events either work or don't work because of an actor's skill with dialogue. But it can be a hundred different things which cause problems.

Basically you want people to get into contact - actors can't act if they're not in contact with the other actor - also they can't act if they're not in contact with the director. An actor needs to know focus. They should ask: at what am I aiming? The actor needs to be alert and to listen! Acting is about 'contacting' and knowing what you're doing about technical instructions. If you can achieve these things - you get acting.

There is no hiding on stage. There are wonderful screen actors, but I also think that it's possible for the untrained actor to fake a screen action and still be 'read'. This is because film is a sophisticated and visually arresting medium, whereas, on stage, there is less to look at - but more to choose from - so an actor can either get focus or miss out. You compare the screen which of its very nature gives focus!

Ros:
Did any particular actors/directors influence your development as a director?

Peter:
The ones I mentioned. Cicily Berry, Betty (Williams), Doreen Hogan, Marg Barr, Keith Bain Aubrey Mellor, George Whaley, Richard Wherett. George Whaley has been a film influence.

The interview concluded and I thanked Peter for his time.

PHONE INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE OGILVIE 1.3.01
BY ROS WILLIAMS

(By way of introduction I thanked George for his time and indicated that I wanted to work through the key questions on the survey. As he had already received my letter, I did not go into further detail about why I was undertaking this work. Before we started, I passed on greetings from an actor friend, Genevieve Thackwell-James, who had done a workshop with George in the past.)

Ros:
Question 1: Do you favour any particular theoretical approach to acting – for example, Stanislavsky, Mamet etc?

George:
No I don't prefer any particular approach. I've always felt that the theories become 'generalisations'. Actors either have talent or they don't – it's unique and personal - ultimately you can't do anything about talent and whether or not they have it. A director's job is to 'open the door' for the actor and there are all sorts of ways to open those doors. Ultimately it depends on the individual teacher and student and director and actor. Theories can be received as icons, but quite truthfully, though I've known many people in my life who have been influenced by Stanislavsky, I've never seen it actually operating during a performance.

The actor responds spontaneously to their surroundings, the director, the other actors, the place they are in… Their response is influenced through the things which are there – what they feel and smell. The actor concerns him/herself with how to approach the work and character.

Ros:
Well I'd agree that there is no one way – it seems to me that most directors have a 'grab bag' of things they use depending on the actors and the task at hand.

George:
Yes, so, for example, Stanislavsky is no good for Brecht. There's only one approach: you touch the props – there's only one way, and the feeling of life comes through the props. And so much also depends on the actor. When you think of Stanislavsky and Copeau and all those old 19th century approaches, they were made to suit a theatre which was generally the same. Now, however, there is every conceivable form of theatre – from independent experimental theatre to a modern look at the classics. We all find many ways.

Ros:
Question 2 is: What are important parts of your own approach?
I got the impression from reading another interview in *Cinema Papers* that you use an approach akin to meditation in your work with actors – is this correct?

George:
It's not *akin* to meditation: they *are* meditation ideas. Meditation is vital! Usually, actors appear with fear – for example, fear that they're not going to do the right thing – they want to please you. They're afraid that they're not up to it – worried about how they'll manage – all sorts of things. But there is only the work: the words, and the approach is to deal with it – with love and trust …this is the way to the word ....you must empty the fear and have courage – go forward – and not be afraid. It's about emptying – filling up is the preparation.

I've just finished working twenty hours over one and a half days with twelve young actors and this was their first camera work. The only thing I wanted of them was for them 'not to perform' and to be at ease – then talent shows through.

Ros:
Question 3 is: How do you approach character development?
I read a Cinema Papers interview in which Russell Crow talked about his experience of working with you and he noted the long discussions you had about whether or not his character should have a chipped tooth and whether or not he should retain it or have it fixed up.

George:
Yes, I recall that… In relation to character backgrounds it is very seldom I would not say this is the way to approach him or her. I ask: What is the world of the scene? You then build it – what it's like and where does it lead – you provide the world of 'what". I use 'imagine' exercises for this.

Ros:
My next question is whether or not you use a dialogue coach/dramaturg?

George:
No.

Ros:
Well, How do you deal with actors who become blocked? That's question 6 on the survey.

George:
If this happens during rehearsal, I just keep on going through it. One has to say, we have such and such time – so you need to keep going so that at the end you are not stranded. This is my best advice!… For some scenes one day is sufficient – for others you need a week.

Ros:
Do you ever talk actors through a take?
I have talked actors through during filming where there is no sound, but this is rare. I prefer the word 'frozen' to 'blocked'. A director must make sure there is enough time to deal with frozen actors: to stop everything and walk away from the set – to walk and talk

with the actor. I would never confront an actor in front of the crew! – You can't do it to them!

Ros:
Do you attend ADR?

George:
I would help during ADR if an actor called for it. I get a rehearsal and show the scene. You are aiming for the same state of mind.

Ros:
My next question is whether you found learning to communicate with actors difficult?

George:
I must say that this is one thing I've never experienced.

Ros:
Question 12 is: Did any particular actors/directors influence your development as a director?

George:
Yes. Actors especially: Mel Gibson…and Bryan Brown. I learnt by watching them – how they behave, what they take notice of, how they prepare, watching things like a walk.

Ros:
I read an article in which George Miller talked about learning a lot from you – and he talked about an approach you use called "seepage". What is that?

George:
You let the world seep in – invite parts in. You need to talk to the actor – don't listen to garbage about rules to approach acting. Look at the world and people in it – observe the way the person acts - what he (sic) does – how he works – gradually finding the person - to show the actor in a certain way - how to create the character.

(In concluding, I thanked George for his generosity and assistance and I indicated that he had been a great help to me.)

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH CHERIE NOWLAN 12.11.00
by ROS WILLIAMS

(In response to my survey, Cherie Nowlan contacted me to offer to do a telephone interview instead. At the outset of the interview, I thanked Cherie for her time and indicated that I wanted to work through the survey questions to the extent possible. As this was my first interview, I decided not to structure the interview in a rigid way. My recording of the early part of the interview is noted in general terms only.)

Ros:
I asked Cherie to provide me with a brief summary of her training and experience in the industry.

Cherie:
Cherie said that she didn't have any formal film school training although she had done some short courses at the AFTRS – specifically writing courses; the other good short courses included one with Gale Edwards on improvisation and another with Bill Pepper on voice work.

Cherie said that her background is in documentary and drama research for TV. Her first training was on documentary. She had also worked in production companies. Then she made a pitch to Glenys Rowe who took a "chance" on her and this led to a film.

While on the writing course at AFTRS she met Alex Long and the relationship they struck up lead to *Thank God He Met Lizzie* [TGHML]. They also worked together on two shorts – on one she was the co-producer; Sam Lang directed it and Alex wrote it. Another project was an adaptation of one of her short stories, *Lucinda 31*. TGHML was one of Alex's two main pitches at the AFTRS.

Cherie made her first short at 31 and made her first feature after about 4 years of directing. She had been around the traps for about 5 years before moving into directing.

She said that TGHML was relatively easy in the sense that the AFC had been providing funds for films up to 1.8million; also they had been supporting her development up 'til then – in fact they were the only ones who gave her such support.

Ros:
I explained to Cherie that I had recently attended an AFC seminar about the short feature fund and had learned about why they were running such a fund: apparently it is because 60% of first filmmakers don't go on to make a second film and in reviewing the filmmaking scene, the AFC decided that it was clear that the enduring filmmakers had made both shorts and a short feature before going on to make a full feature. Because the AFC recognised that it takes years to learn the craft, the short feature fund was designed to help with this problem.

Cherie:
"It's probably also to do with people being so 'traumatised by their first time' on a feature which leaves them feeling battered that explains why they can't face another and don't go on to make another one."

Ros:
I asked Cherie if she had been traumatised in this way.

Cherie:
"No, but I was exhausted by it....it was in the distribution tousles and in editing where I experienced the traumas. I have a few projects in development now which should go ahead in 12–8 months, but there was no way I could have gone on to make a second film before now. The traumatic part was the rude awakening to the film business rather than the creative process, however, it was something I needed to go through."

Ros:
I referred to question [1] on the survey and asked if Cherie favoured any particular approach to acting, and, if so, what process did she favour and why.

Cherie:
"No. The best approach is no approach at all, because every time I work with actors it's different – I've learned that from commercials. Casting is the essential bit and is the part of the process where I work out how I'll direct and what the actors' needs are on set - this shapes what happens on set."

Ros:
I referred to question [2] on the survey and asked if Cherie had been influenced by the Stanislavskian tradition and whether she tended to break up the script into beats and units, identifying character objectives and obstacles.

Cherie:
"Yes I do break the script/film up into beats, units, objectives and obstacles, but it's not because I've read Stanislavski but because it's logical – it's what I'd do anyway!" She said, "I've been informed by writing courses and books about writing and come at performance from a writing approach. I've read Stanislavsky and Uta Hagen, although I don't remember it all specifically; even with scriptwriting books, it goes in and somehow comes out in my work."

Ros:
I referred to question [3] on the survey and asked if she had ever had any significant experiences in casting which had dramatically changed her approach to casting actors.

Cherie:
"I've learned a lot from the casting process and probably do most of my work with actors in that process. Although it's exhausting, I try to be in on all the call backs because they're the most interesting part. It's there where the cream rises to the top, because at that point it's when I know people will be committed and fresh because they can adapt to different people's needs – do the same thing each time but adapt."

Ros:
I asked if she gets all the different actors to play the same scene at the casting session. I explained that I wasn't sure what's usually done because I don't know about the professional end of casting.

Cherie:
"In call back, I usually try as much as I can to match actors up to people I'm interested in them playing against – to keep it there. Sometimes it's critical who they're going to be with -especially in TGHML - all those wedding guests being there in pairs – I tried to match up as much as I could. I do cast a lot of drama school graduates – especially from NIDA - they're amazing because their technique is so good. I recently worked with Gillian O'Dowd who was fantastic but I had no idea she'd been to NIDA until I went out there and saw her on the wall! Their training really comes through."

"During casting callbacks – it's gruelling coming back, and it's stressful. Trained actors can handle the repetition, especially the more they work on stage. So many have training and significant theatre experience – you can tell. When I talk to NIDA graduates I tell them it's their calling card."

"My casting of Fran O'Connor is the one I'm most proud of. Frances could only afford one day in Melbourne – I'd been having troubles finding the right character although I originally thought there'd be thousands and I started to think I wouldn't be able to find a Jenny and I was really depressed about it. After the initial casting session I asked 'who is that?' and then they told me about her training at WAPPA, work with MTC... her work on *Halifax*. I went home armed with information and work on tape in *Halifax* and I thought, 'Shit, she can do anything!' I was pressured to give roles to an established actor. That was one of the only times when call backs weren't interesting. I have a bit of a call back rule – that is, I use it - but on that occasion I thought: 'Why? I love her!'. That was a significant experience because so often you're under pressure not to go through casting process...not test. I won't do it here - compared with the US where you must accept stars without a casting test. I learned a lot from that experience of giving that role to Fran – I was able to give a chance to new actors. That taught me that I must go through casting regardless of whether or not the role goes to a name: 'you go out and see people'. Fran only mentioned 'that film she'd been working on on weekends' – (ie *Love and Other Catastrophes*) later."

"I feel that those actors contribute a lot to the film. It's a very generous thing they do: seeing them helps to work out how to do a scene. At the outset I'm never sure how I'll direct the scene. Seeing it helps me. Jane Campion does role plays – I do the same. In locations, I play the parts with the AD and Camera people helping."

Ros:
I noted that I had read an interview where Jane Campion talked about doing role plays. I then referred to question [4] and asked Cherie if she had any type of preferred rehearsal process.

Cherie:
"No. For me, the issue is time and availability; it's dictated by practical issues. I do rough rehearsal – never up to speed. I do end up talking about the screenplay, characters, objectives. I trust that they're going away and working out character beats/journeys ... I have no more need to know about certain needs of actors than F stops. I've hired them for their expertise and what they bring to set: the less I have to say the better. The talk I do is more to do with choreography and business."

Ros:
I asked her if she used a voice coach or dramaturge, as per question [5].

Cherie:
"No, not so far because it's not been required, however, I would contemplate it if I were doing, for example, a Shakespearean adaptation or the character was a Russian etc."

"I should have said that I attended improvisation classes with Gale Edwards. I also sat in on rehearsals with Michael Gow. For me, these were seminal. The play Gow was working on was impenetrable. He didn't discuss meaning but rather allowed revelation of meaning through choreography, improvisation and props. The dramaturge for me is usually the writer and they sit in on rehearsals and help with questions."

Ros:
I noted that Michael Gow had offered me the chance to sit in on rehearsals, and Cherie recommended this as a learning experience. I also talked about how generous my survey participants had been – particularly Don Crombie whose response had really touched me because of the effort he had taken to respond. I then asked whether or not Cherie had ever had to direct actors who had become blocked.

Cherie:
"One time an actor was blocked with a particular line. You try to change the choreography in frame and their business...if that doesn't work you get another actor to do something to them. For example, on TGHML – in relation to one of the wedding guests, Richard slapped him hard on the back – and I used this take. You do what you can but that really is what casting weeds out. I'm not an acting teacher – it's not my job – you only have to learn the processes."

Ros:
I explained that some of these questions were suggested by my supervisor. I said I assumed that the previous question was more meaningful where one was working with non actors – such as on a project like *Wildside* or *Heartbreak High*.

Cherie:
"I like George Ogilvie's work and his wide experience, which he can draw on in such situations. It's useful to get them up to speed. I would use both a coach and a dramaturge if I were in that situation."

Ros:
I asked at what point she prefers to work on performance with her actors, as per question [7].

Cherie:
"I do this as soon as I say 'action'. I never know what they're going to do until I say action. This was especially true of Kate Blanchett and I'd have no idea what was coming until that point and it was always a wonderful surprise! I will discuss meaning and do a read through; discuss where they need to get to as part of the rehearsal."

Ros:
I then asked her about whether or not she had any particular views on the use of improvisation in filmmaking.

Cherie:
"Yes, I do it, however, I will replace lines only if necessary."

Ros:
I indicated that I think there are many approaches one can use in directing and that it seems to me that improvisation can be a most useful tool.

Cherie:
"Kiss or Kill was fascinating but the improvisation had a huge effect on sound design. Because it was mostly impro, it became a nightmare because in post syncing there was no script."

"Sounds needs to be treated carefully. I did some voice workshops with Bill Pepper and they were fantastic."

Ros:
I explained that Bill was my primary teacher at NIDA and I mentioned that we used to have fantastic Wednesday afternoon accent classes and Bill would always arrive with two pots of tea for everyone. (Cherie said she remembered his tea too.)

Cherie:
"My interest in impro is more to do with impro between the words and lines. I do encourage it, however, there's only about 10% room for change. It's not a huge thing, however, it's especially useful when working out choreography."

Ros:
I asked if she had ever found any particularly useful ways of eliciting performance from an actor if she was unhappy with the performance being given.

Cherie:
(At this point Cherie shared 2 such experiences but asked me not to record them in the interview). [....she then continued]

"I never know how to direct unless I've worked through it myself. I can't use a storyboard and I only do them for other people. I think it's a male/female spatial intelligence thing. I can only do it if I've done it myself. I try to rehearse on location as much as I can myself. If there's no opportunity to do this and I'm confused about how to cover it, I'll get the dimensions and get a rehearsal space and then get the actors to block it – if not, I do it myself. I describe it as camera coverage and then talk the actors through their business. Because there's no time for the actors to do their actions I have to be careful. They don't like line-readings and that's very amateurish anyway. I've actually worked with writers where I had to bar them from the set."

"When it's the first time on the set I don't tell them my view, I describe! Line readings are 'naughty.' I've heard myself back on takes getting different ones and I've realised that my perception is skewed. If I get 15/16 takes it's invariably the first take that's right – I know I can't be trusted. What the actor has done instinctively in the rushes is right – I've learned to be up front and say 'I've probably got this already – please bear with me.' In terms of how to elicit performance, choreography and business are always the first things I go to – thanks to Michael Gow. From him I learnt about 'revelation through business'."

Ros:
I asked if she ever helped with automatic dialogue replacement, as per question [10].

Cherie:
"Yes, I do, because it's a very technical thing and sometimes I might get them to do a couple of loops. You don't know until the sound mix what to do. I could work through it as follows: One is more technical; the next will be fast, then slow, but it's not a performance. I have used a looping group to do impro when I needed background chatter for the crowd scene. Post-production sound on my film involved a very good team. I worked with the composer. Mixing is slow and hard. You need breaks to correct your perception or you lose sight."

Ros:
I asked if she had found learning to communicate with actors difficult, as per question [11].

Cherie:
"I think I communicate effectively because I don't talk to them really about acting or performance. I talk about everything but that, but I create an environment which is fun where they can do their best work. It's all about them! The stuff with the crew is a separate thing. On the day it's about the actors and their needs. It was not necessarily something I learned; I did it instinctively. You have to be friends. You have to fade in low and be on the journey with them all for the duration of the film. They respond to this. I wouldn't necessarily do this on a commercial!"

Ros:
Finally, I asked her if there were any people who had been specific influences on her development as a director.

Cherie:
"Michael Gow, Gale Edwards, Dr George Miller. I've also read about Scorcese, Woody Allen, Hitchcock – 'the usual suspects.' Woody doesn't talk to actors; he fires them if they can't do it. He has no rehearsal, he just blocks through. Whether or not it has changed over the years – I don't know. Kate Blanchett also has had an enormous impact on how I work; definitiely also Richard and Francis. All my supporting actors also all had a big influence on me – they were all great!"

Ros:
I mentioned that I had done a workshop with Jeanette Cronin years ago (when she was about 15 before she went to NIDA) and said that even then she was terribly powerful – so I've watched her career with some interest and feel that she is a great, though perhaps underrated, Australian actor.

Cherie:
"Yes, she's great!"

Ros:
I asked Cherie if she had any final comments.

Cherie:
"The less you have to do the better. The casting process is where you work out the best person. Do preparation! Don't imagine you're an acting teaching if you're not. Sometimes people stress out too much. Originally I felt I had to learn first hand: I needed to know what it's like to be them; hence some workshops. Unless you're workshopping in a Mike Leigh way and there's a point to it - stay out of the acting arena."

(In concluding, I thanked Cherie for her generosity and assistance and I indicated that she had been a great help to me.)

FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT ALERDICE NOVEMBER 2000
With updated commentary November 2003

By ROS WILLIAMS

Ros:
I asked Scott about his training as a director and teacher.

Scott:
I trained as a director through the Victorian College of the Arts after deciding law wasn't for me in first year. I did it all pretty much straight out of school. I've worked ever since, partly in a production company, and have been teaching acting and voice at the USQ since about 1995. I usually also teach voice.

(Scott became the head of acting in 2002 and now teaches only acting as the school has a full-time voice teacher, Bernadette Pride who trained in NIDA's voice studies course).

Ros:
I asked Scott whether or not he had a particular preference for acting methodology.

Scott:
Yes, my work is very much Stanislavski based, although I have been strongly influenced by the work of Cic (Cicily) Berry when it comes to vocal technique and text. The technical skills of the craft are critically important. Stanislavsk is the key to truthful acting. The actor must do their homework on the given circumstances and focus on playing their actions.

Ros:
I asked Scott what sort of work the acting course at USQ incorporates.

Scott:
Our training methodology incorporates all the main training approaches to an extent, with a particular focus on a physical explanation of the inner workings of the character and the scene. Essentially, it's very much a Stanislavski based system of training, which is underpinned by the voice work of Cicily Berry and Kristin Linklater, and to an extent Rodenberg and Fitzmaurice. The students are exposed to other ideas, I mean of course they are made aware of them, and they find out anyway through their other actor friends, but we don't advocate Method as such, unlike some of the work going on at * these days. That sort of work troubles me, because I think it can cause problems. A lot of stuff is just a misunderstanding of Stanislavski anyway. You have to be careful with acting students. Especially with unstable ones, and there are usually a few students with lots of personal problems going on.

* Some other schools

Ros:
I asked Scott about his personal view on practical aesthetics.

Scott:
Really, it's just a return to Stanislavski. Unfortunately, I think it denies the need for the actor to experience and feel. I absolutely adhere to the notion that the actor must feel and step into the character's given circumstances rather than accept the idea that the experience of the scene is somehow visited upon the actor. The most important Stanislavskian tool is to 'play an action' – if you play an action you must feel. You make the magic if you step into the scene and use the Stanislavski tools to create the character – you must cause it to come – use the tools of interpretation to create the character. You need to cry out against the idleness of some acting and understand that it's a call to tell a story. The scene tells the story and you must join in to tell that story. I think our actors are hot property at the moment with agents because their work is very connected.

Our movement base has always been important and we explore Laban and have explored things like Alexander technique etc. but in the future we want to have a dedicated movement core within the program focussing on the work of Laban, Alexander, Feldenkrais and Susuki at least.

Ros:
I asked Scott if they cover practical aesthetics in the course.

Scott:
Well, sure, the actors all know about it. But as I said, it's actually a return to the very basis of Stanislavski and can sometimes be very confusing for actors as it's often handled by people who don't really understand what

they're talking about – in the end it's best just to go with Stanislavski. Stanislavski will give you the "as if" aspects of it anyway.

Ros:
I said that to a large extent I agreed with him, because it seemed to me that PA is really just about paring acting back to the most basic of ideas – ie. action playing – but I said that in one sense some aspects of PA work (say when working with someone like Nic Lathouris) can be helpful for actors who get worried about trying too hard - PA in some senses can be very freeing, but in the end, I agree, it's really just the core of Stanislavski....perhaps just dressed up as the Emperor's New Clothes.

Scott:
That's right, but you're right, the "as if" stuff is good and so is the focus on action playing. But it's still Stanislavski!

Ros:
I asked Scott if the USQ course includes a unit on acting for the camera.

Scott:
Yes we do. Robert Ketton teaches that. Unfortunately, they can only afford to use video gear, but the Uni has acquired a huge multimedia facility and there may be scope for more exploration with film in the future. We'd like to collaborate more closely with the film and TV people at QUT. In the end, acting for the camera requires the same approach of the actor – it must be truthful and organic. It's just the size that differs, but you don't want the emotion to be small. You look at the showreel material, the emotion is still huge.

Ros:
I asked Scott if there were any people who had been particularly influential in his development as a director.

Scott:
Yes, I've been very influenced by Cicily Berry, my teachers at VCA including Roger Hodgeman, Lindy Davies, and Robert Benedetti. I also learned a lot when I worked with Roger Hodgeman at the Melbourne Theatre Company as an assistant director. He has been my greatest influence. Some of my students have been important – I love transformational actors. For me, they're the ones. Actors must be able to transform themselves into somebody else.

In concluding, Scott and I discussed the woeful state of the arts in Australia and the problem with most of the work being centred in Sydney and Melbourne. We also discussed some of our concerns about funding and how hard it is to get a performing company established in Brisbane. The availability of rehearsal space is one major problem with venues being out of the reach of independent collectives.

(During my initial discussion with Scott, one of his ex-students, Kelli Jones, was present. She indicated that she was happy to complete one of my surveys from an actor's point of view. I was unable to incorporate such material into my study because of space limitations, however, because it reflects what she learned under the guidance of Scott Alderdice, I have typed up her comments to attach to these interview notes).

KELLI JONES SURVEY RESPONSE
2000

Kelli trained at the USQ graduating with a bachelor of theatre arts in 1998. She has worked in theatre and television since graduation, most notably in *Grass Roots* for the ABC.

Kelli studied acting technique in detail at USQ and says it was "based on the Stanislavski method with other methods sprinkled throughout." She does not have any set views on Method acting, but does believe that there is a difference between 'technical' and 'instinctive' actors. She said, "I believe an organic-instinctive actor doesn't fully rely on their craft, but bases decisions made on feeling. Instinctive actors' work is usually more truthful and with much more visible depth." Kelli does not favour a particular approach to acting and says, "my "method" as such is a hybrid of many forms – generally using what 'feels' right, truthful and most natural." In terms of essential preparation during pre-production, Kelli regards both script analysis and character analysis as essential. In response to the question about whether or not she makes many set decisions about character, she said she does "but keeping it quite unbound so as to allow for growth and development as the rehearsal process continues." She engages in other preparation "using music, colour, (and) exploration of character totally removed from the script."

In terms of making artistic decisions collaboratively, Kelli indicated that she sometimes does and sometimes doesn't do this. She said, "It highly depends on the hierarchy which has developed (if at all). In my experience with professional film, decisions regarding character are made with the director only, all other areas are designated to specific people."

Kelli has had the opportunity to engage in re-working scripts on occasions and said, "In *Wildside* the script was altered during shooting if the actor felt it was necessary due to character etc. There was no need for consulting writers. Discussion of changes took place on set with the director. The same (occurred) on the set of *Thunderstone*. We were encouraged to discuss alterations concerning anything we weren't comfortable with for our characters."

In relation to her casting experiences, Kelli said, "it is dependent (on the) casting director. If something specific is required, they will give direction, but there is always an amount of discussion." Of her experience at auditions she said, "usually the director sees the character as such and such, therefore, (says) show us what you have prepared etc." Her ideal casting process would be: "Being able to meet with the director and discuss ideas relating to the character/s and story and where they see it heading and then playing with scenes and character. Having at least ½ an hour with a director." She has noted that many directors "have stated they prefer trained actors." It had only been during the casing of one SBS film that a director briefly discussed acting and directing method with her as part of the process.

Kelli's preferred rehearsal process would be: "Ideally, a few weeks in which a group script analysis can take place (with) much improvisation and playing with scenes out of context and in; character development exercises – solo and with (the) group. Constant discussion and action." In terms of a rehearsal space she simply likes "somewhere quiet where the cast and director wouldn't be disturbed by external noise." Where possible, she likes it if the set can be recreated in the rehearsal space. Her ideal rehearsal process would last "4-6 weeks." She rarely gets the opportunity to rehearse to her satisfaction and feels most actors want "more time than (is) usually given." On one project, a director did assemble the entire cast to discuss the project over 2 days but she said that a week longer would have been preferable. She prefers not to block movement at all, but usually finds the DOP will attend to this. In her experience, directors don't expect actors to arrive having learnt the script

During rehearsal she does use improvisation, story building exercises, and character development exercises, although she says "so far, in my experience, this has been limited, but hopefully, in the future it will increase." Of improvisation, she says "it can work exceedingly well, I believe, if it is not overused and is kept in context."

In relation to the effect that style/genre has on a performance, Kelli said, "as an actor I tend to allow more if the style is more flexible and 'larger'. ie. *Thunderstone* was a sci-fi kids drama – (it was about) still keeping it real, yet there was more room for defined 'character.'" She had never discussed these issues with a director. She said, "the longest period of rehearsal I have experienced on a film/television project was 2 days. So much time is taken up with make-up and wardrobe. I believe more time should be allocated to performance development."

Of her own training, Kelli recalled that they did one unit on voice-over technique for advertisements etc., but not much time was spent on it. In relation to working with a voice coach or dramaturg, Kelli said "In *Wildside*, Nico Lathouris was used as a dramaturg during rehearsals. (He) acted almost like a director, conducting exercises etc. There was a lot of improvisation on *Wildside*." There has been a lot of improvisation on most work she has done where "most directors have been quite accommodation – a few have not."

If she finds herself in difficulty with work, Kelli says she relies on "breathing and centring exercises (and) improvisation with fellow scene members." She has never experienced a director talking actors through a take. Of other actors who have difficulty or are difficult on set, she says "it is something you tend to work with then and there – quite instinctively – usually creating an atmosphere of comfort initially and then specifics from there (with) COMMUNICATION!!!"

Of ADR, Kelli says it's often just the sound editor who attends, not the director, and directors only attend if there is a block.

When asked 'how she learnt about the director's needs' Kelli said:"discussion, discussion, discussion – although it depends on how open they are; sometimes it is very difficult." For her, learning to communicate with directors about performance was not difficult. She says it's about, "Being clear about what you want and need and questioning them on what they want...Remaining as open as possible to all ideas...flexibility on both parts."

Kelli has not noticed that directors are often afraid of actors and says, "If an actor and director are willing to see situations from each others' point of view, then there is no need for fear at all. Communication is ESSENTIAL. Open communication."

Kelli said of her own approach to acting, "I related very closely to the teaching methods of Scott Alderdice. Very organic approach. Specific."