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Abstract:

By means of an intertextual account, drawing on sources from sports, philosophy, theatre, politics and literature, this paper reveals where the sharp boundaries usually drawn between theatre and sport - and implicit value systems addressing training, competition, achievement, expression, identification and audience appreciation – are porous and malleable, with the individual body serving as the source point of complex action and exchange. This paper therefore also gives account of the complex relationships between spontaneity, subjectivity, control and conditioning that exist in both sport and theatre, to varying degrees along a continuum of possibilities, and where the personal performing body – able to write its own script and take action through embodied play – may invite equivalent risk, action and transformation in spectators. This paper forms part of an extended research project with the same title and offers some of the key observations that have arisen so far and which invite further investigation. (149 words)

Keywords: embodied, play, performance, action, script

Who's game? Embodied play in theatre and sport[1]

Introduction: Locating the playing field

In the motivation for a 2004 conference proposed by the Flemish Centre of the International Theatre Institute titled 'The Actor, Athlete of the Heart', the organizers[2] drew attention to the body of the actor – 'his physical presence, his physical expression, the quality of his movements' - and the impact that four pioneers of 'dramatic movement' (Meyerhold, Decroux, Grotowski and Le Coq) have had on contemporary theatre (p. 1). They affirmed the development of the physical actor has been a thread throughout the twentieth century, and positioned the conference as partly historical - looking back on the twentieth century as one in which 'a revaluation for the culture of the body and physical exercise emerged' (p. 2), and partly prospective – 'documenting the living archive of the physical actor in a theoretical and practical way' so as to 'stop inventing the same wheel over and over again' (p. 2)[3].

By means of an intertextual reading, drawing on sources from sports, philosophy, theatre, politics and literature, this paper pays particular attention to the phrase 'athlete of the heart' and its dual reference to contexts of sport and athleticism, art and expression. I acknowledge the overall stance of intertextuality in which '[a]ll literary works […] are "rewritten", if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them' (Eagleton in Chandler 2017) and that as a reader-writer, even an academic one with specialised knowledge, I am 'perform[ing] a kind of amateur archeology' (Chandler 2017) by excavating and re-assembling shards of texts from multiple contexts. This is done purposefully as a means of blurring 'the boundaries between texts and the world of lived experience' (Chandler 2017) in the hopes that 'by combining elements from different discourses […] language use can change the individual discourses and thereby, also, the social and cultural world' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p.7).

In his study *Players All: Performances in Contemporary Sport*, Rinehart (1998, p. 5) states 'the blurring of genres that is one facet of postmodernism demands an examination of formerly discrete performance niches' and offers an example that links theatre and sport:

> [T]here are many intertextually linked performance areas, such as poetry slams and praise poetry, which borrow from theater [sic] and are 'reputedly inspired

[1] This paper forms part of an extended research project with the same title and offers a distillation of some of the key themes that have emerged thus far.

[2] The conference was initiated and coordinated by Herman Verbeeck in co-operation with the University of Ghent. Verbeeck also authored a book of the same title - 'The Actor Athlete of the Heart' - in Dutch.

[3] 'The Actor, Athlete of the Heart' conference proposal and programme distributed by ITI Centre Flemish Community.

> by wrestling matches,' where 'three teams of judges hold up scorecards after each poem like their Olympic counterparts after judging a dive.'

Despite the apparent antagonism between theatre and sports (and perhaps more so in a country such as South Africa, where individuals and companies find themselves scrabbling for resources and infrastructure[4]), practitioners from both contexts can be seen to borrow terminology, theoretical frames and real-world applications from each other. Building further on Schechner's (1973, p. 120) observation that '[t]axonomy in a social science is based on structures that tend to blend into each other on a continuum rather than exist as compartments of "species" of events', an intertextual account reveals where the sharp boundaries usually drawn between theatre and sport - and implicit value systems addressing training, competition, achievement, expression, identification and audience appreciation – are porous and malleable, with *the performing body serving as the source point of complex action and exchange*: from the perspective of certain sports theorists, '[t]he physical movement of the body is the foremost indication of the effort exerted in playing a […] game' (Savage 2016, p. 395); which resonates with the perspective of theatre practitioners who reconfigure 'the individual body […] as the primary source of knowledge, identity and creative action in the world' (Reznek in Lewis & Kreuger 2016, p. 153).

"Go on, be a sport!"

In Western contexts of theatre and performance, Theatresports™ is one of the more recent, and perhaps popular, of performative events that purposefully blurs the boundaries between theatre and sport. The original Theatresports™ was founded by British theatre director, teacher and playwright Keith Johnston[5] and refers to improvisational performances in which the actors receive various instructions, a small collection of specified props and a limited amount of time in which to improvise a response - 'live' in front of the audience. The effects may range from the humorous to the dramatic to the absurd. The connection to sport in the name is suggestive of its competitive framing (participants may fail – be deemed 'boring', 'slow-paced', 'safe' or 'familiar' – and are scored with scorecards by a panel of judges); also, the rules of the game are

[4] In **Sport versus Art: A South African Contest** (2010), Chris Thurman observes that '[s]port and the arts may compete for sponsors and for public interest, but do they necessarily stand in opposition to one another?' His book is described as 'a collection of essays, commentaries, personal memoirs and humorous pieces attempting to answer […] questions about a fraught relationship at the heart of South Africa's public life' and is evidence of a growing interest in challenging the dichotomy that is often drawn between the two pursuits. http://witspress.co.za/catalogue/sport-versus-art/ [Accessed 22 August 2017].

[5] Keith Johnstone is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Calgary, past Associate Director of London's Royal Court Theatre, and co-founder of the Theatre Machine and Loose Moose Theatre Company. https://theatresports.org/keith-johnstone/ [Accessed 29 August 2017].

made explicit (for both performer and spectator) before and during the event[6]. The name further alludes to the verb 'to sport' – to play around with, to make fun of, to amuse and entertain; an energetic and lively encounter in which the unpredictable, and even the unacceptable, may arise. As Johnstone proclaims: 'The whole point is […] to take risks in public and when you screw up you stay happy and they like you'[7]. Actor Peter Coyote[8] has referred to it as 'the Olympics of Improvisation'[9], again reflecting its dual contextualisation in both theatre and sport.

Johnstone's awareness of the spectators as critical participants in the meaning-making and appreciative frame of the witnessed event is partly what moves Theatresports™ out of certain conventional contexts in which theatre is understood as a self-contained signifier of meaning (what Schechner (1973, p. 9) describes as theatre that 'segregate[s] actors from audiences in order to maintain an illusion of actuality'), towards more avant-garde contexts in which theatre (the domain of the actors/script) and performance (the domain of the audience) enter a more dynamic exchange. Theatresports™ invites a more participatory and expansive context, one in which the audience is not only called upon to respond with a physical gesture of finality or completion at the curtain call, but may interact and engage with the performers more immediately and continuously throughout the event - with gestures, postures and vocalisations: actor/improviser Shawn Kinley describes the audience 'engaging whole heartedly' and on occasion 'screaming and almost jumping out of their seats' (2013). Johnstone's original impetus for creating Theatresports™ was the exaltation he recognized in spectators at wrestling matches and he fantasized about replacing the wrestlers with improvisers:

> Wrestling was the only form of working-class theatre I had seen, and that exaltation among the spectators was something I longed for, but didn't get, from 'straight' theatre – perhaps because 'culture' is a minefield in which an unfashionable opinion can explode your self-esteem[10].

This exploding of self-esteem is, paradoxically, sought after in Theatresports™; not in the way it may be experienced in normative social conditions, inviting shame and embarrassment, but

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[6] I acknowledge Sterchele's (2015, p. 98, emphasis added) observation that '[s]port is a contested concept which is used with different meanings to indicate a variety of physical activities' but that 'this concept is primarily used with reference to *performance-oriented competitive physical activity*'.

[7] Johnstone, K., 2008. Transcript from the video 'Taking Risks'. https://theatresports.org/history-of-theatresports/ [Accessed 20 August 2017]

[8] Peter Coyote is an American actor, author, director, screenwriter and narrator who played a key role in supporting Theatresports™ during its inception.

[9] https://theatresports.org [Accessed 24 August 2017]

[10] Johnstone, K., 'History of Theatresports' https://theatresports.org/history-of-theatresports/ [Accessed 24 August 2017].

rather in the sense of the purposeful abandonment of stereotypical behaviours, predictable mannerisms and conventional narratives. The use of words such as 'exaltation', 'minefield' and 'explode' in Johnstone's phrasing points to the presence and liberation of a destabilising current, a force that is intense, immediate and non-negotiable - a force that some may define as destructive, whilst others may perceive as cathartic or resurrecting. In 1988, journalist Martin Portus observed the growing popularity of Theatresports™ in Australia, and described it as 'a theatrical production somewhere between a revivalist meeting and a football orgy' (cited in Dudeck, p. 157). Theatresports™ is thus intended to engage 'the audience in a way that makes them respond openly, as one might do at a sporting event, and has them thinking and talking about the performance afterwards.' And Johnstone's original impetus for Theatresports™ was not only to invite such dynamism and awakening in the audience, but also the actors: 'to make them more spontaneous, responsive and alive in their work'[11].

The vital body and its patterns of action

A key consideration in Johnstone's phrasing above is that of 'thinking and talking about the performance *afterwards*': the primary encounter with a Theatresports™ event is intended to be spontaneous, immediate, vital and visceral; the follow-on encounter may then take on a more contemplative, critical, intellectual and discursive approach. This reinstatement of the personal body as a vitalising force is similarly recognized by Rinehart (1998, p. 4) in his thesis on the parallels between certain contemporary theatre practices and sport: he proposes a key shared characteristic as '[i]nstillment of audience/reader into artistic (and athletic) performance […] in an arena in which artists (or athletes) are "discussing personal realities" with their audience'.

The nature of the 'discussing' being referred to is to be understood in the same way that many contemporary theatre practitioners understand it – not solely as a worded, textual encounter but as a 'plural field' or 'dynamic dialogue' (Fleishman 1997, p. 200). Mark Fleishman[12] (1997, pp. 200-201), speaking more specifically about 'the physical body with its potential for dramatic action' in a South African context, situates the body of the performer as a 'source of primary meaning' that 'serves as part of the text in its own right'. The actors in Theatresports™ do engage in worded dialogue; but the primary emphasis is not on gaining meaning through an interpretation of what is being said, but rather through *how* it is being said; or rather, how what is being said is complementary to other indicators of significance. A similar approach is taken

[11] 'Who is Keith Johnstone?' https://theatresports.org/keith-johnstone/ [Accessed 24 August 2017].
[12] Mark Fleishman is a professor in the Drama Department at the University of Cape Town and co-artistic director of Magnet Theatre.

by physical theatre practitioners, whereby a 'text is created through improvisation, a physical process in which gesture exists before and alongside words as an independent sign system' (Fleishman 1997, p. 201). In the contemporary ensemble work of the North American Cultural Laboratory (NACL), a similar emphasis is placed on rendering 'comprehensible and vibrant the actions of the performative body' so that the body 'inscribes the various resonances and meanings of the performance text' with clarity, precision and style (Krumholz 2016, p. 218).

A distinguishing feature of the orientation towards the performer's body in such cases is not whether words are, or are not, spoken, but where the 'script' is believed to reside. In an article written in the earliest stages of the emergence of Performance Theory, Schechner (1973, p. 7) referred to scripts as 'patterns of doing' that 'pre-exist any given enactment, […] act as a blueprint for the enactment, and […] persist from enactment to enactment'. It is to these 'patterns of doing' in individual performers, as well as ensembles and collectives, that many contemporary directors and choreographers deliberately turn: Gary Gordon[13] (2010, p. 37) describes the 'nexus of personal histories and memories [in performers as] the catalyst for choreographic invention, articulating felt and lived experiences'. This nexus – or point of converging subjectivities – as the source of a theatrical script, resonates with a statement made by Barba that '[t]he word text, before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscripted text, meant "a weaving together". In this sense, there is no performance which does not have "text"' (in Houston 1995, p. 2).

Perhaps it is this recognition of the coherency and agency – the purposeful bringing together and shaping of human capabilities - in the body of the performer that leads Berlin (2006, p. 23, emphasis added) to describe boxing as 'drama without a text, the boxers *writing their own script* with their bodies and their movement […]'. This recalls Schechner's (1973, p. 8) relative positioning of script and drama: whereas drama refers specifically to '[a] written text, score, scenario, instruction, plan, or map' that 'can be taken from place to place or time to time independent of the person who carries it', in the case of a script, such detachment of medium or messenger from message is not possible: 'the transmitter of the script must know the script and be able to teach it to others'. This notion of being able to teach it to others suggests a depth, or embodiment, of knowledge and an awareness of how personal and collective patterns of action may translate across contexts; and is especially apparent in the work of theatre groups where ensemble and improvisational practice are foregrounded. In an interview with Gordon, Praeg

[13] Gary Gordon was former Head of the Drama Department at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, as well as the originator and Artistic Director of The First Physical Theatre Company which was launched as a professional company in 1993.

observes how this transmission of knowledge is perceived and practiced in the creative process of The First Physical Theatre Company: '[the] insistence on an embodied presence, or what you have called "physical intelligence', has upended notions of the performer as a passive, "docile" (via Foucault) body awaiting the instructions of the choreographer-god' (Praeg 2010, p. 30-31). This transmission between actor and audience (or some might say performer-onstage and performer-offstage) is necessarily visceral, sensual and muscular as much as it is cerebral – an embodied gestalt. Grotowski (in Grotowski, Schechner and Chwat 1968, p. 30) offers a clear idea of this process of transmission through the performer's ability to recognize, expose and shape action: 'the creative process exists […] in not only revealing ourselves, but structuring what is revealed'.

These statements situate the individual body of the performer, and their process of scripting meaning through a dynamic interplay between exposure and illusion, seriousness and play, technique and revelation, athleticism and poetry, at the heart of theatre – and for some this is true in certain contexts of sport as well. Berlin (2006, p. 27, emphasis added) offers the following description of the 'best boxer':

> We see [not] only the body but how that body moves informs us about the mind, and in the great fighter body and mind cannot be separated. Strength of body, agility of mind, the ability to improvise, in fact, *creativity on the spot* - these, added to an inner reserve that allows one to go on despite the fatigue and pain - all are qualities possessed by the best, and the best boxers provide the fans with emotions that are peculiar to boxing alone.

Berlin's observation contains many interpretations of the qualities 'possessed by the best' that are similarly used to describe the actor or performer: a psychophysical unity that expresses both spontaneity and discipline, intimacy and revelation, idea and action in the 'living moment'. And his reference to 'providing the fans with emotions' recalls the motivation of many Theatresports™ performers/improvisers which is to engage, inspire and provoke the audience through the honest and immediate sharing of emotions, feelings and non-verbal nuances – an awareness of reciprocity that is borne in situations of risk.

The embodiment of risk

In Berlin's (2006, pp. 23-24) association of boxing with theatre 'before theatre became associated with words' he acknowledges the influence of Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Julian Beck and Judith Malina of the Living Theatre, and the Open Theatre, who were 'striving to bring back a kind of bedrock reality, stressing the physical, the body, movement and gesture

[…] forcing audiences to fully participate in the present experience that only theater [sic] can provide'. Other descriptors used by Berlin (2006, pp. 24-25) to demonstrate this correlation are: 'primary, raw'; 'elemental, immediate' and 'controlled violence'.

These descriptors are not all that different to those given by physical theatre practitioners speaking of the visceral nature of their work, and their positioning of the performer's body in a context which is immediate, impactive and intense. *Shattered Windows* (1993), one of the early works performed by The First Physical Theatre Company, is described by Gordon (in Praeg 2010, p. 39) as 'a jarring and disturbing physicality': 'the performance mode itself […] was corporeal, immediate and frightening'. In his description of the power of two other seminal works, *The Unspeakable Story* (1995) and *Bessie's Head* (2000), Gordon (in Praeg 2010, p. 39) foregrounds 'the multiple sounds and fractal images that delight and confuse the senses'. It is in these contexts of performance as action, where the 'logic, grammar or rhetoric' (Lehmann in Keefe & Murray 2007) of the living actor are replaced by '"presence", […] charisma or "vibrancy"' as primary meaning-makers, that 'an exchange between performer-spectator which goes beyond the cerebral understanding of the work, and takes us into a territory that is sensual and visceral' (Keefe & Murray 2007), may occur.

In his analysis of DV8 Physical Theatre Company, Houston (1995, p. 1) observes that it is 'the body and its energy' that provide the 'raw materials' for physical theatre, and 'the experience of action is the means by which the spectator's psychic state is affected'. Although the staging of DV8's work does not include the directly vocalised audience interactions encouraged in Theatresports, there is nevertheless an equivalent foregrounding of the personal, vital body as the source of the script and the potential impact this may have on audience members: 'Risk is seen to occur as the spectators confront their potential to reconsider subjectivity and the Real, through experience of the theatre event' (Houston 1995).

This foregrounding of action as the heart of performance can be viewed as a political strategy – one that demands a certain degree of accountability through immersion and centrality of both the performer and the spectator's body, not solely the exchange of ideas - no matter how critical the consciousness that originates or engages such ideas.

> To the extent that the body was mistaken for mere form, as a cover for meaning contained within, all political moments have been expressed in terms of consciousness. If the body is recognized both for its material substance and its lived practice, then it too presents the possibility of a politics. (Martin 1990, p.7)

For Hastrup (1998, pp 29-31), it is ‘the magnitude of action’ in the actor – the ‘investment of themselves in a process of becoming what they are not’ – that gives theatre the power to be a ‘moving force in the world’. In a similar way and in relation to boxing, Berlin (2006, p. 28) acknowledges that ‘each performance is distinct and impermanent and irretrievable’; but he cites Joyce Carrol Oates’s description of ‘a boxing match as "serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude"’ such that ‘the fight will enter memory, both personal memory and collective memory’.

Fleishman offers an example of how foregrounding embodied action in theatre may lead to the metamorphosis of fixed signs and the transformation of their related meanings. He describes a scenario from *Weird Sex in Maputo (A Love Story)* (1993), by South African playwright and director Chris Pretorius, using the language of both sport and art/theatre:

> What begins as sexual foreplay, in a jerky, almost haphazard fashion, slowly begins to transform into a desperate, violent dance which at times included the knock-about humour of the wrestling match, at other times what seems like highly serious violent intent. […] Meanings proliferate and the end product is a ‘text’ of physical poetry which could not have been simply composed in words. (Fleishman 1997, p. 205)

In some instances within both theatre and sport contexts, then, this ‘writing of the text’ through the individual performer in collaboration with others takes place through improvisational activities *in rehearsal* as a means of liberating and shaping implicit patterns of action; in other instances, this scripting happens ‘live’, *during performance*, with little prior ‘anchoring’ of meaning by means of scripted dialogue, codified gestures or choreographed relationships; in others still, the prior ‘anchoring’ of meaning is foregrounded, fixed and rehearsed, but with the intention of supporting ‘the spontaneous effort […] of the lived body’ (Savage 2016, p. 395) *it its performance.* Mexican *lucha libre* (free fighting) offers another interesting example of a sport that is ‘staged’ between two or more contestants ‘who compete not as themselves but as [morally coded] characters’ (Levi 1997, p. 57). Levi proposes that the ‘fundamental difference between professional wrestling and, say, soccer is not that one is drama and the other sport, but that as sports they represent different types of drama’; and she thus positions Mexican wrestling in the mode of melodrama.

For many theatre and sport practitioners, then, the degree to which the spontaneous effort of the performing body is made present and visible to spectators is a primary methodology, supporting Barba’s (in Hastrup 1998, p..) observation that ‘[i]t is our actions which, *in spite of us*, make us expressive’. These paradoxical statements - ‘forcing audiences to fully participate’,

'spontaneous effort', 'violent dance' and 'controlled violence' - bring to the fore the complex relationships between spontaneity, subjectivity, control and conditioning that exist in both sport and theatre, to varying degrees along a continuum of possibilities. They recall Grotowski's acknowledged paradox of *conjunctio oppositorum*, in which bodily impulses are simultaneously liberated and constrained in a frame of witnessing or shared participation.

Entering the field of play

At this point, a return to the analogy offered by Berlin (2006, p. 23) earlier – that '[boxing] is drama without a text, the boxers writing their own script with their bodies and their movement' - becomes significant, especially when considering his follow-on observation that this is akin to an 'agon not imagined but realized in the here and now'. Agon is a phrase that offers some insight into the overlaps and convergences between theatre and sport. A simplistic definition of agon, originating from the Greek word *agōn,* is 'conflict', and could refer to a number of situations in which conflict is present, including: athletics contests, charioteering games, horse races, court cases or political debates. Historically, agons were prize-giving events or festivals in Greece. As Savage (2016, p. 391) observes: 'The agonistic spirit of the Greek Olympics is evident in sporting events where competitors or teams strive against one another'. It is this heritage that perhaps leads many contemporary practitioners to place the emphasis on the winning, or competitive, aspect of sport. But agon is also evident in drama and literature referring to 'the dramatic conflict between the chief characters'[14] and it is easy to assume that this conflict must entail violence and victory. But as pointed out by Hatab (2002) – in an article assessing to what extent Nietzche's theory of agonistics could be applied to contemporary democracy – a simplistic reading of agon as simply referring to annihilating opposites is insufficient. Hatab (2002, p. 135) explains that a 'radical agonistics rules out violence, because violence is actually an impulse to eliminate conflict by annihilating or incapacitating an opponent, bringing the agon to an end'. In this sense, the paradoxical presence of 'controlled violence' referred to earlier comes into play. Hatab (2002, p. 135, emphasis added) interprets Nietzche's application of agon as potentially beneficial in the maintenance of democratic relations with the following:

> The self is constituted in and through what it opposes and what opposes it; in other words, the self is formed through agonistic relations. Therefore, any annulment of one's Other would be an annulment of one's self in this sense. *Competition can be understood as a shared activity for the sake of fostering*

[14] 'Agon' https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/agon [Accessed 26 August 2017].

high achievement and self-development, and therefore as an intrinsically social activity.

In *Athletes Play to Play*, Hyland asserts that: 'If (and I mean this as an if) there is a real "telos," a real end or "ultimate" that leads some of us to athletic competition, I think it is something like this: *we want to play*' (2015, p. 31, author's emphasis). A similar sentiment - with winning positioned as *an* objective, but not necessarily *the sole* objective - is offered by Araujo (2016), who observes 'the first priority of an athlete is not to be healthy, but rather to perform remarkably well' and in this intention, he argues, 'athletes resemble artists, acrobats, actors, dancers, and musicians'[15]. Hyland's first accent is on 'we *want*', since she writes in response to an assertion made by another author on sports, Paul Gaffney, that winning, or victory, is of primary importance; her second emphasis is on 'to *play'* with the suggestion that the performative frame is one that invites a creative and dynamic search for 'ideal' human action, where winning and inventing are synergistic.

Savage (2016, p. 393) observes that 'exemplary athletic performances evince the relation between effort, desire, and the power to act inscribed in the human condition'. It is in the realm of play (whether in sport or theatre) that impulses within the personal body towards violence - either obliteration of other/opponent, or negation of self/player - are realized, observed, managed and transformed: 'winning or losing becomes secondary to the quality of the performance and the character of the performer' (Berlin 2006, p. 27). The main distinguishing characteristic of play 'is not its content, but rather its mode' (Okagbue 1997, p. 96); it is in the field of play as a performative act that the subjective body as both the medium and the message, the container and the liberator, comes to the fore. Savage (2016, p. 393) observes the theoretical unity between structure and play such that 'the game consists in the self-structuring movement of the play'. In the 'serious play' of theatre and sport, the individual human being is repeatedly but differentially tasked with finding strategies of engagement as they are confronted with 'the porousness and interchangeability between reality and illusion' (Okagbue 1997, p. 96), navigating 'playworlds that are the slippery ground of contingent being and experience' (Schechner cited in Okagbue 1997, p. 96). In a paradox of action, the 'game demands that the players give themselves completely to it' which leads to a 'spontaneity of […] effort' that 'relieves the players of the strain of real life-choices' (Savage 2016, p. 394).

[15] Araujo, C. G. S., 2016. The terms 'Athlete' and 'Exercisers' http://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2016/06/27/07/06/the-terms-athlete-and-exercisers [Accessed 6 September 2017].

Neither games nor improvisations are free of structures, rules, agreed upon codes and conventions. In these contexts, the body is not immaculately liberated of all limitations, challenges and obstacles. But for some theatre and sports practitioners, the sense that the individual enactor is being offered the opportunity to *inform* these rules in a recursive manner, to feel empowered by working within and simultaneously transforming the structures, is critical. In Theatresports™, performers must surely call upon scripts of behaviour informed by their culture, biology, prior experience and training, and personal preferences to enact a scenario. This is true of other 'improvisational' performances, too. But these approaches to theatre-making are also aimed at recognizing, revealing and, where possible, transforming the tacit scripts that inform human behaviour – whether these be pre-linguistic, emotional, verbal or physical - to avoid performances that are boring, prescriptive, dull, didactic, predictable or egoic. As Praeg observes: 'Technique can […] become complicit in producing an overly designed body capable of producing skill and reproduction, but not invention' (Praeg 2010, p. 31). This sacrificing of safety to illicit immediacy and illumination in the actions of the performing body is captured in Grotowski's observation that 'if [the actor] does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse, then he does not sell his body but sacrifices it' (in Hastrup [ ], pp. 34-35). For Berlin (2006, p. 27), the great boxer must similarly 'go to the limit of his possibility': 'He must be master of his own body, must discipline himself to prepare that body for action and for pain, and he must endure'.

Play then 'is the antidote for the mechanical and fascist body. Play is what […] delivers [the body] from the confines of the fixed discipline of the gymnastic body' (Reznek in Lewis & Krueger 2016, p. 157).

> The choice to enter the field of play and to submit to the rules of the game constitutes a form of consent that on the practical level of our everyday lives sets our wills, desires, and efforts against the illusory wish for absolute freedom. (Savage 2016, p. 393)

Offering an equally paradoxical notion, Berlin (2006 p. 32) observes that 'the great boxer seems to be condemned to action, possessing an impulse to self destruction which, at the same time, is an impulse to self definition'. Individual bodies are still 'socialized' (one might even say conditioned into tractability) through improvisation and games, but into new behaviours perceived as beneficial for the individual and the group, and originating (at least in part) from 'the specificity of identity' and the 'creative release of [subjective] difference' (Reznek in Lewis & Krueger 2016, pp. 157-158).

Conclusion

In 1973, Schechner was able to identify 'an increasing attention to the seams that apparently weld […] drama to script to theatre to performance', even though he did not posit a reason for this increased attention on the 'structural welds' (p. 9). Over two decades later, Rinehart (1998, p. 33) observation that '[t]he metaphor of drama has come to represent and signify twentieth-century sport for the public, sport scholars, and media alike' attests to this trend. Part of Schechner's argument at that time (and a key focus of attention in ongoing performance studies) is that the patterns of thinking abstractly captured in the written words of a Western drama are seen to have displaced the more active sense of scripts as 'codes for the transmission of action'. It is in these accounts of the significance that can be found in 'the seams that weld', in the codes usually relegated to the margins as functional, operational, decorative or idiosyncratic, that overlaps can be found between perceptions of the performing body as having agency and cultural impact in both theatre and sport: 'our bodies are our mode of incarnation in the world' (Savage 2016, p. 392-393).

In closing, I would like to refer to Okagbue's 'play-seriousness [or efficacy-entertainment] axis' – which he identifies as a useful heuristic platform for exploring and fixing the theatre-ritual interplay' (1997, p. 101) – as a useful means to reflect on the theatre-sport interplay. There are as many examples of theatre that tend towards the symbol and seriousness of ritual and drama, as there are of sports that tend towards the metaphor and playfulness of entertainment and games; and many more still of both that reveal differential points along the continuum, blurring broad and easily discernible categories. Within the individual performing body exists a lived experience of this play-seriousness axis leading to the dynamic 'intertwining of the "official and everyday body"' (Murray & Keefe 2006, p. 22), 'the master of muscles' and 'the master of the heart', the desire to win and the desire to perform well – and it is this differential subjective vitality that continues to inspire and sustain contemporary theatre and sport practices.

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