

REHEARSAL*REVERSAL experiment 3: Structured Spontaneity.

By: Goossun Art-illery, DK - Modern Times Stage Company, CAN - Laboratoriet, DK

Daily reports by Sue Balint

Day One

Mon, 11 Jan 2010

The first day was, in my mind, to learn the vocabulary, to start to get a feel for things and let everything wash over me in a way...the lay of the land. Learning the entire vocabulary in one day however is impossible... I'm perhaps starting to learn the alphabet.

The elements are many, and continue to surprise, I feel like the performers have a 'bag of tricks' that are slowly being unpacked and unveiled and we sit and watch the sequences performed over and over and new layers continue to be added....layers of vocals, movements, different perspectives. As the different perspectives of Rashomon, which we watched near the end of the day yesterday, there are many and I'm not sure if one could ever say one was definitive or true. Hardly the point. Each has its unique truth.

The performers - Dafne, Steve, Julia - are committed completely and run their sequences repeatedly with admirable concentration and commitment. Vahid likes to challenge, certainly - taking a piece of paper off the wall - a Danish sign post - and giving it to Steve to be read while Dafne runs her sequence again. No harm there - we try, experiment, pronunciation or *meaning* hardly the key.

More tools for the mouth to work their way around.

More tools to add to the box, that continually opens, unfolds, gives birth...

Day Two

Tue, 12 Jan 2010

More vocabulary - sorry, alphabet - to add to the toolbox. There is something unique in this room with so many interests, disciplines, cultures at work together for what yet I'm not quite sure.

At the end of day today, I had my interview with the Stefani brothers. So early it feels in the process to at all encapsulate where we are and where *my head* is at. When they ask of Vahid's training method - I can only humbly offer my opinion. My own understanding to date. Surely the readings of Grotowski and Mamet before arriving were extremely useful and instructive - and also watching the training at Odin during the latter half of this afternoon. When they ask of the 'unknowns' and what I envision HamletZar eventually will be...I can only imagine and this is the excitement and the challenge, yes? To be lead on a journey unlike one I've had before.

I've been taking notes, mostly, to date. Making broad connections too - looking up some poetry and more academic texts to compliment some of the initial ideas I have in the visual imagery I see unfolding in the sequences.

And so interested to see where all this will lead tomorrow. Soheil feels like my only 'known' element in this process - at least to a certain extent - I am familiar with his work and more importantly, *way* of working. It will be different and may bring a new perspective to the sequences, the direction of the piece. With Debbie, the other writing, taking the lead on text tomorrow, I feel I need to wait and see - more time to allow things to wash over me and take them in...I'm interested in whether her writing is narrative, expository, abstract...I have no idea. How will it work? What will her text and Soheil's perspective create? I feel I need to see this and decide on my own direction after I see some of what happens. Maybe it will point in the direction I should take or, certainly, it will give me a better idea of what excites the collaborators most.

Tomorrow will be a fascinating day, to be sure.

Day Three

Wed, 13 Jan 2010

An interesting day, as anticipated. With the first chance to see Soheil working with group, it was bound to be different. The discussion after the morning work was interesting - Steve noted the contrasts between the experience he had working with both Vahid and Soheil's aesthetics...he asked how we might bridge this internal, individual world with the outer one, with relationships and an outside 'scenario' applied?

This is one of my hopes - that the bridge between the two working methods (Soheil and Vahid's) might be clarified and explored. There is much to get from both methods - and perhaps the bridge between the two is where I find most interesting. The abstract requires a concrete base for the performers. And for everyone else as well. To know where we're 'steering' the boat. I am still learning this myself.

Did the stick work today - Soheil's first exploration with spying and detecting? For me, yes, it could have been smaller, slighter...if the performer believes he/she is hidden, then the stick makes them so. Entirely believable. The simplicity, for me, can be magic.

I'm glad actually, that Debbie has had her day in the lead for text first - so that I saw how it went - what worked, what didn't... and riff off that tomorrow. To write too much text, to bring into the room, doesn't seem the best strategy or most useful given such a short time to work through. Perhaps scenarios, single lines, ideas are better to bring for exploration. Handing Soheil several pages of text could very well be overwhelming and drown the performers in memorizing and/or distractions.

I have asked for some blank staff sheet music, perhaps a little vocal scoring or pictorial ideas the performers can work with - based on gibberish, rhythm, single lines, etc. A good exercise also for me to 'pare down' to the basics of text. No - to narrative, exposition and the like - how little text does there need to be to get the meaning across? This perhaps comes closest to the ideas expressed by Mamet and Soheil's search for the 'essence' of any given material.

Soheil and I have had a great chat this evening (me with the advantage of sharing a flat with him) in addition to my meeting with Vahid and Barbara earlier... I think I have a good direction to pursue for

tomorrow, which is as much writing in advance as collaboration (dramaturgically) during the day. Very excited to see how it goes...

Action and Intention. This is the thing.

Day Four

Thurs, 14 Jan 2010

A good day - things starting to come together. It's nice to see the elements - the vocabulary & toolbox expanding - and new relationships being formed between the individual sequences, individual postures, hand gestures, elements of 'spying', 'killing' with flowers, etc. that Soheil has introduced.

These are the points, visually, I find most exciting...when two previously unconnected images 'click' together and make new context.

The process is evolving, Soheil deciding where to explore next based on the previous session. It is difficult, I find, to find my 'throughline' or which direction I want to write in (or should I be writing at all?) Or working more dramaturgically on the images that emerge and suggesting ways to edit them together. My head's a bit muddled at the end of today, actually. I'd like to make a list of all the elements and tools this evening and see if I can 'cut' them together in a new way. Perhaps then the text would become more obvious.

A good meeting with Vahid and Barbara helped clarify some things and give us a 'plan' for tomorrow's work. I am very much planning on following the Mamet idea of cutting together elements I've seen throughout the week - into a storyboard of sorts and we'll see where it takes me from there.

Such a challenge - I feel Debbie and I in many ways have the most difficult role to navigate and the daily meetings to help us collect our thoughts are really useful. Love the challenge of 'the experiment'. If we can 'get inside Soheil's process' and his head...all the better.
(love to know myself!)

Day Five

Fri, 15 Jan 2010

Really interesting day...difficult, challenging, all those things...

Debbie and I were both asked to bring in our version of a 'scene'...working with Soheil for a session. Going first has its hazards for sure so mine was perhaps more of a 'trial' session. It was ok, but the process was further refined for the afternoon session - and of course another 20 tries at it would make things progressively focused.

There was talk as well and I did find the talk at the end of the day quite useful - in clarifying what it is we're looking for here, doing here, trying to arrive at. Speaking with Barbara at lunch - The Lab is a

very unusual place and it does take one a while to get one's head around the luxury of time to explore and experiment, with no 'product' required. Artists are accustomed to creating 'product' after all - or accustomed *to be expected* to... So this is both great and challenging, to not have that requirement at week's end.

I'm washing my head around the ideas and distinctions of tools, techniques & aesthetics. I am clear for the purposes of this experiment what the terminology defines. Am I also debating the subjective qualities of each...for sure. But that's another experiment.

Aesthetic is easier to distinguish...some tools are so basic, have been used so long, it's difficult to remember their tools anymore. Something specific like the tool of the 'chair game' - I'm interested to see how that translates into work Vahid will do during the last two days. I don't know what this tool will discover, but fascinating to see how it all comes together now.

I'm glad were having our discussion as well - really adds to the process and to keep track of what the other perspectives in the room are.

Contextualization...for Debbie and I are minds immediately go to contextualization through narrative and story. I'm trying to figure out the other methods - more abstract - of doing this. Which feels like a giant puzzle still - but I think the key has something to do with accepting that the context can be different for each of us (or each audience member). That we don't have to impose one story, one explanation, but just present the element for each to contextualize based on personal history, knowledge, impulse.

How does a writer do this? Contextualize with *imposing*?

Day Six

Sat, 16 Jan 2010

The conversation in the morning was quite fantastic actually - a forensic kind of excavating of some of the source materials that have formed the sequences. So great, and also great that this was only 'revealed' today. A real joy in the discovery I think and while my initial thought was that this must make Vahid quite nervous - the potential sabotage effect of telling the secrets, it'd not so cut and dry and I think Dafne explained best over lunch - it's fine that those secrets are revealed because the other layer of secrets (the context for *her*, which only she knows) remains solely with her.

Seeing the Blue Period paintings that informed Blue and the 'death' photos that played prior to the start of Dafne's performance piece... If the photos were played as a slideshow throughout the performance, this would be a visual 'voiceover' actually - one of the 'tools' we're investigating. I was a little stumped about how to contextualize without a narrative story or realistic monologue/dialogue anyway...but this was a bit of a joy to realize a slidewho of images during a performance would be an example of a 'visual' voiceover - which indicates there must be other possibilities too, to contextualize (with voiceover, other other method) that not so linear or obvious at the moment.

A good discovery and hope for future discoveries.

And - 'a new montage' this afternoon - a first really good look, I felt, at the way Vahid works at the next 'stage' of composition. This was really great to see - Dafne and Steve using the tool of the chair game as a structure for blocking, essentially, around the space while carrying on with their sequences and adjusting the tempo and fine tuning some of the details to account for the relationship developing between them throughout the exercise.

Debbie and I were also reading out texts from various sources as per Vahid's directions - from a collection of 'found' texts (Godot, assassination lists) and original writing from ourselves and the other participants based on the 'objects' brought in.

Difficult to listen while being part of the reading but was trying to get a sense of how/when this was effective or added something to the goings-on. There is a joy in the 'accidental' discoveries during these exercises, when music and movement and text coincide in an interesting way without warning. A good working tool for exploration - this is a discovery to take home myself for collective creation processes.

Day Seven

Sun, 17 Jan 2010

Final day - we begin by seeing Dafne and Steve's sequences as they are in their more 'concrete form. Interesting to see with the added costumes and props add and how that informed the way we had been watching the sequences throughout the week.

Dafne's clapping/laughing - Lost in Translation. Of course... Julia's music, kind of lovely, reminds me of Olivia Tremor Control stuff. A Claude Monet painting introduced some of the elements - numerical basis for the 'rules' Vahid laid down prior to creation. Then a hybrid of three storylines/texts - Godot, Hedda Gabler and the chair game. Julia's composition also made an appearance.

Lots of layers and time to see how they might combine in new way.

For me, the music really helps locate a rhythm in the pieces. I find things more 'alive' to watch when music accompanies the work, I feel like the performers become more aware of the rhythm as well and it forces a tempo change. The rhythm's there throughout, but the music clarifies. Personal preference as well. But a good tool.

Barbara's dramaturgical breakdown of the work very helpful to me - how each of the elements served a specific 'goal' - establishing theme, character, tempo, etc. If we can look at it this way, we can understand the tools we have to play with an adjust / re-arrange the elements to serve the story being told.

A final 'presentation' of sorts was really great to experience - that and the final discussion brought things to a good place. So many questions still, which is the point of The Lab, no?