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MASTERS DISSERTATION

VOCALITY: An exploration of the function of the actor's voice in
the production of *Metamorphosis* at the Hexagon Studio Theatre,
UKZN and at the Grahamstown Festival (2011).

STUDENT NAME: ADAM STEYN
STUDENT NUMBER: 206512038
DISCIPLINE: DRAMA AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES
SCHOOL: ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
DEGREE: MASTER OF ARTS (DRAMA)

SUPERVISOR: PROF. H. BARNES

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts (Drama) in the School of Arts, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

As the candidate's Supervisor I have approved this dissertation for submission.

Signed: ... *Hazel Barnes* Date: 1/03/2016.....

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Abstract

This case study explores aspects of actors' voices in the Grahamstown production of *Metamorphosis* using action research with practise-based research techniques and self-reflexivity, focusing on emerging themes and subthemes. The director's function in developing actors' voices into a coherent artistic vision is also elaborated, including the role of a voice director (voice coach) with a comprehensible knowledge of the praxis of theatre voice, including the unique sonic properties of the actors' voices in a safe environment with understanding of the challenges of multicultural voices working in languages other than the mother tongue.

The centrality of the voice in scripted theatre is acknowledged. A Voice Evaluating Tool was implemented to assess problematic areas of actors' voices, and these findings were incorporated into a daily exercise programme. Actors were encouraged to focus on the dramatic text, lexical meaning and connotations of the word (spoken and unspoken), and invest time and effort into clarity of communication skills, including the immense influence of non-lexical gestures, silent acting and the pause within the vocality (voice production). The actors' vocal accomplishments evolved noticeably during the genesis and final performances of this production. Body and voice were intertwined, contributing to the creation of complex and believable characters who distinctly define and clarify intricate emotions and moods.

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	Page 3
1.1. Introduction	Page 3
1.1.1. The spoken word	Page 5
1.1.2. Communication	Page 7
1.1.3. Hearing	Page 8
1.1.4. Dialogue	Page 8
1.1.5. Character building	Page 9
1.1.6. Pause	Page 10
1.1.7. Silent acting	Page 11
1.1.8. Subtext	Page 12
1.1.9. Voice and speech	Page 12
1.2. Comments on the theatrical voice	Page 13
1.3. The South African voice	Page 14
1.4. Conclusion	Page 15
Chapter 2 Research Methodology	Page 18
2.1. Introduction	Page 18
2.1.1. Case study	Page 18
2.1.2. Practice-based research	Page 19
2.1.3. Self-reflexivity	Page 19
2.1.4. Action research	Page 20
2.1.5. Voice evaluating tool	Page 23
2.1.6. Research ethics	Page 24
2.2 Implementation: Action research in practice	Page 24
2.3. Conclusion	Page 28
Chapter 3 <i>Metamorphosis: The Director At Work</i>	Page 29
3.1. Introduction	Page 29
3.2. Concept proposal for the Grahamstown Festival (2011)	Page 29
3.3. Director's vision: Voice	Page 30
3.4. The storyline	Page 34
3.5. Rehearsals	Page 36

3.6. Analysis of the script	Page 40
3.7. Conclusion	Page 40
Chapter 4 Analysis of the Theatre Production <i>Metamorphosis</i>	Page 41
4.1. Introduction	Page 41
4.2. Case Study: Analysis of three scenes from <i>Metamorphosis</i>	Page 42
4.2.1 Scene one: ‘Boss versus Bhengu family’	Page 42
4.2.2. Scene two: ‘Nonhle versus parents’	Page 45
4.2.3 Scene three: ‘Mother versus Father and Nonhle’	Page 48
4.3. Critical overview of three scenes	Page 50
4.4. Crucial data: Themes and sub-themes	Page 52
4.4.1. Voice: Directorial concepts	Page 52
4.4.2. Voice: The dramatic text	Page 52
4.4.3. Voice: Rehearsal to performance	Page 53
4.4.4. Audience	Page 53
4.4.5. Ensemble work	Page 54
4.4.6. Silent acting	Page 55
4.4.7. Voice: Body	Page 55
4.4.8. Voice: Multicultural considerations	Page 55
4.4.9. Voice: Character building	Page 58
4.4.10. Journey of a character: Mother	Page 61
4.5. Conclusion	Page 65
Chapter 5 Conclusions	Page 66
5.1. Introduction	Page 66
5.2. Comments on the four research questions in this study	Page 67
5.3. An interesting discovery	Page 69
5.4. Recommendations	Page 70
5.5. Limitations of this study	Page 70
5.6. Suggestions for further research	Page 70
Reference List	Page 72
Appendix A Voice: Back to Basics	Page 79
Appendix B Director’s Notes	Page 85
Appendix C Voice Evaluating Tool	Page 89
Appendix D Actors’ Consent To Participate In Research Form	Page 94
Appendix E Script Analysis	Page 97

Introduction

This case study will evaluate the 2011 Grahamstown production of *Metamorphosis*, specifically addressing the following questions:

How were the actors' voices used in the production?

What contribution did the voice make within the directorial concept?

What preparations are necessary to create a sufficiently flexible instrument for this application?

What additional factors should be considered for an actor working in a third or fourth language in a production?

Rationale:

A versatile voice used in a sincere and sensitive way is very rare; such a voice can set intense moods, demand attention, communicate the appropriate meaning and prevent misunderstanding. More investigation and research is needed to enhance the vital importance of voices, both in the theatre and many other layers of society (for example public speakers, lawyers, radio presenters, and teachers).

Theatre directors need to explore this powerful tool and to make use of the voice's uniqueness. Each voice has its own characteristics and individual traits. In a multicultural society such as South Africa it can be rewarding to dissect and analyse various voices. Voices with different tones, intonations, paraphrasing and pronunciation can enrich a theatre production very effectively. Many theories on vocality in theatre derive from the western world and South Africa's multitude of multicultural voices needs more specific attention and guidance that is contextually relevant.

This case study explores a particular South African stage production *Metamorphosis*, to explore the function of the actors' voices, concentrating on voice production and the vision of how the director visualises or hears the voice of a character within the drama. A voice has many aspects requiring research and scrutiny; this study of *Metamorphosis* merely touches the surface of this intriguing field of voice. Voice, with all its aspects, is one of the most crucial elements of a stage production or dramatic text. According to Yvonne Banning (1990), research on the voice has not been considered an acceptable academic entity; it is time this attitude changed and this motivates me further in my research on voice.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

A play is interrupted silence (Hodge 2000:52).

A play text is a dramatic piece of work, written specifically to be performed on stage by actors. In terms of a realist approach to text-based theatre (which this research report takes) “stage dialogue . . . is written with the express purpose of creating the illusion that what is spoken from the stage is not true to life but is life itself” (Turner 1968:8). The dramatist writes a theatre text with (various) characters, set in a defined milieu and period, containing stage directions, actions, climaxes, dialogue and in some cases even characteristics of the characters. Actors performing a dramatic text take on the role/part of the characters and perform this in front of an audience. In theatre terminology the written text ‘comes alive’. Before the actual performance of the drama (text) comes the director and actor’s research, the rehearsal period which involves understanding the script and its historical/ social context, agreeing on a relevant interpretation of the script, and finding ways of realising that interpretation through the elements of acting and theatre.

As performing artists, the director and the actor must apply their theoretical and practical knowledge to explore and research a theatre production to the best of their capabilities. Theory is a comprehensive and necessary guideline for all theatre people and cannot be neglected. If the practice is based on existing theory, it can only enhance the appropriate desired result. Research in a specific academic field always unfolds existing appropriate theory, explains how it relates to the present focus of the research and may even suggest new ideas regarding the existing theory. Undertaking research in the practical academic field can

test these theories and open up the field for further research. Therefore it is necessary to scrutinize and dissect existing theories and research papers regarding voice and directing, to gain a holistic view of the academic field.

Currently voice work leans heavily on the actor and director in executing a production because of a limited rehearsal period and lack of funding. The director needs a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the voice and how to achieve a desired compatible result of voice work within a production. The director fulfils the role of a director, facilitator, and teacher, especially in an educational milieu (Mills 1990).

Therefore certain crucial points regarding voice work need to be considered when attempting to direct a play. Each director has his own individual style of working to visualize and to deliver a drama. A director has his own vocabulary to communicate with actors and to make them aware of how to achieve the most apposite and believable characters and adequate voice production appropriate for a specific performance. Theories on voice work and on directing need to be examined carefully, studied, and then applied within the practical field taking into account the context of the drama. In other words, theory lends itself to application in a practical manner in order to enhance and explain the crucial elements regarding the word, dialogue, and voice work, characterization and directing. The knowledge of theory can be used by actors and directors to advance their ability to execute and reach their goal with ease.

Conventionally the use of voice in a South African theatre production has been delineated by the writings of Berry (1980), Rodenburg (1997) and Anderson (1977). The received wisdom is that an actor's voice can be improved with daily exercises and that the voice can be moulded to a specific intention, working with both intonation and pronunciation. Berry (1980) and Rodenburg (1997), both emphasize the meaning of the words in dialogue and the emotional weight contained in the words to assist to bring out the subtext of the play.

Anderson's approach, compared to Berry and Rodenburg, is more conservative in the exercises that he prescribed. But, he was one of the first pioneers to contribute to the voice in a holistic way and therefore cannot be ignored or discarded completely. Berry and Rodenburg concentrate more on how the voice can be improved, working through a variety of different styles of dramas, prose and poems and they believe that any exercise can be changed to fit the actor's style and needs. They concentrate more on the practice rather than Anderson's theoretical approach.

Below in this section (Section 1.1) I set out the main terms and their usage within this report. The following sections (1.2, 1.3 and Appendix B) of this chapter outline the main elements of theatre production which need to be taken into account by the director in guiding the actor: namely the heightening of vocality required for the theatrical voice and the director's engagement with enabling that theatricality. Vocality remains the focus, but acknowledgement of the complexity of the process of voice production is important in relation to the director's task and to the importance of the voice within a performance.

1.1.1. The spoken word

The most powerful weapons men possess for good or evil are WORDS
(Burniston 1975:5).

In order to clearly understand the necessity of a focus on the vocal production during a performance a few crucial and important elements in a dramatic text need to be contemplated so as to comprehend voice work. The extreme weight that a single word within a play can carry; its contextual, emotional, informational meanings and action value as well as its ability to provoke thought must be taken into consideration. This is the starting point for actors and the director to discover the dramatic text through words and to pin point exactly what the dramatist's intentions were with certain actual words he gave preference to.

“Words spring from many layers of consciousness: [f]rom the ordinary management of everyday lives, [and] to the unguarded expression of deep feeling” (Berry 1973:21). Through words we communicate our thought processes, and feelings. Berry compares this to a movement in music and it’s up to us to find the exact energy for the movement of words to unlock the precise action that would fit the word. “You have to trust the words and know what those words mean” (Rodenburg 2002: cover page). To unlock all the details in a word requires understanding of what it means and also in the context of the dialogue, why, how and what is the purpose of this specific word.

Stanislavski sees the word as central to a performance and to an actor “It is absolutely wrong to speak your words to no purpose. You must be fully aware of the value of every word” (Merlin 2007:61). He also prescribes that an actor needs formal training in communication skills.

Sneddon (n.d.) wrote that the spoken word is the main issue of human communications and that speech work is the most neglected academic field of all. The spoken word has three dimensions, an intellectual, an emotional and a physical one and an ‘imbalance’ between these three dimensions will result in failure of proper training and may result in contradictions of meaning. The intellectual element contains ‘thought’ and the emotional element a variety of ‘feelings’. Sneddon (n.d.) said that the word must sound authentic. Berry (1973) feels that a word accumulates a diversity of emotions and coupled to the word, bodily action or gestures will appear. Berry under lined the fact that ‘speaking well’, the actor must learn about the energy of their own speech and to execute it with trust through the body, “It is your physical commitment to the words that matters” (Berry 1975:30). Rodenburg formulated the exact description of the voice and the word: “The voice serves the word and the word serves the voice” (1992:7).

A play needs to be spoken to be understood (Rodenburg 1992). Words (and the character's thoughts) must become part of the actor's body, imagination and voice in order for the character to be integrated into the play. "[T]o do this the actor needs to prepare body, voice and speech muscles, speaking skills, voice production and articulation skills that enhance the text not block it' (Rodenburg 1999:34).

1.1.2. Communication

"Perfect communication demands from the actor a balanced quartet of emotion, intellect, body, and voice" (Linklater 1976:9). Berry compares the play to; "a sophisticated metaphor" (1988:37). In a play the language is specific to the setting and describes the frame of mind that the director/actor needs to follow. But the responsibility of an actor is to be clear through the language, into which he will breathe life, because this will arouse a reaction from the audience and from an actor, far beyond the implications of a scene. The actor must feel the ardent life of the language.

Spoken communication is the life blood of text-based theatre, supported by gesture and action. But unlike other forms of theatre such as physical theatre, the word remains the paramount instrument of communication within the performance of a written text.

Theatrical communication asks an actor to open up and to have a vulnerable but respectful dialogue with other actors on stage. "Man communicates by means of signs and symbols to which he ascribes meaning" (Blignaut 1970:3) and these signs and symbols cause or arouse behavioural reactions, which the receiver can consciously or unconsciously, react to. But the most outstanding aspect about communication is, that the voice is delivering it: "the most powerful means of communication between human beings, far more powerful than the merely printed word" (Esslin 1976:12).

1.1.3. Hearing

Oral communication is essential to all human kind. And needs to be delivered and perceived effectively. Anderson defined oral communication as a two-way process involving listening effectively in order to understand accurately, as well as speaking in such a manner that the message can be easily and correctly defined by the listener, while knowing that “human communication is never completely or ideally achieved” (1977:3).

To listen and to hear is an essential skill for an actor to master, not only for dialogue purposes on stage between characters but to listen and to hear his own voice during voice work and exercises. And by monitoring his voices’ progress or hearing that the voice is placed and applied correctly. “[G]ood voice and good speech come as much from listening...How many of us, however, actually listen?” (Rodenburg 1992:254). Hodge asks this simple question “How well do you hear?” (200:152). Berry (1973) emphasises that an actor’s task is not to control the audience but to encourage them to listen. To listen is a skill and accurate listening can only enhance the work of an actor.

Stanislavsky highlights this important element; an actor must concentrate on listening, which must be integrated into the training of the actor: “[P]utting you in the strongest possible place – physically, imaginatively, emotionally and vocally – to listen, listen, listen, and from the true listening will rise *inspiration*” (Merlin 2007:19). This concept is supported by Berry (1973) who maintains one must listen in a balanced way, balancing between the subjective and the objective hearing regarding one’s individual voice.

1.1.4. Dialogue

Dialogue (the spoken word) in text-based theatre is the action: in Greek ‘drama’ means to take action or to be acted. How the dialogue is delivered by the voice, with specific shading,

with the correct nuances, (tempo, pitch and delivering the dialogue with energy and sincerity) enhances mood, and emotional reality (Mills, 1999). The power within the text, stated by Rhodenburg (1992), is that an actor needs to work through the body, the breath that the actor takes and how the word is uttered.

Hodge (2000) describes dialogue as; it is not what humans say to one another that matters but how they translate the word and their reactions to the specific word. Words can only unfold the action. A play needs to be heard, it's not there for reading purposes. The inner language can be discovered through the dialogue and it is loaded with emotional detail and both lexical and sub-textual meanings. Dialogue has the intention to unlock the subtext (meaningful action), define detailed characteristics for actors/directors and guide them in a specific and uninterrupted direction.

1.1.5. Character building

The voice helps to create the character and needs to be internalized by the actor with dialogue, movement, gestures to highlight crucial characteristics of the character. This should be done in an effective and sensitive way: the voice needs to be coupled to *real* emotions within the actor and only then can it be carried over to the audience with clarity and visibility. "Perfect communication demands from the actor a balanced quartet of emotion, intellect, body, and voice" (Linklater 2006:9).

"Character is the basis of everything in acting" (Coquelin 1968:30). If a director concentrates more on the external traits of a character the impact of the play will disappear quickly and the characters will become caricatures. A disaster for theatre! Stanislavsky (1936) agrees with Coquelin (1968) that the actor must not work only on the external elements of a character; the actor must combine the features of his life to that of the character, heart and soul. The outside traits are important in characterisation but more attention is necessary to create the soul of the

character being portrayed. Only when the internal and external life of the character is completely formed, adjusted in the milieu on stage, will deeper development of the character start to manifest. A few of the emotions that will surface through the character, coming from deep layers of the actor's subconscious, will be intuitive and instinctual. "In order to express a most delicate and largely subconscious life it is necessary to have control of an unusually responsive, excellently prepared vocal and physical apparatus" (Stanislavsky 1936:16). An actor combines his own life experiences to that of a character he plays in order to create a holistic 'person' on stage and to justify, realistically, the inner and external motivations, emotions and behaviour patterns of the character.

An actor brings out the spirit of a character to unlock the secrets within the words and combine them with his own cognitive interpretation of the dramatist's work, creating his own affinity with other stage characters. The actor concentrates on the circumstances that the character lives under and even boosts the character's creativity from his own imagination. In real life emotions are coupled to small tiny detailed movements or gestures; therefore an actor (living in real life) needs to be attentive to the force of this physical detail of emotions. These small physical movements require internal justification and "[T]he inner struggle seeks an outlet in such an external act" (Stanislavsky 1936:149). Every detail or action on stage must have a purpose and an actor needs to justify it convincingly. "The material becomes part of us" (Stanislavsky 1936:53). Another important statement by Stanislavsky (1936) is that a character is supposed to be continuously attentive, alive on stage playing the part and it must happen during the entire run of the play.

1.1.6. Pause

Meyerhold said that the dialogue of a dramatic text demands an actor be a musician but the pause: "reminds him to calculate rhythm as rigidly as a poet" (cited in Braun 1978:149).

The pause is one of the most difficult elements in the technique of speech to master. Berry (1987) maintained that the interaction between the words is as crucial as the spoken words and not to forget the 'silence', the 'silence' is an affirmative verbal alternative. The usage of the pause can enhance dialogue, heighten or punctuate an emotional scene, the importance of what has been said or what's going to be said, gives time for the audience to digest the emotions and information and even a breather for the actor to collect his thoughts. Pauses are used in comedies for timing and accentuating of specific moves, gestures or dialogue. In a performance pauses are 'building blocks' for creating suspense and vary the tempo of dialogue between actors on stage. It can convey the exact statement and the sub-text across to an audience. An actor during a pause needs to keep his concentration, stay focused and in character at all times otherwise the structure of the play will collapse.

1.1.7. Silent acting

Stanislavski called silent acting the inner monologue: "inaudible to an audience, but observable on the actor's face, in his behaviour, and his form of expression" (cited in Merlin 2007:238).

Silent acting is one of the most important building blocks regarding a dramatic text and needs as much attention during rehearsals as the deliverance of dialogue. Through silent acting the body communicates; transmits meaning regarding the immediate action happening on stage. Furthermore silent acting highlights, enhances and underlines the spoken word and is a running commentary on the dialogue happening at that very moment through the different bodily reactions of characters. Therefore the character's reactions; movement, gestures and facial expressions, must be meaningful and executed with a definite purpose.

Silent acting enables the actor to be in a state of readiness when she needs to deliver dialogue. The actor's body is already in the desired intense state required for the scene so that the voice deliverance will automatically match the intensity of the body.

1.1.8. Subtext

One of the most important elements in a drama is the subtext. This can be described as the underlying meaning of the play, but it can also define the psychological make-up of a character. The subtext contains the information of the unconscious motivations, the inner justifications and the consciousness of a character. The voice is the most important element in conveying the subtext. Stanislavsky (Merlin 2007) says in any kind of dialogue a person will hear 10% of the spoken word; the other 90% is unspoken. The subtext is imbedded in the word and an actor must convey it through body, mind, voice and action. The subtext is a link between the conflicts of what a character says and actually does and an actor must incorporate pauses (silences) to convey and enhance the unspoken, hidden messages within a script.

1.1.9. Voice and speech

The distinction between 'voice' and 'speech' must be clearly understood in order to justify the uniqueness of the actor's voice. Turner describes the 'voice' as "instinctive" and speech as an "acquired habit" (1968:1). An individual voice has a distinct value to it and through this quality an actor can easily be identified. But speech and voice are influenced by both nurture and nature. "Language began instinctually, physically, primitively" (Linklater 2006:327) and the voice is "an expression of self" (Linklater 2006: xiv). Berry (1997) declares that "I became deeply aware of the physical connections between the making of the word and the emotional motive of the actor – in terms of Stanislavski, the want/need of the character in the scene" (Hampton 1997:371). Berry (1973) stressed that the general aim of speech is to

express the immediate requirements (needs) of the speaker. She also emphasized the unity of voice and body when expressing emotional experience; the spoken word and body convey the same message. Rodenburg, Linklater and Berry elaborated on the acquired bad habits and unnecessary stress that can negatively affect the voice.

1.2. Comments on the theatrical voice

Voice can be defined as the sonic properties of the individual actor (Mills 1999). For example the pitch and range, projection, voice control, breath control, tempo, quality, plausibility, believability (flexibility in connecting emotions to the voice), intonation, tone colour, emphasis, and combined gestures or movement. The term ‘sonic properties’ has been described as: “[T]he texture or the qualities of the sound which the actor produces through her verbal text or through vocal gestures, [that] elaborates the theatrical possibilities for theatre voice.” (Mills, 1999:3).

Voice cannot be separated from a character or from a spoken dramatic production. In other words the voice takes the focal point in such a production. The voice cannot be concentrated on as a separate entity from all the important elements within a theatre production; but without the voice (spoken words) a text-based theatre production would not exist. Together with other theatre elements (almost inseparable) the voice can be the most important support that carries the entire stage production.

Coquelin describes the voice as far more affective on stage than is to be found in everyday life or situations: “The power of vocal inflection is incalculable and all the visual effects in the world are worth nothing, when it comes to moving the hearts of an audience, in comparison to one cry uttered with true intensity of intonation” (1968:34).

Peter Brook (1992) compares the actor's voice to that of a mountain containing lots of caves and Stanislavsky (2007) on the other hand describes the actor as a laboratory. The actor's voice can be used with the stage space, blocking, and grouping to build tension, for the anticipation of the climax of the play. Additionally, pacing, demanding a certain tone and approach or attack to a specific piece of important dialogue will further enhance a production.

The voice needs to be used in a specific manner to underline or enhance the mood the director has in mind for a scene or the entire play. The actor will be asked to tone down the voice or to build more with the voice in an emotional or sensitive scene. A director needs to have a well-trained ear with respect to the voice and know how to guide an actor to produce or reproduce the character's voice to get the best possible results. The voice, combined with other theatre elements, will highlight a directorial concept, provided the director has a holistic overview of the piece and clearly conceptualizes and understands the role played by the voice in the overall concept of the production.

The voice is central to a production or performance. A production communicates to the audience and Mills (1999) emphasizes that voice is the director's responsibility. What functions of the actor's voice should be studied and taught at university level in a complex multicultural society such as South Africa? Rodenburg spells out the importance of a proper voice training in education "Acting is a craft, and learning to speak, as a performer is a must, it is one of the fundamental techniques you simply cannot go on-stage without knowing how to do it properly" (1997: XI).

1.3. The South African voice

Voice in the South African context is not adequately explored. Specifically the multicultural society we live in drives directors to strive for a locally relevant approach to the voice. South

Africa has eleven official languages; however many productions use English or a mixture of English and an indigenous language to reach the widest possible audience.

Multicultural diversity in South Africa also requires substantial consideration. Each actor is a unique individual, having his or her own speaking patterns, way of using the voice and shading the character's dialogue. In some productions with a multicultural cast the voices have unique colouring and shading that can greatly enrich a production. Actors may have to work in their third or fourth language rather than in their mother tongue (Mills 1999) which adds further considerations for the director in terms of demands on the actor's voice and understanding. The process of constructively observing and critically evaluating voice in a training institution must be sensitive to cultural differences. Conquergood (2002) gave appropriate advice to directors: one must stand in the shoes of such an actor, with respect and feel what the actor is experiencing at a specific moment – then only can one give, meaningful guidance.

1.4. Conclusion

To examine a dramatic text, especially in a learning institution, one needs to consider crucial points that will be to the advancement of the trainee actor and director. Adding the exploration of the function of the actors' voice in the theatre production of *Metamorphosis* will provide a particular focus to this research. The angle from which the voice was perused and presented comes from a trainee theatre director's point of view, therefore it has been important to understand and present both academic opinions and those of renowned theatre directors.

The work of voice experts (Linklater (1976), Berry (1973) and Rodenburg (1992)) was studied to grasp the differences that each one is advocating regarding the practical side of the voice and from which approach and angle they interpret the voice during a theatre

production. Interesting research and appropriate work done by Liz Mills (1999), on the theatre voice: the voice is central to a theatre production, directing and the sensitivity surrounding and working with the multicultural voice, is truly a benefit to South African theatre. And theatre academics in the previous century struggled for the theatre voice and theatre production to be declared an academic entity.

The play used in this research derived from Kafka's short story; *Metamorphosis*. A dramatic text can present one with numerous clues and certain crucial aspects that are closely linked to voice production and the challenges presented by this text were numerous. The basic elements of breathing, projection, articulation, range and resonators, freeing and placing the free voice, support and body posture, are an essential part of voice work and central to a flexible theatre voice (see Appendix A¹). As a director, working in realism and expressionism, the writings of voice practitioners Linklater (1997) and Berry (1997) provide guidelines and inspiration for directorial practice (use of minimalism on stage, concentrating more on the expression of the text and plot by the actors) and vocal practice (the unity of the voice and body to deliver realistic and truthful dialogue).

Berry (1997) states that actors can produce their own sounds but they must pay close attention to their inner voice: "a voice that is not trying to make an impression" and a voice that does not aim to arise any comment (Hampton 1977:437). Berry (1997) advocates "movement of words becomes one with the movement of the inner self, and the word becomes active in every sense" (Hampton 1997:409). Linklater (1997) advises not to ignore the psychological impact of breathing on an actor: "Embodied listening and speaking involves the whole person from feet to skull. The body is all ears. The body is one big

¹ For reasons of length (word count) preliminary analyses of the basics of voice production; of the influence of Stanislavsky and Barney Simon as two major theatre directors on my work; of the voice evaluation tool used with actors; and of the script (an analysis essential for the directorial concept) have been placed in appendices.

mouth” (1976:346). Voice practitioners urge actors/directors to concentrate on the voice being fully embodied, and the body envoiced to create truthful realism or naturalism on stage (Hampton 1997:116&109&199&383).

Sadly in most dramatic training institutions voice is no longer part of the curriculum and therefore the responsibilities of voice production will undoubtedly be another part of the theatre directors’ responsibilities. The theatre director needs to be an expert on voice and to be up to date with new voice/theatrical developments. Because Stanislavsky was, an actor, a director and had extensive knowledge and expertise on voice work and acting, his wise input represents the view of the classic theatre director (see Appendix B). A South African director was studied through commentaries from actors, theatre people and directors. Barney Simon worked with multicultural casts, different South African languages, even a mixture of languages, a director trying to bring theatre to all South African people and a director with a vast knowledge of theatre and people (see Appendix B).

Chapter 2

Research Methodology

2.1. Introduction

My research involved directing actors in a multicultural theatre production adapted from Kafka's short story *Metamorphosis*. This case study explores aspects of actors' voices in the Grahamstown production of *Metamorphosis*, using action research with practise-based research techniques and self-reflexivity, focusing on emerging themes and sub themes. The methodology is described below, and in the second section an example of implemented action research is shown.

2.1.1. Case study

“A case study is an intensive study of a single case (or small sets of cases) with an aim to generalize across the general type” (Swanborn 2010:8). A case study lends itself to investigate a social phenomenon and aims to explore a hypothetical question. By investing in a case study a researcher attempts to focus on an issue in order to understand it better. Data is collected at varies intervals over a specific period of time. During the research process of a case study, the phenomenon under study can generate more tentative ideas and questions, which can guide the researcher further. In any case study, understanding the issues can be supported by applicable theories.

In this case study there is more than one actor involved in the drama of *Metamorphosis*. It will therefore be investigated on the micro-level [more than one actor involved] using an intensive research approach. Intensive research on a case study is “within the unit of observation” (Swanborn 2010:5) and is more in-depth than extensive research.

2.1.2. Practice-based research

Practice-based research is based on original creative work [artefacts] which one uses to explain, contextualise and “demonstrate a critical reflection” on existing theory (Koshy 2011: 2). This is a critical in-depth study of an original creative work and a reflection on theory within the educational milieu (Koshy 2011: 4). These artefacts/creative works must be contextualised, explained in a specific structured way to show the originality of the scholar and the final results must be made available to the larger community. Koshy described practice-based research as: “claims of original contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artefacts such as images, music, designs, models, digital media or other outcomes such as performances and exhibitions” (2011: 3).

Artefacts are an intricate part of explaining and providing an original, unique understanding about a practice. But artefacts must be clearly defined. Koshy (2011: 9) used the view of Scrivener on artefacts:

The art object does not embody a form of knowledge
Art is not form of knowledge communication
Art is not a servant of knowledge acquisition
Art making creates apprehensions
Art research creates novel apprehensions.

2.1.3. Self-reflexivity

An important part of this research is based on self-reflexivity. Nagata defined self-reflexivity as: “having an ongoing conversation with your whole self about what you are experiencing as you are experiencing it” (2004: 139). Self-reflexivity is a continuous communication/ conversation with one’s self about the specific situation that one is experiencing at this very moment. Mindful inquiry is part of self-reflexivity and involves awareness of one’s

intellectual interaction within the practice of research: “emotional regulation, critical thinking and openness and flexibility, where one’s worldview is constantly being updated by new and exciting cultural differences with which we engage in our everyday lives” (Nagata 2004: 141).

Self-reflexivity promotes versatile communication (flexible conversation with one’s self) but to assist in an intercultural situation, one needs to be completely self-aware. This state of mind is compatible with self-reflection about past encounters. One is functioning on an intrapersonal level, consciously regarding feelings, and attentively aware of the ongoing conversation between body and mind (i.e. body mindfulness). “Cultivating communicative flexibility so that one can easily and immediately shift one’s verbal and nonverbal style and tailor the content of what one wants to communicate is a competency that is valuable in interpersonal communication whether it is intracultural or intercultural (Nagata 2004:145).

Self-reflexivity is an essential tool to unify theory and the practical aspects. “[T]o capture the dynamic, developmental, and complex nature of communicating with people of diverse cultures, self-reflexivity is both a requirement for and an outcome of Mindful Inquiries” (Nagata 2004:145).

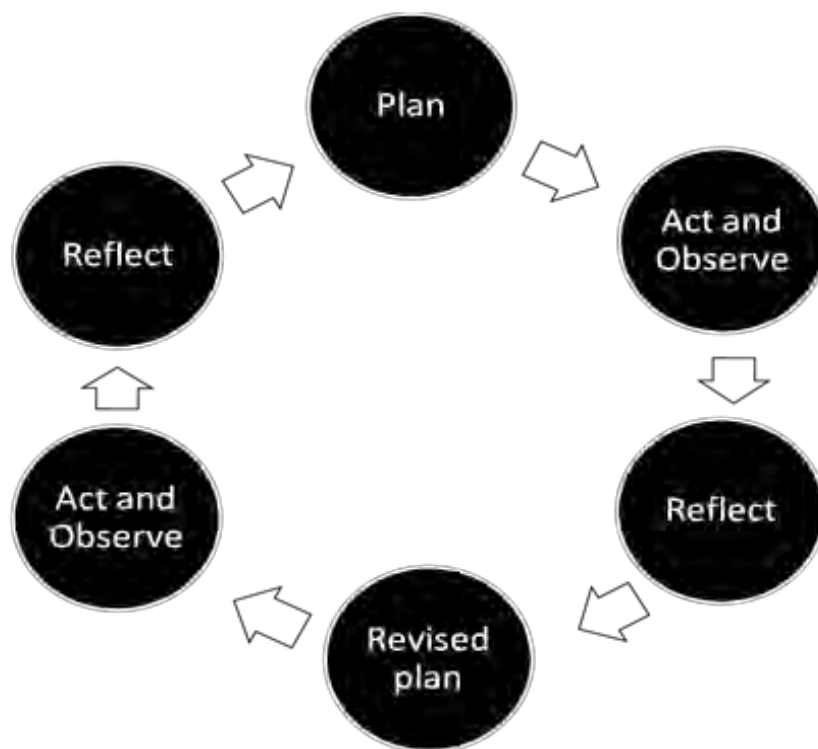
2.1.4. Action research

In order to be sensitive, well balanced, understandable and versatile, the director must take into consideration that every new play will provide a steep learning curve, especially in an academic institution. Directing is a process that is repetitive; in other words, the director’s work, involves trying out a script with actors, rehearsing an interpretation and then repeating and refining, as well as trying out new ideas. Action Research enables the director and actors to conduct research on the production while working.

Action research is a natural part of teaching. Teachers are continually observing students, collecting data and changing practices to improve student learning and the classroom and school environment. Action research channels the energies of teachers toward a better understanding of why, when, and how students become better learners (Miller 2007: 29).

The concept of action research detailed above fits perfectly with the learning processes in the theatre: learn, observe every detail, reflect, revise the plan and then implement the changes to improve one or to improve skills regarding the learning curve (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The action plan cycle



Reason and Bradbury (2001:1) defined action research as: “Draw[ing] on many ways of knowing, both in the evidence that is generated in inquiry and its expression in diverse forms of presentation as we share our learning with a wider audience” Koshy (2011: 16) described Action Research as: growing “out of attempts to acquire knowledge that would help change social systems” and “Action Research requires intervention in order to study the impact of change on a given situation and thereby understand the situation under consideration”.

Action research can benefit an actor and a director indirectly, allowing learning and understanding of a specific situation or a taxing scene in a drama. Action research is a qualitative methodology used in social contexts and can also be used to explore demanding social dynamics within a drama, leading to better insights into a unique problem area.

Another important aspect of Action Research is that it generates knowledge. Knowledge is based on and supported by theory. Reason and Bradbury defined action research as “a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in pursuit of a worthwhile human purpose . . . seek[ing] to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice” with the goal of arriving at/ or practical solutions for pressing issues concerning people (2001: 1). The “system is composed of humans engaged in interactions, using gestures and language, resulting in creation of impressions and transmission of information” (ibid.).

According to Winter, “[T]ruth in a social setting however is relative to the teller” (1989: 3). He listed six key points that can assist a ‘new’ researcher in his task: The work must be reflective, dialectical, and collaborative, take risks, hold a multiplicity of views on theory, and be practical and transformational. Action Research, more than any other research methodology, focuses on a real-life situation and can develop a more ‘smooth’ or solvent solution to real problems. It is used in circumstances that need a great deal of flexibility, for example, the theatre.

Action Research accumulates evidence which will be acted, evaluated and critically reflected upon. Action Research creates ‘living knowledge’. According to Reason and Bradbury (2001: 2), “the primary purpose of Action Research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in every day conduct of their lives”. Action Research creates new forms of understanding: “Theory without action is meaningless” (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 2). In other words, what people say and do are important to Action Research because this can create new knowledge and open up existing theories for further research.

The research for this dissertation will be based on the field notes of the director’s journal, the notes given to the actors after working through a scene or a run through of a scene. The director’s notes to the actors included: guidance on improving a character’s voice; suggestions on body movements, gestures and facial expressions; and advice on how to create the appropriate intensity with voice and body appropriate to the character.

Directing and acting at a university is often a form of Action Research, backed by theory using a trial and error approach. In other words, the knowledge and understanding of a specific field is improved, based on existing theory. There is learning, observing and with new input or suggestions, reworking of a scene. A scene will be analysed for reappearing patterns and themes, sub-themes when sifted through the data.

The primary data were the actors’ vocal production. The final analysis will focus on the following three scenes: i) ‘Boss versus Bhengu Family’; ii) ‘Nonhle versus Parents’; and iii) ‘Mother versus Father and Nonhle’.

2.1.5. The voice evaluating tool

The voice evaluation tool (see Appendix C) was used to holistically evaluate the actors’ voices, before starting rehearsals. It has been revised from Anderson’s table (1977: 27-28).

The voice evaluating tool was used in the first week of rehearsals to analyse and assess both

the strengths and neglected aspects of each actor's voice. Then to analyse and incorporate these problematic areas in a daily exercise programme. In the theatre production of *Metamorphosis* this evaluation both assisted in working out each actor's voice exercises and aided the director with information on each actor's voice quality. This tool can be used to determine if the vocal exercises have in fact benefited an actor by comparing an early run-through during rehearsals with a performance.

2.1.6. Research ethics

A written agreement on a standardized consent form (see Appendix D) was reached between all parties involved in the production of *Metamorphosis* that real names would not be used in this research. All participants have free access to the thesis and their input is credited.

According to Winterbach (1996), the ethics involved in Action Research include that:

All parties involved must be consulted;

Confidentiality must be maintained;

All parties involved must influence the work; and

Work in progress must be visible and open to suggestions.

These ethical guidelines were adhered to.

2.2. Implementation: Action research in practice

Arriving at the final end result of scene one: 'Boss versus Bhengu family', (see Chapter 4, 4.2.1., full description of this scene) can be closely linked to figure 1 (The action plan cycle) which describes the major points of how to apply Action Research to gain/accumulate data (re-occurring themes and sub-themes) and to get a different perspective/solution on the phenomena encountered during any rehearsal. In reality a director during a rehearsal period,

does apply the techniques of Action Research to reach the end result of a scene. Following and applying, physical work through the principles of Action Research (1. Plan, 2. Observe the action on stage, 3. Reflection (notes) on seen action, 1. Revise plan, 2. Observe the action on stage...) will be demonstrated by using existing data of the first rehearsal of scene one: 'Boss versus Bhengu family', concentrating more on the character of the Boss.

Rehearsal of scene one: 'The Boss versus the Bhengu family'

1. Planning:

It was explained to the actress that she was entering an already explosive atmosphere (fear, anxiety and confusion) in this scene. The emotions surrounding her are irritation, being cross and let down by Thabani not coming out of his room. Her main purpose is to get to the bottom of Thabani not being at work on time. The Boss is an overpoweringly robust person with high self-esteem and she is a shrewd business woman. After the Boss has entered, the existing mood on stage must be acknowledged and used to her advancement. She then dominates the rest of the scene using her voice and body

2. Observe:

It was important to take notes, from the entrance of the character of the Boss until she scampers off fearfully.

3. Reflect:

A quick brainstorming session with the actors was held after giving notes regarding this scene. The scene did not match the vision of the director and suggestions from the cast were considered.

1. Revised plan of action:

This time the character of the Boss must dominate the scene even more from entrance to exit with body and voice. Imagine the Boss as a big, tall person with a forceful voice that fills every corner of the stage and auditorium. She is a voice to be reckoned with, which can cut any one to size, causing people to be humble and obedient. Her purpose for entering the Bhengu household is to find out why Thabani is not at work and she is adamant that not a single member of the Bhengu family will stop her before she has spoken to Thabani to get to the bottom of this problem.

1. Observe:

Let the scene run through again and take notes.

2. Reflect:

Again a brainstorming session with cast was held, with detailed notes. It was felt that more verbal and physical strength was still required from the character of the Boss. Thabani said at one stage she looked down on her workers and therefore needed to intimidate the actors.

1. Revised plan of action:

The actress was told to use all her power and strength within her voice. She must use big, bold movements and gestures to match her strong, overpowering voice. It was suggested that she wear high heeled shoes for the next run through. She must feel superior to the other actors on stage and be playful in a scary way with periods. She must not hide reactions or emotions; these needs to be shown clearly to rest of the characters, and the characters must be dominated with these reactions and emotions.

2. Observe:

Watching another run through of the same scene and taking notes.

3. Reflect:

A brainstorming session with the actress and the cast followed. The Boss, with high heels, big, bold gestures and movement captured the essential mood required for the scene and from now we could concentrate on defining smaller details to express the uniqueness of the character. The Boss must not become a caricature or a one dimensional character. There needed to be work on the rhythm, tempo and intonation of her voice, especially variation in producing a big, overpowering voice. The body needs to support the voice and to become this holistic believable 'huge' character in all dimensions. The ultimate aim is for the actress' voice to be embodied and that her body is envoiced. The advice was not to bend the upper part of the body forward when delivering dialogue, "This is weakening your character and hampering voice production. Believe in your character ...And keep the high heels!" High heels add height, and assist the actress, giving a feeling of being taller, 'bigger' character. Hampton agrees with Berry, stating that a physical action or even an added prop or a costume piece can benefit an actor "The purpose is to free the speaker from overconcentration and so release a subconscious response" (1997:393).

This was where I left the scene that day, to let all emotions, voice suggestions, movements and gestures become more familiar with the actress and to let her think about the character and scene, by internalising all the notes. In other words the crucial foundation had been laid and I would be working on this scene again, using the functions and applied methodology of Action Research, to introduce more or redefine details concerning the voice, gestures, movements and facial expressions.

The figure of Action Research shows that this is a continual process that unfolds more and more possibilities and develops understanding of a problematic/difficult social situation. The re-occurring themes during scene one, emerging are namely the integration of the body and

vocality (voice production) by enhancing a character. In the situation of a rehearsal, directors tend to use similar methods or steps to gain more knowledge, understanding of taxing scenes and to do ongoing research while working.

2.3. Conclusion

In an academic, tertiary environment the director needs to teach, guide and facilitate trainee actors to obtain the knowledge to transform theory into theatre. By specialising in the function of the actor's voice within the production of *Metamorphosis*, as well as directing the play, I needed to invest in a research methodology to suit my immediate responsibilities.

Action Research generates knowledge of a social phenomenon by bringing together action and reflection, theory and practice. In fact, by implementing the continuous circular steps of planning, acting and observing, and reflecting, the data is collected while one is working.

This process is complemented by practice-research that contextualises a creative work with in-depth study of an original creative artefact. These chosen methodologies are compatible with the repetitiveness of directing, whereby the director and actors gain knowledge of the social dynamics within the dramatic text.

Chapter 3

Metamorphosis: The Director At Work

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will cover the directorial concept, the sonic properties of the actors, the dramatic text, and crystallization of the dramatic vision. The pre-rehearsal concept interacted with the practicalities of working with student actors and within the constraints of a theatrical performance. The actors needed to focus on voice and character building exercises, and on analysis of the text, including themes, motifs, symbols and character studies (Appendix F).

3.2. Concept proposal for the Grahamstown Festival (2011)

Franz Kafka (1949) wrote a short story about a middle class family in central Europe confronted by the reality of their oldest son, the only breadwinner, turning into a beetle. The family has to deal with the existence of the beetle in their midst, while juggling their own fears and the expectations of the outside world. The family adjusts by neglecting the beetle and focusing on their own narrow interests.

I decided to use Kafka's story to investigate how such a situation could transform a reasonably functional South African family in the present time and to explore the potential impact within the family spiral. In psychology the family spiral is described as an ongoing circular movement of behaviours and attitudes that never reaches a final resolution. Issues are never completely resolved. The unresolved problems are always lurking beneath the surface of the family dynamics. A dysfunctional family system can be described in the following way: "With its adaptive resources overload, a family system can no longer deal successfully with everyday stressors or adequately nurture the growth of its individual members" (McAdam 2009:10).

Kafka died from TB. This experience probably gave rise to his conceptualisation of the beetle. There are parallels with that of the character Thabani, in the play of *Metamorphosis* under study. The play is adapted from Kafka's short story to describe an isiZulu speaking family. The isiZulu language is used to enhance the drama but English is predominant so that the audience can follow the story. The Bhengu family stays somewhere in rural KwaZulu-Natal, and the family consists of Father, Mother, the daughter Nonhle, and Thabani, the son and only breadwinner. The other characters, the Boss, the Lodger and the Cleaning Lady in the play are portrayed by a white African actor for contrast, emphasising the diverse cultures and racial tension in South Africa.

After several careful readings of the novel I realised that the story could be a powerful play in the South African context. The following images came to mind: earth, mud houses, woven Zulu mats, clay pots and the smell of a rural countryside setting. The play was based on these earthy images. All props would be mimed by the actors. The transformation of the lead actor into the beetle would be conveyed by body movements and a suitable, contrasting vocal range. *The Elephant Man* provided inspiration: David Bowie played the lead role, in the 1970s, with no make-up, using his body alone to express his transformation.

3.3. Director's vision: Voice

Each character is uniquely achieved and defined through the actor's voice. The director guides the actor to accomplish and truthfully execute his vision of the character's voice. The director's comprehensive intelligence of the function and usage of the voice enhances a play and empowers the actors. Detailed nuances help to convey the subtext and hidden messages to the audience. Through voice, the director subtly guides the audience through the emotional journey of the characters and their complex inner emotional conflicts. Each word, dialogue, monologue and sound contributes to the atmosphere of the play.

During auditions, the director needs a clear view of the sonic properties required from an actor for a particular character. A director with extensive knowledge of the voice can imagine how characters' voices need to sound within certain scenes. But he must not be set rigidly on only one specific quality of voice but should rely on his well-trained hearing to recognise the voice quality that will suit and enhance a particular character.

Thabani:

The character's voice needs to be experienced in a broad voice range, varying easily between high and low notes, especially when trying to communicate to the other characters in the Boss's scene. His voice will range from an almost falsetto level to the lowest range in which the actor's voice can be comfortable, combined with continuing hissing sounds and or noises to suggest the vocal side of the transformation into an insect. The actor needs to be physically fit; this is a physically demanding role, with added demands during the physical transformation scene. The actor needs to have control of the vocal mechanism even under extreme physical duress.

When delivering the commentary on what is happening in scenes and feeding the audience with crucial information regarding a character or about a specific situation on stage, the voice needs to be clear, coupled with vibrant resonance to clearly define the change overs between different situations and scenes.

Mother:

The director visualised the Mother's voice being close to that of the earth. Her voice needed to be low, filled with authority, sternness; she is a person living in simplicity and is down to earth. The mother's voice reveals a sense of the animal when anyone in her household is threatened or ill; she will defend and assist them to the bitter end. The mother is a person tested by frequent asthma attacks. The Mother's voice is full, rounded in a deep resonating

tone ringing through the theatre with fondness, compassion and her caring for her household members. She needs to express, vocally and bodily, the internal emotional conflict she is experiencing. Her voice/body grows in strength from the first scene, subtly, to showcase the power accumulated within the character by the end of the play.

Nonhle:

Her voice in the beginning must be in the higher register; childlike, bubbling, carefree and caring only about things a seventeen year old girl would care about, for example her school musical. But during the drama she matures, dealing with the problems cause by her brother's transformation and illness. She is being pushed to maturity fast. Her voice needs to accommodate the transformation that happens within her. She needs to explore a lower, more mature register in her voice to accompany the harshness of reality she experiences. She is fast becoming an adult in an unfair world, with a different outlook.

Father:

Initially the father's voice is calm with appealing baritone sounds and a sense of authority and leadership. The challenging part for the actor will be to transform to a drunk man, but still be audible and clear. The transformation must in essence highlight the difference in voice production when sober and drunk. The director requires the father's voice to display the tipsiness with vocality rather than expressing it with the emphasis on the actor's body, otherwise the character can become a caricature. The Father's inner struggle trying to keep the family afloat must be conveyed through voice intonations. Different voice qualities and tones are required for addressing his wife, his daughter or his son's Boss. There is slow regression within this strong character, to be exhibited through voice/body; ultimately he presents as a weak guilt-ridden figure in the finale.

The Boss:

The Boss's character and voice needs to be gigantic, overpowering and dominating, taking control of a scene immediately, ruling it from the beginning to the end. A flexible voice is required exploring the variety of tones and the different registers embedded within the actress's vocal capacity. Her voice resonates within the world of a business driven milieu and the ultimate authority of a powerful ruthless boss figure.

The Lodger:

The lodger requires a well-educated voice which contrasts with the Bhengu family's more colloquial tones.

Cleaning Lady:

The cleaning lady needs to speak in a tone that represents a lower class than the Bhengu family, using a mixture of English, Afrikaans and isiZulu languages, to communicate, highlighting the diversity in people and the different languages used in South Africa. This character is based on the actress/comedian, Carol Burnett in the Carol Burnett's Show in the late 70s on South African television. The Cleaning Lady, same as Carol Burnett, sees the bleak situation happening within the Bhengu family in a lighter, more comical way, thus underlining the actual absurdity of the scene.

After the auditions/casting of the characters, more precise and in-depth analytical work for the actors and director begins, in completing his pre-vision of detailed characters. Now his 'picture' becomes more concrete, vivid and small specific details require attention; his imaginary characters become more of a reality. In some instances his pre-vision of the character's voice might change, not in a negative manner but towards a constructive conclusion. The director may adapt his vision to match the actor's capabilities. He will need to compare the sonic qualities of the actors' voices and develop the actors' voices to cope

with the demands and traits of the characters. The director needs to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the voices he is working with to achieve natural and finely detail vocal interaction between the characters and the contextual milieu of the play.

3.4. The storyline

The storyline of the original Kafka play is accurately followed with a few changes to accommodate the Zulu milieu and to accentuate a few important elements to make the play more truthful to current events. The main focus is shifted away from the beetle onto the rest of family in order to show their struggle to survive. The sole purpose of the beetle now is to deliver a running commentary about the other characters and to remind the characters of his continued presence.

There is an intense focus on the family members other than the beetle, especially by concentrating on the characters of the Mother and Father. Their emotional turmoil is explored and the life alterations they need to adopt to survive their harsh realities. Furthermore unexpected power shifts between these two characters bring an alternative dimension to this dysfunctional family structure.

Barney Simon once said to me during a rehearsal that any script can be interpreted differently by any director; everyone is unique and will focus on the aspects of the dramatic text which they consider particularly important bring in their own individual artistic focus to the production. Changing or cutting any dialogue is the director's privilege to enhance his specific focus within a dramatic piece. Remembering these words gave me courage to go with my original analysis of the short story. This story lends itself to many interpretations. This concept has resonance with our South African realities where family members are transformed by AIDS and TB, and where stigmatisation continues to determine our responses to illness and tragedy. The reason for Thabani changing into a 'beetle' (AIDS or TB) was

never vocally expressed by any character during the play or explained as the cause of his metamorphosis. Poverty as a consequence of AIDS is our African reality.

Changing the storyline created many small but important elements within the new *Metamorphosis*. There was more emphasis on the psychological characters of the Mother and Father to highlight the dysfunctional family dynamics within the Bhengu family. The director subtly swung the audience's empathy at the end of the play from Thabani to his Mother.

Unlike the original short story, the Mother believes her son will return whereas Father and Nonhle actually want to get rid of the beetle.

The ending of the play was changed to enhance the dysfunctional behaviour within the Bhengu family and to underline the evolving interpersonal dynamics. In the conclusion of Kafka's story, the father told the mother and Gretha (the daughter) that they must go for a walk because they have not been out of the house for a long time and the mother adds that Gretha has now become a woman and they all must look for a suitable husband for her.

The original ending left me cold, unsatisfied, and seemed inconclusive in terms of the different focal points that I intended to highlight and enhance within the new text of *Metamorphosis*. The 'old' ending was left intact for the first preview by the Drama lecturers. A new vision and plan, to rewrite the finale, took shape, to incorporate the shift in focus during the text and to exhibit the tremendous growth and decline in power within the characters more clearly. The intention was to highlight the many unresolved issues between the characters, and challenge the audience with more questions than answers. In the rework of the ending, after the Cleaning Lady has discovered that the beetle has died, the always-in-control Mother Bhengu becomes distraught, blaming the Father and Nonhle for Thabani's death. Afterwards, in silence, each family member deals with their own emotions and feelings, until the black out. The story becomes less cynical and, perhaps more truthful.

3.5. Rehearsals

Rehearsals are the crucial period where the director and the actors realise and combine all facts, suggestions and input to build realistic and holistic characters. Needless to say this is when the director facilitates and guides the actors, with his vision, to accomplish the ultimate goal they strive to achieve and to do justice to the dramatist and to the play as a whole.

Rehearsals started in June 2011, but we had to adapt to accommodate the actors' study times and examination schedule. The few rehearsals during June were used to familiarise the actors and stage manager with the short story, the voice elements required from each character and we worked verbally on challenging acts or scenes. The more detailed the knowledge of the short story, the easier it was to create a dramatic play. The focus for this production was the entire body; movements, gestures and facial expressions had to match the intensity of a character's voice deliverance and production, and there was a focus on the voice as an extension of the body, at all times.

At the beginning of the rehearsal period I concentrated on and worked through Kafka's short story. Then I focused the actors' attention on their specific characters and we discussed how they had to use their voices as the major aid in developing their characters. The actor needs to observe other people from whom they can learn important characteristics, by watching how they behave in intense and confrontational situations. Stanislavsky (1936) said that an actor throughout his life must be attentive to any situation that will aid the actor's work, file these experiences away to recall them when needed.

During the early rehearsal periods I concentrated more on the word and the intended meaning within the dramatic text. Sneddon (undated) believes there are three aspects to a word: intellectual, emotional and physical. Each word contains a tool to unlock a deeper

significance. What is the action that the word provokes and how can it unfold to assist the actor in action, movement, and voice usage?

The word carries significant information. Thus the meaning of the word is a vital key to unlock the sometimes hidden emotion and truths the actor must incorporate into his character. This helps to unfold the hidden message the dramatist may want to communicate through the drama. The meaning of a word can differ vastly from its basic dictionary meaning. It is the meaning within the context of the drama that needs to be considered. It is up to the actor to deliver and convey the word – the contextual meaning – intellectually and with appropriate and meaningful action. In other words, it is important that the actor delivers each word with precision and in accordance with the dramatist's intentions.

Through the word, vitally important information can be gained, guiding the voice usage for certain emotions and actions on behalf of a character. The word is similar to a code and deciphering it appropriately reveals important facts and clues in a scene. The word is also an action and can influence the character's viewpoint, voice, body, movements, gestures and facial expressions, or action during a scene. Is it an innate action, or a reaction only achieved through voice or has it an effect on the voice and on overt actions of a character?

During a rehearsal of *The Suit*, an actress asked Barney Simon to give her advice on the word 'degradation' used by one of the characters. He replied that she must understand the meaning of the word and how the character is using it in the context of the scene: "Chew on it, digest it and then only utter it again" (witnessed). He added she must internalise the word and make it part of the character.

The play acts as the director's guideline; in most instances it guides actors and directors to follow and execute the play to the intentions of the dramatist. Individual character responses must be unique. The body and voice of an actor must be an ensemble to create the character

and to build on and expand the individual traits of their character, including the voice. In certain strenuous and emotional scenes, the voice needs the body of the character to enhance, support and highlight a specific emotion. Without the actor's body, any expressed emotion will lose the real impact and will come across as weak and inappropriate.

Resonance plays an important part in expressing emotions or feelings. A voice that is thin and shrill struggles to express a truly convincing emotion and can become a continuous irritation. In contrast a voice that is rounded, full and rich, with warm resonating sounds, can project with ease and is pleasing to the ear, expressing larger than life emotion. The director works towards resonance, knowing that too much head or body resonance can damage and contribute to weak and unbelievable characters, whereas a well-balanced resonating voice can overcome tremendous obstacles, help the actor reach higher levels of emotional expression and add to fine detail voice nuances.

The complexity of emotions/feelings must be clarified; there is rarely a pure emotion of hate, love, anger or sadness, but rather a mixture of various emotions. Often only one emotion will dominate and stand out. With professional training and determination a voice can clearly translate and transfer all other insignificant emotions involved through bodily movement, sounds or gestures.

Before rehearsals and during the read through of the text/short story, I made an evaluation of the quality of each actor's voice (see Appendix C) to locate problem areas and to implement a voice warm-up session where needed.

Barney Simon was notorious for asking an actor, even out of rehearsal times "to give him a specific line/dialogue" that was not to his satisfaction. A single line/dialogue was of utmost importance for Simon. When an actor repeated the line, Simon would consider if the line truly reflected the characteristics of his character. This always happened in a relaxed manner:

“Say that again. I don’t understand. Give it to me straight” (Stephanou 2001: 99). I always look to see if an actor can achieve and apprehend the true emotional nature coupled with any dialogue, speaking in a natural conversational flow.

From previous experience, early in rehearsals I start with vocal deliverance by using the voice in a natural flowing, tempo to fit the character. I focus on articulation in place (enunciation) but with no projection; I consider an everyday conversation between the characters, concentrating on the true emotional deliverance of the lines working to be as natural and realistic as possible.

Another exercise is to truly listen to each other. The true intentional message needs to be expressed and heard with undivided attention, and then can be followed with further communication. These exercises assist the actors to improve their hearing and listening capacities, as well as to evaluate their own voice deliverance and dialogue.

For further attentiveness I often ask an actor to read the short story to an imaginary audience, expressing the detail of the story through voice deliverance and the body. The rest of the actors must be focused, following carefully because anyone of them will be asked to continue, matching the previous actor’s technique. All this is in preparation for the serious undivided attention needed for rehearsals to follow

I found all these exercises extremely helpful especially when starting to block a scene in the theatre and with the initial concentration on all important, major movements. As a director, one needs complete concentration from all involved. At this stage it is also important to consider the research dimension (Fig. 1. The action plan cycle).

3.6. Analysis of the script

A major change occurred four weeks before the opening of this play in Grahamstown. Due to time constraints, as the director I discarded the original idea to hold a workshop and wrote in two days a script of the short story *Metamorphosis*. The dialogue was kept plain, but powerful, with certain dialogue sections in isiZulu and the odd Afrikaans words. With exactly three weeks left I started to block the script and planned to have at least three working run-throughs of the play in order for the actors to memorise the sequence of the scenes and to familiarise them with the new script. I also needed to accommodate the drama lecturers who would provide the director/actors with their expert advice and constructive suggestions to enhance the play. Careful analysis of the script and characters before the rehearsal period allows the director to develop an informed directorial concept for the production and the actors to start work immediately on that vision without wasting valuable rehearsal time (see Appendix E for a detailed script analysis on which the directorial concept was based).

3.7. Conclusion

The director needs to walk a demanding path both to intellectually comprehend and interpret the dramatic purpose of the story, and to bring to life his vision for the play. The viewpoints, visions and themes of *Metamorphosis* needed to be meticulously voiced. New focal points have to be incorporated in a pragmatic manner to expand on themes and sub-themes. The text needed to be adapted and contextualised to accord with the director's unique vision of the play. In order to execute the directorial concepts and themes, rehearsal time needed to focus on specific aspects of the dramatic text, the development of verbal expressions, and the influence of the body on the voice, characterisation, movement, and acting styles. Voice work is central to the process of transforming the dramatic text into a gripping live performance in the theatre.

Chapter 4

Analysis of the Theatre Production *Metamorphosis*

4.1. Introduction

This first half of this chapter concentrates on three key scenes from the production of *Metamorphosis*. The director reflects on his intentions for the character building process, and on findings during the rehearsal process and performances within the context of a multicultural student production. The second half includes an analysis of significant data, focusing on the Mother's vocality and character development.

As a director, in training, I will reflect on what I discovered during rehearsals and the run of the production of *Metamorphosis*, specifically regarding the voice. The director, entering the rehearsal period, starts to mould his visions of the characters with the actors, taking into consideration their individual voices in an attempt to build detailed, holistic characters. I decided to work in the naturalistic genre regarding characterisation, and to showcase the complexity of the characters, dealing with taxing emotion laden scenes and the physical, emotional effects occurring within each character. The script and short story was perused repeatedly for details to assist the cast and director to formulate a voice production suitable for each character. The challenge was to achieve a natural milieu and still be true to the dramatist's intentions, visions, dialogue and characters. Each individual scene has a tremendous impact on the voice deliverance of each character and each scene stimulates growth in voice, body and attitude towards other characters.

Voice production/sonic properties differ between characters. How can the actor achieve the voice elements as an integrated part of the character? The director, together with the actor, concentrates on the individual style/sonic properties of the speaking voice of the character.

4.2. Case study: Analysis of three scenes from *Metamorphosis*

Three scenes are analysed below and Action Research methodology has been applied to reflect the processes involved.

In this analysis the term 'body' refers to the actor's body, including all movements, gestures and facial expressions, used to enhance and to support the voice. The voice becomes a crucial extension of body. Together the body and voice enhance the emotional state experienced by the audience and sustain and support atmospheric moods.

The analysis in this section 4.2 is primarily focused on the holistic vision of the director.

Section 4.4 covers the concepts about voice necessary to achieve that vision.

4.2.1 Scene one: 'Boss versus Bhengu family'

Director's viewpoint:

The anguish experienced by Thabani at this point in time in the play needs to be amplified to express the urgency of the situation. The Boss knocks on the door and Thabani says: "It's someone from the warehouse. They mustn't open the door" (2011: 2). Through the closed door a person says "Morning!" (2011: 2). Panic must peak within the house, growing sharply when Thabani shouts: "It's the boss herself!" (2011: 2). The Father must be in a panic because he knows Mrs Brooks well and owes her money. Mother and Nonhle are on edge because Thabani is ill, has missed his train and he is supposed to be at work. Mother can be seen as a person representing all mothers.

The Boss's character must be overflowing with confidence and her self-assurance must border on arrogance. When the Boss enters she must take control of the entire situation in order for the other characters to exhibit their emotions truthfully. The Boss must be a soundboard from which the other's play, act and feed. Thabani mentioned earlier that the

Boss is: “Always sitting high at her desk and talking down on us” (2011: 1). She’s not a very patient person and interrupts the others frequently. She must love her own voice and use it to overpower the situation. Her body language, coupled with her voice, must express that she is a shrewd business woman. Mrs Brooks reveals certain personal details about the work and notes that Thabani is not performing adequately. “I come with the intention of telling you this – in private” (2011:3) she completely ignores the rest and claims to be speaking to Thabani (still through his closed bedroom door) on behalf of his parents and herself. She is a very attentive person; she walks in, hears a noise and demands “Was that something falling down in there?” (2011:2). When Thabani tries to answer the Boss’s questions and only unrecognisable noises escape from his mouth, she says angrily “Surely he can’t be trying to make fools of us!” (2011:4).

The Mother tries to explain to the Boss in broken English mixed with isiZulu words that her son is a good man and he must be very ill otherwise he would have been at work. Her voice is filled with anxiety and panic but she is also trying to win the sympathy of the Boss. Mother tries to engage with the Boss as one mother to another. The Boss ignores her and starts talking to Father. Mother is not sure what they are saying in English, becomes agitated and nudges the father and says: “Uthini, uthini umlungu?” (What’s she saying, what’s the white person saying?) (2011:3).

The Father is more worried about the state of his son’s room if the Boss goes in there to speak to Thabani. As he is ashamed of Thabani’s behaviour and feels guilty that the Boss has had to come to his house. He agrees to everything the Boss says. He desperately pleads with Thabani to open his door, and goes on to try to speak privately with the Boss. Anger towards his son, mixed with frustration and shame, fill his voice every time he answers or when he calls for his son to respond.

Nonhle speaks to Thabani in a 'little' voice filled with nervousness; her voice climbs almost two octaves higher when telling him that his Boss is here. She is afraid of this bossy person in their house, peeps now and again at Mrs Brooks and eventually she starts to cry. Nonhle's behaviour is childlike in this tense situation.

All the emotions the family characters convey through their voices and bodies are apologetic and shameful, as they desperately try to calm the Boss in this explosive situation.

The psychological impact when the beetle appears must be visible in the actors' bodies and voices. The transformation of each character must show the audience the shock and absurdity of the moment. The Boss scampers away, now scared and stripped of all her confidence, completely deflated by the sight of this screeching creature chasing her. Thereafter, the emotional milieu is set for the growth of each character, in body and especially in voice, as they begin to define their individuality.

Findings during rehearsals:

During rehearsals different approaches were taken in this scene. When the Boss's character was too submissive and too sympathetic towards the Bhengu family, the scene did not reach its full potential or contribute to the rest of the play. The rest of the characters found it difficult to express their emotions, and voice production was often false and laboured. In other words, the scene did not contribute to the building of tension, or character growth. Further, the emotional impact of the following scene was degraded, and the urgency of the situation lost.

But if the character of the Boss dominates the scene with voice, body and presence, it enhances, highlights and supports the essence of the scene. The other characters can then feed off the Boss's character (the intensity in voice/body and energy) and be truthful to their characters. The tension mounts in anticipation for the entrance of the beetle. And the contrast

of the changes within each character can be more easily depicted after we see Thabani's transformation. The scene creates a natural flow for the next scenes to follow and sets a clearly disturbing mood. (See Section 4.4 for a more detailed analysis of the vocal concepts necessary to achieve these interpretations)

Reflection:

During the actual performances, the scene reached its full potential, with the actress entering with the appropriate energy, attitude and voice intonation. The maturity and intensity of the voice, expressing all important traits of the character with ease and confidence, was perfectly in accordance with body support. The Boss maintained her concentration throughout the scene, keeping her voice in character, expressing an overpowering, robust and authoritarian character. The other characters could with ease express their emotions matching the Boss's intensities, reaching the goal within the scene and setting the desired pace for the rest of the performance in motion.

Mother with nervous energy tried to calm the others, but expressed numerous times that Thabani must be really sick. Father, very humble and extremely worried about how this explosive situation that can affect him regarding his debt, angrily demanded that Thabani open his bedroom door and apologise profoundly to the Boss. Nonhle, scared of this stranger, started to cry and through the bedroom wall urged her brother to open his door. This is the first confrontation situation and it threatens the peaceful existence of the Bhengu family.

4.2.2. Scene two: 'Nonhle versus parents'

Director's viewpoint:

The scene starts off tranquil and happy. Nonhle sings a song with Father accompanying her on the drum. Mother is very proud of her daughter and the Lodger is taking photographs. When the beetle comes out to hear his sister's singing, showing burning love and affection

for his family, the Lodger sees the creature on the digital screen of her camera and then screams: “Mr Bhengu! What is that?” (2011:11). Chaos ensues. Father and Nonhle try to calm the Lodger while Mother is struggling to breathe, with yet another asthma attack. “I beg to announce that because of this disgusting condition in this house – I am leaving” (2011:11) says the Lodger. Father defensively responds that the Lodger must leave his house at once, saying he does not care about her money. Thabani witnessing all this mutters “I’m feeling so ashamed” (2011:11) and tries to move back to his room.

Then Nonhle seizes the opportunity to try and convince her parents that this creature must go and that it will cause their deaths if it stays. She is now more mature and pragmatic, and pleads with her parents to see her point of view. She is angry that the beetle had interrupted her singing and chased away the Lodger, with disastrous financial implications. Her voice must combine anger with urgency. This is the first time she is making a stand against her parents and she wants them to see her worries, agitation and concerns, not only for herself but for all of them. “He must go! Get rid of the idea that this is Thabani. If this were Thabani he would have realised long ago that human beings cannot live with such a creature – And he’d have gone away!” (2011:11). She is adamant, angry and close to becoming hysterical; her voice is breaking and she is close to tears. She cannot endure the reality of this “thing” being her brother.

Father shows sympathy for his daughter but he considers the feelings of his wife. He agrees with Nonhle, but knowing how his wife is still set on the idea that Thabani will come back, he speaks in a low voice filled with understanding and empathy towards his daughter: “You are more than right.” but he adds, “If it could just understand us” (2011:11).

Mother, listening to them, still struggling to breathe, starts to cry and with a strong emotionally- filled voice cuts in and shatters Father and Nonhle’s idea to get rid of Thabani: “No, no – he’s my unfortunate son” (2011:11).

Thabani, hearing all this, weakly says, with strong emotions of rejection and abandonment: “I must go to my room” (2011:12). That night, Thabani dies.

Findings during rehearsals:

A sudden dramatic build-up to this scene requires an unbroken, intense span of concentration from all the actors involved, especially the four actors remaining on stage. The approach of Nonhle must be subtle but with a strong determination to drive her opinion forward to convince her parents and obtain their support. This will show the audience that she has developed into a level-headed adult. The daughter’s character needs to show maturity; it requires courage for her to take a definite stance against her brother (the beetle) and to argue with her parents. However, the turmoil of mixed, bottled-up emotions pouring out of her compromises her chances of removing the “beetle”. During the play the audience learn that Nonhle’s parents are strict and want their children to treat them with utmost respect. Nonhle’s voice work in this scene needs to be delicate and persuasive; preferably working in a lower register than her previous lighter voice; but strong enough to drive the message home. If this is executed with precision, the response of the father will be understandable when he agrees with Nonhle. The Mother on the other hand, attentively observes, in silence, not saying a word till the end of the scene. Then unexpectedly she cuts in with a voice showing Father and Nonhle that this conversation is over and nothing is going to happen or change. This scene was an emotional and vocal challenge for all actors. (See Section 4.4 for a more detailed analysis of the vocal concepts necessary to achieve these interpretations)

Reflection:

This scene was the ultimate build-up to the final climax of the play. During the performance, if the actress playing Nonhle remembered her dialogue and did not improvise, the emotional dimensions of the storyline would expand in a chronological order, preparing the audience for the unexpected end. But during a performance when words and emotions differed from the intention and practice during rehearsals, voice work and the meaning of the scene becomes blurry and confusing. This scene taxed the other actors, but they did their best and tried to restore the essence within the scene. Sadly though, this captivating scene, during performances never reached its intended potential.

4.2.3 Scene three: ‘Mother versus Father and Nonhle’

Director’s point of view:

In this final scene of the play, Mother’s bottled up emotions erupt like a huge volcano. This previously quiet character verbally and physically attacks her husband and daughter after learning from the cleaning lady that her son is dead. She scolds her husband, saying that he is responsible for the tragedy. In a low heartbroken, emotionally shaken voice, she blames him for letting Thabani work to pay off his debt while sitting at home and not allowing her to see her sick son. She sees Nonhle, storms forward trying to physically attack her but is restrained by the Father. Continuously, in an emotionally loaded voice, close to breaking point, she tells Nonhle that Thabani is her own flesh and blood, and she did not look after or feed Thabani properly. She breaks away from her husband and sits down. She then cries bitterly, mumbling softly, swaying gently forwards and backwards to comfort herself. Father, a broken, guilt ridden figure, stripped of his power over the family, becomes even more weak and broken. Nonhle enters Thabani’s room, looks at the dead beetle, covers her nose and goes to sit in front of his room. Showing little or no emotion, hugging her legs close to her chest she

nervously glances at her parents. Nonhle has regressed from a young adult to a little girl once again.

Father kneels next to the beetle and gently touches it. He is struggling to come to terms with his mixed emotions of sorrow, guilt and his bruised, broken ego; he is a weak figure without power. After a while he covers his son, shooting a quick glance at his wife, which is met with a stern rejection. He walks to the front of the stage and sits down with his head in his hands. Soon afterwards, the Mother gets up, moves, with a powerful stride to her son's room, glances at his body, sighs and rests her head against the door post. The Mother exhibits a strong powerful evolution of character. Blackout, the play ends.

Findings during rehearsals:

If the actress playing the Mother does not reach the full intensity of the moment, attacking her husband and daughter, the impact of this scene will be lost. Mother's outburst must show that she is at the end of her emotional tether, is losing all self-control when she attacks them verbally and physically. She must channel all her energy of anger, hurt and blamefulness through her voice/body directly at the characters of Father and Nonhle. These emotions from the Mother show she is a force to be reckoned with. The rest of the actors can easily define and convincingly exhibit to the audience their emotional conflict. The Mother emerges as a strong well balanced character. The stronger the conflict situation, the stronger the ending will be, clearly demonstrating the still existing, unresolved family dynamics within the Bhengu family. The ending must leave the audience with more questions than answers. (See Section 4.4 for a more detailed analysis of the vocal concepts necessary to achieve these interpretations)

Reflection:

During the performance the actress playing Mother managed her voice and body with precision, allowing the scene to reach its full potential. By delivering her dialogue in the lower ranges of her voice, accompanied by a balanced reverberating resonance, the impact of the dialogue became more forceful and clear-cut. The appropriate matching intensity of her body further enhanced all emotional expressions. She exhibited a stronger character without all the inner discords that had previously blocked her progressive growth becoming a rounded, holistic person. This energy fuelled the rest of the characters to execute and exhibit their internal emotional conflict with ease. The Father figure revealed a weak, lonely character, stripped of his power, wriggling about to make sense of the intense emotion of guilt.

4.3. Critical overview of three scenes

Looking at the three scenes in chronological order, clearly displayed the growth within each character. The voice and body of the actors worked as a smooth synchronised well-oiled machine to express motivational, goal orientated emotions. Holistic characters were developed that were believable. Character growth was dependent on the ensemble work done and on the undivided attention given by the actors to each other.

In the first scene, it was vital that the characters worked in unison, with focused attention. Without this the chronological growth of the characters would be hampered and the characters would become one dimensional. In addition, the surprise element, the entrance of the beetle, would have been lost and spoiled for the audience.

During the second scene the characters and their characteristics are more established. But if a character, at the height of an electrifying moment simply improvised (using unrehearsed movements, not focused on voice deliverance and growth within the character), the character

would be degraded to a one-dimensional level and the body would transmit the opposite of the intensity in this climatic situation. It was important to question the impact of this scene on the other actors, observe how they handled this scene, and adapt coping mechanisms.

What emotional feeling does this scene evoke within each character/actor and what coping mechanism is needed to survive these evocative, emotional challenges and the unpredictable impact on the character? After pondering the above question, the following possibility came to mind: not to be thrown off course by any negative influential factor. At these crucial moments the actors could have fallen back on a survival technique: their knowledge of the script and by relying on a supple, well-trained voice/body transmitting the original.

Interestingly, a dip in the sustainable attention of actors on stage can have such a negative effect within an act/scene on stage, by influencing so many aspects: the natural flow of set dialogue, rehearsed movements, concentration on individual voice deliverance and the chronological development of a character profile. A slip in the concentration adversely affects the work done together by characters: playing off one another's energy; teamwork to reach a desirable intensity within the scene; building towards the climactic moment; and crucial time for exhibiting individual characteristic traits.

In the last scene analysed, it is evident how the characters have been shaped, affected by previous scenes, and the growth/maturity that has been accomplished within their evolved characters. The transformations they acquired, contrasting new or improved attitudes and behaviours and the emotional life decisions they have been through must be made clear through voice and body; rooted voices, relying on resonance to fill the theatre space, with exact thought through more heightened dialogue and to internalise, within the body, this new tension energised the atmosphere in preparation for the final climatic scene of the play.

Throughout the drama the use of silent acting and pauses are incorporated to wordlessly express finer details and to master one of the most difficult techniques within a drama that can reveal the thought process of a character. The actor must be focused, and attentively engaged with dialogue and actions on stage. In theatre terminology, the actors' presence must be felt and be acknowledged by the audience: 'Do not die in the scene'. In other words, if an actor is not delivering any dialogue, he/she needs to be attentively engaged in the action happening on stage, listening and responding appropriately by relying on and incorporating the entire body.

4.4. Crucial data: Themes and sub-themes

4.4.1. Voice: Directorial concepts

In this research I concentrate on the voice and aim to share the director's vision regarding a character's voice. The sound qualities or sonic properties of the actor, display a variety of emotions and the harmonious interplay of all the characters' voices together is also an important consideration. It is important to take into account how each actor's sonic properties contribute to a unique sound, tone and variation within a scene/act and to consider how each actor can assign a distinctive different articulation to a similar sound adding to his existing vocal vocabulary. The actor's sonic properties must be connected to a character and the director must guide the actor to explore these distinctive unique sonic properties and incorporate these elements within the character. Achieving this can enhance a character to be uniquely contrasting in the view of other characters.

4.4.2. Voice: The dramatic text

By systematically working through a dramatic text, emotional intensities of scenes will gradually grow. Failure to maintain or to sustain these emotional intensities will have a negative effect on the 'normal' growth process of a drama. During each scene the actors, as team work

(ensemble), must know the purpose of the goal (to set a specific emotional mood) they are working towards. When one goal is reached, building towards the next goal will begin. This can only be mastered by the usage of the voice (tempo and pace, correct intensity of the voice) and the expressions of the appropriate emotions, supported by the correct intensity of the body,(gestures, vocal gestures, silent acting, movements and facial expressions). However a completed goal will be the beginning of the next ‘new’ goal and these goals will continuously happen till the end of the play.

4.4.3. Voice: Rehearsal to performance

Some of the most important rituals before each rehearsal or performance include attentive physical breathing, voice warm-up and extensive articulation sessions. These undeniably enhance the actor’s voice deliverance and confidence. As the actors explore more functional, delicate voice nuances to be incorporated within their characters, self-confidence grows. Exploring their characters’ voices enables more detailed nuances and finer vocal possibilities. The director needs to push the actors to learn and discover their unexplored voice capabilities. Through this intense work, the director must carefully guide actors, being quite forceful at times, to reach his vision and the correct impact for a scene. As rehearsals progress, voices must grow in confidence and expression to contribute to well-defined characters. Therefore general voice warm-up and articulation exercises, before each rehearsal or performance, contribute positively to voice deliverance and vocal expressiveness.

4.4.4. Audience

Conquergood voiced the essential but unspoken law that actors must communicate clearly with the audience: “the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skills, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content” (2002:32). In other words the director and actors must

consider the audience's need to be able to follow the dramatic text and to understand the milieu, settings, communication techniques, characters, experienced emotions, their thought process through the appropriate vocal and bodily deliverance.

One of the purposes of a performance is entertainment and to show case work being done in association with a specific theatrical group, or a director or an academic training institution. When one is entertaining, all communication skills must be well defined/rehearsed to convey a precise message to the audience. It is crucial that the voice of an entertainer is well developed or trained to enthrall an audience. Actors need to deliver realistic emotion laden action-packed dialogue, with enunciation, a well-developed richly toned, energised voice with adequate projection, but in harmonious unity with the body (movements, gestures and facial expressions). The actor in character needs to use a well-trained, expressive, believable voice to engage the audience in the performance.

During the performance certain members of the audience may relive their own past experiences or experience similar emotional conflicts to some of the characters. The aim of the play *Metamorphosis* was to engage the audience, challenging them to think and reach their own solutions about the situation before them. Was Thabani an AIDS victim of our society or was it tuberculosis that caused his unfortunate death? The drama could have continued and then what would the solution be regarding the Bhengu family?

4.4.5. Ensemble work

Here actors are working together to achieve the emotional goal within a scene. Focused team work is needed, the actors playing off each other's energy, matching the intensity of body and voice to the spoken word. Any unexpected dip in concentration from an actor can have negative repercussions on the character and voice work, affecting other actors/characters, and altering the emotional goal within the scene as well as the natural flow of subsequent scenes.

4.4.6. Silent acting

When not delivering dialogue actors need to be attentively involved with the stage action, displaying their characters' thought processes, and matching the intensities of the ongoing dialogue and emotional context. This requires the character to involve the entire body: non-lexical sounds, gestures, movements and facial expressions. When the next verbal cue arrives the actor will therefore be ready to immediately engage with verbal participation in the scene.

4.4.7. Voice: Body

The theatrical voice depends on the body for breath control, support, resonance, projection, and articulation, defining and sustaining intense emotions or moods during a theatrical performance. Voice and body are so intertwined that both should always be considered together in order to work towards a believable and artistically valid performance. Although the body or voice can express emotions on its own, the combination of the two can achieve greater, more detailed, and clearer expressive heights, especially when difficult emotions are being portrayed. When voice and body function in synchronization, imbedded within each other, exceptional and multi-dimensional characterization will be achieved.

4.4.8. Voice: Multicultural considerations

It is intriguing to work on a theatrical production containing three or more different languages. In *Metamorphosis* the play was constructed in two languages, English and isiZulu, with the odd Afrikaans words thrown in. Actors had to quickly switch between the two languages and the mixture of different accents kept the dialogue crisp and original, pleasing to the ear. I discovered that working in a different language (not in one's mother tongue) does not greatly affect the voice production. The actors involved in this production were being trained at an academic institution where teaching is predominantly in English. Insecurities

need to be considered as do the different stances of the mouth, tongue, lips and jaw when pronouncing intriguing ‘new’, ‘unusual’ words. It is important to encourage actors to go over their dialogues to familiarise themselves with the intricate parts and words. The normal range of the voice, when speaking in one’s mother tongue, tends to be in a more comfortable lower range; speaking in another language, the voice range climbs a few octaves higher. Voice exercises on a regular basis boosted the actors’ self-confidence in pronunciation. It is important to do articulation exercises before each performance, to go verbally through the character’s whole dialogue and familiarise oneself with the sound of the language. Flexible articulatory organs are essential for correct pronunciation of sounds not occurring in one’s mother tongue. It was also important to read all the critical notes on the character, movements and pronunciation, which have been noted during the rehearsal period by the director. This assists with a holistic picture of the character’s language, necessary voice deliverance, movements and actions as part of a specific act/scene in a performance on stage.

As a director, working in three languages was a challenge. IsiZulu speakers tend to rush over emotional words, acts, scenes and generally speak at a much faster pace than, for example, English speakers. Here one needs to work on changing the pace to match the pace in the other language and to be attentively involved in the translation to ensure the right isiZulu words are used. Because of the fast tempo of the isiZulu language, the actors tend to brush over the emotionally laden words thereby losing valuable information. It is important to correct the emotionally expressive side of spoken isiZulu to match the emotional expressiveness in the second language. There is no difference in emotions or the expressing of emotions between the two languages. It is important to allow the two languages to support, enhance and complement one another in order to express holistic suitable information with ease.

Interestingly I found that if an actor struggled with the pronunciation of a taxing ‘word’, not in his mother tongue, this would eventually become a tongue twister. The best option was

usually to change the word, using an alternative word that still fitted in with the context. In other words the following were important: voice and relaxation exercises, changing difficult words, articulation and pronunciation exercises, as well as working with any insecurities linked to using a different language.

Multicultural diversity in South Africa also requires substantial consideration. Each actor is a unique individual, having his or her own speaking patterns, ways of using the voice and shading the character's dialogue. In some productions with a multicultural cast the voices have unique colouring and shading that can greatly enrich a production. Actors working in a third or fourth language, need additional guidance. Conquergood (2002) advises directors to be in a state of self-reflexivity: one must stand in the shoes of such an actor, with respect and feel what the actor is experiencing at a specific moment – then only can one give the correct, meaningful guidance (as discussed in Chapter 1).

Voice in the South African context has not been adequately explored. Our multicultural society drives directors to strive for a locally relevant approach to the voice. South Africa has eleven official languages; however many productions use only English to reach the widest possible audience. Any performance is a: “visual – aural – kinaesthetic medium” (Mills 1999:13). A performance in any language does not necessarily have to be understood by the audience, the visual elements (action, gestures, and facial expressions) and voice sounds from the dialogue will allow the audience to follow the story line of each scene.

Mills said it is the director's “conscious theatrical choice” (1999:13) as to which language and accents will be used in a theatrical production, and the choice will be a matter of artistic vision. Currently more and more directors are using more than one language in a performance, and the varieties of accents with attending cultural diversity enhance these productions. For example, in *Woza Albert* and *The Suit*, Barney Simon reflected on South

Africa's complex heritage by casting actors from diverse cultural backgrounds in these complex multilingual dramas.

4.4.9. Voice: Character building

In the production of *Metamorphosis* I worked with realistic, complex characters. The multi-layered dimensions of a character depend mostly on intricate voice work. The actors need to experiment with vocal components; intonation, rhythm, range, tempo, enunciation and articulation. These should be compatible to define this complex character. Voice undeniably defines and highlights most characteristics of a character. It is important to combine the voice with body movements, gestures, vocal gestures and facial expressions. The body; movements, gestures, facial expressions, amplify, enhance and define the spoken word or clarify emotions. The voice is in fact an extension of the body, supporting, underlining, highlighting and justifying the emotional expressions. Furthermore the body can build and sustain atmospheric moods and enhances intricate emotional responses. The voice and body of an actor will define unique individual and contrasting traits amongst characters, and these differences could be mindfully chosen to purposefully accompany and define detailed characteristics. The voice and body interact harmoniously to generate actions and reactions within a character that are recognisable at once, upon entering a scene.

Voice deliverance, colouring and shading of words, differentiate a character from other characters; this is largely due to an actor's individual sonic properties. The voice with a suitable style, intonation, enunciation, rhythm and speaking pattern, can clearly define a character. It is important that the voice range is calibrated to co-exist, accompanying the character in harmony with the rest of the characters' voices. The statement made by Coquelin defines a character: "Physique, gesture, voice, each must blend into a perfect unity" (1932:47).

A good example to depict and illustrate the above is in the first scene. The Boss enters with her overpowering, larger than life bombastic voice; perfectly formed, articulated, pronounced dialogue in order to be clearly understood, fast tempo to avoid unnecessary interruptions, working in the lower range of her voice to underline her authority and with a well formulated voice combined with significant variation and pitch to deliver her intended message. Talking down to the family members, using enormous self-important sinister facial expressions that leave the rest of the characters feeling unworthy and nervous.

The entrance of a 'new' character can highlight more detailed characteristics by presenting a divergent side of each character already on stage. The expressional voice work changes with new and different colouring and shading, gestures, movements and facial expressions that can transform the characters on stage to accommodate the appearance of a new character and their energy force. The atmospheric mood of the scene will change if any character feels threatened by this 'new' character's entrance. More emotional energy is presented to the actors/characters who must decipher these 'new' confrontational energy forces and implement coping techniques to deal with this. In actual fact there will be significant changes accompanying body actions and voice deliverances of the actors/characters already on stage. In theatre terminology, characters on stage will feed off the energy of this character's entrance and the counter actions implemented for survival, will showcase more divergent sides of each character.

The psychological make-up forms the basis of a character. A character accumulates and builds more characteristics to add to the original psychological make-up throughout the duration of the play. An example: the character Mother gained more confidence and was eventually able to confront and blame Father and Nonhle for Thabani's death, whereas in the beginning scenes she submissively accepted their orders. These transformations happened over an extended period of time with subtle variations to the outer and inner characteristics of

the character. The character's voice expressed this growing confidence, however gestures, body appearance and facial expressions, enhanced and fed the voice which became stronger with a noticeable variation of nuances starting to accompany the voice deliverance. The individual manner in which each character expresses an internalised emotional conflict is clearly reflected in the tone of the voice accompanying behavioural patterns.

A character's psychological make-up is a driving force, blowing life into the character. This can be closely linked to a character's intentions, motivations, perspectives and behavioural patterns in continuity with the dramatic text. This life force steers a character forward in each scene. Each character enters a scene with a specific goal in mind. The end result of a scene/act, either a positive or negative result, has a tremendous impact on and causes new significant changes that will affect the voice deliverance of the character thereafter.

It is interesting to observe trainee actors improvise a confrontational scene. They shout to deliver the specific emotion, for instance 'anger', quickly reaching the peak within their voices' deliverance and continue on the same voice level till the end of the confrontation. This is nothing more than a continuous bombardment on the ears, with no variety and the impact of the scene is lost. Variety in projection and voice deliverance is another part of the voice that the director will have to guide the actors through. Actors need to realise that the voice is versatile in delivery and execution, and it is crucial to reach full impact and to carry it correctly with variety and pizzazz throughout a scene. The actor needs to explore the mature side of his voice and to invest more in the lower deep tones of his voice range. The voice should be supple and versatile and be able to react to any given situation in an appropriate manner. Subsequently then the actor can explore the subtle nuances within the voice to add colour and shading to enhance any scene by incorporating the support and intensity of the body.

A simple comparison between characters should reveal many distinct details. What kind of emotion has been transmitted from one character to another character and how did this affect the other character? What feeling/emotion did the onlooker cause within the other character and does this emotion change the atmospheric mood of the act/scene? Tiny details of characters need to be explored and incorporated in a scene. The voice production of a character needs to be accompanied and amplified through the voice/body, to reach credible dimensions. This is one of the most important things I learned from Barney Simon: to concentrate on small detailed gestures, facial expressions and movements because small insignificant expressions, even in the deliverance of certain taxing dialogue, can add to a realistic and believable character.

4.4.10. Journey of a character: Mother

Focussing on the voice of the Mother, I visualised the character as a strong silent earthy person. She is characterised by few words but is the pillar of strength within the Bhengu family. She has a strong deep voice, representing the earth, and when she speaks everyone listens. Expressing an earnest emotion in a lower voice register is certain to be more authoritative than the use of a shrill voice; this also forces the audience and other characters to take this character seriously. It is important also to create contrast between different voices, for example the voice of Nonhle as a child and that of the Mother.

In the first scene, the Mother is still establishing her character. She starts off by pleading with all the characters on stage to leave her son Thabani alone because he is sick and they are tormenting him, but her focus is solely on her sick child; she does not worry about any of the other character's motives or intentions towards her son. The Mother establishes her unconditional love and concern for her son and focuses primarily on him. Through her voice, combined with body movements, gestures and facial expressions, she lays the foundations for

her character. She is a character struggling with her health, asthma attacks, Thabani's sudden illness, and a language barrier that prevents her from clearly formulating and expressing her thoughts and intentions. The actor playing Mother, deals with these obstacles by concentrating on her voice deliverance, body, gestures, vocal gestures, movements and facial expressions, honing them to express these qualities. She is a character that clearly loves, lives and cares for her family, and will do everything possible to protect and safeguard them against any negative forces.

In the second scene, the character of the Mother is now well defined and established. The simplistic character from the previous scene is now a more a complex character. She is run down, physically and emotionally, with extra burdens, chores and her emotional state is stretched to the limit. Mother is prevented from going into her son's room or even seeing him. Her determination that Thabani will get better grows in each scene and she believes the situation the family is struggling with is only temporary and that her son will return. Mother still asks her daughter Nonhle if she has fed Thabani today. During the family argument about Thabani, still struggling to get over her last asthma attack, she listens attentively to Father and Nonhle talking about getting rid of the beetle. She cuts in with a definite "no". The once submissive character has transformed into a determined, strong, multifaceted character that ends an argument between Father and her daughter with a decisive "no". Her voice in the lower range (effect of the asthmatic attack) combined with a rounded resonance filling the space with not only her shock and disbelieve, combined with a voice tone and pitch of a character that had had enough. The dialogue that followed was slow and she meticulously emphasised each word with rounded reverberating resonance to stress her point. This was the turning point where the character started to take matters in hand.

The actress uses the lower register of her voice to project her physical and emotional tiredness, relying on the support from her diaphragm and deep rooted breathing. Her voice

deliverance, combined with slower bodily actions and gestures, clearly displays the inner conflict she is dealing with and her emotional tiredness. Her facial expressions reveal the emotional burden she is carrying as well as the emotional conflict that is starting to weigh her down as she keeps all the emotional turmoil and stress inside. She experiences a conflicting emotional struggle between the love, respect and hope for her son and the love for her husband and daughter; this is demonstrated by her reaction and voice intonation; deep rooted voice resonating through the theatre space and in an irrevocable tone, a steady calculated tempo, when she dismisses her daughter's suggestion to get rid of Thabani.

In the final scene the Mother is woken up by the Cleaning Lady to be told about her son's passing on. She quietly observes the rest of the family and the news seems to take a while for the Mother to process. Mother, always in control, then starts to attack Father verbally followed by a focus on Nonhle. Mother blames the family for Thabani's death. She launches into her attack, raw emotions erupting out of her. Mother has finally reached breaking point. The quiet, passive and obedient character has evolved into a powerful figure that confronts the family head on.

In this scene, the actress made use of different levels of her voice range and actively explored the lower ranges of her voice, expressing the raw emotional burden and combining it with sadness of her son's death. Strong mixed emotionally laden words and strong bodily action and big defining gestures were used. The actress relied on deep supportive breathing, the diaphragm, perfect articulation, adequate resonance, strong rooted and well placed voice with a strong projection to accompany the difficult outpouring of mixed emotions and combining this with the primary emotion of sadness. In other words, the voice and body organs [breathing, diaphragm, tongue, teeth, soft palate, lips, body and bodily posture] needed to be supple and well trained [fit] to successfully support and enhance and deliverance [truthful] of this emotional dialogue to the audience. Undivided concentration was also required for this

specific scene. An actor needs a well-trained voice and must master the basic techniques of breathing and voice work. In scenes like this, the intentional use of projection, resonance and different ranges of the voice can become a burden for the untrained voice and in the long run, there can be voice abuse/damage to the vocal cords.

The formation and intrinsic growth of a character happens in each scene and near the end of the play *Metamorphosis*, one observes a holistic, complex, changed character. The character's journey throughout the drama and interaction with other characters changes and acquires noticeable new and intricate characteristics. This can result in catharsis that alters some motivational and intentional [psychological make-up] aspects of a character. Needless to say, without the voice any transformation and or growth regarding a character will be unfocused and blurred. A well trained voice focuses one's attention on all changes; the voice spells out all complicated emotions and suitable body movement, gestures and facial expressions elaborate these emotional transformations within a character. Therefore without the trained voice, a character will never reach a holistic, believable level.

The detailed concepts of the director are like a tapestry finely woven into or through each scene, combining other theatre elements, being depicted with care, and emerging throughout the drama. But a director cannot alone claim fame because the work during rehearsal is not solely that of the director. Work done together can influence the directorial concepts and can greatly enhance the dramatic text. A director is there to guide and make suggestions.

However if other people, actors, lecturers bring valuable workable ideas to the table this can only progressively enrich the play and their suggestions should be considered. The other crucial element of this tapestry is voice production. The knowledge of the director regarding voice work is important for achieving the desired voice qualities in each scene. In other words voice training must be part of a trainee director's curriculum.

4.5. Conclusion

Data on the recurring themes and subthemes in the chosen three scenes are suitable for critical analysis, including whether the director's vision for the vocal production has been realised. Specifically, the analysis can focus on the influence of the voice on characterisation and achievement of the emotional peaks within the scenes, and on voice deliverance and breathing techniques supported and sustained by the body.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

5.1. Introduction

According to Conquergood, a performance “is now a powerful locus for research in human science” (2002:25). We must not look at a performance as a paradigm but rather “in terms of a caravan – a heterogeneous ensemble of ideas and methods on the move” (2002:34).

This research is a study of the 2011 Grahamstown production of *Metamorphosis*. Four sub-questions, focusing on specific topics, derived directly from the study’s hypothetical statement have been analytically presented, from the director’s perspective. Chapter 1 described the praxis of the theatre voice according to renowned voice theorists, Berry (1973), Anderson (1977), Linklater (1976) and Rodenburg (1997). Also discussed are professional directors’ comments on vocality and directing (Appendix B). I have incorporated the views of two prominent South African theatre practitioners (Liz Mills on theatrical voice and Barney Simon as a director) because of their unique individualistic perspectives of and contributions to South African theatre. In Chapter 2 I outline the methodology that has been used in this research. I have described the journey of *Metamorphosis* as it became a dramatic text in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 is an in-depth analysis of three specific scenes and contains reflections on important data; themes and sub-themes: the director’s concept of each character’s vocality including the sonic properties each actor needs to consider to realise his vision, reaching goal after goal with particular vocal intensities within the dramatic text and to accomplish clear and sincere communication with an audience. Other considerations include the impact on vocal production through ensemble work, the significance of silent acting, grasping that the

body enhances and defines moods/emotions, multicultural voice work to be sensitive towards actors, and in character building how the voice defines a character.

5.2. Comments on the four research questions in this study

How were the actors' voices used in the production?

The use and deliverance of the actor's voices in *Metamorphosis* corroborate my understanding of the essential nature of the centrality of the voice in scripted theatre. In the academic environment, the theory of the theatrical voice is based on the theoretical and the practical components of an actor's voice deliverance. Praxis, as proposed by Mills (1999), is a combination of the theory and the practice and needs to be an intense focal point for trainee actors. The theatrical voice in practice is undeniably supported by the theoretical understanding of voice training.

Specifically in the production, the lexical meaning of words and the underlying connotations of words, were reflected in physical alterations and shadings of the voice to transmit clearly detailed nuances and interesting vocal textures. The contributions of vocal deliverance and clarification, messages and emotions, visibly contributed to multi-layered holistic and believable characterisations, incorporated and supported within the actors' bodies. Words and dialogue were carefully considered within the dramatic text. The interaction between the word and theatrical voice was illustrated in the use of the natural rhythm of language to fuel energy towards climaxes, maintain an adequate pace and build of tension. Actors played off one another's energy and built through the dramatic text to highlight specific words or dialogue pieces.

It was important to match the intensity of previously delivered dialogue with suitable voice intensity, vocal tones and bodily movements. When focal points were emphasised; there was

attention during pauses and silences in order to work with the body to ensure reactions of appropriate intensity in co-ordination with the voice.

What contribution did the voice make within the directorial concept?

To explain the role of the voice solely within the directorial concept is virtually impossible. More extended and in-depth research needs to be done to isolate the voice from any other theatrical elements, silent acting or/and the body of an actor, the technical aspects of the production and to clarify the viewpoint of the director regarding a scene on a theatre voice. More elements to consider in this case study included the input, suggestions, shift of focal points in scenes that altered the original directorial concept as well as availability of time, finances and/or unforeseen situations.

However, the director with an extensive knowledge of the praxis of the theatrical voice, can guide the actor to execute a character's voice authentically and convincingly and in accordance with the director's concept of the characters.

What preparations are necessary to create a sufficiently flexible instrument for this application?

At the start of rehearsals I used the voice evaluating tool to analyse actors' voices in order to *formulate* a voice warm-up session to be implemented before each rehearsal and performance. By means of the voice evaluating tool I was able to isolate problematic areas that needed attention. Voice exercises contributed to more confidence within the actor to explore more intricate voice work.

This production was part of a tertiary institution actor training programme; acting and voice had to be based on theory and practice, thus the actors had both an understanding of how the voice works in theatre and practical classes to train the voice. Such preparation is necessary in order for the director to realise his vision for the vocal aspects of the production (see

Chapter 1). It was important to show that voice theory can be supported by practical deliverance of the theatrical voice within a theatre production and to consider more detailed intriguing voice techniques.

During *Metamorphosis* and daily voice exercises I observe that the actors' voices became more flexible, confident, and supple while the actors developed more substantial control over their voices to accomplish taxing emotional laden dialogue.

What additional factors should be considered for an actor working in a third or fourth language in a production?

No interesting significant findings were discovered to illustrate the difficulty of working in a third or even second language. The actors in this study had been taught in English at this tertiary institution for up to nine hours daily, although seventy percent of the cast were isiZulu speaking.

I discovered, however, that the voice warm-up exercises, including relaxation and articulation exercises, were a crucial aid to promoting confidence in delivering dialogue in any language. An actor struggling to pronounce an intricate word might become tongue twisted. An alternative word, fitting the contextual meaning of the text, might need to be found.

5.3. An interesting discovery

It was found that the voice and body needed to be considered together; gestures, movements and facial expressions and voice cannot be seen as separate elements. In other words the voice and body are inextricable. In character building the voice relies on the body for support to enhance/echo intricate emotions and to sustain moods. In other words in vocal production and deliverance, the voice is an extension of the body. Regular warm-up exercises are necessary for more range and in order to integrate mesmerising detailed nuances into the

vocal production. In this research, these daily exercises definitely increased the quality of ensemble work between the actors. In addition, the exercises encouraged actors to explore their voices further during the rehearsals, and then with the guidance, expertise and support from the director, vocal deliverance could reach greater intensities.

5.4. Recommendations

It is recommended that all tertiary institutions offering dramatic art invest in development of the theatrical voice to enable young actors to master basic vocal techniques. Directors responsible for training actors need comprehensive knowledge of the theoretical and the practical side of the voice; both are required for a good theatre production.

Trainee directors should invest in reading, research and training of eyes/ears, to understand emotional situations and people, to analyse/understand the deeper meanings of directorial work. A director needs to develop his/her own unique directorial language to communicate to actors truthfully and clearly, as recommended by Barney Simon.

5.5. Limitations of this study

By being emotionally involved with the production of *Metamorphosis* and collecting data during rehearsals and performances, I might have missed certain important research data that could have reached more definite conclusions. I would recommend that the researcher be not to closely intertwined with a production. Further this study was limited to one case study and the findings may not necessarily be applicable beyond it.

5.6. Suggestions for further research

It would be worthwhile investing in a research methodology that focuses solely on the voice, eliminating other theatre elements that could possibly overshadow the voice. This methodology needs to explain how elements such as attention, silent acting, gestures,

movement, facial expressions and ensemble work, interact with and influence the voice deliverance of an actor within a scene.

Researchers such as Banning (1990) have claimed that in South Africa the vast field of the voice is not viewed as an academic entity. Others like Scheepers (1982) have argued that stage production is not part of an academic entity. How then can we research voice or even try to develop new theories or clarify existing ones?

More research in South Africa is required in the field of the theatre voice. Mills (1999) has argued for the centrality of theatre voice in a performance and suggested that the idea be explored of the director as a voice coach during a theatre production. Well trained multicultural voices can hugely enrich our theatre productions.

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Appendix A

Voice: Back to Basics

Important aspects of the voice need focus to highlight the immensely important place voice has in a text-based production and towards characterisation. Any voice training for the theatre should take into account the elements explored below.

The Body:

Rodenburg (2002) compares the body of an actor to that of an athlete. In other words the body needs to be fit, aligned and flexible to bring out the best qualities of the voice. To obtain a healthy body posture the actor needs to centre the body; - align it equally - and to root it. To root the body means to distribute the bodily weight evenly on both feet and to combine rooting with energy to fill the entire body/being of an actor, and the use of deep breathing. In other words deep breathing is supportive to the voice, and every breath invigorates the actor, voice, mind and word. Here the rounded voice escapes from deep within the body and is fully supported by bodily alignment. A good body posture is fundamental to master the vocal instrument. Poor body posture or alignment will block the full potential of the voice. “[Bad] habits can seriously damage a voice” (Rodenburg 2002 22). Berry (1973) on the other hand says that an actor must be able to experience the action of the muscles through which voice is produced and to internalize the unique technique. Another major obstacle that can cripple the voice is bodily tension. No artist can achieve effective communication with unnecessary physical constraints. Tension can cause a chain reaction that will eventually constrict and block the aesthetic production of the voice. To work against tension, the actor needs to familiarise himself with the muscle functions within the body (relaxed state) that contribute

to the delivering of a full resonate voice. Stanislavsky (1936) believes that with deep breathing and a relaxed state an actor can focus on starting to reconstruct a new character.

Breath:

Mankind needs to breathe in order to live, to produce a sound or a word and to communicate. The correct breathing method used by actors is called diaphragmatic – intercostal – breathing. Berry (1974:16) gives a short but effective description of diaphragmatic – intercostal – breathing, “. . . you open the breathing out in the base of the ribs [intercostal muscles] and the diaphragm and stomach.” This method of deep breathing energises the mind and imagination of an actor. Deep breathing combining with support ignites the creativity of the imagination in order to explore heightened emotions, hidden qualities within the voice and strengthens communication skills. The breathing muscles must be strengthened by continuous exercises to support and enhance the ‘loaded voice’. The ‘loaded voice’ is a voice that’s filled with the exact energy and emotion, it is placed correctly and stimulates the audience’s minds to listen attentively to the character. Berry (1987) underlines the importance of breathing in connection to characterisation - that a breath is a combination of breath and thinking. And therefore breathing accentuates the liveliness, believability and thought processes of a character on stage. But accurate deep breathing does not only energise the voice, it strengthens “word to word”, “line to line” and “thought to thought” (Berry 1987:83-86).

Support:

“Support is the physical connection from the muscles of the ribcage (intercostal) and lower abdominal area (diaphragm) to the breath” (Rodenburg 2002:36). The breath maintains the capabilities of a voice with the assistance of the breathing muscles, enabling the actor to produce a free sound. Muscle support is necessary for an actor, athlete, opera singer, and everyone seeking to use voice effectively. It is the basis of the whole being of a character.

With adequate support and deep inhalation and exhalation, this method of breathing fuels the characteristics of a character and maintains the continuity of the character throughout the play. The breath is a back-up support system for the word, language, emotions, thought processes, movements, attention to other characters and motivations, making a character realistic and alive. Rodenburg on supportiveness of the breath and on language and the word: “By supporting you will gain not only vocal clarity and ease, but an emotional connection to the words and the thoughts and feelings within them” (2002:39). Support enhances the dialogue of the actor so that the audience perceives it as truthful, sincere and justifiable.

Freeing and Placing the Free Voice:

Freeing the voice means that it is “completely effortless and efficient” (Rodenburg 1992: 159). A free voice, like breathing moves up and down the body with no blockage or any difficulty or discomfort. Berry (1973) said in order to achieve this effortless action the breathing and voice must be relaxed and fit. The trained actor can accomplish breathing that’s connected with no concentration and deliberate action involved – it has become second nature to the actor. Stanislavsky originated this perception “Voice has to be placed, it has to rest upon breathing and upon the diaphragm” (cited in Cole 1983:118). Deep breathing will arise from the lower part of the abdomen, is supported by the diaphragm which then supports the voice as well. Discomfort while producing voice can be a problem of tension or the actor using his instrument wrongly or incorrectly. Adhering to an open throat, effortless breathing, relaxed lips and jaw and removing any tension constricting the air passage ensures that the actor will release a free voice. Coinciding with the unstrained voice is where and how to place the free, effortless voice. The sounds will be formed in the front of the mouth, behind the front dentures, the gum lines, with the tip of the tongue and with lips. A tight or tensed jaw can seriously hamper the freedom of the voice. It is important to bring the sounds forward in the mouth and face, where the vowels and consonants are formed. Berry suggested

that only then can the sound escape the actor's body without force and deliberate action "[T]hrough breath and verbal muscularity we must be so free that there is no sense of pressing the sound out" (1987:30). Rodenburg believes that "The natural voice has to be able to pass freely up through the body, past the chest and throat and effortlessly into the mouth, to be sent equally effortlessly on its way into the world" (1992: 161).

Range and Resonators:

"Range is the changing of notes in the voice and the movement of pitch up and down" (Rodenburg 1997:96). Rodenburg adds that the range of the voice can convey and enhance the emotional communication and the intellectual stimuli within a speaking voice. It helps to break the monotony and flatness of the voice and makes the voice sound more interesting with a much larger variety of tones. But only if the voice is free and the 'emotional' and 'intellectual' components are attached to it. The vocal imagination should be stretched between two to three or four octaves for a trained speaking voice. Rodenburg (1997) states that this bigger range is the 'colour' of the voice.

Resonators (resonance of the voice) are hollow spaces within the body that can be located in the lower abdominal area, chest, throat, nose and face. These different resonators will affect the quality of the voice and will incorporate distinct variations to the notes of the voice. The resonance/vocal tone in the voice will broaden; resonance amplifies the voice to reach and fill the auditorium with the presence and voice of an actor. Resonance can help an actor to adapt the voice in awkward theatre spaces and not consciously strain or push the voice to be heard. Resonance energises and enhances the solidity of the word.

Articulation:

Berry (1973) calls articulation 'muscularity', in other words articulation involves tiny muscles that need to be exercised and muscularity can only be obtained through daily

practice. “The aim in achieving clear speech is economy, efficiency and effortlessness in articulation” (Rodenburg 1992:230). To execute articulation with ease, the speech muscles must be flexible and consonants and vowels should be correctly formed within the mouth. Knowledge of the stances of the soft palate, tongue, jaw, teeth and lips during the forming of vowels and consonants must be practised and internalised by the actor. Linklater (2006:295) says articulation means; “jointed” or “having joints” implying that it aids understanding by separating the flow of speech. Speech muscles can easily become lazy and then the articulation of words/speech can be muffled and unclear. Rodenburg states that articulation must not be overdone or interfere with the meaning or expressiveness of the word; it must be natural and not noticeable. Tension in the speaking muscles can easily affect articulation as such and therefore it needs continuous practise and exercises to make it flexible and supple. Stanislavsky defined articulation as: “sound and phrasing must be at the tip of the lips, at the teeth” (cited in Cole 1983:118). Projection relies on articulation in order to formulate the sound perfectly and make audibility easier and clear for the audience.

Projection:

Projection means to ‘throw’ the voice off stage into the auditorium, so that audience members can clearly hear and follow the conversation/dialogue happening between actors on stage. To do this with ease, and sufficiently, an actor should attentively be aware not to push the voice out but to have control over it. The diaphragm will contract more and thus support the levels of the sound being produced harder or louder, as well as sustain the voice longer. Projection in other words means the volume of the outgoing voice and an actor should strive to consciously control the levels of volume, with variation, but not to get stuck on one monotone level. This could happen when there’s unnecessary tension in the throat or in the jaw area in the mouth and it will put a tremendous strain on the voice. Another factor to take in consideration is the different stage spaces or theatres an actor will perform in. The level of

the voice will be affected by acoustics these space. Rodenburg states that projection will be naturally adapted to any space or situation as soon as an actor “[A]dopted a right to speak fully and forcefully, space suddenly shrinks to accommodate what you have to say” (1992:224).

Some properties of an actor’s voice are innate but any voice can be improved, modified with daily practice. Voice can be recognized as a major part of characterization and is important to a production. Through voice the actor can convey the subtext of a script. The voice has a unique function; when coupled to the actor’s memory it can reproduce believable emotions. In other words the voice can set and enhance a production’s atmosphere. Importantly, this depends on the actor’s ability to use his voice effectively to convey appropriate emotions. Further, the voice is a multifaceted tool that can support and enhance the cultural identity of a character.

Appendix B

Director's Notes

Director's notes on directing:

The director needs to represent and have “the creativity of a sculptor and an architect” (Braun 1978:92).

A play needs to be read, by the director, in quite a different way than any other reader. He will engage in the play with a unique vision and an understanding of how all the elements within the drama work and fit together to produce an authentic, artistically correct end result. He will carefully visualize what precisely the dramatist had envisioned, and enhance the thematic focus of the dramatist. Which style of directing/acting will enhance, complement the play and how will the envisioned milieu support it? In other words a written play is the skeleton and through the director's expertise, experience and visualization the missing links will be filled to make a comprehensible piece of ‘art’. The director pastes together the play, fills in more detail, characteristics of the characters, and ensures that the dialogue is respected and followed through in the correct tempo, rhythm and approach to emphasise the dramatic elements in the text. Hodge describes the responsibilities of the director as: “A vision of the play..., a comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics of plays..., skills in communication..., and a very strong desire to entertain...” (2000:2).

Stanislavsky (1936) commented on how an actor needs to be aware of his acting abilities and his overall approach, attitude towards his work. The acting skills and truthfulness towards creating a character must be based on the techniques that the actor studied at a training institution. The actor should not rush in and depend on an overacting style, or concentrating on only the external traits of characterisation. Every action on stage should reflect the

emotional and intellectual elements linked to it, “[I]nner–outer co–ordination” (Stanislavsky 2007:18). Any diffuse characteristics need to be clarified. Acting must always be true to oneself, “Acting is an act of self-identity in the fictional circumstances of the stage, and it can be accomplished only if my acting is authentic, true to myself” (Vened 2000:3). Linklater adds to this point of Stanislavsky’s but concentrates more on the intellectual and the psychological problems of an actor: “...the actor’s voice must be rooted in neuro-physiological pathways of body” and “The actor must develop a body that sees, hears, feels, and speaks. The actor’s brain must be his or her body” (Linklater. 2006:8).

A director’s responsibility in theatre is to take on a teacher’s and facilitator’s role when directing actors in a play. The successful director needs to know all the elements involved in a production – from décor design, all the technical aspects, acting, through to the usage of voice. Morris (1984) said that a director must have the ability to know how to give constructive, helpful direction and criticism to actors. The director has first-hand knowledge of the “[P]rocess and technique of the actor, emotional, physical and intellectual: skills in the use of voice and speech, and the technique of applied movement, and a knowledge of how these skills apply to actors” (Morris 1948:9).

“Stanislavsky when directing is first of all an actor. When I direct [then] I am first of all a playwright” (Brecht cited in Hodge 2002:105). Brecht implied here that Stanislavsky directed plays solely concentrating on the actor’s point of view towards the drama and not that of the playwright. Brecht on the other hand directs as a playwright. There are numerous approaches towards directing a play that are highly successful. A less experienced director normally starts out by doing a tremendous amount of research on the play and only then considers what abilities the actors can contribute towards the aesthetic dimensions of the production.

Directors who work in a realist tradition tend to push actors to deliver dialogue in the most natural way possible, using this to highlight the sincerity and believability of a character. Stanislavsky (1936) underlines that the inner truth must be played truthfully, with naturalistic emotions combined with previous experiences. An internal emotional impulse must be imbedded in the external representation of the character. An actor needs to know all the aspects of the voice in order to apply it with discretion and in a correct and truthful manner. Chekhov discarded Stanislavsky's beliefs that the 'feelings' of a character must come from the actor, "what does the character feel? –would [this] enable the actor to transform into the character rather than reducing the character to the personality of the actor" (Hodge 2002:81). Meyerhold firmly believed that if the bodily appearance is aligned with the emotional feelings intertwined with the voice work and deliverance, the performance will be convincing, because all emotions, and the voice are based on by the placement of the actor's body (Hodge 2000:40).

A South African director: BARNEY SIMON:

As a South African director it seems important for me to consider how directing has developed within this context. In terms of my own practice as a director and due to limitations of space I will focus on the iconic director Barney Simon, whose directorial approach I have personally experienced. As a director, Barney Simon concentrates predominantly on the actor, the actor is the most important element in a dramatic text rather than any technical aspects concerning a stage production. The actor and how the actor portrays the character and all the elements concerning a holistic, realistic and believable character are of the utmost importance for an actor to achieve during rehearsals for a stage production. Simon worked closely and intensively with each actor so each actor could discover the utmost sincerity regarding their character within themselves. In other words Simon strives to break down the inner barriers surrounding an actor and empower the actor to

discover the ultimate truth about themselves and only then will the real truth reflect within the character. The actors must be true to themselves to obtain the truthfulness to be projected across to the audience. He believed that the actor must strive to understand and find the inner truth that will set the actor free to achieve the character's movements, sincere voice work, natural emotions and gestures that will enhance all character work in a positive way.

Barney Simon worked in a very unconventional theatrical way to achieve his visualizations of a drama. Unconventional in the way that he used more rehearsal time exploring and probing actors to get their characterization intact rather than concentrating on dialogue, movement or the written text per se. He used photographs, images, and news articles on people, old films and artwork that enhanced and inspired the stories he would use to evoke understanding of character. He encouraged the actor to tell his own stories reflecting some of the actor's personality and even very personal, private fears and feelings on specific topics. He cleverly guided the actor to realize that these fears and feelings can enhance the character that he will portray and how to use these emotions that must become a natural part of the character. In retrospect he built characters to be identifiable with people in every sphere of society, who could function in everyday life. Simon as a director had his own vocabulary, language he used to communicate with actors and theatre personnel.

Appendix C

Voice Evaluating Tool

TEMPO		
1	Too fast	
2	Too slow	
3	Monotone	
4	Inaccurate phrasing	
5	Rhythmic speaking	
6	Other	
PROJECTION		
1	Too loud	
2	Too weak	
3	Lack of variety	
4	Forced overuse	
PITCH		
1	Voice too high	
2	Voice too low	
3	Lack of variety	
4	Fixed speech patterns	
QUALITY		
1	Nasal	
2	Husky	
3	Breathy	
4	Throat orientated	
5	Straining (forced)	
6	Flat	
7	Pushing	
8	Emotionless	
9	Other (immaturity)	
10	Thin / weak	
11	Uncontrolled	
12	Diaphragm control poor	
ARTICULATION		
1	Clarity poor	
2	Lazy tongue	
3	Tight jaw	
4	Swallowing words	
5	Lips	
6	Laboured	
RESONANCE		
1	Head	
2	Nasal	
3	Chest	
4	Overall	

Implementation of Voice Evaluating tool: Character Mother

During a read through of the text, at the beginning of the rehearsal period, the following information was collected with the aid of the voice evaluation tool. No voice warm-up or articulation exercises were done before the read through. By collecting this information from all the actors I could work out a comprehensive warm-up programme where most of these problematic areas of voices could be address, daily. The following problematic areas were noted:

TEMPO:

1. Too fast.

PITCH:

1. Voice too high.
2. Lack of variety.

QUALITY:

4. Throat orientated.

ARTICULATION:

1. Clarity poor.
2. Lazy tongue.
3. Tight jaw.
4. Swallowing words.
5. Lips.

Using the evaluation of the actors' voices, a short but powerful voice warm-up session was implemented to address areas of neglect. If the character of the Mother does these warm-up and articulation exercises regularly, every day, this will address most of her problems regarding her voice. However the two areas of her voice that she must mentally focus on include her tempo (too fast) and pitch (placing voice too high). In other words a warm-up session should focus on the proper way of breathing, placing of the voice, resonance, projection, to strengthen vocality and the suppleness of the articulation muscles.

Comparison of an Actor's Voice: A Rehearsal and A Performance

The question I was pondering on; did these daily exercises address or improved the problematic areas of the actors' voices? I decided to collect data from a run through during a rehearsal and that of a performance and to compare the two performances with the aid of the voice evaluating tool.

A run through during rehearsal: Character of Mother

TEMPO:

1. Too fast.

PITCH:

1. Too high.

QUALITY:

2. Husky voice.

ARTICULATION:

3. Swallowing of words.

During this specific run through, by talking too fast and swallowing words, the actress brushed over important dialogue, threw away too many lines, ignored pauses and did not give herself the time to experience an emotion or to finish a thought process. In other words a considerable amount of crucial information regarding the scene and the character got lost. And falling back on placing the voice too high not only altered the scene but also degraded the character of Mother to one dimension. The husky voice sometimes could be due to a cold, sinusitis, placing the voice wrongly or a dip in concentration on voice deliverance. I discovered that actors tend to concentrate on many technical points as separate entities regarding their voice deliverance, aspects of their character and movements. All they need are a few rehearsals to actually realise that these factors work in unison closely together and in many instances need to be executed as one unit. It is important that actors work the thought process through the entire body and to finish it. A reaction can occur that sets an emotion, voice and body (gestures, movements and facial expressions), in motion to exhibit and support the thought process and verbally express the emotion then.

A Performance: Character of Mother

ARTICULATION:

4. Swallowing of words.

The swallowing of words occurred in the climax of the final scene in the play; the actress picked up her pace and did not give herself adequate time to first finish the one thought process before moving on to the next new thought process.

Results of Implementation of the Voice Evaluation Tool: Comparing Two Performances

It was discovered that the voice warm-up and articulation exercises, before each rehearsal and performance, greatly benefited the actors for performances and voice deliverance. The director's notes appeared to have made the actors aware of discrepancies, regarding voice deliverance, which had happened unconsciously.

The Mother's voice grew in maturity and confidence from rehearsal to performance, becoming a clear cut and a strong expressive instrument. The voice was subtle conveying difficult emotions and this advanced and strengthened the overall emotional mood of a scene. The dialogue forms a part of her character and finer and more detailed voice work (in a lower voice range), proper enhancement of resonance emerged that pushed her character's believability to a stronger and higher level. The character's body was in unity, with the voice deliverance. This underlined, enhanced and highlighted each expressive emotion. Even smaller more defined detailed gestures and facial expressions appeared forming part of her characteristics, and purposeful, motivational, strong movements accompanied the holistic unique character. During pauses the character kept her undivided attention span occupied with conveying her thought process clearly transparently and understandably. In the last scene, the silent acting, all gestures and even subtle movements were in harmony with the character, depicted the emotional turmoil of the bereaved Mother.

Appendix D

Actors Consent To Participate in Research Form

RESEARCH INVITATION AND INFORMATION SHEET

Date: _____

Good day, my name is Adam Steyn. I am inviting you to participate in research I am doing titled:

VOCALITY: An exploration of the function of an actor's voice in the production of 'METAMORPHOSIS' at the Hexagon Studio Theatre, UKZN (2011).

I am inviting all five actors in the production to participate. The purpose of the study is for me to learn more about an actor's voice in a multicultural academic environment. As part of the study I would like to review the way your voice changed and developed during the rehearsal and performance process.

I am therefore requesting your consent and permission to review the notes and video recordings I made during the rehearsals and performances. These records were made at the time for production purposes, not research purposes. The information will be kept private, stored in a locked cupboard for five (5) years after the completion of the project, and then destroyed. The names of the actor-participants will be kept confidential and will not be used in research publications.

I do not anticipate any risks or discomfort to you if you choose to consent. You will not benefit directly from participation. However, the knowledge gained may assist the voice development of other student-actors.

This research will not require more of your time. You have the right to choose not to consent to this study, and you may withdraw your consent at any time without any penalty to yourself.

I am not receiving funding for this research. You will not incur any costs by participating in this study, and will not be offered any incentives or reimbursements.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number PENDING).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me at:

Email: steyn.adam@gmail.com
Cell phone: 083 468 8233
Address: Drama and Performance Studies, Pietermaritzburg Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

You may also contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I (Name of Actor)

have been informed by Adam Steyn about the study entitled:

VOCALITY: An exploration of the function of an actor's voice in the production of 'METAMORPHOSIS' at the Hexagon Studio Theatre, UKZN (2011).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at:

Email: steyn.adam@gmail.com
Cell phone: 083 468 8233
Address: Drama and Performance Studies, Pietermaritzburg Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may also contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby also provide consent to:

Use of video recordings from the rehearsals and production for research purposes YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

(Where applicable)

Appendix E

Script Analysis

Themes

Disease:

In families where any life threatening disease strikes, certain changes need to be made in order to survive its onslaught and repercussions. The family's hierarchy for instance must be renegotiated for the family to be functional again. In the play the only breadwinner is struck down with AIDS/TB and the rest of the family must think of ways to overcome this economic problem. The Bhengu family copes well with this burden but the emotional side of the disease exhausts them. Looking after and caring for Thabani is the task of Nonhle; this wears her down to the point where all she can experience is antipathy. The mother, who loves and believes in her son, gets an asthmatic attack every time she sees him, indicating unresolved psychological issues, and the father doesn't see Thabani as his son anymore. The father starts to drink in order to escape the situation he is in. There is a dysfunctional family structure and each member must cope in their own unique way; mental and physical exhaustion leads to more tension.

The stigma associated with disease often causes families to deny their reality and to hide from any preying eyes in their immediate community. Seeking help or any advice from outside the family is not an option and they struggle on their own with the resources available within the immediate family structure. They feel shame. The father told the mother and Nonhle never to leave the door open and that no one must see Thabani. He even told the cleaning lady never to enter the room where the beetle is kept. And the mother doesn't leave the house during the duration of the play.

In Kafka's time people saw any insect, especially the dung beetle and cockroach, as synonyms for dirt; if found in a house it is assumed the family is living under filthy conditions. Presently AIDS or TB can be seen as synonyms for people's promiscuous sexual behaviour. Thabani only gives one important clue to the audience at the beginning of the play: "Casual acquaintances!" (2011:1). During the play the words 'AIDS' or 'TB' are never verbally uttered. The audience simply witnesses the havoc such a disease can cause within a family and how the members individually try to cope or become dysfunctional.

Economy:

In South Africa at present, with no growth in the economy, a majority of people struggle to survive from day to day. If the only breadwinner is unable to work anymore, the rest of the family will feel the devastating impact of this. In some cases, desperate measures will have to be considered in order for the families to function 'normally' again.

This happens to the Bhengu family in the play *Metamorphosis*: Thabani fell ill and the other members had to think of ways to survive. The father got work as a postman and the mother started to do washing and mending. How was the only breadwinner treated before the tragedy? The mother prepared breakfast and ensured he was up in time each day for work; after the transformation she was barred from even seeing her son. On the three occasions that she did see him, she had an asthma attack. The father treated his son like a slave and later with revulsion. Nonhle initially took care of her brother but later neglected him. Arguments were frequent between the tired family members and they found it difficult to communicate with each other.

A human is valuable in society with his worth based on his work and salary; without this the person is of no importance to a household. An incurable disease that immobilises and confines a person to a room is a huge burden to a family.

The play also provides a commentary on the political climate in South Africa, and how this can affect every sphere of society, especially that of the educational system in governmental schools. When the family brainstorm how to beat their current bleak economic situation, the mother suggests that Nonhle must quit school and start to work in a spaza shop [general dealer; café]. Thabani vehemently protests against this: “No! No! – she’s in grade 11. But the education in her school is shameful. She’s there every day from 8 to 2:30 and *sometimes* only one teacher will show up for only one lesson. Where are the rest of the teachers?” (2011:7). Father complains: “And in these hard times everything becomes more expensive – electricity, food, petrol” (2011:6). The Bhengu’s tragedy plays out within the wider South African context.

Family duty:

The duty of the family is to look after and support the person who is working. This is especially true in the case of a sole breadwinner who is also paying his father’s debt. Before the transformation, the family does its duty and looks after Thabani. Later there is the sense of needing to get rid of him.

Alienation:

How could the Bhengu family not be aware of the transformation within their son/brother, Thabani? There were early signs: in the beginning of the play, Thabani is slowing down while his mother and sister are increasing their pace. He has few friends and people around him and this escalates into a complete alienation from his environment, his mind, body, his family and his job.

Freedom:

Thabani dreams of the day that he can be free from his job but first he must pay off the debt. He yearns for freedom from this demanding job and all the backbreaking travel. Illusory

freedom appeared after the metamorphosis but this escape fails to bring the total freedom he was hoping for. The only real escape from all the burdens in his life will be his death (Bworks 2007).

Guilt:

Thabani has a strong sense of family duty. He feels guilt ridden every time the family mentions money or their economic struggles (Bworks 2007). He wishes that he could talk and thank his sister for feeding him, but he gives up on this idea because his physical appearance will revolt her and cause her more unnecessary stress. The ultimate blow to him is when his mother says she will take on a job too. According to Bworks the son “dies out of guilt for his family” (2007: np).

Personal Identity:

Thabani is transformed into a gigantic insect. He is trying through the duration of the play to rebuild his identity and to make sense of what has happened to him. His self-identity was based on living for others and he doesn't want to inconvenience his family now. During the play he is searching for identity but he never had a well-defined and holistic identity to start. At the end, he felt love for his family (Bworks 2007), especially while Nonhle is singing. Love and freedom are the only two elements he needed to establish his identity. But it is too late; he dies shortly thereafter.

Motifs

Metamorphosis:

The driving force behind the play that fuels the drama into action is the transformation of Thabani into an insect. Not only does he undergo physical changes, but psychologically as well. This psychological change also happens within each member of his family. The main metamorphosis triggers a few other significant transformations within the family: how to get out of their financial predicament and to find work. The emotional burden is the toughest for the family. After the transformation of Thabani, the family become transformed from their states of despair, hopelessness and passiveness: they look at the situation in perspective and attempt to deal with it to the best of their ability. The change that Nonhle is experiencing, growing from a child into an adult, reverberates with the transformation that her brother went through. Thabani is “forced to watch the family fall apart in silence” (Bworks 2007: np).

Money:

The debt which his father owes to Thabani’s Boss dominates Thabani’s life before his transformation. It is unclear why the Boss lied to Thabani’s parents saying he had embezzled a large amount of money from the company. However the Boss is permanently chased away by the beetle thus freeing the Father from his debt. Now the family starts to work and takes a lodger into the house. Money and the fear of poverty drive many of the anxieties illustrated by Thabani’s obsessive fear of losing his job.

Sleep and Rest:

Thabani wakes up one morning changed into an enormous insect. He sleeps very little during the play and his feeding times are when his parents are resting in the afternoons and after they have gone to bed at night. Is he scared that worse will befall him if he sleeps, or that he might

miss out on more changes in the household? Sleep and rest for the other family members strengthen their inner selves and offer an escape from reality.

Symbols

Uniform:

Throughout the play Thabani describes what his family members are busy with “What are they doing? Pa is sleeping in his chair. Mother is bending low over a shirt she is mending. Nonhle is reading a book” (2011:10). He makes comments on the condition of his Dad’s clothes. All these facts that we are accumulating is only through the perspective and view point of the character of the son. When the Dad arrives from work he says: “Now he is standing there in fine shape dressed so smart” (2011:9), and later he remarks on his father’s postman’s uniform: “Father insists on keeping his smart clothes on all the time – he’s starting to look dirty and drinking heavily” (2011:10). All this symbolises a decline within the mental state of the character of the father; there is deterioration from smartly dressed to an untidy mess. Perhaps this is a sign that he cannot cope with the stress surrounding him and the situation in which he is captive.

Food:

The food, trying different kinds of food, is synonymous with the sympathy that Nonhle has towards her brother; when she stops giving him food it is because her sympathy has disappeared. ”No Ma, I’ll do it later” (2011:8) Nonhle answers her mother when she is asked if she has fed Thabani today. Food is also mentioned when the Lodger is eating, and Thabani complains how hungry he is but not for that kind of food that is being devoured by the Lodger. Is this a silent scream for attention as the family starts to lose interest in him and starts to cope with life without his contribution?

The father throws food at his son to get him back into his room but he doesn't bother to feed him. He seems to have lost all respect for his son and he doesn't want to be reminded of the whole bizarre situation. The first words spoken by Thabani when he gets back from work are "I'm not hungry, not hungry" (2011:1) and near the end he exclaims "I'm hungry enough – but not for potatoes and meat – and here I am dying of starvation" (2011:10). All this underlines the basic need for sustenance, and in sickness, cravings for different kinds of food that are not available. Ironically the play starts with the son not hungry and it ends with him starving to death.

Sound:

The sound of Thaban's bedroom door reverberates through this quiet household when it is opened or closed. The sound is a permanent reminder to the family of the aggravated fate that has befallen them. A cantankerous, disturbing and deafening sound of only a door, opening and closing that is supposed to be a familiar sound, but is ultimately a form of mocking for the tired, overworked and stressed-to-breaking-point, family already tiptoeing around one another to avoid unnecessary friction.

The continuous ticking of the metronome is used to physically spell out that time is moving forward and stresses the queer uniqueness of the situation. Seconds change into minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and eventually years. When Thabani wakes up, the metronome highlights the urgency of having to get up and go to work, otherwise he will be late. With each ticking of the metronome, when he is not able to get up, he becomes more confused and bewildered. It seems to symbolise that his time is starting to run out, and is in a sense a prediction of his death. Time waits for no one. The sound of the cockerel announces a new day and informs the audience of the immediate rural context of the family.

In conjunction with above I brought in rituals [repetitive movement and gestures] to suggest that time was passing. Before the actual play starts, actors mimed the Bhengu's pre- and post-work rituals. The pace increases during each individual scene. This scene is repeated three times. Mother and Nonhle speed up the pace and Thabani slows down till his transformation, suggesting that time is against him. Later the same technique is used, when his sister feeds him and reports to her parents on his eating habits.

Absurdity:

There is a sense of the 'absurdity of life' in two scenes, when the Cleaning Lady calls Thabani "an old dung beetle" and adds "strange pet!" (2011:8). The Lodger on the other hand calls out: "Mr Bhengu! What is that?" pointing at Thabani and says firmly "I beg to announce that because of the disgusting conditions in this house – I am leaving!" (2011:11).

Character studies

The Boss:

She represents the harshness of the business world that Thabani works in and will only protect her interests/business with zero sympathy or tolerance towards her workers, even when they are sick. People are discarded without excuse.

The Cleaning Lady:

The Cleaning Lady brings comic relief to the play providing a new refreshing perspective on a bleak situation. She sees Thabani for what he is: "dung beetle" and "strange pet", and teases him with her broom, in contrast to the family's experiences and perceptions of Thabani.

The Lodger:

The Lodger functions in the play as a soundboard, reflecting the family's fears, perspectives and their misguided beliefs about Thabani.

Thabani:

He is the only breadwinner in the Bhengu family who supports his indolent father, his asthmatic mother and his sister who is at school, in grade 11. He is forced to follow an exhausting and meaningless career as a travelling salesman, not only to provide for the family but to pay off the debt his father owes the Boss. He loathes his job and cannot wait to tell the Boss that he will quit and start to live his own life without the frustration of continual travelling. He temporarily escapes his job after his transformation but more permanent escape can only be realised through death.

Thabani is a loner who longs to have a relationship and friends but his work forces him to cut the rest of the world out of his life. Before the transition he was already living an alienated lifestyle. After it he is locked in his room with little contact with his family, imprisoned and removed from the world and society around him. Isolated from his family, society and the human race, he becomes completely dehumanised. He is trapped physically and emotionally.

Thubani is a complex character, with feelings and emotions ranging from love, concern, anger, frustration, guilt, sadness and depression. After the transformation he is guilt ridden and urges himself to get up to work and wonders what will happen to the family if he cannot work anymore. The guilt becomes unbearable when a stranger enters his house, the Lodger. He is extremely angry that the family tries to make the Lodger feel at home and serves her delicious food disregarding him. "I am so angry – they are neglecting me. Nonhle is so tired – she doesn't care to bring me food or to clean my room. Mother is trying but no one takes

notice of her. And now my room has become a storage space – and I’m covered in dust. But they attend to the Lodger!” (2011:10).

He rarely thinks of himself and is more concerned with the welfare or well-being of his immediate family members: Nonhle’s schooling and the money he saved for her to attend professional singing lessons; his asthmatic mother who he truly loves must work– “Poor mother, how can she do that job with her asthma? It even troubles her walking through the house” (2011:7). He tolerates his father but he does admit that he is scared of him. “And look at his enormous shoes – he could easily crush me!” (2011:9). The metamorphosis brings about changes that Thabani finds hard to accept, especially his family’s attitude towards him, with his father violently shoving him into his room, imprisoning him, and Nonhle changing from love to rejection in her desire for him to leave the family altogether.

An inner struggle erupts within Thabani after the transition. He still thinks as a human but his body is different and reacts in a bizarre manner that does not obey the commands of his brain. He never fully accepts the condition he finds himself in and his humanity never completely disappears. Thabani tries to communicate with his family but they do not understand him, burdening him to the depths of despair. He said: “I’m feeling so ashamed” (2011:11) close to the end when there was yet another argument between his family members about him. He cannot tell Nonhle what he prefers to eat or that he is starving. In other words the body and mind are always counteracting one another and through the lack of communication, he eventually dies of hunger.

Nonhle:

Nonhle is seventeen years old. Thabani admires her beautiful singing voice and was saving some money to send her for professional singing classes. Brother and sister adore one another. No wonder it is Nonhle who initially took on the responsibility to feed and look after

her brother after his transformation. Later she forces her parents to accept that Thabani will not return and she wishes that this “thing” will go: “He must go! Get rid of the idea that this is Thabani” (2011:11).

She is a typical teenager and disagrees constantly with her parents. But she helps her mother with household chores, and attends to her father by bringing him beer, helps the mother to take him to bed and helps him to dress properly for work. She cares and looks after her mother when she is having an asthmatic attack. She helpfully suggests that a lodger will bring in more money for them “I was just thinking – can’t we rent out my room? I can sleep in the lounge” (2011:7). She is in conflict between what is best for her parents and for her unfortunate brother.

She progressively changes throughout the play. In the beginning she is a scared girl, crying when the Boss arrives to talk to Thabani but close to the end of the play, she is standing up against her parents, as a young adult and arguing that the “thing” will cause their deaths. She struggles with her conflicting love for her brother and parents. Eventually, she chooses and decides to discard the brother completely. Nonhle shows little emotion after the death of Thabani. She got what she wanted: the “thing” is gone! But she is the only character that undergoes a radical change towards her brother, from empathy to disgust and she ultimately despises the sight of him. When her sympathy disappears for her brother, she stops feeding or looking after him and tries to get rid of him.

The Mother:

The Mother is asthmatic and generally not in good health. But she loves and cares for her family and respects and obeys her husband. She gets up early every day, wakes Thabani and Nonhle, makes breakfast and sees her son off to work. Despite the changes in the household she still helps her husband to get ready for work. On seeing Thabani as an insect, she suffers

an asthma attack, but she still believes up to the end of the play that her Thabani will return. “He’s our son, and will get better – He’s just very sick that’s all – Thabani is just overworked” (2011:7). There are deep rooted underlying psychological factors within a person that can trigger asthma attacks.

The mother struggles to speak in English, especially to strangers, unlike her husband or daughter. Speaking to the Boss she uses a mixture of English and isiZulu much to the confusion of the Boss. During the conversation between the father and the Boss she nudges her husband and wants to know what the Boss is saying. At various intervals she whispers to her husband in isiZulu: “What’s she saying? What’s the white person saying?” (2011:3). This was also illustrated in the scene with the Lodger when she asks to be in the photograph as well “Me? Me? Me?” (2011:11), pointing at herself.

She too starts to work, despite her illness, by washing, ironing and mending clothes for community members. Throughout the play she longs to see Thabani but the father and Nonhle do not want her to go into his room. “You are not going into that room alone – not at all!” says the father (2011:7).

The mother’s beliefs are based mainly on those of traditional Zulu culture. When the family begs Thabani to open the door, the morning after his transformation, the mother hears strange sounds from within his room, she calls out to Nonhle: “We must go to the inyanga! [Traditional healer] – Thabani is ill. Did you hear how he was speaking?” (2011:4). She does ‘imphepho’ rituals (cleansing of the house and talking to the forefathers) and singing a sleep lullaby, at night when everyone is asleep, to comfort her son.

She reminds Nonhle to feed and look after Thabani properly “Please don’t neglect him! Try different kinds of food. Nonhle, Nonhle! You mustn’t give up on Thabani!”(2011:6) and

scolds her husband for not using Thabani's name when talking about him "His name is Thabani!" (2011:6).

Compared to the other characters the Mother shows more empathy towards Thabani and is convinced he will return or get better. When Nonhle says the "thing" must go, Mother replies in horror: "No, No! He's my unfortunate son" (2011:11). But during the death scene she shows more emotional distress and is generally distraught, more than any other character. The day after her son got ill, she firmly walks to his room: "We must feed Thabani." (2011:5). Nonhle blocks her and replies: "I will feed him. Go and make tea for Baba." "Will you?" (2011:5) asks the mother. No wonder she furiously blames the father and Nonhle for his death, crying profoundly. In this scene her frustration and agitation towards the family reaches boiling point. She wanted to take care of her son but was permanently barricaded from entering his room, not allowed to do anything for her sick son or even see him. As a character she struggles with her love for Thabani and the rest of the family, and ultimately with the loss of her son.

The Mother is timid, quiet and soft spoken, respecting her husband as well as obeying his rules regarding not seeing Thabani at all. The Mother changes from a relatively weak character to a strong force expressing her emotions and beliefs. At the end the Mother possesses the power, and ultimately emerges as the new head of the family, taking over from the Father figure. She needs to break with Zulu tradition in order to reach her full potential in life.

The Father:

The Father had a business but it failed, leaving him owing money to Thabani's Boss. Thabani, because of the economic climate, was forced into an unsatisfying job, to work for the Boss in order to pay back his Father's debt and support the family.

The father shows no remorse for being responsible for Thabani working alone, carrying out his responsibility and duties towards the family. In the ritual when Thabani is leaving for work he doesn't lift his head from his newspaper only waves at him slightly. It is an effort for the father to see Thabani, after the metamorphosis, as his son and he shows less empathy towards him than the rest of the characters. "You've seen what he's become. Is that really our son?" (2011:7).

Subsequently the Father was forced to take on a job to survive, working as a postman. Despite Mother and Nonhle's care he starts to drink heavily and becomes sloppier and dirty, insisting on keeping on the same uniform day and night. His depression deepens with the changed climate within the household. He gets so tipsy that the mother and Nonhle must take him to the room to sleep. He is violent and aggressive towards his son on two occasions. He shoves him into his room with his knobkerrie and insists the door must always be closed and no one must see him. He eventually gives his son a fatal blow by throwing sweet potatoes and 'amadumbi' (African potatoes) at him in order to get him to return to his room. An African potato becomes embedded in Thabani's body and no-one tries to remove it. This blow weakens him and is one of the factors that contribute to his death.

In the end, as he covers the body of his son, mixed heartfelt emotions engulf him, feelings of shamefulness and guilt about his behaviour towards his son, his wife and daughter. Finally he experiences intense sorrow and pain.