



DEIRDRE MCLAUGHLIN

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PROJECT TITLE

Systems of Experience: Stanislavski, Embodied Cognition and the 'Creative Process of Experiencing'

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, research dialogues between neuroscience, cognitive science, philosophy of mind and performance practice have provided valuable insights into the guiding concepts and principles of actor training. This thesis offers a critical examination of the experience of acting utilizing an enactive approach to embodied cognition, and proposes a reframing of key concepts from the Stanislavski system as a model for the actor's conscious experience. Drawing from Varela, Thompson and Rosch's perspective on the 'embodied condition of the human mind', this thesis argues for a reconsideration of the conceptual structures that underlie the actor's conscious experience with an emphasis on understanding of the dynamic relationship between the actor's body, brain and world.

Chapter 1 examines current applications of cognitive science to actor training and introduces embodied cognition and the enactive approach as a critical framework for understanding human experience. Chapter 2 introduces neurophenomenology as a methodology for addressing the hard problem of consciousness and argues for a move towards a transdisciplinary approach to the conscious experience of acting. Chapters 3 - 7 draw on Ward and Stapleton's identification of consciousness within an embodied cognition framework as 'embodied, enactive, embedded, affective and extended' to offer a re-configuration of the received thinking around the concepts of embodiment, action, perception, emotion and self as they are directly and indirectly incorporated within the framework and methodology of the Stanislavski system. The relationship between these five concepts within the process of experiencing is identified as a dynamic cognitive architecture within both the Stanislavski system and the embodied cognition framework.

Through a conceptual reframing of the Stanislavski system, this thesis provides a theoretical foundation toward the possibility of new transdisciplinary practices for actor training and supports a necessary reframing of the experience of acting as complex, adaptive and emergent from the intersubjective experience of embodiment.

PROFILE

Deirdre is an actor trainer, director and dramaturg living and working in London. Her professional credits include: National Theatre Studio, Shakespeare's Globe, Battersea Arts Centre, The Roundhouse, Dance City, Cambridge Junction, Finborough Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Powerhouse Theatre and New York Stage & Film.

In addition to her PhD research into actor training and embodied cognition, Deirdre has also published and presented work in the areas of performance and health in the UK and the US, drawing on her ongoing collaborations with intermedial artist and researcher Dr. Joanne Scott (University of Salford) exploring representations of altered states of consciousness in performance and Deirdre's own autobiographical experience of temporal lobe epilepsy.

Deirdre has been employed as a visiting lecturer and workshop leader at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, St Mary's University, Wimbledon College of Art, University of East London, Queen Mary University, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, Misericordia University, Apiary Studios, S.P.A.R.C. and New Voices for the Theatre.

Deirdre has a BFA from the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University (COPA) and an MA from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2014 VASTA (Voice & Speech Trainers Association Annual Conference), *Research as a Creative, Strategic Thinking Process*, London, UK.

2014 IFTR (International Federation of Theatre Research), *Déjà vu and the Looping Pedal: Constructing the Experience of Altered States of Consciousness within Live Intermedial Performance*, University of Warwick, UK

2014 AISB Keynote with Dr. Experience Bryon, *Embodiment in Not Just a Passing Fad – An Introductory Provocation*, Embodied Cognition, Acting & Performance Symposium, Goldsmiths University, UK.

2013 PSI (Performance Studies International), *Transmitted Thoughts: Who is the Receiver?*, PaR performance installation, Stanford University, Palo Alto, US.

2013 On Collaboration II, *Divergence/Convergence: Reflecting on Digital Activity and the Construction of Self in Collaborative Processes*, Middlesex University, UK.

2013 CPR (Colloquium on Performance Research), *Crossing Boundaries: Exploring the Potential for Interdisciplinary Research in Areas of Science and Performance*, RCSSD, London, UK.

2012 21st Century Leadership, *On Introspection, Leadership and Neuroscience*, Battersea Arts Centre, London, UK.

2011 Performing Research, *Emotions and the Actor-Craftsman: Exploring a Task-Based Perspective*, RCSSD, London.

2010 Performing Research, *REMIX: RE-Considering Models of Performance Research*, RCSSD, London, UK.

2008 Performing Research, *REMIX: Redefining Authorship*, RCSSD, London, UK.