

**PHILLIP ZARRILLI'S PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTING
TRAINING AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN
PERFORMANCE**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Performing Arts (Theatre)

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DECLARATION

I, Gaurav hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled “Phillip Zarrilli’s Psychophysical Acting Training and its Effectiveness in Performance” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Smriti Bhardwaj, working as Associate Professor, in the Department of Theatre and Music of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigators. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “Phillip Zarrilli’s Psychophysical Acting Training and its Effectiveness in Performance” submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the reward of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of Theatre and Music, is a research work carried out by Gaurav, Registration no. 12021183, is a bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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ABSTRACT

Konstantin Stanislavski formulated a ground-breaking actor training technique that marked a major shift in theatre practice. His systematic approach is also referred to as the first written acting training method. The thesis initially explores the origins of theatre and the emergence of an actor. It aims to understand why there was a need for formal training in acting. It looks at how theatre performances have evolved over time and examines different acting training methods in detail. The research specifically delves into the evolution of psychophysical acting training and its development. The journey of acting as an art form has changed drastically since the early 1900s. The thesis looks at recent developments in psychophysical acting training and focuses majorly on Philip Zarrilli's work. Zarrilli was a well-known practitioner, actor trainer and academician. He taught at several prestigious universities including the University of Exeter, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, North Western University and the University of Surrey. He developed a unique acting training method based on Asian concepts of the body and mind. His psychophysical approach draws inspiration from Indian traditional art forms like Kalarippayattu, Kathakali and Yoga. It also has influences ranging from Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, A.C. Scott and Eugenio Barba. Zarrilli emphasised a comprehensive understanding of breathing, awareness and the relationship between the body and mind. His emphasis on "pre-performative" training empowers participants to embark on deep personal journeys of self-discovery. This thesis highlights Zarrilli's significant influence on actor training and highlights the detailed processes involved in his method for an actor's development.

The study conducts a detailed examination and critical evaluation to assess the effectiveness of Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training method. It explores how it is applied in practice and explores how traditional art forms such as Yoga, Kalarippayattu and Kathakali shapes his technique. This research discusses the details of his technique and its significance in contemporary theatre practice. The study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of Zarrilli's method and highlights the key principles of his

method. The study sheds light on Zarrilli's innovative contributions to acting training and its implications on the performing arts.

Research Objectives: This research project aims to study Philip Zarrilli's Psychophysical acting training process and how traditional art forms like Kalaripayattu, Kathakali and yoga helped in developing a "pre-performative" training process.

1. To understand the techniques of Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training.
2. To document how "Pre-Performative" training is transposed into the performance in this acting training process.
3. To analyse the role of traditional art forms Kalaripayattu, Kathakali and Yoga in the development of Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training.

The research project highlights the process of acting as an embodied phenomenon and contributes to the generation of new knowledge at the intersection of art and science. The central quest of this project is an examination of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting pedagogy with a particular emphasis on the significance of pre-performative training for contemporary actors. This research seeks to highlight the embodied practices inherent in psychophysical training methodologies and sheds light on the interplay between body, mind and performance. The study explores the subtle nuances of embodiment in performance and offers insights into the transformative potential of pre-performative training. This research seeks to create a nexus between theory and practice in order to enrich understanding of acting as an embodied phenomenon. The study also serves as a platform for debate by delving into recent developments in psychophysical training methodologies with a particular focus on practitioners and teachers associated with this evolving field. The inquiry also centres around an exploration of how culture shapes theatrical practices and pedagogies. It offers insights into the multiple ways in which cultural contexts inform the embodiment of performance. The research project aims to foster a deeper understanding between culture, theatre and pedagogy.

Key words: *Psychophysical, Bodymind, Yoga, Kalarippayattu, Kathakali, Embodiment, Natyasastra, Breath, Awareness, Sensory Perception, Traditional Art*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO.
	DECLARATION	i
	CERTIFICATE	ii
	ABSTRACT	iii-v
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi-vii
	LIST OF TABLES	xiii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xv
1	INTRODUCTION	1-26
1.1	Psychophysical: Definitions, Meanings and Interpretations	1
1.2	Acting as a Phenomenon	2
1.3	Statement of the Problem	6
1.4	Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training and Critical Comparative Analysis with other Contemporary Approaches	7
1.5	Phillip Zarrilli's Life	13
1.6	Phillip Zarrilli's Professional Career and Works	15
1.7	Phillip Zarrilli's Memories	21
1.8	Significance of the Study	23
1.9	Delimitations of the Study	24
1.10	Summary of Succeeding Chapters	25
2	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	27-94
2.1	Historical Background of Actor Training	27

2.1.1	The Origin of Theatre: Democracy and Theatre	27
2.1.2	Greek Tragedy and the Introduction of an Actor	27
2.1.3	Chorus, Actors and the Need for Actor Training and its Development	29
2.1.4	Bharata Muni's "The Natyasastra" and Abhinaya (Acting) in the Natyasastra	31
2.1.5	The Concept of Bhava and Rasa	34
2.1.6	Greek Theatre, The Natyasastra and its Connection to Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training	39
2.2	The Development of Psychophysical Acting Training Methods and Influences on Phillip Zarrilli's Method	40
2.2.1	The Stanislavski System	42
2.2.1.1	Phillip Zarrilli on Stanislavski	47
2.2.2	Michael Chekhov	48
2.2.2.1	A Comparative Analysis of Stanislavski and Chekhov	52
2.2.2.2	Contemporary Relevance of Chekhov's Technique	53
2.2.3	Jerzy Grotowski	54
2.2.3.1	A Comparative Analysis of Stanislavski's "The Method of Physical Actions" and Grotowski's Idea of "Impulse"	58
2.2.3.2	The Objective Drama Project	60
2.2.4	Eugenio Barba	65
2.2.4.1	Eastern Theatre, Pre-Expressive Training and Extra Daily Technique in Barba's Practice	68
2.2.4.2	Barba's View on Exercises for Actors	71

2.2.5	The Neutral State by Jacques Copeau	74
2.2.6	Tadashi Suzuki and the Grammar of the Feet	77
2.2.7	A.C. Scott and the East-West Bridge in his View	79
2.3	A Comparative Analysis of Psychophysical Acting Pedagogies and Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training	81
2.4	Research Gap	87
2.5	Research Methodology	90
2.6	Conclusion	90
3	THE BODYMIND DUALISM AND THE PSYCHOPHYSICAL DISCIPLINES	95-169
3.1	The Bodymind Dualism	95
3.2	Understanding the Whole Bodymind: The Strong Bodymind Connection	102
3.3	The Psychophysical Disciplines	110
3.3.1	Kathakali	113
3.3.2	Kalarippayattu	119
3.3.3	Yoga	132
3.3.4	Interconnections Between Kalarippayattu and Yoga in Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training	143
3.3.5	The Vital Energy Within: Breath and the Metaphors Marking this Energy	144
3.4	Research Survey with Practitioners of Psychophysical Disciplines of Yoga and Kalarippayattu	152
3.5	Conclusion	165
4	PHILLIP ZARRILLI'S PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTING TRAINING METHOD: A	170-217

	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	
4.1	A Phenomenological Outlook	172
4.2	Pre-Performative Training	180
4.3	A Comparative Study: Phillip Zarrilli and His Influences	206
4.4	Critical Engagement and Counter-Arguments	210
4.5	Conclusion	213
5	PHILLIP ZARRILLI'S PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTING TRAINING METHOD: A PRACTICAL APPROACH	218-293
5.1	Preliminary Breath Control Exercises	221
5.2	The Optimal State of the Psychophysical Actor	230
5.3	An Overview of the Psychophysical Actor's Process as Devised by Phillip Zarrilli	231
5.4	From Psychophysical Training to Acting: Structured Improvisations	243
5.5	Performance Scores	256
5.5.1	Act Without Words I	262
5.5.2	Not I	266
5.5.3	The Water Station	271
5.6	Conclusion	288
6	CONCLUSION	294-307
6.1	Summary	294
6.2	Analyses of the Study	296
6.3	Findings	304
6.4	Conclusion	306

	BIBLIOGRAPHY	308-317
	APPENDIX	318-326

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	TITLE	PAGE NO.
1.1	Michael Kirby's Continuum from Not- acting to Acting	4
2.1	The Nine Rasa and Bhava	35
3.1	Representing the Demographics of percentage of practitioners of Yoga and Kalarippayattu	154
3.2	Representing the Demographics of Percentage of Type of Practice	156
3.3	Representing the Participants Responses to the Survey Questions	156
5.1	Representing the Six Primary Psycho-dynamic Principles of Psychophysical Training	230

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO.
3.1	Representing the Demographics about Gender of Yoga and Kalaripayattu Practitioners	154
3.2	Representing the Age Distribution of Participants of Yoga and Kalaripayattu	155
3.3	Representing the Demographics of the Type of Practice	155
3.4	Representing the Positive Influences on Working Abilities of Participants	158
3.5	Representing the Opinions on Integration of Yoga and Kalaripayattu into Formal Acting Training	158

LIST OF APPENDICES

S. NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO.
A	List of Interviews	318
B	Close Ended Questionnaire for Yoga and Kalarippayattu Practitioners	319
C	Open Ended Questionnaire for Practitioners of Yoga and Kalarippayattu	322
D	Open Ended Questionnaire for Phillip Zarrilli's Students	323
E	Open Ended Questionnaire for Theatre Experts and Actor Trainers	324
F	List of Publications	325
G	List of Conferences	326

CHAPTER- 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Psychophysical: Definitions, Meanings and Interpretations

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word Psychophysical is related to psychophysics and refers to sharing mental and physical qualities. Psychophysics, as defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary, is a branch of psychology concerned with the effect of physical processes (such as intensity of stimulation) on the mental processes of an organism.

According to Zarrilli, “Psycho” is derived from the Greek psyche. Psyche can mean “life, spirit, soul, self”. This meaning informs the commonplace contemporary use and understanding of the self as defined by modern psychology- “the science of mind or mental phenomena, the science of behaviour, the mental, attitudinal, motivational, or behavioural characteristics of an individual or of a type, class or group of individuals” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 18).

Phillip Zarrilli discusses the meaning of psychophysical and he also mentioned that there cannot be one definition. There can be many interpretations related to it. He asserted that the definition cannot claim definitive answers regarding the inquiries central to its practice. Zarrilli dismisses the dualistic interpretation of the term and highlights its unity. He recognizes the composite essence of the term “psycho-physical” and “body-mind” which encompasses the integration of both mental and physical aspects. The interpretation of the term “psychophysical” varies among practitioners based on their individual experiences with it.

Sube Singh Ravish is a very well-known yoga practitioner and teacher who defined psychophysical as,

“The physical and the psyche work together in coordination and there is a state when they work together with high speed that they appear as one. Although they are never one but through practice, we can attain this state in which they appear to be one. For example, if we look at a high-speed moving fan it appears to be one, but it is built of different panels. This consistency is a state of yoga, and I will say that psychophysical is another name for a state of meditation” (S.S. Ravish, Personal Interview, November 14, 2023).

These definitions and interpretations are the result of personal experiences and extensive engagement with psychophysical disciplines. It clearly indicates that each practitioner approaches these practices in a unique manner which results in distinct experiences for each individual.

1.2 Acting as a Phenomenon

According to S.S. Ravish (Personal Interview, 14 November 2023) Plato mentions that poetry is thrice removed from reality. First is Literature, second is the adoption of this literature in the form of actions, third is the interpretation of this action by the audience. Aristotle also mentioned that may art be an imagination and not real. But the reality in art is even more prominent than life because without imagination we can't make this world a better place. This is not art for the sake of art, but this is art for life and theatre is also a form of art for life. Theatre is not only a form of entertainment, but it reflects life and reaction to life. Aristotle mentioned that art is not thrice moved from reality, but it is something which is beyond reality.

“We easily perform our everyday routine without being conscious of it but if we have to perform the same thing on the stage then we become very conscious of the actions and the

audiences. We try to avoid mistakes and jerks. This awareness is the core energy of acting and this energy provides life to the stage. You will be able to perform flawlessly without mistakes when you practise the process of transferring this energy from body to heart (mana) and vice-versa.” (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

“The actor must first of all see his own ways of doing (in daily life) so that he can then construct such ‘doings’ (actions) consciously on stage. All this he uses as a springboard to arrive at a genuine experience in which his emotions react naturally without pumping to what he is doing on stage. The totality of what the actor does, with all of its consciously executed details and spontaneous truth, reveals to the spectator something specific about our human condition.” (Richards, 1995, p. 103)

Theatre making and acting is an evolving process which is deeply rooted in the phenomenon of self-discovery. It can be looked upon as a research into how individuals relate to their performances and the art of performance making. The field is characterised by continuous exploration, experimentation and adaptation because artists seek to push the boundaries of their creativity. “Acting may be defined as that psychophysiological process by means of which a theatrical world is made available at the moment of its appearance/experience for both the actors and audience” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 44). Acting as an art form is driven by the quest for authenticity. Actors engage in a profound exploration of their characters. Through extensive research and training they embody diverse roles and bring them to life on stage. As theatre making and acting evolves then it also alters the relationship between artists and spectators.

“Every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a ‘theory’ of acting- a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his or her performance, the structure of actions which he or she performs, the shape that those actions take (as a character, role, or sequence of actions as in some performance art), and the relationship to the audience.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 3)

Michael Kirby (2002) examined acting by tracing the acting/not-acting continuum from one extreme to another. He explores a continuum of activities from non-matrixed actions (not-acting) to character-based performances (complex acting). Kirby outlines a progression of activities starting with “Happenings” and leading up to “character acting”. He aims to examine and redefine our understanding of what constitutes “acting” versus “not- acting”. In 1972, Michael Kirby sought to explore the transformations occurring within American acting throughout the 1960s. He proposed there was a departure from character-based acting towards the not-acting/non-matrixed aspect of the spectrum. According to Kirby’s perspective, acting in its fullest expression presents no challenge in terms of definition. The challenge lies in delineating the transitional zones where acting commences as we construct a continuum.

Table 1.1 Michael Kirby’s continuum from not- acting to acting.

Not- Acting Non-matrixed Performing	Symbolised Matrix	Received Acting	Simple Acting	Acting Complex Acting
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Kirby talks about non-matrix representations which are concerned with those performers who do not do anything to reinforce the information or identification. The performer is merely himself and is not embedded. He refers to him as being non-matrixed. “The performers who do not do anything to reinforce the information or identification like the stage attendants of kabuki and no, are merely conveyed by their costumes themselves and not embedded, as it were, in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place, and time, they can be referred to as being “non-matrixed” (Kirby, 2002, p. 41). As we progress from the far end of the continuum towards acting, we encounter a condition where the performer refrains from active portrayal. But the costume symbolically represents something or someone. This state could be termed a “symbolised matrix”. Within a symbolised matrix the elements of reference are attributed to but not enacted by the performer.

Kirby describes Received acting as, “Anyone merely walking across a stage containing a realistic setting might come to represent a person in that place and, perhaps, time without doing anything we could distinguish as acting” (Kirby, 2002, p. 42). He specifies that non-matrixed performing, symbolised matrix and received acting represent various points along the continuum from not-acting to acting. As we progress along this scale, the degree of simulation, representation, and impersonation increases. None of these actions have been executed by the performer in a distinct manner that we could categorise as acting.

Simplistic characters that define acting: Whether physical or emotional if the performer engages in actions to stimulate, represent or impersonate then they are considered to be acting. It is not important if the style is employed or whether the action contributes to a full characterisation. Emotional involvement is also not a prerequisite. The definition of acting is linked to the nature of the performed actions. “Acting can be said to exist in the smallest and simplest action that involves pretence” (Kirby, 2002, p. 43). Acting extends beyond purely physical actions to encompass emotional expression. For example, public speaking may evoke emotions, but it does not inherently constitute acting.

The point when acting appears: When emotions are deliberately emphasised for the spectators. It is a point where performers are actively selecting and projecting aspects of character emotion to engage the spectators. Kirby asserts that acting inherently involves a fundamental psychological or emotional element. While this element exists in varying degrees across all forms of acting. He mentions that it is not sufficient to differentiate acting from not- acting. It could be argued that the only utilisation and projection of emotion serve as the distinguishing factor between acting and not- acting. Kirby also notes that as we progress along the continuum from not- acting to acting, there is a gradual increase in the level of representation, personification and similar elements.

Complex Acting: The most basic form of acting involves the utilisation of only one aspect of the craft. Emotion as previously discussed may be the only domain where pretence

occurs. For example, a simple action like putting on a jacket may be simulated in this manner. Acting evolves as more and more intricate elements are integrated into the pretence thus gradually increasing the complexity of the performance. Kirby provides an example of a scenario where a performer in the context of a scene is putting on a jacket. They may opt to convey various elements such as emotion (let's say, fear), physical attributes (portraying an elderly individual), setting (under a bright sun) and numerous other factors. Each of these elements could be depicted independently. When presented all together or in close succession, the acting becomes intricate and multifaceted. (Kirby, 2002, p. 46)

“As Happenings demonstrated, not all performing is acting. Although acting was sometimes used, the performers in Happenings generally tended to ‘be’ nobody or nothing other than themselves; nor did they represent, or pretend to be in, a time or place different from that of the spectator” (Kirby, 2002, p. 40). Kirby asserts that Happenings offer valuable insights into contemporary developments in acting. The emergence of Happenings revolutionised theatre in several ways. One is that the traditional scripts lost their significance as performances began to be collectively created. The dynamic relationship between audience and performance underwent various alterations. Spectators often became an integral aspect of the performance itself. This exploration of audience participation became prevalent and unconventional spaces were utilised for performances. There was a heightened focus on movement and visual imagery among other innovations.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Each era is characterised by its distinct artistic elements that define its cultural landscape. The evolution of contemporary theatre is propelled by the rise of new technologies and a historical shift from a solely text-based theatre. The contemporary theatre has entered a post dramatic phase leading in a new era where actors face increasingly challenging dramaturgies. Lehmann clarifies that towards the latter part of the nineteenth century the

dramatic theatre had undergone an extensive period of development. It marked the culmination in its establishment as a fully refined discursive formation. The evolution from this established discursive formation towards the post dramatic represents a process marked by stages of introspection, deconstruction and the gradual separation of elements inherent to dramatic theatre. This journey unfolds through the diverse experiments of the historical avant-garde and neo-avant-garde movements of the 1950s and 1960s. It marked the emergence of post dramatic theatrical forms (Lehmann, 2006, p. 48). A notable aspect of this transformation is the departure from psychologically based characters. Theatre heavily relied on character development rooted in psychological depth. Some contemporary theatre practitioners disrupt this notion moving towards a more fragmented and abstract portrayal of characters and narratives. This opens up a vast realm of possibilities for actors to explore alternative forms of expression and engage with spectators in more emotionally evocative ways. Zarrilli argues that psychological means are not sufficient for contemporary theatre making, “I argue here that the ‘psychological’ is no longer if it ever was a paradigm with sufficient explanatory and/ or practical power and flexibility to fully inform the complexities of the work of the contemporary actor” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 8). In the light of new developments contemporary actors at times find themselves navigating an uncharted territory when they encounter post dramatic theatre. This artistic evolution challenges actors to push their creative boundaries. It wants actors to experiment with physicality, voice, movement and other elements in order to cultivate a deeper understanding of how performance unfolds. The exploration of innovative dramaturgies and character portrayals is set to redefine the art of acting.

1.4 Phillip Zarrilli’s Psychophysical Acting Training and Critical Comparative Analysis with other Contemporary Approaches

Psychophysical Acting training is a method that aims to foster a profound connection between the body and the mind. It was first explored and formalised by Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) who is a prominent figure in theatre. Stanislavski along with

Vladimir Danchenko co-founded the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) company. Stanislavski revolutionised the approach towards acting. It is important to clarify here that the term “psychophysical” was first used by him in theatre and performance practice.

“The psychophysical approach to acting outlined above builds most immediately on the visions and key principles and insights of Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Artaud. It was the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) who, as part of his lifelong practical research into the nature and processes of acting first developed a ‘psychophysical’ approach to Western acting focused equally on the actor’s psychology and physicality applied to textually based character acting. Stanislavski described how the actor’s ‘physical score’, once perfected, must go beyond ‘mechanical execution’ to a ‘deeper’ level of experience which ‘is rounded out with new feeling and ... becomes, one might say, psychophysical in quality’. Thus, in every physical action ... there is concealed some inner action, some feelings.” (Zarrilli, 2015)

Phillip Zarrilli states that Psychophysical Acting Training examines the dynamic interaction between the actor as the performer and the actions they undertake. It re-evaluates both the practice and its theoretical exploration. It draws from a diverse range of intercultural paradigms and principles to highlight the foundational concepts underlying Konstantin Stanislavski’s utilisation of the compound term “psycho-physical”. It represents the comprehensive process of psychophysical training via Asian martial arts and yoga which has been developed till now. Through this training the actor re-educates their bodymind and gains a fresh perspective. It offers an alternative conceptualisation and framework for the actor’s craft rooted in an “energetics” of performance. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 1)

Phillip Zarrilli’s psychophysical acting training, rooted in Asian martial and meditative practices, particularly Kalarippayattu, yoga, and tai chi represents a unique integration of breath, embodiment, and presence. His method is fundamentally distinct in its pre-

performative focus, preparing the actor's bodymind as a lived, responsive instrument before engaging with text or character.

Critical Comparative Analysis with other Contemporary Approaches:

Stanislavski

Stanislavski emphasised the significance of establishing a strong link between psychology and physicality in actor training and performance. It laid the groundwork for what later became known as the psychophysical approach. Stanislavski's contributions to the art of acting were ground-breaking. He challenged conventional acting practices that relied solely on external gestures. He advocated for a more authentic and internally driven style of acting. He urged actors to delve deep into the psychology of their characters and connect their emotions to their physical actions. Throughout his career Stanislavski directed, taught and extensively wrote about acting. He outlined his psychophysical approach to actor training in books such as "An Actor Prepares" (1936), "Building a Character" (1949) and "Creating a Role" (1961). These works explain the nuances of the famous "Stanislavski System" which emphasised the importance of emotional truth and physical actions in acting. He encouraged actors to draw from their own emotional experiences and memories to create authentic performances referred to as the "affective memory" technique. His ideas concerning emotional memory and the method of physical actions hold significant importance within the field.

Stanislavski's later shift to the method of physical actions where emotion and physical action are interconnected resonates with Zarrilli's approach. However, Zarrilli diverges by prioritizing the pre-performative state, using embodied awareness practices like breath control, martial arts, and yoga to awaken the bodymind before engaging with character. Zarrilli preferred cultivating a non-representational presence rather than aiming for realism or character psychology in a traditional sense.

Michael Chekhov

Michael Chekhov also emphasized the psychophysical connection in acting. His work centred around the imagination, psychological gestures, and inner impulses manifesting through the body. Zarrilli's method begins with breath and embodied awareness as the foundation of performance. While Chekhov's method arises more from the actor's psychological projection, aiming to translate inner experience into outward physical form. Chekhov often encouraged metaphorical or symbolic movement as a way to access character.

Jerzy Grotowski

Jerzy Grotowski, another key figure in psychophysical training, focused on stripping away the non-essential. He aimed for a ritualistic and raw physicality that demanded total commitment from the performer. Like Zarrilli, Grotowski emphasized awareness, and the performer's body as a sacred vessel. However, Grotowski's training leaned toward extreme physical and vocal exertion, whereas Zarrilli's work remains internal, contemplative, and energy-based, drawing from yogic and martial awareness rather than raw exertion.

Eugenio Barba

Eugenio Barba is the founder of Odin Theatre and Theatre Anthropology. It places the actor's craft at the intersection of codified performance traditions and intercultural physicality. Like Zarrilli, Barba seeks to understand pre-expressive principles that transcend cultural boundaries, often drawing from Asian forms. Both emphasize body memory, and energy dynamics. Barba's performers work extensively with score-based physical dramaturgy, where stylized precision meets improvisational structure. Zarrilli's work, while equally rooted in Asian traditions, focuses less on codification and more on the internal flow of breath, energy, and awareness. Barba studies performer presence through ritualized action across cultures. Zarrilli's psychophysical training is

more meditative and inwardly transformative, using Asian traditional arts-based awareness to unlock performative readiness.

Tadashi Suzuki

Tadashi Suzuki's actor training method, like Zarrilli's, is rooted in Asian performance traditions and emphasizes grounding, breath control, and physical precision. Both trainers require the actor to develop a strong centre and a strong physical presence. However, Suzuki's exercises are often rigid and performative, shaped by the aesthetics of traditional Japanese theatre, whereas Zarrilli's practice is fluid, internal, and contemplative. Zarrilli's actors are trained in stillness and awareness, allowing performance to arise organically from an attuned bodymind rather than stylized form.

A.C. Scott

A.C. Scott was a significant figure in the exploration of Asian theatre traditions and intercultural performance. He advocated for incorporating Eastern performance philosophies into Western practice, especially through Chinese and Indian practices. While not a trainer per se, Scott's theoretical work aligns with Zarrilli's in the belief that Asian embodied techniques offer profound insights for actor training. Scott's emphasis was often descriptive and comparative, analysing forms and proposing integration. Zarrilli executed this knowledge into a daily psychophysical practice. Zarrilli's contribution goes beyond theorization and provided a functional training paradigm that brings intercultural practices directly into actor training process. Zarrilli extends the lineage of Scott through practice-as-research and performer training.

Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training occupies a distinct position among contemporary performance pedagogies. It shares foundational concerns with Stanislavski, Chekhov, Grotowski, Suzuki, Barba, and Scott, such as presence, bodymind unity, and performer preparation. Zarrilli's work is crucial for its sustained engagement with non-Western practices, and in its insistence on the pre-performative cultivation of embodied

awareness. His method reframes acting as a practice of being, offering a transformative path that reshapes not only how actors perform, but how they exist in the moment.

The term “psychophysical” was developed over the time through the efforts of various theatre practitioners. It is associated with the integration of psychological and physical elements in actor training. The contemporary theatre practitioner Phillip B. Zarrilli has further expanded on these ideas. He explored the psychophysical approach to enhance an actor’s embodiment, presence and emotional authenticity in performances. This research work primarily focuses on the pedagogy of Phillip Zarrilli, who was a well-known writer, director, actor trainer and an academician. He developed a unique approach to psychophysical actor training. Zarrilli has authored several books including “Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski” (2009), “(Toward) a Phenomenology of Acting” (2019), “Kathakali Dance Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play” (2000) and “When the Body Becomes All Eyes: Paradigms, Practices and Discourses of Power in Kalarippayattu” (1998). He has edited the book “Acting (Re)Considered” (2002) which comprises a collection of essays dedicated to psychophysical acting training. He also edited the book titled “Intercultural Acting and Performer Training” along with Dr. Anuradha Kapur and T. Sasitharan. His book “Psychophysical Acting: An intercultural approach after Stanislavski” (Routledge, 2009) received the 2010 Association for Theatre in Higher Education Outstanding Book of the Year Award at the ATHE convention in Los Angeles, August 2010. Zarrilli asserts that his psychophysical acting training process provides actors with valuable conceptual and practical tools to address the challenges posed by contemporary dramaturgies. Zarrilli advocates for a “post-Stanislavskian” perspective. It is crucial to note that Zarrilli’s psychophysical approach does not reject Stanislavski’s teachings but rather seeks to transcend the understanding and application of Stanislavski’s legacy. By adopting a psychophysical outlook actor can explore new dimensions of their craft. This approach emphasises the unity of body and mind to empower actors with a fresh perspective on acting.

1.5 Phillip Zarrilli's Life

Westlake (2020) mentions that Phillip Zarrilli was born in 1947 in Covington, Kentucky which is just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, United States. He was raised in Akron, Ohio and embarked on a journey that encompassed his passion for philosophy, religion, activism and theatre. Zarrilli's mother was a singer. After completing his education at Buchtel High School, he pursued studies in philosophy at Ohio University. Kim (2016) mentions that Troy Orton, a professor specialising in Hindu Philosophy, Aristotle and logic took notice of Zarrilli's extraordinary qualities. He advised Zarrilli throughout his university education. After his B.A. in 1969, Zarrilli received a Rockefeller Grant for a trial year as a seminarian. He chose McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. After his trial year he earned a Master of Divinity degree in 1971. Although he did not ultimately become a minister. His fervour for philosophy and religion shaped his commitment to advocate against the war and fight for social justice. "His burgeoning sense of moral conviction during his time at seminary led him to be vehemently against the Vietnam War, and he engaged in activism. Interestingly, he began to be intrigued by the performing arts concurrent to his time of activism. This time in his life was a high point of his youth and changed him on a fundamental level" (Wallace, 2012, p. 36).

In an interview given to Wallace (2012) Zarrilli mentioned that "When I got to seminary, it was incredibly exciting intellectually, socially, and politically because at that time the church was incredibly politically active. The mainstream Protestant denominations had really radical theology along with the Catholics. My idols were Martin Luther King and William Sloan Coffin, a chaplain at Yale University. He was the main person, really helping to activate the anti-Vietnam War movement." (Wallace, 2012, p. 36)

Wallace mentions in her writing that at this point of time philosophers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre influenced Zarrilli a lot. It was a philosophy of action and often atheism which opened Zarrilli to a new pathway of thought. This existential sensibility fed

his future to a psychophysical and full bodymind pedagogical approach. As these two existential figures (Camus and Sartre) as well as others of their league influenced Zarrilli. He got interested in theatre as “a process of communication and also of experience.” He saw theatre as a “vehicle” where “philosophy, religion and theatre could meet. It is that vortex between thought and deep experience for both the performers and the audience and attempts to figure out how and why we live the way we do.” (Wallace, 2012, p. 37)

Westlake (2020) mentions that Zarrilli recognised the potential of theatre as a means of expressing and implementing his ideas. He enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Minnesota. He completed Ph.D. in 1978 in theatre under the supervision of John Hurrell from University of Minnesota. In 1976, Zarrilli’s path intersected with that of A.C. Scott who was the founder of the Asian Experimental Theatre program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Zarrilli assumed the leadership of the program following Scott’s retirement in 1979. Zarrilli not only taught at North Western University and NYU but also remained committed to regular training in Kerala where he studied kalarippayattu under the guidance of Govindan Kutty Nair. Phillip Zarrilli’s notable academic achievements garnered him numerous scholarships, grants and awards. He was granted a Fulbright scholarship in 1976 to pursue his work in theatre. This scholarship came at a pivotal moment in Zarrilli’s educational journey which was situated between the completion of his master’s degree and his subsequent Ph.D. studies. He utilised the scholarship funds to embark on a journey to Kerala, India with the aim of studying kathakali which is a traditional form of Indian theatre. This phase of Zarrilli’s life proved to be transformative as he immersed himself in the intricacies of kathakali and parallelly began to focus on theatre pedagogy. His primary objective was to address acting challenges faced by Western students. The experience in Kerala sparked a revelatory process shaping Zarrilli’s evolving approach to theatre. Sadly, Phillip Zarrilli passed away on the afternoon of April 28, 2020, in the comforting presence of his partner Kaite O’Reilly. He is survived by Kaite, as well as his children, Barth Lawrence and Samara Anne.

1.6 Phillip Zarrilli's Professional Career and Works

Kim (2016) mentions that Zarrilli began training in kathakali dance drama in 1976-77 under the guidance of M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri at the Kerala Kalamandalam. It was his study of kathakali's preliminary training processes that led Zarrilli to kalaripayattu which is the source of kathakali's preliminary training exercises. In 1988, he achieved the exceptional distinction of being the first non-Indian recipient of the traditional *pitham* which is a significant symbol of mastery in the ancient Indian martial art Kalaripayattu. It was provided to him by Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar. From 1976 to 1993, Zarrilli dedicated separate periods of time to intensive training and thorough research on kalaripayattu. These immersive experiences allowed Zarrilli to delve deeply into the intricacies of these art forms and profoundly influenced his artistic perspective. Zarrilli incorporated different Asian art forms like Yoga, Kathakali, Kalaripayattu and Tai chi in his pedagogy. He learned hatha yoga from teachers like Chandran Gurukul and Dhayanidhi for several years in India. His objective was to grant contemporary actor's invaluable insight into the creative processes inherent in these traditional art forms. Along with primary long-term training under Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar, Zarrilli also studied under C. Mohammed Sherif (Kerala Kalaripayattu Academy, Kannur) and Raju Asan. Zarrilli established Tyn-y-parc CVN Kalari in Wales, United Kingdom which stands as the inaugural certified traditional Kalari studio outside of India. Since its establishment in 2000, CVN Kalari, Wales has been dedicated to training practitioners through a comprehensive set of psychophysical processes. "Zarrilli went through different stages in the development of his unique acting training. The underlying drive has always been to develop concrete approaches that can help contemporary actors and directors in their creative processes, responding to the need for an alternative approach to actor training that is not limited by a particular acting style that is psychological/behavioural realism" (Kim, 2016, p. 449). He developed a unique and intensive pre-performative process for training actors which combines elements from the practices of yoga and Asian martial arts kalaripayattu from Kerala, India and Taijiquan Wu style from China. He taught this pre-

performative process of training actors at his private studio in Wales and throughout the world. He conducted workshops or long-term residences at many institutions including the Grotowski Institute (Poland), as part of the “BEYOND” project with Emio Greco and Co (Amsterdam), Helsinki Academy of the Arts, Seoul International Theatre Festival, National Theatre of Greece, Tainan-Jen Theatre Company (Taiwan), Gardzienice Theatre Association and many university actor training programmes such as Trinity College (Dublin), Indiana University (USA), Intercultural Theatre Institute (Singapore) and the Norwegian Theatre Academy.

Pooja trained under Phillip Zarrilli at ITI, Singapore and elaborated on the development of Phillip Zarrilli’s pre-performative training. She mentioned that Phillip Zarrilli came to India to learn Kathakali at Kalamandalam in Kerala. Then Phillip questioned where these movements were coming from. Then he got to know about Kalarippayattu and Kalari was banned during the freedom movement. He came in the 1970’s to India and everything was in a state of revival. Zarrilli searched for all the Kalari practitioners around. Phillip was curious and he was inquiring, and a very interesting point appears in Phillip’s book where he mentioned that there was a time when he was practising Kalari, and he was drenched in sweat. He was able to feel every muscle of his body working and the guru kept on instructing that use your entire body. Pooja mentioned that this is where his technique evolves. Once he got comfortable with his body then he understood that this entire body is about awareness and opening up in space. Pooja assumes that these are the instances which led to his understanding. Barba and Grotowski were also exploring. Even Barba had “pre-expressive” training and Chekhov had “zero stage” where everything comes to a neutrality, and you again start from this stage. She thinks there is always a need to come back to some place. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Zarrilli was appointed Professor of Drama in 2000 at the University of Exeter. His title was altered to Professor of Performance Practice to better reflect his extensive experience and research in intercultural performance and contemporary acting practice. In 2013,

Zarrilli became Emeritus Professor of Performance Practice. Before joining Exeter, he was Professor of Theatre, Folklore and South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “Understanding the relationship between the martial art as pre-performative training and kathakali as performance work, Zarrilli developed his unique approach to actor training during the early days of his teaching career at the University of Wisconsin-Madison” (Kim, 2016, p. 448). He also taught at U.C.L.A., North Western University, N.Y.U. and the University of Surrey. Zarrilli founded the Ph.D. in performance practice which was the first research through practice program in University of Exeter. He established “The Llanarth Group” in 2000 in West Wales, U.K. The Llanarth Group is a collective of theatre/performance artists committed to the production of exceptional international theatre. Their work centres around the comprehensive psychophysical training of actors from diverse cultural backgrounds. Each production undertaken by the group involves a carefully selected team of collaborators who align with the specific aesthetic of the project at hand. The group’s creative process involves the development, rehearsal and sharing of small-scale collaborations and original works with local audiences. These preview showings offered free of charge takes place at the Tyn y parc studio located in West Wales. While the productions are primarily intended for audiences in Wales and beyond, they also aim to foster intercultural exchange by encouraging the sharing of performance techniques, approaches and aesthetics. Resident dramaturg Kaite O’Reilly contributes her expertise and guidance to the group’s endeavours, adding depth and insight to their artistic explorations. The work of The Llanarth Group includes productions across a wide variety of aesthetics and dramaturgies, including:

- 2018 “*Richard III redux* or *Sara Beer [IS/NOT] Richard III*”, co-written with Kaite O’Reilly, directed by Phillip Zarrilli, featuring Sara Beer. World premiere, March 2018 and on tour in Wales, and on tour to Germany.
- 2018 “*And Suddenly I Disappear*”: The Singapore/UK ‘d’ Monologues by Kaite O’Reilly, directed by Phillip Zarrilli, co-produced with Access-Pathways Productions (Singapore)—a Kaite O’Reilly Unlimited International commission.

- 2016: World premiere of Kaite O'Reilly's "*Cosy*". An Unlimited production in association with Wales Millennium Centre. Premiere: 08 March, with a tour of Wales.
- 2015 "*playing the maids*": a creative response to Jean Genet's *the Maids*, this entirely new co-created work is co-created with Gaitkrash (Ireland), Theatre P'yut (Korea) and two independent artists. Premiered at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff. Funded by Arts Council of Wales. Features four performers who are Exeter graduates including Jeungsook Yoo, Sunhee Kim, Jing Hong Okorn-Kuo, and Bernadette Cronin, as well as current faculty member, Adrian Curtin. Directed by Phillip Zarrilli. Dramaturg: Kaite O'Reilly.
- 2012 "*The Echo Chamber*": co-created by Kaite O'Reilly, Ian Morgan, Peadar Kirk, and Phillip Zarrilli with Arts Council of Wales funding. Premiered at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff.
- 2010-2016 "*Told by the Wind*": East Asian inspired work co-created by Kaite O'Reilly, Jo Shapland, and Phillip Zarrilli with funding from Arts Council of Wales and AHRC. Previewed at Evora Festival Portugal (2009) and has toured to Berlin, Chicago, Wroclaw, and most recently in 2013 to Tokyo Theatre Babylon.
- 2010 "*The Evora Books*": a library of hands: commissioned by Escrita na Paisagem Festival de Performance e Artes da Terra, Evora, Portugal (curated by Jose Alberto Ferreira). Co-created by Phillip Zarrilli and Kaite O'Reilly. A site-specific performance at the Evora Library Reading Room.
- 2000-2012 "*The Beckett Project*": productions of eight of Beckett's 20 plays from 2000. Performed on invitation of the Malta Arts Festival, 2012.

Zarrilli's other international works as a director:

- 2018: Beckett's "*Footfalls* and *Play*" The National Theatre, Costa Rica, and in 2017 with The National Theatre Company, Costa Rica.
- 2015: Directed a major new production of Ota Shogo's "*The Water Station*" with an international cast. Nordland Teater and on tour in Norway. Premiered 24 September.

- 2014 (and 2016) Invited Guest Director to the Taipei Arts Festival. Directed the world premiere of Kaite O'Reilly's "*the 9 fridas*" with Mobius Strip Theatre in association with Hong Kong Rep. In October 2016 the production was re-rehearsed and performed at the Hong Kong Rep as part of the International Black Box Festival.
- 2010-2011: "...sweet...dry...bitter...plaintive" (Corpo-realities commission, 2010, also performed at the Manchester DECIBEL Festival, 2011). A Sankalpam production performed at Laban Theatre, London, and on national tour throughout the UK.
- 2006: "*4:48 Psychosis*" at KNUA (Seoul, Korea).
- 2004: "*The Dance of The Drunken Monk*". A Sankalpam performed at the Percell Room, South Bank Centre, and on a UK national tour.
- 1999-2008: Collaborations with Bharatanatyam choreographers/dancer, Gitanjali Kolanad: "*Walking Naked*" and "*The Flowering Tree*" with Gitanjali Kolanad, 1999-2008 [premieres in Chennai, performances in Toronto, UK, and world-wide].
- 2004 & 2008: Directed "*The Water Station*" and "*Attempts on her life*" in Singapore at Esplanade Theatres on the Bay for TTRP/ITI. (Retrieved from https://cdf.exeter.ac.uk/drama/people/profile/index.php?web_id=zarrilli)

Kim (2016) mentions that Zarrilli's ground-breaking approach to actor training encompasses a three-stage process. Each contributing to the overall development of performers. The first stage is known as the pre-performative phase and involves training students in traditional forms like yoga and kalarippayattu. This initial stage establishes a foundational groundwork that serves as a prerequisite for engaging in theatre-making. In the second stage, Zarrilli introduced what he termed "structured improvisations" as a vital bridge between the pre-performative and final performance. During this phase performers learn to equip their psychophysical qualities such as awareness, focus and energy in order to embody specific acting tasks. Through these structured improvisations actors acquire the necessary skills to adapt to the performance environment. The third stage represents the culmination of Zarrilli's process where performers transition into the actual

performance. This stage allows actors to apply their refined psychophysical awareness and skills to create an authentic theatrical experience. “His training of actors and students is best reflected in the MA/MFA theatre practice program that Zarrilli developed at the University of Exeter, where he and his students were given priority access to studios at least five days a week for three hours a day. This provided the students the time that is required for the experience, cultivation and embodiment of the principles underlying the psychophysical processes” (Kim, 2016, pp. 449-450). Through this comprehensive three-stage process, Zarrilli’s methodology enables actors to progress from foundational training to the development of improvisational abilities and finally leading to performances. Kim states that the conventional divide of theory and practice does not exist in Zarrilli’s work. He engages simultaneously in intellectual and practical investigation in his writing on performance. Kim believes that Zarrilli’s contribution paved for the new ways we talk about theatre and performance now.

Dr. Anuradha Kapur mentioned that Phillip Zarrilli taught a lot for instance in ITI, Singapore and he was a very loved teacher. She mentioned that he had developed a method that allowed students to begin thinking and many of the students that he began working with in the initial stage whether it in Exeter or Singapore were not aware of these embodied theatrical traditions as we are already aware in India. In that sense he is one of the early people who began looking for this. We have these traditions already; may it be Grotowski or some other practitioner of the past. She asserts that but, in our time, Phillip Zarrilli has been very committed to being able to make the actor understand that there is a world around and in all his writing he talked about bodymind duality and how to put it together. (Dr. A. Kapur, Personal Interview, 23 June 2024)

Ankur feels that Phillip Zarrilli is instrumental in documenting what he experienced in South India. Phillip Zarrilli came to India and documented traditional practices. He had a certain understanding of the practices and hold on language. Many are not able to understand physical work that is right there as they cannot get the meaning out of it. So,

we need words to associate meaning with things. He documented Kalari and took it to the west. Ankur feels it is a really good documentation. Zarrilli has been instrumental in documenting Indian sensibilities through a fresh perspective. (Ankur Saxena, Personal Interview, 18 November 2023)

1.7 Phillip Zarrilli's Memories

Dr. Sreejith Ramanan is a faculty at School of Drama, Calicut University. He is into theatre teaching, acting and direction. Nowadays, he is directing plays for organisations and theatre schools. He did his graduation from School of Drama and then did his P.G. from Hyderabad University. He did M. Phil from Gandhi University, Kottayam. He further did three years specialisation in Acting from Intercultural Theatre Institute, Singapore. There he got the opportunity to meet legendary director and actor trainer Phillip B. Zarrilli. In 2007, Zarrilli came to ITI to direct a major play production titled “Attempts on her Life”. He came to direct this play with 5 of his actors from his department at University of Exeter.

Sreejith Ramanan shared the memories he has of Phillip Zarrilli. “I really want to share another memory with you, it’s not about the production. After the production we had a really strong relationship. He used to write to me that he wanted to come back to Kerala because he had a strong association with Kerala. Just before his death he got an opportunity to come back to Kerala and he conducted a workshop at School of Drama and Fine Arts, Calicut University. That was his last theatre workshop and also, he performed “Told by the Wind” in International Theatre Festival of Kerala. That was also his last performance. During that time, he handed over his latest book “(Toward) a Phenomenology of Acting” in ITFOK. He went back to his hometown, and he wrote a letter to me. It was like a thanksgiving note for helping him to come back to Kerala. He mentioned that he completed a cycle, he completed a circle. He knew that he was going to die soon. When he was in Kerala there were symptoms that he was going to die. He was affected with cancer, and this is the second time he was affected with it. He got a clear signal that within weeks he

is going to die. But he did not reveal it in Kerala. He went back to his home and was admitted to hospital, and he wrote a touching note. I still have that letter with me. This is very memorable for me, and these kinds of master's have given a lot of inspiration to us. The way they approached their life and working with the theatre people and connecting with the theatre people all over the world. He connected with lots of theatre makers all around the world. People were influenced by him. He was from top to bottom a theoretician and practitioner. One thing I want to mention is that during his rehearsal he used to be very calm, quiet and very respectful. Whenever he needed a particular actor for a particular scene, he only demanded that actor and in a very obedient way he used to ask us to join. The rehearsal process was so easy and comfortable. I used to sit for all his rehearsal process because I wanted to observe him as director and trainer. He generously permitted me to sit with him and understand his methodology. I remember all of these fond memories.” (Sreejith Ramanan, Personal Interview, 22 April 2024)

Pooja shared the memories she has of Phillip Zarrilli. She mentioned that it is very close to when Phillip died, and she remembers it because it was immediately after Irfan Khan's death. A month before Zarrilli had mailed Pooja that he is going to die, and it was such a positive email that she got from Zarrilli. The mail was about his time in Kerala, and he used to mention that he spent so much time in Kerala, but he has never performed there. He also got to perform in Kerala before he passed away. He took a class in Drama School, Thrissur and Pooja was translating his session. Pooja feels that it is such a pleasant memory for her. Phillip did so many workshops around the world and there are so many of his students around the world. For Pooja he was a very kind person and a very good academic writer. Pooja mentioned that Zarrilli was always accessible and always available as a teacher. Pooja mentioned that there is one thing Zarrilli said before he started training. “On the first day of training, he asked how many of you have read my book and said that forget it because whatever you have read is one thing and what we will do together is totally different. When you are reading you develop a certain idea of what he is trying to say but when he is teaching, and you are doing it in real time so whatever he has written makes a

different sense. I have seen articles written by my friends which absolutely don't resonate with Zarrilli's training and are completely misinterpreted. This idea of how you read and understand it and the other idea of doing it and understanding it which Zarrilli himself mentioned to us. People usually discuss what Phillip wrote and I many a times think that there is a lot of intellectualising a particular process versus what you get by actually doing it physically.” (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Phillip was a teacher who followed this practice of radical compassion, and he really was a master who lived by the principles he was teaching through psychophysical work. He was always incredibly respectful, gentle and open in the way he dealt with everyone no matter who they were. Everyone was equal in the room, he never worked in a way where he would play favourites. His entire practice was just about how he should just give the right kind of tools so that you can access your own breath and your energy source. His concern was how you re-engage with what you find pleasurable and enjoyable about acting. There was something very pure to be a part of that kind of training, which is entirely focused on the work itself, the work is you, the work is breath, and it is up to you how deep you want to go with that, and it allows you the space to find a connection. Niharika thinks this is liberating in a really subtle but radical way. Phillip's training was a training of compassion which meant that whatever you offer is accepted and he will only give you the tools to make it better or to find a deeper way to access it. (N. Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May, 2024)

1.8 Significance of the Study

Phillip Zarrilli in contrast to many of his teaching influences has undertaken a direct immersion into the practice culture. It provides him with first hand training experiences. While Scott acquired his knowledge of Tai chi through direct learning in China under whom Zarrilli trained. Stanislavski's understanding of yoga encompassing both practical and theoretical principles was confined to literary sources. Despite Chekhov's fascination

with Hinduism any transmission of yogic knowledge to him was notably diluted. Barba and Grotowski each separately travelled to India and had the privilege of witnessing kathakali performances as western spectators within its authentic sociocultural context. They did not undergo any formal training in that cultural discipline. Zarrilli trained with a diverse array of teachers in forms like Kathakali, Kalarippayattu, Tai Chi and Yoga which is a distinction that is exceptionally rare. Zarrilli's exploration is an inactive approach to understanding acting as a phenomenon. He draws upon contemporary advancements in phenomenology and cognitive science. He formulated a meta-theoretical framework that views acting from the perspective of the actor as an enactor and doer from within. This enactive approach emphasises the embodied nature of acting where the actor's experiences, emotions and physicality play a central role in shaping the performance. He integrates insights from phenomenology which examines the subjective experience of consciousness and explores the bodymind relationship. By delving into the inner world of the actor and their interactions with the external environment Zarrilli formulated a comprehensive approach. The thesis stands out for its valuable insights into Zarrilli's personal background and offers details of his training method. With little exposure to Asian traditional forms, how did Zarrilli evolve into the figure who operated a Kalari studio in Wales and travels over the globe, immersing himself in the study and practice of psychophysical performance techniques? This exploration seeks to uncover the interplay between Zarrilli's life experiences and sheds light on the intricate nexus of his cultural encounters and professional pursuits.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study: The study has been limited to as per the following aspects:

- It is limited to the industry experts and students of Phillip Zarrilli from India only.
- The study did not focus much on Kathakali, as it inspired Zarrilli and other teachers mentioned, but Zarrilli does not use it in his teaching.
- It is limited to Indian psychophysical disciplines of Yoga and Kalarippayattu and did not focus much on Chinese martial arts tai chi to limit the area of the study.

1.10 Summary of Succeeding Chapters

The second chapter provides a detailed account of review of literature including the origin of theatre and its development. It focuses on the factors leading to the birth of an actor and the development of the art of acting with reference to the seminal art works “Poetics” and “Natyasastra”. It also highlights the development of the first psychophysical acting training method by Konstantin Stanislavski and the theatre practitioners who followed the lineage. It highlights the influences on Phillip Zarrilli’s works and method. The chapter outlines the research gap after a detailed study of different methods. The third chapter discusses the bodymind dualism and progresses to an understanding of the whole bodymind as formulated by Phillip Zarrilli. The chapter talks about the psychophysical disciplines of Kathakali, Kalarippayattu and Yoga highlighting the qualities they generate after a long-term practice and how Phillip Zarrilli used them to help actors. It includes a detailed research survey conducted with practitioners of yoga and kalarippayattu to outline its potential practical benefits. Chapter fourth focuses on the theoretical aspect of Phillip Zarrilli’s method including the phenomenological outlook. It considers the “Pre-Performative” training developed by Zarrilli to train actors. Chapter fifth provides a practical understanding of Zarrilli’s method by focusing on the Performance Scores, Structured Improvisations and exercises developed by Zarrilli to train actors. In chapter six we conclude the research work succeeded by a detailed Bibliography and Appendices.

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CHAPTER- 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Historical Background of Actor Training

2.1.1 The Origin of Theatre: Democracy and Theatre

Greek theatre holds a significant place in theatrical history. It originated in ancient Greece and emerged as a distinctive art form that encompassed a range of dramatic performances. During the 6th century B.C. Greek society witnessed two significant advancements: Democracy and Theatre. These innovations emerged as a result of the cultural revolution which left its mark on various aspects of Greek civilization ranging from architecture to literature to vase paintings. Democracy arose from the need for social organisation while theatre was conceived as a means to restructure society, preserving the initial organisation. These two elements, democracy and theatre, grew hand in hand within ancient Greek society. Theatre manifested in two forms within society: ritualistic performances and entertainment. “The shape and form of a Greek tragedy may fairly be described as ritual. Ritual is not, indeed, confined to religious worship. A framework of ritual controlled the composition and production of an ancient Greek tragedy” (Greenwood, 1936, p. 4). When rituals took on the form of theatrical performances distinct genres such as tragedy, comedy, and satyr emerged. Among these genre’s tragedy held the highest regard. The intertwined nature of theatre and democracy necessitates a deeper exploration of the origins of theatre, specifically its connection to tragedy.

2.1.2 Greek Tragedy and the Introduction of an Actor

Nietzsche (1872) mentions the origin of tragedy. The god Dionysus was associated with music and dance which was considered the form of human expression beyond language. Hymns called dithyrambs were sung in praise of Dionysus as a part of early celebrations. The next development was tragedy and theatre became a regular part of the festival. The

Dionysian choral singing and dancing along with the ordered speech of the actors on stage gave birth to the ancient Greek tragedy.

Aristotle (330 BCE.) discussed the origin of Tragedy in “Poetics”. Poetics by Aristotle stands as a seminal work in the realm of literary theory and criticism. This treatise examines the nature and purpose of poetry providing profound insights into the principles and techniques that underpin the creation of art, especially Tragedy. It also delves into various genres of poetry analysing their essential elements and exploring the role of imitation, catharsis and mimesis in achieving aesthetic excellence. With meticulous analysis Aristotle unravels the intricacies of tragedy, comedy and epic poetry. It sheds light on their structure, plot, characters and language. He lays emphasis on the transition of ritualistic songs to drama.

“Tragedy certainly began with improvisations, as did comedy. Tragedy advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped. Aeschylus first introduced a second actor; he diminished the importance of the Chorus and assigned the leading part to the dialogue. Sophocles raised the number of actors to three, and added scene-painting” (Aristotle, 330 BCE. /2000, p. 8). The Greek word for playwright is “didaskalos” which means trainer. These trainers were not only meant to train performers but also the citizens for participation in democracy through theatre.

The origins of Greek drama attribute the pioneering role of the first actor to Thespis. Although there is ongoing debate regarding his precise contribution. Some argue that Thespis himself assumed the role of the first actor, while others contend that he introduced the concept of an actor on stage, thus catalysing a significant transformation in theatrical performance.

It was the Athenians who introduced the concept of an actor in addition to the chorus, thereby pioneering the notion of theatrical performance. Before the introduction of actors, trained choruses performed Dithyrambs. It consisted of a large group of individuals who

danced and sang to praise the god Dionysus. Suffering and knowledge were intricately interconnected within tragedies. The knowledge emerges as a result of the purification of emotions through suffering. The introduction of an actor, as opposed to a chorus, underscored the emphasis on individuality within a character. This individuality was often undermined and ultimately destroyed due to the devastating consequences of the tragic events. The inclusion of actors and the subsequent emphasis on individuality within characters added another layer of complexity to the tragic art form.

2.1.3 Chorus, Actors and the Need for Actor Training and its Development

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the birth of actors, it is essential to recognize the role of the chorus and its relationship with actors. “Choruses were central to Greek civil life. Sources that discuss tragedy emphasise the critical function of the chorus in civic education and laws assisted choregos in recruiting participants. Plato (Leg. 654b) pronounces those without experience of choral performance to be uneducated and states that choral dance is the whole of education” (Foley, 2003, p. 4). Choregia was the institution responsible for financing and training both dramatic and dithyrambic choruses for theatre festivals. Choregoi, wealthy citizens appointed by the state, supported choral training and provided necessary equipment. The chorus served as an educational institute for the young and its success was determined not only by the precision of movement and song but also by its role-playing abilities. Initially consisting of fifty individuals, the number of chorus members was likely reduced to twelve, possibly by Aeschylus, in order to shift the focus onto the actors on stage. As actors became prominent in tragedy, the demand for better training arose. The art of acting apparently developed and was refined radically during the fifth century. The performance was probably more amateurish when poets like Aeschylus were their own first actors. By the fourth century a good actor, says Aristotle in his discussion of delivery in the Rhetoric, wins prizes by suiting his voice to different emotional modes and varying both the volume and pitch of his voice and his vocal rhythms. (Foley, 2003, p. 6)

Choral dancing and singing were undoubtedly more advanced than acting at the inception of tragedy. Actors gradually improved their performance skills and successfully competed with the chorus. Evidence of this development is found in the writings of Helene Foley, who highlights examples such as slaves trained to perform Platonic dialogues with attention to character, modulation of voice, gestures and delivery. “Choral mentality derives from the religious sphere as much as and perhaps more than from the political sphere. Choral performance of ritual gestures or allusion to ritual or the gods is as pervasive a part of its role as its relation to a civic community” (Foley, 2003, p. 21). The chorus in Greek tragedy played a multifaceted role, serving as both a narrator of myths and a moral guide for actions. It functioned as an alter ego for specific characters, embodying their fears and secrets. The chorus emerged as a profound voice, dispensing counsel on political principles. It held the power to provide the audience with insight into the hidden aspects of the protagonist’s psyche. As the voice of the author, the chorus conveyed whatever the author intended the audience to know. It represented the society at large, dramatizing the communal voices of the people. Mark Damen (1989) delves into the characters portrayed by actors in Greek tragedy, offering valuable insights into the roles they played. “All actors wore masks and body length costumes hiding their personal features except their height and voice. The mask and costume lent credibility to the differentiation of the characters played by the same actor and to that extent made it possible for actors to play multiple roles” (Damen, 1989, pp. 317-318). Damen’s investigation went beyond the exploration of multiple roles played by actors in Greek tragedy. He examined the impact of this phenomenon on Greek tragedy as a whole. The inclusion of actors marked a significant breakthrough in Greek theatre. With the ability to change masks and costumes, actors were able to portray multiple characters within a single performance. This added a new dimension to Greek tragedy, allowing for greater dramatic variety and complexity. The introduction of actors allowed for more nuanced characterizations and heightened emotional impact, as they could embody the diverse range of roles required by the dramatic narrative. By shifting the focus from the chorus to the actors, Greek theatre underwent a transformation, with the actors assuming a more central role in the performance. This

development not only expanded the possibilities for storytelling and characterisation but also altered the dynamics between the actors and the chorus. The actors became the primary vehicles for conveying the dramatic narrative, while the chorus continued to provide commentary and engage in dialogue with the actors. The introduction of actors in Greek tragedy marked a pivotal juncture in the evolution of this art form. It marked a shift towards a more dramatic and dynamic style of performance, allowing for the exploration of diverse characters and narratives within a single play. The transition from the chorus to the actors played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Greek tragedy.

With advancements in actor training, choruses as a group made efforts to rival the performances of actors and poets in the eyes and minds of the audience. “The Greek word for actor was *hypokrites*, which probably meant ‘answerer’ originally: the composer, in taking a part in performance, is extremely likely to have ‘answered’ the chorus” (Ley, 2006, p. 34). After the introduction of actors, choruses were regarded as occupying a lower social status than the characters. The chorus remained a formidable competitor to actors in terms of stylistic expression, linguistic prowess and performative strength. Through their powerful language, themes, songs, and dances, they offered a tough challenge to actors. The tussle between the chorus and actors in delivering better performances contributed to the improvement of Greek tragedy and the art of acting. The understanding of the interplay between the chorus and actors provides insights into the birth and development of actors in Greek tragedy.

2.1.4 Bharata Muni’s “The Natyasastra” and Abhinaya (Acting) in the Natyasastra

Bharata Muni, a prominent figure in the realm of performing arts formulated a comprehensive manual known as “The Natyasastra” (NS) to explain the intricacies of the dramatic art form in Indian context. Bharata Muni delved into the nuances and techniques of acting and performance. This extensive treatise offers a profound exploration of actor training. It includes a wide array of elements such as movements, gestures, sentiments, make-up, costumes and more. One of the key strengths of NS lies in its ability to articulate

the essential relationship between the literary and technical aspects of drama. It formulates an outstanding vision of theatre that integrates drama, dance, and music. All these forms harmoniously work together to evoke the emotional experience known as “Rasa” within the spectators. The primary objective of *Natya*, as mentioned in NS, was to provide pleasure to the audience. The spectators were often referred to as “Rasic”, as they were the recipients and consumers of the Rasa generated during a performance. Manmohan Ghosh talks about the origin and development of drama,

“The Hindu drama, like similar other forms of ancient art and poetry, seems to have been of religious origin and it developed probably out of dances and songs in honour of deity like Siva who in later times came to be styled the great dancer-actor Nataraja. As time passed, the dance with songs gradually assumed the form of regular dramatic spectacles and the range of subjects treated was extended beyond the legends connected with the exploits of a particular deity.” (Bharatamuni, 500 BCE. /1951, p. LV)

The NS is often referred to in vast treatises on gestures, poetics, music, prosody and even on grammar. The NS written in Sanskrit language is of major interest to performance theorists all over the world. The NS also includes considerable other materials for the cultural history of India like language, literature, art, poetics, costumes, mythology, psychology etc.

The NS delves into the art of acting, known as “*Abhinaya*”, which serves as a medium for effectively conveying the dramatic text to the spectators. The term Abhinaya can be deconstructed into two Sanskrit words, namely “*Abhi*” and “*ni*” which collectively signify the notions of causing, attaining, or getting. It is derived from the Sanskrit word Abhi which means “towards”. Abhinaya inherently possesses the capacity to lead the audience towards the evocative “*Bhava*” or emotional experience of the Rasa. Abhinaya serves as a powerful tool to guide and immerse the spectators in the depths of the emotional journey depicted on stage. “As the root *ni* preceded by *abhi* means carrying the performance (*prayoga*) of a

play to the point of direct ascertainment of its meaning, so the word made out of them becomes *abhinaya* (carrying towards)” (Bharatamuni, 500 BCE. /1951, p. 150). Chattopadhyay (2013) mentions that drama was popular in ancient India and performers/actors played an important role in popularising dramas. He analysed the vision of performers towards acting by trying to understand the mind and mentality of the theatre workers of ancient India through Natyasastra. Malyaban Chattopadhyay highlights a significant distinction between the modern perception of acting and the intricate process outlined in NS. He emphasised on the fact that, in contemporary times acting is thought of as a process to showcase what a playwright has penned down, through gestures, movements, facial expressions and use of voice speech. Unlike the term Abhinaya in Natyasastra which suggests a much more intricate process of an actor’s art which was highly systematised and explicitly worked out.

The Natyashastra outlines four types of abhinaya, which are techniques used by performers to convey emotions and narratives in Indian classical theatre. These four types are:

1. The Physical Representation (*Angika*)- This form of abhinaya involves the use of bodily movements and gestures to express emotions and convey meaning. Different examples of gestures are *Akampita*, *Kampita*, *Dhuta*, *Viduta* etc.
2. The Vocal Representation (*Vachika*)-Vachika abhinaya refers to the expression of emotions through speech and vocal delivery. It includes recitation of dialogue, singing and modulation of voice to evoke different moods and sentiments. It relates to the proper musical notes (*svara*), voice registers (*sthana*), pitch of vowels (*varna*), intonation (*kaku*), speech-tempo (*laya*) to be used in reciting or declaiming a passage for the purpose of evoking different sentiments (*rasa*) in the spectators.
3. The Temperament (*Sattvika*)- Sattvika abhinaya refers to the expression of emotions through the internal states of the performer, including their mental and

emotional experiences. It represents the entire psychological resources of a man. Satvika abhinaya adds sincerity and depth to the performance, allowing the audience to connect with the innermost emotions of the characters portrayed.

4. The Costume and Make-up (*Aharya*)- This form of abhinaya involves the use of costumes, makeup, and props to enhance the visual appeal of the performance and to help in the portrayal of characters and scenes.

These four types of abhinaya work collectively to create a rich and immersive theatrical experience which allows performers to convey complex narratives and evoke a range of emotions (Rasa).

2.1.5 The Concept of Bhava and Rasa

According to the principles of NS, it is stated that the essence of theatre lies in the concept of rasa. Rasa refers to the emotional flavour or sentiment that is experienced by the audience during a performance. Bharata Muni explains that rasa is the result of the combined interaction of three elements: *vibhava* (stimulus), *anubhava* (involuntary reaction) and *vyabhichari-bhava* (voluntary reaction). Originally, NS mentioned eight rasas, but later Abhinavagupta added a ninth rasa. Bharata Muni emphasised the significance of sentiments or rasas in communication. He states that there is no Natya without rasa. The experience of rasa is generated through the combination of determinants (*vibhava*), consequent emotional reactions (*anubhava*) and transitory emotional states (*vyabhichari-bhava*). “I shall first of all explain the sentiments (rasa). No meaning proceeds (from speech) without (any kind of) sentiment. The sentiment is produced (*rasa-nispattih*) from a combination (*samyoga*) of Determinants (*vibhava*), consequent (*anubhava*) and Transitory states (*vyabhichari-bhava*). The Dominant states (*sthayi bhava*) when they come together with various other states (bhava) attain the quality of the sentiment (i.e. become sentiment)” (Bharatamuni, 500 BCE. /1951, pp. 105-106). These

concepts outlined in NS highlight the fundamental role of rasa in Indian classical performing arts which provide a framework for understanding the emotional impact and aesthetic essence of a theatrical performance.

Table 2.1 The nine rasa and bhava

Rasa	Meaning	Bhava	Colour
Shringara	Love	Rati	Light Green
Hasya	Laughter	Hasya	White
Karuna	Sorrow	Shoka	Grey
Raudra	Anger	Krodha	Red
Bibhatsa	Disgust	Jugupsa	Blue
Bhayanaka	Fear	Bhaya	Black
Veera	Heroic	Utsaha	Pale Orange
Adbhuta	Wonder	Vismaya	Yellow
Shanta	Peace	Calm	White

The concept of bhava in NS refers to the states that are conveyed to the audience through the use of words, gestures and the portrayal of different temperaments. Some of the definitions of the Bhava as mentioned in NS are:

“It is said in reply that bhavas (states) are so called because through words, gestures and the representation of the Temperament, they infuse the meaning of the play into the spectators.” (Bharatamuni, 500 BCE. /1951, p. 118)

“As in these the inner idea of the playwright is made to pervade the mind of the spectators by means of words, gestures, colour of the face and the representation of the temperament they are called bhavas.” (Bharatamuni, 500 BCE. /1951, p. 118)

The word *rasa* in the context of Indian aesthetics carries the meaning of “essence”. When asked about the meaning of *rasa*, it is explained that *rasa* is referred to as such because it is capable of being tasted or experienced. It is important to note that *rasa* is not a literal taste but rather a metaphorical concept related to the aesthetic and emotional experience of the audience. “It is said that just as well-disposed persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spices enjoy its taste and attain pleasure and satisfaction, so the cultured people taste the Dominant states while they see them represented by an expression of the various states with words, gestures and the temperament and derive pleasure and satisfaction” (Bharatamuni, 500 BCE. /1951, pp. 105-106). It is the culmination of a refined and pleasurable experience that the audience derives from engaging with the artistic and emotional elements of a performance. It is not a physical taste but rather an experiential and aesthetic delight that arises from the harmonious combination of the various elements of a theatrical presentation. This explains that *rasa*, although not a literal taste, is a metaphorical concept that captures the profound impact and pleasure experienced by the audience when they are immersed in a performance. Richard Schechner (2001) took into consideration the above-mentioned concept. As sensitive persons enjoy food prepared with different ingredients and feel pleasure in the same way sensitive spectators enjoy performance with various emotions expressed by actors through their gestures, movements and words. The *sthayi* bhavas are the “permanent” or “abiding” emotions that are accessed and evoked by good acting, called *abhinaya*. *Rasa* is experiencing the *sthayi* bhavas. Schechner puts it in another way, “the sweetness in a ripe plum is its *sthayi* bhava, the experience of ‘tasting the sweet’ is *rasa*. The means of getting the taste across from preparing it, presenting it is *abhinaya*” (Schechner, 2001, p. 31). It’s very important to notice that here *rasa* theory is defined as a process which connects the outside and the inside making it one when experienced. Schechner calls *rasa* theory/ theory of flavours as *Rasaesthetics*.

Richard Schechner (2001) discusses briefly the concept of *Rasa*. He asks an important question, “Where in the body is theatricality located? What is its place?” He claims that,

“Traditionally in western theatre, the eyes and to some degree the ears are where theatricality is experienced. By etymology and by practice a theatre is a ‘place of/for seeing’. Seeing requires distance, engenders focus or differentiation, encouraging analysis or breaking apart into logical strings; privileges meaning, theme, narration. But in other cultural traditions there are other locations for theatricality. One of these, the mouth or better said, the snout-to-belly-to-bowel- the route through the body managed by the enteric nervous system.” (Schechner, 2001, p. 27)

He further specifies that Rasa means essence and that essence has the power to move us, to transform and shape our responses. It has the power to affect our psychophysical expressive behaviour. Rasa is defined as a sensual experience which spectators get while watching a performance. Schechner defined Rasa as aromatic. “Rasa is sensuous, proximate and experiential. Rasa fills the space, joining the outside to the inside. What was outside is transformed into what is inside” (Schechner, 2001, p. 29). Schechner outlines an overall theory of rasa which he calls Rasaesthetics. In his writing he formulates an important understanding of the rasa theory by marking a distinction between “artistically performed emotions” and “emotions of everyday life”. In the *rasic* system, there are “artistically performed emotions” which comprise a distinct kind of behaviour (different, perhaps, for each performance genre). These performed emotions are separate from the “feelings”- the interior, subjective experience of any given performer during a particular performance. There is no necessary and ineluctable chain linking these “performed emotions” with the “emotions of everyday life.” (Schechner, 2001, p. 32)

Schechner explores the intersection of neurobiology and performance particularly emphasising the presence of a “brain in the belly”. He referred to the research conducted by Michael D. Gerson. The research reveals that the enteric nervous system (ENS) is often referred to as the gut’s brain. It is located within the lining of the oesophagus, stomach, small intestine and colon. According to Schechner (2001), this research suggests that when

someone says they have a “gut feeling” they may actually be experiencing a neural response originating from the ENS rather than the brain in the head. Schechner raises the question of whether such gut feelings can be trained and examines the systems involved in converting these feelings into expressible emotions. The existence and location of the ENS supports a fundamental principle found in Asian medicine, meditation and martial arts which proposes that the region between the navel and the pubic bone, specifically the gut and lower spine, serves as the centre/source of readiness, balance and reception. This region is considered crucial for individuals learning various Asian performances, martial arts or meditative practices. Phillip Zarrilli’s extensive research delves into the relationship between the *nabhi mula* (root of the navel) in the Kerala martial art of kalarippayattu and its connection to performance art training, psychophysical centring, and ayurvedic medicine. The *rasic* system, a component of various Asian systems of performance, medicine, and martial arts, strongly influences the ENS. These disciplines are closely intertwined within Asian cultures sharing a deep connection.

“Rasaesthetics opens questions regarding how the whole sensorium is, or can be, used in making performances. Smell, taste, and touch are demanding their place at the table. Thus, I am making a much larger claim and sending out a more general invitation. I am inviting an investigation into theatricality as orality, digestion, and excretion rather than, or in addition to, theatricality as something only or mostly for the eyes and ears. I am saying that performance practice has already moved strongly into this place and now is the time for theory to follow.” (Schechner, 2001, p. 47)

Richard Schechner concludes that the *abhinaya* which translates to “leading the performance to the spectators” begins with the performer being the first spectator. If the performer, as an observer of own performance, is genuinely moved by own portrayal then the performance is more likely to succeed. Schechner insists that theatre performances should be examined through the lens of Rasaesthetics with particular attention given to the shared experiences between the performer and the audience. The focus is placed on the

connection and interaction that occurs during the performance. It highlights the importance of the performer's emotional engagement and the subsequent impact on the audience.

2.1.6 Greek Theatre, The Natyasastra and its Connection to Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training

Aristotle's "Poetics" and Bharata Muni's "Natyasastra" are the oldest texts and laid down the rules for theatrical productions. Both the texts examined and formulated the art of drama and acting thus differentiating between a trained and untrained actor further generating a need for actor training. The comparisons between Greek theatre and Sanskrit theatre have been made by scholars over the time. Graham Ley (2000) delves into the philosophical underpinnings of three seminal texts: Aristotle's Poetics, the Natyasastra, and Zeami's treatises on Noh. Rather than directly comparing their theoretical content, he proposes a shared objective among these works: to legitimise performance within their respective cultural background. Ley asserts that these authors employ rhetorical devices and language to effectively fulfil this aim. He suggests that Aristotle, in his Poetics, brings Greek tragedy into the realm of Platonic philosophy by subjecting it to analyses and arguments related to cognition, ethics, and psychology. Bharata's Natyasastra, on the other hand, contextualises theatrical performance within religious practice, providing both its significance and context.

The historical examination of actor training from Greek tragedy to the codified precision of Indian classical theatre reveals a recurring emphasis on embodied presence and transformation. In ancient Greece, the introduction of the individual actor from within the chorus marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of performance, highlighting the transition from collective ritual to personal embodiment of character and emotion. Similarly, the Indian tradition of Abhinaya (Angika, Vachika, Aharya, and Sattvika) provided performers with a systematised psychophysical method to evoke Bhava and Rasa. Both traditions underscore the actor's body as a primary medium of expression, demanding a high degree of embodied training.

Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training can be seen as a contemporary extension of these ancient performance philosophies. His integration of Asian martial arts Kalaripayattu and Yoga draws from the same reservoir of embodied knowledge that underpins classical Indian aesthetics and Greek theatre. Zarrilli's focus on pre-performance training, cultivated through breath, stillness, and awareness, mirrors the preparatory functions of choral training in Greek theatre and the inward focus of Sattvika abhinaya in Indian dramaturgy. Just as Aristotle and Bharata emphasized the need for actor training as a tool for emotional engagement, Zarrilli positions the actor's bodymind as a site for personal transformation.

Richard Schechner's theory of Rasaesthetics locates theatricality not only in sight and sound but also in the gut, breath, and sensory pathways. This finds direct expression in Zarrilli's methodology. Zarrilli's attention to the nabhi mula (navel root) and energetic centres of the body aligns with Schechner's neurobiological and phenomenological insights, bridging Asian somatic practices with contemporary performance theory. Zarrilli's actor is not only a reproducer of emotion but a practitioner of presence.

Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical training does not stand apart from classical traditions, it is profoundly in dialogue with them. It reflects a conscious continuum of performance history, where the actor is not merely a vessel for text but a cultivated instrument of energy, awareness, and transformation. Zarrilli reintegrates traditional disciplines and aesthetic sensitivity of ancient performance systems into a method suited for the complexities of contemporary theatre-making, reaffirming that effective actor training is, and always has been, deeply psychophysical.

2.2 The Development of Psychophysical Acting Training Methods and Influences on Phillip Zarrilli's Method

The notable theatre practitioners such as Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, and A.C. Scott brought attention to the importance of the

physical body in the actor's craft. These practitioners devised their unique techniques to explore the connection between the physical and the psychological aspects of acting.

“When working on oneself, is the actor working on himself, on himself- as- the- actor, or on both? What aspects of the self are being worked on? At one end of the spectrum is the potential overemphasis on the actor's personal, subjective emotional life. In its most extreme form, acting is reduced to what the actor- as person feels emotionally in the moment. There is no clear articulation of the distinction between the emotional life of the actor- as- person and that of the character. The result can be self-indulgence to the neglect of the physical side of the acting equation.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 17)

Robert Gordon (2006) identified six significant approaches to contemporary western acting as they stand in the new millennium:

1. **Realistic Approaches to Characterization:** It is focused on psychological truth and this approach aims to portray characters in a lifelike manner.
2. **The Actor as Scenographic Instrument:** The actor's role is similar to that of a performance artist where the emphasis is on creating and manipulating the overall theatrical experience as a form of artifice.
3. **Improvisation and Games:** This approach views theatre-making as a playful process where actors engage in improvisation and interactive games to shape the performance.
4. **Performance as Political Praxis:** Acting is seen as a means to instigate social and political change using the stage as a platform for advocating transformative ideas.
5. **Exploration of Self and the Other:** In this approach, acting becomes a personal encounter delving into the depths of the self and seeking to understand and portray other individuals convincingly.
6. **Performance as Cultural Exchange:** Embracing the concept of “playing one's otherness”, this approach involves acting as a way to explore and exchange diverse cultural perspectives.

Gordon explored the works of influential theorists and practitioners in twentieth-century western theatre to culminate his analysis of these six approaches. He explored the contributions of theatre visionaries such as Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Meyerhold, Copeau, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski and Barba among others to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives on acting. Gordon formulated a compelling seventh approach titled “Performance as Psychophysiological Process: The Embodiment and Shaping of Energy”. This approach emphasises the fusion of the physical and psychological aspects of performance which highlights how the actor’s body and mind work as a whole to embody and channelize energy throughout their theatrical expressions. Gordon aimed to enrich the understanding of acting as a holistic and dynamic psychophysical phenomenon. It is important to understand how psychophysical approach developed and reached till this point.

2.2.1 The Stanislavski System

“All of our acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us in everyday life, become strained when we appear before a public. That is why it is necessary to correct ourselves and learn again how to walk, move about, sit, or lie down. It is essential to re-educate ourselves to look and see, on the stage, to listen, and to hear” (Stanislavski, 1936, p. 73). Konstantin Stanislavski was a well-known actor and director who developed a system to train actors. He is read and taught in all drama schools almost all over the world. He was the first one to use the term “Psychophysical” in relation to theatre studies and actor training. Stanislavski recognized the need for an innovative approach to stage the evolving dramas in his time period. In 1904, the Moscow Art Theatre produced three plays by the Belgian symbolist playwright, Maurice Maeterlinck. It became evident to Stanislavski that this new wave of drama demanded a fresh acting technique to effectively bring these plays to life on the stage. According to Benedetti, (1999, as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 15) “Stanislavski realised that a new acting technique was necessary for this static drama.”

The Method of Physical Actions: American psychological realism often saw theatrical characters as separate entities of the mind and the body. When actors created a character, it suggested the character is made in the mind and then transferred to the body. There was less discussion about how this character becomes part of the actor's body. Stanislavski's "method of physical actions" tried to address this by focusing on physical abilities in acting training. Moore mentions that Stanislavski clearly stated that human behaviour is a psychophysical process. Every inner experience is expressed through a physical action. Considering all human actions to be psychophysical and united, he suggested that the truthful fulfilment of physical actions will involve an actor's truthful emotions. Moore asserts the importance of "the actor's physical training" in the Stanislavski System and its call for physical training to make the body "responsive." (Moore, 1979, p. 35). Students must be taught awareness of the psychophysical processes of an action and must learn to fulfil the psychophysical action. The actor must develop mastery of the choice of actions in the creative process which describes the inner life of character. Stanislavski strongly believed that physical action is the key to an actor's emotion and worked on the development of this method.

Whyman Rose (2016) discusses Stanislavski's approach to acting and actor training. A distinction is drawn between acting training in regard to a text-based theatre where characters psychology is emphasised and on the other hand a post dramatic writing where psychophysical approach is preached. Rose explored the acting theories who observed the misconception of separation between the body and the mind and suggested psychophysical training as a possible solution for betterment. Stanislavski was the first to coin the term psychophysical which focused equally on actor's psychology and physicality in developing characters. Though the term was used prior in different domains. Rose mentioned that Stanislavski believed that it is necessary to experience the role. It is to have the sensations of its feelings every time and on every repetition. Stanislavski's psychophysical approach is an actor fully experiencing and embodying the role and their presence in the moment drawing from the sensory information available. Rose discusses the complications of acting and suggests that the solutions to these problems can be seen in psychophysical training.

In relation to the actor's body Rose explains how discussions of body, emotion, feeling, mind, memory and action, among others, are being viewed as aspects of a unitary embodied human process. It is an attempt to uncover Stanislavski's use of the term psychophysical and by examining it indicated the need for areas of research related to the performer's body and the training process. By reassessing Stanislavski's style of acting process Rose argues that "All acting and performance is psychophysical. It cannot be anything else, since in all human activities, practically speaking, 'mind' and 'body' are inseparable" (Rose, 2016, p. 14). "Stanislavski described how the actor's physical score, once perfected may go beyond mechanical execution to a deeper level of experience which is rounded out with new feelings and becomes one might say psychophysical in quality" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 14). This is a good starting point to think about the Psychophysical in training, in performance and how working on it helps an actor to work on his skills.

Bella Merlin's experience of Stanislavski based training in Russia supports the idea that Russian teachers engage in "little cerebral analysis of texts in rehearsals" (Merlin, 2001, p. 6), they emphasised the method of physical action and active analysis where the emphasis is on "acting, doing, experiencing, playing" (Merlin, 2001, p. 255). Coger (1964) mentions that Stanislavski in training wanted the actors to discover their characters through the small truth of the simplest physical acts. The actor not simply performed the task but "experienced the task" as it is being done. Through this way of working the scenery and blocking of the performance evolved organically. Stanislavski used physical actions to create the need for that inner life which permits an actor to realise the external action; a circle of creation is made. He believed that exploring the physical actions helps actors in finding feelings, impulses and reactions suitable for the character. "With his work on physical actions, Stanislavski went beyond but also extended his old idea of emotional recall. He asked his actor, 'What would you do if you were in the given circumstances?' These circumstances are the circumstances of the role: age, type, corporality, a certain type of experience. From Stanislavski's perspective, it was logical and very efficacious" (Grotowski & Salata, 2008, p. 37). The method of physical actions was the final phase of his discoveries before his death. Physical Actions provided elementary behaviour

generated through truly physical actions. But Grotowski extends his views that an actor turns to his own life and instead of emotional recall, he turns to the body memory. He also claimed that more essential than this physical action is the pre-physical, which he called “Impulse”.

On the basis of his experiments and observations, Stanislavski made distinctions among theatre acting. The first kind of acting consisted of stereotypes and copying of gestures from experienced actors. He had respect for the second type of acting which he called “the art of presentational performance”. Through this second type he genuinely wanted the actor to penetrate the psychic state of a character to be represented. He wanted the actor to experience the role while performing. He believed that when an actor experiences a role then the fully realised personality of the character so dominates the occasion that the actor’s own personality virtually disappears (Hobgood, 1973). The actor must learn to align his psyche with that of dramatic characters for a creative process to take place and for genuine character experience to appear for the audience. Stanislavski also made it clear that by experiencing he didn’t mean to get possessed by the character. In his system experiencing is the key idea and Hobgood (1973) considers another important term “Embodying” the second major phase of actor’s development. By Embodying, Stanislavski meant “to make visible the invisible creative life of the actor” and for this to happen the actor’s body should be in ready condition to immediately respond to the inner impulses of experiencing. But in his early writings Stanislavski did not cope with the problem of actor’s duality. His initial concept of experiencing called for an identification of actor and character so closely that it denied the fact that the actor continues to be himself while portraying a character (Hobgood, 1973). Stanislavski believed that “human spiritual life” had the greatest power in the theatre and the actor must keep it intact in order to seek awareness and a sense of proportion.

The practitioners influenced by Stanislavski’s training are crucial in gaining a deeper understanding of his training system. One such influential figure was Richard Boleslavsky, who was a student of Stanislavski. After training under Stanislavski at the Moscow Art

Theatre, Boleslavsky founded the American Laboratory Theatre in New York. He aimed to apply Stanislavski's principles in the American theatre context. Boleslavsky's work had a profound impact on American acting and theatre education. He played a significant role in spreading Stanislavski's ideas to a broader audience. He delivered a lecture in America titled "Acting, the first six lessons", which focused on Stanislavski's acting system. This lecture offered valuable insights into Stanislavski's principles and techniques and popularised Stanislavski's approach to acting. The lecture was later published in the 1923 issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly* which made Stanislavski's ideas accessible to a wider readership and contributed to the dissemination of his teachings beyond Russia. This dissemination played a crucial role in shaping the development of acting theories and practices not only in the United States but also around the world. One of Boleslavsky's notable students was Lee Strasberg, who studied under him and later became a prominent figure in American theatre. Strasberg established the Group Theatre in New York. The Group Theatre was the first American ensemble to place significant emphasis on Stanislavski's teachings pioneering the adoption of the Stanislavski System in American acting and drama.

Hobgood (1973) also mentioned in his writings that Stanislavski wanted the actor to experience both himself and character simultaneously during performing. His process is a process of self-analysis that allows an actor to achieve an authentic sense of self/being through acting. The actor achieves the state of "I am" uniquely every time he performs; to do so, he must overcome the deadening habits that theatrical repetitions threaten to encourage (Worthen, 1983). He challenged the conventions of acting and theatre in order to decentralise the established structure and offered contradictory imperatives to define the actor and his art. The actor's authenticity and truth are of most importance to Stanislavski's system. Despite contradictions of his system, the actor trained in Stanislavski method kept on his struggle of self-realisation through art.

2.2.1.1 Phillip Zarrilli on Stanislavski

Phillip Zarrilli discussed Stanislavski's system as explained by Sonia Moore (1979) in "Training an Actor: The Stanislavski system in class". According to Zarrilli, Moore's approach to the Stanislavski system tends to overemphasise the intellectual aspect of creating a character leading to a neglect of the physical aspects of acting. Zarrilli argues that Moore's language in her book suggests that the character is constructed logically by the mind through textual analysis and then imposed upon the physical body during performance. "The mind as a container of images remains separate from the body. Control is provided by what Moore variously calls 'thinking,' 'logic,' or 'conscious control,' i.e., the Cartesian rational mind. It is assumed that whatever is 'in the mind'; can be transferred into the body. Precisely how this transfer from mind to body takes place is never discussed" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 17). Moore views the mind as a container where emotions are stored and can be revived during the act of performance. This perspective portrays the mind as having conscious control over the body and the overall experience of the actor. Zarrilli highlights that Moore's approach keeps the mind and body separate, with the mind serving as the source of control and the body as the recipient of its commands. The transfer of ideas from the mind to the body is considered self-evident and the actual process of this transfer is not elaborated upon or discussed. According to Zarrilli's analysis, Moore's approach to acting heavily relies on mapping out a set of objectives in a text which can lead to an excessive self-consciousness about the acting process. Zarrilli contends that when an actor becomes preoccupied with these set objectives then there is a risk of overthinking and analysing which might hinder the psychophysical process of embodiment. An actor must immerse himself in the character and physically embody their actions. Only focusing on objectives may encourage an intellectual approach that keeps the actor at a distance from their bodily experience. This intellectualization of the acting process can hinder the actor's ability to fully engage with the character and their emotions on a deeper level. Zarrilli criticises Moore for not articulating a clear process by which bodily action is genuinely embodied or initiated. The absence of a well-defined method for integrating the mind and the body in

the acting process may result in a disconnect between the actor's thoughts and their physical actions affecting the authenticity and effectiveness of their performance. "Stanislavski's use of 'psychophysical' in relation to acting was therefore an innovative, if historically limited and not always successful, attempt to problem-solve the relationship between the psycho and the physical elements of acting." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 13)

According to Zarrilli, Bella Merlin's writings on Stanislavski offer a pragmatic and comprehensive approach to the psychophysical process. Unlike Moore's overemphasis on intellectualization and separating the mind from the body, Merlin's approach emphasises the seamless integration of body and psychology. Merlin's practical approach views the body and psychology as a continuum which means there is no rigid boundary between the two aspects. This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of the mind and the body in the actor's creative process. The actor's physical actions are not just a result of intellectual analysis but rather an organic and embodied expression of their psychological and emotional states. The concept of "constant inner improvisation" in Merlin's psychophysical actor points to a dynamic state where the actor remains open, responsive and adaptable to the present moment within the performance environment. Merlin's approach to Stanislavski's psychophysical process emphasises the unity of bodymind. It promotes a state of continuous improvisation which facilitates an embodied acting experience for the actor and impactful performance for the audience.

2.2.2 Michael Chekhov

Michael Chekhov was the nephew of the famous playwright Anton Chekhov. He was a renowned actor, director and acting teacher of the twentieth century who developed his unique approach to train actors. He was born in 1891 to the family of Anton Chekhov's elder brother in St. Petersburg and embarked on his theatrical journey in the same city. He initially polished his skills at the Suvorin Drama School in 1907 before transitioning to the Suvorin Theatre where he served as an actor. He emigrated from Russia in 1928 and

travelled to Germany, Austria, France, Lithuania, England and the U.S.A. where he died in 1955. Kirillov and Merlin (2005) mentions that the first edition of Chekhov's work was first printed in 1986 in Moscow. This included his books, articles, rehearsal notes, letters and diary entries. Among these writings, his book on acting "To the Actor" is best known. Kirillov and Merlin presented the narration of Chekhov's life in the first autobiographical book, "The path of the actor". They also presented some extracts of his second autobiographical book, "Life and Encounters". These works are important to understand why and how Chekhov's method appeared and was developed.

Kirillov and Merlin (2005) clarifies that Stanislavski taught his students at the First Studio a method of acting deeply rooted in psychology, emphasising the use of their own emotions and experiences. For Chekhov, this continually amplified his inner conflicts ultimately leading him to a deep psychological crisis. He recognized the inherent constraints of this teaching approach and embarked on a quest for his own unique method. He believed that there should be a clear distinction between the actor as a person and the actor as artist. The production process of a play was looked upon by Chekhov as an opportunity for the search of a new acting technique. He began teaching acting in Moscow and after emigrating he taught in all the countries he went to, providing him an exposure to international theatre practice. Chekhov established his studio in Ridge field, Connecticut and further established a drama school. During the development of his new technique, he was influenced by the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, who introduced him to Anthroposophy. "Anthroposophy is the religious-philosophical teaching founded by Rudolf Steiner at the beginning of the twentieth century, and which focuses on the spiritual aspect of life and human nature. With the help of anthroposophical theories, Chekhov was able to understand the 'ideal' nature of theatrical art and to develop his own particular principles of a new acting technique" (Kirillov & Merlin, 2005, p. 9). Anthroposophy helped Chekhov with his psychic condition, and it provided him with a new spiritual dimension for his creative work. Gordon specified the Eurythmy, or the "science of visible speech" had a tremendous impact on

Chekhov. These are the spiritual dances aimed to transform sound and colour into movement.

The Psychological Gesture: “Michael Chekhov’s most conspicuous contribution to the actor is what he has named, the ‘psychological gesture’. This is a very specific movement that is first imagined then executed as a means to excite the actor to play. It is in many ways a question posed by the actor, a question concerning this or that expression. Receiving the answer is the initial difficulty of the technique and this brings us back to the body, which must become sensitised to the movements it can make” (Petit, 2010, p. 6). Chekhov believed that the actor must approach the physical body in a new way and indulge into the energetics of a performance. Through different exercises, concentration and focus, he motivated actors to discover the power within. “The real work of the actor is to transform personal experience into a universal and recognizable form of expression that has the ability to change something in the spectator” (Petit, 2010, p. 9). In order to make this possible, the actors must activate the energy inside and transform it to the image through the physical body. Chekhov believed that the artist must explore the spirit of human beings and embark on a journey to investigate it. Each actor develops his own set of skills. This was referred to as the “creative individuality” by Chekhov. “The actor’s creative individuality seeks an aesthetic union with the character and will not allow the actor’s personality to interfere with that process. With this the actor’s work becomes an artistic creation” (Petit, 2010, p. 11).

“Michael Chekhov developed an approach to the creation of character based on an active use of the imagination, not as an image in the head, but as an act of engagement of the entire bodymind. The actor explores the creation of a character by physicalizing a ‘psychological gesture’ through which the soul of the character and the physical body of the performer meet” (Gordon 1991, p. xxxi). Chekhov provided his students with guiding principles to acquire and develop the technique. These principles act as a reference point to the technique. Chekhov believed that the body and the psychology (mind) are indivisible.

The dynamic principles include Energy, Imagination, Characterisation, Psychological Gesture, Concentration, Incorporation, Radiation, Body, Atmosphere and Space. The technique specifies that the most powerful means that are at disposal of an actor are intangible. These intangible means include space, atmosphere, radiation, relationship, inner movement, imaginary centre and imaginary body. When the concentration fades, these means also fades. They cannot exist without an imaginative and concentrated effort. Chekhov believed that the psychological gesture was the gateway to access the actor's subconscious. "A concentrated and repeatable movement or action, the psychological gesture awakens the actor's inner life and its kinaesthetic image feeds him while he acts on stage" (Gordon, 1991, p. xxx). He proposed that each character embodies a unique psychological gesture that unveils their deepest motivations and personality traits. It's the actor's task to decode their character's psychological gesture which allows the soul of the character to merge with the physical body of the performer. "There are no purely physical exercises in our method. These would be useless, since our primary aim is to penetrate all of the parts of the body with fine psychological vibrations. This process makes the physical body more and more sensitive in its ability to receive our inner impulses and to convey them expressively to the audience from the stage" (Gordon, 1991, p. 43). Chekhov believed that each psychological state is a combination of thoughts, feelings and will impulses. Each movement is physical (gesture) and at the same time psychological (Qualities or Images), thus he coined the term psychological gesture to portray the gesture connected with feelings. Through a detailed exploration of the psychological gesture the actor organically experiences the process of becoming a character. "The actor's concern must be that the words sound more and more in harmony with the gesture, that is with its what and how" (Gordon, 1991, p. 68). Chekhov stated that the actor must find his creative individuality and for the character to find its creative individuality, the psychological gesture is the way.

2.2.2.1 A Comparative Analysis of Stanislavski and Chekhov

Gordon (1991) mentions that Stanislavski referred to Chekhov as one of his best students and at the same time a radical challenger to Stanislavski's system of training actors. "The idea that an actor can 'go beyond the playwright or the play' is the first key to understanding the Chekhov technique and how it is different from Stanislavski's early teachings" (Gordon, 1991, p. xii). In 1912, Chekhov joined the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) and alongside became a member of the newly established studio, which would eventually be recognized as the First Studio of the MAT. This studio was initiated by Konstantin Stanislavski and served as a platform for the evolution and dissemination of his acting method. Chekhov became the artistic director of the first studio in 1922. During the 1913-1923 Chekhov appeared in several MAT productions and established himself as a reputed actor. In 1918, he opened his own studio in the Arbat theatre district of Moscow. "In his private flat, Chekhov at first investigated the concept of reincarnation and the techniques of Indian Yoga. One novel exercise involved deep meditation. Tapping their mind's collective or racial unconscious, the students tried to become reincarnated as their characters" (Gordon, 1991, p. xvi). Gordon (1991) specified Stanislavski focused on the two major elements, one is work on oneself and other is work on one's role. On the other hand, Chekhov focused on imagination and character and in his technique all the exercises followed this. Both Chekhov and Stanislavski shared the belief that actors needed to move beyond the established conventions. Stanislavski emphasised the importance of seeking "truth" in genuine human behaviour and the workings of human psychology. On the other hand, Chekhov saw the key lying beyond the confines of both theatre and everyday life, deep within the imagination of the performer. Stanislavski relied on the actor's affective memory and Chekhov wanted his students to generate fictional memory or to imagine outside from their personal experiences.

2.2.2.2 Contemporary Relevance of Chekhov's Technique

Petit (2010) wrote a detailed account on the technique and method of Michael Chekhov. He is a student of Deirdre Hurst du Prey who was Chekhov's student and secretary for 20 years. When asked about the most important factor about Chekhov's method, Deirdre responded that "That would be truth". Petit believes that truth is a big and simple idea, "Once it gets complicated the truth becomes more and more elusive. I want to speak from this place of simplicity, where I found my own truth, because useful acting techniques can only be about one's own truth, the truth one is experiencing in the moment" (Petit, 2010, p. 1). Petit has been practising Chekhov's technique for 30 years and teaching it to students for 20 years. "Chekhov's methods are actually limited in scope. His intention is to lead the actor to an inspired performance. The ways in which we can bring ourselves to inspiration are limited. This is actually a good thing because we can choose exactly how we will work and in what manner we will approach the role; and we will expect not to flounder" (Petit, 2010, p. 2). Petit makes it clear that he is presenting an approach to this method that has come to him and how he adapted it in his practice. Chekhov himself wanted the actor to devise his own technique and ways of working.

"Michael Chekhov was ahead of his time. He must have known that because he spoke about the Theatre of the Future and also about the 'actor of the future'. With the proliferation of Eastern philosophies and practices in the west today, we are open to more concentrated approaches to working. We accept spiritual and energetic influences on life. The purely intellectual psychological method has already demonstrated its limits for performance. The conception of a human being as an energetic force is no longer an idea that needs defending. The mind-body connection is now commonplace. Modern humans have reclaimed this non-materialistic attitude towards themselves. This is the basic working stuff of the Chekhov technique." (Petit, 2010, p. 3)

In Chekhov's method, it is important to understand the meaning of Energy and Imagination. Energy is the life force, a force that makes the body move and it can also be understood in the terms of prana as mentioned in Indian philosophy. Imagination is another key term as it is the underlying principle of any creative process. Petit mentions that Chekhov's seminal work, "To the Actor", stands as a significant contribution to the field of acting, yet navigating its content can present certain challenges for practitioners. Chekhov was unable to publish the spiritual exploration in his book leaving a gap in this discourse on acting. By delving into archival materials preserved by Ms. du Prey, Petit uncovered Chekhov's subtle references to the "spiritual" aspect of acting, even though scattered across lesser-known archives. Practitioners of the Chekhov technique acknowledge this absence and engage in lively discourse, exercises, and experimentation to probe and embody the spiritual essence hinted at in Chekhov's work. This essence, while evocative of spirituality, transcends traditional religious connotations. Petit addresses this missing part and offers a methodological framework that is reliable and accessible. (Petit, 2010, p. 5)

2.2.3 Jerzy Grotowski

Jerzy Grotowski created the "Theatre Laboratory" in Opole in Poland in 1959. The laboratory with time gained a status of an institute for research in theatre and acting. "The Theatre Laboratory's productions represent a kind of working model in which the current research into the actor's art can be put into practice. Within the theatre milieu, this is known as the method of Grotowski" (Barba, 2002, p. 9). Grotowski referred to his theatre laboratory as a research centre. He believed that expressing something verbally can often seem more complex or even disrupt their clarity. A simple action can be easily understood through gestures and executed seamlessly by both the mind and the body working in harmony. "Because no-one else in the world, to my knowledge, no-one since Stanislavski, has investigated the nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, the nature and science

of its mental-physical-emotional processes as deeply and completely as Grotowski” (Brook, 2002, p. 11).

Richards (1995) elaborated on the discoveries made by Grotowski. He is a research collaborator and was involved at the work centre of Grotowski in Pontedera, Italy. Richards initially participated as a member of the performance team in the focused research program at University of California in 1985 and after one year he joined the work centre of Grotowski in Italy. Richard specifies that Grotowski understood that true learning involves mastering a skill through practical application. He emphasised the importance of learning by actively engaging in the task rather than relying solely on concepts and theories. Theoretical knowledge was only integrated into their work when it could directly contribute to solving a practical challenge they were facing (Richards, 1995, p. 3). Grotowski critically analysed the work of the artists that came before him and outlined the useful concepts for him. He always inspired actors to devise their own methods to work with.

Richard Schechner (1999) talks about the importance of Grotowski and his work in relation to the American theatre and in general. Schechner talks on two viewpoints to explain Grotowski’s contribution to theatre: one is his scholarly viewpoint, and the other is his personal viewpoint. The author placed Grotowski on the fourth place in the list of 20th century great directors after Stanislavski, Meyerhold and Brecht. Grotowski’s theatre was based on the motto, “Process, not product”. His theatre was designed for a small group of audiences and was experimental in nature. The theatre he made mostly treated audiences as participants and not mere ordinary theatregoers. His main conquest was experimenting with the actor’s techniques and embodied practices in order to create a new form of actor training in pursuit of spiritual knowledge. Schechner identified Grotowski’s effect on theatre in three major ideas, 1. The powerful acting occurs at a meeting place between the personal and the archetypal, 2. The most effective theatre is the “poor theatre”, where the actor’s presence is primary and 3. The theatre is Intercultural, relating to many cultures.

Grotowski worked on these ideas for a lifetime and his impact can be traced everywhere in world theatre.

Findlay (1980) talks about Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory and the productions they devised. The laboratory since its inception has devoted itself to rigorous actor training. The company experimented thoroughly with actor's art, actor-audience relationship and the arrangement of theatrical space. Grotowski worked on "paratheatrical experiences" which he considered as a meeting point of creative individuals and working together in an atmosphere that has been carefully structured for such encounters. Paratheatrical Experience are structured events lasting for days, weeks; sometimes occurring in the forests or mountains, sometimes in a closely confined space in which no distinction is made between performers and spectators. Findlay concludes that through these experiments the laboratory was seeking to explore in new ways the fundamental sources of human creativity and the kinds of contexts in which creativity flows spontaneously. He believes that these experiments dealt with a third realm- a realm that is neither art nor life rather something else that partakes of both without really being either. Grotowski had left theatre per se in an effort to apply the principles he has learned in theatre to a wider but more significant context and the laboratory has been always known for such creative risks.

Grotowski's theatre was composed of dense semiotic structures and used minimal theatrical devices. Grotowski and Salata (2008) has written on Work Centre by Grotowski and Richards. It discusses for Grotowski the primary sign maker was the actor who engages in a complex meaning making process with the spectators. Grotowski's theatre was a theatre of actions which offered a new realism in which actors exposed themselves in a presentational mode. His productions were unique in the sense that they brought the transgression against illusion and challenged the institution of theatre and its conventional behaviour. He defined theatre as an event between actor and spectator in which human truth otherwise difficult to perceive becomes available. He wanted the actor to reveal himself and thus make theatre as an event of confession for both actor and spectators. He was interested in the destruction of theatricality and moved towards inner theatre. He

considered resignation as the key notion for the actor, “resignation from pretending”. This “not to pretend” means resigning from reacting mechanically and beginning to act/do. The notion of performance text and the actor as a body on the stage dominates contemporary theatre thinking and to reproach Grotowski’s work one must first think about the nature of the event. Grotowski moved away from the traditional way of doing theatre and argued that theatrical events are not an object of aesthetic perception or mimetic reproduction of the form but a visible vehicle. This visible score neither represents the event nor presents it but merely provides a possibility for it to emerge. Grotowski observed that when a human being acts with his own self then his act unfolds as a particular form. This form allows truth to appear authentically, and this truth is the truth of being. His goal was to explore the spiritual process of the actor and all the sources that helped him towards the process. He worked on developing a method in which there is no time lapse between the inner impulse and outer reaction so that the spectator sees the visible reflection of the spiritual impulses. His process is not a process of attainment of skills but of eradicating the blocks so that the actor exposes his spiritual self totally. In his Theatre Lab, actors worked on composition of the role, on the construction of form and on the expression of signs i.e. on artifice. According to his technique there is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice leading to a structured and disciplined spiritual process. On the basis of it, he claims that a man in an elevated spiritual state uses rhythmically articulated signs, a sign which is not a common gesture but the elementary integer of expression. Through years of his work in theatre, he made two concrete conceptions: the poor theatre and performance as an act of transgression. (Grotowski, Wiewiorowski & Morris, 1967)

Peter Brook (1991) mentions his observations about Grotowski’s work and the paradox in his work. He believes that the work created by Grotowski had an immense reach and impact. The central element for the process of theatre making is human beings, the individual. Grotowski continued to explore this unknown human being, the actor throughout his work. Brook proposes that there must be a living, permanent relationship to be established between work of research which is without public witness and the immediate nourishment that it can give to the public work. The exploration of possibilities of humans

which Grotowski seeks was a spiritual search which he already mentions in his writings. But this spiritual search needs a form to survive. That is why Brook asks Grotowski to make his body of work clearer and to what extent his work on dramatic art takes a way which is inseparable from the necessity of a personal evolution for those who work around his method.

2.2.3.1 A Comparative Analysis of Stanislavski's "The Method of Physical Actions" and Grotowski's Idea of "Impulse"

Stanislavski worked on the method of physical actions and later Grotowski also worked around the physical actions. "With Stanislavski, the "method of physical actions" was a means for his actors to create "a real life," a "realistic" life in performance. For Grotowski, rather, the work on physical actions was a tool to find this "something" in which there would be a personal discovery for the one doing. For both Stanislavski and Grotowski physical actions were a means, but their ends were different" (Richard, 1995, p. 78). As a student at the State Theatre Institute in Poland, Grotowski started exploring the method of physical actions by Stanislavski and discussed his connection with Stanislavski's method in conferences and his writings. Richards mentions experience of one such conference held at Hunter College, New York. Grotowski clearly specified that physical actions are key to an actor's craft.

"Activities are not physical actions," Grotowski repeated many times. He then demonstrated very clearly the difference between physical activities and physical actions. He did so with his glass of water: he lifted the glass to his mouth and drank. An activity, banal and uninteresting, he said. Then he drank the water observing us, stalling his speech to give himself time to think, and size up his opponent. The activity had been turned into a physical action, alive." (Richards, 1995, p. 31)

Grotowski focused on the principle of "organicity" in physical actions. "Grotowski, organicity indicates something like the potentiality of a current of impulses, a quasi-

biological current that comes from the ‘inside’ and goes toward the accomplishment of a precise action” (Richard, 1995, p. 93). For organicity our body must learn to think for itself. The mind gradually learns when to remain passive or offer positive reinforcement to facilitate the body’s progress while ensuring integrity. The mind recognises that it was not the sole authority. The body possessed its own form of cognition. As the mind adopts a passive stance, the body finds freedom to take charge and actively engage in the process.

“At the Teatr Laboratorium in Opole, Poland (founded 1959), Jerzy Grotowski built on Stanislavski’s later work by developing and articulating an intensive psychophysical pathway for the actor aimed at self-transcendence in which the actor strips himself down to become a living incarnation. Inspired in part by his observations of the intensive training of actor-dancers in the kathakali dance drama of Kerala, India, Grotowski’s early theatre work developed an intensive psychophysical process of physical/vocal training aimed at elimination of anything extraneous. The actor was to be engaged in a total psychophysical process as a holy act of self-abnegation.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 14)

There is a distinction between Stanislavski’s use of physical actions and Grotowski’s exploration of it. Richards mentioned that “One day Grotowski said to me: After the ‘System’ of Stanislavski, came his ‘method of physical actions.’ Do you think that Stanislavski would have stopped there? No, he died. That is why he stopped. And I simply continued his research” (Richards, 1995, p. 105). Grotowski’s approach was not just a continuation of Stanislavski’s technique, but he built upon the concept of physical actions beyond Stanislavski. Richards mentioned that one day, when speaking to him about his work on physical actions, Grotowski said: “It is not really Stanislavski’s ‘method of physical actions,’ but what is after.” It is rather a continuation” (Richards, 1995, p. 93). In Stanislavski’s method, the idea of impulse is tied to the periphery of the body. On the contrary, Grotowski proposed that every physical action is preceded by an impulse originating as an internal reaction within the body. It only becomes visible when it manifests into an action. Grotowski’s exploration of impulse follows a logical progression

as he seeks to uncover the innate impulses within a liberated body, moving towards a state of completeness that transcends everyday experiences. Toward the end of his life, Stanislavski was dealing with the concept of impulses. He acknowledged the actor's ability to "activate and strengthen the impulses within the action" though he primarily linked them to the outer aspects of the body. Grotowski shared with Richards his belief that Stanislavski hinted at viewing the exploration of impulses as an area open for further investigation. It suggests that there were indications that Stanislavski saw this aspect for deeper exploration. Richards mentions that their method of physical actions differ on the basis of Impulses. In Grotowski's work the concept of impulse is very important but in Stanislavski's method it is not highlighted. Richard justifies that it is because Stanislavski focused on exploring physical actions within the framework of everyday social interactions and conventional settings. He delved into the dynamics of human relationships in realistic, day-to-day situations. Grotowski's approach seeks to uncover physical actions within a more fundamental flow of existence and is detached from daily routines. Within this raw essence of life, Grotowski emphasises the significance of impulses. (Richard, 1995, pp. 95-99)

2.2.3.2 The Objective Drama Project

Richard talks about the "Objective Drama Program" headed by Grotowski. They would normally work from six in the evening until about two in the morning. Throughout the year the work was focused on what later came to be known as the "Main Action". Every day the participants performed an exercise called "Motions". "Motions are a series of stretches/positions of the body. Its structure is fairly simple, and on its first superficial level can be taught quickly. Motions are in part an exercise for the circulation of attention, so when certain elements after many years became easy for us to execute, a new level of precision had to be added to make the exercise again a challenge" (Richard, 1995, p. 52). Motions appear to be simple, but it is complicated. Motions are the outcome of several years of systematic work. The primal state is the starting point of motions. It is a state of readiness in which the body can move in any desired direction. "Motions are a series of stretches. The stretches are simple (one can see some similarities to hatha yoga, but it is

different). There are three cycles of stretches/positions. Each cycle is one specific stretch/position executed four times, once toward each of the four cardinal directions; turning from one direction to the next is done standing on the same spot” (Richard, 1995, p. 54). Motion is part of the pre-performative training of Grotowski and its results can be traced only after a long-term practice. Richard admitted that after practising motions for years he got a strong hold of the structure. Everyday practice in the program worked towards the “Main Action”. Grotowski’s assistants led the performance team in finding and elaborating on structure and Grotowski analysed these structures and suggested corrections. “This period is reminiscent of the work Stanislavski conducted in the final period of his life, when he concentrated his attention on a small group of actors, not to create a performance, but to perfect the technique of those specific actors while working on Moliere’s *Tartuffe*” (Richard, 1995, p. 56). Grotowski also worked on the individual structures, and they were repeatable like a mini performance. In the final version of the “Main Action” there were sequences which were executed as part of the “individual structures”.

Balinese performer I Wayan Lendra reflects on the parallels he perceives between Grotowski’s training and his own training in Balinese performance. Lendra represents a new generation of talented performers from indigenous traditions who have pursued academic degrees in the west and actively explore performance across cultures. He identifies similarities in the state of being between his experience of Balinese performance and Grotowski’s project, describing it as one of total “alertness”. In his collaboration with Grotowski, this state is achieved through “Motions”. He draws connections between his experiences in Balinese performance within traditional ritual/religious contexts and the rigorous effort required in Grotowski’s work.

Lendra (2002) presented his views about the Objective Drama Project (November 1983-June 1986) that was undertaken by the Department of Drama at the University of California-Irvine. The project aimed to unite various performative cultural traditions and facilitate their interaction. It focused on studying the effects of relationships among

performers, forms, groups and environments. The project followed a structured approach, and each cultural form was taught by a skilled performer native to that culture. These forms included Haitian vodou ritual, Korean shamanistic dance and songs, Hatha yoga, Balinese incantations and mantras, and Japanese karate. A number of exercises were developed during the project. Along with these exercises, the project emphasised the creation of individual or group pieces called Mystery Plays. These plays delved into the artistic potential and insights gained from the exercises. Lendra from Bali, Indonesia, was one of the four technical specialists involved in the project. They instructed and mentored the 18 participants in both traditional forms and new techniques. Lendra expressed that the project had a profound impact on him in multiple ways. He experienced a shift in consciousness and heightened awareness which accompanied changes in physical impulses and behaviour. Despite the long hours of work almost every day, he felt fully awake in his body. He also felt deeply connected not only with himself but also with his native culture, Bali. He believes that the primary purpose of the ritual is to assist individuals in understanding the significance of their responsibilities. Through mental cleansing, the ritual readies the body and mind for complete focus and with regular practice it strengthens one's commitment and understanding. The ritual fosters a heightened alertness essential both in daily life and artistic pursuits. In Bali, this awareness is reinforced by beliefs, nurtured by nature, and upheld through repetition and training. Proper traditional training is essential for creating art that serves not only as entertainment but also as a way to connect one's true self with the boundless power of nature. (Lendra, 2002, pp. 154-155)

In the Objective Drama Project, exercises were inspired by rituals from diverse traditions. Grotowski never labelled these exercises as religious. They held unique significance and were performed differently from the Balinese training methods.

“An important word which Grotowski used frequently was “alert”; participants should be alert. In order to be alert the first and most important basic rule to observe is to be silent. This rule permeated every facet of the project. Participants were only allowed to speak when they really needed to express an idea related to the project, or when asked to discuss

their reactions to specific activities. Grotowski called this a “silence of saturation.” It was not meant to be a spiritual silence.” (Lendra, 2002, p. 155)

According to Lendra, maintaining silence opens up numerous possibilities. It enhances awareness of one’s surroundings and calms the mind through silent self-observation. The workshop aimed to break away from mechanical routines and foster a dynamic flow of events to infuse “new life” into each session. The only exercise with a fixed structure and timing was “the Motions”, which was always performed at sunset or sunrise. The project was structured to assess the effects of the exercises on the participants. Grotowski never explicitly explained the meaning or purpose behind any exercise, leaving it open for interpretation. Grotowski purposely avoided providing the meaning or intended outcome of the exercises. He didn’t want participants to approach the work with a preconceived “idea”. He believed that working on a physical exercise with a predetermined idea would be misleading and deceptive because the mind would be actively seeking the result of that idea. This approach would inhibit the organic nature of the action and block the flow of physical impulses. “Grotowski is very fond of the idea of “contradiction,” an idea against conventional ways of living and understanding, but with the intention of provoking organic physical and mental responses on the part of participants. The exercise called the Motions, practised at sunset or sunrise, also has a practical purpose embedded in the idea of contradiction. Sunset and sunrise are the times when ordinary nature is spectacular” (Lendra, 2002, p. 157). During the Motions exercise, participants are instructed not to react emotionally to what they see. They are discouraged from making statements like “the sunset is beautiful”, which is a common response. They are encouraged to simply observe what is happening around them. This contradiction within the exercise serves to heighten alertness and increase awareness of physical impulses. Consistent practice of this exercise leads to heightened alertness, which in turn fosters a sensitivity to the body and can lead to spiritual experiences. Kinaesthetic learning is paramount in both Balinese traditional training and Grotowski’s approach. Unlike verbal communication, which describes what is being learned, kinaesthetic learning involves direct bodily engagement without relying on mental processes beforehand. Grotowski believed that “the body itself functions like a

brain”, capable of recording and recalling movement patterns and emotions instinctively when stimulated. He discouraged learning solely through verbal explanations because the brain doesn’t capture the emotional essence of an action when learned mentally. Kinaesthetic learning integrates both the physical precision and the emotional depth of an action, which also applies to vocal training. (Lendra, 2002, pp. 157-158)

The Motions is a comprehensive physical exercise that encompasses various aspects of training. It serves as both a body-stretching routine and a mental endurance exercise. The main goal of this exercise is to cultivate sensitivity in the body and alertness in the mind. It is performed slowly and requires significant physical exertion. “The Motions were performed to develop the sensitivity of the body and to help generate mental alertness. The *agem* or basic position of Balinese Dance theatre and Grotowski ‘Primary position’ developed in Objective Drama Project are similar” (Lendra, 2002, p. 160). Lendra emphasises that the key quality of both the *agem* and the primary position lies in the alignment of the torso and head, with a slight forward lean. This tilt creates a pull and contraction, generating energy that ascends to the head, fostering heightened awareness. This concept parallels the elaborate Indian energy system of chakras, where energy rises from the base of the spine (*muladhara*) to the crown of the head (*sahasrara*), leading to elevated consciousness. Both the Balinese basic stance and the primary position evoke feelings of lightness and readiness. They instil a sense of upward energy flow, enhancing physical and mental sensitivity. The Motion is a complex exercise because it demands that participants refrain from reacting to any one thing but instead fully perceive everything they see and hear. This requirement contradicts our usual way of living, where we naturally react to stimuli. It is precisely this contradiction that brings about a sense of life and self-awareness.

“When I see with panoramic vision and hear all sounds- both in performing Balinese dance/acting and in doing the Motions precisely- I become highly aware of my body; it absorbs what I see and hear. The surroundings become one with my body, and I feel as if my body is hollow and is being lifted. The more I see and hear, the more I sense my body.

Especially in the Motions I feel the vibration of my energy throughout my body, and I feel the pulses of my heart in my feet. After each session of the Motions, I usually have the feeling of distilled energy and oneness in my body.” (Lendra, 2002, p. 161)

Lendra concludes that these exercises serve a singular and crucial purpose: the awakening of innate physical power. This power is often referred to in Hindu tradition as “sleeping energy” or “kundalini”, residing at the base of the spine. Through various physical and vocal exercises, this innate energy can be activated. Grotowski likened this innate physical power to the “reptile brain” which encompasses the spinal cord and brainstem, with the dormant energy located at the bottom of the spine. This latent energy exists within every individual. Grotowski aimed to explore ways to awaken this energy centre and recognised that its activation can heighten our awareness, sensitivity and perception. (Lendra, 2002, p. 162)

2.2.4 Eugenio Barba

Eugenio Barba is a theatre director, actor, theorist and founder of “Odin Theatre” in Denmark. Barba was an assistant of Grotowski in the early sixties. “Theatre Anthropology” is a well-known work of Eugenio Barba. It includes the research conducted by Barba from 1980-1990 at International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) with special focus on the “pre-expressive” training. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, Anthropology means the science of human beings or the study of human beings in relation to physical character, environment, social characters and culture. Barba and Savarese (1991) specifies that the term “Anthropology” is not used in the sense of cultural anthropology but ISTA’s work in itself is a new field of study applied to human beings in an organised performance situation.

Theatre Anthropology: “Theatre Anthropology is the study of the pre-expressive scenic behaviour upon which different genres, styles, roles and personal or collective traditions are all based. In an organised performance the performer’s physical and vocal presence is modelled according to principles which are different from those of daily life. This extra-

daily use of the bodymind is called technique” (Barba, 1995, p. 9). After a transcultural analysis Barba identified various techniques applied by the performers which focus on generating extra-daily energy through extra daily exercises. Theatre Anthropology refers to these intercultural influences or recurring principles as the field of pre-expressivity. The study of the pre-performative training helps in the expansion of knowledge about acting training processes and its consequences in a performance situation. This will help one to learn about the learning process. It is not only the study of performance per se but what is before a performance i.e. the training process and how this training is transposed in the performance.

“Early in his work with the Odin Teatret, Barba inherited from his work with Jerzy Grotowski a search for a foundational psychophysical process for the actor which took account of observations, insights, and techniques from non-western performance traditions. Eventually Barba abandoned his own quest for a specific psychophysical training technique, leaving it to the Odin Teatret actors with whom he still works, to develop their own process as a state of constant “self-revelation,” and thereby to ensure that their techniques would not be the imposition of some external technique (1972). In place of developing a specific training technique, Barba began a long-term collaborative commitment to an exploration of what he calls Theatre Anthropology.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 88)

In a letter to Richard Schechner, Barba expressed his disinterest in focusing solely on technique but rather on the problems associated with techniques. He highlighted that the evolution of 20th century European theatre saw the emergence of what he termed “small traditions” and the development of separate cultures within the theatrical landscape. Barba observed that certain theatre groups functioned similar to tribes, each inventing its own unique small traditions. This characterization underscores the diversity and innovation within the theatrical community with various groups carving out distinct paths and methodologies in response to their own creative challenges and cultural contexts. (Barba, 1995, p. 143)

Barba suggests that various theatre practices employ different working languages. Each has its own set of terminology, metaphors and aesthetic or scientific orientations. But beneath these diverse languages lies a common “pre-expressive” level shared by all. Despite the differences in vocabulary, cultural influences and historical trajectories, all theatrical traditions navigate a common river, drawing upon fundamental principles of performance and expression that transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. It’s evident that concepts such as the performer’s extra-daily technique and pre-expressive behaviour represent different approaches to describing a shared reality. Despite the variations in terminology and perspectives used by practitioners from different eras, they ultimately shed light on different facets of the same underlying truth to enrich our understanding of performance.

Ian Watson (1988) talks about his observations about the training sessions of the Odin Theatre. The central to Barba’s entire body of work is the performer. His productions are crafted through the improvisations of actors during rehearsals. Even his sociological inquiries revolve around the interaction of performers, both as individuals within a collective and as part of a broader societal context. He believed that using practices from the East and the West, can enliven actor’s performance and encourage cultural exchange. Watson mentions an important observation of Barba’s work that he focused on individual physical training and its evolution. Barba realised the importance of individual rhythm in the training process and focused on the individual actor’s pace and rhythm. What is unique about Barba’s group is that individual actors started developing their own training exercises. It consisted of an improvised series of physical and vocal training exercises that they felt best challenged their own skills and limitations.

Composition Exercises: The “composition exercises” at Odin Theatre involved any series of movements as the focus was on the physical ideograms created by the body during movements rather than movement itself. In a composition exercise the actor focuses on the psychophysical association. Barba emphasises process over product, that

is, doing the exercise rather than learning a specific skill. The use of improvisations in devising performances along with the focus on the composition exercises led to a new type of actor training.

2.2.4.1 Eastern Theatre, Pre-Expressive Training and Extra Daily Technique in Barba's Practice

Barba's fascination with the eastern performances can be traced back to his observation of how powerful stage presence eastern performers have while performing. This fascination prompted him to begin a systematic study of oriental theatre and to develop an acting training process derived from the eastern forms to train western actors. Barba made important observations about the Eastern theatre: the use of learned body techniques designed to break the performers automatic daily responses and the principles of use of energy(breath) during performance. The techniques used to break automated behaviour of daily life were referred to as the extra daily techniques by Barba which were included in pre-performative training. Barba from his initial theatre days rejected the mechanical automated daily life behaviour as it inspired lifeless presence on stage. His theatre went on to discover physical exercises to break this automated behaviour and present actors with a strong presence in performance.

Barba presented a cross-cultural examination of performance explaining that the performer's craft arises from the amalgamation of three elements: 1. The performer's inherent personality traits and artistic sensibilities, 2. The socio-historical context and tradition of a performer and 3. The utilisation of physiology/bodymind through unconventional bodily techniques, rooted in transcultural principles, as explored by Theatre Anthropology under the concept of pre-expressivity. The first aspect is related to individuality while the second relates to the shared characteristics among performers. The third aspect encompasses all performers across time and culture, constituting the performance's "biological" dimension. The first two elements facilitate the transition from

pre-expressivity to expression, while the third serves as a constant, highlighting the diverse individual, artistic and cultural variations within performance. The first aim of theatre anthropology is to trace the recurring principles from different performance cultures. (Barba, 1995, p. 10)

Barba believed that the performers of classical and traditional Asian theatres possess a quality of energy that penetrates spectator's attention. This acquired power is generated through a particular training and use of the body. "The body is used in a substantially different way in daily life than in performance situations. In the daily context, body technique is conditioned by culture, social status, profession. But in performance, there exists a different body technique. It is therefore possible to distinguish between a daily technique and an extra-daily technique" (Barba, 1995, p. 15). Different cultures devised different body techniques governing with a particular set of principles. Since Stanislavski's time, theatre exercises and training have been viewed as a collection of practices aimed at transforming the performer's everyday body and mind into one suitable for the stage. Theatre has continually adapted to address contemporary performance challenges. Theatre Anthropology focuses on this practical aspect aiming to navigate the diverse techniques, aesthetics, genres and specialisations within theatre. Rather than merely cataloguing acting techniques, it seeks something fundamental: the essence of technique, which lies in the foundational training of the body and the mind. Each technique approaches this training differently by emphasising the importance of learning, that is how to learn. Eugenio Barba delves into the exploration of actor's techniques and the continuous training necessary to acquire essential skills. This exploration led to the emergence of Theatre Anthropology as a new discipline focused on studying the foundational aspects of acting, including the pre-expressive principles of actors. Barba defines Theatre Anthropology as the examination of actor's pre-expressive behaviours across various genres and traditions within stage representations. Scenic Bios is the state of physicality that a performer generates in the act of performance. It is a state of readiness and energy that is above and beyond daily life. Barba traces the performer's bios in several key aspects: 1. Amplifying and activating the inherent forces that operate in balance 2. Embracing and navigating the oppositions that

steer the dynamics of movements 3. Embodying a deliberate inconsistency that remains coherent and purposeful 4. Disrupting automatic responses through the introduction of extra daily techniques. (Barba, 1995, p. 33)

Eastern acting traditions, such as the Noh theatre in Japan, the Odissi dance and the Kathakali theatre-dance in India or the Topeng theatre-dance in Bali. All these traditions base their work on the grammar of the body that would activate the performer's presence in performance. This presence is acquired through techniques that he would learn and train before he began to express himself in performance. Barba calls this body activated by the performer as the dilated body or purposive body, that is, a body-in-life. The dilated body has as operative principles those belonging to the pre-expressive level. This energetic body fascinates and attracts the attention of the spectator when the performer moves within space through actions. The notion of a dilated body is directly related to the concept of incorporated knowledge, or "embodied knowledge" based on how culture is bodily absorbed. "To find the body's extra-daily techniques, the performer does not study psychology but creates a network of external stimuli to which he can react with physical actions" (Barba, 1995, p. 34). Theatre Anthropology can also encompass the study of actor's embodied language. This language is cultivated through extensive bodily practices, but the study extends beyond specific traditions to explore universal principles of bodily expression. The central concept to Theatre Anthropology is the unification of bodymind, viewing actors as psychophysical entities. The actor's craft and pedagogy are regarded as psychophysical performances, analysed for their pre-performative and expressive principles. This broad approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness between the body, mind, and performance in theatrical practices. "The recurring principles, the dance of the sats, the ways of canalising and modelling the performer's energy, all are descriptions at the pre-expressive level. The performer's work on her/himself and Stanislavski's method of physical actions, Meyerhold's biomechanics, Decroux' mime system, all furnish ample material for analysis" (Barba, 1995, p. 104). It is primarily the practical work and empirical research conducted with performers from diverse traditions that support the idea of the pre-expressive as a distinct level of

organisation from the expressive level. Barba suggests that for performers focusing on the pre-expressive level is essential for shaping the quality of their presence on stage. If performers are unable to effectively engage with this pre-expressive level, then they cannot truly embody their roles. The performer is similar to a body scientist whose task is to differentiate between the pre-expressive and expressive levels of performance in order to uncover their underlying principles. Like a scientific researcher, the performer selects a specific area of investigation, delving into its intricacies and boundaries to gain deeper insights. Phillip Zarrilli mentioned Eugenio Barba's intercultural exploration of psychophysical processes. Barba's focus was on the extra daily use of the body and its application for actor's.

2.2.4.2 Barba's View on Exercises for Actors

Barba (2002) offers a detailed list of characteristics that define systems of training, or exercises used by actors to work on themselves. According to Barba, effective exercises go beyond mere physical conditioning, and they foster a profound awareness of the actor's internal life. This awareness is not limited to psychology or behaviour but extends to a psychophysiological level. It enables the actor to approach each performance moment with a fresh and heightened bodymind. He asserts that engaging in exercises during ongoing training should be considered as a process of continuous transformation and renewal. Barba mentions that in the 20th century a big change happened in fields like sociology, psychology and the arts. Theatre underwent a major change with a focus on making scenic fiction more significant. Barba came up with the idea of actor's sub score which highlights the sub textual layers of performance that contribute to the overall portrayal and impact of a character on stage. This concept underlines the importance of subtle nuances and hidden dimensions in acting. It reflects the broader evolution and innovation that happened within theatre during the 20th century.

“By sub score I do not mean a hidden scaffolding, but a resonance, a motion, an impulse, a level of cellular organisation that supports still further levels of organisation. These levels

extend from the effectiveness of the presence of the individual actor to the interweaving of their relationships, from the organisation of space to dramaturgical choices. The organic interaction between the different levels of organisation brings out the meaning that the performance assumes for the spectator.” (Barba, 2002, p. 99)

Barba discusses the concept of the smallest perceptible action which emphasises the idea of an organic action. He describes a physical action as the “smallest perceptible action”. He states that even a microscopic movement, such as a tiny displacement of the hand, can cause a change in the tonicity of the entire body. A genuine action induces a shift in the tensions throughout the body. Barba emphasises that these actions originate in the torso, in the spinal cord, rather than being driven by isolated parts of the body like the elbow or shoulder. Each dynamic impulse is deeply rooted in the torso which is a fundamental condition for the existence of an organic action. Barba proposes that the organic action is generated by the inner life of the actor and there are various methods to cultivate this inner life. Barba suggests the introduction of the age of exercises in theatre implies a shift towards a greater emphasis on training methods and techniques. The exercises aimed at developing the inner life and physical presence of actors. “A good exercise is a paradigm of dramaturgy, i.e., a model for the actor. The expression ‘dramaturgy of the actor’ refers to one of the levels of organisation of the performance or to one aspect of the dramaturgical interweaving. Indeed, in every performance there are numerous dramaturgical levels, some more evident than others, and all necessary for the re-creation of life onstage” (Barba, 2002, p. 100). In this age of exercises, the process of training becomes central to the artistic development of actors and the creation of vibrant theatrical experiences.

“Exercises are small labyrinths that the actor’s body-minds can trace and retrace in order to incorporate a paradoxical way of thinking, thereby distancing themselves from their own daily behaviour and entering the domain of the stage’s extra-daily behaviour. An exercise is made up of memory, body-memory. An exercise becomes memory, which acts through the entire body” (Barba, 2002, p.100). Barba identified characteristics that distinguish

exercises and elucidate their effectiveness as dramaturgy reserved for the private work of actors, focusing on the actor's self-development:

1) Pedagogical Fiction: Exercises serve as pedagogical fictions, guiding actors to learn not merely how to act, but how to think with their entire bodymind, transcending traditional notions of actor training.

2) Real Action: Exercises teach actors how to carry out genuine actions not merely 'realistic' ones, emphasising authenticity and embodiment in performance.

3) Engagement of Entire Body: Each phase of an exercise involves the entire body with transitions between phases serving as crucial moments of heightened awareness and focus. This transition between the phases is referred to as "sats" by Barba.

4) Dilation and Refinement of Behaviour: Exercises dilate and refine specific dynamisms of daily behaviour. They isolate and edit these dynamisms to underline the play of tensions, contrasts and oppositions thus turning daily behaviour to extra daily on stage.

5) Experience of Body as Centre for Actions: Exercises enable actors to experience their bodies not as unified wholes, but as centres for simultaneous actions. It initially evokes a sense of appropriation of spontaneity that ultimately evolves into a fundamental quality of presence.

6) Learning to Repeat: Exercises teach actors how to repeat actions continuously without becoming dull, challenging them to discover and motivate new details within familiar scores thus fostering precision and creativity in performance.

7) Self-Test and Encounter with Limits: Exercises are not merely work on the text but on oneself, serving as tests that allow actors to encounter their own limits and deepen self-awareness. (Barba, 2002)

Barba believes that these qualities demonstrate the highly transformative power of exercise for an actor's personal work on himself and facilitates a deeper self-discovery. Through these exercises, actors achieve a sub score which is a kind of play that exists beneath the surface of the visual actions. It is the interaction between the visible (the score) and the invisible (the sub score) that the actors experience as an inner life. Barba believes the exercise teaches actors to navigate from simplicity to "simultaneous multiplicity" and enables actors to embody and convey multifaceted nature of human emotions. (Barba, 2002, pp. 104-105)

2.2.5 The Neutral State by Jacques Copeau

Jacques Copeau and his associates developed a method to guide actors toward achieving a state of motionlessness or simplicity in silence, commonly referred to as a "neutral" state. Eldredge and Huston (2002) discuss how Copeau introduced his students to mask work which laid the groundwork for Etienne Decroux's Corporeal (Promethean) Mime. While Eldredge and Huston acknowledge the paradox and challenge of using "neutral" as a primary metaphor, they argue that neutral mask work, corporeal mime and martial arts helps individuals in discovering what Copeau described as moments of motionlessness.

Eldredge and Huston (2002) explored the process of actor training at Jacques Copeau's Ecole du Vieux Columbier, Paris. Copeau implemented his innovative concepts of actor training and aimed to convey significant messages through minimalistic gestures both in stage design and acting. "I want the stage to be naked and neutral," he wrote, "in order that every delicacy may appear there, in order that every fault may stand out; in order that the dramatic work may have a chance in this neutral atmosphere to fashion that individual garment which it knows how to put on". The simplicity that Copeau sought required a neutral atmosphere" (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, p. 140). Copeau aimed for actors to find a neutral atmosphere inside themselves. Actors should begin with silence as a base, a state of stillness which is full of energy but without movement. "To start from silence and calm. That is the very first point. An actor must know how to be silent, to listen, to answer, to

remain motionless, to start a gesture, follow through with it, come back to motionlessness and silence, with all the shadings and half-tones that these actions imply” (Copeau, 1970, p. 222). To find their inner neutrality, Copeau suggested students work with masks. By wearing a mask, actors could let go of their usual habits and artificial attitude. “The actor always starts from an artificial attitude, a bodily, mental, or vocal grimace. His attack is both too deliberated and insufficiently premeditated” (Copeau, 1970, p. 222).

Jacques Lecoq mentions that Neutrality is “a fulcrum point which doesn’t exist.” As the actor approaches this fixed point, he becomes “a blank sheet of paper, a ‘tabula rasa’.” Tabula rasa means an absence of preconceived ideas or predetermined goals/unpremeditated state. Andrew Hepburn explains that neutrality involves responding to stimuli solely based on sensory input. “Neutral activity withholds nothing; it is an energised condition, like the moment of inspiration before speech. The neutrality that the mask seeks is an economy of mind and body, evidenced at rest, in motion, and in the relationship between them” (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, p. 142). Eldredge and Huston explain that being a personality or even just being oneself doesn’t align with neutrality. An actor can hope to perform a neutral action, but he cannot be neutral. Neutral is a fulcrum point that doesn’t exist. To achieve a neutral action, an actor must let go of themselves disregarding their own attitudes or intentions. At this moment, they are uncertain about their next move. The neutral action requires both movement and stillness to be unpremeditated. The metaphor “Neutral” is usually misunderstood by the students as a state of relaxation rather than a state of dynamic readiness.

Many mask teachers follow a training approach called “via negativa”, where they refrain from giving direct instructions but instead identify mistakes after they occur. Since everybody is different, each practitioner must find their own neutrality, that is there is not a single pattern or approach. Before attempting masks, practitioners need extensive training to become aware of body movements. This conditioning period is crucial for a deeper understanding of masks. “The moment of putting on the mask is crucial, since the body will immediately begin to accept or reject the mask. The actor may feel the urge to impose

a movement or a body image, but he must inhibit that urge, allowing his own thoughts, his breathing, and his stance, to be replaced by those of the mask” (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, p. 144). The journey into neutrality begins with basic exercises like standing, walking, sitting or handling objects, all while wearing the mask. These simple tasks initiate practitioners into a process of experimentation, observation and refinement. Each activity is scrutinised to uncover new insights. “The research of neutrality never ends, for every level of knowledge, if accepted rather than questioned, becomes a technique imposed on the mask. The advantage for the performer is that each new technique is stronger than the old, because it is closer to the body’s natural functioning” (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, p. 144). Once the initial exercises are mastered then the teacher assigns more complex scenarios where the practitioner interacts with elements or objects. Second level of error concerns the pace of movement. The actor might grasp an object suddenly, without readiness or delay so much that by the time they pick it up, the necessity has passed. A third level of error relates to the imposed attitude. The student executes a single action yet in a way that suggests a character with previous experience of the action. In the “Discovery” exercise, the actor wearing the mask lies down as if asleep, while the teacher scatters objects of different shapes, weights and textures around them. The goal is to awaken, examine several of the objects as if encountering them for the first time and then go back to sleep. The objective is to approach these familiar objects with fresh eyes, disregarding any past experiences with them. “The neutral mask might discover the working of the umbrella, but only as the result of an exploration; and that discovery, if it comes, has no psychological or intellectual purpose. The mask does not impose a concept on the environment, but accepts the experiences contained within the environment” (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, p. 145). The neutral mask serves as a tool for understanding performance rather than as a method of performing. It helps analyse the quality of the body’s actions by concealing the face while revealing attitudes, intentions, nuances and emotional tones that are otherwise difficult to perceive. The mask highlights the body’s points of tension and requires the body to be unified into a cohesive image for comfort. Wearing the mask involves both internal and external focus, as well as analytical and

holistic approaches. It bridges the gap between physical and emotional techniques which allows the quality of movement to be amplified and observed. “The actor cannot be neutral; he can only hope to attain moments of neutral action. The neutral mask is not a way of performing; there is no neutral “style” of acting. The mask helps to identify a resting state for the actor, a condition of presence from which all things are possible, and to which all actions return at completion” (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, p. 147). Eldredge and Huston conclude that the neutral mask teaches simplicity both in stillness and in movement. The body begins from a neutral state or silence, executes the action, and returns to the initial state. The next action then starts again from this neutral state. An actor should be comfortable in both stillness and movement and should be able to make transitions effortlessly between the two. The neutral mask offers a way for teachers and students to momentarily grasp and hold onto the elusive quality known as “presence”. (Eldredge & Huston, 2002, pp. 144-147)

Copeau aimed for a state where you “think with the body” and “act with the mind”, which he believed corporeal training could achieve. Similarly, martial arts training holds the potential to reach this state. Both Copeau’s vision and Asian practice disciplines suggest that this state is achieved gradually over time.

2.2.6 Tadashi Suzuki and the Grammar of the Feet

Tadashi Suzuki has developed a rigorous discipline of training actors that is practised not only by his own company (Suzuki Company at Toga, SCOT) in a rural Japanese village but also by numerous actor training programs in the West. Suzuki reflects on the purpose, practice and philosophy underlying his training method. His method emphasises the actor’s connection to the ground through their feet. Suzuki refers to his approach as a “grammar of the feet” because being aware of the body’s connection with the ground enhances awareness of all the body’s physical connections. According to Suzuki, training aims to enable the entire body to express itself, even in silence.

Tadashi Suzuki (2002) described his method of actor training. “The main purpose of my method is to uncover and bring to the surface the physically perceptive sensibility which actors had originally, before the theatre acquired its various codified performing styles and to heighten their innate expressive abilities” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 163). Suzuki ventured into his method while examining the differences in physical perception among different peoples. “I first began to think of the method when I was trying to search for ways to examine the differences in physical perception among different peoples, such as those found while the actors on stage just stand still, or have an impulse, take some action. I wished to integrate these differences into something we humans could share as a common property, beyond all differences in race and nationality” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 163). He believes that the consciousness communication of the body with the ground leads to a greater awareness of all of the physical body. His method gives importance to feet/stomping of feet as he believes that the basic physical sensibility of any actor depends on his feet. This stomping of feet is done in order to arouse the energy to activate the human spirit. “Technically speaking, my method consists of training to learn to speak powerfully and with clear articulation, and also to learn to make the whole body speak, even when one keeps silent” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 163). Suzuki’s training develops “concentration of the body through controlling the breathing”. Similarly, training in traditional Asian martial arts develops the practitioner’s intuitive ability to control the circulation of the breath/energy through the entire body. “A basic part of my method of training involves actors stomping on the floor for a certain period of time to rhythmic music, or rather, walking around fiercely beating the floor with their feet in a semi-squatting posture” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 165). When the music stops, the actors relax their bodies completely and fall to the floor, remaining still and quiet. After a pause, slow and smooth music begins to play. In response to this change, they slowly rise to their feet in any manner they choose, eventually returning to a natural standing posture. This exercise involves two contrasting movements: dynamic and static (motion and rest), representing the release and suppression of physical energy. The goal of this training is to enhance concentration on the body by regulating breathing. The main focus of this training is to maintain a consistent stomping rhythm with steady

force, while keeping the upper body stable and without swaying. Suzuki mentions that recognizing the importance of the pelvic region in the construction of the human body and the balance of supporting forces is not a concept unique to his method. This understanding is fundamental to most performing arts practices across different cultures. The conquest of Suzuki's method is to restore the wholeness of the human body in theatrical context by employing unique qualities of traditional theatre.

2.2.7 A.C. Scott and the East-West Bridge in his View

A.C. Scott, an East Asian theatre scholar profoundly engaged with traditional performance practices in China, Japan, and India, and their pedagogical value in the training of contemporary actors. Scott's observations and adaptations of these traditions contributed to an intercultural performance discourse that positioned the actor's body not merely as an expressive tool, but as a medium of transformation and embodied awareness.

A.C. Scott was concerned by how casually American acting students viewed acting and how much energy they wasted unnecessarily. In response to this experience, Scott started using Tai Chi to train actors. Scott's use of Tai Chi for actor training was not only a departure from the American focus on a psychological/behavioural approach to acting but also an effort to implement a different paradigm. Scott drew inspiration from Jacques Copeau, as well as from his personal experience with practising Tai Chi. For Copeau, training comes before any performance. It is a time when the actor should find an optimal condition or state of readiness, similar to Benedetti's "stillness at the centre". Copeau aimed to achieve this state of stillness through a form of body training that didn't treat the body as a mere tool, unlike athletes. He wanted the training to enable normally developed bodies to adapt to any action they might undertake. It's a state where the actor has mastered stillness and is prepared for whatever follows. (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 185)

For A.C. Scott, the body of the Asian actor was not a passive instrument for mimetic expression but a creative, conscious instrument, comparable to a finely tuned musical tool, capable of resonating with emotional and cosmic energies. "The body of the Asian actor is

creative in the manner of a musical instrument and where the actor in the west uses his body to represent reality, the Asian actor's body becomes reality. Only by conditioning the body in this way can it become a medium of response to every nuance of suggestion enabling the actor to immerse himself within the cosmic force which in Asian thinking defines the inner reality" (Scott, 1975, p. 211). This understanding further represented a philosophical and practical shift as performance was no longer understood solely as externalized behaviour but as energetic, process-oriented embodiment, in tune with the unseen forces that shape the human experience. Scott's actor training thus moved toward psychophysical presence, a quality Zarrilli would deeply explore in his own pedagogy.

Scott's work was also inspired by Jacques Copeau, who argued that the actor's training must precede all performance. Copeau envisioned an actor grounded in awareness, breath, stillness, and neutrality. As Zarrilli (2002) notes, Copeau's emphasis on preparing the actor for anything that might unfold, rather than rigidly rehearsing for specific tasks, resonates with Scott's Tai Chi-based approach to cultivating presence, flow, and responsiveness (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 185). It was this fusion of Copeau's ideals and Asian embodied wisdom that influenced Scott's methodology, which he in turn passed on to Zarrilli during their collaboration. Asian traditional disciplines, in this context, functioned not only as a movement discipline but as a foundational psychophysical tool, a means to train the actor's breath, alignment, attention, and energetic economy. The goal was inner transformation, leading to a state of readiness and receptivity, or what Stanislavski might call the "inner creative state" and what Benedetti later termed the "stillness at the centre." A.C. Scott's work stands as a crucial bridge between Western experimental training and Asian embodied performance traditions.

2.3 A Comparative Analysis of Psychophysical Acting Pedagogies and Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training

Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training system emerged through a unique synthesis of intercultural, embodied, and experimental traditions. His methodology, while innovative, is deeply rooted in the foundational work of key 20th-century theatre practitioners who redefined the actor's craft by challenging bodymind dualism, emphasizing pre-performative training, and exploring the actor's presence through physical, energetic, and spiritual processes. Among these, the influence of Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Jacques Copeau, Tadashi Suzuki, and A.C. Scott is especially prominent. Each of these figures contributed crucial philosophical and pedagogical principles that shaped Zarrilli's intercultural and psychophysical approach to actor training.

Stanislavski and Phillip Zarrilli: Stanislavski's insistence that every inner experience must find expression through physical action provided a crucial early theoretical and practical framework for psychophysical acting. His method of physical actions emphasized the training of the actor's body not merely as a representational tool, but as an instrument of truthful, lived experience, a precursor to many modern somatic approaches. Phillip Zarrilli acknowledges this lineage, Zarrilli's work also represents a significant paradigmatic departure. While Stanislavski's system focused on text-based theatre, developing character through action, imagination, and affective memory within given circumstances, Zarrilli's approach begins even earlier in the actor's process. His training is pre-performative, cultivating presence, attention, breath, and energetic awareness through daily psychophysical disciplines like yoga and Kalarippayattu. Where Stanislavski sought to harmonize the actor's emotional and physical life within the role, Zarrilli's actor often trains outside of character and text, focusing instead on the refinement of the bodymind as a receptive and responsive entity. Both systems ultimately strive toward authentic presence and the embodied expression of internal impulses, creating

a continuum of practice from Stanislavski's psychophysical dramaturgy to Zarrilli's intercultural embodiment.

Michael Chekhov and Phillip Zarrilli: Michael Chekhov's psychophysical approach to actor training is rooted in the dynamic interplay of imagination, energy, gesture, and spirit forms a crucial conceptual backdrop against which Phillip Zarrilli developed his own psychophysical system. Chekhov's notion of the "psychological gesture" manifests his core belief that the body and psychology are inseparable in the actor's process. While Zarrilli does not adopt Chekhov's psychological gesture per se, his work resonates with the principle that energetic embodiment lies at the heart of acting. Zarrilli's training similarly emphasizes kinaesthetic awareness, inner impulse, and embodied responsiveness, but through a different lineage, one informed not by Anthroposophy or imaginative gesture, but by Asian martial and meditative practices such as Kalaripayattu and yoga. Where Chekhov saw the actor as a spiritual explorer discovering the character's soul through movement, Zarrilli reorients the actor's journey inward, focusing on the pre-performative cultivation of breath, attention, and inner energy, before engaging with character or text. Both systems view acting as a transformative practice, one that transcends psychological representation and treats the body as an energetic medium of transmission. Chekhov's emphasis on radiation, atmosphere, and creative individuality anticipates Zarrilli's actor as a bodymind in heightened presence, a vessel tuned to the moment, to the breath, and to the impulses that arise from a deep, trained stillness. Chekhov's legacy finds continuity in Zarrilli's intercultural framework, even as Zarrilli grounds psychophysical training in embodied being rather than symbolic gesture.

Jerzy Grotowski and Phillip Zarrilli: Jerzy Grotowski's legacy as a rigorous investigator of actor embodiment, impulse, and presence significantly shaped the foundations of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical approach. Grotowski's work in the Theatre Laboratory as both practical training ground and philosophical inquiry redefined actor training not as a preparation for performance, but as a spiritual and ethical process of unveiling the self. Grotowski's experiments in "poor theatre", which prioritized the actor's expressive body

over theatrical spectacle, deeply influenced Zarrilli's own view that the actor's bodymind is the primary site of performance. Like Grotowski, Zarrilli believes that performance arises from a discipline of presence, a commitment to inner impulses, breath, rhythm, and action. However, Zarrilli distinguishes his methodology by rooting this process in Asian martial and meditative practices, which he uses to train actors to respond to impulse. Grotowski's concern with eradicating the gap between inner impulse and outer gesture finds resonance in Zarrilli's emphasis on cultivating heightened awareness. Both practitioners share a commitment to intercultural exploration, spiritual inquiry, and the actor as an instrument of transformation. While Grotowski moved away from traditional theatre into paratheatrical, Zarrilli developed a parallel but distinct pedagogy where the pre-performative training process becomes performative in itself. In this way, Grotowski's investigations into impulse, action and actor-spectator encounter find a powerful echo in Zarrilli's integrated system of psychophysical training.

Eugenio Barba and Phillip Zarrilli: Eugenio Barba's investigations into Theatre Anthropology, with its emphasis on pre-expressive behaviour, extra-daily technique, and intercultural performer training, exerted a profound conceptual influence on Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training. Barba, through his work and his research at ISTA, shifted the focus of actor training from representational expressivity to the underlying energetic and physical principles that activate presence on stage. His notion of the dilated body, trained through techniques drawn from Eastern performance traditions resonates deeply with Zarrilli's commitment to embodied discipline. Both practitioners share the conviction that the actor must transcend culturally conditioned, automated daily behaviour in order to achieve a heightened state of readiness. Zarrilli's engagement with kalarippayattu and yoga reflects Barba's influence in viewing the actor's body not merely as expressive but as a cultivated field of energetic flow and responsiveness. While Barba did not codify a universal training method and instead emphasized the individual actor's evolving process, Zarrilli operationalized these insights into a structured training. Furthermore, Barba's idea that the actor is a "body scientist", engaged in decoding the laws

of pre-expressivity across traditions, aligns with Zarrilli's actor as a researcher of embodied knowledge. Both frameworks treat performance as a lived inquiry into presence, energy, and transformation.

Jacques Copeau and Phillip Zarrilli: Jacques Copeau's foundational work on the Neutral State and the use of neutral mask training offered a critical conceptual parallel that echoed throughout Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting methodology. Copeau's pursuit of a performative condition where the actor returns to a baseline of dynamic stillness, heightened receptivity, and energetic silence strongly aligns with Zarrilli's emphasis on cultivating a state of alertness and embodied presence. Both practitioners sought to refine the actor's pre-performative state as a condition of readiness. Both approaches consider the cultivation of presence as the actor's first responsibility, a moment-to-moment attentiveness. Although Zarrilli's training does not explicitly employ neutral mask, the underlying pursuit of a state of simplicity, unity, and energetic stillness links his practice directly to the legacy of Copeau's neutral state. Thus, Copeau's work supports Zarrilli's actor training as a discipline of psychophysical readiness rooted in the present moment.

Tadashi Suzuki and Phillip Zarrilli: Tadashi Suzuki's rigorous physical discipline, centred around his concept of the grammar of the feet, played a significant role in shaping the development of intercultural and psychophysical approaches to actor training, including that of Phillip Zarrilli. Both Suzuki and Zarrilli deeply valued the body's rootedness and energetic connection with the earth, placing the feet and breath at the centre of their actor training pedagogies. Suzuki's emphasis on stomping, grounding, and controlled breath is not merely a technique of physical exertion but a means to awaken the actor's latent expressive energy, reuniting the voice and body as a singular expressive unit. In Zarrilli's training, this awareness of the actor's centre of gravity, balance, and breath, cultivated through traditional Asian practices, resonates with Suzuki's goal of reclaiming the actor's pre-codified, instinctual, and embodied presence. Suzuki sought to

“restore the wholeness of the human body” in performance through rhythm, stillness, and dynamic oppositions, a principle echoed in Zarrilli’s insistence that training must engage the total psychophysical self. The Suzuki actor’s rigorous engagement with breath, pelvic alignment, muscular economy, and full-body energy mirrors Zarrilli’s vision of the actor as a mindful body, trained to respond internally and externally through moment-to-moment awareness. While Zarrilli’s work does not replicate Suzuki’s exact exercises, it shares a core philosophy: the necessity of grounding performance in embodied energy, breath, and disciplined attention to the actor’s relationship with space, time, and inner impulse.

A.C. Scott and Phillip Zarrilli: A.C. Scott served as a vital bridge between Western experimental theatre and the embodied performance traditions of Asia, significantly influencing Phillip Zarrilli’s development of psychophysical actor training. Scott’s integration of Tai Chi as a training method for Western actors marked a radical departure from the dominant psychological models of acting, instead emphasizing inner stillness, and bodymind unity. His insistence on training the body not as a mimetic tool but as an expressive medium capable of resonating with emotional and cosmic energies aligned with Eastern philosophies of performance, particularly those that treat the actor’s body as the site of transformation. This sensibility became foundational in Zarrilli’s approach, especially in his use of Asian traditional practices as a preparatory psychophysical disciplines. Zarrilli was directly influenced by Scott’s emphasis on cultivating inner readiness, stillness at the centre, and present-moment responsiveness, qualities Scott saw as essential in the Asian performer’s training. In Scott’s vision, echoed by Zarrilli, the actor is not a vessel for external representation but a conscious body-in-process, attuned to breath, impulse, and energy flow. Scott’s own intellectual lineage drawing from Jacques Copeau’s belief in pre-performance training as the root of presence parallels Zarrilli’s understanding of training as preparation for “being available” to the moment of performance rather than rehearsing fixed outcomes. Scott’s philosophical and embodied integration of East and West provided Zarrilli with a transcultural framework within which

psychophysical processes could be explored not as abstract theory but as concrete, repeatable practices that lead to transformation in and through performance. A.C. Scott's work laid crucial groundwork for Zarrilli's radical rethinking of actor training beyond Western dualistic paradigms, toward a holistic, intercultural, and embodied actor pedagogy.

Phillip Zarrilli (2002) in "On the edge of a breath, looking" talks about the concept of "standing still while not standing still" within the context of intensive psychophysiological training in Asian martial and meditation arts. This terminology and method were developed by A.C. Scott in 1963 and in collaboration with Zarrilli since 1979. It explores the complexities of this paradox focusing on how actors learn to be both motionless and active simultaneously. Zarrilli examines the preparation and training of actors through immersion in Asian art forms which aim to cultivate a state of readiness. It suggests that acting is a psychophysiological process requiring the cultivation of bodymind to fully embody tasks in performance. To discuss training the actor to "stand still while not standing still" involves a process that not only changes how the practitioner interacts with their bodymind during practice but also shifts their conceptualization of this relationship. Zarrilli discusses his own transformative shift in this relationship. Before engaging with the practice of Kalaripayattu and Kathakali in India in 1976, Zarrilli's experience of the body was based on a variety of sports. When for the first time in 1976, he engaged with these traditional disciplines he wasn't ready at all for the intense experiences he would have with bodymind. In the beginning, he spent about six months immersed in studying kathakali dance-drama. Every day, he trained intensely for around seven hours at the Kerala Kalamandalam with M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri. Then, for another three months, he started training for four hours a day in the closely related martial art, kalaripayattu, with Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar at the C.V.N. Kalari in Thiruvananthapuram. (Zarrilli, 2002, pp. 181-183)

"Over the months and years of observing masters of both kathakali and kalaripayattu, I began to notice the 'ease' with which they embodied their incredibly dynamic arts, manifesting an extraordinary focus and power. In kathakali that power is manifest in the

full-bodied aesthetically expressive forms through which the actor channels his energy as he realises each mood (bhava) appropriate to the dramatic context. In kalarippayattu that focus, and power is manifest not only in performance of the fully embodied forms of exercise but also in the fierce and potentially lethal force of a step, kick, or blow.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 183)

Zarrilli, who trained under Scott, absorbed this paradigm fully into his own psychophysical framework. Scott’s influence is visible in Zarrilli’s commitment to daily structured practice, his use of Asian traditional disciplines and his consistent insistence that the actor must first prepare the bodymind.

2.4 Research Gap

“The study of the performance practices of the past is essential. Theatre history is not just the reservoir of the past, it is also the reservoir of the new, a pool of knowledge that from time to time makes it possible for us to transcend the present. The entire history of the theatre reforms of the twentieth century, both in the East and in the West, shows the strong link of interdependence between the reconstruction of the past and new artistic creation.” (Barba, 1995, p. 11)

“Delsarte, Stanislavski, Meyerhold and a host of their disciples each developed ‘systems’ which used languages of acting based on the assumption of an objective science (of the mind and/or body). On the other hand, German Expressionists, Artaud and others rebelled against rationalism and/or ‘the word’. They assumed languages and metaphors of acting which romantically reified the subjectivity of the actor, thereby making the intensely ‘personal’ the source of ‘truth’. Objectivism and subjectivism remain two sides of the same problematic, dualistic coin.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 10)

Language often serves as a collection of metaphors we employ to articulate and understand our experiences. All acting languages are metaphorical, and we need to scrutinise the

philosophical assumptions that underpin this language and acting paradigm. Zarrilli suggests actively questioning and openly challenging the language and the assumptions it carries while also seeking more suitable alternatives. “If propositional language can never fully represent acting, then actors have no choice but to ‘live by’ metaphors. The question is not whether languages of acting can/ should be metaphorical, but what specific ‘metaphors’ are actors to ‘live by’?” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 10). Zarrilli acknowledges the inherently metaphorical nature of all acting languages. It is hard to describe exactly how acting works and to fully capture the practice itself. There are different ways of talking about acting and how they are used. All acting languages need continual reconsideration in light of their context and application.

“Because of the limitations of our propositional modes of representation, we have a hard time trying to express the full meaning of our experiences. So, while we must use propositional language to describe these dimensions of experience and understanding, we must not mistake our description for the thing described.” (Johnson, 1987, p. 4)

Stanislavski was the first to use the term psychophysical even though his use is historically limited. He developed the “Method of Physical Actions” which offered to bridge the gap between bodymind and challenged his own techniques of “Effective Memory.” (Stanislavski, 1936). Michael Chekhov interpreted psychophysical through his coinage of “Psychological Gesture” which is a concentrated and repeatable movement that awakens the actor’s inner life and its kinaesthetic image (Chekhov, 1991). His training of the body is a training in awareness; in learning how to listen to the body, how to be led by it. Grotowski, through his psychophysical developments, hoped to explore the innermost core of the performer’s personality and wanted him to sacrifice it through years of bodily training (Richards, 1995). This innermost core is the innate physical power present inside the body. He wanted to investigate and find a way to wake up this physical power through bodily training which when awakened can increase our awareness, sensitivity and perception. Jacques Copeau’s work on psychophysical training highlights the link between

the breath and the body in motion and the link between doer and done which is accomplished through long term bodily based training (Zarrilli, 2008). Tadashi Suzuki reflected upon his practice and philosophy behind his training which emphasises the actor's relationship to the ground through his feet. He locates the consciousness of the body's communication with the ground and leads to a greater awareness of the physical body.

Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training approach draws directly upon non-western philosophies and practices in order to freshly re-consider a psychophysical approach to contemporary acting. Zarrilli utilised Indian psychophysical disciplines such as Kalaripayattu and Yoga to develop his acting training method. He claimed that the training that actors undertake provides them with a practical means of attuning their perceptual awareness so that they are able to be immediately responsive and sensitive to the performance. Zarrilli's method and practice plays an important role in understanding the contemporary developments in psychophysical approach to acting.

There is very limited research work done to study the effectiveness of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training. Phillip Zarrilli worked intensively on the psychophysical acting training and developed a unique method to train contemporary actors in which traditional art forms like Yoga, kalaripayattu plays an important part. Zarrilli also specified about the process of how pre-performative training is transposed to performance. In an interview Zarrilli told Wallace,

“In Zarrilli's view, teachers such as Stanislavski and Grotowski have tried to solve the same acting problems that he has identified, and they arrived at similar conclusions about the efficacy of Asian modalities, without consciously seeking to teach in an intercultural way. He does not necessarily have a bias in favour of Asian-derived disciplines but sees potential in these disciplines to remove blocks in performance. Zarrilli allows actors to challenge themselves at the level that they are capable of. He seeks to make the acting process healthy and accessible, ‘providing a pathway’ to solving these problems for each performer individually.” (Wallace, 2012, p. 44)

The proposed research work seeks to investigate the contemporary understanding of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training and its effectiveness in practice. Psychophysical acting training and pre-performative training offer a significant potential towards understanding the ideas of embodied acting languages. It also highlights the concept of energy and the underlying principles of performativity. I believe that the research project can not only contribute significantly to the deep understanding of relation between traditional pre-performative training but also about understanding the contemporary performance practice. It will also take into consideration the process of transposition of pre-performative into performance.

2.5 Research Methodology: The proposed research project implements a mix method research including Analytical method, Historical method, Questionnaire method, Research Survey, Interview method and Descriptive research method. These methods suit the research project best as the effectiveness of the psychophysical acting training can be traced better when it is talked about in detail.

2.6 Conclusion

The training methodologies discussed by Stanislavski, Chekhov, Grotowski, Copeau, A.C. Scott, Barba and others are centred on metaphorical language developed through intensive practice. Each of these influential theatre practitioners proposed unique approaches to develop actor's skills. While their techniques differ in some way, they all strive toward the same goal, which is enhancing artistic expression and establishing a deeper bond between bodymind. Scott's concept of "Training the actor to stand still while not standing still" focuses on cultivating inner stillness and presence. The idea is part of a broader psychophysical training approach inspired by Tai Chi which Scott adapted to develop an actor's readiness and presence. Jacques Copeau also engaged with physical movements in his training methods and believed that actors should seek an optimal psychophysical state or readiness. This state is referred to as the "State of Motionlessness or Neutral State". It

provides a foundation from which actors can authentically and truthfully approach their roles. Michael Chekhov's "Psychological Gesture" is designed to access the subconscious and emotional depths of characters enabling actors to embody emotional truth. Eugenio Barba's "Composition Exercises" involve structured exercises to develop physicality, vocal expression and ensemble dynamics. These exercises are intended to give actors greater control over their bodies. The emphasis these practitioners place on breath, inner energy and physicality in their training underscores the importance of traditional practices in shaping modern drama and acting. Their distinct perspectives and methods continue to influence the theatre world and actor training.

The influence of cultural practices such as Kalarippayattu, Yoga and Kathakali on global performance arts highlights the significant role of the bodymind relationship it cultivates. These traditional arts not only improve physical conditioning and mental focus but also carry deep philosophical and spiritual meanings promoting discipline and mindfulness. By integrating these diverse cultural practices into their methodology's theatre practitioners enhance their understanding of the bodymind connection. All theatre practitioners mentioned above investigated with great experience and scientific rigour the territory we call "pre-expressive" which Zarrilli refers to as "pre-performative". But how they affect the performer's body can be explored further. This will help in generating new knowledge about the process of embodiment and the body as an experienced phenomenon.

Theatre practitioners should scrutinise and contextualise the psychological as a phenomenon whose cultural meanings and social significance have altered over time. Thus, it requires reconsideration from time to time. These analysis aims to reshape the discourse around acting by transcending traditional dichotomies like body/mind or emotion/reason. They seek to portray acting in a holistic manner by acknowledging that meaning is crafted and conveyed not only through language (mind) but also through movement (body). In recent years, there has been a growing body of literature recognizing the holistic aspect of acting, often using the term "psychophysical" to describe this integrated approach. Phillip

Zarrilli is one such theoretician and practitioner who explored the realm of psychophysical in detail.

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CHAPTER- 3

THE BODYMIND DUALISM AND THE PSYCHOPHYSICAL DISCIPLINES

3.1 The Bodymind Dualism

“The bodymind dualism can be traced back to Plato who asserted that the mind (psyche) had an independent and superior metaphysical status capable of participating in the knowledge of the world of forms. The body was part of the physical world and therefore a deterrence or hindrance to a person’s epistemic and spiritual development.” (Shaner, 1985, p. 42)

This early privileging of the mind over the body created a hierarchy that would persist for centuries, shaping Western thought on human experience and expression. Rene Descartes (1641) formulated a theory of body-mind dualism. He is well-known for his idea about the body and the mind being separate entities. His idea is majorly referred to as Cartesian dualism. He suggested that the mind and the body are two different substances, and they interact to form the human experience. He argued that the mind or consciousness is a non-physical, thinking substance. The body is a physical, extended substance that occupies space and has a definite size and shape. He suggested that the mind and body are different things that work together to make up human experiences. In his important book, “Meditations on First Philosophy” (1641), Descartes explained his idea.

Descartes’ position not only crystallised the conceptual separation of mind and body, it also entrenched the view that the mind is the seat of agency and the body its subordinate instrument, an assumption that would deeply influence Western performance traditions. The idea formulated by Descartes has been significant in the history of philosophy. It also faced criticism regarding how a non-physical mind can affect a physical body without breaking the laws of physics. In contemporary philosophy various alternative theories have been proposed to address the challenges of Cartesian dualism. “When psychology emerged

as a separate discipline from philosophy in the nineteenth century, the sciences of mind and the self were often considered separate from the science(s) of the physical body. This split reflected the long-term Western binary dividing mind from body that so problematically crystallised in the mind–body dualism of the seventeenth-century French philosopher Rene Descartes” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 13). In response to Descartes bodymind dualism, some philosophers started looking for alternative ways to connect the body and the mind more closely. One such approach was using the term “psychophysical” to show that mental aspects and physical aspects are interconnected. Psychophysical suggests that mental processes (psyche) and physical processes (body) are interlinked and cannot be fully understood separately. This move toward psychophysical integration sets the stage for 20th-century phenomenologists and ecological theorists, who reject the notion of the body as a mere vessel and instead recognise it as an active site of perception, meaning-making, and action.

“Acting is either too easily over-intellectualized or becomes overly subjective. This is due to our compartmentalization of mind, body, and emotion, it is commonplace to assume that mind is an absolute organ or category separate from the body or our feelings and emotions, to separate mental processes from the body and our feeling/emotional world or vice versa, is highly problematic from the perspective of understanding acting process.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 76)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s three important books, “Phenomenology of Perception” (1962), “The Primacy of Perception” (1964), and “The Visible and the Invisible” (1968), brought a major change in how we think about the relationship between the body and the mind. His work raised questions about how the body shapes human experiences. Merleau-Ponty challenged the traditional idea which considered the body as a tool controlled by the mind. He rejected the idea of separating the bodymind and highlighted the significance of the lived body. “For Merleau-Ponty, the focus of philosophical inquiry shifted from ‘I think’ to an examination of the ‘I can’ of the body, i.e., sight and movement as modes of entering

into inter-sensory relationships with objects, or the world” (Ponty, 1964, p. 87 as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 45). He believed the body is not passive but actively involved in how we perceive and act in the world. He argued that the bodymind are inseparable and work together as a whole. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology thus reframes the actor’s body not as an obedient tool awaiting mental command, but as a perceiving, acting subject in itself, an idea that directly undermines Cartesian separation and paves the way for psychophysical training approaches. By emphasising the importance of embodied experience, Merleau-Ponty challenged Descartes dualism. His ideas had a big impact on fields like phenomenology, cognitive science and philosophy. Zarrilli points out that Merleau-Ponty’s view of the body is essential in how we perceive things. In Western philosophy, perception and action were seen as completely separate. Merleau-Ponty challenges this idea mentioning that perception and action are inseparable. He believes that when we perceive things, it is not just a passive thing where we take in sensory information. It is an active process that involves our whole body. Our ability to move and act is crucial in how we understand the world around us. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 45)

James Gibson, a notable psychologist, played an important role in reshaping views about perception and action. His influential book, “The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception” (1979), introduced a ground-breaking perspective that challenged prevailing ideas in psychology. Where Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology roots perception in lived bodily experience, Gibson extends the argument into an ecological dimension showing that perception is not only embodied but also inseparable from the environment with which the body is in constant exchange. Gibson’s approach is referred to as ecological psychology. It rejected the notion that perception involves creating mental images in our brains. He argued that perception is directly connected to the immediate environment and the information it provides to our senses. According to Gibson, the environment itself holds all the information needed for perception and our perceptual systems are tuned to detect these possibilities in the environment. This notion of direct engagement resonates with an actor’s need to be attuned not only to their own body but also to the space, objects, and

fellow performers around them, a dynamic interplay central to psychophysical training. Perception is not about creating mental pictures, but it is an active process of engaging with the environment. This process is guided by the ability of the body and the information present in our surroundings. He believed that perception is not just a function of the mind inside the body but involves the whole organism interacting with its environment.

Philosopher Alva Noe was concerned with the intricate relationship between perception and action. Noe builds upon the foundational research of Gibson, as well as draws from phenomenology and cognitive science to advance an enactive approach to both perception and perceptual experience. Noe states that “perceiving is a way of acting. Perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do. the world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction” (Noe, 2004, p. 1 as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 47). Noe’s emphasis on perception-as-action reinforces Merleau-Ponty’s “I can” and Gibson’s ecological engagement, bringing the discussion even closer to the psychophysical actor’s task: cultivating an active, embodied readiness in every moment of performance.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold offers an ecological view of perception that focuses on the connections between living beings and their surroundings. According to Ingold, the idea of the “whole-organism-in-its-environment” goes beyond typical boundaries. It represents an ongoing process unfolding in real time: a process of growth or development. Ingold suggests that perception is not static but a dynamic and ongoing journey of learning how to perceive. Individuals adapt and refine their perceptual abilities over time to shape their understanding of the world (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 46-47). This developmental view mirrors the long-term cultivation required in psychophysical disciplines, where awareness, movement, and responsiveness are refined through sustained practice over time.

“Given the resilience of mind-body dualism, students often experience a ‘real’ disjuncture between their minds and their bodies. They have great difficulty ‘freeing’ themselves from the ‘mind’ to work out from their bodies. They often have a ‘mental block’ which they must overcome before they are free to allow themselves to explore how to discover a psychophysical impulse as a beginning point in action. I read this disjuncture not simply as an example of an acting problem, but as part of an ongoing cultural reconsideration of the paradigms, discourses, and relationships between the body, mind, and experience in the constitution of meaning, knowledge, “self,” and our daily practice(s) of life- including acting.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 13)

These philosophers argued for the inseparability of perception, action and thought within their respective approaches. They reject the traditional idea of perception as simply receiving information from the world to the mind and action as output from the mind to the world. They propose a more holistic understanding of perception. This shared departure from dualistic thinking offers a conceptual foundation for psychophysical actor training, an approach that treats perception, action, and emotion as co-arising and mutually shaping, rather than as discrete processes.

In their view’s perception does not belong to a specific part of the body. But it arises from the entire being engaging dynamically with its environment. This inclusive perspective suggests that perception is a complex process involving the whole organism. “For the actor/doer as a sentient perceiver on stage, perception should not be reduced to merely having subjective feelings. Perception occurs when we experience sensations sufficiently that make a certain sort of sense to us, i.e., we understand that the sensations we experience are constitutive in some way” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 47). Zarrilli argues that authentic perceptual experiences depend upon our utilisation and refinement of sensorimotor knowledge. Perceptual knowledge can be best described as practical knowledge where individuals possess an understanding of how to act or respond appropriately. “Perceptual knowledge is therefore practical knowledge, i.e., one knows how. Over time one gains a

practical grasp of the way sensory stimulation varies as the perceiver moves. We develop a battery or repertoire of sensorimotor skills and ways of being attentive which are the foundation for our perceptual encounter with the world” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 48). This process involves the development of an extensive collection of sensorimotor skills. It forms the foundation for our perceptual engagement with the world. The sensorimotor knowledge enables individuals to comprehend their spatial relationship to elements in their surroundings. It is crucial to emphasise that this form of knowledge is experiential as opposed to being theoretical or based on propositions. Zarrilli acknowledges the role of sensorimotor knowledge and its integral connection to perception.

Kemp (2010) provides insights from cognitive science to explore how actors prepare for and perform roles. The new discoveries in neuroscience, psychology and linguistics challenge traditional dualistic ideas that have shaped acting theory for decades. They propose more integrated models for understanding the cognitive and expressive aspects of acting. Performing is a unique skill that involves abilities beyond those we use in our daily lives. Kemp points out some important questions i.e. How does acting relate to real life? What similarities and differences exist between them? He takes into consideration these questions by drawing upon his personal experience as an actor and director, as well as insights from cognitive studies. “The last thirty years have seen major changes in the scientific understanding of the brain, the mind, and its mechanisms. These have been prompted by increasing sophistication in brain scanning technology that has provided a wealth of neurobiological data about the brain at work” (Kemp, 2010, p. 7). By incorporating findings from neuroscience and embodied cognition, contemporary thinkers like Kemp bridge philosophy and science, further legitimising the integration of body and mind in performance training.

The trajectory from Plato’s metaphysical separation of psyche and body, through Descartes’ formalized Cartesian dualism, to the phenomenological and ecological challenges posed by Merleau-Ponty, Gibson, Noe, and Ingold, reflects an ongoing dismantling of the rigid boundaries between “mind” and “body.” What emerges from this

lineage is a steadily widening recognition that perception, action, and cognition are not isolated functions of distinct substances, but are instead co-constitutive processes of the lived, embodied organism in constant engagement with its environment. This philosophical shift is critical for actor training because it directly confronts the compartmentalization that Zarrilli identifies as an obstacle for students, the “mental block” that prevents full-bodied engagement with impulse, sensation, and psychophysical readiness.

By reframing perception as action, and action as inseparable from embodied awareness, these thinkers collectively provide the theoretical foundation for psychophysical training disciplines that dissolve the bodymind split. Their insights validate practices in which sensorimotor knowledge is cultivated as practical, lived intelligence, knowledge that cannot be abstracted from the body’s doing. In the context of performance, this means that the actor’s awareness, movement, and responsiveness are not ancillary to thought, but are themselves forms of thinking. Zarrilli’s pedagogy draws upon precisely this integrated understanding, situating the actor as a sentient, perceptive doer whose craft depends on refining the pathways between sensation, movement, and meaning. The move from philosophical critique to embodied practice is therefore not incidental; it is the necessary bridge that connects centuries of theoretical debate on bodymind dualism with the lived realities of psychophysical acting disciplines.

It is reasonable to expect that the advancements in the understanding of the mind and body over the past three decades prompted changes in acting theory and training. From a historical standpoint, as our knowledge of the body evolves through scientific research, it is natural to expect that theories of acting will adapt to incorporate new insights. These developments lead to revisions in how actors approach their craft. Many contemporary acting training methods advocate for the inclusion of body training as a central aspect of an actor’s preparation. While numerous programs already integrate practices like kalaripayattu, yoga, or dance to strengthen the connection between mind and body.

3.2 Understanding the Whole Bodymind: The Strong Bodymind Connection

Building on the philosophical and scientific critiques of Cartesian dualism outlined in the above section, the discussion now moves from theory to practice examining how the rejection of bodymind separation takes shape in concrete actor training. If 4.1 traced how thinkers from Merleau-Ponty to Gibson redefined perception, action, and cognition as inseparable processes, this section explores how these principles manifest in psychophysical disciplines and performance contexts. Here, Zarrilli's notion of the "whole body" becomes a practical embodiment of these theoretical insights, integrating awareness, energy, and responsiveness into an indivisible bodymind. This section considers how such integration is cultivated through intercultural techniques, traditional practices like yoga and kalaripayattu, and the experiential testimonies of actors and teachers who embody this holistic approach in their daily work.

Phillip Zarrilli mentions his initial encounter with the term "whole body" during his time at CVN Kalari in Thiruvananthapuram. Initially, he found himself troubled by this concept. With time he came to realise that "whole body" was synonymous with what he refers to as the "bodymind" and its strong connection. From his standpoint the integration of the whole body/bodymind entails working with a fully awakened energy that flows through one's entire being. This transformative process seeks to cultivate a heightened state of awareness which enables actors to engage fully with a specific action and to respond instinctively to their immediate environment. According to Zarrilli, a primary challenge confronting contemporary actor lies in their inability to effectively harness the power of the whole body/bodymind. The inability to inhibit one's whole body hinder actors from achieving their utmost potential in their craft. Ryszard Cieslak, who worked with Grotowski as an actor mentioned that "an important thing to remember is that an actor must concentrate on his whole body. Just as a musician has to exercise his fingers every day, so an actor has to exercise his body almost to the point of overcoming it, that is, being in complete control of it" (Cieslak, 1992, p. 261 as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 4). This reflects on how

psychophysical acting rejects the compartmentalising of the self and challenges the approaches which refer to this bodymind dualism. The psychophysical sees the body and the mind as indivisible and considers it as a whole. Raina specifies that

“Within the context of actor training, ‘mentalist’ processes, as distinct from embodied communion, work through a conscious separation of the mind from the body, setting up the western actor’s mind/body split. It is to attend to this need for wholeness, in the first instance, that Zarrilli and the psychophysical tradition engage with Asian forms, working to solve the Cartesian duality of a mind/body separation.” (Raina, 2019, p. 122)

In light of new scientific discoveries and extensive exploration of non-western practices, psychophysical acting training emerges as a valuable tool for training actors. Zarrilli’s psychophysical approach aligns with Eugenio Barba’s concept of the “pre-expressive” phase of training. “Neither does the identification/alienation polarity exist at the pre-expressive level. No matter what the effect the performance ought to produce on the spectator may be, the distance between the body and the mind, the sensation that there is a mind which is commanding and a body which is executing, must be reduced until it disappears” (Barba, 1995, p. 115). Similar to Barba’s concept of the dilated body, Zarrilli aims to lead actors toward achieving an embodied acting style characterised by heightened bodymind awareness. This phase focuses on preparing actors on a foundational level enhancing their body awareness, sensory perception and energetic presence in preparation for actual performances. Zarrilli mentions that “Psychophysical Acting is therefore self-consciously intercultural. I draw directly upon non-Western philosophies and practices in order to freshly (re)consider a psychophysical approach to contemporary acting, East and West” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 8). Psychophysical acting training expands the actor’s toolkit which enables them to adapt to a diverse range of dramaturgies. The psychophysical approach focuses on the “pre-expressive” or “pre-performative” phase in which actors undergo a comprehensive preparation process.

“The pre-expressive has to do not only with the physical aspect but also with the bodymind complementarity. It reproduces within its most restricted and basic scope a totality equivalent to that which must characterise the broader level of organisation of expression. The bodymind totality of the performer on the pre-expressive level is equivalent, on the expressive level.” (Barba, 1995, p. 117)

Zarrilli challenges the traditional bodymind dualism by asserting that the work of an actor occurs in the space between the physical and the psychic. This suggests that acting is a holistic process where the body and the mind are interconnected. He believes that developing a language and theory of acting that transcends the bodymind dualism is indeed a challenging endeavour. Some contemporary approaches to acting already aim to bridge this gap by emphasising the unity of body and mind to focus on the actor’s whole being in performance. The exploration of diverse cultural perspectives on embodiment and performance can contribute to a more holistic approach to bodymind and acting. In order to create a theory of acting that moves beyond western bodymind dualism it is crucial to explore the diverse range of human experiences and perspectives on embodiment. It is possible to develop a language and theory of acting that better reflects the psychophysical nature of the actor’s work without falling into the traps of dualistic thinking. “All performance work begins and ends in the body. When I talk of spirit or mind or feelings or psyche, I mean dimensions of the body. The body is an organism of endless adaptability. A knee can think, a finger can laugh, a belly cry, a brain walks, and a buttock listen.” (Schechner, 1973, p. 132). Schechner disagreed with the idea of seeing the body as just a tool. He believed that your body is a part of who you are not just something you use. He thought it is important to consider and train bodymind together as a whole.

Ashish Atrey has been working in theatre and performance for 8 years now. He did his master’s in performance studies from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Delhi. After this he joined Drama School, Mumbai in 2019 which offers a one-year course in theatre making and acting training. Then he got the opportunity to work with the repertory company of

Indianostum theatre in Pondicherry. Till now he is working with them. The director Koumarane Valavane believes in preparing actors for all sorts of performances and he aims to develop a daily routine of practice for actors. Ashish Atrey believes that the practice of psychophysical disciplines helps in cultivating a strong bodymind connection. It is something you can achieve over a long period of time. It requires a lot of patience in the sense that in the beginning you may feel that you are not able to push yourself but if you keep practising then over a period of time you can develop a strong bodymind relation. This relation is there in the body but through these practices it becomes more accessible. Ashish mentioned that psychophysical disciplines can be valuable for acting training as it is not a western concept that we need to introduce to Indian actors. Indian theatre forms actually contain psychophysical disciplines as a part of their morning practice. Psychophysical is already a part of our culture from the beginning may it be classical forms or traditional forms. When we start reading about theatre forms then we get to know that all of them borrow a lot from these psychological disciplines. Ashish shared his personal experiences of a production named “Veer Nadam” in which Kalari movements were used. The production used songs from Therukuthu and movements from Kalari. These are the movements he learned in Kalari practice for one and half years. During this production the practice of Kalari was part of the morning practice and was also practised throughout the day. He realised that during that production he was at the highest peak of his body awareness. He was proposing a lot of things to the director and after the ending of rehearsals he still had energy in the body. He believes that these practices help in generating a heightened awareness, but it also makes you creatively aware. He felt that his creativity was also at peak at that time along with his awareness. (A. Atrey, Personal Interview, 3 January 2024)

The term whole body refers to the bodymind or psychophysical as one compound term. Psychophysical acting training rejects the compartmentalising of the self and challenges the approaches which refer to the bodymind dualism. It draws inspiration from non-western traditions such as yoga and kalarippayattu to offer a deeper understanding of fundamental

elements of acting. It helps sharpen their skills and attune themselves to the demands of the performance ahead. Actors gain a deep sense of embodiment, sharpened focus and emotional availability for authentic theatrical experiences.

“The limits of the physical body can never be transgressed without knowledge and thoroughly mastering the sensory impulses which govern the process of living. The vital instincts and rhythms can only be acted upon and mastered through a very expert technique. It is this technique which is called yoga” (Mishra, 2018, p. 7). Over the years, India has developed a rich tradition of psychophysical disciplines aimed at bridging the perceived gap between the mind and the body. The disciplines such as yoga and kalarippayattu emphasise holistic practices that integrate physical postures, breathing techniques and mental concentration. Through consistent and long-term engagement in these practices’ individuals cultivate a profound awareness of the interconnectedness between their physical sensations, mental states and emotional experiences. “Yoga presupposes the ‘mind-body’ link that has now become a widely shared ‘holistic’ view of the person. Exploring this ‘mind-body’ connection is an integral part of the world view known as the New Age” (Pandey, 2016, p. 55).

Mehak started practising yoga at the age of 10 years and it’s been 18 years since she is practising yoga. She mentioned that it started with a kid’s yoga class, and it went on for 2 to 3 years. She never thought that she was ever going to pursue professionally ever. She continues with practice of yoga till now. Apart from practising yoga in childhood she was also involved in dance. She started doing theatre with her college theatre group and continued for over 3 years. Now, she would say that yoga helped her in different movements, breathing techniques and kept her mentally and physically strong to keep going for performances. After graduation she took a course in yoga to work on herself. Then she realised that it is a profession, and her first professional training was in 2017 and she kept on taking a few more courses in Delhi and Rishikesh. She started teaching yoga in 2018 along with her theatre practice in the evening. For the past few years, she has

specialised in women's health. She has been teaching yoga for the last 5 years and specialises in women's health dealing with hormone disorders, stress and fertility related issues. Mehak believes that the practice of psychophysical disciplines helps in cultivating a strong bodymind connection. Here she is compared to somebody who does not practise psychophysical disciplines. She mentioned you are training your mind and body and if you are performing you can't perform with only one of them. You have to perform with all of your senses and be present at that moment. Even if you are singing, even if you are dancing and even in theatre, you have to be present there and these disciplines contribute to an extent when they are experienced. This is then only you can articulate your experience through words. She thinks that her training and specifically the right kind of training helps in understanding why this and why not this when there is any kind of bodily response. The kind of harmony in what you are feeling whether you are accepting that feeling or not, but it is something that establishes itself when you get the knowledge of it. (Mehak, Personal Interview, 27 November 2023)

“Mind is very active, and it keeps running but this is not with the body. The thing is how to slow down the mind. I think everyone has too much knowledge in their mind. John Bretton quoted that you could do what you can do, you can think what you can think but do not waste your time with unnecessary thoughts. 90 percent thoughts we get in our mind in a day are unnecessary and these unnecessary thoughts are creating anxiety, sadness, panic attacks. Psychophysical exercises help you to control your mind, slow down your mind and clear your thoughts. When you slow down your mind it gets connected to your body and the moment your mind is connected to your body then you perform better in every aspect of your life. This is the process I take all of my students through. I teach them to relax your muscles, mind and open up the body.” (A. Singh, Personal Interview, 25 January 2024)

Sube Singh Ravish is a very well-known yoga teacher, philosopher and a poet. He started practising yoga when he was in second standard and now has almost 60 years of experience

of practice of yoga. Sube Singh Ravish started doing the observed practice of yoga from a yogi in his own way. In his childhood the practice of yoga started and till now he is continuing it. At a certain point in his life, he got introduced with the philosophies of yoga guru Ramdev and it further intensified his interest and commitment to yoga. Now he takes group classes of yoga and organises big yoga camps. He really feels good that the practice of yoga that he preaches actually helped people in improving their life and recovering from diseases. Sube Singh Ravish mentioned his understanding of the topic after reading Phillip Zarrilli's book, "Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski". He mentioned that the craft of performance and the craft of acting happens on stage and in both these domains body and mind work together. The character which an actor embodies depends a lot on the physicality of the actor in the sense that how he portrays it physically. But the soul of the character is in our mind. We feel that it is easy to portray whatever is in our mind physically but when we try to do it in front of an audience, we might face a difficulty in portraying it. The biggest reason for it is that the mind and the body exist as separate entities. But when an actor enters into a condition where the mind and the body are able to glide into each other's energy. This gliding must happen very speedily so that body and mind appear to be one, even if they are different. This is the point from where the art of acting originates. Then there are different ways to develop it. He tries to relate how yoga and martial arts help an actor in developing his character and the art of acting. For example, if we talk about stick fighting, it is one of the traditional art forms developed in ancient times to protect yourself. In south India we can find the same kind of martial art forms. One unique thing about these art forms is that they require rigorous practice and consistency. For example, if we talk about painting when a painter's hand and mind become one then only, he is able to create magic on the Canvas. (S.S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

Sube Singh Ravish believes that when body and mind unite then they become one in practice. They become one in practice with help of long psychophysical training but are always separate. Their coordination of working together becomes so fast that the shifting

of energy between mind and body becomes effortless to a point that we don't even recognise it. In literature we also call it "*Sadharinikaran*", For example if the actor is able to transport audiences to his world, then the magic happens. This *Sadharinikaran* happens only when the mind and body are closely connected. This close connection or we can say becoming one of the mind and the body is what we use in the art of acting, dancing or painting. We can also call it "Samadhi" because the kind of pleasure you feel in samadhi is the same; when you have control over your body and mind and in order to attend this state you need a long-term practice of yoga or any other psychophysical discipline. When you practise this art forms consistently then you can generate a balance in your body. This is the reason that generally performers are also regular practitioners of yoga and martial arts. (S.S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

Taken together, these perspectives, from Zarrilli's own training in kalarippayattu and intercultural psychophysical methods, to Barba's pre-expressive bodymind complementarity, to the lived experiences of contemporary practitioners, illustrate a shared rejection of the Cartesian separation of mind and body. Instead, they affirm the indivisibility of the actor's physical and mental processes as the foundation for performance. The recurring emphasis on heightened awareness, energetic flow, and the disciplined cultivation of the "whole bodymind" reflects a deep consonance between philosophical theory, non-Western embodied traditions, and the pragmatic realities of rehearsal and performance. Whether articulated in the language of phenomenology, yogic philosophy, or martial arts practice, the central insight is consistent: the actor's craft depends on an integrated, responsive, and adaptive bodymind. Zarrilli's psychophysical approach situates itself at this convergence, drawing from intercultural sources not as exotic supplements, but as essential components in the rethinking of acting theory beyond dualistic constraints. This synthesis underscores that psychophysical training is not merely a preparatory exercise; it is the very ground from which the expressive, transformative potential of the actor emerges.

The testimonies discussed in in this section reveal that the cultivation of the whole bodymind is not merely an abstract philosophical proposition but a lived, repeatable discipline that shapes the actor's readiness, creativity, and presence. From Zarrilli's intercultural synthesis to the indigenous Indian traditions of yoga and martial arts, the consistent emphasis lies on long-term, embodied practice that dissolves the perceptual gap between physical and mental processes. This practical integration mirrors the theoretical critiques of dualism addressed in the above section, but also extends them by showing how lived training generates a heightened, responsive state where the actor can enter into an organic flow between sensation, thought, and action. Moving forward, the discussion will examine how these psychophysical disciplines function not only as preparatory tools but as ongoing frameworks for performance, shaping the performer's inner and outer work, and enabling a more expansive understanding of embodiment in acting.

3.3 The Psychophysical Disciplines

As explored in the previous section, Zarrilli's rejection of bodymind dualism calls for a form of actor preparation that unites physical and mental processes into a single, indivisible field of awareness. The psychophysical disciplines constitute the practical embodiment of this philosophy. They are not abstract ideals but concrete, repeatable, daily practices that cultivate a state of heightened readiness.

Antonin Artaud referred to the psychophysical actor as a "crude empiricist" (Artaud, 1970). Empiricism represents a philosophical view which asserts that the knowledge of the world is derived from personal experiences in particular sensory experiences. It emphasises that knowledge cannot exist without direct involvement and encounter. The psychophysical disciplines aim to identify the fundamental empirical aspects of the actor's art so that they can be subsequently refined through practice. Artaud underlined that the actor's knowledge must come through lived, sensory experience rather than theoretical abstraction. This

notion resonates with the bodymind principle discussed earlier that the actor's deepest understanding is generated through the physical act itself.

“The psychophysical exercises begin with the body and move both inward toward subtle realms of experience and feeling and outward to meet the environment. They are a form of empirical as well as (meta)physical (re)search. This (re)search is not undertaken by the side of our brain which engages propositional, analytical thought, but by the bodymind together as they become one in and through daily practice” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 64). Such practice is at once empirical, rooted in tangible, repeatable work and metaphysical, opening the actor to dimensions of experience that cannot be accessed through analytical thought alone.

The psychophysical disciplines/embodied practices such as Kalarippayattu, Yoga, and Kathakali helps in the cultivation of sensorimotor knowledge. Through engagement in these specific form's individuals can establish a strong bodymind connection leading to the generation of what Alva Noe terms as the “Sensorimotor knowledge”. As practitioners immerse in the process of rehearsals or when they construct an acting score, they are actively developing sensorimotor knowledge. This knowledge becomes an integral part of an actor's repertoire to shape their ability to embody performance. The training that actors undertake should provide them with a practical means of attuning their perceptual awareness. This type of preparation must take place on two levels. One is the preparation of the actor's perceptual awareness in general. Another one is the preparation of the actor's perceptual awareness specific to a performance environment shaped by a specific dramaturgy (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 49). As Sube Singh Ravish notes, all actions begin in the physical and culminate in the metaphysical; this transition depends on the seamless coordination of body and mind. For him, the actor's work is a process of uniting visible and invisible energies, a long-term training that leads to states such as *Sadharinikaran* or *Samadhi*, where the bodymind functions as one in performance.

“All the actions are physical to metaphysical. The starting of the action is physical, and the heightened state is metaphysical. That is why we require the coordination of body and mind to do any action successfully. We can’t do any action on the basis of one only. We always require both of these factors. That is why I will say that psychophysical is not only important in theatre or art, but it is an important part of everyday life and actions. Our behaviour is psychophysical and without it we can’t do anything.” (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

Ajith Lal is an actor, theatre maker and a clown who mostly works in Kerala, Bangalore and southern part of India. In 2014, he studied a one year acting course at National School of Drama, Bengaluru. There the methodology is based on conducting different workshops of different traditional theatre practices of southern part of India like Therukuthu, Yakshagana, Koodiyatam, Kalarippayattu along with contemporary acting training. In 2016-17 he joined Thrissur School of drama to pursue post-graduation in theatre arts. While training he learnt through different play production processes and in the morning had sessions of traditional art forms like kalarippayattu and Koodiyatam. He mentioned that “All the traditional art forms which we learnt in NSD Bengaluru, we used them exactly in the play making. For example, if you are learning a martial art form like Kalari, we will use it directly in the play as movement. All these traditional art forms had direct application in the plays” (A. Lal, Personal Interview, 20 December 2023).

Zarrilli specifies that across diverse modes of embodied practice such as martial arts, meditation techniques, traditional medicine practices and traditional performing arts there is a shared set of principles and bodymind paradigms. These fundamental concepts shape and underpin the distinct modes of embodied practice found in different cultures. “Of the relationship between the body and mind, Moore states that an actor’s control over his body should be as complete as that of a dancer” (Moore, 1979, p. 16). Zarrilli delves into the integration of yoga, kalarippayattu and tai chi as essential components of a systematic daily training for actors. He seeks to underline the universal aspects of the bodymind which

transcend cultural boundaries. Zarrilli's perspective highlights the interconnectedness of various disciplines allowing practitioners to draw upon a wide range of traditional knowledge to enhance their craft. This approach also promotes a holistic understanding of the self.

Phillip Zarrilli's approach to psychophysical acting training is not derived from a single tradition, but from an interwoven tapestry of performance and martial disciplines, each contributing distinct yet complementary principles. Indian classical performance forms such as Kathakali provide a codified score of gesture, rhythm, and emotional expression; the martial art of Kalarippayattu offers conditioning, alignment, and the heightened state of readiness termed as "body is all eyes" and yogic practice develops internal energy (*prana*) and the disciplined control of breath. At the centre of all these traditions lies the cultivation of vital energy whether understood as *prana-vayu* or *qi* and the unification of body and mind in performance. In Zarrilli's framework, these systems do not stand apart as separate influences, but function as an integrated ecology of practices in which narrative, physical, martial, and meditative training reinforce one another, dissolving the Cartesian divide between mind and body and replacing it with the fully present, breathing actor.

3.3.1 Kathakali

Building on the psychophysical foundation outlined in the previous section, Kathakali emerges as one of the clearest living examples of how an acting tradition systematically integrates external physical form with internal mental and emotional states.

"Artaud was never able to develop a psychophysiological technique actualizing this vision of the actor as an 'athlete of the heart'. Among today's actors those who visibly display Artaud's vision of an 'affective musculature' controlled by manipulating the breath is the kathakali actor-dancer who literally wears his emotional states 'in' his body- most obviously in his facial expressions- and who learns such control through the overt manipulation of his breath." (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 192)

Kathakali has become increasingly popular among western artists as well as scholars interested in cultural performances. Phillip Zarrilli's book "The Kathakali Complex" targets two groups: those involved in the creative arts like dance and theatre and those studying cross-cultural performance. Zarrilli explores the origins and evolution of Kathakali and delves into actor training to provide a thorough examination of actors in performance. His interest in Kathakali emerged from his fascination with the training methods of Kathakali actors and how these methods could be applied in western performances. His curiosity was first ignited by the writings and exercises of Jerzy Grotowski in the 1960s.

"Kathakali (literally 'story play') dates from the seventeenth century when it evolved from a confluence of ritual/folk, classical and martial sources under the patronage of the rulers and landlords of Kerala's major principalities. Once kathakali's basic performance structure and aesthetic style had evolved, the changes within the world of performance have been relatively gradual and subtle" (Zarrilli, 1984, p. 4). Zarrilli's exploration of Kathakali's history and development categorises it into three main genres: Classical, Folk/Popular, and Ritual traditions. The Classical tradition is rooted in Bharata's 'Natyasastra'. Folk/Popular traditions are more accessible to the general public. They are often written entirely in regional languages for immediate understanding. Ritual performances serve specific purposes such as deity propitiation. Zarrilli seeks to uncover the intricate layers that make up Kathakali by exploring its creation process and the unfolding of time during performances.

The Kathakali tradition portrays stories from Indian epics such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas. These performances blend dance, acting and music into a cohesive whole often termed as dance-drama. "Temple performances like the Samporna Ramayana are typical of kathakali for the masses. Kathakali as temple festival performance has become so popular today that the number of performances sponsored by the temples has become the major source of income for all troupes and individual kathakali artists" (Zarrilli, 1984, p. 34). During Kathakali performances the onstage vocalists sing the text,

delivering both narrative sections and character dialogues. They voice all the characters appearing onstage. Performers undergo years of training to master their techniques. Actors wear elaborate costumes and makeup that allows elaborate facial movements and expressions. All roles in Kathakali are portrayed by men. “The resurgent vitality which kathakali as a ‘classical’ art form has experienced in the twentieth century is certainly due to multiple theatrical worlds, each of which can be appreciated on a variety of levels” (Zarrilli, 1984, p. 12). Kerala Kalamandalam stands out as the most renowned Kathakali school and troupe. It was established by the poet Vallathol in 1920 during a time when Kathakali and other traditional Indian arts faced decline due to a lack of patronage. Vallathol led a revival of interest in Kathakali by bringing together top artists and teachers to establish the first major Kathakali school.

The classical Indian performance tradition “Koodiyatam” which translates to “combined acting” is the only existing form of Sanskrit dramatic enactment with roots in the *Natyasastra*. Koodiyatam is likely the oldest form of classical aesthetic theatre still practised. An important aspect of Koodiyatam is its elaborate system of hand gestures known as *mudras* and detailed facial expressions and the use of eyes to convey emotions (*rasa*). Kathakali adapted a lot from Koodiyatam and maintains a direct link to this ancient classical tradition. Kathakali’s basic makeup and some aspects of its costumes are also adaptations from Koodiyatam styles. (Zarrilli, 1984, pp. 41-42)

“Kathakali dance-drama evolved during the seventeenth century from a confluence of historical circumstances and through a unique confluence of performance genres, all of which are Kerala’s version of the classical, folk and ritual performance traditions. But Kathakali’s form, spirit and techniques were further influenced in their infancy by the addition of another element- the martial art tradition of Kerala Kalarippayattu.” (Zarrilli, 1984, p. 41)

Another significant influence on Kathakali's technique and aesthetics is martial arts form Kalaripayattu which is preserved by the Nair's known as Kerala's martial caste. Young Nair's were trained in a Kalari (a gymnasium) and underwent years of practice in physical exercises, massage and weapons. The martial practices and spirit preserved in the Kalaripayattu tradition are integral to the development of Kathakali. Some specific exercises, stances and choreographic patterns are evident in Kathakali which demonstrates the close connection between the two traditions. "Historical evidence for the specific influence of Kalaripayattu on Krishnattam and Kathakali in K.P.S. Menon's book, Kathakali Rangam. Menon relates that Cathu Panikkar, from a family in Pittambi area known as masters of Kalaripayattu, was instrumental in early development of Kathakali associated with the authoring of the four Mahabharata plays written by Kottayam Tampuran and with the staging which evolved for the performance of these plays" (Zarrilli, 1984, p. 52). The influence of Kalaripayattu on performing arts in Kerala particularly in the training of Krishnattam and Kathakali actors is visible in several aspects. The structure is based on the general principles and specific exercises of the martial art which forms the foundation of their preliminary physical conditioning.

Here, Kathakali demonstrates a key psychophysical principle already discussed in 4.3: the reshaping of the body through long-term training until physical form, internal intention, and emotional state are inseparable. "To reach that goal- to become a master actor of Kathakali- the student will pass through a gradual process of reshaping the body and of perfecting movement techniques through daily and yearly repetition, until each specific movement has become a part of his body consciousness- a new language of creation and expression on the stage" (Zarrilli, 1984, p. 68). Zarrilli specifies that to grasp the Kathakali actor's journey we have to focus on the three main stages. First is the preparatory phase in which the actor embodies training gaining early-stage experience and matures over time. The second phase happens during the performance night when there is a creative process of blending past learning and reflection on the actor's growth. Finally, there is the actual

performance in which the actor's creativity merges with makeup, costumes, fellow actors, musicians and audience interaction for an ideal outcome.

Asian traditional theatre forms follow established patterns providing actors with a framework for character creation. In Kathakali, first actors learn the physical score for embodying characters which allows them to focus on perfecting technique and character development. Initially the attention is on developing the physical score and internal training becomes prominent in later years. This mirrors the psychophysical trajectory Zarrilli advocates for contemporary actors: form first, then inner work both ultimately integrated.

A Kathakali actor embodies a character through a process that involves both external and internal aspects. "Kathakali actors are performers seeking to achieve their 'ideal' characterizations. On the best night this ideal will include the actor giving his fullest concentration, prior to performance, to reflection upon the character he is portraying that evening, how he has performed the part in the past, and what changes, alterations, or additions he might make this evening" (Zarrilli, 1984, p .99). The Kathakali actor's process aims for what can be termed as "performance flow". It is similar to the state of total integration of mind and body found in martial arts practice. This concept is not surprising given Kathakali's roots in Kalarippayattu, where similar intense concentration in the moment is required. Both Kathakali performers and martial artists operate within absolute physical frameworks. Achieving this performance flow means fully embodying the character onstage, being completely present and immersed in the moment without being lost.

Kathakali's training structure and performance philosophy resonate deeply with the core tenets of psychophysical acting that Zarrilli advocates. In Kathakali, the shaping of the body through rigorous, codified movement patterns, the conscious regulation of breath, and the precise control of facial and ocular expression are not aesthetic embellishments but essential pathways to aligning body and mind in performance. This approach embodies the empirical, body-first principle outlined earlier: starting with the physical to reach the

metaphysical. The actor's long-term conditioning ensures that technical form becomes an instinctive vehicle for expressive and emotional truth, a process Zarrilli identifies as fundamental for the contemporary psychophysical actor.

For Zarrilli, Kathakali served as both a model and a laboratory for understanding how external score and internal state can merge in real time to create "performance flow." Its martial arts inheritance from Kalaripayattu mirrored the grounded stability, explosive energy, and breath control he later built into his own actor training system. Moreover, Kathakali's three-phase actor's journey, preparation, performance-night reflection, and live enactment, provided Zarrilli with a culturally rooted structure that could be adapted for modern intercultural training. In this sense, Kathakali is not simply one influence among many, but a practical demonstration of how an entire performance tradition can sustain a holistic bodymind discipline over a lifetime of practice. It affirmed for Zarrilli that psychophysical training is not an adjunct to performance but the very foundation of an actor's craft.

Achieving this performance flow means fully embodying the character onstage, being completely present and immersed in the moment without being lost. This is not only a matter of technical mastery but of channelling an inner current of energy that sustains the actor's precision and presence across the long duration of a performance. Here, Kathakali's link to Kalaripayattu is crucial, the martial artist's capacity to direct force, maintain alertness, and recover balance mid-action mirrors the Kathakali performer's need to sustain the intensity of *abhinaya* and choreographed movement. Both forms depend on a cultivated ability to summon and direct energy through the breath. This is the bridge between physical form and interior state, the threshold where performance moves from the merely visible to the deeply embodied.

3.3.2 Kalaripayattu

“Inevitably my presence became one factor contributing to a resurgence of interest in kalaripayattu among Malayali’s, Indians in general, as well as foreigners. A growing number of academic and popular accounts of kalaripayattu, both my own and those of others, have attracted both non-Malayali’s and foreigners to the study of kalaripayattu. Since 1980 many of my students have travelled to Kerala to study. In 1983 an Irishman living in Brazil read my 1978 article on kalaripayattu and travelled to Kerala to begin training. At a 1983 conference, a Bombay little-theatre director learned about kalaripayattu from me and set out the next year for Chavakkad to train at the Sri Narayana Guru Kalari in order to apply her study of the martial art to her contemporary theatre work.” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 22)

Kalaripayattu is primarily a martial arts form for self-defence. Martial art traditions have been part of Indian culture since antiquity and one can find references in epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kalaripayattu is a discipline which combines physical-mental training and self-discipline. It incorporates the knowledge about the bodymind, the knowledge of traditional medicine and the art of massage. The origins of this martial art can be traced back to the twelfth century and the techniques used in it are close to the practice of yoga. “Kalaripayattu is practically and conceptually informed by yoga, as well as Ayurveda. Just as the hatha yoga practitioner begins by learning basic postures (asana) and breathing exercises, so the kalaripayattu practitioner at first tames both body and mind via poses, body exercises, and breath-control exercises” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 67). Zarrilli (1998) specified that since at least the twelfth century, Kalaripayattu has been observed across the state of Kerala and adjacent areas of Coorg in Karnataka. This martial art tradition has been particularly linked with a specific section of Hindu Nayar’s, who were tasked to serve military duties. Zarrilli explains how kalaripayattu contributed to forming a unified Malayali identity in the early years of Indian independence. The Kerala Kalaripayattu Association officially recognizes three distinct styles of kalaripayattu

which are categorised based on the geographical regions. These are known as the northern, central, and southern styles.

Manish has been practising Kalaripayattu since he was 8 years old. Now he has a Kalari Kshetra in Pondicherry at auroville. It's been almost 35 years since he is practising Kalari and he learned it from EP Vasudeva Gurukul at CVN Kalari, Kaduthuruthy, Kerala. Phillip Zarrilli interviewed EP Vasudeva Gurukul and its part of his book "When Body Becomes All Eyes". Manish mentioned that all the traditional practices, especially Kalari, starts with psychological adeptness. Kalari is a martial arts form that was supposed to protect the society, so psychological knowledge for perfection is very important to learn this kind of martial form. He believes that the practice of Kalari is very important for an actor and a theatre practitioner. His understanding is that when a theatre practitioner goes into the emotional changes like entering into the character, sometimes it is difficult to come back to the normal level. He feels that Kalari is the best practice that can actually neutralise your emotions. The practice of Kalari can help you understand what your body is and what its limitations and its strength are. It gives an understanding of how to manage emotion and while acting how to access your emotional realm. Kalari leads towards developing the energy or stimulating the physique through that energy. He mentioned that there is a saying in Kalari that, "whatever energy you generate in the Kalari, leave it in the Kalari and go". That means actually during the practice whatever energy stimulated you leave it there. If you ask any Kalari practitioner, mostly they will say that after the practice they feel more energetic. (Manish, Personal Interview, 19 December 2023)

"All the practice we do is very intense, though after this intense practice we don't feel tired, instead we feel more energy. All experienced practitioners have the same opinion except the beginners. We need to think from where this energy comes, the energy comes from the practice, and it is making you more energetic. The high energy which you are generating during the practice, you need to neutralise that. The actor is on stage and if an unexpected moment happens on stage, then the actor can respond through the awareness generated in

the practice of Kalari. The body responds according to the situation.” (Manish, Personal Interview, 19 December 2023)

Zarrilli’s ethnographic monograph “When Body Becomes All Eyes” (1998), offers a detailed analysis of kalarippayattu. The research draws on numerous interviews and fieldwork, along with the Zarrilli’s own experience in long term training in Kerala. The monograph provides a rich and multifaceted account of kalarippayattu’s significance. Zarrilli examines how a single cultural practice can assume different meanings in various contexts. He explains that kalarippayattu is influenced by what South Asian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai describes as “public culture”. “What interests me most about this phenomenon is the dynamic and shifting relationship between the body, bodily practices, knowledge, power, agency and the practitioner’s ‘self’ or identity, as well as the discourses and images of the body and practice created to represent this shifting relationship” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 4). Zarrilli presents a performance ethnography of kalarippayattu while exploring it as a cultural practice that shapes bodies, knowledge, power, agency and identities through regular engagement.

Arpit Singh is a young Kalarippayattu practitioner, performing artist and an actor. He has been practising Kalari for the past 12 years. He started doing theatre in 2009 and from 2009 to 2012 he was part of Delhi theatre groups. In 2012, he left for Kolkata to train body and voice because he thinks both of these are the important tools for a performer. He trained with teachers like Arko Mukhopadhyay, Probir Guha and Usha Ganguly. From there he left for Shanti Niketan and in Shanti Niketan he met Avni Biswas who was a disciple and student of Jerzy Grotowski from 1983 to 1984. During that time, he got introduced to Kalari. There is a course in Shanti Niketan in which from 7 am in the morning to 5 pm in the evening to train body and voice. In the training for body and voice they did folk art forms like Kalari, Chau and Gotipua etc. Then he trained with his Kalari master in Kerala. His Kalari master is P. Thakapanna and his son Ajith Gurukul. He went to different

gurukuls of Kalari to learn and explore what they do. Now he has this space named “Kalari Warriors” in Mumbai which trains in Kalari.

Arpit Singh trained from the same gurukul where Zarrilli trained in Kalari in India. Zarrilli learnt it from CVN Kalari. Arpit also read his book “When Body Becomes All Eyes” and got inspired from it. He always gives his students a reference for Zarrilli’s book. He always mentions that if anyone wants to know about Kalari and performing arts, they must read his book. Arpit Singh mentioned that there are two major styles of Kalari that are Northern Kalari and Southern Kalari. He trained in Northern style Kalari. He did a complete course of Kalari just leaving the Ayurveda part. The syllabus of Kalari is divided in four parts, first one is mastery over the body, second one is mastery over the wooden weapons and then mastery over the weapons. The fourth level is mastery over the ayurveda, medicine and the technique of healing which he did not do. He didn’t do it because he is a performing artist and he focused on levels through which he can work on the qualities he wanted to bring in his body. (A. Singh, Personal Interview, 25 January 2024)

Arpit Singh mentioned that when he started practising Kalari he did not have much interest in weapon fighting because he never wanted to be a weapon fighter. From the very beginning he was interested in the body because he wanted to use it in performing arts. His vision was very clear as to why he is learning Kalari. First, he was a theatre practitioner and to work on his body he started practising Kalari. He uses the essence of Kalari in his practice from the very beginning and relates it to the warriors. Mostly 95 percent of the practitioners of Kalari were warriors. In order to be on the battlefield and to win the war, what is needed is body, speed, grace, sustainability and at the same time you need focus, awareness, peaceful mind, bodymind coordination, control of mind and a powerful mind in order to take on all the challenges. He relates the qualities needed by an actor to that of a warrior. He thinks that this is all what an artist also needs like 360-degree awareness, presence, connection between your breath, bodymind and being fully present and focused. If all of these qualities are in Kalari then why don’t train your body mind and get the

essence of Kalari. He got better as an actor and performer with practice of Kalari. (A. Singh, Personal Interview, 25 January 2024)

“Extra-daily practices are those practices such as rituals, dances, theatre performances, the recitation of oral narratives, meditation and/or religious practices, martial arts, etc., which require the practitioner to undergo specialised body training in order to become accomplished in attaining a certain specialised state of consciousness, body, agency, power, and so on. Extraordinary energy, time and resources are often invested by a society to create cultural specialists whose embodied practices are the means by which personal, social, ritual and/or cosmological realities are created and enacted.” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 5)

Ashish Atrey practises yoga and Kalarippayattu as part of his acting training. He believes that these psychophysical disciplines primarily make you more aware of your body. He mentioned that body and mind are no separate entities as Zarrilli also mentioned that they coexist as one entity. Theory and practice are two different things, but you need practice in order to understand how theory works. Kalari makes you physically and sensorily more aware and you experience this coexistence. He realised in the early phase of practising Kalari, like for initial three four months he used to feel very exhausted but after a point he realised that the practice of Kalari is giving energy to utilise for the whole day. So, it started working the other way around, if you don't practise Kalari someday then you feel exhausted. The practice of Kalari started giving more energy to utilise throughout the day. Kalari generated a sort of physical and mental energy to utilise throughout the day. There were many things which were inaccessible but the practice of Kalari made it accessible to the body. When you continuously practise Kalari for 6-7 months, you realise that your approach towards life and performance changes positively. You become more confident, and you start developing your instincts. Since martial arts helps in developing your instincts both mental and physical. Ashish mentioned that their work in Indianostrum is based on experiments and improvisations. When you have developed instincts then you become creatively more available to the director and your co-actor. Then you are able to deal with

the surprises and challenges happening in the training process. You become spatially more aware and are able to respond to the immediate environment. Kalari is a part of daily practice, and you realise how this practice helps you in practice and you are able to propose better to the director. (A. Atrey, Personal Interview, 3 January 2024)

The practitioner's self is reshaped through long-term practice according to an idealised state gaining agency and power. This transformation can only occur through the body actively engaged in practice. The bodily practice enables an individual to gain agency and power which allows them to act in very specific ways within certain contexts. "John Blacking noted long ago that 'there is no such thing as the body, there are many kinds of body, which are fashioned by the different environments and expectations that societies have of their member's bodies'" (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 6). As environments and societal expectations evolve then types of bodies that societies cultivate also change. Both the body and the self are constantly being shaped making them provisional. The martial artist adopts a body through practice, but this body is a mix of various assumptions about the body, practice and power. The body in practice is an experience generator where oneself, agency, and power are disciplined and transformed. The individual and collective experiences interact to shape the self during practice. Zarrilli's monograph also explores the institutional and social contexts that influence how the body and self are experienced in practice.

Karthikeya is doing a masters in performing arts from Pondicherry University. He has been a Kalari practitioner for the last 6 years. He is training the actors in Kalari in Indianostrum theatre, Pondicherry. He has experience of teaching Kalari to contemporary actors. He also taught south Indian traditional art forms to theatre practitioners from Paris who came to India to learn it under the guidance of his master Manish. He also practises traditional art form from Tamil Nadu. His process of training actors is based on Kalari, and it includes warming up exercises, physical exercises to energise the body and to strengthen the body. The training starts from 6:30 a.m. in the morning based on the physical activities. He

chooses elements from the practice of Kalari which are useful for the contemporary actors. He has done three shows based on the practice of Kalari. One performance was inspired from Tamil play, and he used the elements of Kalari in it. The practice of Kalari is the backbone of this performance. Then another one is a performance of Indianostrum Theatre, Pondicherry named “Veer Nadam”. In Veer Nadam singing was an important aspect along with the physical movements inspired from Kalari.

“As an actor we need to work on different aspects of performance like training your voice, training your body, coordination and focus. Kalari helps in attaining all these qualities. Kalari helps in opening up your awareness. If you start your day with Kalari then it provides you with lots of strength and stamina to work” (Karthikeya, Personal Interview, 3 January 2024). Karthikeya believes that in Kalari there are lots of variation levels but warming up and “Mei Payattu” are the basic ones. Warming up includes losing of the body and joints for getting it ready for the practice. Then it moves to the physical exercises which includes balancing of the body and then finally moves to “Mei Payattu” which is about the focus and awareness of the body. He believes that the practice makes you aware about your body like where your arm is moving, where your leg is moving. It is to generate awareness of your bodymind. These elements are useful for the actors in developing flexibility, strengthening, focus, group coordination, body movements and awareness about yourself and the space around you. The practice is very useful for the body and helps you in conveying movements through your body in different ways. He mentioned that the practice made him more confident on stage and helped him in exploring the body. Karthikeya mentioned that the practice of psychophysical disciplines is helpful for actors. There are different elements which you can develop from the practice of psychophysical disciplines like for example coordination and focus. One important thing is that these practices teach you discipline and how to lead a disciplined life. (Karthikeya, Personal Interview, 3 January 2024)

Zarrilli first arrived in India in 1976 to conduct research on the history and process of training in Kathakali. “As a performance scholar and ethnographer, theatre director and actor-trainer, I was interested in how Malayali actor-dancers understood their training process, and how that process enabled them to embody Kathakali’s aesthetic principles” (Zarrilli, 1998, pp. 11-12). Zarrilli’s daily kalarippayattu training was more than just participant observation. It profoundly changed how he experienced and understood bodymind. Zarrilli believed that kalarippayattu is a “body art” (*meyyabhyasam*) and learning it truly comes from “daily practice”. Daily practice highlights the necessity of repetition for a practitioner to develop the right “body expression” (*deham bhavam*). “Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar explained that “kalarippayattu is 80 percent mental and only the remainder is physical” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 211). As a student’s body and mind start to align with the body expression then they gradually begin to embody the ideal state of accomplishment. “The common Malayalam folk expression, ‘*meyyu kannakuka*’ encapsulates the martial practitioner’s idealised state of actualization where the bodymind is in such a concentrated state of acuity and awareness that, like Brahma, the ‘thousand-eyed’, the practitioner can ‘see’ everything around him, intuitively sensing and responding with his accomplished ‘powers’ to any/ everything in the immediate environment” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 212). According to a popular folk saying, in this state, like Lord Brahma, the thousand-eyed, “the body becomes all eyes” (*meyyu kannakuka*). This represents an optimal state of awareness and readiness which is similar to the intuitive and instinctive awareness of an animal in its natural habitat who is always prepared to react to any stimuli. (Zarrilli, 1998, pp. 18-19)

“My overt physical ineptitude was matched by my equal naivete about how to learn through my body, and how that body was related to my mind. I physically ‘attacked’ both kathakali and kalarippayattu exercises. I tried to force the exercises into my body, my body into the forms. I was determined to make myself learn each exercise, no matter how difficult” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 183). Through the long process of repeating basic forms of practice Zarrilli began to notice a shift in how he related to body and mind during exercise or performance. He was tapping into an “internal energy” that he could gradually control and

adjust. This control extended to performances over the time. He discovered a deeper understanding of the internal dynamic of his psycho-physiological connection during practice. He learned to achieve a heightened awareness and sensitivity to his bodymind, breath and the surrounding environment during action.

Manish believes that all the traditional art forms work on developing a strong bodymind connection, without the psychic aspect you can't practise. For example, when you come to the kalarippayattu practice in the Northern style, the beginning part is "Mei Payattu", and it is for improving coordination and strength. When you come to the weapon training and with this example, he explains how Kalari can help the actors. You start to share the space because you are fighting with someone else that means you are sharing a common space. This space actually grows slowly and if you are not ready to share the space with somebody in a comfortable manner then the practice is not going to work. He mentioned that here adaptation is an important thing and if psychologically you are not ready, you have fears in you then you will not be able to share the space with someone else, even if it is a choreographed fight. When you reach the weapon training your body is working in a coordinated manner, but you have to work with another individual in a space who is your partner and the dynamics between the two keep changing. Each time your adaptiveness is improving, the adaptiveness as a person, as a social being and when you come out to the society it starts to reflect in your normal day to day life. (Manish, Personal Interview, 19 December 2023)

"Kalarippayattu training traditionally revolves around two closely interrelated systems of practice the daily process of training per se, which is understood to transform the practitioner's physical body (*sthula sarira*) as well as his internal subtle body (*sukshma sarira*), and the daily, seasonal and calendrical rituals which circumscribe every activity in the place of training (Kalari) and provide access to the powers of the deities." (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 61)

Zarrilli explained that achieving mastery in kalaripayattu, like yoga, requires gaining “complete knowledge of the body”. This knowledge encompasses three distinct aspects: the fluid body, the physical body (*sthula sarira*), and the subtle body (*sukshma sarira*). In Indian philosophy, the subtle body goes beyond the physical, involving energy channels known as *nadis* and energy centres called chakras. These elements are crucial for the flow of vital energy (prana) through the body which affects physical, mental and spiritual health. Each of these bodies has its own conceptual and practical history which has been transmitted through generations in the form of embodied practice.

“The subtle body refers to the ideational construct used by many south Indians to identify and articulate the psycho-spiritual experiences of the yogi, martial artist and the pilgrim/devotee. It provides a map of an experiential landscape especially for those who practise psycho-physiological disciplines or sadhana. The map of this landscape allows the practitioner to ‘make sense’ of the psycho-physiological effects of practice on his bodymind as practice reshapes his experience.” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 123)

Zarrilli (2009) elaborates that in Indian perspective the subtle body is conceived as a conceptual framework to articulate the psycho-spiritual experiences. It serves as a tool for mapping the intricate terrain of psychophysical disciplines and provides practitioners with a language to explain the transformations. “Psychophysical Acting Training provides an alternative conceptualization and model of the actor’s work based not on acting as representation, but on an ‘energetics’ of performance. It explains how energy is activated, how perceptual/sensory awareness is heightened, animal like, as the ‘body becomes all eyes’ and how both are applied to a variety of dramaturgies” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 1). Through long term practice practitioners refine their sensitivity to the subtle dimensions of their being. It helps in attuning to energetic shifts and the interplay between external movements and internal sensations. Zarrilli points out that the journey toward complete knowledge of the body starts with the physical body (*sthula sarira*). It is experienced through exercise routines and massage. These practices are grouped together as “body preparation”

(*meyyorukkam*). The mastery of basic poses (*vadivu*) is a crucial part of this preparation. The poses are named after animals and can be compared to the basic asanas in yoga. In the C.V.N. style of kalarippayattu, several key animal-inspired poses are elephant pose, lion pose, horse pose, wild boar pose, serpent pose, cat pose, cock pose, fish pose. The physical exercises include preliminary leg exercises. In the C.V.N. style of kalarippayattu, students start their training with eight basic leg exercises which are performed with both the right and left legs. Once a student demonstrates a sufficient level of balance and control through these exercises then they are introduced to Mei Payattu. It involves a series of body conditioning exercises that further develop strength, flexibility and coordination. At the C.V.N. Kalari in Thiruvananthapuram, the number of body exercise sequences ranges from eight to fourteen. The training includes twelve regular sequences and two additional special sequences. As the practitioners begin to learn the first body exercise sequence in kalarippayattu then they are introduced to the fundamental poses, steps and jumps. These initial lessons are crucial for establishing a solid base in the physical vocabulary of kalarippayattu. Initially practitioners have to confront and move beyond the physical constraints of the physical body. It involves stretching muscles to enable the adoption of challenging poses. This process also includes clearing away mental distractions and starting to develop a one-point focus. As the practice progresses, the practitioner begins to experience changes in the bodymind.

Arpit Singh thinks about what he can offer as a Kalari teacher to the students. The students are not going to learn Kalari to fight and are not also devoting like 6 months' time. Then he thought about what else he can offer, and he realised that the problem is that they are actors who are coming to learn. He found out that there are insecurities, work pressure, financial issues and people have stress, anxiety, depression. People are not in alignment with their bodies, so he started working on these aspects. Then he started moulding Kalari practice in regard to this and he started working on their mind aspect in class. He started telling students in the class that focus on your mind and how to relax it and how to be aware of your bodymind. (A. Singh, Personal Interview, 25 January 2024)

Arpit Singh elaborates on the structure/working of his Kalari class. There are different kicks in Kalari. If we are doing the leg spin, then he will instruct students to relax your body and focus on one point. Then he tells them to catch the rhythm, then he keeps instructing them to correct their posture and relax your muscles. All these instructions he relates with mind and tell them to develop one pointed focus. When you are active physically then you make sure that you stay relaxed in that posture. When you are working on your spine you need to observe if you are moving all your spine or not. Suppose we have this snake exercise and what happened with humans is that initially we also used to walk on four legs and when the human body transformed with time, we used two legs to walk thus restricting the spine movement. If you observe all the animals when they move their spine move. In humans the spine is not moving because we are on two limbs and when he conducts this snake exercise, he makes sure that each participant's spine must move. Now all the nerves in the body are connected to the spine and all the nerves are relaxed. If nerves are relaxed then your mind gets relaxed, so you will be able to make better decisions and you will be able to deal better. Everything is about dealing and making your path in this world. If through Kalari we are able to build focus through these exercises he inspires his students to attain these qualities. He always goes from body towards the mind. If your body is relaxed, then your mind gets more focused. He keeps conducting these exercises and simultaneously he keeps pointing out about the experiences like if they get a better focus or not. He keeps telling them to mark the feelings and experiences they get while doing the exercises. (A. Singh, Personal Interview, 25 January 2024)

“Exercises and weapons forms are repeated until the student has sufficiently embodied the inner life (bhava) of the sequence, i.e. until the correct form gets ‘inside the student’s body. Once the exercise becomes ‘effortless’, as one performs the exercise one should naturally begin to experience the ‘inner action’ behind the external movement” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 117). This transformation reflects the first tangible improvements in bodymind connection emerging from dedicated practice. Through long term practice the external body becomes

flexible (*meivalakkam*) and, as Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar described, ‘flows like a river’. (Zarrilli, 1998, pp. 84-85)

Manish talks about the evolution of Kalari. He mentioned that time always changes the practice. The method can change but not the form. The form has a structure and if you take something out of this structure it will affect it. If you don’t have a detailed understanding of the movements, sequences or the continuation of the movements, you should not change. But the method of teaching is changing according to the situations and circumstances. But the form must remain intact. If after practising for 25 to 30 years you feel that something should change in the form, then you discuss it with the masters. The practical application is hidden in the movement, and you may not be aware of it. If we don’t keep the form intact, then after some generations it will fall apart because you have taken out the essence of it. Kalarippayattu is still surviving because the essence is there, the masters kept the pattern and the progression intact and also the connection between the form. The process of the development of the bodymind is natural and effortless and if you change the pattern, it can lose its essence. (Manish, Personal Interview, 19 December 2023)

Kalarippayattu offered Zarrilli not just a martial art to study ethnographically, but a living, embodied system that aligned almost seamlessly with the aims of psychophysical actor training. Its emphasis on the transformation of both the *sthula sarira* (physical body) and the *sukṣma sarira* (subtle body) through daily, codified, and ritualised practice mirrored Zarrilli’s central belief that the actor’s craft begins with disciplined, extra-daily training that reconfigures the bodymind. In Kalari, form is inseparable from function: animal-inspired stances, precise leg sequences, breath regulation, and weapons work are not mere physical drills but vehicles for cultivating acute spatial awareness, adaptability, and an instinctive readiness, what the tradition calls *meyyu kaṇṇakuka*, “the body becomes all eyes.”

For Zarrilli, these martial principles translated directly into actor training: the warrior’s capacity for total situational awareness became the actor’s capacity to remain fully present

and responsive on stage; the structured progression from body conditioning to heightened energetic sensitivity became the actor's journey from physical readiness to expressive spontaneity. The Kalari ethos of "leaving the energy in the Kalari", releasing accumulated energy at the end of practice resonated with his understanding of how actors must be able to enter and exit heightened states without psychological residue, ensuring emotional safety in performance.

Kalarippayattu also reinforced the psychophysical principle that external form can be a gateway to internal state. By repeatedly embodying forms until they became "effortless," the Kalari practitioner like the psychophysical actor accessed an "inner action" behind external movement, aligning breath, focus, and energy into a unified performance presence. The martial artists cultivated 360-degree awareness, coordination, and discipline found a natural parallel in Zarrilli's integrated training model, where the actor, like the warrior, must inhabit a bodymind capable of precision, adaptability, and deep attentiveness to both self and environment.

3.3.3 Yoga

"The limits of the physical body can never be transgressed without knowledge and thoroughly mastering the sensory impulses which govern the process of living. The vital instincts and rhythms can only be acted upon and mastered through a very expert technique. It is this technique which is called yoga." (Mishra, 2018, p. 7)

"The definition of yoga is '*Yoga chit vritti nirodhah*', meaning one who can control his thoughts and is able to go beyond is called yoga. Chit vritti means the thoughts which keep on emerging in our mind. If we are not able to control these thoughts, then it will be difficult to internalise a character." (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

Sube Singh Ravish mentioned the definition of yoga. He mentioned that there is a definition of yoga provided by Sages and Sutra which is "Yoga chit vritti nirodhah". But if we also

think through a long practice that the process of life is also a yoga. If we want to attain a sense of totality in any action, we perform in life then we need to follow the core of the yoga sutras. That is why we have an old traditional saying that, “the more you give rest to your body or luxury to your body it will provide you with pain; and the more you engage your body into action and give it less rest it will provide you pleasure”. Yoga can be defined in different ways like to do any work successfully you need to do rigorous hard work and this motivation and focus to do the hard work can be attained through yoga. Focus (Ekagrata) and commitment (Nishtha) are the qualities you can gain from yoga in order to perform any work efficiently. If a lady is carrying a vessel full of water on her head and she is balancing it on her head without even touching it, then it is also yoga because of the long practices associated with it. A type of body training and balancing is associated with it. There are many deeds in this world whose basis is yoga. The first Sutra of Patanjali is that yoga is a discipline. We can define yoga in many ways but the core of it is the consistent practice associated with it. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

“The complete energy is to be awakened. When we sow a seed, and it grows into a plant or tree. Similarly, the energy is hidden in our body, and we need to awaken it and the stages to awaken it is mentioned in yoga sutras which helps in awakening the body energy.” (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

“Yoga is a discipline to improve or develop one’s inherent power in a balanced manner. It offers the means to attain complete self-realisation. The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word yoga is ‘Yoke’. Yoga can therefore be defined as a means of uniting the individual spirit with the universal spirit of God. According to Maharishi Patanjali, Yoga is the suppression of modifications of the mind” (Pandey, 2016, p. 1). Yoga is a psychophysical discipline aimed at cultivating harmony between the body and the mind. “All practices of yoga work on body and mind likewise so that body and mind form a unit and the human potential can be fully developed. One comes to oneself in the silence of meditation, to the

very centre of oneself and one recognises one's own uniqueness and strength as a part of a strength which stands behind everything which happens" (Pandey, 2016, p. 1). The philosophy and practice of yoga includes various branches and ideas leading towards spiritual evolution, self-realisation and liberation.

"*Yukta iti yoga*" is called to join, to unite. This is to unite your inner power to your physical body and make them one. There is a sleeping energy within our body and usually we are not aware about it. When we unite this energy with our body and when our body starts to represent that energy then this is called *Samatva Bhava*. It is a concept in Hindu philosophy meaning a state of equality, indifference or uniformity. The term comes from the Sanskrit word "*sama*" meaning equal. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

Mehak believes that the basic definition of yoga is union. She believes that the union within has to be balanced and to get to a stage where there is less turbulence, and you are just sailing through. Yoga means to balance and have a union within and outside. The definition of union in a spiritual sense is to have a physical, mental and emotional balance. She believes that at the time when she was teaching yoga and also practising theatre, she felt that right practice makes a big difference here. If you don't know the right technique of practising yoga, then whatever you do is not going to help you. So, what she really observed after a few professional training and simultaneously practising theatre is that she could see the control over her body. There was a lot of body control and a lot of stamina to understand how to operate the body. She observed these qualities very evidently because she was practising regularly. One more important thing is how you train your lungs, and it really helps you in betterment of your performance, she marks it as one of the major contributions of yoga practice. (Mehak, Personal Interview, 27 November 2023)

Zarrilli's work sheds light on different yogic practices that have historically originated in South Asia. These practices encompass a wide spectrum of approaches and philosophies aimed at achieving different goals. Different forms of yogic practices are Karma Yoga,

Maya Yoga, Nirvana Yoga and Hatha Yoga. Each of these yogic practices represents a unique path towards spiritual growth, self-awareness, and liberation. Zarrilli (2009) highlights one of the notable branches of Yoga which is called Hatha Yoga. Hatha yoga represents a distinct method of psychophysiological training. “Hatha yoga is a specific technique of psychophysiological practice. Classical hatha yoga includes repetition of breath control exercises, forms/postures (asana), combined with restraints/constraints on diet and behaviour. These practices are understood to act on both the physical body (*sthula sarira*) and the subtle body (*sukhma sarira*) most often identified with Kundalini- Tantric yoga” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 65).

Hatha yoga is a specific technique developed over a long time period which includes breath exercises, asanas, behaviour constraints and diet constraints. It works on your *sthula sharira*, *sukhma sharira* and awakening of kundalini. Sube Singh Ravish mentioned that first of all what is the effect of yoga on our physical body. Asanas are developed in a way so that their practice helps in better working of the physical body. After long practice of asana, we will be able to control our musculature and mould it into a desirable form or will be able to hold on to a desirable form. If we don’t have a developed and flexible body, then we will not be able to adapt to different characters and situations. Second thing is that the character which is in our mind we need to reflect it in our body and prana plays an important part here. Prana is the source of energy. All the energy in the body is attained through prana only and when we present a character or situation we shape it with our prana only. If we don’t practise pranayama or asana, then we will not have a strong body or musculature. Through prana we present characters better. All the great artists in different fields worked a lot on the breath and musculature (*ang sanchalan*). (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

“The true essence of yoga revolves around elevating the life force or ‘Kundalini’ at the base of the spine. It aims to achieve this through a series of physical and mental exercises. At the physical level, the methods comprise various yoga postures or ‘asanas’ that aim to

keep the body healthy. The mental techniques include breathing exercises or ‘pranayama’ and meditation or ‘dhyana’ to discipline the mind.” (Pandey, 2016, p. 2)

The practice of Yoga focuses on awakening consciousness. It involves a dormant spiritual force described like a coiled serpent at the spine’s base. This force is a key component of human awareness. Activating this energy is crucial for achieving self-awareness. The main purpose of this yoga is to unlock this energy. “Hatha yoga, sometimes referred to as the ‘psychophysical yoga’, was further elaborated by Yogi Swat Mārama, compiler of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika in the 15th century CE. This yoga differs substantially from Raja yoga of Patanjali in that it focuses on shatkarma, the purification of the physical body as leading to the purification of the mind (*ha*) and prana, or vital energy (*tha*)” (Pandey, 2016, p. 95). In classical hatha yoga, practitioners engage in repetitive breath control exercises and assume various postures, aiming to harmonise the body and the mind. This holistic approach to hatha yoga acknowledges the interconnectedness of the physical and subtle realms with practices designed to awaken and balance vital energy (prana). Hatha yoga is experiencing a surge in global recognition and is increasingly being regarded as a therapeutic modality. Across diverse cultures and regions, practitioners, researchers and healthcare professionals are increasingly acknowledging the multifaceted benefits of Hatha yoga. In recent years, extensive scientific research has been dedicated to exploring the physiological, psychological and even neurological effects of Hatha yoga practices. “Yoga as exercise or alternative medicine is a modern phenomenon which has been influenced by the ancient Indian practice of Hatha yoga. A survey released in December 2008 by the U.S. The National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health found that Hatha yoga was the sixth most commonly used alternative therapy in the United States during 2007, with 6.1 percent of the population participating.” (Pandey, 2016, p. 51)

Mehak believes that psychophysical training can be valuable for actors. She said that the actor needs to be trained and they need to do “*Abhyasa*”. It contains discipline, it has regularity and a lot of consistency. Then only you start seeing the magic of it and this takes

a long time of practice. She feels that it is about training your body and mind and these techniques are definitely very effective. The right practice of asanas, meditation and breathwork will change your body and benefit you. How you need to include it into the curriculum is that there has to be some teaching regarding what the practice is about, bringing yoga philosophy in much more digestible form, maybe you can start with Patanjali but in an easy understandable form. She thinks when you understand an art form through what wisdom it is bringing to you then it makes more sense to you. She recommends knowing the basic anatomy of the human body just to understand how a particular asana is working on your body. We need to generate a practice which is also informing about the injuries. This is the need of the hour because you can notice in the U.S. a lot of injuries are happening during the practice of yoga. The right practice with good knowledge of the injuries is something needed right now and the guidance of a trained professional. If you don't know where you are going wrong in the practice, then there is no point in doing it. Also, gradually understand how you can go beyond after aligning your physical aspects. She recommends the steps that Raja yoga and Hatha yoga follows; what we call the seven steps of Samadhi. You train yourself socially, mentally and physically as an individual. The subtle practice will bring a lot of peace and clarity in life. There is a lot of action and reaction we do in theatre, and after indulging in these practices it becomes much more impactful and effective. The practice of yoga will really help actors, but it should not be forced upon because there are a lot of people who will never like yoga. So, if it is not happening to them, don't force it. Then let them switch to some other form of psycho physical training, whatever works for them. (Mehak, Personal Interview, 27 November 2023)

Pandey (2016) mentions that Yoga traces its origins back to Lord Shiva, who is believed to have imparted knowledge of over 8,40,000 asanas or postures. The earliest reference to yoga can be found in the Rig Veda, an ancient Indian text. Sage Patanjali formalised and elaborated on the practice of yoga in his seminal work, the "Yoga Sutras". Patanjali elaborated on the eight limbs of yoga, providing a comprehensive framework for spiritual

and physical development. These limbs include ethical principles (*yama and niyama*) which are considered pre-requisites for yoga practice, physical practices including postures and breath control (*asana and pranayama*), and meditative techniques such as pratyahara, dharana, and dhyana. The ultimate aim of these practices is to attain samadhi which is a state of spiritual bliss and self-realisation. Through disciplined practice of yoga individuals can explore the depths of their being and cultivate harmony between mind, body, and spirit. (Pandey, 2016, pp. 4-5) Pandey also clarifies that the Yamas represent restraints, while the Niyama's denote observances. Asanas aim to establish a connection between body and mind with help of diverse psycho-physical postures. (Mishra, 2018, p. 163).

Sube Singh Ravish mentioned that yoga is related to your food habits, your thoughts, your attitude and the same is mentioned in yoga sutras Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Prati Ahara means 'Ahara ki Prapti' which means finding your senses. Dharana means to embody the character you want to portray. Samadhi means transferring the energy to your body. The state in which you act is the state of Samadhi. An artist or a Yogi are in the same samadhi/state when they perform their deeds. Even a Martial artist or Kathakali dancer channels energy through their body and enters into the samadhi when they perform. For any art or artist, it is important to control their body and breath and to learn to glide the energy from body to mana and vice versa and its *ekrupta* (unity) gives birth to art. Sube Singh Ravish mentioned Maharshi Patanjali in his Yoga Darshan mentions that Samadhi is the last stage of Yoga which is based on the physical asanas. In the yoga sutras the journey to reach the state of Samadhi is mentioned. Yogis reached Samadhi through different ways like some did it through Raj Yoga or Hatha Yoga. He mentioned that Samadhi is a state in which you are clearly able to see your inner territory and feel it. It is a state in which our inner self, mind and the physical body unite. When you are totally indulged into this state then you go beyond yourself and your body. Samadhi is a state of stillness. You can achieve Samadhi through any psychophysical discipline or through any art form like dance, acting etc. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

Sube Singh Ravish mentioned that the first part in yoga sutras is Samadhi Pada. If we focus all our energies on one focal point it is called samadhi. Like if we use a lens to reflect sun energy on one point then it produces fire. If we are able to reflect all our energy on one point, then we can complete an action to the fullest. In this first part Maharishi Patanjali mentioned that the motive of a human being is samadhi. The task is to generate such a quality in the human body that you are able to reflect all your energy in the desired way and make the human body effective. If we disperse the source of energy, then it will not be that effective. Now what are the ways to reach samadhi? He gave his verse 1, “*atha yoganusasanam*” meaning yoga is a discipline and now we will talk about it. Verse 2 is “*yogah cittavritti nirodhah*” meaning that through yoga you can control the unnecessary thoughts which emerge in our mind. *Citta* means *mana* and *vritti* means thoughts. To stop these unnecessary thoughts is yoga. After this Patanjali talks about the ways to do this. Like in Gita Arjuna says that hey Krishna Prabhu, *mana* is fickle and not even the legends were able to take control over it, but no one was able to do it. How do I focus on one point as a warrior, please tell me the way to do it? Lord Krishna replied, hey Kunti Putra only through practice/abhyasa you can achieve anything. Keep the feeling of vairagya/detachment/renunciation in your heart and practice. Patanjali told us in verse 3 “*tada drastuh svarupe avasthanam*” after the unnecessary thoughts stop, we stop in our own state. *Sva* means in your own *stha* means to stop. Who is *svastha*? The person who is in his own state is *svastha*. It is important to understand sva/self. So, this verse signifies that the wavering mind makes us anxious, troubled and tense. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

Phillip Zarrilli in his book quoted, “Standing still without standing still” and here Zarrilli is pointing towards the state of Samadhi. It is clear from his quote that we are in one stage (*avastha*) and in work in relation to that Avastha. We don’t move according to our own will but as an actor we work according to the character’s will in performance. This is the condition of moving while standing still. It is the same as the state of Samadhi. Sube Singh Ravish mentioned that you must have observed that actors are usually practitioners of yoga

also. Yoga is used as a supporting element for the development of an actor's craft. It helps in making their body perfect. If the body is not in alignment, then we will not be able to work with our body. If we don't have control over our body parts, then we will not be able to use our body fully. We need to work on our muscles and to do that yoga asanas can help us. The definition of Asana is "*Shariram sthiram sukham asanam*" means to hold your body in a particular posture with ease is called asana. Patanjali mentioned the same definition in his writings. We can relate it to the art of acting in the sense that for how long you can maintain your character in performance. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 14 November 2023)

Another important aspect of Yoga is "Pranayama" which involves cultivating an awareness of one's breathing and regulation of respiration. The practice cultivates an understanding of breath initially starting with the awareness of inhalation and exhalation. "The Prana may be defined as the finest vital force in everything which becomes visible on the physical plane as motion and action and on the mental plane as thought. The word Pranayama, therefore, means the restraint of vital energies" (Mishra, 2018, p. 163). Pranayama combines two words: "Prana" meaning vital energy and "Yama" meaning control. It refers to controlled breathing exercises that help channelize energy from the air to the body's internal organs. "Breathing properly promotes oxygenation of the blood, focuses the mind on each task and helps avoid unnecessary tension. Learning to breathe properly is essential in getting prana or inner wind to move through the body" (Mishra, 2018, p. 81). The practice of yoga turns the usual and automatic breathing into the realm of consciousness. The act of breathing becomes the focus of deep meditation. This helps control and calm the flow of thoughts in the mind through which practitioners can develop one-point focus. "The chief aim of Pranayama is to unite the Prana (rising energy in the astral spine) with the Apana (descending energy in the astral spine) and take the united *Pranapana* slowly towards the head. The effect or fruit of Pranayama is *Udghata* or awakening of the sleeping Kundalini" (Mishra, 2018, p. 167). The famous image of a yogi sitting in a lotus position or standing in a pose shows this deep focus and stillness of bodymind.

Sube Singh Ravish mentioned that if we provide good feed to a plant and it will grow better than other plants like wise through right breathing techniques, we can provide oxygen throughout our body making body cells effective. If our cells are working effectively then the body also becomes effective and efficient. Alertness, effectiveness and awareness are the results of right breathing. That is why it is mentioned in Bhagavad Gita, “*yogah karmasu kaushalam*”; meaning that if you want to attain excellence in all the actions you perform, then yoga is the right way to do it. To attain control over your body you need long practice of yoga, meditation and breathing techniques. Prana/Life is a form of energy and all the energy which works inside the human body is Prana. Prana is the only energy which provides fuel for the actions. The control over Prana is very crucial for an actor. Generally, in life you may feel that breathing is simple and unconsciously we are always breathing but there are different types of breath, and every emotion is related to this breath. If you want to take control over this breath/Prana, then you need a long-term practice of Pranayama. “Pranayama means the widening of prana. Usually, Prana is important to live and inbreath and outbreath are usually considered two types of breath. But there are many more ways to look at it and there are many types of prana. In whatever direction we want to widen and channelise our energy we can do with help of pranayama.” (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

For Zarrilli, Yoga provided not merely a system of physical postures or meditative practice, but a comprehensive discipline of bodymind cultivation that paralleled the actor’s need for sustained inner-outer integration. In Hatha Yoga which Zarrilli explicitly incorporated into his daily training structure, the balance of *sthula sarira* (physical body) and *suksma sarira* (subtle body) mirrored his central psychophysical premise: that performance presence emerges from a unity of breath, focus, and embodied action. The yogic dictum *yogah cittavrtti nirodhah* (yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind) resonates with the actor’s challenge to quiet inner turbulence so that attention can be channelled entirely toward the demands of the role and the moment.

Postural training (asana) in Yoga functions in Zarrilli's method much as it does in its original context: a means to stabilise the body so that breath and attention can deepen without obstruction. In actor training, this stability becomes the foundation for maintaining a role's physical score with consistency and ease, holding "character" with the same stillness and alertness with which the yogi holds a pose. Similarly, pranayama, the conscious regulation of breath aligns directly with Zarrilli's understanding of breath as the bridge between inner intention and outer action. Just as yogic breathing cultivates vitality, focus, and energy control, the actor's breath modulates rhythm, supports vocal delivery, and governs the pacing of physical action on stage.

Zarrilli's concept of "standing still without standing still" reflects a yogic state akin to samadhi, where outward calm coexists with an intense inner activity of awareness and readiness. For the psychophysical actor, this is the capacity to inhabit a heightened state without unnecessary muscular tension, to remain present without slipping into mechanical repetition. Yoga's emphasis on disciplined daily practice (abhyasa) and non-attachment (vairagya) also finds a clear echo in Zarrilli's ethos: the actor must train rigorously without clinging to results, cultivating both resilience and adaptability.

The Yogic understanding that every emotion and mental state is mirrored in a corresponding breath pattern enriches Zarrilli's approach to score-building. By altering breath consciously, the actor can shift energy, presence, and even emotional quality in performance. The yogi's control over prana becomes the actor's ability to direct performance energy with precision, not dissipating it, but focusing it entirely on the moment of enactment. In this way, Yoga is not simply an auxiliary practice in Zarrilli's work; it is a core psychophysical technology for cultivating the clarity, vitality, and unity of self that make the actor fully responsive to the demands of live performance.

3.3.4 Interconnections Between Kalarippayattu and Yoga in Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting Training

Although originating from distinct cultural and historical contexts, Kalarippayattu and Yoga share a set of underlying principles that made them mutually reinforcing pillars in Zarrilli's psychophysical actor training. Each is a discipline of the bodymind, integrating physical form, breath, and mental focus into a unified mode of practice. For Zarrilli, their combination was not eclecticism for its own sake, but a deliberate strategy to cultivate complementary dimensions of performance readiness: Kalarippayattu for grounded physical dynamism and Yoga for inner stability and breath mastery.

Kalarippayattu's sequences of strikes, leaps, and postures demand whole-body coordination, precise spatial awareness, and an alert responsiveness to an opponent or partner, qualities that directly translate to the actor's capacity to inhabit a role in relation to co-performers and the environment. This martial art focus on rooted stances and explosive transitions trains the musculature for readiness without rigidity, echoing Zarrilli's ideal of "readiness in stillness."

Yoga complements this external dynamism with internal regulation. Its emphasis on asana stabilises the body, pranayama refines the breath as a carrier of energy, and samadhi oriented focus calms the mind's fluctuations. In Zarrilli's system, this yogic stillness underpins the actor's ability to sustain long sequences without losing emotional or energetic clarity. Where Kalarippayattu trains the actor to generate and project energy, Yoga refines the capacity to centre and conserve it, ensuring that outward action arises from a balanced inner state. These two disciplines help in cultivating continuous, unbroken movement led by breath and intention. Its slow, deliberate shifts teach the actor to sense the flow of *qi* (energy) through the body, developing a kinaesthetic awareness that is as useful in stillness as in motion. The principle of "moving from the centre" aligns with Yoga's focus on core stability and Kalarippayattu's demand for grounded stances, creating a shared foundation of movement efficiency and expressive clarity.

In Zarrilli's training, these disciplines do not exist in isolation; rather, they form a shared practice ecology. The explosive readiness of Kalaripayattu finds balance in the inward stillness of Yoga, both enriched by the continuous energy modulation. Together, they provide the actor with an expanded sensorimotor vocabulary and a heightened capacity to shift seamlessly between physical, emotional, and energetic states. This integrated approach ensures that the actor's bodymind is not only technically skilled but also finely attuned to the demands of live performance, capable of "standing still without standing still," holding presence that is both dynamically alive and deeply centred.

3.3.5 The Vital Energy Within: Breath and the Metaphors Marking this Energy

"The external form remains empty, 'life-less', and a mere shell if the internal wind or energy, or the 'soul' of the form, is not manifest. The internal 'life', 'spark', or 'soul' of the form is the degree to which the practitioner activates and circulates the energy (*prana-vayu*) and awakens power (*sakti*).” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 130)

Wind moves throughout the body and drives all activity. This is similar to how wind in nature affects everything. The ancient text Sushrut Samhita lists five different winds. Prana is one of these five and it is also a broader term for any wind activity in the body. Prana or prana-vayu refers to breath as life itself or the crucial life energy. “As Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar explained: Who am I? My hands, legs, nose, etc.? Who am I? My hands, legs, breast? That, all of these, is prana. Just to close your eyes, that is one prana. Yawning is another prana. Therefore, life itself (*jivan*) is prana” (Zarrilli, 1998, p. 131). Many experts have equated the vital energy of wind known as prana with life itself. Prana governs the entire body and is the controlling force for all body parts. Prana-vayu is not just air but it is power. This power completely dominates our bodies. Prana is synonymous with life or the individual soul. “For kalaripayattu masters who still interpret this wind-power as *kundalini sakti*, its awakening within the bodymind is that state of actualization toward which the entire process of training leads” (Zarrilli, 1998, p.139). The usage of the term “vital” is very important here. It suggests liveliness, a richness of life and endless energy.

Zarrilli believes breath is crucial because it is the essence of life and the main force which keeps us alive. He stresses that actors need to recognize the energising power of breath and include its importance in their training.

In both ancient performance traditions and contemporary psychophysical acting, breath is not simply a mechanical act of respiration but the primary conduit for *vital energy*. For Zarrilli, *prana-vayu* is breath-as-life, breath-as-power. Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar's articulation of *prana* as "life itself" encapsulates a belief shared by kalaripayattu masters, yoga practitioners, and traditional actors, that every physical, mental, and emotional act begins with breath. Breath is not mere air but *sakti*, the dynamic force that permeates the entire bodymind. For kalaripayattu masters, the awakening of this force aligns with the rise of *kundalini sakti*, the very state toward which training is oriented. This understanding is echoed by Sube Singh Ravish, who describes yoga as both the culmination and channelling of internal energy. Through *prana*, *dhyana*, and sustained practice, the actor cultivates an ideal bodymind capable of embodying complex psychologies on stage. Here, the philosophy and psychology of a role merge with disciplined physicality, illustrating Zarrilli's assertion that breath is as essential to acting as it is to life itself. Ravish's reference to "*Yogah karmasu kaushalam*" further reinforces the inseparability of internal energy cultivation from the craft of performance.

Sube Singh Ravish concluded that if we analyse the relation of yoga practice in the field of acting then we can say that it helps an individual in culminating his/her energies and channelize it in one direction. We learn to put together or collect our energy and then channelize it in the desired direction. This work in itself is yoga. Yoga is not only the culmination of invisible/internal energy, but it also helps in generating control over the body and *prana*. Yoga helps in the culmination of consciousness, internal energy and *prana* thus generating a cultivated/cultured body. In all the art forms may it be acting, dance or music we practise one thing that is *prana*, *dhyana* and consistent practice. Yoga helps you in developing an ideal body. *Prana* plays a central role because we can't express any

emotion without it. That is why to generate or express emotions an actor works on the breath/prana. Yoga is not only about asanas, pranayama or diet but all the eight elements put together is yoga. He said that in acting we have to study the psychology and philosophy of a character and portray it through our body. Yoga helps an actor in pulling this process to the best of an individual's potential. "*Yogah karmasu kaushalam*" meaning yoga is excellence at work. That is why yoga is important for all aspects of life and art. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

Mehak mentioned that the bodymind connection in yoga can be understood in the terms that nothing is done without the breath. Breath is the basic principle of life, and a lot of people undermine the importance of breath and mindfulness. She provides an example here, imagine if there is a tiger in front of you, you will not take long deep breaths, instead you will search for oxygen. It is not that the environment around us does not have oxygen, but you pant and try to search for more because you are scared so the emotion of fear is having a direct response to your body and your breath too. If you want to reverse this, you need to control your breath and this was an example of external fear. We live in a world in which there are a lot of mental and internal insecurities, so if you want a comfortable breath then you need to start training your breath. There are techniques to try and understand the relation of our being in any space and you can start working with your breath. This is why whenever you go to a therapy session it starts with long breaths and this has a direct impact on your body as it starts to feel that there is no fear, and nothing to be scared of. She turned down the alertness here. She mentioned that in scientific knowledge, we call it a sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. The whole understanding of this brings a lot of change. At the same time, she feels that being present is a kind of meditation technique. Even if you are performing on stage you have to be present, and it is a kind of meditation. So, let yourself train out of the stage experience for such scenarios so that you don't break the character. She also faced a lot of trouble getting into a character that she had to perform and with all of this training that preparation became easier. The training she

mentioned is any kind of training which involves developing bodymind connection. (Mehak, Personal Interview, 27 November 2023)

Mehak's observations take this principle into the realm of embodied psychology, linking breath directly to emotional states and the autonomic nervous system. Her "tiger" example shows how fear instantly alters breath patterns, and how conscious breath control can reverse physiological responses to stress. This mirrors the actor's challenge: to remain present and maintain breath-awareness even under the heightened pressures of live performance. For Mehak, training the breath is also training presence, a meditative quality essential for sustaining character without breaking under external or internal distractions.

Zarrilli links the concept of "psyche" with the Indian concept of "prana-vayu" and the Chinese concept of "qi/ki". These terms refer to breath, life force or inner energy and are related to the ancient Asian traditions and performing arts like Yoga, Kathakali and Kalarippayattu. "As such prana and qi/ki identify both the material reality of the breath-as-breath, as well as the enlivening quality that can be present as a process of engaging the breath-in-action as a circulating energy. Energy is that which animates and activates the actor" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 19). Yuasa (1993) delves into the relationship between the body and the mind which led him to identify people who develop a keen awareness of the internal flow of ki (breath/energy) as "ki-sensitive". He describes their psycho-physiological awareness as being sensitive to one's whole body. Yuasa believes that through practices like martial arts, a ki-sensitive person can bridge the gap between mind and body. He suggests that this flow of ki-energy makes one aware of what he calls the "emotion-instinct circuit". A person who has a deep understanding of ki-energy can not only harness and control this energy within their body but can also project it outward.

Ankur mentioned that psychophysical is a lot about engagement with breath, body and people. All of these factors add to the work. Psyche is everywhere, in space, through breath and through the body. He is involved in psychophysical movements, as it is mentioned in

Natyasastra about the concepts of Nritya, Nritta and Natya. He is really inspired by the idea of Nritta. His experience with psychophysical disciplines is that he does Chau, yoga, Kalari and lots of breath work. All the movements that are originating from the body are coming from breath. How do you take the breath, the first thing is opening up the body and closing the body? Opening and closing the body breathing plays an important part. It is a simple mechanism that oxygen is the element that burns fuel inside the body. We need to supply more oxygen if we need to release more energy. Psychophysical means how you are utilising the energy produced in the body. If there is too much energy in the body, you go into a state of restlessness. So, finding the balance and economy of energy is important. Everybody is talking about energy these days. But we need to understand how energy is generated; it is generated through oxygen coming inside the body. (A. Saxena, Personal Interview, 18 November 2023)

Zarrilli draws deliberate parallels between the Indian *prana-vayu* and the Chinese *qi/ki*, both of which name breath as both material and enlivening energy. Yuasa's (1993) concept of "ki-sensitivity", the ability to perceive and direct the internal flow of energy describes a heightened psycho-physiological awareness cultivated in martial arts, yoga, and traditional performance forms. This awareness enables practitioners to connect emotion and instinct, internal and external, so that energy can be both harnessed and projected. Ankur Saxena's own experience with psychophysical work confirms this: breath initiates all movement, whether in Chau, yoga, or kalarippayattu, and managing the economy of this energy determines whether the performer remains balanced or restless.

Zarrilli highlights the "space between" and explores how actors learn to "listen," "begin to hear," and "pay attention". He compares the practice of East Asian calligraphy to acting. In calligraphy, it is believed that the painter doesn't just "portray" a landscape but is moved by *qi/ki*. The calligrapher doesn't move the brush instead they listen for the moment when *ki* arises. The artist must be receptive to the brush. Acting as a vehicle for the "inner movement" is driven by *qi/ki* rather than letting their ego take control. He mentions that

like Calligraphy, acting can be best viewed as a phenomenon and process. He believes that we encounter the “lived/living” world of performance through processes of attending to, by becoming sensorially aware of it and by being affected by it. This is how we experience and inhabit our “embodied consciousness” while acting. The Italian verb “ascoltare” means not simply to listen, but “to attend to”. Cognitive neuroscientist James Austin defines attention as awareness stretched toward something. Actors with time develop the quality to attend to and open one’s awareness. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 4)

Zarrilli suggests that instead of starting with a modern interpretation of “psycho”, it is more beneficial for actors to adopt a wider view of the “inner realm” suggested by the original Greek term psyche. Psyche can also mean “the vital principle” which refers to the lively quality of an actor’s energy. Zarrilli considers breath as vital energy that goes beyond the simple act of breathing. He explored how breath can be a powerful force when activated through traditional artistic practices. The activation of breath increases the sensory sharpness and awareness. Zarrilli believes that once this inner energy is awakened it connects the internal with the external unifying them in performance. Zarrilli asserts that breathing exercises serve as the foundational cornerstone. These initial breathing exercises play an important role in comprehending the components involved within the psychophysical training. “Daily repetition allows the actor time to explore ever subtler dimensions of the body, the mind, and their relationship in action, i.e., body and mind are gradually being attuned to one another” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 29). For beginners, these qualities are not immediately noticeable. They need to consistently practise the psychophysical disciplines. Most traditional kalarippayattu master’s concur that the qualities gradually become apparent as practitioners develop external and one-point focus (ekagrata), refine their physical movements and learn to control their breathing to correctly circulate energy. “The kathakali actor, yoga practitioner and kalarippayattu martial artists all assume that ‘the vayu (breath/energy/life force) is spread all over the body’ and that it is how to control the breath that is an implicit part of the training” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 19).

Through repetition of daily exercises, the breath is eventually controlled and develops breathing which originates at the root of the navel.

Zarrilli's transformative journey with his bodymind began with his travel to India in 1976. It marked a turning point in his understanding of the bodymind relationship. Through his training in Kathakali under M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri at Kerala Kalamandalam and kalarippayattu under Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar of the CVN Kalari in Thiruvananthapuram, he underwent a significant process of exploration and learning. The extensive years of practice and training were crucial for Zarrilli in developing a deep and meaningful connection between his bodymind. Through dedicated training he gradually achieved a state of readiness and heightened awareness. The practitioners of psychophysical training believe that the longer year of practice leads to the integration of body and mind i.e. becoming one in practice. "I was able to enter a state of heightened awareness of and sensitivity to my bodymind and breath in action within, and simultaneously keep my awareness and energy open to the immediate environment. I was beginning to discover how not to stand still, while standing still" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 24). Zarrilli uses the Malayalam language metaphor used in Kalarippayattu to elaborate his state of bodymind after years of training as "body is all eyes". It suggests a heightened state of awareness and presence where the actor's entire being is attuned in the present moment. In this state the actor is utilising their whole body as an instrument of perception. Such a perspective reflects a deep understanding of psychophysical training and its focus on the unity of bodymind. It also aligns with the principles and goals of many theatre practitioners who seek to cultivate a heightened state of readiness and authenticity in their performances. Ankur Saxena mentioned that the realisation is that the body changes if you provide the right stimulus to the body. By the right stimulus he means what works for your body. There are days when only breathing works for me. Sometimes there are days when you need to do strong physical movements. How far can you move your body, how far can you reach out, so how internal you can go. All of this spectrum allows you to understand different markers you connect with. "If I trace back psychophysical movements and practitioners of

traditional art forms like Koodiyattam or kathakali, what they have catered is to build an ability to improvise on the spot because they have practised and rehearsed so much. The mind is in the body, the western idea is a separate thing; their idea is of deconstruction. But Indian essence is about combining things, it's about Alchemy of emotions. In Indian methodology people try to figure out how things work in cohesion rather than segregating things.” (A. Saxena, Personal Interview, 18 November 2023)

As Ankur Saxena notes, mastery comes from recognising what stimulus, breath, strong movement, or deep stillness; the body requires in the moment. Traditional Indian performance arts, whether Koodiyattam or Kathakali, cultivate precisely this adaptability. Unlike the Western tradition's tendency to analyse body and mind separately, these forms operate on the principle of cohesion, an alchemy of emotions, breath, and movement. In this light, breath is not a preparatory step but the central axis of psychophysical acting, linking the internal and external, the seen and the unseen, into a unified, vital presence.

In Zarrilli's integrated training ecology, the concept of *prana-vayu* is not an isolated yogic idea but the living thread connecting all the disciplines he draws upon. In Kathakali, breath is the invisible current that animates the codified facial expressions (*rasas*) and sustains the physically demanding movements. In Kalarippayattu, the breath controls the flow of power through strikes, stances, and leaps, allowing the practitioner to maintain balance, readiness, and precision, the same heightened alertness the Kathakali actor channels onstage. In Yoga, *pranayama* cultivates the deep internal reservoir of energy and focus that underpins both martial and performance training. East Asian practices parallel this by working with *qi/ki*, reinforcing the principle that movement and breath are inseparable and that internal energy guides outward form. Zarrilli's pedagogy deliberately overlaps these streams so that the performer learns not only to execute physical scores but to breathe them into being, activating form from within. Thus, breath becomes the primary mediator between stillness and action, interior state and external expression, dissolving the boundaries between art forms and affirming the universality of the bodymind principle.

The universality of this energy principle allows Zarrilli to integrate these disciplines into a cohesive training ecology. In each form, breath operates as both a physical and metaphysical connector initiating movement, sustaining its flow, and anchoring the performer's attention. This is why his pedagogy emphasises not merely "doing the movement" but breathing it into being. When this internal current is consciously activated, the actor achieves a heightened bodymind state what Kalarippayattu masters call "body is all eyes" a condition of total presence where awareness radiates through every limb and gesture. By threading Kathakali's codified precision, Kalarippayattu's martial readiness, and Yoga's inward cultivation into a single practice, Zarrilli positions breath as the fundamental bridge between stillness and action, internal state and external expression. In this synthesis, form is never empty; it is always enlivened from within, affirming the psychophysical unity at the heart of his actor training.

3.4 Research Survey with Practitioners of Psychophysical Disciplines of Yoga and Kalarippayattu

The research survey was conducted to understand, from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, how the regular practice of psychophysical disciplines such as yoga and kalarippayattu impacts physical, mental, and emotional capacities, and more specifically, how these practices influence the cultivation of a harmonious bodymind relation. This section situates the survey within the broader context of psychophysical acting training, drawing parallels between the experiences of practitioners and the principles outlined in the training methods of Phillip Zarrilli and other key figures. The survey thus serves a dual purpose: To empirically assess the perceived benefits of these disciplines among current practitioners and to evaluate the relevance of such disciplines for integration into formal actor training programmes.

Aim of the Study: The study aims to ascertain the potential benefits of practicing psychophysical disciplines, focusing on yoga and kalarippayattu. It aims to evaluate the effectiveness of practicing yoga and kalarippayattu in enhancing the bodymind relation.

Objective of the study:

- To evaluate the extent to which the practice of yoga and/or kalarippayattu contributes to improvements in physical strength and flexibility.
- To examine the role of these disciplines in enhancing body awareness, emotional connection to the body, stress management, and mental clarity.
- To assess whether these practices foster a harmonious bodymind relation.

Research Methodology: The study adopts an analytical approach with an empirical focus to examine the impact of yoga and kalarippayattu on various aspects of practitioners. Each participant was presented with a structured close ended questionnaire through Google forms consisting of items designed to measure different components related to the practice of yoga and kalarippayattu. The questionnaire utilised a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Agree” (1) to “Strongly Disagree” (5), allowing respondents to express their opinions.

Source of Data: Data collection was facilitated through the online platform Google Forms, ensuring efficient data capture and management. Participants were invited to complete the questionnaire at their convenience to enhance participation rates.

Methods of Research: The research utilised pie charts and graphical representations.

Sample Design: A total of 90 practitioners of yoga and kalarippayattu participated in the survey, providing valuable insights into their experiences related to the psychophysical disciplines.

Data Analysis: Quantitative responses were analysed through pie charts and graphical representations, while qualitative insights were drawn from in-depth interviews with selected practitioners.

Participant Demographics

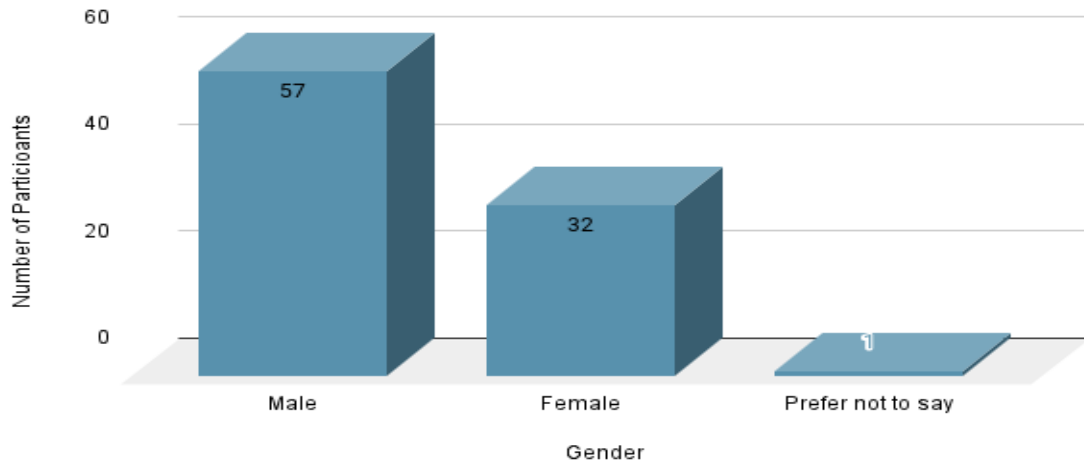


Figure 3.1 Representing the demographics about gender of yoga and kalarippayattu practitioners

Table 3.1 Representing the demographics of percentage of participants of yoga and kalarippayattu

Gender	Percentage
Male	63.3
Female	35.6
Prefer not to say	1.1

Age Distribution of Participants

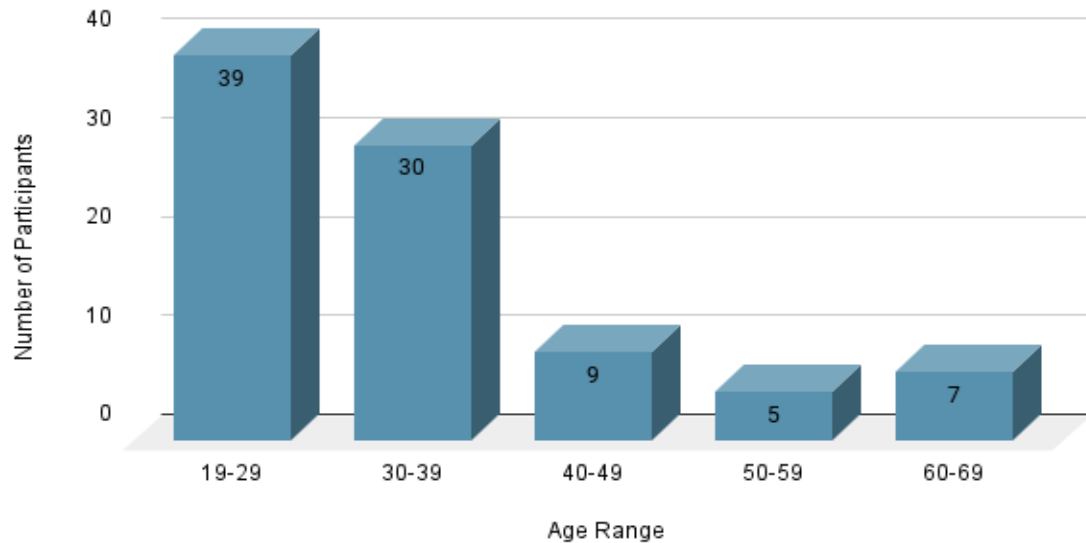


Figure 3.2 Representing the age distribution of participants of yoga and kalaripayattu

Demographics of the Practice

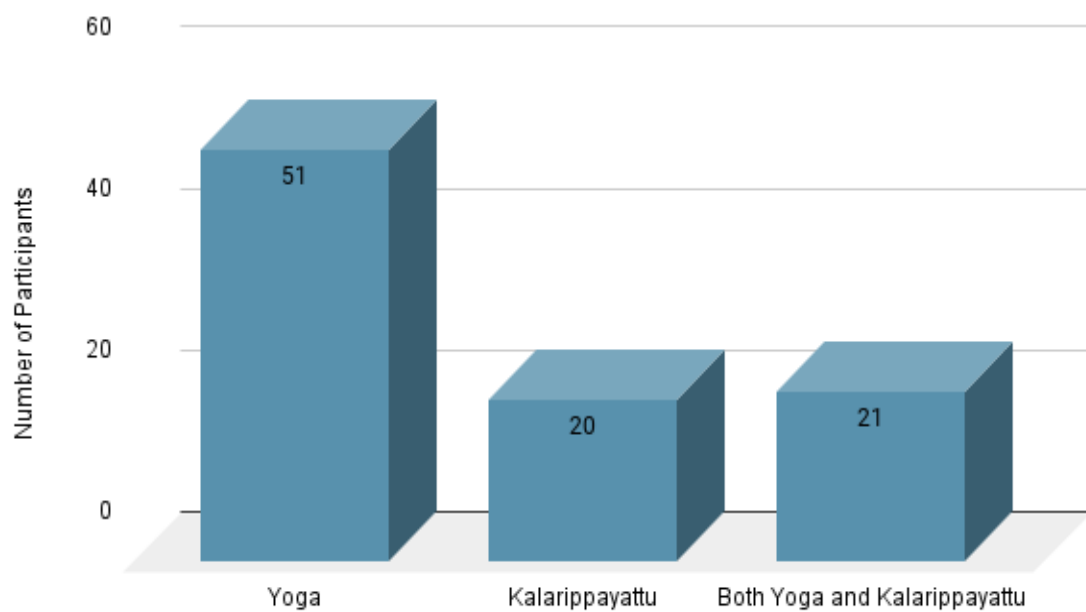


Figure 3.3 Representing the demographics of the type of practice

Table 3.2 Representing the demographics of percentage of type of practice

Type of Practice	Percentage
Yoga	56.7
Kalarippayattu	22.2
Both Yoga and Kalarippayattu	23.3

Table 3.3 Representing the participants responses to the survey questions

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Has practising Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga improved your physical strength and flexibility?	75 (82.4%)	15 (16.5%)	1 (1.1%)	-	-
Has practising Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga enhanced your body awareness and control?	69 (76.7%)	20 (22.2%)	1 (1.1%)	-	-
Do you feel more emotionally connected to your body through the practice of Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga?	63 (70%)	22 (24.4%)	5 (5.6%)	-	-

Has Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga helped you manage stress and maintain mental clarity?	57 (63.3%)	26 (28.9%)	5 (5.6%)	2 (2.2%)	-
Has Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga helped you attain a better bodymind relation?	60 (66.7%)	28 (31.1%)	2 (2.2%)	-	-

Quantitative Findings

- Improvement in physical strength and flexibility: A majority of participants (98.9%) either strongly agree or agree that practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga has improved their physical strength and flexibility.
- Enhancement of body awareness and control: A majority of participants (98.9%) either strongly agree or agree that practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga has enhanced their body awareness and control.
- Emotional connection to the body: A majority of participants (94.4%) either strongly agree or agree that practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga has made them more emotionally connected to their bodies.
- Stress management and mental clarity: A majority of participants (92.2%) either strongly agree or agree that practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga has helped them manage stress and maintain mental clarity.
- Attainment of a better bodymind relation: A majority of participants (97.8%) either strongly agree or agree that practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga has helped them attain a better bodymind relation.

Two questions were formulated for drawing final conclusions

- Do you believe that your experience in Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga has positively influenced your working abilities?

Positive Influence on Working Abilities

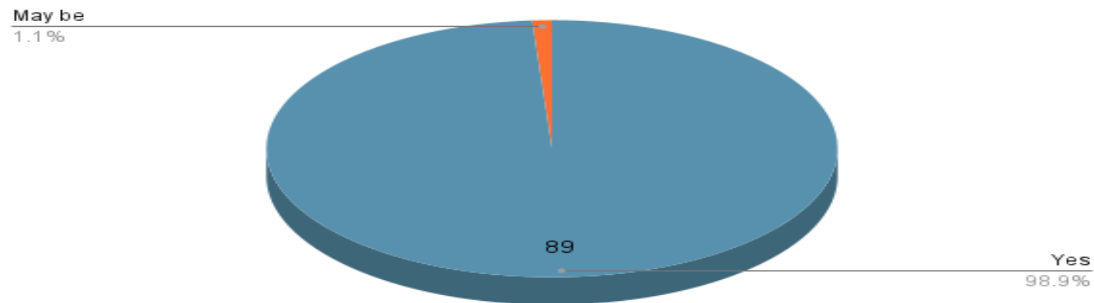


Figure 3.4 Representing the positive influence on working abilities of participants

Yes- 89 participants (98.9%)

May be- 1 participant (1.1%)

- Do you think that elements of Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga should be integrated into formal acting training programs to enhance an actor's bodymind relation?

Opinion on Integration of Yoga and Kalarippayattu into Acting Training

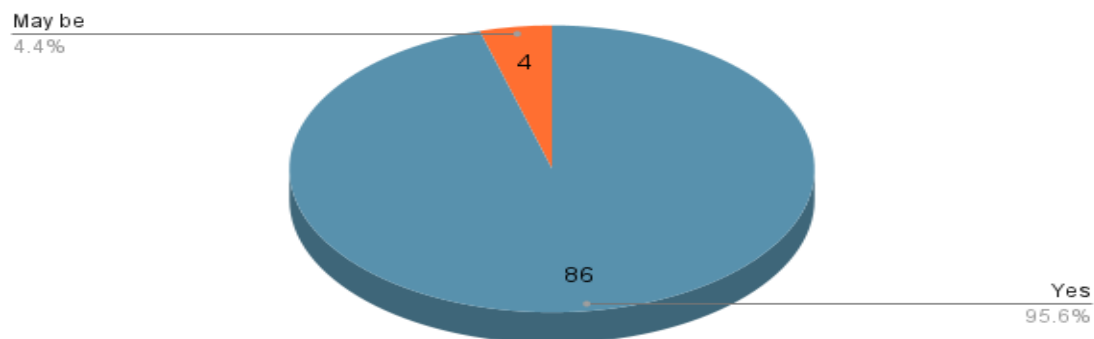


Figure 3.5 Representing the opinions on integration of Yoga and Kalarippayattu into formal acting training

Yes- 86 participants (95.6%)

May be- 4 participants (4.4%)

The data suggests that practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga has a positive impact on various aspects including physical strength, flexibility, body awareness, emotional connection to the body, stress management, mental clarity and bodymind relation.

Positive Influence on working abilities: A majority of participants (98.9%) believe that their experience in kalaripayattu and/or yoga has positively influenced their working abilities. This indicates a strong perception among practitioners that these practices contribute to their professional skills and performance.

Support for integration into formal acting training programs: A majority of participants (95.6%) believe that elements of kalaripayattu and/or yoga should be integrated into formal acting training programs to enhance an actor's bodymind relation.

The survey confirms that yoga and kalaripayattu not only produce measurable improvements in physical and mental capacities but also cultivate a heightened psychophysical readiness, a state Phillip Zarrilli refers to as being “body becomes all eyes”. By combining the breath-awareness, energetic alignment, and internal-external integration found in yoga with the dynamic spatial awareness and physical adaptability of kalaripayattu, practitioners appear to develop a state closely resembling the “heightened awareness” central to psychophysical acting. The findings align with Zarrilli's assertion that psyche (vital principle) and soma (body) are inseparable in performance preparation. The overwhelmingly positive response towards integrating these practices into actor training suggests that psychophysical disciplines may serve as an effective bridge between theory and embodied performance.

The survey supports the argument that incorporating psychophysical disciplines into formal acting curricula can:

- Build foundational strength, flexibility, and body awareness.
- Develop breath control and energy regulation.

- Enhance emotional resilience and focus.
- Foster an integrated bodymind state conducive to performance.

These outcomes mirror the very principles underlying Zarrilli's actor training framework, reinforcing the need for their inclusion in modern actor education.

Qualitative Insights: Interviews

Sube Singh Ravish explained that yoga can help in major transformations in the life of an individual with examples of his own practice. He said that in our daily lives everyone wants to express themselves and how you express yourself in your life is related to the focus/ekagrata of your mind/mana. If you are more focused, then you will be able to work better and express yourself better. Through yoga we can awaken the energy of our heart and the aura of our physical abilities. This energy and aura help in creating a positive impact. The discipline of the body and a positive language of the body can be attained through long practice of yoga. When you are engaged in consistent practice of yoga then your energy chakras are active. If all the energy chakras are active, then the body will be able to channelize energy and create a positive impact. He mentioned that the actor cannot do away with his training without these psychophysical disciplines because they teach you the principles of balance, awareness and completeness. That is why actors must start with these psychophysical disciplines and then start with their stage work. In acting we need an active body, control over the breath and the body. These qualities can be generated through the practice of psychophysical disciplines. He recommends that it is important to take control over the body. You must take control over your inner energy/*antarmana*. If a teacher is teaching the techniques to explore your body and senses through psychophysical disciplines, then it will be easy for him to teach the nuances of the acting training. It is important to set up a base for the practice through these psychophysical disciplines and then build upon it. These psychophysical disciplines must be part of your daily routine. We can learn a special type of discipline from these practices which helps in generating awareness in our body. Whether it is kathakali, yoga or martial arts or any other

psychophysical discipline it is aiming to develop a connection between the internal and the external. While acting we have to shift our energy flawlessly. There is a balance in this energy shift. He said that yoga and acting are two very closely relatable. The terms yoga and abhinaya are synonyms. If you are doing acting it is yoga only. Asana is a type of dance in stillness. The qualities needed or generated in these two forms are almost the same. (S. S. Ravish, Personal Interview, 28 November 2023)

Mehak mentioned her transformation through practice of yoga. She believes that it helped her in developing a depth in regard to how she looks at things and people. She doesn't give an impulsive or surface level thought to any kind of stimulus received. This kind of understanding brings a lot of empathy towards people, and it brings a lot of acceptance in life. Mehak recommends psychophysical disciplines yoga and kalarippayattu for acting training. She thinks a lot of things which part of the acting training process have come from these psychophysical disciplines. As these disciplines are time tested and date back to ancient times. They are the base of any kind of bodily training. The right practice of yoga along with the knowledge of injuries will definitely help. Even if you want to pursue acting, whichever form may it be like physical theatre or improvisational theatre; the practice of yoga will bring a lot of stability and clarity of thought and you will be able to express yourself in a much more confident way. Mehak believes that it is a very hard journey to be a performer. It's a lot of internal work and you can't skip that internal work because it's going to reflect in your art then. There is no shortcut or quick fix. If the magic has to happen it will happen from within only. Until unless you start connecting with your inner self, you start working on who you are and start questioning yourself then you start to uncover things. (Mehak, Personal Interview, 27 November 2023)

Manish believes that the practice of Kalari gives him energy to bounce back whenever he feels uneasiness. After his graduation he continued his practice because he felt it is his duty to act as a bridge between the old Kalari generation and the new generation. He mentioned that the time is running fast, and the teaching methods are changing though the foundation

is the same, but the teaching methods have to be more reachable to the young generation. Manish feels that the training in psychophysical disciplines can be valuable for actors, but the training should inform the artist that it is just the beginning. Yoga asana, Pranayama and relaxation can prove to be very impactful for the artist. Relaxation techniques are very useful for the actors to come to the neutral level after practice. The thing about Kalari is that the impact of the practice will reach the body in a certain period of time. Usually, it seems that it takes a long time and long-term practice to realise this impact on the body. So, the practitioners should be aware of this fact. It takes long term practice to generate this spatial awareness through sharing of common space and quality of adaptiveness. In a short-term practice maybe, you will be able to adapt some physical movements from Kalari, but this subtle adaptiveness and presence of mind might not develop. These practices give you knowledge and if you want it to change your body, practise it for a long period. Both psychological and physical factors are equally important for Kalari. (Manish, Personal Interview, 19 December 2023)

Arpit Singh mentioned his transformation through the practice of Kalari. When he speaks about Kalari he always relates it as an art of war. He always related Kalari with the art of war because warriors used to practise it. Once your body and mind are trained as he also mentioned that warriors also used to train their body and mind. So, once you have control over your bodymind and if you experience this thing in your personal life like if you have control over my bodymind then you will not be dependent on anybody both emotionally and physically. All the mental challenges like anxiety, depression, insecurities we face in life, and we will be able to handle it if we have a strong mind. His strongest mind came from the practice of Kalari because he approached Kalari in that way. Kalari has helped him make his body and mind very strong. It starts from the body because Kalari is a very physical art form. So, once you have a strong body then it helps you build a strong mind. If you practise any physical art form for a longer time it helps you build a strong body and thus it helps you build a strong mind. Arpit Singh believes that psychophysical training can be valuable for actors. He quotes acting as what you are thinking, and you are able to

convert it into an action then it is acting. If you are not able to convert your thoughts into actions, then it is not acting. Acting is all about this conversion. If you are to convert thoughts on the floor, then it becomes physical and it is only termed as psychophysical performance because it is starting from a thought and it is converting through your body. The moment your thought converts through your body it becomes complete. You will not be able to convert your psycho to the physical if you don't have knowledge of what you are doing. Arpit Singh believes that the incorporation of traditional art forms like Kalari or yoga in acting training can enhance an actor's physicality, movement and spatial awareness. He thinks actors must learn yoga and Kalari. Mostly in all the acting training institutes in India, yoga and Kalari is practised because they recognise the value of these traditional disciplines. Earlier he also mentioned that what the warriors need is also what actors need. Once the actors generate this bodymind connection then 50 percent work is done now they can focus on character building and other required things. But if your basic principles are not clear, like if your breath is not clear, your voice is not clear, your body is not in alignment or not trained then you become weak as a performer. (A. Singh, Personal Interview, 25 January 2024)

The combined analysis of the research survey and practitioner interviews reveals a clear and consistent pattern in the perceived benefits of practising yoga and kalarippayattu. Quantitatively, an overwhelming majority of participants across different dimensions agree that these psychophysical disciplines enhance physical strength, flexibility, body awareness, emotional connection, stress management, mental clarity, and overall bodymind integration. This statistical affirmation is strongly echoed in the qualitative narratives shared by experienced practitioners. Arpit Singh relates kalarippayattu to the "art of war", asserting that physical training fortifies the mind and creates a foundation of strength and resilience that actors can rely upon. Manish emphasises that while the physical benefits can be observed in the short term, deeper qualities such as adaptability, spatial awareness, and presence of mind require long-term dedicated practice. Sube Singh Ravish draws attention to the importance of breath control, inner energy regulation,

and *ekagrata* (focus), underlining that these qualities are essential for both yoga and acting, which he considers synonymous in their pursuit of balance, awareness, and completeness. Mehak highlights the deepened empathy, acceptance, and conscious self-expression that emerge from sustained practice, along with the ability to remain grounded and authentic in performance. Together, these insights show that yoga and kalaripayattu not only develop the actor's physical instrument but also cultivate emotional authenticity, psychological resilience, and a harmonious bodymind connection, elements that Zarrilli identifies as central to psychophysical acting. The convergence of quantitative agreement and qualitative testimony strengthens the case for integrating these disciplines into formal acting curricula. The fact that 98.9% of respondents believe their practice has positively influenced their working abilities, and 95.6% support embedding these methods in actor training, reflects a shared conviction among practitioners and participants alike: that the psychophysical foundations laid by yoga and kalaripayattu are indispensable for actors seeking both technical precision and inner transformation.

These findings align closely with Phillip Zarrilli's conception of psychophysical acting, where training is grounded in practices that awaken and circulate vital energy (*prana-vayu, qi/ki*) to unify body and mind in performance. The respondent's emphasis on physical conditioning, breath control, spatial awareness, and emotional presence mirrors the core objectives of Zarrilli's approach, which integrates traditional disciplines like kalaripayattu and yoga as daily embodied practices. Zarrilli maintains that through sustained repetition, actors refine their awareness, regulate their energy, and develop a readiness that is both physical and psychological, an idea clearly supported by practitioners in this study who stressed long-term engagement, inner transformation, and adaptability as essential outcomes. The high degree of consensus among participants about the relevance of these disciplines in formal actor training echoes Zarrilli's assertion that psychophysical work is not an optional supplement, but a foundational methodology for preparing the actor's instrument the integrated bodymind for the demands of performance.

3.5 Conclusion

The findings of this research clearly demonstrate that practising kalarippayattu and yoga has a significant positive impact on practitioners. An overwhelming majority of participants believe that these disciplines have directly enhanced their working abilities and should be incorporated into formal acting training programs. These results indicate that the integration of psychophysical practices into actor training is not merely beneficial but essential, offering performers a well-founded method to cultivate the mental focus, physical readiness, and holistic embodiment necessary for their craft.

According to Zarrilli, traditional practices are an active embodied doing. Yoga and Martial arts are a technique of disciplining the body. These are technologies of the body in Foucault's sense, i.e. practices through which humans develop knowledge about themselves. The interplay between training methodologies and performance genres highlights the deeply contextual nature of acting and performance. Each mode of training is designed to shape the performer's bodymind to meet the unique demands of different performance styles in which they operate. Training techniques act as a technology of the body which systematically alters and prepares the actor or performer. The rigorous physical training and mental discipline required by classical ballet differ significantly from the methods used in contemporary dance. In theatre the method acting approach contrasts with traditional Indian theatre because of different sets of cultural values and philosophical beliefs. These practices are informed by the ongoing discourses about the body and performance. The technology of the body are these specific training techniques which cannot be separated from the discourses that inform them. It is crucial to situate the techniques within a broader socio-cultural and historical landscape because it influences the act of performance itself.

The way acting is understood and practised varies significantly across cultures. It is deeply rooted in their unique paradigms of the bodymind relationship. In India, the concept of embodiment in acting is intricately linked to several indigenous theories and practices that

shape aspects of performance. Ayurveda is the traditional Indian system of medicine which offers a humour-based understanding of physiology and health. Yoga philosophy and practice provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the effects of physical and mental exercises on the bodymind. Yoga and Kalaripayattu help actors achieve greater control over their bodymind leading to enhanced presence and expressivity on stage. The central elements are the concept of prana vayu and kundalini shakti (awakened inner energy). In this context, both prana and kundalini shakti can play a significant role in enhancing the skills and channelizing the energy. When awakened through these specific practices, this energy leads to heightened states of awareness which can be transformative for actors.

The recent developments in the field of psychophysical acting training are formulated by Phillip Zarrilli. He acknowledged the compound nature of the term psychophysical which encapsulates the integration of the body and the mind. He developed a unique training process and delved deep into the intricate relationship between the body and the mind, employing Asian martial arts form Kalaripayattu and yoga as transformative tools to re-educate the bodymind. Asian martial arts and Yoga offer a unique pathway for understanding the principles of energetics in acting. According to Barba's perspective, only the physical training of the body proves insufficient without the full engagement of the mind. Barba's standpoint underscores the importance of mental presence, mentioning that an actor's awareness of their surroundings and their own body's kinetics is fundamental to delivering a captivating performance.

These conclusions resonate strongly with Phillip Zarrilli's approach to psychophysical acting training, where yoga and kalaripayattu are not supplementary exercises but transformative technologies of the body in Foucault's sense embodied practices that shape both physical and mental states. The data reinforces Zarrilli's emphasis on "active embodied doing" and supports Eugenio Barba's insistence that physical technique alone is insufficient without full mental engagement and presence. Furthermore, the holistic

principles underlying Indian traditions such as Ayurveda and yoga with their focus on prana vayu, kundalini shakti, and the disciplined awakening of energy find direct application in the actor's process, fostering heightened awareness, expressive precision, and adaptability.

In essence, this study affirms that the traditional psychophysical disciplines of yoga and kalarippayattu provide an indispensable foundation for contemporary acting training. By bridging ancient embodied knowledge with modern performance demands, these practices enable actors to align internal energy with external action, creating performances that are both physically precise and energetically alive. Their integration into actor training is not a cultural luxury but a pedagogical necessity, one that ensures future performers are equipped with the depth, presence, and resilience to meet the ever-evolving challenges of the stage and screen

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CHAPTER- 4

PHILLIP ZARRILLI'S PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTING TRAINING METHOD: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

“A master of practice-based research, Phillip B. Zarrilli transports us to experiences that Stanislavsky and Grotowski could only imagine. Combining phenomenology, cognitive science, dynamic systems theory, the enactive approach and a lifetime of discoveries as an actor, director, Asian Inspired actor trainer, interdisciplinary philosopher and international performance maker, Zarrilli expertly unlocks what the lay actor might call ‘being in the moment’.” (Merlin, 2020, as cited in Zarrilli, 2020, p. ii)

Phillip Zarrilli formulated a psychophysical acting training process for contemporary actors by incorporating elements of yoga and Asian martial arts. Zarrilli realised the relevance of psychophysical acting training in the modern era and its invaluable contribution to actor's development. This comprehensive training equips actors with practical tools to enhance their mastery over the craft. Zarrilli offers readers a historical overview of the psychophysical acting approach and emphasises on the significance of incorporating yoga and Asian martial arts in acting training. Zarrilli's exploration of psychophysical acting training centres on the intricate connection between the actor's role as a doer and the actions they perform.

Naushad Mohammed Kunju is from Kerala, India. He studied in Thrissur School of drama from where he did bachelor in theatre arts with specialisation in acting. At that time, he learnt a lot of theatre movement, different theatre approaches and different systems of training. He got an awareness of theatre from Thrissur School of drama. Then he got an opportunity to study in the National School of Drama (NSD), Delhi. While studying in NSD, he experienced language issue but practised through his physicality. The practice of Kalarippayattu, some expressions of Kathakali and mudras, some nuances of Koodiyattam and the practice of Yoga helped him in attaining a flexible body to engage in theatre performance. He mentioned that it is about balancing both the language and the body

because if you want to become an actor you have to work on both. After passing out from NSD in 1999 he worked in the repertory company of NSD for 2 years. Then in 2002, he went to the Intercultural Theatre Institute, Singapore and at that time it was named Theatre Training and Research Program. He wanted to research further so he went to the Intercultural Theatre Institute. He was part of the second batch of the ITI, Singapore. During this time, he got introduced to Phillip Zarrilli. He said that the training at ITI is completely different as for the three years as he engaged with different Asian traditional disciplines like Noh, Chinese Opera, Wayang Golek, Bharatnatyam. Now they have introduced Koodiyattam too. After passing out from ITI he came back to the National School of Drama as an actor trainer. Later, he served as the artistic director of Shriram centre in Delhi for 2 years. He believes that there is a never-ending process of training, learning and exploring yourself. Whatever he learnt from his masters was a rigorous process of doing and learning.

“We need to question why we are practising and what we are practising. The theoretical part is the core, the reading, research and analysing is important. Some teachers give you perspective about how we are practising and why we are practising. These are the questions which bring more authenticity to our work. The actors talk about body, voice and mind but if you want to work with the body you need to negotiate and articulate so that we can balance these factors. The training involves thinking and analysing. It is the unity of training, thinking and analysing.” (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

In 2010 he joined the department of theatre arts in University of Hyderabad. He is transforming what he practised over the time into the training whether it be theory, research, body works, studio explorations and other forms related to actor training. He believes that every form has a discipline to teach, and they generate some kind of analytical thought. It is not like that everything will be in my body, but we have to articulate it properly. This is the way he is practising and his pedagogy during the initial stage of teaching revolves around what he learnt from his masters. He recollects his old teacher's

methods and then he filters it out. In the initial stage he has taken from his teachers work. The same approaches he followed and then maybe after 2 years it blended in with his research work. He mentioned that the masters set a base for us and then we develop our own system through practice. He said that some areas of practice are completely his and some kind of teaching method is developing. He stated that his training method is not authentically his but sometimes it blends with different approaches like Grotowski, Meyerhold, Stanislavski and Phillip Zarrilli. All these teachings are in the backdrop. These teachings provided a threshold to enter into a new world. He believes that with these teachings when you enter the practice area then you have some kind of knowledge to negotiate. Naushad Mohammed Kunju mentioned that Phillip Zarrilli moved beyond the Stanislavski system because limitations are there. We are thinking, feeling and making some kind of character to portray. In the 1970's there was an argument about Stanislavski's system that orally you are speaking the dialogue but not working much on the sensations of the body. They are forcefully triggering the emotions. He said what Zarrilli achieved is a total Awareness of the body. The total awareness of the body through physical score with help of discipline like Kalari, Yoga, Tai Chi and many others. The reason that Japanese Noh is part of the curriculum at ITI is because of the minimisation of the movements involved. It helps in realising the economic quality of the movement. Zarrilli had some contradictions with the Stanislavski system. (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

4.1 A Phenomenological Outlook

“The distinction is roughly that between doing and being when the artist in the actor comes forth, we are reacting to the actor's particular way of doing his role. Our awareness of the artist is likely to surface at certain ‘peaks’ in a performance when the character given to the actor by the dramatist is endowed with its perfect personality. What a dramatic text offers the actor is an ideal portrait, an abstraction, that can be made real in a thousand ways.” (States, 2002, p. 26)

Phillip Zarrilli considers “acting” as something to be explored and thought about in the studio. At the beginning of his book “(toward) a Phenomenology of Acting”, he mentions that his book is an important answer to Jerzy Grotowski’s key question about how actors can touch which is untouchable. “Phenomenology invites us to listen to ‘the things themselves’, to be attentive to how we sensorially, kinaesthetically, and effectively engage with acting as a phenomenon and process” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. i). Zarrilli explains that the word “toward” in his book title indicates the impossibility of creating a complete phenomenology of any human activity. This means that research on any embodied practice including acting and actor training will always be evolving. In his book, he extensively uses his own experiences and those of the actors he worked closely with. He examines different types of performances including character-based plays, non-verbal performances, devised performances, Koodiyattam and Noh to discuss acting and actor training. Zarrilli through his research and practice provided a phenomenological approach towards acting and provides an account of how he practised phenomenology when training, performing, directing or teaching. He provided a better understanding of acting as an embodied practice. Zarrilli explored the nature of embodied consciousness in the studio which offered a site for philosophical exploration for actors.

“Throughout my career as a director, actor, teacher of acting, and author, I have been ‘doing’ phenomenology, i.e., allowing phenomenology to inform both what I practise and how I write about those processes. I utilise phenomenology alongside one branch of cognitive science known as dynamics systems theory as an open-ended process of reflection on how we encounter and inhabit the lived/living world(s) of our embodied consciousness in ‘life’, in the studio, and on stage.” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 1)

Zarrilli explains that the metaphors are suggestions to be tested in the studio. He mentions that the studio is a place where actors explore what it means to “touch” the “untouchable”. Actors experiment with how they use their tongue, lips, teeth, eyes, ears, palms, breath, shoulder and fingertips. They also consider how they are “touched” and influenced during

the process of embodied imagining. Despite this exploration, the true nature of acting will always remain “untouchable,” even as we try to grasp it through practical studio work or reflection on that work. “Grotowski wisely observes how in the studio one shouldn’t listen to the names given to things; one should immerse oneself in listening to the things themselves” (Grotowski & Salata, 2008, p. 37). Zarrilli explored the ways of immersing oneself fully in listening to and understanding the things themselves. “One cannot work on oneself . . . if one is not inside something which is structured and can be repeated, which has a beginning, a middle and an end, something in which every element has its logical place, technically necessary” (Grotowski 1995, p. 130). Zarrilli states that some forms of in-depth psychophysical training offer specific structures in which every element has its logical place and provides a step-by-step approach for self-improvement. He believes that this training helps individuals explore embodied consciousness by focusing attention, enhancing sensory awareness, practising kinaesthetic “listening” and engaging in processes of imagining.

To understand the process of acting Zarrilli deploys phenomenology as a tool. “Phenomenology is not a fixed body of knowledge, but a core method of investigation that may be flexibly adapted and remains open to new findings, terminology, and modification of practices” (Wertz, 2015, p. 85). Zarrilli believes that phenomenology is similar to acting because both are processes and practices. It helps address the structures and primary concerns shared by Stanislavski and Grotowski: experiencing and consciousness. Experiencing refers to the living/lived world as we encounter it as an embodied process and consciously involves being mindful and reflective on stage. Zarrilli states that phenomenology does not try to establish absolute truths or provide a complete description of our living/lived world. It aims to understand and explain how experience, perception, consciousness and imagination are shaped as we interact with the world. This ongoing process helps us perceive, act, engage and be influenced by the world around us. Zarrilli mentions that his phenomenological accounts emphasise how bodies, consciousness and skills are fundamental in shaping experience, perception and action. “Phenomenology is

concerned with both the structures of these experiences and what each of these experiences is like. If acting is understood as a mode of embodied enquiry, i.e. a phenomenon and process of surprise and discovery in the moment, then acting as well as directing may also be understood as a way of ‘doing’ phenomenology” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 11). Zarrilli mentions that seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, thinking, imagining etc. are all phenomenological accounts which focus on what each activity is like. What it feels like to encounter the world and what it is like to experience the world as our body moves through it. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 10)

Anirudh said that Grotowski also talks about this time lag between impulse and action. Stimulus creates impulse and impulse creates action. The problem is this time lag that happens between the impulse and the action. So, this whole cycle of stimulus to impulse, impulse to action and how this becomes second nature when you receive impulse, and the body reacts. He believes that the ability to receive stimulus is credibly important for any actor training. In terms of character, he thinks that it is more a question of doing years of training and bridging this idea of western psychological approach to understanding character. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

“An enactive approach the primary concern is with articulating a way of understanding acting and actor training as a phenomenon from the perspective of the actor as enactor/doer from inside the structure, act, experience, and processes of performing. In this view acting is best understood as a dynamic embodied/enactive psychophysical phenomenon and process by means of which a (theatrical) world is made available at the moment of its appearance/experience for both the actors and audience” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 12). The developments in cognitive science have developed different approaches to study the mind and Zarrilli uses “embodied dynamisms” in which the mind is seen as an embodied dynamic system. He chose this model as it offers the most explanatory power for understanding both the processes of acting and the actor’s internal experience during a

performance. Zarrilli explored an enactive approach to understanding acting, contrasting it with representational theories which are constructed from an outsider's perspective.

Pooja is an actor and has worked in films predominantly from the past 2 years. She started doing theatre when she was 10 years old with Professor Chandra Daasan at Loka Dharmi Theatre, Kochi. After schooling, she did her under graduation from Lady Shri Ram College, D.U. in Economic Honours. During this time, she started considering theatre as a professional career. She did her masters in theatre arts from school of drama and fine arts, Thrissur. After this she did an acting training programme from Intercultural Theatre Institute, Singapore. That is where she met Phillip Zarrilli and was trained by Phillip at that institute. Phillip was a visiting faculty at ITI, Singapore. He was associated with ITI from the beginning. There are only 3 to 4 permanent faculty at ITI and everyone else is a visiting faculty. Pooja elaborated on her understanding of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training and its core principles. Pooja thinks psychophysical is a new principle because if you look at the new acting principles everything is psychophysical. It incorporates body intelligence and psychological intelligence. Pooja also teaches so she discovered more about it. There is a whole debate about what is psychophysical and if you read Phillip's book on psychophysical acting the introductory chapter provides a lot of historical data. There Zarrilli mentions about the understanding of the body like initially it was just about anatomy and then this split of psychology and physiology came. The understanding about the body developed and how the body stores emotions and knowledge. Pooja thinks that only with a psychophysical approach the process of the acting will be complete. Approaching the psychological part alone is not enough. The body is not realised in terms of mimicking gestures or putting on a particular physicality. That is something she learnt from Phillip's technique. It is about understanding the body as a whole being and it includes your physical body, your consciousness, your voice, your breath and everything that is related. It is a holistic understanding of the body and preparing it for performance altogether. It is not like separating anything, you can work on certain aspects separately, but it is like preparing your being as a whole for the performance making process. Pooja

mentioned that most of the time people talk without even trying to understand and have a peripheral understanding. This is the case in all acting theories and practices, may it be Zarrilli, Chekhov or Stanislavski. She mentioned that the later part of Stanislavski's practice very actively explored the psychophysical. It is also said that the initial translations of Stanislavski's work are not really great. Then one Russian man learnt English and translated Stanislavski's work and it is very different from the earlier translations. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Stanislavski recognized the need for a process in which actors constantly discover things anew. "All our acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us in everyday life, become strained when we appear . . . before a public . . . that is why it is necessary . . . to learn again how to walk, move about, sit, or lie down. It is essential to re-educate ourselves to look and see, on the stage, to listen, and to hear" (Stanislavski, 1936, p. 73). Anirudh Nair mentioned that Stanislavski's training is psychophysical training. His method is very much a psychophysical method but when it is broken down, many times it is taught then the separation between the body and the mind becomes very strong in it. A lot of students end up receiving this. For a long time, it was taught wrong where there was this separation and a lot of emphasis on the psychology of the character and then always there is this gap of understanding the psychology of character and how do you make sense of it in my body. He mentioned that Stanislavski's method applies to any sought of work whether it be the most realistic or completely post dramatic or may it be a dance piece. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

"If and when we carefully examine in detail how any specific experience is structured temporally, spatially, sensorially, etc., we can be transported to a place where it is possible to 'discover things anew'- what seemed everyday might be 'retranslated into a new experience'. This process of making experience anew is central to the actor in two ways: through processes of embodied imagining and processes of (re)discovering 'anew' a set of rehearsed actions in the performative moment." (Zarrilli, 2020, pp.13-14)

The long-term engagement with any skill based embodied practices like martial arts, Pilates, acting etc. provides practitioners with opportunities to attune themselves to and experience an enhanced state of “sensing”. Zarrilli provides an example that becoming a surgeon involves mastering various specific areas, such as general medicine, surgical skills, and listening to heart sounds. All these fields need careful sensory training. Surgeons must have an embodied understanding of their specialty while using their senses, perception, and cognitive skills when required in the moment. After many years of training and practice, master surgeons develop “embodied skills”. “What should be clear from the example of cardiac surgeons is the necessity of developing the specific authority/kinaesthetic/tactile skills and modes of sensory awareness to practise their specialty to a point where that awareness is intuitively deployed in both diagnosis and the practice of surgery” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 23). Similarly, becoming a skilled practitioner of Yoga, Tai Chi, Kalari, massage therapy, Pilates or wine tasting requires years of training and experience. Over long-term training practitioners can enhance their sensory awareness and energy within their respective field. They gradually develop the high level of attention needed for their specific practice.

Naushad Mohammed Kunju mentioned that the traditional psychophysical disciplines played an important part in his learning. He had wonderful teachers at Thrissur School of Drama, Kerala including a teacher named Namboodiri, a very well-known Kathakali artist. He carried a lot of energy, and you can sense that energy. Another teacher he mentions is Koodiyattam teacher Kalamandalam Sivan Namboodiri. He asserts that these masters carried a unique energy with them. They taught him nuances in the practice. Their practices are totally based on body work which he kept practising and repeating to learn. He thinks this is another way of teaching, an old school tradition of teaching. Naushad reflects that why he was learning those disciplines was not that clear initially. He never questioned the masters, he did not know how to question it, did not know how to ask questions in relation to what he was practising. He did not know how to articulate or question what he was doing. He was obeying the practice. When he came to NSD, he had Thang Ta practice, he

had contemporary body practice with Suresh Shetty. He practised Chau movements, Kalarippayattu and many other forms. He knew that he could implement these in practice. Naushad asserts that this kind of notion was there, and these practices knowingly and unknowingly add to your body. Naushad mentioned that after 10 to 13 years of practice of psychophysical disciplines he got some idea of why he was practising. He got an idea about why he was practising these disciplines and how to implement them. Till then he was just practising and not reading, not reflecting and not analysing the practice. Naushad asserted that once Phillip Zarrilli came, and all the nuances of practice came together like in a flower from one petal to another petal to another so that you can feel it clearly. For Naushad, Zarrilli provided a clear context to the practice. He understood the religious, political and cultural context to carve out a beautiful body, beautiful cultural or characteristic body. Zarrilli revealed the core of the Asian philosophies and practice. Naushad mentions that this is the beautiful difference that one is we are doing practice, and another one is we are doing the practice with knowledge of its context. (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

Edwin Creely (2010) offers an elaborative perspective about Zarrilli's ideas and embodied practices. He mentions that Zarrilli focused on a "flow" between internality and externality which is essential to excel in performance. His technique is a technique of adaptability and flexibility. It teaches you to be adaptive to your own body and reflexive to the environment. Zarrilli through his practice is posing a theory of learning which is centred on the counterpoint for an actor between interiority (Psychophysical exercises) and exteriority (Reflective: what is done). Zarrilli presents a meta-theory of acting where acting is examined from the actor's perspective as a doer and enactor within an acting score. According to Zarrilli, acting is an extraordinary, embodied skill that demands the development of heightened sensory and perceptual awareness. This heightened awareness enables actors to be fully and immediately responsive to the theatrical environments they encounter during performances. His approach embodies an intercultural perspective which draws upon principles of Stanislavski and Asian traditions.

“Psychophysical Acting Training provides an alternative conceptualization and model of the actor’s work based not on acting as representation, but on an ‘energetics’ of performance. It explains how energy is activated, how perceptual/sensory awareness is heightened- animal- like- as the body ‘becomes all eyes’ and how both are applied to a variety of dramaturgies” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 1). Eugenio Barba in a foreword written by him for Zarrilli’s book “Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural approach after Stanislavski” highlights three significant aspects that serve as connecting threads throughout Zarrilli’s writings. First, he explores the intersection of Western and Asian theatrical traditions which shed light on their shared elements and mutual influences. Secondly, he delves into the symbiotic relationship between artistic and scientific knowledge. Lastly, he emphasises the vital connection between performative work and the inner life of the performer. “Zarrilli opens a space before and behind theatrical work- training, rehearsals, and performance. It is a vast space of awareness and imagination which allows both the eager beginner and the experienced practitioner to feel they are part of a history, to identify themselves with a system of thought, and to hover between truth and shared necessity” (Barba, 2009, p. xiv). Barba emphasises that Zarrilli’s thoughts go beyond theoretical description of concepts, and it is a product born out of Zarrilli’s personal and practical experiences. The concepts presented by Zarrilli hold practical implications and serve as starting points for practitioners in their artistic journeys. Barba believes that Zarrilli’s work addresses the needs of contemporary theatre by creating a valuable link between past and present. It presents a deeper understanding of psychophysical acting and its relevance in today’s performance landscape.

4.2 Pre-Performative Training

Pre-Performative Psychophysical training to “make the body all eyes”. Zarrilli created a combined pre-performative/bodymind training process for actors that included exercises from kalaripayattu, hatha yoga, and Chinese martial arts (Wu style) tai chi. He organised the core practices into the following daily routine practised for two to six hours:

- preliminary kalaripayattu breath-control exercises.

- simple yoga stretching and practice of a range of hatha yoga asanas.
- repetition of a short form of the Chinese martial art tai chi (Wu style).
- a progressive series of kalaripayattu exercises including animal poses (*vadivu*), leg kicks (*kal etupp*), and steps (*cuvadu*)– integrated into complete body-exercise sequences (*meipayattu*) performed back and forth across the floor, and, when working with very advanced students, weapons training.
- concluding with a repetition of the preliminary breath-control exercises.

(Zarrilli, 2020, p. 25)

Naushad Mohammed Kunju elaborates further on Zarrilli's method that the first thing is the body and its alignment. He asserts that be yourself and give a little energy to your body, give your body some kind of awareness and presence. Then be conscious about your breathing. Breathing should be very soothing and not tense, not making your body rigid. Be calm, be aware and connect to your body through breathing. Feel the nuances of openness and closeness. It is very abstract to say openness, but here in Zarrilli's method it means openness of all the senses and being ready to accept. This is one of the key principles of Zarrilli's method. Zarrilli articulated many movements for developing flexibility, fluidity, stamina and balance of the body. Naushad mentioned that another term which Zarrilli used was peripheral awareness. It comes from being of the body. He believes that it is coming from the practice of Kalari and your whole body becomes an eye. If you are looking on the front side, then your back side must be aware. The back awareness must be there, and you sense through your shoulders and your back. You should engage with full awareness and presence in a particular space. These are the basic principles Zarrilli used and don't force yourself to do anything. If your practice is solid, then you will be able to adapt in any performance situation. You have to make your system ready to adopt or add on or interpret or analyse or reproduce it to perform. Naushad Mohammed feels that when he works with the students there are confusions in the sense of how we can work with the mind. There are many things we have to deal with and make them understand that you need to make a base first. Then only the body will support. We need to make a clear notion of

why we are doing these body movements because mostly the students are training to speak dialogue in front of the camera. The students just want to act but later they would understand that the physical score should be explored first then only acting will happen. The speech work we have to do is related to the physical score and the rhythm of it. In the initial stage some feel that to act in film or theatre why we need this kind of training. (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

Along with structuring the training as a series of progressive exercises Zarrilli also developed a set of metaphors and imaginative processes to assist actors in fully grasping and experiencing concepts like energy, different states of attention, utilisation of sensory awareness and an embodied form of imagination. These elements collectively enable the body to “become all eyes” whether in the practice of a martial art or in acting. Extensive training in embodied practices help the actor to embody consciousness as they experience and discover:

- the flow of energy within oneself and into the environment.
- how to direct one’s attention, working between foreground and background.
- how to open up, attune, and “thicken” specific modes of sensory awareness- visual, auditory, tactile, etc.; and
- how to engage embodied processes of imagining. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 25)

Zarrilli suggests that these embodied practices awaken particular kinds of tactile awareness. For example, Kalarippayattu focuses on developing and enhancing specific types of tactile sensitivity relevant to both martial arts and performance. “The lion pose: ‘direct’ visual focus . . . opening peripheral awareness . . . tactile awareness through the feet and palms” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 26). In Kalarippayattu, the Lion Pose (Simha Vadivu) is a fundamental animal posture learned by Zarrilli from the teaching lineage of Gurukul Govindan Kutty Nayar. It is integrated into comprehensive body exercise sequences (*mei payattu*) that combine various animal poses with kicks, steps and jumps. Performing the

pose demands focused attention and awareness, the practitioner gazes through a specific point. While it may seem like direct visual focus, it's more about expanding one's embodied awareness into the immediate surroundings while still directing the visual focus forward. The practitioner looks ahead, but this act of "looking" is a process of inner opening. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 26)

The awakening of tactile/sensory awareness in both the feet and the palms reminds us that touch is not passive, i.e., we actively use touch to explore or meet the world (Leder, 2016, p. 14). Touch "relies on active movement" as the palms or the feet reach out, stroke, and thereby solicit "sensory information" (Leder, 2016, p. 46). Zarrilli emphasises that the practitioner not only moves and gazes forward but also from the "root of the naval" (*nabhi mula*). This means looking ahead while also delving deep into one's body, opening up both peripheral and back awareness to the immediate environment. Through Kalarippayattu practice, a practitioner ideally develops a complete 360-degree embodied awareness which enables swift responses to the immediate environment. This process initiates an exploration of the inner subtle (yogic) body fostering an understanding of prana-vayu circulation throughout the body in different forms. With long term practice, the practitioner develops a growing sense of "what it's like" to move within and from this specific form. Through repeated practice and careful attention to each repetition, this quality of "what it's like" helps the practitioner tune into the subtler aspects of experiencing the form. This ongoing process serves as a means to explore the nature of embodied consciousness through "living communication" with the world. The lion pose also encourages practitioners to extend their awareness downward through the feet, through the floor, to the edges of their surroundings and even to the space behind them. Zarrilli suggests that practitioners engage in a process of kinaesthetic imagining. It deepens their felt connection to the posture from within while also expanding their awareness of the surrounding space. When prana-vayu is awakened and realised in the body then a sense of embodied/kinaesthetic connection is felt within. (Zarrilli, 2020, pp. 28-29)

Anirudh Nair expresses the impact of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training on an actor's ability to develop their characters and sensory perception. He mentioned that "Sensory perception is the most important and it has a direct impact on the awareness that Phillip talks about in relation to space and breath. The level of sensory awareness that develops is huge and I think that is very key and crucial in pre-performative training in preparing the instrument of the actor. This is what Phillip talks about in 'When body becomes all eyes' this ideal state that an actor in any performance needs to be aware and able to receive any stimulus coming from any source from any direction." (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

"In the process described above, my verbal invitation to open one's embodied awareness through the soles of the feet optimally engages both sensing as well as imagining. One gradually opens oneself to the sensorial 'movement' of breath/energy (prana-vayu). One gradually opens tactile awareness through the skin/soles of the feet. As one opens sensorially to the movement within and through the feet, in this process one is equally engaged in imagining. This takes shape as a dynamic inner energetic 'line' that extends from the lower abdominal region through the feet, upward through the spine, through the palms, top of the head, and eyes, as well as the specific tactile sensation available through the surface skin of the foot. This awakening is felt as a kind of grounded energy. One eventually feels oneself 'rooted' in/through 'inner' movement yet open as one expands one's relationship out into space and to everything/everyone in the space." (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 29)

Participants begin with a series of breath control exercises. Next comes a series of more complex breath control exercises. These involve coordinating simple movements of the arms with inhaling and exhaling while maintaining focus on an external point and tracking breaths from the region below the navel throughout the body, down to the ground through the feet, out through the arms and hands, and up along the spine to the top of the head. The training also includes specific yoga exercises that highlight coordinating breath with complex movements. There is a focus on maintaining breath circulation during exercises

and providing proper support in the pelvic region. For example, in a sequence like *Surya namaskar* (sun salutation) when extending the leg backward while arching the back on an inhalation student must develop an intuitive awareness of the lower abdomen. This area serves as the starting and ending point for breath travel and offers the necessary support for correctly performing the exercise.

“These simple-to-state but difficult-to-actualize principles of focus/concentration (on the breath and on an external point), coordination of breath with movement, and support/centring (in the hips/navel with a natural alignment of the spine) constitute a set of primary discourses of practice. They are applied throughout the two-hour training regime as it progresses through other preliminary exercises, including slow balancing exercises, kalaripayattu’s animal poses.” (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 187)

There are few points which Zarrilli mentioned about the culture and atmosphere of his training studio. Participants are expected to keep focused, concentrated and completely attentive in each moment. He occasionally reminds participants:

1. not to space out or attempt to relax rather their task is through specificity of focus to enter a state of concentrated ness in the moment, which is not energy less, but energised.
2. not to push or attempt to find some mystical or spiritual something in what they are doing, that is, they are to assume that what they find will come out of the specificity of their embodied relationship to the exercise in the moment of its performance.
3. not to work so hard at attempting to find or keep focus that they are distracted by their trying, to allow themselves to acknowledge distractions but learn how to discipline their (naturally) wandering attention by bringing it back to a specific point of focus and breath.

4. that they are engaged in a long-term process which they are likely to find at times frustrating and boring in its repetition, and therefore should not expect immediate, earth-shattering, and/or constant discoveries, that is, they must be patient and work with and through time.
5. that this work is not for me, their teacher, but for themselves, and therefore they must begin from the first day to become their own teachers, that is, to internalise the discipline which my outside eye and comments at first call to their attention. Such attention to the focused and concentrated deployment of their (energised) bodies in space through time must become intuitive. (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 29-30)

The psychophysical training process is a lot about self-discipline. Without such discipline there exists a risk of the training devolving into a mindless endeavour. To ensure its effectiveness participants must persistently engage in the continuous re-discovery of self throughout the training journey. Each participant's journey of self-discovery within this training is bound to be unique and personal which contributes to the individualised nature of the experience. Psychophysical training fundamentally revolves around learning through the body itself. Zarrilli always tells students and people who work with him that there are not any definitive answers ultimately. He does not teach anyone anything. These exercises and this systemic practice provide a pathway within the individual to have discoveries. It is that search for that possibility of some kind of encounter with oneself and with what one is doing that moves someone towards this territory of something more. Zarrilli's training is a technique of self-discovery of an individual about his body and finding pathways of attunement which are unique to the individual himself. He recognized the important link between the pre-performative attentiveness and the effective rendering of the performance. The training fosters a profound connection between the participant's physical selves and their cognitive understanding. This integration of body and mind reinforces the significance of the training and enables participants to unlock their full potential as performers.

Anirudh Nair started doing theatre in an amateur way in 2002 when he was studying in Delhi University. He went to do his master's with Phillip Zarrilli in 2007. He did M.A. in Theatre Practice from University of Exeter. Anirudh went to Exeter specifically to train with Phillip Zarrilli. He was in touch with Professor Zarrilli for one and half years and read about his works. After this he decided to go to Exeter. During that time, he encountered one of the guest teachers Phillip invited named Anna Hellena MacLachlan who recently left Gardzienice, a theatre company in Poland. The company works in the lineage of the Grotowski. Staniewski is the name of the founder of the company. Then for the next 4-5 years he worked and trained extensively with Anna Hellena seasonally. He started working with two other theatre practitioners, one is Shankar Venkateswaran in India, and a company named The Original Practice, London. These were two big influences on his training journey starting with Phillip and the eastern European theatre practices taught to him by Anna Hellena. He collaborated with Shankar over 10 years for different productions. Now he works as an actor, director and teacher at Drama School Mumbai. His teaching pedagogy comes very much from these four significant influences. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Anirudh Nair mentioned that his biggest takeaway from the idea of Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical acting training is that in the western approach mind and body are separated and it is important to understand what it means. Zarrilli kept using this as one word "bodymind". The understanding of the bodymind as one as experienced in practice. Anirudh mentions that in the beginning it was very difficult to understand, and it was very conceptual. He understood the concepts in the start. There was nothing strange about them because these concepts were coming from the south Asian context. Before going to Exeter, he trained in some theatre forms like Koodiyattam. So, when Phillip introduced these ideas, it was not strange or difficult to grasp but to embody your bodymind was very difficult. It took years to learn to embody your bodymind and to understand this essential term Phillip used "When Your Body Become All Eyes". It took time to adapt these conceptual understanding in the practice. Anirudh did a one-year M.A. with Phillip Zarrilli. He thinks

that during that time he was not completely able to adapt to it in practice. He meant when we even felt this bodymind connection while training with Zarrilli it happened in moments and there was a lot of frustration in the batch regarding training. Eventually, after a long time/ some year and again working with Zarrilli and eastern forms, this integration of the body and the mind was understood by him. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Zarrilli himself mentioned that long term practice of psychophysical disciplines is required to embody the bodymind connection and feel it. Anirudh mentions that there was a little bit of frustration in the batch regarding training because at times we want immediate results. He said that it was a batch of 5-6 people. Among them he was the only south Asian and one was a Chinese student, and others were from U.K. He thinks in general for them these concepts were new, and the training was new whether it be yoga, Kalari or tai chi. For Anirudh tai chi was new and he was familiar with yoga and Kalari. Though a lot of his batchmates did a two-year MFA and he did one-year MA. He got very lucky that it differed because if he went there 2006 that was the year when Phillip fell ill, and his cancer had re-emerged. In 2006 he did not teach at all. So, the batch of MFA in 2006-2007 was very frustrated because to do this course without Philip is impossible. There were other teachers and assistants of Phillip who were teaching like Rebecca was one teaching. But it was very difficult to understand and grasp things without Phillip. Then Phillip made this magical recovery and came back to full time teaching in 2007 by the time he went to study. Anirudh thinks that without Phillip it was very difficult, and the course didn't make sense. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Through practise the actor optimally begins to develop a new relationship to one's bodymind. The bodymind becomes singular as one engages fully in what one is doing as it is done. One begins to discover a state of calm and repose as well as a heightened sense of awareness of the body- in- action. Copeau was precise about the type of embodied awareness that training should develop in the actor: "What is needed is that within them every moment be accompanied by an internal state of awareness peculiar to the movement

being done” (Copeau, 1970, p. 219). With each repetition of each exercise for the nth time there is this subtle “something more” that can be found in one’s relationship to movement/action. It is repetition per se which leads one eventually to the possibility of recognizing oneself and one’s bodymind relationship through exercise.

Naushad Mohammed Kunju mentioned how he perceives the bodymind connection in Zarrilli’s training. He asserts that his mind and body relation mean the mind is very complex and sometimes it is not in our hand to control it. He said that in Phillip Zarrilli’s System when we talk about the balance between the body and the mind then there is a mutual negotiation which always provides some support to carry forward. We need to focus on the logical reason, the space and the situations of the body we are working with. There are limitations and advantages in relation to this we have to negotiate. We have to surrender our body to any circumstances because you don’t know anything, but your mind is saying that you know everything. In this sense the negative superego is to be negotiated and you need to seek the balance. You need to start with zero, negotiate and build upon it. You always have to accept, analyse it, experience it and then share it. This is the way Zarrilli was teaching and also implementing the same in his practice. That is why Naushad asserts that you need to remain flexible in any situation as we have limitations. You need to realise these limitations and have some kind of system to negotiate with it. So, it is always a negotiation between mind and body. (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

Zarrilli refers to David Edward Shaner’s ideas about three types of bodymind awareness. Shaner argues that it is impossible to experience the body or mind separately. Even though our experiences might have aspects of both mind and body, experiencing one always involves experiencing the other. He describes this connection as “polar” rather than “dual”, since the mind and body depend on each other to exist. Their relationship is symbiotic. Shaner differentiates between three modes of bodymind awareness. First order and second order are pre-reflective whereas third order is reflective/reflexive. First order is the mode of experience prior to intentional experience. Second order is pre- reflective but with a

difference. One thinks with the body and acts with the mind. It is the most primordial form of intentionality. Attentive practice renders this awareness for ex. Martial arts, yoga poses or acting score rehearsals in which action may be filled with intentionality but through practice we expand our awareness and the exercise, or score becomes known to us and intentions are neutralised. Third order is in which kinaesthetic dimension is least evident and completely absorbed in thinking and momentarily forgetting we have a body. Second order bodymind awareness is where the domain of acting can be placed. In this order bodily tensions and mental intentions are neutralised and one's response to the situation may be immediate. Zarrilli uses the term "bodymind" as synonymous with psychophysical to mark the polar nature of this relationship between the perceptual and bodily based aspects of second order awareness. (Shaner, pp. 42-43, as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32)

The long-term training focused on the body helps develop a special relationship between the action and the actor. This involves creating a strong connection between breathing and body movement. Zarrilli uses examples from Kathakali dance-drama to explain how psychophysical actor's work. Understanding how performances work in Kathakali is based on local medical and physiological ideas. It incorporates knowledge from Ayurveda and yoga's concept of the subtle body. "The kathakali actor, yoga practitioner, and kalaripayattu martial artist all make two assumptions about their practice: (1) that the *vāyu* (breath/energy/life-force) is spread throughout the body and (2) that control of the breath is an implicit part of the training. It is by repetition of daily exercises that the breath is eventually controlled" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 37). Practice of disciplines such as tai chi, kalaripayattu and yoga allows actors to discover the breath in the body and helps apply this qualitative body awareness to performance. These embodied practises free the practitioner from "consciousness about" allowing the actor to enter into a state of concentrated ness informed by the performer's relationship to his or her breath. The training in psychophysical disciplines empowers the actor with a means of making embodied acting choices and not simply choices that remain empty mind- full intentions. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 38)

Anirudh Nair mentioned that as a teacher and as a part of Drama School, Mumbai he sees different types of training and the biggest difference is that it took him time to understand that Phillips training was a “pre-performative” training and not a performative training. To understand this difference, he took time. He understood what it meant for the preparation of the actor’s instrument. “In our MA whole year, we did this pre-performative training. I think this was also the reason for the frustration that there was not much transitioning from ‘pre-performative’ to ‘performative’. It was a little, we had this ‘actor-director workshops’ where we did bridge between the training and the work. But in the end, it felt like that it was not enough and I will say not enough is also not right to mention because if the training is not embodied in you then to apply it is difficult. It takes time to set this training in your body. Arriving within his work to performative training or formative application was not done in that one year. That only happened for me many years later after doing further training in other forms that were very closely and conceptually related to Phillip’s forms and then after that the performative aspect was settled.” (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Anirudh Nair states that it was not like the training was only pre-performative throughout the year they also had productions. There was one production which Phillip directed, and they had these ‘actor-director’ workshops in which they did scene works in the class. Then they also had individual projects as part of the training in which they were tasked to apply the psychophysical approach which we were learning. He asserts that in that year it mostly remained conceptually with him. In actual practice it was less visible and felt. In fact, he mentioned that in that year what he was understanding conceptually, and the opposite was happening in the performative segment because the mind was involved on a major level and it was very active in thinking about applying the concepts he was learning. He felt the practical implications in brief moments. There were engaging moments but through the training what was its result on his body he didn't know. The transition from pre-performative to performative on his body happened after some years. Anirudh asserts that he practised eastern-European traditions after Zarrilli’s training and also after coming back

to India from Exeter he did Kathakali for two years with Rajendra Asan sir in Kathakali centre. He mentioned “It really helped me further and I also kept my yoga practise regular. But all these training sessions were very difficult to do post Phillips training because I was really able to hold the concepts and the bedrock of how Phillip would lead that training through the Kathakali. For me Kathakali was not only Kathakali but internally all of the things I had learnt and imbibed from Phillips psychophysical acting training were being applied to this training for myself. Then a lot of the training with Anna Helena was in eastern-European physical traditions where there was extreme focus on the body and a lot of partner acrobatic work, a lot of work on the self and physical forms derived from eastern-European traditions and Grotowski based traditions. All of that I did have a base in Phillips training and helped me understand it. Then slowly it started to become more performative in application and understanding it in performative application.” (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Dr. Anuradha Kapur thinks that psychophysical acting training and pre-performative training is very useful for the actors, and it is a very good thing to be aware of. She thinks in India we are at an advantage because our forms are like that. She mentioned that the traditional forms are required and so are martial arts forms. Whether it is a module in a drama school or a module in an acting course. The module lets us say that martial arts is a very critical part of an academic training in India in relation to acting. She mentioned that Zarrilli also points out that the actor has to be aware. What she suggests is that in south Asia and southeast Asia enough traditions still remain for the actor to realise that there is no bodymind duality. According to her Zarrilli also puts bodymind as one word. It is like saying that you have to get out of the mind set in which you consider body and mind as two separate entities. In the western approach earlier, they started putting the voice and the face as the most important in the acting training and performance. So, below the throat the body actually does not exist in a lot of acting traditions. She mentioned that as we know Stanislavski was interested in yoga and he was interested in what we call spirit. Now we need to understand what spirit is and it is not just inside but it also something which shows

the outside. You can also call it soul, and it is something which you can express through the body. She asserts that we do have these traditions in India and certain forms bring it to the limelight. She thinks we have been at an advantage that we have thought about it in Asia. The western tradition made it all mind for example subtext, analysis and motivation; all of this is related to mind. How you show the subtext is in small actions but what Zarrilli was pointing out is that what you feel has to be expressed via breathing. When we laugh our breathing changes, when we cry our breathing changes, it is no new thing. For instance, in Adishakti the entire teaching is based on breathing. It is no major shock for us. She thinks that it is something western academia and drama schools have benefited greatly by adopting this kind of teaching by Phillip. (Dr. A. Kapur, Personal Interview, 23 June 2024)

Rose (2007) talks about Zarrilli's work in detail and his contribution to the field of psychophysical acting training. Zarrilli described how his work with eastern trainers resulted in a change to his approach to the practical work. He adopted a model of bodymind from the east to replace cartesian dualism. Even Stanislavski borrowed from eastern concepts of yoga and used it to sharpen focus. He equated energy with prana and explored spirituality in relation to acting. Rose claimed that Zarrilli is concerned with the performance as a spiritual practice underpinned by ideas from eastern philosophies and practices. He asserted that through psychophysical practices an actor begins to develop a new relationship with his bodymind. As he calls the bodymind becomes singular as one engages fully one's awareness in what one is doing as it is done. The idea of prana also known as ki/energy is central to Zarrilli's theory. The flow of prana/Ki/energy where attention is "brought into the body" is achieved by means of breathing exercises. Rose concludes that psychophysical approach to acting explores the "physical" and the "psychic" in order to find a way to perform in which the beginning point is not psychology but the enlivening quality of the actor's breath. Rose claims that the discussions on body, emotion, feeling, mind, memory and action are viewed as aspects of unitary embodied human process. Rose indicated the necessary research to be conducted in order to discover new understandings of the performance processes.

Zarrilli mentions that in Cartesian dualism imagination is frequently regarded as solely a mental process. He proposes that the act of imagining is a psychophysical process involving the entire bodymind. “The ‘physical aspect to thought’ which is the counterpart of ‘thinking with the body’ both of which are essential for the actor if he or she is to be a complete artist capable of creating thoughts with the body” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 39). Zarrilli thinks our body is made up of several bodies each linked to different experiences. He makes a distinction between the body we are aware of in daily life and the body we experience in extra daily activities like psychophysical disciplines. These activities bring out unique modes of embodiment and give rise to distinct experiences of the body. Zarrilli uses Drew Leder’s ideas of “The Absent Body” to discuss a major issue and contradiction about the body. Leder describes two modes of embodiment that constitute our everyday experiences as the surface body and the recessive body. Each has its own way of being absent and present. This helps Zarrilli explore the complex nature of how we experience our bodies and their presence or absence. He looks at how modern actors use their bodies in the world. He identifies two extra daily modes of embodiment through which actors experience their bodies during acting as the “aesthetic inner bodymind” and the “aesthetic outer body.” These ways show how actors connect with their bodymind differently when performing. This interaction between experience and absence helps actors dive deep into their roles and performances.

The actor’s four embodied modes of experience

The surface body- It is the sensorimotor surface body through which we engage in the world for ex. when we use our hands to explore and touch. This is the body of “flesh” (metaphorical). The surface body is primarily characterised by the external five senses that connect us with the outside world. As we engage with the world our body constantly encounters opportunities for active responses. We exist through our body in this world and the sensory world involves constant possibilities of active responses from the body. Despite the continuous engagement of the surface body with the external environment it has a quality that allows it to be momentarily forgotten. Walking for example, becomes an

acquired skill within our sensorimotor repertoire that we perform without conscious effort. The surface body plays a crucial role in our engagement with the external world which allows us to interact and respond to stimuli.

The process of learning a new physical skill like a pose in kalarippayattu is an interesting path of embodied body changes. Initially, the practitioner needs to focus hard and follow instructions to get the pose right. Through lots of practice and mindful engagement with the pose practitioners become more aware of how to align and execute it precisely. With practice the pose becomes a part of the learner's body. They don't have to think about it consciously as it becomes almost intrinsic. Zarrilli refers to this stage as the body "disappearing". The body "disappears" not in a literal sense but in that the learner doesn't need to consciously control every part of the movement anymore. The pose is now part of their motor memory and embodied knowledge. This phenomenon extends to various domains of expertise including dance, sports and other psychophysical disciplines. It exemplifies the transformation from conscious effort to embodied mastery where the bodymind works in harmony.

The visceral body- It refers to the internal organs of the human body. It includes the mass of internal organs and physiological processes such as digestion as well as sensations like hunger. Symbolically this aspect of the body can be likened to "blood" signifying the dimensions of experience that lie beneath the flesh. In our daily experiences the lived body is in a constant state of exchange between flesh and blood which results in a unified organic circuit. This circuit exists within the interplay of surface and recessive bodies to form a gestalt. The body's moments of disappearance and absence highlight our continuous relationship with the world and our immediate environment. (Leder, 1990, p. 160)

The aesthetic inner bodymind is about reaching a state of heightened perception and experience that goes beyond everyday life. This is achieved through long term involvement in specific psychophysical activities or training regimes. These could include yoga, martial

arts, butoh, acting and other performing arts. Through these practices' individuals work on developing both their physical bodies and mental focus to tune into more subtle levels of awareness and experience. This process has an aesthetic quality because it moves beyond the ordinary. It leads to a transformative change in how one perceives their bodymind. This change shows as the constant "disappearance" of the body becomes less obvious and replaced by a deeper interaction between body and mind. This mode of experience is called "inner" because it starts with an internal exploration. The basic state of not noticing the aesthetic inner bodymind shows up in our everyday experience with breathing. Most of the time unless we are physically exerting ourselves or stressed, we don't pay attention to our breathing. It happens automatically and we remain unaware of its ongoing rhythm. This automatic nature of breathing makes it fade from our conscious awareness under normal conditions. When we do activities that involve physical effort or face tough situations our breathing becomes more noticeable. This increased awareness of our breath during such times reminds us of its constant presence and draws our attention to its rhythmic patterns and importance. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 55)

Anirudh Nair highlights the core principles of Zarrilli's training. For him the basic core principle is the bodymind connection and the core of that is the breath. For him its body, mind and breath and the breath being the link between everything. Zarrilli mentioned that practices like Yoga and Kalaripayattu can lead to a deep level of inner awareness through a strong focus on breathing. He mentions that this subtle inner bodymind is usually hidden and stays unexplored until certain psychophysical practices are used to engage awareness in a specific way.

Practising yoga and martial arts involve a detailed focus on the breath to cultivate attentiveness. It is crucial for accessing and harnessing the inner body. This breathing acts as a bridge connecting the inner and outer body. "It is through the breath that the aesthetic inner body reaches and touches both the surface body of exteroception, and also the depth (blood) body of our inner recesses" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 56). The awakening of the subtle

inner bodymind is a significant result of participating in psychophysical practices like Yoga and Kalarippayattu. Zarrilli mentions that numerous modes of traditional as well as contemporary actor/dancer training such as Japanese Noh, Meyerhold's biomechanics, Grotowski based work, butoh, Suzuki training, kathakali dance- drama etc. provide practitioners with the potential to develop an aesthetic inner bodymind. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 57)

The aesthetic outer body refers to the performer's physical presence that is presented for the observation of the spectators often referred to as a character. This performing body exists simultaneously in two realms during the performance. One as a vessel of experience for the actor and the other as a subject of experience for the spectators. Throughout the performance the actor embodies a predetermined set of actions or tasks. To do so, the actor dynamically channels their energy, attention and awareness in accordance with the dramaturgy which informs the performance structure (the score). The actor remains adaptive and responsive to the immediate demands. The actor thoroughly engages with the score fully by inhabiting each action within it. In this process, the actor maintains a dual consciousness continuously modulating the four bodies. A key element in this enactment is the actor's breath which not only reflects their own breathing but also becomes indistinguishable from the breath of the character they are portraying. This integration of breath intertwines the actor's essence with the character's essence. The aesthetic outer body represents the physical embodiment of the performer's presence in a theatrical performance. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 58)

Anirudh Nair thinks Phillip's training is a useful training that helps remind us that even the bodymind integration is necessary and the psychology cannot be present without the body. In the Indian tradition this is not there for example in Koodiyattam we don't think about character motivation, we practise the form bodily. He thinks in terms of creating characters it is absolutely essential but that being said it only comes from repetition and years of training and practice. He thinks the one year he spent training with Phillip he could apply

that. Also, the other thing he mentioned is that even in India, our entry point into the amateur world of acting is very psychological and he is talking about his experience. For people who have done traditional training it is not the same case for them. But most of the people who enter theatre contemporary practice the entry point tends to be extremely psychological. There are lots of discussions around characters and all of it becomes fundamental. Then to find this bridge from psychology to adapting it in the body then we had no clue about this transition in amateur theatre. At times this transition happened also unknowingly and most of the times it didn't happen. In the start only, the psychologising cannot happen without the body. He thinks the psychologising in the body of the actor is the key principle to creating a character. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Zarrilli (2002a) talks about the importance of studios in the process of creating a performance or developing once expertise in practice. He considers the studio as a place where words countless and something comes from nothing. He uses two working metaphors to support his study which are: How is it possible “to stand still while not standing still”? (Benedetti, 1973, p. 464) and how is it possible to work precariously between balance and counterbalance, to be poised and counterpoised, “on the edge of breath”? (Blau, 1982, p. 86). He claims that the psychophysical practices allow the practitioners to explore these paradoxes or working metaphors. Zarrilli clearly mentions the studio as a location where ideas, intellect and imagination are shaped through embodied practices. It is a place of ample opportunities, but all are momentary. A studio is a place where we explore the relationship between the doer and done, where we establish relation to our own practice. On the basis of his study Zarrilli mentions some fundamental paradoxes which we explore in a studio: 1. how to make the complex, simple and the simple, complex 2. The relationship between space and time, between absence and presence 3. The embodied relationship between in-spiration and expiration 4. The relationship between the said and the unsaid 5. The relationship between self and others. Zarrilli believes that all these propositions can be attained in a studio as it is a place to practise, and the preliminary psychophysical exercises help the practitioners to have first-hand experience of an embodied intuition.

Anirudh Nair as an actor trainer talks about the major challenges faced by the contemporary actors. He feels that one major issue is the practicality of the theatre industry in this country which leads to the fact that 70 percent of the students whom he teaches have the end goal of working in the film industry. In order to get success, there the need that is felt for performative training is very high. So, there tends to be an impatience with pre-performative training in the sense that why is there so much focus on the pre-performative training. The actors want to know how to deal with the text, how to apply Stanislavski and as soon as students see an immediate practical application of what they are learning in class then their investment in it is exponential. For the majority of students, the patience and the ability to engage with it for practical reasons, be it economical, be it time, be it personal reasons is harder. So, for pre-performative training the preparation of the actor's instrument is something that gets less priority. There is a lot of focus on the performative aspect of training. Anirudh thinks this is the biggest challenge and also the second thing which is slightly unrelated to the context of Phillip is that there is so much exposure to film, OTT and TV. There is a lot of good content that exists, but 95 percent is in the space of realism. Realism as aesthetic and to imagine beyond it is getting difficult because realism as an aesthetic works very well in cinema. In our tradition of cinema there was less realism but now its quotient is rising. So, the mark of good acting and good performance is becoming realistic acting and realistic performance. He also mentions that there is nothing wrong with that but there is a struggle to imagine outside of the realm of realism. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Anirudh Nair makes a distinction between Zarrilli's method and the principles that form the core of the method. He thinks if an actor training program has the time and the space to do intensive investment in form-based training applying Zarrilli's pedagogical principles to the teaching of that form then he thinks it can have great significance. This is within the context of contemporary actor training. If generally somebody is doing Kalari he thinks they should just do Kalari. But if it is possible in the context of a drama school and Kalari is being taught in order to train as a pre-performative training for the contemporary theatre

actor then using Zarrilli's principles and way of teaching and methodology can have great value. But he still wants to underline that time and dedication is required for this kind of training. If the form itself is being used, then he thinks time is necessary. But even if the form is not being used then the principles can form a core. Anirudh Nair thinks about the relevance in our world today of this specificity of the forms Zarrilli used remains specially taught in those contexts completely outside of the context of India. Phillip spent a long time in India learning these forms and what does it mean for the other practitioners who are carrying forth Phillip's training. What will be the relevance of these forms in Phillip's training he doesn't know? He thinks the principles are very key and can be applied anywhere but he wonders about the forms. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Zarrilli poses some important questions in relation to acting as a phenomenon. Is there a situation where an actor only uses their mind to act or only their body? What influences an actor's performance? What is the goal of acting training? How do the physical and mental aspects connect in acting both on the inside and outside? Can we create a way of talking about and understanding acting that avoids the traditional Western separation of body and mind?

Zarrilli aimed to refine a particular energy, focus and psychophysical quality in the actors. An actor must balance their own ideas of what acting should be with the specific requirements of the production they are involved in. Zarrilli wants that an actor develops a network of relationships in action between the three sets of demands which any production potentially places on the actor's approach:

1. the structural, dramaturgical demands of the dramatic text and/or the particular genre of performance (happenings, performance art, etc.).
2. the structural demands of the performance text- how the director (or whoever is shaping the work) determines the specific structure of this particular performance text; and

3. the relationship between the actor and what the actor does, i.e., the qualitative, psychophysiological dimension of the actor's engagement in the task-at-hand. (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 17)

Anirudh Nair elaborates on the pre-performative training and its working in Zarrilli's method. He did one student production with Zarrilli. He thinks that it is not that pre-performative training is directly transposed to the performance because it is not a skill for example reading any text of Shakespeare or understanding its metre or doing its syllable counting is a skill. Pre-performative training is a type of training, and it is not a skill. To find direct application of pre-performative training is difficult. For example, if a marathon runner is doing yoga and definitely it will reflect into his practice but to directly identify this transposition is reductive. In the same way the concept of the pre-performative training is to tune an actor's instrument. If an actor's instrument is better tuned, then he will bring it better in the performance in comparison to the actor whose instrument is less tuned or has less pre-performative training. When we talk about presence, energy on stage then what is the meaning of these words when we try to break them. For me the meaning of these comes from the idea which Zarrilli talks of pre-performative. In training with Phillip, he did lots of work in terms of awareness and when we try to find its meaning in performance and the level of awareness you are bringing to a scene and the effect it has on your co-actors. Anirudh mentioned that Grotowski also mentions what stimulus your co-actors are bringing and how that stimulus translates into impulse and further leading to action. It is the same thing in pre-performative training is the training that allows to break down the barriers between stimulus and the resultant action. Stimulus comes and its response is built in our body as impulse, and it converts into action. Because of socialisation there is a delay in that chain and Grotowski mentioned the same in his work. Pre-performative training works towards making that time lag between impulse and action to minimal. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 16 March, 2024)

Dr. Sreejith Ramanan talks about his understanding of pre-performative training and his own experiences about how this pre-performative training or how the elements are transposed into the actual performance in Zarrilli's method. Sreejith mentioned that pre-performative training happens before the performance. Actors need certain kinds of qualities. As a performer when you get on stage, your body should be prepared to conceive a theatre language. Your body should be ready to adapt according to different styles of productions from different directors. The style can be anything like the *commedia dell'arte*, street theatre or post dramatic theatre. Actors during their pre-performative stage have to train their body in a certain manner so that they can contain all kinds of performances. This pre-performative technique helps us to achieve certain qualities as a performer. Sreejith said that there were special methods which Zarrilli himself handpicked like yoga, Kalari and tai chi. So, there were continuous instructions which activated the sensory awareness and dynamic energy that brought significant change to the actor's body and performances. Your sense organs become very sharp, and you develop a very controlled and balanced energy. This guides you through the performance and you can channelise this energy in a very suitable manner. (Dr. S. Ramanan, Personal Interview, 22 April 2024)

Pooja mentioned his understanding of pre-performative training in Zarrilli's method. Pooja has received training in almost all contemporary acting techniques and this pre-performative training is something she demands to be done. She believes that even in acting schools it should be a great focus because this training makes a performer better. She mentioned that when you start singing classes you start with basics and then you go on to learn songs. Even in the case of dance first you learn basic steps which is called the preparation phase in which you train the body to be a dancer. Then after this only you go on to perform. But in acting people think that anybody can do it. She believes that in our country there are great actors who have not undertaken any training, but they are constantly learning on their own. But these numbers are very few. People are very curious about their craft. Pooja shared this thought which Stanislavski mentioned. There were two performances, one in which he felt that he did well, but people didn't like. Other one is in

which he was not confident, but people liked it. So, he was curious about how and why it happened. Out of this curiosity he started asking questions and started discovering more, that is why Stanislavski is very important because he asked such important questions. Pooja believes people who have journeys like this must have progressed. Everybody wants to perform but very less understands that there is a need to understand acting. Acting training or pre-performative for her is where you learn your basic steps or basic notes and that sits in your body. Right now, she is doing her first Hindi language project. She has to do a lot of stunts and she believes that what helps is that you understand working with your body. You are able to learn faster. She had a really good education in English. But when it came to Hindi and she started working with her dialect coach it was easier for her to understand how the language works. She was able to understand what she needed to do to attain a certain sound of a word. She mentioned that you start developing an ear and affect. Once you start understanding something then you can continue building on it. That is why pre-performative training is important. It is her analogy that if you look at Natyasastra or Beijing opera, they always have this distinction among acting like *angika*, *vacchika*, *aaharya* and *sattvika*. It talks about training the different elements of an actor. If you look at Indian traditional theatre forms like Koodiyattam, it is present traditionally in our system. Most of the acting training techniques emerge from an observation of eastern philosophy and training. The pre-performative training is the state where you actually train, and she believes that in modern acting it is very less. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Niharika is an interdisciplinary artist and works in different capacities as a writer, director and performer. Her main theatre training is with Phillip. She started working as a professional theatre actor in Mumbai. She did not have any professional training at that time. She was finding regular ways of putting up plays and acting seems to be quite limiting. She felt that it was not asking anything of the performer outside of just being a prop and saying lines on stage. She was looking for different ways to enter this process and she did a workshop with Shankar Venkateswaran in Bombay. He was using tai chi and standing meditation in the workshop and a lot of work was based on the stillness. She really

liked that method and asked him about how she could train in this further. Shankar suggested to Niharika that there is a teacher called Phillip Zarrilli whose method he was using in the workshop, and he teaches at University of Exeter. This was in 2010 when she applied to Exeter and went to do her master's under Phillip Zarrilli for one year. The core of her training is psychophysical work, and she still uses that in all of the works that she is making.

Niharika Negi mentioned that the core principles of Phillip Zarrilli's training are applicable across most ancient traditions. She recently attended a training with guru Venu G. in his training program called "*Navarasa Sadhana*" and shared her experiences. Phillip Zarrilli and Venu G were friends. Phillip used to do this after the main training which was called "Structured Improvisations" where you would embody structures of desire or different sorts of images. What she found while doing Navarasa Sadhana is that what Phillip had done was he had taken the navarasa and created a way to almost take actors through how to activate them for example how to activate pleasure or how to activate sadness. With navarasa in a traditional way, Venu G version is quite contemporary, and the actor's task is to find it for themselves like what is pleasure and how do you activate it. You are able to discover the navarasa but ultimately you discover it for yourself through practice. Niharika Negi thinks that where Phillip's pedagogy differs is that he created a plan with which you could actually activate it and it is left to each individual actor in the process. In Zarrilli's method there is a very clear path in achieving these things. Niharika Negi elaborated on the pre-performative training and how it is transposed in performance in Zarrilli's method. "From my understanding the whole psychophysical acting methodology is a pre-performative method. This can be used to train people and can be applied to other training. Its main objective is to help you achieve bodymind unity and the main principles it is working with is that of traditional and martial arts. You are looking from the '*dantian*' which is a point below your navel and your breath is originating from there and impulse to move or breath also arrives from that point. You are looking from that point all the time." (N. Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May 2024)

Dr. Anuradha Kapur mentioned that she is not sure if you can trace the direct application of psychophysical disciplines into the performance. But you become generally aware and have these qualities which are generated through psychophysical disciplines. You generate this awareness through breathing that you can create emotions through breathing. When you learn any psychophysical discipline then it can be interpreted in many ways, and She has also quoted in one article written by her. One of her students told her that in Koodiyattam what comes from inside to the outside is an image of a mountain on which Shiva and Paravati are sitting. Dr. Anuradha Kapur mentioned that all of this is coming from the imagination and through your breathing you open your imagination. So, this is a soliloquy but here you are putting a word from one discipline of history to another discipline. From Stanislavski you put it into Koodiyattam. But it is an explanation for an actor of what you are doing. If you are making a soliloquy in Koodiyattam then it is also Koodiyattam and Stanislavski at the same time. She mentioned that it is how you do your insights. That is where training will help. For example, an amateur actor thinks that it is enough to learn lines and perform but it is not impactful. But an experienced actor does it with his whole body and presence. Michael Chekhov mentioned that an actor must bring the whole world to the stage. The meaning of it is that you are aware of your surroundings. What happens in training, and this is my experience is that you practise psychophysical disciplines in a drama school and when you go out then you experience your body in a new way. You are actually able to listen, and you are aware. She asserts that this is all because of the training. (Dr. A. Kapur, Personal Interview, 23 June 2024)

Dr. Kapur's reference to simultaneously "doing Koodiyattam and Stanislavski" points to a hybrid mode of actor awareness: the actor draws on Koodiyattam's codified physicality and symbolic imagery (e.g., visualising the mountain with Shiva and Parvati) while applying Stanislavski's psychological and imaginative techniques to personalise and internally justify the action. In this sense, the breath becomes the conduit between an external form rooted in tradition and an internalised, affective truth enabling the actor to inhabit both systems at once. Dr. Kapur's analogy between Koodiyattam and Stanislavski

highlights how psychophysical training can bridge seemingly divergent acting traditions. In Koodiyattam, the performer works from an externalised, codified score; gestures, facial expressions, and rhythms deeply embedded in cultural convention. Stanislavski's approach, conversely, prioritises internal motivation and psychological truth, from which physical action flows. Kapur suggests that through psychophysical disciplines like those used by Zarrilli, an actor can merge these approaches: for instance, performing a Koodiyattam soliloquy with the full precision of its codified gestures, while simultaneously generating inner emotional truth through breath and imagination, in line with Stanislavski's system. This dual lens allows for a layered performance where external form and internal experience reinforce one another, rather than existing in opposition. Dr. Kapur's reflections on combining Koodiyattam and Stanislavski illuminate how psychophysical training enables the coexistence of seemingly divergent traditions within a single performance moment. Through psychophysical disciplines like those in Zarrilli's method, an actor can inhabit both modes simultaneously executing a Koodiyattam soliloquy with precise external form while generating an inner life through breath, focus, and imagination. In this way, external codification and internal experience converge, producing a layered, resonant performance.

4.3 A Comparative Study: Phillip Zarrilli and His Influences

Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical actor training can be understood most effectively by situating it within a lineage of modern and contemporary performance practitioners and traditions. His work emerges from an interwoven genealogy that spans Western modernist innovations and Asian embodied performance systems, bringing together figures such as Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, and Eugenio Barba, alongside traditional practices including Kathakali, Kalarippayattu, and Yoga. This comparative analysis highlights the key convergences and divergences across these systems, demonstrating how Zarrilli synthesises inherited ideas while re-framing them through his own theoretical and pedagogical lens.

Genealogies and Historical Placement

Stanislavski established the modern grammar of the actor as a disciplined practitioner, emphasising systematic rehearsal and the re-education of everyday behaviour for the stage (Stanislavski, 1936/1989). His later work moved toward the “method of physical actions,” integrating body and mind in performance. Grotowski radicalised the actor’s craft by reframing the studio as a laboratory for rigorous psychophysical research, prioritising process over product and pursuing the “via negativa” to strip away obstacles to presence (Grotowski, 1968). Barba extended this inquiry into an intercultural frame, coining the concept of “pre-expressivity” to describe the extra-daily physicality shared across global performance traditions (Barba, 1995).

Zarrilli inherits the systematic discipline of Stanislavski, the laboratory ethos of Grotowski, and Barba’s anthropological curiosity, but relocates the theoretical centre of gravity to bodymind energetics. This relocation is informed by long-term immersion in Asian martial and meditative disciplines, and supported by contemporary phenomenology and enactive cognitive science (Zarrilli, 2009).

Philosophical Underpinnings: From Psychological Models to Enactive Bodymind

While Stanislavski’s later method integrates physical actions with inner life, his approach is often interpreted in Western contexts as primarily psychological. Michael Chekhov developed the “psychological gesture”, a physically embodied imaginative device intended to trigger an inner state privileging the role of imagination as a driver of performance (Chekhov, 1991). Grotowski’s practice framed the actor’s work as a spiritual and existential exposure, while Barba’s anthropology emphasised the culturally-specific ways that extra-daily techniques generate presence.

Zarrilli reframes these foundations through an enactive lens, treating acting as a process of embodied world-making in which perception, action, and awareness are inseparable (Zarrilli, 2009). Breath, prana, and kinaesthetic imagining are central operational

principles, making the energetic dimension of performance largely peripheral in earlier Western methods a primary focus.

The Role of Breath and Vital Energy

In Stanislavski and Chekhov, breath is acknowledged primarily as physical support for voice or gesture. Grotowski incorporated breath within intense physicality, but without an explicit metaphysics. Barba acknowledges energy circulation in pre-expressivity, but leaves its cultivation to the specifics of each tradition. By contrast, in Kathakali, Yoga and Kalarippayattu, all formative influences on Zarrilli, breath and vital energy are the central generative forces for performance.

Zarrilli's training foregrounds this principle, treating breath as the engine that animates the actor's sensorimotor and imaginative life. Breath is systematically coordinated with movement sequences (such as *meippayattu* animal postures in Kalarippayattu) to generate pranic circulation, root the actor's attention in the lower abdomen, and cultivate peripheral awareness (Zarrilli, 2009).

Pedagogical Structures and Training Regimens

Stanislavski's pedagogy is often text-centred and scene-based, whereas Grotowski's laboratory work privileged exploratory, group-specific processes without a fixed syllabus. Barba's International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) resists prescriptive methods, encouraging actors to evolve their own technical vocabularies. The Suzuki method offers a highly codified daily routine focused on grounding, voice, and stamina.

Zarrilli departs from both open-ended exploration and rigid singular technique by creating a hybrid, systematised daily sequence that draws on Asian forms while retaining the laboratory's reflective ethos. His training begins with breathing and Yoga-based centring, proceeds through Tai Chi and *meippayattu* sequences, and closes with breath integration.

Each stage is paired with metaphoric prompts and reflective awareness, embedding practice in an ongoing phenomenological dialogue.

Acting as Enactment

For Stanislavski and Chekhov, acting involves both doing and representing, with inner life motivating outer action. Grotowski and Barba emphasise doing as a transformative, here-and-now event, with presence emerging from extra-daily energy. Zarrilli aligns with this latter view, conceiving the actor as an enactor: someone whose task is to bring a world into being through the dynamic interplay of breath, body, attention, and imagination. This emphasis on enactment displaces representation as the central paradigm, positioning acting as an emergent, embodied activity.

Imagination and Kinaesthetic Imagining

Chekhov's psychological gesture externalises an archetypal image to shape inner life. Zarrilli's "kinaesthetic imagining" similarly uses imagery but insists it be anchored in breath and sensorimotor awareness. Whereas Chekhov's method can be applied as a shorthand for state induction, Zarrilli's imagery is inseparable from the physical and energetic work, ensuring that the image lives in the body rather than being superimposed on it.

Cultural Sourcing and Ethical Engagement

Grotowski, Meyerhold, Decroux, Lecoq, and Brook all integrated non-Western or physical vocabularies into their work, often through selective borrowing. Barba and Zarrilli, however, engage these traditions ethnographically. Zarrilli's apprenticeship with Kathakali masters, Kalarippayattu gurus, and Yoga practitioners allowed him to adapt these systems as pre-performative technologies with respect for their epistemic contexts. His method is thus distinct from superficial incorporation, functioning instead as a translational bridge between traditional embodiment and contemporary actor training.

Outcomes and Institutional Considerations

Stanislavski's and Chekhov's techniques are adaptable to short-term training; Grotowski's and Barba's require long-term commitment but resist codification. Zarrilli's method is highly structured and potentially transferable to institutional contexts, but demands sustained time investment to achieve embodiment. The outcome is an actor with heightened sensorimotor acuity, peripheral awareness, and energetic calibration, a performer capable of adapting to diverse dramaturgical demands while maintaining a grounded presence.

Inheriting Stanislavski's discipline, Grotowski's rigour, and Barba's intercultural attentiveness, Zarrilli moves decisively beyond these antecedents by centring breath and energy as the foundations of training, reframing imagination as an embodied process, and integrating phenomenology and enactive cognition into the studio. His work constitutes a rare synthesis of ethnographic fidelity, structured pedagogy, and contemporary theory, producing a psychophysical training model that is at once traditional in its sources, modern in its delivery, and innovative in its conceptual framing.

4.4 Critical Engagement and Counter-Arguments

While Zarrilli's psychophysical training has been widely acknowledged for its depth, innovation, and intercultural synthesis, it is essential to engage critically with the method to locate both its strengths and its limitations. Such engagement ensures that the discussion remains grounded in scholarly rigour and open to dialogue with broader performance studies discourses.

Cultural Appropriation vs. Ethical Integration

One of the most persistent critiques of any training that draws from non-Western traditions is the risk of cultural appropriation. Critics argue that when performance practitioners adopt elements of Asian martial arts or meditative disciplines, there is a danger of decontextualizing them from their original socio-cultural, spiritual, and ritual frameworks

(Schechner, 1993). In the case of Kalarippayattu, Yoga, and Kathakali, these practices are embedded in specific epistemologies, lineages, and teacher–student relationships that carry ethical responsibilities.

Zarrilli addresses this critique through sustained apprenticeship with traditional masters in Kerala and a careful reframing of the work as pre-performative training rather than as theatrical representation of cultural forms (Zarrilli, 2009). His engagement is ethnographic and long-term, avoiding the superficial “borrowing” that has characterised some intercultural theatre experiments. Nonetheless, sceptics might still question whether adaptation for Western actor training inevitably shifts the meaning of these practices, particularly when taught outside their original ritual contexts.

The integration in Zarrilli’s method is not an extraction but a translation, a dialogic process in which the principles of these traditions are preserved in their pedagogical essence while being applied to the specific needs of contemporary performance. This translation is transparent about its sources and insists on acknowledging the epistemic origins of the techniques.

Accessibility and Institutional Constraints

Another critique relates to time investment and accessibility. Zarrilli’s training demands sustained, daily practice over months or years to yield transformative results. In many institutional contexts particularly Western drama schools with limited curricular hours such time commitment may be impractical. Critics argue that the method’s full benefits are unattainable in short-term workshops, leading to partial or diluted implementation.

While the depth of embodiment indeed requires time, Zarrilli’s work demonstrates that even short-term exposure can recalibrate the actor’s awareness of breath, grounding, and kinaesthetic presence. However, for institutions seeking to embed psychophysical methods, the training must be scaffolded longitudinally potentially across multiple semesters to preserve its integrity.

The Question of Empirical Validation

Given the increasing interest in empirical research on performance training, some scholars call for measurable evidence to support claims about the effects of psychophysical practice on acting performance, cognitive function, and emotional regulation. While phenomenological accounts from practitioners provide rich qualitative data, they may be critiqued as subjective or anecdotal.

Recent studies in embodied cognition, sports science, and contemplative neuroscience offer emerging empirical frameworks that align with Zarrilli's claims (Noë, 2004). Integrating psychophysical training into empirical research designs as partially undertaken in this thesis can strengthen the academic legitimacy of such methods without reducing their experiential richness.

Potential Overemphasis on Technique

Some practitioners and theorists warn that the deep physical and energetic discipline required by psychophysical methods can risk overemphasis on technique at the expense of spontaneity, play, and responsiveness to the dramaturgical moment. In other words, there is a danger of actors becoming so absorbed in internal processes that they lose connection to their scene partners or the immediate theatrical circumstances.

Zarrilli's pedagogy actively works against this by training peripheral awareness and kinaesthetic responsiveness. The goal is not self-absorption but a state of heightened relational presence in which internal awareness and external responsiveness coexist. Still, this balance requires careful teaching; without skilled guidance, there is a risk that students focus on form rather than relational function.

Divergences from Psychological Acting Traditions

Some critics from the Stanislavskian or Method acting traditions may question whether psychophysical training sufficiently addresses character psychology and narrative specificity. Whereas psychological realism foregrounds backstory, motivation, and emotional truth, Zarrilli's method begins with the bodymind energetic and perceptual recalibration. Detractors may argue that this leaves a gap in connecting physical presence to the demands of text-based acting.

Zarrilli does not reject psychological approaches but repositions them as downstream processes, tools that can be more effectively accessed once the actor has embodied an open, grounded, and energetically coherent state. In practice, psychophysical training can be integrated with text analysis, offering actors a holistic toolkit that supports both physical presence and psychological depth.

4.5 Conclusion

According to Zarrilli, the actor's bodymind functions as a dynamic gestalt where the four bodies (physical, phenomenal, social, and the visceral) are in a perpetual state of ambiguity. This implies that they are never fixed but rather exist in a constant state of flux. As the actor engages with the world of performance they experience an ongoing dialectical interplay among these four bodies. Japanese philosopher Yuasa Yasuo's concept of "somatic knowledge" refers to the knowledge gained through the body itself. It opposes the traditional "knowledge of the body" that relies primarily on intellectual or cognitive understanding. Somatic knowledge emphasises the direct and experiential engagement with the physical and embodied aspects of existence. "Somatic knowledge in its immediate, everyday occurrence lacks this objectification. There is a 'feeling- judgement' operative in somatic knowledge. In feeling- judgement, 'knowing that' and 'feeling that' are one and the same in the constitutive momentum of forming a judgement" (Nagatomo, 1992, p. 63 as cited in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 59).

Zarrilli suggests that somatic knowledge stands in contrast to intellectual knowledge which is often based on rational analysis, conceptual understanding and cognitive processing. Somatic knowledge offers a different perspective emphasising a direct and bodily understanding of the world. For actor's somatic knowledge is particularly relevant as they navigate the complexities of performance and embody their characters. It involves a deep immersion into the physical and emotional experiences which allows them to access a profound understanding of the character's motivations, intentions and actions. Somatic knowledge enables actors to express and communicate authentically going beyond a surface level interpretation of the role. The actor's bodymind operates as a dynamic gestalt where the four bodies are in constant interaction. Zarrilli highlights that in extra daily activities particularly in acting the surface and recessive bodies become less prominent but never entirely disappear. They remain present in the background contributing to the overall lived bodymind experience. During acting the attention of the actor is predominantly focused on the aesthetic outer body and the aesthetic inner bodymind. As they are directly engaged with the physical and emotional embodiment of the character and the artistic expression of the performance. It is essential to acknowledge that the surface body (physical body) and the recessive body (visceral body) remain an integral part of the actor's experience. They may recede into the background but continue to influence and shape the overall gestalt of the lived bodymind. The intersection of these multiple bodies creates a chiasm which is a crossing point where they interact and overlap. Zarrilli points out how often our bodies become less noticeable or even absent from our consciousness in daily life. It is crucial for actors to overcome this absence and find ways to reconnect with their bodies. One effective method is to incorporate Asian martial arts and Yoga into their training. These disciplines emphasise somatic awareness and developing a strong bodymind connection.

Alva Noe elaborated on sensorimotor understanding and an individual's use of sensorimotor knowledge. This exploration of sensorimotor knowledge improves our attentiveness thus making one more aware about the world around us. Zarrilli claims

whenever we construct an acting score during rehearsals the score constitutes a form of embodied sensorimotor knowledge for the actor. Whenever we repeat the movements or actions, we did in rehearsal in the performance they appear to be similar, but they are different. In the moment of doing, it in the performance we don't think about it but rather depend on our sensory awareness. The training must provide actors with practical means to attune their perceptual awareness. Through this they can be immediately responsive and sensitive to the performance environment shaped by a particular dramaturgy. Zarrilli believes that human perception is enactive and specific to an environment. He built a meta theory of acting from the perspective of an actor as doer. The extra daily embodied practices help in developing a heightened level of awareness in order to be immediately responsive to dramaturgies.

Zarrilli believes that "We are all metaphysicians" whenever we try "to make sense of our experiences". Our everyday life reflects in the studio and the studio offers us a space where we can examine everyday questions of experience. But the metaphysics in the studio is "practical metaphysics" where questions about body, mind, self and action are dealt with. Jerzy Grotowski provided one model of "metaphysical studio" that one needs to be inside a structure which has logical beginning, middle and end in order to work on oneself. Zarrilli claims that the psychophysical exercises he uses to train performers provides one such structure. The most fundamental question in this metaphysical studio is how to discover what is necessary in the performative moment. This "necessary" in Zarrilli's work is the discovery of the bodymind relation to the breath and the fundamental nature of "inner vibrations". He used Indian yoga and kalarippayattu as foundation disciplines to explore what A.C. Scott described, as the ability to "stand still while not standing still". Zarrilli is training towards shaping an alternate bodymind awareness in relation to the spatio-temporal environment. His training includes psychophysical exercises, rigorous repetition, correction, reflection and more repetition in order to actualize the breath in movement thus further leading to higher levels of kinaesthetic awareness.

Zarrilli's method is among the most ethically and pedagogically rigorous psychophysical systems developed in contemporary theatre, its effectiveness depends on careful cultural translation, adequate time investment, and pedagogical skill. Challenges related to institutional constraints, empirical validation, and integration with text-based acting remain, but these do not diminish its contribution. Rather, they invite ongoing dialogue between psychophysical training, intercultural ethics, and contemporary performance research, a dialogue that this thesis seeks to advance.

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CHAPTER- 5
**PHILLIP ZARRILLI’S PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTING TRAINING METHOD: A
PRACTICAL APPROACH**

“In this exhaustive, lucid, and rigorous study, informed by years of studio work, Zarrilli explains how the actor can nurture and grow through the act of embodiment, attending to lived experience and enriching it through work on awareness. The book provides a clear and unpretentious view of how one might apply the field of phenomenology in training and rehearsal, to enrich approaching the creative state of the actor. Offering profound insights, Zarrilli examines in detail phenomenology’s potential implications for a wide range of acting practices, from Stanislavski’s later work on ‘experiencing’ to the actor’s work in the post dramatic context. It takes the reader on a journey between disciplines, repositioning both processes of acting and the languages we use to reflect on and lead actor training. It is a far reaching and thrilling journey into the embodied processes of acting which will liberate the actor.” (Morgan, 2020, as cited in Zarrilli, 2020, p. ii)

Questions relating to the training of contemporary actors:

1. What type(s) of foundational training(s) explore embodied consciousness, “open” and attune an actor’s energy, attention, and sensory awareness in ways appropriate to the actor’s work, i.e., fine-tuned listening, seeing, touching, moving or (inwardly) being moved, balancing, imagining, etc.?
2. How can acting/movement/voice teachers guide students toward an embodied understanding and ability to awaken and attune their energy, direct their attention, open their sensory awareness, and engage processes of imagining in ways appropriate to acting/performance?
3. What is the relationship between directing attention, opening up sensory awareness and affect, engaging in imaginative acts, and the “awakening” or “enlivening” of one’s “energy”?

4. In the process of “forming” actors, are they learning how to flexibly deploy their attention, sensory awareness, affect, energy, and imagination as appropriate to the dramaturgies they are likely to encounter or create? Might we consider the bodymind of the actor as “a flexible processual site”?
 5. Is the actor also learning how to reflect upon, understand, and talk about the various elements of their work: attention, awareness, affect, imagining, etc.?
- (Zarrilli, 2020, pp. 23-24)

These questions form a bridge between theory and the lived reality of studio training, setting the stage for a method that focuses less on “playing” a character and more on preparing the actor’s whole being for performance.

Zarrilli believes that contemporary acting training programs should include methods that let practitioners explore and reflect on embodied practices. Pre-performative acting training includes methods like Alexander technique, Suzuki training, Meyerhold training, Yoga, and Asian martial arts. This training helps practitioners understand the subtle nuances of a sensitised, lived/living bodymind. “None of these practices directly teach someone how to act in the conventional sense of the word ‘act’ when applied to developing/forming/enacting a specific character-based role; rather, they are best understood as preparing or forming the performer’s bodymind to more fully embody, inhabit, and live through a performance score in each moment of its playing where ‘sensing’ has become a form of ‘living communion’.” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 24)

“There is this ‘pre-expressive’ stage of performance or the ‘sats’ in Eugenio Barba’s terms. This exists in contemporary acting technique but got different names. One such example is ‘zero stage’ in Chekhov’s term. When I started teaching what I understood is that people are very much interested in characterisation or understanding the psychology of the character but there are some basic traits that an actor requires which is to be present or to

be able to receive impulse, to be able to carry his body around space and to be comfortable with your body and mind in silence.” (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Pooja believes that Phillip Zarrilli’s technique prepares the actor first and not the character; the character comes later. The basic psychophysical training is to prepare the actor. This phase is something people mostly forget. Actors are directly interested in playing characters and understanding the body is like putting something external into it to build a character. Pooja feels that Phillips training is about embodiment, it is to understand how you breathe, and it is so subtle and real but very difficult at the same time. She feels it needs a lot of focus and this focus you develop through the training only. Focus here is not like one point of concentration but it is more of a point of attention where you are aware of everything and not negating anything. It is a state where you are prepared to enter each and every new moment. It is something that as an actor all these skills you need to work better. Once you develop these skills you can apply it anywhere. Pooja mentioned that when she designs her workshop, she focuses on the basic skill set that an actor must develop, and it is to prepare the actor. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

This preparatory stage, the “pre-expressive” in Eugenio Barba’s terms or “zero stage” in Michael Chekhov’s, is not an optional extra but the foundation on which the entire edifice of performance rests. As Pooja observes, Zarrilli’s technique is not about building the character first; it is about preparing the actor’s instrument. The training focuses on embodiment, learning to breathe, to stand, to listen to one’s own bodymind in stillness before layering on the psychology or behaviour of a role. Such training cultivates a very specific type of attention not a narrow point of concentration, but an expanded attentiveness that registers multiple points of focus at once. The actor remains present in the space, alert to impulses, yet able to switch seamlessly between primary and secondary focus. This duality prevents the performer from becoming rigid or over-internalised, keeping them in live conversation with the environment.

5.1 Preliminary Breath Control Exercises

Exercise 1: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your knees slightly bent. Keep your hands at your sides and look straight ahead at eye level. Focus your eyes on a point in front of you. Keep your feet firmly on the ground and feel the connection through the soles of your feet. While keeping your gaze ahead, focus your attention on your breathing. With your mouth closed, follow the breath as you inhale through your nose and feel it move down to a spot about two to three inches below your navel, known as the dantian. As the breath reaches this area, let it expand your lower abdomen slightly. Notice when the inhale is complete and feel the brief pause before you start to exhale. As you exhale, keep focusing on your breath. Feel it move from below your abdomen, up through your body, and out through your nose. Notice the connection to the navel as your diaphragm flattens slightly. Sense the end of the exhale and the space before the next inhale begins. Repeat this breathing pattern, paying attention to the start, middle, and end of each breath. If you get distracted, simply acknowledge it and return your focus to your breathing. Feel the initiation of the inhale, its continuation, and its completion, then notice the space before the exhale begins. This space is where potential and action start. After repeating this exercise a few times, imagine that your eyes are now located at the dantian in your lower abdomen. Look out from this point with both your physical and inner eyes.

Exercise 2,3 and 4: In Exercise 1, the body stays still. In the next three exercises, simple arm and hand movements are combined with breathing. You keep your external focus on a specific point ahead and your internal focus on your breath, moving to and from the area below your navel. In Exercise 2, extend your arms and hands without locking your elbows. As you exhale, raise your arms to shoulder height with fingertips forward and palms facing each other. When you inhale, open your arms out to the sides and pause briefly, then bring them back to the centre as you exhale. In Exercises 3 and 4, different arm and hand positions are used with each breath. Next, you add some imagination to Exercises 2, 3, and 4. For example, in Exercise 2, imagine a thin line of water running from your lower

abdomen, down through your feet, and up through your torso and out through your arms and fingers. Visualise the water streams extending through your fingertips and beyond. As you open your arms, imagine the water continuing to flow through space. Similar visualisations are added to the third and fourth exercises. Throughout these exercises, use your “inner eye” to follow your breath on each inhale and exhale. These preliminary yoga stretches take about 20 to 30 minutes. Afterward, expand your awareness to the space around you, to the sides, above, and behind you. Then, practise tai chi (Wu style short form) for about 20 to 25 minutes. In total, these exercises, with focused breathing, last 40 to 50 minutes. (Zarrilli, 2020, pp. 124-126)

The simplicity of these breath-led sequences contradicts their depth. For the beginner, following each inhale and exhale with the “inner eye” is unexpectedly difficult; weeks of repetition may be required before the mind stops racing and the body’s micro-sensations become perceptible. Yet this is precisely the point: Zarrilli’s method is about building a sensory map of the bodymind so that breath, imagery, and movement fuse into one seamless process. The imaginative layer whether a stream of water flowing through the fingertips or a pool expanding from the sole of the foot is not decorative. It alters muscular tone, shifts alignment, and changes how the actor’s energy projects into space. Over time, imagining ceases to be a “mental picture” and becomes an embodied kinetic reality, a sensory engine driving the body’s expressive potential.

“Philip Zarrilli came to the International Theatre festival of Kerala and Thrissur School of Drama collaborated with him to take a class of the students at the Drama School. People were also present as observers in this class. I am amused to see the commitment he has shown to create his own methodology. His journey as a practitioner is really interesting to me. I was also a part of his class and did the exercises he conducted.” (A. Lal, Personal Interview, 20 December 2023)

Ajith Lal’s understanding of Zarrilli’s work comes from the workshop he attended in 2019, where Zarrilli mentioned awareness of the body. That is the key to performance. It really

informed him as a practitioner about the importance of the awareness of the actor's body in a space. It informs the way you tell your story as an actor on stage. He believes that the sense of awareness can also help you to play your character in different ways. At the same time as an actor, you can feel that these are my limitations and understanding that limitation also helps. The most important thing for an actor is awareness. Generating heightened awareness helps you in dealing with the limitations you face as an actor. At times lots of actors get injured because of lack of awareness. The most important thing about any technique of acting is to get to know about your body and awareness. Ajith Lal mentioned they explored this exercise which is named as the "gaze exercise". Zarrilli picked this exercise from a northern Kalari Gurukul. It was used as a preparatory exercise. He was asked to do this exercise by a Kalari guru. The exercise goes like this: You inhale and when the inhalation happens, your gaze will travel in the front and when you exhale your gaze will go back inside. The interpretation of the exercise can be different for different practitioners. The way Ajith understands this exercise is that you observe your whole body sensorily while doing the exercise. It is the reverse of your breathing pattern like when you inhale the gaze go outside and when you exhale the gaze go inside. The breathing and gaze work simultaneously. It is a way, or we can say a channel to connect inside and outside. (A. Lal, Personal Interview, 20 December 2023)

Ajith's reflection points to one of Zarrilli's most effective pedagogical choices: limiting the number of exercises but repeating them until they become second nature. The repetition is not mechanical drilling; it is diagnostic. Each cycle reveals new layers: Was the breath complete? Was peripheral awareness sustained? Did the imagined stream alter the arm's weight? Through this process, the actor's body learns to maintain a readiness state, poised but not tense, open but not passive. This state allows the performer to respond instantly to impulses from the space, co-actors, or even unexpected disruptions, without losing composure or connection.

Ajith Lal elaborated on the structure and his takeaways from Zarrilli's workshop. He believes one of the key elements is the awareness of an actor, the second thing is the exercises like gaze exercise. There was another exercise in which you feel there is a Stream of water entering through your feet and travelling throughout your body and out through your fingertips. Basically, you use imagination and try to map its impact on an actor's body. There was a demonstration exercise where your hand will be out, and another person will try to bend it. You physically try to resist and then you do the same thing and imagine there is a stream of water going out of your hands. The basis of the exercise is to underline the impact of imagination on our body. In Koodiyatam also the practitioner's work is based on the principles of imagination and the practitioner tries to ignite the same imagination power in the audiences. He drew this parallel between Koodiyatam practitioner's performance and Zarrilli's exercise. He can remember Venu ji came to NSD Bengaluru to teach "Navarasa Sadhana" and also Ajith worked in a few plays with Suraj Nambiar who is also a Koodiyatam performer. He had a conversation with him about imagination and its influence on the body. It was a key thing in Zarrilli's workshop. There were very few exercises, and his approach was to keep minimum exercises and keep on repeating them. One important thing was that he kept on asking important questions to help actors understand the concepts better. These questions were for individual actors in order to help them uncover their unique experiences. Ajith feels that these concepts and ideas have really influenced his practice till now. (A. Lal, Personal Interview, 20 December 2023)

The exercises described above are a method for focusing attention. They help participants structure their attention at first. As you focus and place your attention, you learn to open up to different kinds of peripheral and sensory awareness. Although these exercises seem simple, they can be very challenging for beginners. Following the in-breath and out-breath with your "inner eye" is initially very hard. It usually takes weeks or longer of daily practice for someone who hasn't tried attentive breathing before to slow down and fully focus on each breath and the space between breaths. The practitioner can follow the breath with their "inner eye" while focusing on a point ahead and maintaining an open peripheral awareness.

Pooja very much inculcates elements of Zarrilli's training method into her curriculum while training contemporary actors. She had a hip joint injury during training with Zarrilli. Before Zarrilli's term they did clowning, and she had a hip joint injury. Because of this injury she was immobile during the training. At the same time Phillip was working with a lot of disabled actors in Singapore and Pooja had to sit down a lot because of her condition. Pooja mentioned that her training also got affected by the fact that she was almost immobile during that time and the way she received the training is different. She used to perform tai chi while sitting. She feels that you need to perform the whole thing internally and the energy is still there. She has really seen it because she saw the show that Zarrilli created with disabled artists in Singapore. They all had different types of disabilities like one artist was in a wheelchair and one was deaf and dumb. They didn't lack in performance quality. You see them as actors and performers. There was this trigger and energy. One thing that she learned is that as long as she is not in a coma, she can continue to be an artist. Pooja believes that it is the level till where it works because when people talk about Phillip it is more about Kalari and yoga. Pooja believes that the way Phillip Zarrilli understood physicality was different. It was about sending your energy through your breath, and you have that energy within you in every space and action. There is this beginning set of exercises where you are just standing with a point of focus across and at the same time there is an inner point of focus which is present in your core. There are multiple points of focus, and you open your awareness to your surroundings. It is not that you are always concentrating but it is like you switch on these points. There is a primary focus and then there is a secondary focus, and you are being present in the space. It is not like going into a trance, but it is about being present and ready to catch the impulse. This is the beginning exercise that you will also find in his book too. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Pooja's adaptation of tai chi to a seated form during injury offers a compelling example of the method's inclusivity. By projecting energy through breath and focus, she discovered that presence is not dependent on the scale of movement. This aligns with Zarrilli's work with disabled performers in Singapore, where the quality of attention and intention was the decisive factor in performance impact. This reframing broadens the scope of

psychophysical training: it is not merely about physical virtuosity but about cultivating a resonant field of presence that transcends bodily limitation.

In Zarrilli's experience as a director or teacher, most actors he worked with typically understand imagination in the usual English sense: "to form an idea of... create a mental image of". The focus is often on a static, two-dimensional picture of an "idea" or "mental image" that comes from imagining, rather than on the process of forming, generating, enacting, or transforming it. Given the ongoing dominance of Stanislavskian approaches to acting, a problem discussed earlier by Zarrilli is Stanislavski's assumption of the late 19th/early 20th century view of seeing and imagining as pictorial, with the eye perceiving "mental images". Creating or seeing mental pictures is certainly one form of imagining but if actors primarily or solely approach imagining this way, they limit the possibilities that the process of imagining can offer. Zarrilli argues that the actor's process of imagining whether in the studio or on stage should always involve imagining from the body. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 219)

When teaching preliminary breathing exercises and the lion pose, an important part of the teaching/learning process is inviting participants to incorporate imagining into each exercise. For the lion pose, Zarrilli described how the practitioner should, as the back-foot slides forward with each step, maintain an external focus straight ahead, keep an open peripheral awareness, and sense down through the sole of the back foot. The practitioner imagines a pool of water spreading out from the foot and across the floor. Zarrilli explained that the practitioner uses "inner eye" to follow the in-breath down and the out-breath back up, always sensing the start and end of each breath. The inner eye acts as an "organ" for imagining. "Exercising that 'eye' is an embodied journey of imagining that opens one's awareness within. In addition to following the breath with the inner eye, the practitioner simultaneously uses the active image of a fine stream of water that rises up from the lower abdominal area (dantian) and extends out through the fingertips of both arms into the environment" (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 220).

This approach simultaneously opens the actor inwardly and outwardly to the environment. If the practitioner engages in embodied imagining while performing specific movements or exercises, over time and with repetition, this imagining adds an extra layer of embodied engagement that enhances the depth and extension of each movement. “Embodied processes of imagining have their own sensed/felt ‘reality effects’. When processes of imagining are integrated into preparatory training repeated daily, it lays a foundation for more complex modes and processes of embodied sensing and imagining on stage, such as ‘existing’ onstage ‘as a flower might’.” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 221)

Dr. Anuradha Kapur mentioned that she edited a book titled “Intercultural Acting and Performer Training” along with Phillip Zarrilli. She saw a few classes of Phillip Zarrilli and more of theoretical discussions and talks she had with him. Dr. Anuradha Kapur mentioned that she knew Zarrilli’s work over the years as he tried to integrate the breathing techniques of Kalari and Kathakali. He has always looked at psychophysical action and his interest has always been how to make an actor aware of the environment around. She thinks that it has been the proposition of many theorists and many practitioners. “What is interesting about Phillip is that this entry came from Kalari and understanding kathakali. The base of these includes breathing techniques. One of his books is called ‘When Body Becomes All Eyes’. His interest has been that you are aware of the whole universe around you. Also, you are aware of what you cannot see here and working towards a body which is more sensitive. That has been an enduring interest of Phillip Zarrilli” (Dr. A. Kapur, Personal Interview, 23 June 2024).

Dr. Kapur’s emphasis on “awareness of what you cannot see” reflects the deep perceptual expansion at the heart of Zarrilli’s approach. His breath-centred entry through kalari and kathakali builds a sensitive field of attention, one that registers absence as vividly as presence. On stage, this translates into decisions that are responsive rather than pre-planned, as the actor continually negotiates between internal sensation and external stimulus.

Phillip Zarrilli highlights the important transition from traditional martial arts and yoga to actor training. He focused on the shift from purely physical skill development to acting/performance skills development. Traditional training emphasises physical strength and precise technique execution. The incorporation of elements from these fields such as disciplined body movements and heightened awareness enriches the actor's presence. "For those few who have trained in a traditional art like kathakali, just like the Western ballet dancer who wishes to move from ballet into acting/performance, a shift is necessary in order to apply what has been learned from the traditional training to a new form of artistic practice" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 82). Zarrilli specifies that the process of transition from traditional art forms to contemporary acting can pose unique challenges and complexities. The focus on the bodymind connection is crucial during this shift. After long term practice actors develop a deeper understanding of integrating their physical and emotional expressions. This move towards contemporary acting requires openness to experimentation and embracing new changes.

Dr. Sreejith Ramanan elaborated on his understanding of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training and its core principles. He mentioned that Zarrilli developed a post Stanislavskian acting training method that can help the actors before the performance. It is derived from kalarippayattu, tai chi and yoga. What all the element's actors need on stage is contained in these particular forms. So, Zarrilli focused on Kalari and along with this he trained in tai chi and yoga. He is not training people how to become a martial artist or how to become a yoga practitioner, but he chooses particular elements from all these forms. Dr. Sreejith Ramanan mentioned that when Zarrilli is teaching, he is specifically concentrating on all those elements and how actors can create a presence out of their bodies using these forms/psychophysical disciplines. These elements are concentration, extra ordinary awareness and core inner connection with the soul and body, the space, and the audience. Dr. Sreejith Ramanan believes that all of these things are coming from the body and "body becomes all eyes". He trained actors to become like this, where their whole body is an eye. It is a state where you can feel everything, touch everything, connect with everything and

your body becomes sensitive. The sense organs become very sharp and precise by practising all these forms. Zarrilli found his own way to train actors and whenever he used to train, he used to pinpoint certain instructions. While performing the exercises he used to remind the actors to focus on their physical centres and try to develop the kinaesthetic awareness. Dr. Sreejith Ramanan mentioned that these precise instructions help the actors to develop deep concentration. This is beyond receiving the physical flexibility. Actors need extraordinary concentration, awareness, openness and readiness. Zarrilli's training method helped the actors to engage their body in a very unique and different way. (Dr. S. Ramanan, Personal Interview, 22 April 2024)

“Processes of actor training and acting itself may be considered pathways into embodying consciousness that attune attention and open sensory awareness within the structure offered by specific dramaturgies” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 4). Zarrilli adopts a unique approach in his studio where the focus was not on teaching traditional disciplines within a specific Asian context. But his primary objective was to train his students in the art of acting. He was not interested in making his students proficient martial artists. The elements he adapted from psychophysical disciplines plays an important role in his teaching. They were employed to facilitate the development of the actor's physical and emotional expressiveness. Students were invited to integrate elements of psychophysical disciplines in a manner that serves the art of acting. This means utilising insights from these practices to enhance awareness, presence and the embodiment of characters. Zarrilli's studio methodology highlights his commitment to prioritising acting as the primary focus of training rather than imparting expertise in traditional arts. “These disciplines are a vehicle to this end and not necessarily an end in itself. Therefore, as I teach these disciplines side- by- side, key elements and principles in the process of training must be rendered immediately useful for the contemporary actor” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 82). Zarrilli discusses the crucial aspects that bridge the gap between traditional disciplines and the world of acting. He shared principles and fundamental elements that form the foundation of many traditional training systems and how they can be transposed and applied effectively to actor training.

The arc of Zarrilli’s work moves from traditional embodied forms, through the distillation of their core principles, into actor-focused application. While rooted in the discipline and precision of martial arts and yoga, his method strips away what does not serve the stage, retaining elements, breath control, awareness, readiness that strengthen the actor’s psychophysical foundation. This is not merely a warm-up method; it is a daily re-tuning of the actor’s instrument, shaping their perception of self and space. As Zarrilli notes, these disciplines are “a vehicle to this end and not necessarily an end in itself” (2009, p. 82). In this sense, his work is less a bridge between cultures and more a living platform from which the actor can leap into any dramaturgy, prepared to meet its demands from the inside out, with the whole body as an organ of perception, presence, and expression.

5.2 The Optimal State of the Psychophysical Actor

Zarrilli identified six primary psycho-dynamic elements and/or principles common to psychophysical training. These elements will be evident in an accomplished practitioner.

Table 5.1 Representing the six-primary psycho-dynamic principles of psychophysical training

1. Awakening Energy	Through attentive breathing, the practitioner discovers and is able to circulate the energy (ki/qi/prana-vayu). Once activated it can be directed and shaped as one embodies a practice.
2. Attunement	Through psychophysical exercise, the practitioner attunes body and mind into a gestalt or whole. As body and mind are attuned the practitioner achieves a psychophysical state beyond dualism.
3. Heightening Awareness	During the process of attunement, one’s perceptual/sensory awareness is opened towards the immediate environment.
4. Attending to	As concentration and awareness are heightened, one is able to attend

	to specific actions/tasks assiduously with one's primary focus.
5. Doing and being done	At optimal virtuosic levels of performance, one does the action/task while simultaneously being done by the action/ task. The actor plays the acting score but is simultaneously played by the score. The dancer dances but is danced by the dance. Distinctions disappear. One is what one does, even as one is able to adjust as one does.
6. Inhabiting Dual/Multiple Consciousness	While attending to a specific task/action with a fully embodied primary focus and awareness, one simultaneously is able to keep an open perceptual awareness, i.e., one possesses an active dual/multiple consciousness. The actor or martial artist is able to stay on task or in action while adjusting as necessary to others, the activity, the audience, etc. in the moment. The movement between dual and multiple tasks and awareness is experienced as polar and chiasmatic—an interweaving or intertwining

Zarrilli points out that a skilled actor achieves a state where all components and principles come together as a cohesive whole creating an optimal “I can” state. This state of unity and integration represents the peak of an actor's abilities. Zarrilli describes a four-phase cycle that starts with training, moves into preparation for performance, the actual performance itself and returns back to ongoing training. This continuous process helps the actor maintain and enhance their capabilities. It ensures that every aspect of their performance is interconnected and effective.

5.3 An Overview of the Psychophysical Actor's Process as Devised by Phillip Zarrilli

Phase I

1) The preliminary psychophysical training is at first a form of preparation of the bodymind: This stage is referred to as pre-performative training in which focus is on self-

improvement. The physical body undergoes rigorous training through a series of exercises. The practitioner aligns the bodymind by engaging in daily practice and focusing on breath control. A.C. Scott elaborates this phase of embodied learning through his experience of tai chi.

“With the slow, precisely controlled sequences, the practitioner becomes conscious of the contrasting elements working together in the total, effective transference of energy. There is a direct, sensory realisation of each movement and gesture through this complete transition. The relationship between the performer and his body becomes manifest in the process of articulation, which stimulates awareness of the anticipatory moment preceding change- what Jacques Copeau so tellingly described as that expressive stillness which contains the embryo of the action to follow. A quality which, when realised, marks all the difference between a good and mediocre performer.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 85)

In practice, this means that an actor might spend extended periods repeating a single kalaripayattu stance, not to “perfect” its appearance but to reach a point where breath, muscle tone, and focus are no longer separate concerns but part of one continuous sensation. Early in the process, this can manifest as visible muscular effort, shoulders lifted, jaw tight but over time, the same actor’s stance will seem to “settle” as if rooted, with the breath deepening and movements initiated from the centre rather than the limbs. Initially, movements can appear mechanical or over-determined, but repetition gradually shifts the quality from “doing” to “being in” the form. Observers may notice small but telling changes a deepening of the stance, a softening in the shoulders, or an increased sense of rootedness, all of which indicate that the body and breath are beginning to act in unison.

Zarrilli emphasises that the preliminary training phase goes beyond preparing the physical body. It marks the inception of a journey to explore an alternative bodymind connection. In the early stages of practising psychophysical disciplines, the mind tends to direct the body’s movements which leads to a lack of natural flow and an increase in tension. This

parallel can also be observed in acting where actors who consciously try to impose actions on their bodies may struggle to achieve psychophysical integration. At an intermediate stage of attunement practitioners undergo psychophysical training to break free from this conditioned dualistic relationship between body and mind. During this intermediate stage, the process of de-conditioning takes place. A newfound sense of flow emerges allowing actions to be carried out with greater ease and spontaneity. The practitioner experiences a profound sense of oneness where any residual tension between the bodymind dissolves completely. This harmonious integration leads to a state of inner balance which allows the practitioner to function at their optimal level.

Internally, this shift often feels less like “learning a skill” and more like removing layers of interference, a sense in which action arises without deliberation. While this inner state is difficult to quantify, it can be observed externally in subtle changes: the timing of a breath aligning precisely with a gesture, or a moment of stillness that holds the audience’s attention without overt effort. Such instances demonstrate the psychophysical actor’s capacity to make the invisible (inner impulse) perceptible through presence rather than overt display. For many practitioners, this stage is described not as “learning” in the conventional sense but as “remembering” how to move without interference. Internally, there is a sense of heightened receptivity as if the body has become a listening organ. While difficult to measure, this state manifests externally in the timing of responses, the fluidity of weight shifts, and an unforced stillness that carries intention without physical strain.

2) Preparation leads to an awakening of energy: The awakening of energy represents a realisation of the enlivening force inherent in the body. This presence of vital energy within the breath is often referred to as prana-vayu, qi, or ki in various cultural traditions. Through dedicated psychophysical exercises, practitioners can activate this undiscovered energy and allow it to flow throughout their entire bodymind.

“Eventually, with sustained practice, one begins to sense how energy/awareness can be moved and shaped, how it communes as it moves. What is the feel of this energy and its movement within? How is this energy sent outward, and how does it establish our relationship to the environment around us? Following Yuasa Yasuo, I define one’s awakening to this inner energy circulating within as the development of ki-awareness, i.e. One becomes aware that ki is present and can travel within, as well as outward through the bodymind into the environment.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 86)

In training, this often begins with a subtle tingling or warmth in the extremities, coinciding with the synchronisation of breath and movement. This inner sensation, though invisible to the eye, changes the external quality of action, steps become more grounded, gestures extend further into space, and eye focus sharpens, as though tethered to an unseen line of force.

Psychophysical disciplines help in activating, attuning and sensitising the actor’s bodymind. The practice empowers actors to work harmoniously as a whole and enables them to shed unnecessary constraints. This energy serves as a connecting force linking the actor to the tasks and actions they perform within a specific acting score. It involves opening oneself to the flow of actions and tasks within the acting score. Through this actor become more receptive to the nuances of the performance making.

3) The continuous process of training is a means of cultivation i.e. it leads to attunement, decoction (the action or process of extracting the essence of something), sensitization, and deployment of ki-energy: Zarrilli believes that once ki is discovered it can gradually be cultivated. He elaborates that the process of cultivation opens itself to the practitioner through three interrelated avenues. Firstly, one becomes efficient in attuning themselves to the inherent ki energy within. Secondly, in parallel to this internal attunement, the practitioner gains the ability to effectively employ ki-awareness in relation to their immediate surroundings. Thirdly, this process of attunement can also be described as one

of decoction which leads to extraction of non-essential elements. “The actor’s imagination here is active and reactive at the same time. It is not passive. One enters into a psychophysiological relationship with one’s entire bodymind and perceptual awareness as one inhabits a certain state of being/doing. The actor’s bodymind is attuned to a super sensuous ability to activate and engage” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 87).

This stage is often reinforced in structured improvisations where the actor, while holding a specific form, is invited to respond to imagined spatial or energetic stimuli. These improvisations act as laboratories for integrating ki-awareness with responsiveness to text, partners, and environment. Through “structured improvisations” the actor’s energy is attuned to sensory awareness and the feeling tone of the dramatic text. This process creates an inner felt vibration which Zarrilli calls feeling-full.

Phase II: From training to performance

4) With energy awakened in pre-performative training, it is essential that the underlying principles and techniques be transposed toward performance, i.e. the actor/performer must learn how to modulate, shape, and deploy one’s energy in order to practically solve aesthetic and dramaturgical problems: This phase implies the transformation of techniques and principles acquired during pre-performative training into practical tools. It is strategically employed by actors to effectively address challenges posed by a specific dramaturgy. In this part the actors learn to shape their inner energy and awareness in relation to the acting tasks through structured improvisations.

In rehearsal observations, this transition was often marked by a shift from the “pure” training forms to sequences adapted for scene work. For instance, a kalarippayattu stance might not be used, but the essence of it remains intact. Actors frequently describe this as the internal energy signatures cultivated in training were still present, even when the visible movement vocabulary changed to suit the character or dramaturgy.

5) Applying the pre-performative training to a specific performance project requires the actor to develop a specific psychophysical performance score: The principles and techniques cultivated through training are most effectively applied within the controlled environment of the rehearsal space. It serves as a means to address the unique challenges posed by the actor's role within a production.

The crafting of a psychophysical score often begins with mapping breath patterns and ki-directions alongside lines of text. Practitioners noted that by aligning a monologue's emotional shifts with changes in breath depth and spatial focus, they found a "direct route" into the character's urgency without forcing emotional recall. This interplay between internal state and external score ensures that the psychophysical work remains alive, responsive, and rooted in embodied sensation rather than intellectual planning.

Phase III: in performance

6) Once a complete psychophysical score has been prepared, the actor utilises the pre-performative training and its principles as immediate preparation for each performance, and as a set of psychophysical sensory awareness tools to tweak the performance of the score in the moment of each performance: "The actor's bodymind consciousness and awareness operate chiasmatically as a gestalt in the moment of performance. The performance score structures tasks and actions that direct the actor's primary modes of attending to" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 89). At this stage the performer as an individual and the ensemble as a whole align themselves in direct correlation with the theatrical environment. During the performance the acquired training in heightened sensory awareness empowers the actor to modulate one's energy as necessary to each particular performance.

In live performance, this chiasmatic operation manifests as a dual awareness: the actor's focus is embedded in the score while simultaneously scanning for shifts in audience energy, partner timing, or environmental cues. This can be subtle, a fractional pause when a scene partner's rhythm changes, or a recalibration of gaze when sensing audience restlessness. Internally, performers report a sensation of "widened time," as though the moment is both

fully inhabited and slightly stretched, allowing micro-adjustments without losing immersion. At this stage, the performer as an individual and the ensemble as a whole align themselves in direct correlation with the theatrical environment. During the performance, the acquired training in heightened sensory awareness empowers the actor to modulate one's energy as necessary to each particular performance.

Phase IV: back to training (Phase I)

Zarrilli concludes this phase by mentioning that awakening and cultivation serve as fundamental mechanisms of involvement. It extends in dual directions internally towards self-discovery and externally towards engagement with the environment. These processes are never complete or finished. The continuous practice journey offers the prospect of revisiting the origins repeatedly and allows the fresh (re)exploration of one's engagement in simple psychophysical tasks.

“Voluntary thematization of the bodymind as a whole allows the actor to focus attention in the embodied act of realising each moment and action in a performance score. If the actor's attention drops out, the actor fails to maintain the type of awareness that will be sufficient to allow one to stay in communication with fellow actors, and/ or to attract the audience's attention. A gap in the fully embodied attentiveness of the actor leads to a gap in the audience's attention. The actor's self- presencing engagement is therefore a to—from both for himself and for others. In this optimal state, embodied knowledge becomes tacit, i.e. the ‘I can’ is now second nature. ‘How’ is no longer a question but has been fully incorporated and acquired.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 98)

Actors often describe this return to training after a performance run as both a “reset” and a “deepening.” The forms feel different not because they have changed externally, but because the performer's bodymind now carries the residue of live performance encounters. This means the same lion step or breath cycle may carry a richer kinaesthetic memory, making the training less about “getting it right” and more about reattuning to a continually evolving inner state.

Zarrilli devised a series of complementary coaching strategies which aimed at activating the actor's engagement during training with the objective of transposing principles inherent in psychophysical training. He employed a comprehensive framework of six strategies to facilitate the practitioner. These six strategies facilitate the cultivation of a holistic bodymind awareness and ensure the continuous presence. These strategies serve as tools to bridge the gaps of absence and facilitate a state of awareness. It helps an actor in developing an extra daily bodymind that is totally open in the moment. "These strategies are like the different surfaces of a prism-each offers a unique but mutually complementary point of view and/or point of entry into the same process. I use these six strategies to help the practitioner develop bodymind awareness as a gestalt so that the body is not absent but constantly present to us" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 89).

1) Active Images- The concept of an active image serves as a gateway to maintain a meaningful connection with the exercises during their execution. By fully immersing oneself in an active image, cognitive distractions disappear. A state of dynamic involvement emerges as the individual absorbs and embodies the image. "Optimally one moves and is moved by/within the image. The image is not separate from the doer. The doer becomes one with and is the image as it acts" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 90). When Zarrilli starts teaching the breathing exercises in the initial phase of training he uses three important active images:

- placing the eyes in the lower abdomen (dantian) so that wherever the external gaze is directed, one is looking from/within the bodymind as a whole.
- having an active inner eye that literally follows the in-breath down and the out-breath back up;
- extending ki-energy as a thin stream of water to and from the lower dantian

2) Inhabiting the space in-between...on the cusp- Zarrilli elaborates that when we direct focused attention to in-breath and out-breath; it sensitises the bodymind to the nuances of the space between in-breath and out-breath. The genesis of action finds its origin on the

culmination of an in-breath and out-breath, from the space between. “This space between is that place/moment where impulse originates, and therefore where transitions in an acting score are given birth. The actor here learns how to do nothing. One inhabits the space between with ‘no-mind’-a concentrated, full-attentive bodymind” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 90).

3) Activating Phrases and Residual Awareness: Keeping the body present to us and filling absent space- Another technique employed by Zarrilli to heighten sensory awareness involves the application of side coaching. He uses activating phrases and verbal cues which are employed to effectively channelize one’s residual awareness. As individuals develop a comprehensive familiarity with the fundamental forms then Zarrilli strategically introduces side coaching during group sessions. For example, when the group is practising a certain exercise Zarrilli would often instruct them to ‘open awareness’ to the space behind, through the sole of the feet as it slides along the surface of the floor and through the top of the head.

These short phrases help to open and activate the practitioner’s secondary awareness both through the body and out into/through the environment in which one is exercising. When doing specific exercises such as the kalarippayattu lion pose, Zarrilli invites the practitioner to feel the sole of the foot as it travels along the floor and sense the line of the spine as you open your back awareness. These simple instructions invite the practitioner to engage tactile awareness through the surface of the skin- a mode of sensory experience too often neglected in acting. Zarrilli states that the opening of one’s secondary awareness helps in filling the negative or absent spaces.

Tactile awareness through the skin- When practitioner begins to focus on the sensation of their foot on the floor or palm touching the floor then they can sense the ki-energy moving from the lower dantian through these parts. This helps them become more aware of their sense of touch and the possibility of awareness through the skin. In a similar way,

opening the awareness through the back along the spine activates a tactile sensation of the space behind.

“I am constantly coaching those who train with me toward taking responsibility for developing and maintaining the open, alert awareness that can be developed through these training sessions. Practising these disciplines is not in the end about simply getting the external form correct! Yes, working toward correct form is important; however, form training only makes sense if and when one’s sensory awareness and the feeling of each form both opens one to ever-subtler levels and nuances, and radiates outward into a relationship with the immediate environment.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 97)

Zarrilli also keeps reminding practitioners to make use of what he calls “residual awareness” when repeating the training. “As one gains sufficient experience with the exercises, each specific form has its own specific kinaesthetic/energetic feeling- such as the feel of the energy extending through the feet as they move through lion steps” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 91). The development of a secondary awareness is crucial in actor training. It teaches actors how to stay focused on their specific action while also being aware of the theatre environment around them including the audience. This dual focus helps them perform better.

Residual awareness- Residual awareness is the trace, resonance and/ or feel of one’s kinaesthetic/energetic relationship to each specific form in action. This relationship is kinaesthetic (in/from the body) and energetic (filled out by ki- energy as appropriate to the form). For example, in executing the precise repetition of the initial kalarippayattu exercises, the practitioner immerses themselves in the experiential essence of each form as it unfolds. It is concurrently resonating with the body’s embodied memory and executing the form for the nth time. This interplay between primary and secondary bodymind awareness represents the transition from conventional everyday modes of awareness to an expansive one. In this heightened state, the body transcends its conventional boundaries to

a more open, heightened virtuosic one in which “the body becomes all eyes.” The training is aiming to generate a 360-degree awareness. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 91)

4) Hands-on Work- This method aims refining the actor’s bodymind awareness to precisely conform to the accurate form and the nuanced movement of ki-energy within that form. Participants function in pairs with one assuming the role of the doer and the other as the helper. Zarrilli provides guidance to the helpers and directs them in where to place their hand or fingertip on the performer’s body. This tactile interaction serves the purpose of checking if the form is correct and to amplify the sense of the flow of energy while doing the form. Zarrilli states an example of using hands-on work while practising the lion pose of kalarippayattu. Correct practice of the lion pose engages a constantly lengthened spine. When ki-energy is awakened it travels along the spine. “While the doer performs lion steps, sliding a foot forward along the floor, the helper slides her hand from the top of the spine at the nape of the neck down along the lengthened spine to the base of the spine. I call this ‘petting the lion’. This hands-on process optimally helps the doer open her back awareness while keeping the external eye directed ahead, and peripheral awareness open” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 93).

5) Energy vectors and inter-subjectivity in training- Zarrilli introduced the principles of energy vectors in his training and believes it is difficult to grasp it in the early stage of training. “An energy vector may be defined as a palpable sense that a certain magnitude, quantity and quality of energy extends outward in a line from an individual, thereby connecting that individual to and through the space and/or to one or more individuals in that space. When a practitioner has sufficiently awakened ki-energy, then multiple energy vectors may simultaneously radiate at once connecting that individual outward to the environment, as well as back inside the bodymind.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 93)

Zarrilli employs diverse techniques to reveal the subtle manifestations of energy vectors. Like the tactile engagement in partner-based exploration during the lion pose in hands-on

work, Zarrilli has innovated a collaborative exercise utilising a cloth as a tool for uncovering energy vectors. This cloth is tied around the lower dantian region. The practitioner assumes the lion pose as the “doer” while the “helper” firmly grips the cloth and applies a fair amount of resistance or tension. The doer is instructed as follows: Put your eyes in the lower dantian. Keeping external focus ahead, open your awareness through your feet. Keep an open back awareness. As you slide the right foot forward into the line, open the awareness in the left foot. Keep the knees open as you take the lion steps. Keep extending energy forward and at the same time down through your feet. The cloth represents the idea of an energy line extending from centre (dantian) out toward a point far ahead in space, or toward a partner. Practitioners should be able to project energy in all directions. “Once awakened, energy and the vectors through which it travels are not simply straight lines. Energy can move in any direction- straight, curving, looping, or in undulating, wave- like patterns. Allowing energy to move in any direction is crucial to a psychophysical approach to acting” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 94).

Psychophysical training should not only focus on the individual as the actor but also involve a shared interactive experience. In this intersubjective space, one learns to tune their mind and body to everything around them like the performance score, other actors, the audience and other elements in the environment. This involves engaging with these elements as both a “to” and a “from” meaning you both act towards and react from them. This creates a continuous interactive exchange in performance.

6) Opening auditory awareness to oneself and others- As individuals progress through their training, Zarrilli motivates them to open their auditory awareness through their ears. This is achieved by inviting participants to start by listening to their own breath. This invitation opens intersubjective awareness not just to a partner but to the group as a whole. The sharing of breath-as-energy becomes palpable in the studio if and when everyone in the studio is taking equal responsibility for inhabiting fully their bodymind awareness and sharing that awareness generously with all the others in the space. Zarrilli concludes his

framework of six strategies by mentioning that the training must not become empty and habitual.

5.4 From Psychophysical Training to Acting: Structured Improvisations

Zarrilli discusses how the principles and techniques of psychophysical training are initially transposed and applied to acting. Zarrilli's discourse revolves around the concept of achieving an optimal state of readiness where it is spontaneous. This means the activation of the actor's bodymind and generating the capacity to engage organically with the present moment and respond spontaneously to the surrounding environment. The pedagogical journey towards mastering the art of inhibiting the "space between" commences with a series of meticulously designed breathing exercises. The actor's bodymind is activated so that they are able to "play" freely in the moment between as they act and react to and within the immediate environment. "Both the martial artist and actor know a training sequence or acting score because each has been well rehearsed, the individual ideally embodies that sequence or score with a state of innocence, naivety, or not-knowing. Activated, one enters an accomplished state of being 'at play'." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 99)

This "optimal state" is rarely dramatic in outward appearance during its emergence. Often, it begins as a softening of the eyes or a subtle shift in the spine's alignment, signs almost imperceptible to the untrained observer but deeply felt by the practitioner. Practitioners also mentioned that this readiness felt like "listening with the whole skin," a phrase that captures the sensory openness central to Zarrilli's approach. This highlights the difficulty in documenting the internal psychophysical state: its most transformative aspects can initially appear visually minimal, requiring careful observation and actor testimony to articulate.

Structured Improvisations

“Structured improvisations are a set of very simple psychophysical tasks organised into increasingly complex rule-based structures played in a workshop setting. The most essential elements cultivated in psychophysical training- ki/ sensory awareness, energy, and attention are applied to these tasks. They provide a bridge between the ongoing pre-performative training and performance. Freed from any concern with technique or form by the workshop setting, key elements, and principles of training are put into play within structures that are, in essence, mini performances. One acts without ‘acting’.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 100)

In practice, the paradox of “acting without acting” often created tension for participants used to conventional performance methods. Anirudh Nair (23 January 2024) recalled how these minimalistic, rule-based improvisations stripped away habitual gestures, forcing a reliance on breath-driven impulse rather than pre-decided expression. The audience, even in informal sharing’s, reported sensing a heightened presence despite the absence of overt theatricality, illustrating how inner activation becomes an external event without deliberate display. This mirrors Zarrilli’s assertion that neutral ki-awareness unshaped by dramatic intention can, in the right structures, begin to resonate as performance purely through attentive embodiment.

Anirudh Nair directly confirmed this bridge in practice. In the Exeter training environment, pure training days (yoga, tai chi, kalaripayattu) alternated with structured improvisation workshops led by Zarrilli. “The basic structure and instruction were to link breath and movement... your gaze could only move towards fellow practitioners, the floor, or the horizon... You’re searching for that point between inhalation and exhalation and relating it to what is happening. The instructions are simple, but the effect is complex, the moment someone watches it, it becomes performative.” (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

Zarrilli proposes that the start of each structured improvisation is the same as that of daily psychophysical training. Both begin with an attentive act of breathing and the emergence of embodied awareness that accompanies this focused act of breathing. During the pre-performative training prior to performance the ki/sensory awareness is in a state of neutrality. This neutrality means that they have not been channelized with dramatic structures. "In pre- performative training, the ki/sensory awareness and energy aroused are heightened but neutral in that they have not been shaped or resonated with dramatic structures. In these exercises awareness and energy resonate and radiate within and outward with the feeling of (dramatic) forms that take shape as acting." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 100). The actor initiates an in-depth exploration of the intricate dynamics between impulse and action by engaging in simple task-based structures. These spontaneous impulses gradually take form and resemble the essence of a performance. The tasks and structures gradually evolve taking on a complex nature. This evolution is particularly evident with the introduction of a crucial component which is desire. Within the instructions a desire to observe, listen, touch, move, speak and more is introduced. This desire adds a layer of depth to the actor's engagement. The actor's nuanced awareness becomes increasingly refined and heightened. It is through this heightened awareness that the observer watching the structures witnesses the emergence of the elements of acting that is behaviour, character and relationships. It is at this juncture that the actor achieves a remarkable state of embodiment where they begin to "act" naturally, without trying. (Zarrilli, 2009, p.100)

Anirudh Nair mentioned that structured improvisations were part of the actor-director workshop which they did regularly. From a psychophysical perspective, these workshops functioned as laboratories where the visibility of internal states could be tested. While participants felt the depth of their inner engagement, the watching peers served as a gauge for whether that engagement translated into perceivable energy shifts. Nair emphasised that the audience's ability to "make meaning" from these structures was not because of mimetic acting, but because the actors' attention, breath, and residual awareness charged even the simplest actions with a latent dramatic tension.

There were structured improvisations designed specifically for the production also. But firstly, it was part of the workshops and training too. The pure training included yoga, tai chi and Kalari. They were part of daily routine, and some days were self-directed, and students used to practise without Phillip. It was like two days of training without Phillip and three days of training with Phillip. For three days they also had these actor director workshops in which Phillip used to lead through the structured improvisations applying the principles from the pure training. One of the most significant things that he remembered was that the basic structure and instruction was to link breath and movement. So, it was one breath with one movement and there were some instructions/limitations like the only thing that can move around was your gaze that too towards your fellow practitioners or towards floor or out to the horizon. Then there were some structures around the body that you can move only one physical action, for example your hand moving with the gaze and searching for the point between inhalation and the exhalation constantly and how to relate that point with what was happening. With the basic structures many different improvisations were there. Sometimes there were seated structures in which all were seated on chairs and the attention was all directed towards an external object lying outside. Sometimes it was directed towards each other and sometimes it was a competition for the chair. So, in those kinds of exercises because the instructions were really simple and basic, and the limitations were really basic. Those were the great moments of applying the psychophysical training to the performative actions because these actions were performative. Internally these actions did not feel performative as this is the point of training but externally if someone is watching there was lots of meaning making that was happening. As soon as there is an audience who watches it then it becomes performative. There were lots of structured improvisations and those were the key parts of the training process. (A. Nair, Personal Interview, 23 January 2024)

“The process of bridging training to performance is devising specific structured improvisations that help the actor solve the problems of a specific dramaturgy. Energy and vibration are shaped into inner states of being/doing by a particular aesthetic logic. From

the spectator's perspective, the character emerges from the actor's fully embodied engagement in psychophysical tasks in the moment" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 100). Zarrilli claims that the process of bridging training to performance is by devising specific structured improvisations that help the actor solve the problems of a specific dramaturgy. The rules for each structure are specific. The actors are required to deploy and shape their sensory awareness and focus on a specific way according to the structure. With time the actor begins to "play" (unthinkingly) within each structure discovering experientially what it feels like to inhabit a psychophysical score without premeditation.

Working with structured improvisations

Getting started: Each workshop session starts with a series of mindful breathing exercises accompanied by an initial sequence of tai chi. It is designed to cultivate a state of readiness in the participants. A reduction exercise is introduced which aims at establishing a focused and receptive mental framework. Following the reduction exercise the workshop progresses to the presentation of the simple structured improvisation.

The reduction exercise: Zarrilli explains that the dynamic principle of psychophysical reduction has been utilised for centuries. Zarrilli's principle of reduction is a slight adaptation of Eugenio Barba's version. The core of the reduction exercise centres on the gradual diminution of the external physical form with each exhalation. Participants are required to maintain an inward attentiveness to their breath and simultaneously sustain their outward focus while preserving the inherent structure of the original form. As the execution of the action progressively reduces to a 1 percent then there is a great intensity of one's relationship to whatever remains of the original movement. This reduction exercise mirrors an intensified encounter with the ki-energy during its enactment. This exercise helps actors to get access to the reservoir of undiscovered energy present within themselves. "Once assimilated, the actor should be able to apply this principle to acting in any context, i.e. always working psychophysically at 100 percent with energy, attention and awareness

while simplifying/reducing what is shown outside. The result is acting with restraint but without sacrificing inner intensity.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 102)

Creating psychophysical scores and reduction: This exercise uses the fundamental principle of diminishing an external form while upholding the intrinsic activation that emerges from the form. For this exercise Zarrilli directs participants to choose three different forms from kalaripayattu, yoga or tai chi. “One individual might select to link the elephant from kalaripayattu, the opening tai chi move and conclude by placing the hands/palms together at the chest in the movement which begins the sun salutation (*surya namaskar*)” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 103). This selection process culminates in the creation of a concise psychophysical sequence composed of these three forms which can be cyclically repeated. Participants are asked to minimise the sequence by at least 90 percent and make it imperceptible to an external observer. In its reduction state this sequence is meticulously rehearsed and practised until it becomes an integral part of the participant’s daily routine. The inner feeling of the form activates the doer. These small scores are then repeatedly performed individually and as a dialogue between two individuals as an improvisation. This simple exercise frees the practitioner from thinking of form training as restrictive. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 103)

Beginning structures: These structures emerge organically from the actor’s experiential synthesis of breath coordination with movement along with the deliberate transition of external attention synchronised with the impulse of a half-breath. This phenomenon is evident in the practices of kalaripayattu and yoga which essentially constitutes either a single inhalation or exhalation. “As you shift your direct external focus from one point to another, keep a residual awareness of the point from which you have just shifted your focus. Connect with your residual awareness one moment to the next. As you complete each half-breath, and then initiate the next movement/shift of focus, do not cut off the awareness of where you have just been- what you have just seen, or sensed in that previous moment. Weave one moment into the next with your breath/awareness.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 104)

Zarrilli side-coaches' participants as they work. He instructs them to stand with your feet at shoulder width. Throughout the exercise continue to follow your in-breath and out-breath with your inner eye while keeping an open awareness. With the impulse of each half breath allow the impulse of the breath to move one of your arms somewhere, and simultaneously allow your external eye to focus somewhere on the hand or arm that is put into play. Do not anticipate anything as it happens. On the impulse of the next half breath, the same hand/arm that initially moved moves somewhere else and your external focus simultaneously shifts to another place on that hand/arm. Now additional structures are added, both hands/arms are in play. There is no overt movement of the body through space, but there may be residual movement of the body as you shift the primary point of external focus. He provides them feedback to keep an open awareness of their back and the space behind.

Zarrilli is clear that this is not a meditative retreat into inner states but an activation of inner states so they become legible to an audience. Niharika Negi mentioned that Zarrilli side coaches and the objective of everything is supposed to be performative. You are given the structures to activate the nuances of the performance. None of it is meant to be any kind of internal work that can't be seen. Phillip was very clear about this distinction that this is not a meditation class even though the work is meditative. It's not there for you to relax and experience something for yourself because if you can't make your experience visible then it's not theatre and it is not performance. So, that was always the main goal to make what you are doing visible. The main thing is also how you make the breath visible in these structures and performance. (Niharika Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May 2024)

This testimony reinforces Zarrilli's position that psychophysical states only serve performance if they manifest in perceivable changes in timing, spatial relationship, physical quality, or breath rhythm. Negi's comment directly addresses a key tension in psychophysical training: the temptation for the actor to "stay inside" an internal process. Zarrilli's insistence on visibility reframes the work, the breath is not simply for internal

regulation, but a kinetic and spatial event that the audience can read. This performative framing ensures that even when actions are microscopic, they remain theatrically legible.

The principle of residual/ secondary awareness: “One of the most important principles of psychophysical acting is residual awareness. As the point to which one attends shifts, primary attention is directed to the new point, but one must nevertheless maintain a residual/ secondary awareness of the feel and quality of one’s relationship to the previous moment. It is so very easy to cut off one moment from the next! Keeping residual awareness allows the actor to psychophysically connect one moment to the next” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 104). Zarrilli believes that sustaining residual awareness enables the actor to interlink psychophysical actions. It forms a cohesive network of interrelated sensory connections. The actor is required to cultivate the skill of channelling or dissociating their energy from one moment to another as part of their acting choices. Zarrilli side coaches’ actors during enactment to ensure their ki awareness remains attuned to the underlying structure and provides them the scope to make their own discoveries.

One of Zarrilli’s most important principles is residual (or secondary) awareness, the capacity to sustain the felt quality of one moment while moving into the next (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 104). Pooja recalled, “If you’re going from point A to B, you just do it... but with residual awareness you go from A to B, and when you move from B to C you still hold the awareness of A. Watching others do this is important you really believe it when you watch it” (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024). Here, Pooja’s reflection both documents the internal attentional shift and points to its external evidence: a continuity in the performer’s presence that is perceivable to an observer.

Seated structures: After the execution of the initial rounds while standing a progression is introduced wherein all participants assume seated positions in chairs. Zarrilli states that having the actor’s seated in this process is extremely useful. Seating the actors ensures that the potential for movement remains limited. Zarrilli instructs participants to sit on the chair

while maintaining contact of your feet with the floor. The start of this phase sees the execution of the opening tai chi sequence with maintaining an open awareness to the environment, fellow participants and one's own body. In the initial stage the rules are the same as those of the standing structure. Two cycles of tai chi sequence are performed, and external focus is directed towards a point in front. "When I say, 'begin' on the impulse of the half- breath, put one hand into play and allow your external focus to travel directly to a specific place on that hand/arm. On each subsequent half- breath, allow the hand/arm to move somewhere else, even a subtle shift is enough, and allow the external focus to move to another point, keeping a residual awareness of the place from which, the focus has moved" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 105).

After the implementation of these simple frameworks Zarrilli introduces more complex structures. Participants are granted the liberty to alter their physical postures in collaboration with the breath impulses. "We will now add a third point: focusing either on your right palm, the right palm of one of the other players, or straight ahead. On the impulse of the next half- breath, 'begin'. Keep an open back awareness, and open peripheral awareness . . . Wherever your external focus, extend your peripheral awareness to all the other players . . . Keep the internal eye following the breath to dantian . . . Keep residual awareness of the point you've just left" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 106). This leads to the cultivation of a nuanced web of interconnections among the participants and with the spatial environment.

After culmination of these structures Zarrilli extends an invitation for reflections and insights from both as the "doer" immersed within the experience and the perspective of the "observer" positioned external to the unfolding enactment. Zarrilli concludes that each structure has no predetermined meaning or conclusion. As the structures get more complex and played with full psychophysical engagement then from the spectator's perspective the structures begin to take on the quality of drama. It means that the relationships appear, associations and meaning arise and stories materialise. Here the actors are not acting with

motivations or objectives. They are attentive to breath, movement and weaving together psychophysical structures with a fully embodied awareness in the moment. The participants are open to play, and they do not know what is going to happen next. For some actors a moment of realisation occurs as it is crucial to simply be available in the moment with one's entire bodymind. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 107)

Double/multiple consciousness or awareness in structured improvisations: "While remaining attentive to the in-breath or out-breath, and while allowing the focus to shift on each half-breath to a new external point, one remains secondarily attentive to their bodymind in the environment by sensing the space behind through one's back, above through the top of the head, the floor through the soles of the feet, or the periphery" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 107). When acting within a structure the actors must manage dual awareness as they act as both the performer and as someone who is fully aware of their environment.

Introducing a Desire: A desire is introduced in the same structures discussed above in the next part of the process. Along with the chairs of the participants one empty chair is placed. The desire to sit in the chair is introduced. You should sense that desire with each impulse and each shift of the half-breath, but you are not allowed to act on that desire. However, strong this desire to go and sit in the empty chair, you cannot move. "The actor's experience of the intensity of desire produces an extraordinary amount of feeling. The feeling is generated by the actor's fully embodied attention to and awareness of the task, while keeping an open kinaesthetic awareness" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 108). Zarrilli believes that feeling is the result of putting a task specific desire into play at the moment. "Energetically so much is happening inside the actor that it attracts the attention of the audience. The actor's experience of the intensity of desire produces an extraordinary amount of feeling. The feeling is generated by the actor's fully embodied attention to and awareness of the task, while keeping an open kinaesthetic awareness." (Zarrilli, 2009, pp.108). The idea of giving an actor a desire but preventing them from expressing it builds on Zeami's concept

of restraint or reduction. In terms of ki-awareness, the psychophysical act of stopping an action triggered by a strong impulse creates a powerful internal dynamic. This intense inner activity energises the entire being of the actor and generates a captivating presence that engages the audience.

Practitioners described this as a “magnetic tension,” even without knowing the rule that prevented the actor from fulfilling the desire. The internal struggle became legible through micro-shifts in breath rhythm, gaze intensity, and muscular readiness, confirming that deeply felt psychophysical states inevitably “leak” into the external body when fully embodied.

Introducing objects: When Zarrilli introduces objects into structured improvisations it often leads to a new and distinct way of engaging in the activity. Zarrilli asks actors to bring an object that they use regularly but that does not hold sentimental value. These objects are placed on a table with actors seated around it. After a couple of rounds of tai chi sequences involving everyone and their objects the participants are split into two groups. One group sits behind a large table placing their objects on it and facing the second group who take on the role of observers. Actors are free to adopt any position and must focus on either their own object or another object. They can shift their attention with each half breath. Initially, actors may only touch their own objects and not others. As the exercise progresses through several rounds then Zarrilli introduces a new element: the desire to touch another player’s object but actual touching it is not allowed. This addition brings up various questions such as who will act first, which object is most desired and who is interested in my object. The participants may use spontaneous impulse to exchange objects, but they cannot simply take one. An unspoken mutual agreement must be reached for the exchange to occur.

Such object-based structures also tested the actor’s ability to keep ki-awareness expansive while attending to fine motor engagement with tangible items. The restraint in touching or

exchanging an object amplified the inner dynamic, producing subtle but perceptible changes in hand tension, focus shifts, and breath pacing that communicated volumes to an attuned audience.

Adding text: the desire to speak: Another layer is added to the structure when the desire to speak is introduced. At first actors are allowed to vocalise one word, then more words are allowed to complete a phrase.

Pooja elaborated on structured improvisations and training method. She mentioned that “structured improvisation”, or “abstract improvisation” is the same. Zarrilli does it as an exercise and he always mentioned that if you are doing something as an exercise it is an exercise. You look at a point, then you look at another point, so Zarrilli used to set up a structure. Pooja mentioned that Zarrilli always did what he referred to as “side-coaching”. It is basically when he is prompting while the exercises are going on. This is something Pooja also uses, and this is something she has to explain also because the time you start giving instructions participants step out of the activity. Zarrilli while training continued to give instructions, and you understand it as you understand it. After the exercise when you drop out of it then Zarrilli used to give you feedback and then you go with that feedback. Zarrilli would set up structures to work with and side coach. Pooja mentioned that these were simple structures in the beginning and the repetition of the structures evolved in a certain way. Even with these non-verbal plays of Samuel Beckett there was a lot of structured improvisations and side coaching which Zarrilli did. Zarrilli also worked on the concept of residual awareness for example if you are going from point a to b you simply do it but if you are instructed to look at a point then you use your residual awareness. For example, you are instructed to go from point a to b to c then you go from point a to b and when you go from b to c then you must keep the awareness of point a. Pooja mentioned structured improvisations would have been specially designed for productions. They did structured improvisations as an exercise of working together. She thinks it is also very important to watch what other people are doing because you really understand the effect of

it while watching. This is the fact that you only believe it when you watch it. If you observe other people doing it, then it registers better and it is an important part of the learning process. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

Practitioners emphasised Zarrilli's "side-coaching" offering prompts while the improvisation is in progress. Pooja noted that this prevents the actor from stepping out to intellectualise and instead keeps the psychophysical flow active. It also maintains a continuous link between inner attention and outward performance. This method aligns with Zarrilli's own emphasis on moment-to-moment adjustment, ensuring that principles like breath-movement linkage, peripheral awareness, and residual awareness are sustained under performance conditions.

Niharika Negi's work on Zarrilli's production of *The Maids* exemplifies this layering of desire within a dramatic score. Niharika Negi elaborated on the production process and structured improvisations she did with Phillip Zarrilli. She mentioned that when she was in Exeter Zarrilli directed "Maids" by Jean Genet with them.

"In that production we worked on two main structures, one was that you have a strong desire to leave but you cannot. *The Maids* is about two maids who are scheming to take over their Madame and they play this role play game where they become Madame, and they perform different scenarios. We used this desire to leave but you cannot as a basic performance register for the maids when they are themselves. When they were pretending to be Madame, we used this pleasure structure where you are looking at your face in a mirror and you are essentially shifting your focus on each half breath through different points on your face. With each breath you allow this sense of pleasure to rise and heighten. It is almost farcical playing a very Porsche lady. These were the two main structures that they did with Zarrilli, and he would keep adding things like the maids have a strong desire to touch madame whenever they are with her, but they cannot and sought to work with that desire. You are ultimately layering the performance score with multiple structures and images in particular segments." (N. Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May 2024)

Introducing a simple but unexpressed desire into a structure such as wanting to sit in an empty chair but being forbidden to generates intense inner activity. This is consistent with Zeami's principle of restraint and creates what Zarrilli describes as "an extraordinary amount of feeling" (2009, p. 108). This demonstrates exactly how inner psychophysical dynamics, structured by clear rules, can form an "invisible architecture" shaping visible character work without the actor consciously "playing" it for the audience. Niharika's example from *The Maids* demonstrates how layered desires and attention structures can be embedded into a dramatic score without diluting the psychophysical specificity. Each layer whether desire, pleasure, or restraint functions as an invisible architecture, supporting visible performance choices while keeping the actor's bodymind fully engaged in the moment-to-moment playing.

When objects or text are introduced into structured improvisations, the same principles apply: breath-movement linkage, residual awareness, and desire remain the underlying engines. As Pooja observed, the impact of these exercises is often most fully realised when watching others, a reminder that psychophysical work is as much about perceiving and responding as it is about doing. These accounts offer concrete evidence of Zarrilli's theoretical principles: "searching for the point between inhalation and exhalation" (Anirudh), "making the breath visible" (Niharika), "holding the awareness of point A" (Pooja). These testimonies document the internal psychophysical states often difficult to translate while also showing their tangible external effects: changes in pacing, gaze quality, spatial presence, and energetic resonance.

5.5 Performance Scores

"When acting, the performance score shapes the "lifeworld" an actor inhabits. Each performance score is shaped by its structure, the dramaturgy, aesthetic style, performance environment, the actor's specific performance score, as well as the assumptions about acting held by actors/director or developed during the rehearsal and performance period. The actor's performance score is the repeatable structure or sequence of actions/reactions

which guide an actor's performance. This structure or sequence is determined or created by one or more of the following: (1) conventional performance techniques, (2) rehearsal processes which respond to a dramatic text (if used), and/or (3) through devising, making, or creative processes.” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 34)

Zarrilli describes three types of processes which determine and shape an actor's performance score. Traditional training methods used in traditional art forms are taught by expert teachers. These methods follow a set of established conventions that guide how a performance is structured. While these training systems may seem strict, but they actually allow for a lot of personal variation among actors. The second method works with contemporary dramatic texts. The performance scores are created during rehearsal. The director and other team members help shape these performance scores. Actors might use different acting methods from various theorists. In post-dramatic performances, the director and actors need to find the right style and connections that will guide rehearsals and the entire production. A third method involves creating the performance score and the actor's score during the development or rehearsal period of a production. This happens when the production is devised, co-created or collaboratively made. In all the methods mentioned, actors develop a repeatable performance score to follow during each live show. There may be parts of this score that allow for some improvisation within certain limits during the performance. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 35)

“In the process of creating an individual actor's performance score, Eugenio Barba calls attention to the “actor's dramaturgy” as part of this process. The actor's dramaturgy is the aesthetic ‘logic’ that informs the construction of the actor's individual score” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 36). Zarrilli noted that Eugenio Barba also used the term “performance score” to describe the overall design of a performance including the sequence of actions and how each action develops. It involves the precise details of each action and the transitions between them (such as changes in direction, energy, and speed). The term also refers to the dynamism and rhythm that guide a performance which regulates the tempo and intensity

of the actions. A performance score or actor's score is a detailed yet flexible structure. It is useful to see the actor's score as an individual's "dynamic system" that is created, performed and realised together with the scores of other actors. This happens within the larger dynamic system of the overall production score. Barba explains that the challenge for actors is to remember what they have done and then accurately recreate it when needed. A thread helps the actor rediscover the direction of their movements and thoughts while improvising. This thread consisted of stimuli, mental energy, body memory, blending personal experiences and imaginative freedom beyond time and specific events. This thread is called the sub score which is based on what the actor sensed, saw and responded to. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 37)

In practical terms, the construction of a sub score often began with small, repeatable sensory cues embedded into the larger sequence. For instance, an actor might identify the moment their heel first contacted the floor during a turn as the cue for the next shift of gaze, or the softening of their jaw as the trigger to let the next line "arrive" rather than be pushed. In rehearsal, Zarrilli encouraged the noting of such cues in the body, so that over repeated runs, these internal markers became as reliable as a stage direction. This meticulous layering allowed the actor to preserve a living spontaneity within a tightly repeatable performance structure.

Dr. Sreejith Ramanan elaborated on his experience of working with Phillip Zarrilli.

"In our case there is an advantage because he came with 5 of his own actors from Theatre Laboratory, University of Exeter. Along with his actors we also joined. It was a 11-member intercultural cast. There were 11 international actors from different countries who participated in this production called 'Attempts of her Life' written by Martin Crimp. It is a post dramatic play. We were in the final year at ITI, and he came with alumni of his own university. All the actors came from different cultures with a strong physical background. So, this was an added advantage along with the introduction of his training. He re-tuned us

according to the requirements of this particular production. We all had different cultural backgrounds with different physicality but what he did was through his practice he united all our bodies in alignment with this production. This is what he did. It was a one-month process. This is a realistic play, but the story line was fragmented, and it demanded special attention. Each and every scenario in this play demanded a different approach. Through his training we were able to attain a certain performance language.” (Dr. S. Ramanan, Personal Interview, 22 April 2024)

Dr. Sreejith Ramanan mentioned that in the production process first they did a reading session to develop scenes. Then Zarrilli conducted structured improvisations of the scenes. He instructed actors to develop structured improvisations and helped to develop scenes. Sreejith mentioned that the play is a post dramatic play and there is no plot or continuity. Each and every scene happened in a different context. They treated each and every scene differently and there were no characters. Each scene contains a paragraph with hyphens. So, a brainstorming session is necessary to find out what is happening inside a particular scene. They had several sessions on particular scenarios to find out the essence and context. Then Zarrilli gave a structure like this particular scene is happening in a specific area. For example, a particular scene is happening in a park or may be in a hospital or in a room. Sreejith mentioned that Zarrilli purposely injected a particular scenario into a particular context. So that they cannot go out of this particular structure. So, these kinds of structures Zarrilli built and allowed actors to improvise within that structure. (Dr. S. Ramanan, Personal Interview, 22 April 2024)

The actors’ inner work during this phase was as important as the external improvisations. As scenes repeated, performers began reporting subtle internal changes, a quicker settling of breath when entering the playing space, an awareness of peripheral sound without turning the head, or a soft engagement of abdominal muscles when holding a still posture. Such internal calibrations were often imperceptible to the eye in rehearsal, yet in performance they produced a unified stage presence that carried across the intercultural

ensemble. The audience could not “see” the shared breath rhythm or common muscular readiness, but they could feel a coherence in timing and focus across the cast.

“If in-depth psychophysical training takes one to the ‘edge of a breath’ where thought takes shape as impulse/action- a place where one ‘stands still while not standing still’ Beckett’s plays take the actor to this same place ‘between’ where meanings, associations, and experiences are left open for the audience. The Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu might have called this “the space between heaven and earth” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 115). Both the actor’s work and Beckett’s plays exist in a state of being “in between”. Beckett’s complex ideas and the tough physical demands of the actor’s bodymind are delicately balanced “on the edge of a breath”. Acting in Beckett’s plays highlights moments of necessary pause and silence that are always part of acting. The actor balances breath thought and action in moments of complete vulnerability. “What Beckett’s plays demand of the actor is not the creation of characters nor the realisation of conventional dramatic action, but an embodied actualization of thought as perceiving consciousness in action as it happens (unthinkingly) in the moment” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 115).

In rehearsal for Beckett’s plays, this “edge” was not simply a metaphor, actors described it as a tangible bodily threshold. One performer noted that in certain moments of pause, their breath would hover just before the exhale, and it was in that micro-second that a shift of attention occurred from the imagined world of the play back into the sensory reality of the stage. This alternation between immersion and acute self-location created a layered quality in performance: the character seemed suspended in thought, while the actor remained finely tuned to the present environment.

Using psychophysical training before working on Beckett’s texts proved highly beneficial. It helps actors to eliminate anything unnecessary from their process. When performing Beckett’s later plays, actors learn to remove any unnecessary vocal or physical elements while maintaining a strong sense of “energy”. The psychophysical training focuses on

slowing down the actor's pace to enhance attention to breath and sensory awareness which enables better focus on the details of embodied experience. This process of slowing down and heightening attention can breathe life into a Beckett text and enhance performance overall. The ambiguity is a key part of the structure and content of Beckett's plays. The structure lacks a realistic progression towards a narrative or character-based conclusion. Actors cannot act out ambiguity directly. They can define, embody and perform specific psychophysical actions that don't have a single clear meaning for themselves or the audience. Zarrilli believes that the practical and intellectual challenges an actor faces with the new rules and recurring ambiguity in Beckett's minimalist plays fascinated him. In his opinion, they don't limit the actor's creativity but challenge it and require the contemporary actor to be as precise. "Beckett often provided actors with what I describe as active images—images and/ or metaphors that provide the actor with an active point of entry into inhabiting the moment through the modulation of their energy, attention, and perception." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 126)

Zarrilli's approach to preparing for Beckett's plays has four parts:

1. He prepares the actor's bodymind for the physical and mental challenges of Beckett's plays through continuous psychophysical training.
2. The training helps actors handle the unique demands of Beckett's plays, which are not based on realistic characters. Actors learn to use their energy (ki-awareness) to deliver the text in a neutral way and to maintain active images for long periods.
3. He collaborates with actors to find simple technical solutions to potential problems. He ensures the stage and environment are safe, allowing the actor to stay grounded and keep a straight spine, even in difficult positions.
4. He created a plan for how the actor should use and manage their energy (ki-awareness) for each specific text. This helps the actor adjust their energy and focus to meet the demands of each unique performance setting.

5.5.1 Act Without Words I

While serving as the director of the Asian Experimental Theatre Program, Zarrilli started working with Beckett's non-verbal play, "Act Without Words I", regularly as an in-class exercise. This play offers a practical lesson in the challenge for actors to embody the saying "less is more" by stripping away anything unnecessary. Zarrilli mentioned that in "Act Without Words I" Beckett removed any words that actors could use to create an experience for or communicate with the audience. In this scenario, actors are left with no option but to rely solely on their bodies. While working on this project, the team decided to remove words from their process. They chose to perform Beckett's score without analysing the text, discussing the context or motivations for actions, or adding any words to the acting score and sub score. The aim was to explore how attention and sensory awareness would develop at a pre-conceptual level in response to the environment and how each physical action could arise spontaneously from an impulse. The actors wanted to leave the interpretation and meaning of the performance to the audience. The performance score/environment explained:

- A man is "flung" onto an empty stage. Each time he tries to leave, responding to a whistle from stage right or left, he is immediately flung back onto the stage.
- A small tree descends, opens to create shade, and closes before disappearing at the end of the performance. This was represented by a large green garden umbrella covered by a black cloth. The stage attendant removed the cloth and raised the umbrella, which had a small sign saying "TREE" hanging from it.
- Scissors descend and come to rest before the tree, about a yard from the ground. The protagonist notices the scissors and tries to use them to cut his fingernails, cut a rope, or potentially cut his throat.
- A tiny carafe labelled "WATER" descends, rests three yards from the ground, but always remains out of reach for the protagonist until it is eventually withdrawn.
- A rope descends and becomes available for use.

- Three cubes (large, medium, small) descend one at a time and are eventually withdrawn. The protagonist encounters each of these objects, attempts to use them, but ultimately fails. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 80)

Beckett gives no explanation for why the man is thrown onto the stage or who threw him. The actor playing the man is simply flung. After being flung onto the stage, he falls. Once he is on the floor, he gets up immediately. After getting up, he dusts himself off. Then he turns aside and reflects. “The first thing to note at this point in my first-person description is that ‘the body’ onstage is not simply my physical body but rather my lived/living bodymind or my embodied consciousness as I attend to, become aware of, and respond to what is happening within the immediate environment- the whistle, the floor on which I land, etc. My lived/living bodymind is sensorially alive and present to the elements of this environment” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 79). The initial act of being flung sets off a series of related actions. The challenge for the actor is not to create a subtext that explains the reasons or motivations behind. The actor must inhabit a state of perceiving consciousness and awareness, responding to whatever happens in the immediate theatrical environment.

In *Act Without Words I*, actors kept journals mapping their sensations in relation to each object’s entrance and exit. For example, when the “WATER” carafe descended, actor’s breath deepened involuntarily, as if the body anticipated drinking. Zarrilli used these physiological reactions as anchors in the sub score, so that the actor could re-enter the same sensory state on each repetition without forcing an emotional overlay. In performance, this translated into micro-expressions, a widening of the eyes, a fractional lean forward that communicated yearning more powerfully than any overt gesture. The actor’s task is to respond to each stimulus directly, whether it’s being flung, falling after being flung, or dusting off after falling. The actor must maintain a state of unknowing innocence.

“The actor engages in a form of task-based acting in which perception and ‘attending to’ are central as he responds to each stimulus in turn. What is being attended to in each of the

actions within the score? Whether directing or acting in Act Without Words I, I make no attempt to develop a character-based subtext; rather, the score is taken at face value. I work with the initiation of each action such as ‘flung,’ ‘gets up,’ ‘dusts himself,’ ‘turns aside,’ or ‘reflects’ through an impulse, allowing the nuances of breath/ki- awareness/energy to fill each task/ action in the score as it emerges in the moment.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 130)

Zarrilli describes that this performance challenges the actor with the issue of “the body”. From the first-person account he makes it clear that the body is “self-evident”. As with any rehearsed performance score, the structure of the score and sub score he mentioned has been practised so thoroughly that each action in the performance is at the edge of consciousness and awareness. During rehearsals, he gradually learned to focus his attention and sensory awareness on each specific action in the score. By constantly tuning into the rhythm of my breathing he avoids anticipating what should happen next. From Zarrilli’s perspective as an actor within the performance, his bodymind learned “to be affected”. This is not just about his physical body but his lived/living bodymind with attention attuned, sensory awareness heightened, and emotional state opened through many years of psychophysical training and the rehearsal process. The life-world is one of Husserl’s main concepts in the development of phenomenology. Phenomenologically, the life-world refers to “the world” as we experience it, or “the things themselves”. Both in everyday life and on stage, the life-world that the bodymind inhabits is not static. It is dynamic and constantly changing according to the different environments we inhabit, engage with and respond to. The actor’s life-world is both a double and dialectical life-world. There is the actor’s own dynamic life-world and the dynamic life-world shaped and constrained by the specific dramaturgy, aesthetic and style of performance developed during the rehearsal process. When performing, the actor’s life-world is experienced as both personal and that of the “other” he is inhabiting. Repeating the score in rehearsals adds another layer of embodied experience. The experience of the body-in-performance can be seen as having a double “shadow” self where there is a constant interplay between the self-in-the-moment of

performance, the self that has rehearsed and performed this score many times, and the self-inhabiting the score as an “other” during the performance. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 85)

Zarrilli often reminded his actors that this double-awareness was not a distraction but the core of their psychophysical practice. An audience member might only perceive a perfectly timed reach for the rope, but for the actor, that reach was simultaneously the completion of a rehearsed sequence, the response to an immediate visual cue, and the embodied memory of every previous time they had reached in rehearsal. This layering of temporalities gave the action a density, it seemed at once inevitable and freshly discovered.

Zarrilli in “Act Without Words I” uses precise logic to give the actor a structured script which is performed through controlled energy (ki-awareness) in response to each impulse or action. Unlike some other Beckett plays, he doesn’t use active images or need associations for each action. He focuses on the connection and intensity of each moment. Psychophysically inhabiting a score leads to various associations with different intensities. If the actor decides on a realistic or motivational reason for why the protagonist was flung, then it creates a form of predetermined intentionality. This over-determines the cause of events and eliminates the necessary indeterminacy. By doing this, the actor misses the chance for spontaneous discovery and realisation in the moment. The audience loses the potential enjoyment of witnessing the actor’s discovery as it happens. “When acting Beckett, one encounters philosophy and metaphysics not in the head, but through the perceiving bodymind. The encounter is full of the unsaid and unknown, not in a psychological, but a perceptual, existential and/or metaphysical sense. Each step, gesture, word, or phrase must be taken on its own terms and progressively linked to the next moment through one’s use of energy, breath, and perception without reference to a settled psychological or behavioural choice.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 118)

5.5.2 Not I

There is so minimal action in Beckett's plays. One such example is "Not I". "In Not I the actress playing Mouth is immobilised and invisible seemingly suspended and hovering in a sea of black, seven to eight feet above the stage floor except for her moving mouth with its red lips, white teeth, and pink gums/tongue lit by a single tightly focused spotlight" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 118).

From the actor's perspective, the immobilisation in Not I is not merely a physical constraint but a reorientation of the bodymind. Without the possibility of using limbs or posture shifts, the entire expressive channel is funnelled into micro-movements of the lips, tongue, and breath. In early rehearsals, Pooja recalled the peculiar sensation of her body "disappearing" from her conscious field, leaving only the mouth as the site of identity and agency. This perceptual shift was disorienting at first but later became a source of heightened presence the sense that her entire being was condensed into a single point of light and vibration. In the limited settings, each actor's body and mind are pushed to an extreme state or condition. In Not I, Mouth is the sole presence, a consciousness distilled into the continuous flow of speech. These situations contribute to what makes Beckett's style unique and direct the actor's focus towards embodying consciousness within these confined environments.

Pooja discovered while teaching that people always go a lot into character study. Phillip also gets the table work done because you do your research but when it comes to performance there is more to a character. There is a lot which is undiscovered. Even a character gets interesting when there is a space for the unknown. This just doesn't come from verbal or intellectual preparation. This is where techniques help you to channelize the world that opens up. There is a space where the character speaks to you, and you don't have to attack it. Pooja believes that Zarrilli's training helps her to deal with different performance situations and dramaturgies. Pooja performed one solo piece which was part of her course at ITI, Singapore. She also had the honour to see Zarrilli perform. After her

graduation and before Zarrilli passed away, he had performed in Thrissur at International Theatre Festival of Kerala. She was the stage manager there. She elaborated on her working experience with Zarrilli. She mentioned that the text on which she worked with Zarrilli was a text by Samuel Beckett titled “Not I”. This is one of Beckett’s short plays and it is more like a solo piece. According to the play you just see a mouth and the words are letting out of it. If you look at the text, there is no logical way to remember the text. In the performance Pooja is sitting and the first word is “out, out into this world”. So, the text had to flow out also at the same time. Pooja remembers that in the rehearsals Zarrilli stopped her after the first word.

“There is so much text and you get overwhelmed by it because you have to say it, the only way to do it is to trust the technique. To get into that space is difficult but Zarrilli’s technique helps. What I learnt in this experience is that you also start to develop a judgement about when it feels right. You would feel when the text is coming out right, you are sensing your feet. Zarrilli mentions that if you are lost or feel like you are not present then immediately sense your feet which he titled as ‘Tactile Awareness’.” (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

In practical training, this meant returning repeatedly to small, reliable bodily sensations, the grain of the chair under the fingertips, the weight of each foot on the floor, as touchstones amid the torrent of Beckett’s text. Over time, these tactile anchors became reflexive, surfacing automatically in moments where mental concentration wavered. Pooja described the resulting shift in inner state as “dropping back into my body without losing the line,” a quality that stabilised her vocal delivery even during passages of extreme verbal speed. Pooja mentioned that tactile awareness is something where you have a physical awareness and you have your feet on the ground, so that you have the sensation of the foot being placed on the ground. That is something that immediately grounds you and anchors you technically also. While dealing with different dramaturgies it is necessary to not get

overwhelmed and then only when you have achieved a neutrality, it allows the text to play out for itself.

The practice of returning to the feet as an anchor point was not just a grounding technique but a reset for the entire bodymind. Pooja described how, during one particularly fast-paced run, sensing her heels in contact with the floor instantly slowed her inner tempo without affecting the required delivery speed. To the audience, the text still poured out in an uninterrupted torrent, but the quality of her voice had shifted, less strained, more resonant as her internal state moved from panic to controlled flow. Achieving this neutrality was not a passive act. In rehearsal, it involved an active listening to the rhythm of one's own breath, consciously delaying the impulse to "express" until the text itself seemed to generate its own inflection. This reversal letting the text lead the performer mirrored Zarrilli's broader psychophysical aim of dissolving the controlling will. Pooja noted that in moments when she succeeded in doing this, the words felt "as if they were arriving from somewhere else, but still through me," producing a tone that was free from personal sentimentality yet charged with immediacy.

She mentioned that there are these screams that come in between the text, and we need to understand what these screams are. You can't be out of that atmosphere and scream because you want a particular effect. When you are there experiencing the moments, which felt absolutely right and falling in place and then the text starts speaking to you. She believes that instead of getting overwhelmed by the text you start doing justice to it. Usually what happens is when you start performing you also become very indulgent and actors also start making the personal association, then a lot of things which are not part of the character comes in because you are indulging in it. This resistance to indulgence was tested during performances in front of live audiences. The temptation to lean into a particularly resonant moment, to "ride" the emotional wave, was strong but she found that such impulses almost always broke the delicate balance of the piece. Returning to the physical score, the fixed position of the hands, the micro-adjustment of the jaw before a scream kept the

performance within the precise container Zarrilli had cultivated. Audiences reported feeling an unbroken intensity, which Pooja attributed to this discipline.

Pooja believes that Zarrilli's training removes you from indulging and you start doing more justice instead of being emotionally overwhelmed or being carried away by what you are feeling. She thinks that these kinds of texts do something to you physically also because every time you say the word it is coming out of your body. Not just Beckett, even in Harold Pinter's work there are a lot of silences that you see in the text. People talk a lot about these pauses and silences, but the question is how do you play it? Pooja thinks Zarrilli's system offers a very grounded technique to approach these things. In such a scenario you are not playing any particular character but carrying the text to the audience. All these are very carefully written words that is why in Beckett's play if you change anything then it won't be the same. Beckett was very strict about not changing any word he had written because he writes in a certain way. All of his short plays are of this nature. The immutability of the text meant that variation had to arise from within the actor's bodymind rather than from altering verbal content. Pooja experimented with subtle changes in internal energy allowing the sensation of weight in the sternum to deepen during certain phrases, or imagining warmth in the cheeks to shift the resonance of the voice. These adjustments were invisible as "techniques" but perceptible as changes in atmosphere, giving each performance its own micro-distinctiveness while remaining textually identical.

Pooja feels that the point is how do you perform these plays because at the same time it gives you an autonomy and agency to explore it. It removes you from the space of indulgence and respects the artistic piece that you are creating. It is very easy to become indulgent and you feel good while performing in that space because you feel like that, I felt something but that may not necessarily help the performance as such. It is more about understanding and trusting what is enough and not getting carried away personally. This is something Pooja believes that Zarrilli's training has helped her with. There is so much context in the words that you need to have a physical score or something Zarrilli mentioned

as “sign posts”. Pooja mentioned that through these sign spots you create a score for yourself as an actor or as a performer. This is something she really does whenever she is on stage. Even within a plot driven play there are points of transition that are where you feel loss of energy and how you maintain energy to make the performance wholesome. Zarrilli’s training has really helped her with these things. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

These sign posts acted like tactile bookmarks in the body. In *Not I*, one such sign post was the transition between a long, uninterrupted run of text and the sudden insertion of a scream. Rather than preparing vocally for the scream, she prepared physically, softening her abdomen and sensing the back of her throat so that the sound could erupt without muscular strain. In practice, this kept the scream integrated into the flow of speech rather than standing out as an isolated “effect,” aligning with Zarrilli’s principle of actions arising from impulse rather than imposition.

Pooja also elaborated on the rehearsal process and preparations for her performance directed by Phillip Zarrilli. She had this back problem and Phillip kept cushions to support and made her very comfortable. There was a chair placed in front of her also so that she had more tactile awareness. Her hands are placed on the chair and every time she feels overwhelmed, she would sense her hands, sense her feet and sense her back. It is during the performance they had put a phone torch, and the lights were also there so that only her face is visible. The main thing was text coming out and Zarrilli would stop her at times. Pooja mentioned that Zarrilli was a very rigorous man and very kind. He used to very kindly ask to repeat, and it is so tiring, but you are figuring it out and at the same time you understand why he is asking to repeat. It is a very hard process and cracking it is one of the most important journeys in her life. (Pooja, Personal Interview, 30 April 2024)

These physical accommodations were not merely for comfort but served as part of the performance score itself. The pressure of her palms against the chair created a constant

kinaesthetic feedback loop, reminding her of spatial orientation even in the absence of visual reference to her body. During long runs, she found that this feedback reduced mental fatigue; instead of holding the body rigidly through willpower, she allowed the tactile points to “hold” her, freeing cognitive energy for maintaining the rapid-fire text. Reflecting afterwards, Pooja described the process as “learning to live inside the text without owning it.” The paradox was that the more she let go of personal control, relying on breath, tactile anchors, and sub score markers, the more vivid and consistent the performance became. For her, this was the clearest embodiment of Zarrilli’s psychophysical method: the inner state of grounded alertness was the true performance, and the outward delivery was simply its visible trace.

5.5.3 The Water Station

“What initially attracted me to The Water Station was Ota’s unremitting aesthetic attention to the divestment of anything unnecessary from a performance score. Here was an aesthetic with a minimalism similar to but different from those of either the traditional Japanese Noh theatre or the plays of Samuel Beckett each in its own way requiring actors to ‘stand still while not standing still’. In the Water Station the actor must inhabit and embody the states of being/doing which constitute each slowed-down, everyday action in a psychophysical score.” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 150)

“The Water Station” is a poetic and non-verbal performance score. Ota Shogo and his theatre company The Theatre of Transformation (Tenkei Gejiko) devised and developed the performance based on two main principles: acting in silence and making that silence a living human experience by performing at a very slow tempo. This slowness was not merely a visual aesthetic but a deep re-conditioning of the actor’s temporal awareness. As Jeungsook noted, the altered sense of time “felt like gravity itself had grown heavier,” compelling her to find support in her breath and core alignment. The audience could only see a gradual shift in her gait or the patient lowering of her gaze, yet internally she was tracking microscopic tensions, the weight of each step in her arches, the way her breath

pooled low in the dantian before rising. Such inner calibrations, invisible to the casual viewer, were essential to sustaining the “living silence” Ota envisioned.

The artistic process that Ota experienced while working on *The Water Station* has been characterised by Mari Boyd as one of ‘divestiture’. This involves removing or stripping away anything unnecessary from the performance score and theatrical environment. This aims to transport both actors and audience out of their everyday world focusing instead on the essential elements of our shared existence which is the ‘unparaphrasable realm of experience’ as Ota describes it. Ota delved into the profound nature of silence and the tangible presence of the actor simply ‘being there’ on stage. (Shogo, 1990, pp. 150-151)

Performance Context: When the audience enters the performance space a broken water faucet is in the centre stage. They immediately see and hear a constant running from a broken water faucet. The thin stream of water hitting the pool in the basin creates a constant sound in the otherwise silent theatre. To the audience’s left and upstage of the faucet is a pathway similar to a traditional Noh stage, where a series of nameless travellers enter. This pathway leads them to the “water station” at centre stage. Behind the pathway, upstage, there is a large pile of discarded junk such as shoes, tires, dishes, bicycles, bird cages and crates. Each traveller whether alone, in pairs, or in groups, encounters and interacts with the water before moving out of view. The pathway continues to the audience’s right which is where each traveller exits. In a series of nine scenes, travellers enter the pathway from the audience’s left, either alone, in pairs, or in groups.

Each traveller interacts with the water before continuing their journey and leaving the stage. Sometimes a traveller from one scene meets those in another. In the transition from Scene 1 to Scene 2, the Girl senses someone approaching and sees two men in the distance. She hides in the junk heap to watch them. When the men find the water, they lock mouths, fighting for the slender stream. Drawn to them, the Girl stands up to see better. They sense her, turn and their gaze pushes her back into the junk heap. After they leave, Scene 3 begins

with the Girl noticing a Woman with a Parasol approaching. The Girl tries to look away but can't. During their intense interaction, the Woman's dark eyes pressure the Girl so much that she cries out with an open mouth and wide eyes. The Girl then avoids the Woman and leaves, leaving the Woman alone by the water with her broken parasol. In Scene 4, a Man comes out of the junk heap, brushes his teeth, reads an old newspaper, and watches the travellers interact with the water station in Scenes 4, 5, 6, and 7 before disappearing silently in Scene 8. Throughout the performance, the constant sound of running water changes in two ways to create a dynamic soundscape. Each time a traveller interacts with the water by touching it, drinking from the tap, filling a canteen, bathing, etc. the sound produced by the water changes. In Scene 7, when the Man and Woman reach the water station, they gradually take off most of their clothes to bathe in the basin. When the water first touches the Woman's skin, there is complete silence until the water starts dripping off her skin. The sound of the individual drops hitting the pool is different in pitch, volume and quality from the constant stream of water. The sound changes depending on what the water hits and how it interacts with each surface. (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 145-146)

While working on *The Water Station*, Ota and his company were exploring the process of how to "stage living silence" (Ota 1990, p. 151). Ota's "drama of silence" mainly involves removing unnecessary words. With the soundscape described Ota's "living silence" is not about having no sound at all, but about reducing the noise of everyday life by cutting out constant talking and busy thoughts. Ota creates this theatrical silence by slowing the actors down, so each action they perform is stripped of anything unnecessary. Slowing down the actors and their actions can be seen as a process of "decoction" for both actors and audience, a process that removes anything non-essential. This approach leaves only the essential elements on stage, like the pathway, a running faucet, and a junk heap. By removing unnecessary parts and slowing down the performance, the audience's focus and concentration are intensified. Practitioners described the effect as a mutual slowing between performer and spectator. Niharika Negi (Personal Interview, 30 May 2024) likened it to "tuning the room to a single breath cycle," where every gesture from lowering

a parasol to cupping water became a shared act of noticing. For the actor, this demanded precise ki-awareness; for the viewer, it fostered an almost meditative attention.

“Ota’s score could be described as a series of simple actions or as an invitation for the actor to fully embody and inhabit each action in the score as a journey of sensory awareness. This sensory journey unfolds as the actor opens her awareness to/through each action of the score taking place in the pre-articulate present- the immediate here and now.” (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 91)

Zarrilli directed *The Water Station* in September 2004 for the Theatre Training and Research Programme (TTRP) at the Esplanade Theatre Studio, Singapore. The production included a cast of eighteen: eight professionals and ten third year TTRP acting students. Of the eight professionals five were recent TTRP graduates. Zarrilli delves into how understanding *The Water Station* through the lens of Noh theatre’s three-part progression jo (initiation), ha (continuation), kyu (completion), helps to illuminate the structure and rhythm of Ota’s script.

Rehearsals:

Psychophysical Stimuli and Embodied Actions: Zarrilli analysed the text from psychophysical perspective and believes that the arrangement of actions is an evocative form of visual poetry. Ota’s use of particular words to describe actions and how he arranges them on the page works in a way that is similar to the punctuation in Beckett’s writings. Ota’s text also provides non-psychological stimuli that help actors physically embody specific actions. A detailed analysis of the main actions shows the following types of information and stimuli for creating the actor’s psychophysical score:

- Movement/Placement
- Tempo-rhythm
- Sensory awareness within a particular part of the body

- Sensory awareness in relation to an object within the immediate environment
- Sensing within the body
- The quality of the sensory relationship to the wider environment

Each type of stimulus mentioned above offers a way for the actor to immediately engage their sensory or ki-awareness while performing specific actions. When the actor fully embodies an action, they form a psychophysiological connection with and through the action. Ota's text provides the psychophysical seeds that the actor's bodymind cultivates through direct engagement. For Naushad Mohammed Kunju (Personal Interview, 12 January 2024), the turning point came when he could feel "the shape of the breath" moving through his body in slow action. In one water sequence, he recalled how inhaling fully caused the skin of his palms to tingle before even touching the water, a sensation he allowed to dictate the timing of his reach. Such internal markers became as important as spatial cues, ensuring that action emerged from lived sensation rather than external imitation. The actor starts to find the right intensities and qualities of ki or sensory awareness to fully realise each action from within. The process of embodied sensory engagement gradually shapes the overall aesthetic logic of the performance score for the specific role. The actor doesn't create a character from analysing motivations or objectives before rehearsals, but they develop it by engaging sensory and ki-awareness during rehearsals.

The rehearsal process began with intensive psychophysical training and applying principles to structured improvisations. As the actors began to discover and establish a sensory, psychophysical connection to impulses and actions Zarrilli introduced them to elements of "The Water Station" without explicitly stating. The actors went through a series of progressive exercises that further directed their awareness and the feeling of breath-in-action towards engaging with the types of inner states of being and doing. The actors are seated in chairs. Before starting any of the following structures, they collectively perform a series of repetitions of the opening tai chi movements. This helps them attune and sensitise themselves to each inhalation, exhalation and the space between breaths, as well

as to the larger ensemble, thereby enhancing their peripheral awareness. The series of exercises followed this structure:

1. Shifting external focus between three points: With each half-breath (inhalation, exhalation), shift your external focus between the following three points: directly ahead, slightly down and to the right, and slightly upward toward the space above, or the sky.
2. Adding an awareness of the space behind: While continuing the above, wherever your external gaze travels on each half-breath, maintain a strong sensory awareness of your back and the space behind you. Allow this sense of the behind to grow stronger and stronger.
3. Adding the awareness of a desire: In addition to the strong sense of the back and the space behind, add the impulse of a desire to look back. You are not actually allowed to turn and look back. Feel this desire in specific parts of your body, such as the palms, feet, and along the spine. Let this desire to look back start from and resonate in the lower dantian, radiating to specific parts of the body.
4. Adding the impulse to look back... interrupted: Allow the strong sensory awareness of the back, the space behind, and the desire to look back to grow even stronger gradually. Without anticipating when it will happen, sense the impulse in your lower dantian to look back and start to look back, but stop. You cannot look back.
5. Adding another desire: While working between the three points of external focus, let each shift in focus be guided by the desire to stay. You do not want to leave where you are. Sense this desire to stay here, seated, from the lower dantian, and feel it in your feet, palms and behind your eyes.
6. Adding a compulsion... a “must”: Continuing the structure above, add the following “must”. Despite the strong desire to stay, you know that you must get up and leave, but you cannot. You do not want to get up but feel the compulsion that you must. Let this compulsion inhabit each cycle of breath as it gathers in your dantian and

travels. Now, you must actually stand up. You must get up and leave. You must leave now.

7. Introduction to the slow walk: At this point in the progression, begin working on the slow walk required. Maintain the strong sense of behind and the desire to stay and not leave, with your external gaze focused across the room through the wall at the far end. Start a slow, sustained walk toward the far expanse ahead. Walk as slowly as possible. It should not look like a mime walk but like your everyday walk, just slowed down. From the outside, the walk should look normal and not draw attention to its slowness. As you begin this slowed-down walk, keep an awareness of your breath of the in-breath as it travels to the lower dantian and the out-breath as it travels back up. Let your awareness of your breath help slow down your walk. (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 155-156)

The series of exercises helped the actors become more aware of their senses both inward and outward in their surroundings. The inward attention is sustained by keeping an inner eye on their breathing to increase their awareness and dealing with the urge to look around. The outward relationship expanded their awareness to include and reach out to external points. The actors were side coached through each repetition. This process helped them become more aware of their senses both inward and outward. After several repetitions, Zarrilli divided the actors into two groups so they could observe each other and see how well their ki-awareness and energy connection were working. By observing, they could tell when someone was forcing an inner connection instead of letting it naturally develop from their breath and impulses. “The preliminary exercises above began to move the actors toward the type of heightened sensitivity to the whole atmosphere/environment necessary in staging. With 99 percent of the action slowed down, it was the actor’s inner engagement of states of being/doing that would potentially attract and hold the spectator’s attention in performance” (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 157). Zarrilli would sometimes adjust environmental details without warning altering the sound of the water stream, or shifting an object a few inches to disrupt habitual response. As Naushad explained, “When you enter the performance space, you feel the space, you sense the space and the sensations that you can

pass on to the audience.” These micro-adjustments kept the actor in a state of responsive alertness, preventing the work from sliding into mechanical repetition. The next step was to focus on specific actions from Ota’s text. Like the preliminary exercises, Zarrilli guided the actors to perform these actions with heightened sensory engagement and concentrated energy through their backs, feet, lips, mouth, fingertips, ears, and so on. While coaching them through these actions, Zarrilli repeated key phrases. For example, when saying “sense the behind,” He encouraged actors to feel the subtle details of their awareness and sense what is behind along the spine... feel it in the feet, palms, along the spine, and through the head.

Zarrilli provides first person accounts from inside performances of *The Water Station*. Rehearsals for the production started with psychophysical training, focusing on structured improvisations tailored to the specific needs of the production. This process involves getting actors up on their feet and engaging in psychophysical exercises similar to those in an actual performance. The actor’s breath during action is crucial for this process. For example, when the fingertips touch the lips, the actor feels this as the breath moves from the abdomen through the fingertips. The actor can sense the quality and duration of the touch. This contact is significant and allows the actor to engage with their sensory awareness through their breath. By slowing down actions like “fingers to the lips,” the actor can deeply explore their sensory experience in the moment. This detailed sensory engagement helped create a psychophysical score.

Hilde Stensland played “the girl” in scene 1 and talked about her experience performing. Before working with Zarrilli, she had not worked in this specific psychophysical way. She said that all the training and breathing exercises she did prepared her body to slow down. At first, she enjoyed the training but did not understand its purpose. As rehearsals for the production started, everything made sense both physically and mentally. She realised how crucial the training was to work this way and getting into the rhythm and slowness of the body. It helped her focus on the details which became clear when they started working on

the scenes. She stopped thinking and body and awareness took over at that moment. She used awareness when acting before also but through this process she realised how important open awareness is. It was a revelation due to the detail involved. She started to feel the air and was not just acting on stage but becoming aware of how the sound and air were in that specific space. Stensland described how by working without words, she gradually learned the basic actions that made up her performance and began to focus her attention and senses on the actions and environment without thinking. She felt “released” from being in her head and from having to plan or force a feeling to motivate her actions. (Zarrilli, 2020, p. 94)

Jeungsook also played “the girl” and shared her views. In the Water Station, the artificial abnormality of the actor’s body is created by the unusual sense of time combined with complete silence. The slowness is an existential condition that impacts the actor’s psychophysical state, revealing an unfamiliar world to the audience where time appears to move slower, and gravity feels heavier. The choreographed actions within this specific spatiotemporal condition are filled with the discovery of what is happening inside the actor’s bodymind as they perform and respond to these actions. She first received the play as a series of concrete actions rather than reading it like a typical literary text. She understood it through her bodymind with instructions like “slow tempo,” “looking back,” “dropping gaze toward the feet,” and “touching lips”. These instructions felt practical like yoga movements and poetic at the same time which generated strong sensations in her. Jeungsook noted that Zarrilli’s way of giving instructions also affected her deeply. She not only heard the words but also felt the quality of the sound he made which further conveyed understanding of the text and created a specific atmosphere. This method was similar to how Zarrilli teaches martial arts. For example, a jumping exercise carried a particular sound quality that influenced her action. The sound carried knowledge about the actions, shaping how she moved. By being attentive, she connected her energy to the actions and appreciated what it offered. (Yoo, 2007, p. 84)

In Singapore after the first week of training and initial exercises each actor was provided with a copy of the script and a specific role. Over the next three weeks each actor created a two-part psychophysical score: (1) the physical aspect, including their character's slow walk, all movements, object manipulation, interactions with other actors and water, and responses to the environment or stage setting; and (2) the inner states that guided and shaped each physical action. Without any lines to speak, actors had to "speak" through their actions, expressing their inner states in relation to their inner world, the environment and other performers. These inner states were entirely unique to each actor.

In scene 2, two men enter the stage and the girl who entered in the scene 1 hides herself. "Scene 2 is structured around a series of key encounters. I provide a brief description of these encounters and ask the types of questions posed to Naushad Mohamed Kunju (Man A) and Pern Yiau Sim (Man B) as I coached them through the development of their outer and inner scores for the scene. As with Jeungsook Yoo, the associations and answers that arose for Naushad and Pern Yiau as they developed their inner scores in response to my questions were purely their own and have remained unknown to me during and after the production." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 165)

In Scene 2, the initial encounter is between the two men and the place from which all the travellers arrive. Their second encounter is with the water. When Man A and then Man B reach the water. As each man encounters the water, the other is present and aware, watching him. The third encounter starts when they become aware of each other across the water, although they haven't looked directly at each other yet. Their awareness has only been indirect. For the first time, they make direct eye contact. In the next action, they shift their focus from each other to the sky. After this initial gaze toward the horizon, their attention briefly returns to the water. "In my work with Naushad and Pern Yiau it was crucial that they execute each shift of focus/attention by keeping connected to their breath and ki-awareness from the lower dantian so as to maintain a residual awareness from one point of focus to the next. The shift for the two men here is from eye-to-eye contact to the sky. As

each man's gaze is directed toward the sky, this act of looking/seeing is coloured by the residue of the associations of the inner state each inhabited as they looked into each other's eyes." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 166)

Ota then introduces another encounter between the two men and the Girl. Until now in the scene, the two men have only been aware of the place they left behind, the water, each other, and the distant sky. The audience has been watching the Girl as she observes the men, seeing how her curiosity gradually pulls her out of her hiding place in the junk heap. Another key moment is when Man B, as he turns to look at Man A, notices the Girl, and both men turn their attention to her. As the men push the Girl back into the junk heap with the intensity of their gaze, their attention once again shifts to the distant horizon of the sky. From the initial moment their attention shifts to the sky, the two men direct their focus to the horizon five times. Continuously returning their gaze to that point on the horizon highlights an ominous and foreboding threat in the distance which resonated psychophysically within both actors. "I worked with the two actors, Naushad and Pern Yiau, on their connection to breath, ki/sensory awareness, and points of focus. They constructed psychophysical scores that played chiasmatically between and among the place each had left behind, their encounter with water, the other, the Girl, and whatever lies on the horizon. They answered each question posed above with their own inner associations known only to them. What was important was that these answers vibrated them qualitatively via their associations within." (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 168)

The evocative actions in Ota's text do not represent a specific inner state of being/doing but they offer entry points for the actor's psychophysical engagement in the moment. When the actor is engaged in this way, the active imagination is fully involved. In *The Water Station*, the actor fully engages her sensory awareness and imagination in each moment. Sometimes this involves a literal engagement of the senses, such as the feel of the water, fingertips touching lips, or handling a parasol, suitcase, canteen, or sheet. Other times the actor engages her sensory awareness to sustain active imagination. "It was important that

the heightened quality of the actor's engagement of inner states within the design of each acting score never became self-indulgent" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 171).

Naushad Mohammed Kunju talks about his experience of training with Phillip Zarrilli. He had continuous training with Phillip Zarrilli for 4 months at Intercultural Theatre Institute, Singapore. He did a production named "The Water Station" written by Ota Shogo and directed by Phillip Zarrilli. He mentioned that in the initial stage Phillip Zarrilli did some initial Kalari practice and tai chi practice. He worked on how these Asian training disciplines like martial arts or meditation practices help to develop the actor's bodymind. He worked on the key factors like how to channelize your energy, how to control your body, how to sustain the energy in your body and how to work with more precision. He believes that we of course need these Asian disciplines, and we need the rigorous one because we don't only need to adapt physical scores from these practices, but we need to make our body a cultured body having its own characteristics. Through rigorous practices, experiences and analysis, we can go beyond our body. Naushad Mohammed Kunju mentioned that Phillip Zarrilli initially taught movements from Kalari and breathing patterns. He adopted a lot from Asian disciplines and Kalari. He taught this exercise in which you move very slowly and open up your lungs to experience the quality of your body. You inhale and exhale while expanding your body. When you inhale, you can feel the shape of the breath, the sound of the breath and it is spreading throughout your entire body giving you sensations. He said that in the initial stage of training he did a lot of yoga and breathing but he could not sense this spreading. Phillip Zarrilli makes us understand that while we inhale, we need to be aware of the breath and the sensations it produces. Phillip Zarrilli had these minute ways to teach. He designed many exercises to open up the body, to work on the physicalisation and exploration of the breath. (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

"The first three months while working with Zarrilli we had a Kalari training and after a break for 2-3 months we started working on the performance part. There is no Dialogue in

The Water station. The whole play is about coming and going. It is like we are talking about who you are, where you are coming from, what you will do and where you will go, when and why. The basic idea is about exploring the five w's of human life. In the water station people come and then they are doing an action and going away. Every action had some kind of connection with the peripheral awareness and focus on the sensations.” (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

Naushad Mohammed Kunju shared the production process and experiences of “The Water Station”. It is a part of a series written by Ota Shogo which also includes The Fire Station and The Wind Station. He mentioned that the method of preparing for the production is very interesting because as an actor we need more dialogue and body work. The reason is as part of acting training we did a lot of physical work like he mentioned about martial arts practice in the morning. He mentioned that it is interesting to notice that they worked on such rigorous forms to work on a production which includes stillness and silence in it. They felt like they wanted to talk because generally the training they got is like that but gradually the situations Zarrilli created leads. When you enter the performance space, you feel the space, you sense the space and the sensations that you can pass on to the audience. He asserts that as an actor he experienced and shared it while in the process and after the performance also. He could sense that it is connecting to the audience. Also, not only to a particular kind of audience but it is for a Universal audience. You are connecting with an audience without speaking a dialogue but through the physical presence of the body and through the inner core of being. It is a strong existence of being in space and it happened because of the practice of the Asian disciplines. (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

Naushad Mohammed Kunju mentioned that we actors are doers, we want to show too much to the audience, but the training taught him how to be still and be more economical in order to create an impact on the audience. Naushad Mohammed Kunju elaborates on the pre-performative training in Zarrilli's method and how it helped in the performance “The Water

Station”. He mentions that there is a structure of practices because lots of masters are talking about how text should work. Once the director will come, we will discuss the play, its analysis and characterization. All these structural qualities are there in the process. The process of the water station is different because there are actions and very less text. Through the actions they had to find the inner monologue. The text is there but they had to develop an inner monologue which you can’t speak but you have to carry that within your body. Your research work time, your archives and studio work help you a lot in developing. When he works with students usually, he provides some material to work on, may it be text or body or gestures or music to develop their work. Then you select from these archives and present it in the final performance. When you have text, and you memorise it and a lot of things can be prepared inside the body. But if you work without text then you make an inner text to sustain from beginning to end.

“I did a 7-minute sequence in *The Water Station*. I just came across the bridge and came to the centre of the stage and met another person and we were just drinking water and at a particular moment we were interlocking lip to lip. It is an organic process but planned at the same time that happens there. We were carrying these relations and all the dialogue we spoke inside these two things are there. We were always speaking the dialogues inside because here we are characters who developed nuances during the preparatory time and performed. It is a big task for an actor, maybe you can do the mechanical actions but how Zarrilli developed those sequences is commendable. All of it developed through three months of training and everyday practice and the discussions that followed. In every discussion we did add on through the feedback we got to reach the further levels. That is why this experience was amazing. I can say we achieved something through that experience with Phillip Zarrilli.” (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

The challenge, as Naushad observed, was “to be still and be more economical” resisting the instinct to “show too much” while allowing the inner monologue to remain active. In his seven-minute water encounter, every shift of gaze, each pause before drinking, was

internally charged with unsaid dialogue. This inner text, carried silently in the body, ensured that stillness did not become emptiness but rather a concentrated field of intention. Naushad Mohammed Kunju also mentioned the challenges and limitations he encountered while undergoing Zarrilli's training. He mentioned that the physical score can't be ignored. In the morning the first thing you have is the body preparation. In Zarrilli's curriculum Kalari is important and Naushad already practised Bharatnatyam, Koodiyattam and Kalari but again he had to practise it as part of Zarrilli's curriculum.

“This notion was always in my mind that again I am doing the same positions, salutations. I was negotiating with this notion to balance it. Of course, I had to do it. Through logical reasoning and critical analysis, I can feel that negotiation between the journey from Kerala to Delhi to Singapore. A lot of knowledge, not only about Kalari but the science of the body, '*Shareera Shastram*'. We learnt Kalari in Kerala for the sake of Kalari Shastra or for the science of Kalari but with Zarrilli its Kalari plus the science of body we learnt. How this energy is scoring and how to channelize it. The channelizing of the energy is an important part. How to conceive that energy from the body and release that in an appropriate manner according to the character is important. This was a big challenge for me because I always wanted to give my hundred percent. If you give 100 percent in every scene then there is no variation. You have to understand that the total score is 100 percent, and you have to segment it.” (N. M. Kunju, Personal Interview, 12 January 2024)

Naushad Mohammed Kunju feels that this was a big challenge for him, and he had many physical problems while training in ITI. He was in hospital because some serious injury happened there. He faced this duality between the contemporary practice and the old system training which he already practised. He feels there is always a kind of anticipation or critical thinking that he always questions. That was his challenge also and now he is giving this training in his department to the students. He suggests to other theatre training institutes that some kind of traditional discipline must be there to understand about the body and its energy.

Niharika Negi elaborated on the Structure of Phillip Zarrilli's class and his method. She mentioned that in Phillip's method of working through yoga, tai chi and Kalari, it is not simply to repeat the motion of these different forms, but it is very specific. In his books also, he talks about each and every single point of awareness. For example, in yoga it is very specific, while performing sun salutations (Surya namaskar) there are 20 to 30 points of awareness that you go through as you move from one posture to another. When you are training, you are training how to be present and aware of each of these points every time you repeat. These are not empty repetitions, and it also moves really well into tai chi where you work again with these same principles of looking from the dantian and the basic principle of tai chi is that your whole body moves as a unit. The movements are multidirectional but are slow and sustained. In her experience it is even more effective than yoga to understand the concepts of psychophysical, breath and stillness. Niharika Negi believes that it helps you understand the movement with each half breath and the energy extending from your body. Then the class would move into Kalari which is a faster version of movements, and it is not the way they teach it in traditional training. The focus never was on how far you can kick or how deep you can go in a posture. Phillip's recommendation was always to go as far as it's comfortable and your body is not getting tense and not to push anything. She mentioned that it was about really letting the breath lead the movements and wherever it goes at that time is the right place. Then you just come back to the breath and find the next breath for the next movement. She thinks doing that in an ensemble is an important part of the training. (N. Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May 2024)

“Every day you practise and the understanding of the principles of the psychophysical acting training grows, and these are the principles that are directly applied to the structural improvisations on chairs (seated structures) which is the mid-way between training and performance applications. Inside of the yoga, tai chi and Kalari training your quality of focus is very specific, so each point of focus is called out to you in terms of where your gaze should be and what type of focus it is like a point-to-point focus or a travelling focus.

Everything that you do through yoga, tai chi and Kalari breaks up in this way when Phillip would take you through it.” (N. Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May 2024)

Niharika Negi mentioned that the quality of focus and different points of awareness like where you are looking from and your breath, not pre-empting the next movement because you know what is coming next are some of the qualities you develop through training. For example, when you are doing Surya namaskar for the 500th time it is not to just repeat it as you know it, it is to do it like you have never done it before (anew) and with all those points of awareness. She believes that what you are training when you do all of this is actually training for acting but it is a very non-directional way. She thinks it also has to do with the philosophy of life and the meditative practices where Phillip never directly tells you this is how you act, or this is right or that is wrong. What you are really training in is how to breathe and how to find your impulse and how to constantly remain connected to your own bodymind and the immediate environment. There is a lot of unlearning that happens in the process of doing this because everybody comes from different backgrounds, cultures and mindsets to train. It creates a neutral ground where no one is being put in the spotlight. Niharika Negi mentioned that when she was at Exeter, they didn't do any performance or acting for almost a month and they were training every day. She feels that in so many ways the training was to help everyone come back to neutral and let go of the past conditioning and just to be present to what was happening. When you have this kind of shift, and you start to apply that to the performance training then everyone observes a remarkable difference. What it really does is that it really allows you to connect to your own soul that you probably have forgotten or lost a connection to. You are breathing but it may not be the right technique to activate your inner energy. She thinks that it is the most special aspect of the training because it allows people the space to access it for themselves, it really allows a performer to find his/her own unique expressions. It doesn't bear any idea how a performer should perform. She mentioned that what's important in Phillip's work is the quality of engagement as you breathe or perform an action, and she think these are the shifts that really have the power to unlock something unique and special to performers that

would work with him. Even Phillip's long-term students were like traditional actors in that way and almost all of them are theatre practitioners or work as interdisciplinary artists. Niharika mentioned that it is a kind of training that almost tells you how to live life in a specific way and that begins to affect everything that you do. The training in arts is not separate from who you are as a person and how you choose to live. She thinks this is one of the most special aspects of this method that Phillip taught. (N. Negi, Personal Interview, 30 May 2024)

Niharika Negi mentioned that the kind of choices Phillip made for the exercises they did through the program or the choice of the production that they did lead them through the process. Niharika believes that the training helps in all the aspects, and she uses it on the stage in every work she makes. She always using psychophysical work with performers; non-performers and recognise the power of this work and how incredible and transformative it is for any person who does it. She thinks it's the best training anyone can have.

5.6 Conclusion

Whether performing 'without words' in *Act Without Words I* or in *The Water Station*, phenomenologically the actor's primary task is to embody and inhabit the pre-reflective/pre-articulate present moment before words, i.e., that mode of embodied awareness. In both *Act Without Words, I* and *The Water Station*, working in the pre-articulate present before words without pre-thought, motivation, or a search for meaning enables the actor to fully inhabit the present moment. By avoiding pre-planned motivations or intentions and emphasising attention and awareness training through a psychophysical process, the actor's focus during rehearsal and performance is on living in the moment through embodied sensory perception. Zarrilli investigated the actor's lived/living bodymind in reference to Martin Heidegger's concept of "Befindlichkeit" (1962) and Mark Rowlands's concept of "Rilkean memory" (2017). The root of *Befindlichkeit* is the verb

“finden”, which means “to find” or “to discover”. Heidegger is searching for a way of articulating the process by which one comes to situate or ‘find’ oneself in the most fundamental way, i.e., the state in which one finds oneself. *Befindlichkeit* might therefore be described as a kind of self-listening or attentive listening. This was reflected in rehearsal moments where actors described sensing the breath hover just before an exhale, or the skin on the palms tingle before touching an object, subtle bodily findings that became anchors in their performance score. The processes of both *Act Without Words I*, *Not I* and *The Water Station* emphasise the actor’s immediate sensory and embodied encounter with the present moment. Rehearsing without text or words enables the actor to engage in and inhabit a form of “deep listening”. The type of listening Zarrilli is referring to here is not just about passive hearing, but it is about a deep absorption that engages our whole embodied consciousness in the present moment. This process of embodied listening absorbs and then redirects our energy and awareness as we take in, explore and question. The actor’s engagement with these psychophysical tasks within the performance score and sub score is so specific and intense that they become animated and energised internally not in a psychological or motivational sense but by attuning their embodied consciousness to what’s happening in the environment at that moment.

Zarrilli discusses a second concept by philosopher Mark Rowland to better understand the embodied state of “unconscious communion” in the pre-articulate present without words. Rowlands asserts that “Acts of remembering can survive their loss of content, they can live on in mutated form, transformed, transfigured. And these mutated acts play as significant a role as anything else . . . in the construction of the persons we are . . . Even when the content of a memory has been lost- forgotten- the act of remembering can shape us as much as this content” (2017, pp. 12–13). Rowlands argues that what is most important is the act of remembering. Although the content of the memory has disappeared, the act of remembering lives on in a new, mutated form (2017, p. 17). Rowlands proposes the term “Rilkean memory” to mark the territory of content less memory. This kind of memory is shown in *Act Without Words I* and *The Water Station*. In the *Water Station*, the characters

deal with a Rilkean type of memory, where their experiences build up without any specific details. In *Act Without Words I*, Zarrilli is trying to grasp memory, but there is nothing there, just like there is nothing and no one visible in the stage setting that causes him to be thrown or fall. In *The Water Station*, all the actors clearly have a build-up of their past experiences from the place they came from before arriving at the water station. Here, performers reported carrying an “inner text” that was never spoken but nonetheless informed the weight of their gaze or the tempo of their step, a living residue of experience that shaped the present moment without needing to be expressed. All these unknown, or unknowable parts of our experiences make up the reservoir of “unconscious communion” in the present moment before we put things into words. Actors can use this as a powerful resource of what is unsaid. These examples were of non-verbal performances, but Zarrilli argues that even in character-based acting the best state for the actor is to live in this pre-reflective/pre-articulate present. Taken together, Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit* and Rowlands’s “Rilkean memory” describe two sides of the same psychophysical condition: the moment-to-moment finding of oneself, and the content-less memory that silently inflects that finding. Both are sustained by a cultivated sensory readiness that is central to Zarrilli’s training.

Alva Noe provided the enactive view which sees perception and action as interconnected, and the main idea is that “perceiving is a way of acting”. Perception is more like touch where we actively explore and engage with what we can touch. For example, Zarrilli listening to a ceiling fan in performance, his hearing can be said to have both been “touched” by the air moved by the fan and to have “touched” an initially unclear sound. As shown in “*Act Without Words I*” and “*The Water Station*” an actor’s work is always actively/passively relational, involving their sensory engagement with whatever they encounter and respond to in the performance environment. In each specific instance, a performance score is carried out by directing attention or opening one’s sensory awareness. During foundational psychophysical training, actors are ideally being tuned into and directed towards various specific and sometimes multiple ways of focusing attention and

opening awareness. The form and feel of a specific training practice or performance score do not come from some essential idea of attention but are developed by engaging embodied attention and sensory awareness in specific ways. Actors often described this as “listening with the whole skin”, a readiness that made them responsive not only to other performers but to the smallest environmental shifts, such as a rope swaying unexpectedly or a prop arriving half a beat early. Through training, repetition and experience, these implicit embodied, sensory ways of “knowing” are physically inscribed, organised, structured and “felt” when performed.

When we construct an acting score appropriate to a specific dramaturgy and aesthetic during rehearsals through repetition, the score comes to constitute a tacit form of embodied, psychophysical, sensorimotor knowledge for the actor to experience and be affected by in performance. These types of sensory and perceptual knowledge are not stored in the brain. They exist as kinaesthetic possibilities, ready to be experienced during the performance. The performer adjusts as needed while performing, responding to the immediate present of the specific performance in the environment. When performing an acting score each repetition of the form or structure is similar but different. In each moment, you don’t think about the form or try to recall the last performance. You engage kinaesthetically with the form as it unfolds in the present moment. As you learn to inhabit a form or structure, you become increasingly sensitive to the subtle sensory experiences of your relationship to that structure. The actor’s perceptual and sensory awareness must be prepared for any performance environment and also specifically for the particular environment shaped by each dramaturgy and performance score. This attunement gives the actor a heightened, extraordinary ability to inhabit their bodymind, staying alert and attuned to the acting tasks in the moment. This was described by Zarrilli through examples of his productions “Act Without Words I,” and “The Water Station”.

Zarrilli concludes the discussion of acting as enactment: human perception is enactive, relational and specific to an environment. From the actor’s perspective within a

performance, we have considered acting not in terms of building a character or making the performance believable, but as a phenomenon and process. This view of acting emphasises dynamic, psychophysical, embodied processes where the actor senses, perceives, imagines, feels, and remembers in the moment of performance. This understanding allows us to see acting and performance as an “energetic” theatre focused on “forces, intensities, present affects” rather than just meaning. While meaning and representation appear to the audience or critics, they result from the actor’s immediate embodiment and use of attention, energy, and sensory awareness during the performance. In this view, the actor navigates the internal and external through embodied sensory perception in action in response to the environment. In this sense, the actor’s craft is less about projecting an interpretation and more about sustaining a state of tuned receptivity, a bodymind that can meet each moment as if for the first time, alive to the smallest shift in space, breath, or impulse.

Zarrilli’s psychophysical approach reframes acting as a lived event, an active state of sensing, perceiving, and responding rather than as the construction of a role. What the audience perceives as presence, meaning, or character is simply the visible trace of the actor’s moment-to-moment negotiation between body, breath, and environment. In this space, *Befindlichkeit*, Rilkean memory, and enactive perception converge, producing work that is alive, unrepeatable, and charged with immediacy. The actor becomes less a vessel for representation and more a finely tuned instrument of attention, a bodymind in action, inhabiting the present with unwavering alertness.

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CHAPTER- 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

Metaphors marking Phillip Zarrilli's work:

- “The body becomes all eyes” (*meyyu kanakkuka*, Malayalam folk expression)
- “Standing still while not standing still”
- working “on the edge of a breath”
- the flow of energy throughout the body
- lived/living bodymind in the moment

Application to performance/acting:

- The training is at first a preparation of the bodymind focusing the “work on the self” as part of pre-performative training. This work on the self is a continuous process in psychophysical acting training. The longer a practitioner trains, the subtler should be the level of one's use of energy in specific dramaturgies. This progressive refinement emphasises not merely physical conditioning but also the cultivation of nuanced awareness that informs artistic choices.
- The application focuses on the deployment of the awareness developed in the long-term training to studio work and performances. The training is used as a warm-up for rehearsal or performance in order to awaken and attune bodymind. Such preparatory engagement ensures that the actor's instrument is both physically alert and mentally attuned before entering the dramaturgical space.
- The workshop/structured improvisations become a preliminary exploration of psychophysical state of being-doing in order to provide actors with an initial immersion into embodied states. The production studies provided nuanced details

of the process. The process involves shaping the physical scores of characters. The task-based physical work gets actors immediately into a psychophysical relationship with the characters. Each state of being-doing is specifically unfolded through an active embodiment of an image or state that may shift or change but must be sustained. The examples of Samuel Beckett's performance scores have specific psychophysical tasks/states that must be maintained. For example, in "Not I" it is crucial for the actress to stay grounded, keep an awareness of her feet in order not to allow the voice to "ride up". Here, the internal psychophysical state must be monitored alongside the visible external action, highlighting the difficulty of translating inner readiness into sustained performative expression.

- The work is also a continuous source of body and spatial awareness to be drawn upon while acting so that one's energy does not collapse, and the shape of tasks and actions does not lose its dramaturgical shape. In this sense the work is applicable to all performance scores. The technique is provided through which one may deploy the "awarenesses" developed in training to the performance.

Training is a process of self-definition, a process of self-discipline which manifests itself continuously through physical reactions. It is not the exercise in itself that counts but the individual's justification for his own work. This approach, this personal justification decides the meaning of the training, the surpassing of the particular exercises. Phillip Zarrilli brought the philosophy of breathing and made it primary through his practice. Eugenio Barba also does it, but he does it differently. To make the breathing primary is an important feature in the way Zarrilli structured his practice. To make breathing primary is an important feature in the way Zarrilli structured his practice, integrating it as both a physiological foundation and a psychophysical entry point for performance. Making breathing primary becomes both a physical anchor and a meditative gateway, grounding the psychophysical state before any external action is taken.

Phillip has provided a vocabulary and an understanding of that vocabulary in contemporary times. This process of defining oneself and finding personal justification is ongoing, it never truly concludes. The practitioner must continually rediscover the “self” through the training with each repetition of the exercise. After years of practice, Zarrilli noticed a change in how his bodymind as it worked together during practice. Whether demonstrating martial arts or acting training, he found himself consistently able to reach a state of readiness and awareness without forcefully pushing into the activity or movement. His bodymind was being trained to be present in the moment, rather than striving toward a specific outcome. He started to embody what Benedetti described as a “stillness at my centre” and he was learning how to “stand still” in a deeper sense. This ‘stillness’ does not imply passivity but rather an active, alert state in which the entire organism is primed to respond. This readiness without strain became a hallmark of his pedagogy.

6.2 Analyses of the Study

Zarrilli knew some somatic practices, self-healing, Ayurveda and many other disciplines and that is why he understood the psychology and physiology of an actor. He explored the works of Japanese philosopher named Yasuo Yuasa, who also worked with body culture and Ki energy. If you experience it in the body, then you can reflect on it. He provided a bridge to connect with students who came from different backgrounds and ethnicities. This intercultural adaptability positioned Zarrilli’s work as uniquely relevant in a globalised performance landscape. His approach was thus both intercultural and intrapersonal, respecting individual embodiment while situating it within global traditions. The interviews with former students reveal recurring themes in how Zarrilli’s method was experienced and applied.

Core Principles and Philosophical Grounding

Students consistently emphasised that Zarrilli’s approach was rooted in an in-depth understanding of body, breath, and cultural context. His studies in kalarippayattu, yoga, tai chi, and Asian performance traditions (e.g., Kathakali, Koodiyattam) informed his ability

to distil principles into accessible, repeatable modules for contemporary actors. This allowed practitioners from diverse backgrounds to access traditional principles without appropriating their performative forms.

Breath was central. As Anirudh Nair observed, the opening breathing action condensed years of principles, connecting with breath, arriving in the present moment, unifying inhalation, exhalation, and action. Niharika Negi described how breath acted as a tangible tool for animating bodymind, allowing an image or thought to be embodied in a grounded, heightened way.

Application and Adaptability

The training's adaptability across dramaturgies emerged as a key strength. Students applied Zarrilli's method to both text-based and non-verbal work, and across cultural contexts. For Naushad Mohammed Kunju, the practice was about "keeping sensations in the body" and reinterpreting them for different characters or performance situations. Pooja stressed that it taught her to "trust what is enough" rather than over-performing, an economy of action rooted in discipline. In pedagogical contexts, elements of the training were integrated into diverse curriculum. Dr. Sreejith Ramanan applied it particularly in preliminary actor training, highlighting its value in building awareness and focus in beginners.

Challenges and Limitations

While cultural background was not inherently a barrier, several students noted that short-term engagement could limit understanding; long-term immersion was crucial to internalising the work. For Anirudh Nair, the form itself, practising kalarippayattu in Exeter was initially an obstacle due to its cultural specificity, but over years it became a bedrock for other forms he practised.

Niharika Negi noted that the method's greatest challenge lay in the performer's own capacity for presence. Its simplicity demanded sustained attention, requiring the actor to

“empty” themselves before beginning. While she initially thought there was insufficient focus on voice, she later realised that voice naturally integrated when breath was properly embodied.

Pedagogical and Intercultural Value

Across testimonies, Zarrilli’s teaching style emerged as one of radical compassion, equality, and respect. His intercultural sensitivity allowed him to bridge traditional knowledge and contemporary application without diluting the essence of either. This bridging function between Asian disciplines and global contemporary practice was cited as one of his most significant contributions.

Naushad Mohammed Kunju who studied at ITI elaborated on the key principles of the Zarrilli’s training method and believes that the training has clear practical implications. He mentioned that it is especially about understanding your body, breath and your cultural relevance. You cannot implement psychophysical disciplines directly into your performance, but you can implement the core of the energy these disciplines generate. You have to acquire the principles of inner energy from these forms and then keep it in our body, keep those sensations into your body and then you reinterpret these energies or translate these energies for different characters you portray or for different performance situations. This is the way you can implement Zarrilli’s method. You are not learning the form, but you are learning to translate it for a particular purpose. This notion of ‘translation’ rather than ‘imitation’ ensures the training remains adaptable to diverse theatrical contexts. This distinction between form and principle is critical for understanding the flexibility of his approach.

Anirudh Nair studied under Zarrilli at University of Exeter believes that the effectiveness of Phillip Zarrilli’s training is not based on factors such as cultural background or prior training. The effectiveness of Zarrilli’s training depends on how much time you are able to devote. If you have only one year to train with Phillip, then yes cultural background

matters. If you understand the cultural concepts and you are not alien to these forms, then it may be a different scenario. But if you have time for continued work and continued practice for 3 to 5 years then cultural background or prior training doesn't matter. Anirudh Nair also mentioned about the challenges and limitations he encountered while undergoing Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training and the overall effectiveness of this training. He mentions that in the beginning the training felt very difficult and confusing. It took time to overcome this confusion. The initial phase of training often involves unlearning ingrained habits, which can create a sense of disorientation before integration occurs. For him the training and what it did for him in preparing his body in this pre-performative training combined with all other training. It took 4-5 years to feel it in his body. Even though he doesn't teach Phillip's training, but he teaches the forms Phillip taught. He doesn't teach yoga, tai chi or Kalari because he thinks these are forms if anybody has not engaged with them for 10-15 years should teach or can teach. Phillip actually engaged with these forms for a long time. But whatever training Anirudh teaches, Phillip's principles form a core for that, and a lot of instructions keep coming back to him. He believes that Phillip's training was really valuable in founding this bedrock on which the other forms he learnt were built. So, the form itself was an obstacle and the alienness of the form. The form being taken out of the context and doing Kalari in Exeter was an obstacle for him to overcome. So, the challenge that he faced was the specificity of these forms because today he feels like he is teaching a lot of Phillip's training in what he teaches but without teaching traditional forms.

Anirudh Nair further elaborated on his teaching method and pedagogy. He uses Phillip's opening breathing action when he teaches. This opening breathing action in itself has many principles which in his understanding forms the core of the larger training of Zarrilli. Be it connecting with the breath, arriving in the present moment while doing the immediate breathing action and in the course of doing that action there is a bodymind unification that happens. It acts as the check in point for bringing everything in focus. It includes awareness of the space above, awareness of the space behind. The image work was very strong with

Phillip and feeling the image of water coming up through the legs, flowing out through the hands. The use of this image to create bodymind connection and awareness of the space above and behind. Anirudh mentioned that all of these principles after many years of practice were condensed into this opening action. All the principles that he learnt in training still apply completely for him, which is the sense of the breath, the sense of the soft focus when you are doing an action, the unity of the breath and the action and finding the movement between the inhalation and exhalation. The idea of “body becoming all eyes” is really being present to when everything is happening so that all of those principles find resonance. The image work acts as a real bridge between the body and the mind. Image is not possible without the mind and the image is there in mind but not sitting in the body is also meaningless. Phillip’s training was essential to understand what it means to imagine with your body. This also reveals Zarrilli’s pedagogy as both somatic and imaginative, where physical sensation and mental imagery are inseparable.

Anirudh Nair agrees that Phillip’s method has visible practical implications in performance and helps you in solving the challenges posed by contemporary dramaturgies. He also believes that Phillip Zarrilli’s training is very much effective in regard to contemporary theatre scenarios. He thinks Phillip’s training applies across the board to all the performative work. Anirudh Nair mentioned that Zarrilli’s training method has contributed significantly to the development and evolution of actor training and performance practice. He feels that one is the importance of pre-performative training for preparing the actor’s instrument which Zarrilli developed. He mentioned that there are not a lot of contemporary theatre practices where pre-performative training is highlighted this much and given this importance. Phillip brought this to contemporary actor training, and it is a vital development.

Dr. Sreejith Ramanan talks about the overall impact or effectiveness of Zarrilli’s training on his performance and approach to acting. Zarrilli’s training helped him to get a very good clarity about his body. Before this training he was not very much aware of his own bodily

possibilities, his body strength and how to channelize his energy. After working with Zarrilli, he got a very crystal-clear idea about how he can concentrate and how he can be more aware. Even his deep listening quality increased after working with Zarrilli. This enhanced 'deep listening' can be read as an extension of psychophysical attentiveness attuning not only to self but also to co-actors, space, and atmosphere. He also inculcates elements of Zarrilli's training into his curriculum while training actors. He had gone through several acting training methods like at ITI, Hyderabad and his early training in School of Drama, University of Calicut. He incorporated whatever helped him as a performer. Sreejith Ramanan believes that when you are doing the preliminary stage of training actors there Phillip Zarrilli's method is very useful especially for the beginners. When you begin with a new batch of actors you can focus on Zarrilli's method. He thinks that Zarrilli's research and his method has contributed significantly to the development and evolution of actor training and performance practice. He thinks that one of his major contributions is that he has written a lot of books which helps the contemporary actors and contemporary acting training methodologies. The demand from the actors in contemporary theatre are very different. Zarrilli's post Stanislavski approach is helping the actors to get into the contemporary realities, especially the post dramatic approach. His books are theoretical contributions and his contribution as a practitioner, whatever he has given to us to help contemporary performance making.

Pooja elaborated on the effectiveness and the impact Zarrilli's training had on her practice. The breathing exercise is the beginning one in which two things are important: breathing and one point of focus. Usually, this exercise is done for a very short period of rounds and if you do it for a little longer, then you automatically start to make associations. This is called "Abstract Improvisations". While performing it you are looking at a point and then you look at your partner and then change that point so automatically there is development of dramaturgy. It is not that you are trying to find anything, but the act emerges on its own. This emergence without forcing mirrors Zarrilli's emphasis on 'allowing' rather than 'manufacturing' psychophysical states.

An actor works in a professional setting and has to work in different spaces with different challenges. How do you adapt according to these spaces and that is where pre-performative training is important to be able to adapt? Pooja believes that Phillip Zarrilli's entire technique is very challenging in the sense that somewhere our mind is usually very scattered and there is always this inner voice that distracts. The stillness is a very provocative space because you are not used to being still. You are still but you are still moving inside. This 'still but moving inside' captures the paradox of psychophysical presence an inner dynamism contained within an outward calm. To get into a space where your inner voice disappears, and you find a strong focus is very challenging. She thinks the training also deals with this when you indulge in long term practice. She feels that the training is unique for everyone. The way she received it might be different from her classmates. Pooja mentioned that the head of the acting programme during her course at ITI was also a student of Phillip Zarrilli. He also uses a lot of elements of Zarrilli's training, and he used to say that you don't try to be interesting, just be interested. She feels this is also with Zarrilli's technique. When people are asked to do something within a given scenario, they want to do a lot of things instead of trusting what is enough. There are places where you have to be loud and perform a lot but there are places where you do only what is required. To figure out what exactly needs to be done is attained through a disciplined body where you can just trust the process and trust this is enough. An actor needs to embody things, and it takes time. It is through repetition when you get comfortable with the technique. Over the years you develop this technique in your body. Your bodymind gets synchronised and it gets into alignment.

Niharika Negi elaborated on Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training and its core principles. What Phillip did was quite incredible because of his in-depth research with Kalari and time he spent in Kerala. Zarrilli spent a few years learning tai chi also. Niharika believes that he was really able to distil the core principles of Asian traditional performance practices like Kalari and tai chi but also the same principles are used in Kathakali or Koodiyattam. He distilled the core principles into actionable and repeatable training

modules that could be taught to the contemporary actors who had no past experience in traditional body-based disciplines. He was able to teach it in a way so they can apply these principles in an effective manner. He really filled this gap between traditional knowledge and contemporary applications in a precise and simple way. For Niharika these are the core principles, and the core principles focus on how you breathe and how do you activate these mechanisms of breathing that can really allow you to embody a thought or an image in a heightened and grounded way. Here, breath becomes not just an oxygen exchange but a dramaturgical force, activating the body mind's expressive potential. Niharika mentioned that there are very few techniques that give you such a specific and simple skill set of learning how to activate your breath in an actionable way and try to understand how in a performance context you can check if it's working or not. It's about using the technique to make sure the breath is actually animating the bodymind of the performer.

Niharika Negi discussed the overall impact or effectiveness that Zarrilli's training method has on her approach to acting and actor training. It was a life changing experience for her because it was the last batch that Phillip taught at Exeter and after that he retired. She mentioned that the training with Phillip in Exeter was a 360-degree flip for her because they only had female participants in class and there were only one or two males. She also mentioned about the challenges and limitations one can face while undergoing this training. She thinks that the challenges are your own internal challenges. The training is very simple but it's very demanding at the same time that you have to empty yourself before you start. The quality of presence it requires over an extended period of time is demanding. It also requires you to go back and do your work in order to see how to embody it in a more permanent way for yourself. She didn't have any challenges in terms of the training because she believes Phillip was really a master teacher and the best teacher she has ever come across. He and his method were absolutely excellent for her, and it can be different for other people. The challenges were more about your own way of engaging with the process. Niharika Negi thinks that the limitation may be at the training she thought there was not enough focus on voice, but she thinks in retrospect it actually was fine because voice is

connected to your breath. If you are able to understand how to breathe properly and are able to move through the text keeping the points of awareness in mind, then you don't have to think about the voice. It comes from the right place if you are embodying the right state. She thinks that it is not a limitation actually. She is happy that they never hyper focused on breath because Phillip was never concerned about how you speak a dialogue, and it was not his focus. Phillip was concerned about the quality of your engagement from which the dialogue emerges. Everything is so connected to these ideas that it is so carefully planned and constructed, and nothing was contradictory to the main ideas. It made the whole process very easy to absorb.

6.3 Findings

- All students agree that Phillip's Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training method has clear practical implications in performance and helps in solving the challenges posed by contemporary dramaturgies. This consensus suggests the method's adaptability across genres and cultural contexts. This consensus emerges despite differences in cultural background, performance style, and length of training underscoring the method's adaptability.
- All students feel that Phillip Zarrilli's training method is very much effective in regard to contemporary theatre scenarios. Phillip's training can be applied across the board to all the performative work. In regard to the effectiveness of Zarrilli's training in future we need to think about who is teaching Zarrilli's method as Phillip Zarrilli is no more. There are principles that students have learnt from Zarrilli's training that they apply. But who is teaching it is the question. We need to know who is teaching and what their experience is. This raises an urgent issue of transmission fidelity and safeguarding of the method's integrity. The risk here is one of dilution without long-term embodied experience in the forms that underpin

Zarrilli's method, future instructors may transmit technique without its deeper psychophysical roots.

- The effectiveness of Phillip Zarrilli's training is not based on factors such as cultural background or prior training. The effectiveness of Zarrilli's training depends on how much time you are able to devote.
- All students believe that Phillip Zarrilli's training method has contributed significantly to the development and evolution of actor training and performance practice. Specifically, his re-centring of pre-performative training as essential rather than supplementary stands out as a structural shift in actor pedagogy.
- All the students inculcate elements of Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training method into their curriculum while training actors. These adaptations range from direct replication of core breathing sequences to integrating the principles of 'bodymind unification' into performance exercises.
- Zarrilli's method has opened many doors outside of India and his writing has opened a huge number of things inside of India. But the practice is parallel. What he wrote gave us a lot of clarity, but his method is in lineage or similar to many methods. The structure of the method is different, but the content might be similar. Zarrilli's theoretical and practical work provided breakthrough in regard to contemporary theatre. His theoretical work is very important because he writes as a contemporary practitioner for contemporary practitioners. His choice of exercises like when and where to put is also important but this choice of exercises is also flexible and depends on the practitioner how to use it. Indian acting training has been interested in physicality and in India Zarrilli's writings hold a great importance. His textual legacy thus functions both as an academic resource and as a living manual for practice, bridging the gap between scholarship and studio work.

6.4 Conclusion

Phillip Zarrilli provided a variety of intercultural examples of embodied processes of imagining in the training, studio work and performance. He also explored the processes of imagining in regard to various acting theories. Zarrilli views the actor's embodied processes of imagining as an intertwining of "the invisible" and "the visible". This framing invites performers to consider that the most potent aspects of their work may be those imperceptible to the audience yet foundational to the score. Zarrilli's practical training first in kathakali and later in kalarippayattu, led him experientially in a way in which his own body was being re-educated to a new way of experiencing physicality and being. His use of Asian traditional disciplines in actor training opened new doors to understanding the place of physical training in India and abroad.

The major problem the young actors face is that they are unable to attend in the moment of being/doing. The minds may be preoccupied with trying to think about an action or motivation they have scored rather than embodying in the moment and directing their attention and awareness as appropriate to that moment in their performance score. This tendency towards over-intellectualisation is exactly what Zarrilli's emphasis on breath, gaze, and energy flow seeks to counter. The practice of Asian disciplines along with acting, are a psychophysiological means of effecting a transformation of the individual. The long-term practice of embodied forms, along with the ability to focus both the gaze and the mind, frees the practitioner from "consciousness about". Each culture has its own psychophysical disciplines with a common concern of cultivation a sensitive and aware bodymind.

Zarrilli focused on all major elements of the actor-training program in order to help students to discover "stillness/neutrality" as it is related to the most fundamental problems of concentration and focus which the actor must actualize on stage. The attempt to bring the whole body into the process of acting is defined as a psychophysiological gestalt which the actor must build through psychophysical disciplines and should clearly differentiate

between the everyday experience and a yet different theatrical experience. Here, ‘gestalt’ signals that no single exercise is sufficient, it is the integration of breath, gaze, energy, and imagery that constitutes the actor’s readiness. The learning through bodymind creates an exceptional quality of presence within the relationship between oneself and what is being attended to. The process of acting requires being attuned to the subtle qualities and awareness of actions. It also requires maintaining a fully engaged connection between the bodymind from one moment to the next. This active state of awareness is not limited to what we see but involves the whole bodymind being ready to respond using all senses in the immediate environment. Through this training actor kinaesthetically and mindfully attends each moment anew. The actor opens one’s awareness thereby establishing a kinaesthetic relationship. Such a relationship, once internalised, becomes an embodied habit, an automatic attunement rather than a consciously summoned technique. Zarrilli’s writings have been inspired by Zeami, Stanislavski, Grotowski, and his lifelong encounter with non-Western performances. He reflected on the process of acting and how we can talk about acting as a phenomenon and process. What he offers is not definitive answers but rather a form of “embodied enquiry”. This refusal to offer fixed answers keeps the work alive, encouraging each practitioner to continually question, adapt, and rediscover the training in their own bodymind.

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Appendix A: List of Interviews

S.NO.	NAME	SPECIALISED AREA
1	Dr. Anuradha Kapur	Theatre Expert and Actor Trainer
2	Mr. Arpit Singh	Kalarippayattu Expert and Actor
3	Mr. Anirudh Nair	Student of Phillip Zarrilli and Actor Trainer
4	Mr. Ajith Lal	Theatre Practitioner and Actor
5	Mr. Ankur Saxena Bashar	Theatre Practitioner and Actor
6	Mr. Ashish Atrey	Theatre Practitioner and Actor
7	Mr. Karthik	Kalarippayattu Practitioner and Actor
8	Mr. Manish	Kalarippayattu Expert
9	Ms. Mehak	Yoga Expert
10	Ms. Niharika Negi	Student of Phillip Zarrilli
11	Mr. Noushad Mohammad Kunju	Student of Phillip Zarrilli and Actor Trainer
12	Ms. Pooja	Student of Phillip Zarrilli and Actor Trainer
13	Dr. Sreejith Ramanan	Student of Phillip Zarrilli and Actor Trainer
14	Mr. Sube Singh Ravish	Yoga Expert

Appendix B: Close Ended Questionnaire for Yoga and Kalaripayattu Practitioners

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your insights as a practitioner of Kalaripayattu and/or yoga are valuable in understanding the relationship between these traditional arts and their potential benefits for acting training. Please answer the following questions.

Name:

Email:

Age:

Gender:

1. Which is the traditional art form that you are practising?
 - Kalaripayattu
 - Yoga
 - Both
2. From where did you get your training in Kalaripayattu/Yoga? Please specify the institute, teacher or any particular group or organisation.
3. For how long have you been practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga?
4. Has practising Kalaripayattu and/or Yoga improved your physical strength and flexibility?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

5. Has practising Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga enhanced your body awareness and control?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
6. Do you feel more emotionally connected to your body through practice of Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
7. Has Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga helped you manage stress and maintain mental clarity?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
8. Has Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga helped you attain a better body-mind relation?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree

- Strongly disagree

9. Do you believe that your experience in Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga has positively influenced your working abilities?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you think that elements of Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga should be integrated into formal acting training programs to enhance an actor's bodymind relation?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you have any additional comments, feedback or suggestions that you would like to share? Please elaborate on the same.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your input will contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of Traditional art/Psychophysical practices in acting training. If you have any further comments or would like to provide additional insights, please feel free to contact.

Appendix C: Open Ended Questionnaire for Practitioners of Kalarippayattu and Yoga

1. Please give a brief introduction about yourself.
2. For how long have you been practising Kalarippayattu and/or Yoga?
3. What is the meaning of the term “Psychophysical” for you as a practitioner?
4. Do you use psychophysical training for your artistic practices?
5. How does training in psychophysical disciplines transformed you as an individual/performer?
6. Do you think Psychophysical training helps in cultivating a strong bodymind relation?
7. Please describe your personal journey or experiences in developing a strong bodymind connection through Kalarippayattu or yoga.
8. Do you feel that psychophysical training in disciplines like Kalarippayattu and Yoga can be valuable for actors?
9. Do you think that the incorporation of traditional art forms like Kalarippayattu and Yoga in acting training can enhance an actor’s physical presence?
10. Based on your experiences, do you have any recommendations or insights for actors, theatre teachers, or practitioners interested in incorporating elements of Kalarippayattu or yoga in acting?
11. Is there any other comment, criticism or observation you would like to share?

Appendix D: Open Ended Questionnaire for Phillip Zarrilli's students

1. Please give a brief introduction about yourself and your theatre training.
2. What is your understanding of psychophysical acting training, and do you inculcate it in your curriculum?
3. In what ways Zarrilli's training method differed from other acting approaches you have encountered and how do you perceive these differences?
4. How do you understand the concept of "Pre-Performative" training in Zarrilli's approach and how it is transposed into the performance?
5. How would you like to describe the key principles of Phillip Zarrilli's training method?
6. Does the effectiveness of Phillip Zarrilli's training vary on the basis of an actor's prior training and cultural background?
7. How would you define or express the impact of Zarrilli's training on an actor's ability to develop their characters and sensory perception?
8. Does Zarrilli's training help in solving challenges posed by contemporary dramaturgies? Is this training effective in regard to contemporary theatre scenarios?
9. How do you perceive the integration of bodymind in Zarrilli's training approach?
10. How do you think that Zarrilli's method has contributed to the development and evolution of actor training and performance practice?
11. What are the challenges and limitations you encountered while undergoing Zarrilli's training method? How does it impact the overall effectiveness of the training?
12. Are there any particular areas or context where you believe Zarrilli's method should be explored further?
13. What is the significance of structured improvisations in Zarrilli's method?
14. Any other comments, criticism, recommendations or observations you would like to share?

Appendix E: Open Ended Questionnaire for Theatre Experts and Actor Trainers

1. Are you familiar with Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical acting training and its core principles?
2. Please elaborate on your collaboration with Phillip Zarrilli and the core principles of his training.
3. How do you perceive the concept of "Pre-Performative" training in Zarrilli's method?
4. Do you inculcate elements of Zarrilli's method into your curriculum while training actors?
5. What insights from Zarrilli's method do you find the most valuable for actors?
6. Do you feel that psychophysical acting training can be valuable for actors?
7. Please elaborate on Zarrilli's contribution to the development and evolution of actor training and performance practice.
8. Are there any particular areas and context where you believe that Zarrilli's training should be explored further?
9. How do you perceive the concept of integration of bodymind or a strong bodymind connection in Zarrilli's training method?
10. Any other comments, criticism, suggestions or observations you would like to share?

Appendix F: List of Publications

1. **Gaurav & Bhardwaj, S. (2024).** The Stanislavski System: A Psychophysical Acting Training Perspective. *International Journal of Religion*, 5(10), ISSN: 2633-3538, pp. 3035-3042, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61707/x2wm2j08>
2. **Gaurav & Bhardwaj, S. (2022).** The Birth of an Actor: Out of Democracy; Ancient Greek Society, Culture and Law. *Anhad Lok*, 8(3), ISSN: 2349-137X, pp. 187-192.
3. **Gaurav. (2022).** The New Performance Spaces and Multimedia in Contemporary Indian Theater. *Anhad Lok*, 8(3), ISSN: 2349-137X, pp. 203-208.
4. **Gaurav. (2023).** Harmonizing Tradition and Modernity: The Role Traditional Music and Traditional Theatre in Shaping Modern Indian Theatre. *Anhad Lok*, 9, ISSN: 2349-137X, pp. 295-300.

Appendix G: List of Conferences

1. **Gaurav. (2023).** Harmonizing Tradition and Modernity: The Role of Traditional Music and Traditional Theatre in Shaping Modern Indian Theatre, Paper Presented at Music Tradition and their Application in Indian Theatre, Bhartendu Natya Academy, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, September 22-24, 2023.
2. **Gaurav. (2023).** Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Indian Music: A Comprehensive Analysis of Music Therapy Interventions, Paper Presented at the International Conference on Indian Music, School of Liberal and Creative Arts, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, November 6-7, 2023.
3. **Gaurav. (2024).** Contemporary Perspectives: Post Dramatic Theatre in India, Paper Presented at CREATIVE-2024, Department of Rabindra Sangit, Dance and Drama, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal, March 26-27, 2024.