Choreographing Time
Temporality in Choreography from the Perspective of a Solo Improviser

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Abstract

Choreographing Time is a practice-led research project exploring how the temporality of improvisational material can be articulated to affect the attention of the audience. The research investigates how the intersubjectivity between performer and audience affects the regulation of time in solo improvisation and contributes to the performance making process. Focusing on developing the performer’s capacity for attention, the two main areas of research underpinning this investigation are Noh theatre and BodyMind Centering® (BMC), a form of somatic practice. In addition, this research combines practical investigation with the theory of ‘self-other’ in neurophysiology and the phenomenological study of perceptual experience to inform the consideration of temporality in the performance of solo improvisation. The methodology includes practices drawn from Noh Theatre, in particular, the application of the temporal concept of jo-ha-kyū in improvisation, movement exploration derived from BMC, together with methods for critical experimentation and analysis of choreographic strategies including reflective writing, reportage and audience interviews. The theoretical and studio research resulted in the presentation of the new solo work 17 Square Brackets with its improvisational score speculating on the conditions of the body to generate performative material. This research proposes further investigation that will seek to integrate fields of knowledge within Western and Eastern disciplines to impart new ways of approaching improvised performance making. This is aimed to enable a coherent experience, which is mutually shared between the performer and audience.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

The thesis comprises only my original work for the Master of Fine Arts (Dance) except where indicated.

Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to the theoretical references and how materials have been used.

The thesis is less than 20,000 words in length, exclusive of appendices and bibliography.

Signed:

Date: July 5, 2017
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Introduction

This introduction outlines the background of the research project and traces the emergence of temporality as a significant research interest in my improvisation and choreographic practice. To show how I have experimented with the notion of time prior to this research, I refer to the experience of my solo dance works, Orbit (2014) and Solo in Three Locations (2014), which laid the foundations of my current practice and uncovered two main influences of my research – Noh theatre¹ and Body-Mind Centering®. I then outline the questions that have guided this research, establish the aim and scope, and discuss the methodology underpinning my practice-led approach. This introduction includes the outline of each chapter in the dissertation.

In my choreographic practice, my study in Noh theatre has been one of the most important influences. In 2009, I travelled to Kyoto, Japan, to study with Master-actor Udaka Michishige, the founder of the International Noh Institute (INI) and the leader of the chorus of the Kongo School. Udaka is both a professional Noh actor and a mask-carver who performs numerous leading roles and exhibits Noh masks extensively in Japan and internationally. Historically, his artistic practice belongs to the living tradition of Noh theatre, where knowledge is passed down through generations dating back to the 14th century. One of the most important aspects of Udaka’s pedagogy is the performer’s connection to the audience and the performance space, which I brought to this research, along with philosophical and artistic principles of Noh.

¹ Noh theatre 能, or Nōgaku 能楽, is the Japanese mask dance-drama originated in the 12th-14th Century. It was evolved from popular forms of entertainment, Sarugaku 猿楽 – song-and-dance, spoken words and magic tricks, and Dengaku 田楽 – folk rituals and customs in agricultural communities. Not until the early 17th Century, Noh was known as Sarugaku no Noh 猿楽の能.
Essentially, Udaka’s pedagogy is about passing on Noh, its philosophy and practice, from one body to another. Agnostic to the age, genders and cultural backgrounds of his students, Udaka is committed to train all students with the exacting discipline of traditional Noh training while accommodating individual student’s needs. For international students without a high level of Japanese language skill, audio-visual and written material in both Japanese and English is provided to communicate the repertoire fully, along with additional practice sessions with Udaka’s assistant teachers, Ogamo Rebecca-Teele and Dr Diego Pellachia. At the foundation level, the repertoires are taught as short dances (shimai 仕舞い) and songs or chanting (utai 謡い), before advancing to the longer, more complex and challenging work of the more advanced levels.

Through my study with Udaka, I discovered that Noh is a traditional art form for contemporary audiences of today, in the same way that older Noh plays spoke to the audiences of their time. I have had the privilege to observe the practice of contemporary Noh where the creative process of a new work is still evolving. In 2003, Udaka drew upon his life-long experience of the Noh tradition to create Heiwa no Inori-Genshigumo (A Prayer for Peace-the Atomic

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2 Born in Texas, Ogamo Rebecca Teele became the first non-Japanese member of the Noh Performers’ Association in 1996. She has been studying Noh and mask carving with Udaka since 1972 and received her Kongō-ryū shihan (certified instructor) license in 1980. She has given lectures, demonstrations and workshops on Noh in the US, Brazil and New Zealand. Teele was awarded the Kyoto Prefecture Akebono Prize for contributions by women to the prefecture in 2003.

3 Dr Diego Pellachia is Associate Professor at Kyoto Sangyo University, Faculty of Cultural Studies. He has published widely on Noh theatre and its reception outside Japan and is currently obtaining Kongō-ryū shihan license. In 2013, he performed the title role in the full Noh Kiyotsune at Kongō Noh Theatre in Kyoto.

4 Each shimai comprises of standard sequences of movement (kata 型) which can be interpreted in various different ways depending on the context of the shimai.

5 Comparable to classical ballet, students must learn a solo adagio from Giselle Act 2 before learning the whole ballet if she takes on the role of Giselle.
Cloud), a Noh play as a meditation on the mass violence of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The process of creating Genshigumo began thirty years earlier and included original costumes, mask, text and choreography. The play premiered in Hiroshima in August 2010, 65 years after the events, and its development is still ongoing today.6 This demonstrates that the age-old principles and philosophy of Noh are a continuously working set of processes applicable to contemporary Noh performance as much as the traditional ones.

Another influential practice in this research is Body-Mind Centering® (BMC), a form of somatic practice that combines the experiential study of anatomy, physiology and principles of human development, through movement, voice and touch. Since 2007, I have worked and studied BMC and improvisation with dance artist and BMC practitioner Alice Cummins7 who studied with its founder Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. I have been involved with an improvisation group “Footfall Ensemble”8 initiated by Cummins in 2012. The group practices regularly and presents work-in-progress showings periodically. The work of Footfall Ensemble is influenced by Cummins’ BMC practice and the lineage of post-modern movement improvisation, focusing on group improvisation as an open-ended exploration with minimal improvisational scores and structures. Through the time with the Ensemble, I have become practised in working improvisationally in the studio and learned how a sense of relationality with other bodies in space, together with BMC, could be used as a resource to generate material.

7 Alice Cummins is a Melbourne-based dance artist and a qualified Body-Mind Centering® practitioner. She is also an internationally qualified somatic movement educator & therapist (ISMETA) and offers improvisation and BMC workshops throughout Australia. She studied BMC with Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen in the United States in 1995-1998 and worked with renowned post-modern improvisation practitioners such as Nancy Stark-Smith, Lisa Nelson and Steve Paxton. http://wwdcw.alicecummins.com
8 Other members of Footfall Ensemble include Dr Philipa Rothfield, Suze Smith, Myfanwy Hunter (née Alderson).
Unlike the Ensemble, my choreographic practice has mostly involved solo improvisation within a choreographic structure. Particularly, I devise improvisational scores which are used to provide an organisational framework for improvised material and relationships between parts of a work. Prior to this research, I had come to notice that there was a potential to further develop my approach to improvisational performance with a greater degree of specificity. I recognised that although the choreographic structure provided the overall framework, it did not address the articulation of the improvisational material itself.

Although Noh and BMC are vastly different in terms of their lineage and history, both practices focus on developing the performer’s capacity for attention. From 2009 – 2014, I felt the dynamics of one practice dominating the other at various points in time. Given my Noh practice was, and still is, at the foundation level, I decided to take time to gain a deeper understanding and embodiment of Noh. I made a conscious decision to give equal importance to both traditions by practising Noh and BMC in the same studio sessions to develop my practice organically over time.

As a result of simultaneously practising, both traditions have contributed to shifting my choreographic focus from aesthetic and pre-devised concepts, to somatic experience of the performing body, creating possibilities for improvisational material within the choreographic structures or scores. These possibilities were tested prior to this research through two solo works, Orbit (2014) and Solo in Three Locations (2014). In particular, one aspect of Noh, the concept of jo-ha-kyū 序破急 – the beginning (jo), middle (ha) and end (kyū)⁹, was investigated in these works. Jo-ha-kyū was not only explored through the

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⁹ See detailed explanation of jo-ha-kyū in Chapter Three.
choreographic structure, but also in the spatial and temporal relationship of the improvised material. In *Orbit*, the accumulation of my somatic experience through ongoing studio practice was framed by the area of the performance space marked by the real-time shifting of sunlight through a window. The choreographic structure was constructed through the concept of *jo-ha-kyū*, layering it with the positions of the sunlight to develop the improvisational scores.

For *Solo in Three Locations*, I worked with designed elements to support the somatic experience of working as a solo performer. The improvisational score was constructed through the notion of three ‘locations’, as the *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū* of the piece, marked by two different lighting sources and a projection of a time-lapse video of a one-hour period of sunlight moving across the floor. Further, *Solo in Three Locations* was a second attempt to articulate improvised material through the modulation of *jo-ha-kyū*, but also raised the issue of the interrelationship between the performer and audience as being significant. The experience of performing the work led me to further enquire into the impact of the audience on the solo performer’s capacity to regulate time in improvisation and to articulate the temporal arc of improvised material.

**Emergence of the research**

Despite the ongoing development of my expertise in both Noh repertoire and movement improvisation, the application of *jo-ha-kyū* for articulating improvisational material in my practice needed further investigation. My performance in *Solo* and *Orbit*, aided by *jo-ha-kyū* as an overall structure, offered a degree of coherence when rehearsing in the studio.
but became vastly different in front of the audience. Instead of taking time for
the material to unfold, the heightened state of ‘performing’ and the resulting
adrenaline rush destabilised my attention to the subtlety and nuance of the
experience, previously found in the generative space of the studio. This
dilemma led me to investigate more deeply how improvisational material could
unfold through time in front of an audience, while optimising the performer’s
ability to recognise potential ongoing discoveries within the improvisation.

Literature on Noh theatre: Zeami Motokiyo’s 15th Century critical
writings; the analysis of the Noh principles and practice by contemporary
practitioner Kunio Komparu; and theories embedded in the foundation Noh
repertoire provoked the uncovering of further discourse concerning the
relationship between the performer and audience. In addition, the inclusion of
Noh repertoire in my studio research provided a practice-based tool to
examine the key concepts in Noh, particularly jo-ha-kyū, alongside the
literature.

Further to this, I chose to apply these concepts in my studio practice
together with the BMC approach to investigate how Noh concepts could be
kinaesthetically experienced in movement improvisation. Like other forms of
somatic practice which explore the experience of the musculoskeletal system,
BMC goes further to include other systems of the body in movement
exploration. The BMC approach utilises the sensorimotor-feedback functions
of the somatic nervous system to explore movement at different levels of
awareness, as kinaesthetic experience accumulates throughout the course of
an improvisation. In this research, the BMC approach has provided a
mechanism to investigate how the kinaesthetic and somatic experience of
improvisation evolves through time, and how Noh concepts could be incorporated as tools to articulate improvisational material.

Research question

In the practice and performance of solo improvisation, how can the temporality of improvisational material be articulated in order to affect the attention of the audience?

Sub-questions

1. What is the interrelationship between the performer and audience in the performance of solo improvisation?
2. What can be understood in terms of temporality when performing solo improvisation and how does the audience perceive it?
3. How does the understanding of the performer/audience relationship inform the performance making process of solo improvisation?

The objective and scope of the research project

The objective of this practice-led research is to investigate how the solo performer can articulate improvisational material through time and invite an empathetic connection with the audience, while maintaining sensitivity to the material and its generative quality. The research explores the interrelationship between the performer, performance maker and audience to understand the underlying conditions of performing solo improvisation with the audience.

The research aims to develop strategies to uncover how the heightened state of ‘performance’ affects how time is regulated in improvisation, while
taking into account that the experience of the improviser and audience is interdependent. The temporal articulation of improvisational material not only concerns performing through time, but also involves consideration and discernment in generating movement when impulses arrive. On occasions, improvisational material flows subconsciously with the kinaesthetic experience, while at other times, it is consciously articulated and forms an arc of experience for both performer and audience. This research explores how the perception and experience of time in performing improvised material can be regulated through the modulation of jo-ha-kyū together with the integration of the BMC approach to the movement exploration process.

This research is not solely focused on the performance of the improvisation, but also the making of a dance work. While mindful that other improvisers may take the roles of performer and performance maker within their work differently, my practice has been based on performing my own creation/choreography in order to experience the work first-hand. As the performer of the improvisation and the initiator of the creative process, I am able to step back to operate outside to conceptualise, shape and frame the material choreographically. This process allows me to gather information about the experience internally, then externalise it through reflective writing, reportage and occasional video recording. I synthesise this information to inform subsequent improvisational experiences. However, the roles of performer and performance maker are not clear-cut. The oscillation between the roles shifts as the need arises, and occasionally, I assume both roles at the same time.

The study was conducted through my improvisation and choreographic practice, using the practice of Noh repertoire and BMC movement exploration
as a starting point. The creative aspect of this MFA research folio was the creation and presentation of a new solo work 17 Square Brackets, performed on April 20-23, 2016 at Studio 221, VCA Dance, University of Melbourne. The concepts of temporality in Noh particularly jo-ha-kyū and Komparu’s self-other relationship was incorporated into the studio practice and the creative process of the new work. In addition, the self-other relationship in neurophysiology was examined to provide a broader understanding of the interrelationship between the performer and audience, along with the investigation into the nature of perceptual experience in phenomenology.

**Choreographing Time: the methodology**

This project was undertaken through four phases of research and choreographic process, incorporating the experiential information on temporal articulation of improvisational material and interrelationship between performer and audience. Although this research was based on my practice as the subject of the investigation, the contribution from experienced Noh practitioners was sought for greater understanding of Noh principles. An active investigation with a selected group of audience was undertaken to gain an insight into the perceptual experience of the viewer. The four phases of the research process were as follows:-

**Phase One**: A research period to gather experiential information of improvisation (April 2015 - November 2015)

This period involved intensive studio practice aimed at examining the kinaesthetic experience of jo-ha-kyū in improvisation and the temporal articulation of improvisational material. The processes were:-
• **Noh practice**: walking exercises, *utai* (chanting repertoire) and *shimai* (dance repertoire) from Noh plays – *Tamura* 田村, *Yuya* 熊野, *Shōjō* 猿々 and *Tsuru Kame* 鶴亀 – to examine and explore the kinaesthetic experience of *jo-ha-kyū*.

• **Movement exploration and improvisation**: To deepen kinaesthetic awareness and register the perception of movement and time. These movement explorations progressed from a series of five-minute improvisations to thirty minutes over this phase of the research. From the initial movement exploration, the articulation of time and *jo-ha-kyū* in the improvised material was recorded verbally and recalled in subsequent improvisation sessions.

• **Reportage**: Using a voice recording device to capture the verbal registration of kinaesthetic experience during improvisation and how the improvised material was mapped out through the concepts of *jo-ha-kyū*. Verbal reporting was an ongoing process which provided insightful information. The text from the reportage was used as a resource to generate further movement material and to develop improvisational scores for later phases of the research.

• **Reflective writing**: This process was used to record the observation and reflection of the improvisation, focusing on emerging movement patterns, and the spatial and temporal relationships within the improvisational material. Excerpts from the reflective writing were incorporated with the selected text from the reportage to develop the

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10 The starting point of the movement exploration ideas were drawn from BMC exercises, exercises by choreographer Meg Stuart and photographs by director/photographer Wim Wenders.
improvisational score that became the foundation of the creative work
17 Square Brackets.

**Phase Two:** A series of two-part interviews – with a selected dance audience in Melbourne (September - October 2015), and experienced Noh practitioners in Kyoto (December 2015).

In this phase, audience members were individually invited to watch a twenty-minute improvisation and be interviewed one-on-one. The focus of the questions was about the perception and temporal experience of witnessing the improvisation.\(^{11}\) The group were selected based on their abilities to articulate their opinions about dance and improvisation. The content of the interviews also informed the studio practice and was subsequently collated and analysed as a resource for the written dissertation of this research.

Further interviews were conducted with Noh practitioners in Kyoto: Master-actor Udaka Michishige, the Founder of International Noh Institute (INI), Ogamo Rebecca Teele, INI associated director, and Dr Diego Pellachia, INI junior director, all of whom are at different stages of their Noh practice. They were asked about their personal experience of jo-ha-kyū, and their experience of performing Noh with an audience. The content of the interviews was collated and incorporated into the written dissertation of this research, and included in Appendix II.

**Phase Three:** The choreographic process and performance season of the solo dance work 17 Square Brackets (January - April 2016)

\(^{11}\) See Interview Processes and Questions (Ethics Clearance Document) in Appendix II, p. xxviii.
This period was a continuing process from Phase One and Two. The improvisational score, which I used to perform for the participants in the invited audience, was practiced, analysed and ‘sifted’ through a process inspired by the ‘RSVP cycle’. The RSVP cycle is a collaborative working process developed in 1966 by the late Lawrence Halprin, a renowned landscape architect and city planner, and his wife dancer/choreographer Anna Halprin, as a way to communicate with collaborators in their design and choreographic process. With emphasis on the process towards objectives rather than the goal, the framework of the RSVP cycle is a reflective assessment process which allows evolution, continuity and visibility of all components and/or participants.12

The creative work 17 Square Brackets was developed through RSVP cycles, which helped me to clarify my role as a performer and performance maker and the oscillation between the two, even though on many occasions the roles were inseparable. Although the performance score of 17 Square Brackets did not change dramatically from the version I showed the invited audience in Phase Two of the research, my understanding of it increased substantially and the improvisational material markedly developed. The interviews with the audience in Phase Two indicated the degree of coherence in the early development of the score, which informed the direction of the work.

**Note on Japanese terminology in this thesis**

The Japanese terminology used in this thesis is written in English phonetics. The Japanese characters of kanji, hiragana and katakana are also

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given at their first mention. This is to clarify ambiguity that may occur with the phonetic readings and to assist readers in researching definitions.

Thesis overview

Chapter One: The Encounter between the Performer and Audience

This chapter focuses on the moment of the first encounter between the performer and audience, influenced by the theories of the performer/audience relationship in Noh theatre. It explores the historical context and development of Noh theatre and how it inspires my approach to studio research and performance, to create a mutually shared experience with the audience in improvisation. Utilising the notion of ‘encounter’ in Noh theatre, this chapter investigates how this abstract idea can be used to determine the timing to begin a solo improvisation performance, with an intention to enable intersubjectivity with the audience.

Chapter Two: The ‘Self-Other’ Relationship – Intersubjectivity between performer and audience

This chapter explores the idea of ‘self-other’ relationship in neurophysiology and Noh theatre. It investigates the theory of mirror neurons as the enabler of empathy and the link between empathy, intersubjectivity and the self-other relationship. Further, it discusses the temporal dimension of empathetic experience in admiration and compassion, and draws a comparison to my own experience when watching a dance piece with a sense of empathetic connection with the performance. The research compares the concept of ‘self-other’ in neurophysiology and in Noh theatre, and considers a practice from Noh theatre to strengthen the awareness of the intersubjective
space between the performer and audience. On the side of the audience, the research explores the nature of perceptual experience of an event or a performance and discusses the notion that the audience are active participants in the performance by mobilising their sensori-motor knowledge to perceive the performance.

**Chapter Three: Temporality and the Modulation of Jo-ha-kyū**

This chapter discusses how improvisational material can be temporally articulated to create and maintain intersubjectivity with the audience and enable an empathetic experience. Furthering the discussion of Noh theatre in Chapter One and Two, the chapter proposes that the idea of fractal time can be used as a model to describe jo-ha-kyū. Additionally, I examine the kinaesthetic experience of jo-ha-kyū, and the fluidity of rendering jo-ha-kyū in Noh as well as in my improvisation practice to provide temporal trajectory of improvisational material. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the anecdotal evidence from the interview with the invited audience on their experience of an improvisation in which the practices and strategies explored in this research were applied.

**Chapter Four: The Practice**

This final chapter discusses the studio research from which the creative process of the new solo work *17 Square Brackets* emerged. It outlines the movement exploration process derived from BMC which involves five actions emphasising various aspects of the nervous system in relation to other systems of the body. These actions – ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’, ‘feeling’, ‘yielding’, and ‘mapping’ – are the basis of the information gathering process for my improvisations which are verbally recorded. The reportage of the
improvisation is analysed as to how the improvisations and the arcs of jo-ha-kyū are formed. This chapter further examines how the language of the selected text from the reportage is used in the choreographic process of 17 Square Brackets, and how Halprin’s RSVP cycle is incorporated as the experimental and analytical process to develop the improvisational score. It concludes with the discussion on the notion of ‘choreographing time’ in my improvisation practice and how it is informed by my understanding of the interrelationship between performer and audience outlined in this research.

**Significance of the study**

*Choreographing Time* seeks to deepen the understanding of temporality in solo dance performance through different disciplines of knowledge in Western and Eastern traditions. Through the studio research and theoretical discussion, the dissertation broadens the knowledge of the interrelationship between performer and audience and brings this understanding to inform the consideration of temporality in the creative process. The research delves into the practical application of the concepts in Noh theatre that informs the performer-audience relationship and the articulation of time in performance to share in the field of contemporary performing arts practice.

This research highlights the invaluable contribution of Noh concepts and principles to choreography and dance improvisation. As a vast body of knowledge and theories specifically for performing arts, there are many aspects of Noh that dance practitioners can study, abstract, experiment or draw from. Of particular relevance is Zeami’s extensive exegesis covering all aspects imaginable of creating and performing Noh, as well as outlining the artistic development of a performing artist through dedicated practice and reflection.
Universally esteemed in contemporary theatre and literature, Zeami’s aesthetic and philosophical writing emphasises an optimal connection to the audience’s perception, to the point that Komparu regards Noh as “the creation of performer and audience”\textsuperscript{13}. Whilst still underrepresented in dance studies, the principles and concepts of Noh are brought into an in-depth investigation in this research, offering a distinct perspective from the previous discourse about time and performer/audience relationship in dance.

More specifically, Noh can offer dance improvisation ideas and practices to hone the resource where improvisation occurs – the performing, improvising body. The concepts of attunement such as \textit{de-ai} and \textit{riken noken} can be regarded as an “imagined condition”\textsuperscript{14} of the body to produce particular kinaesthetic and perceptual outcomes. Through practice leading to performance, such concepts are valuable to dance improvisation for distracting an improviser from a habitual way of moving whilst sharpening awareness of the environment. Importantly, the overarching Noh concept of \textit{jo-ha-kyū} provides an apparatus to articulate time in improvisation.

In a broader context, this research provides an example of how dance improvisation can be understood and perceived. Through various strategies of facilitating the intersubjectivity with the audience, the research emphasises that a dance improvisation performance essentially needs the audience’s implicit attention. In other words, rather than being critically considered through the outward appearance of physical forms, a dance improvisation should be perceived through a lens of empathetic engagement between performer and viewer.

\textsuperscript{13} Komparu, \textit{The Noh Theatre}, 8.
\textsuperscript{14} De Spain, \textit{Landscape of the Now}, 93.
Chapter One

The Encounter between the Performer and Audience

In solo improvisation, performing under the watchful gaze of the audience is a significant step away from the private surroundings of studio practice. There, I am immersed in my internal experience of the improvisation. In the presence of an audience, however, I notice an adrenalised state of ‘performing’ which, at least initially, destabilises my ability to find the subtlety and nuance required. Often, I slip into a default mode of working using habitual movement pathways and speeding the unravelling of the impulses, thus the improvisation lacks attentive and explorative qualities. More importantly, this becomes a way of blocking out the destabilising effect of the viewers, and with it any chance of a feeling of intersubjectivity. Additionally, this adrenalized state distorts my perception of time, so that I am unable to gauge the passage and progression of my dancing and with it the arc of the performance.

As an initial strategy to manage the adrenaline effect prior to starting this research, I practised noticing the flow of time in improvisation, particularly in front of an audience. Using this strategy, I became more receptive to the undeniable presence of the audience, and realised the interrelationship between the improviser and spectators offered a potential area of investigation in my practice. This research, therefore, has been a process of furthering the understanding of ‘choreographing time’ in my solo improvisation performance,
and investigating how the improviser-spectator relationship can be harnessed in the creative process.

In this research, I focus on the implicit relationship between a solo improviser and spectators – an *intersubjective relationship* where the awareness of and receptivity to one another’s subjective states is formed. This process of attunement begins with their initial encounter and continues throughout the course of a performance.

I began this investigation by looking at the performer-audience relationship in Noh theatre which, in my practice, has offered a significant practical and theoretical body of knowledge in solo performance and the intersubjectivity shared by performer and audience. Most of the *shimai*, or dance repertoire, is generally performed ‘solo’ by the *shite* シテ, or leading performer, with other performers on the stage – musicians, chorus and other performers – accompanying the dance. While each *kata* 型15, or the standard sequence of movement, is composed for the audience to interpret the meaning of the dance in combination with the music and chanting, the *shite* remains the focal point. In this way, I consider a performance of a *shimai* repertoire to be solo repertoire.

In this research, my knowledge of Noh emerged from the practice of Noh repertoire and studying related literature. I examined the significance of the historical and developmental influences of Noh to ground the conceptual understanding of the performer-audience relationship in the art form. This gave insight into the background circumstance in which the Noh performer related to the spectators when the art form first developed, and later, extrapolated

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15 Each *kata* can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context of the *shimai*. 


into a theoretical discourse which has inspired the philosophical standpoint in my practice. This accumulative knowledge of the performer-audience relationship underpinned the preparation for my improvisation practice, the selection of improvisational tasks and the development of the improvisation score in my performance making process for 17 Square Brackets.

The historical background of Noh theatre

An examination of the origin of Noh theatre shows how its contemporary form functions in society to delineate the implicit relationship between performer and audience. According to Kunio Komparu, a contemporary Noh practitioner and a 22nd generation direct descendant of Noh performers of the Komparu family, Noh originated in the pre-Medieval era (the 6th - 14th Century) in agricultural festivals. The early form of Noh was a combination of various kinds of entertainment such as mime, dance, songs and magic acts. Under the patronage of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, sacred rituals were performed as dances to express religious faith and portray mystical powers. These early Noh performances functioned to bring the community together for collective acts of worship to a myriad of tutelary gods for bountiful crops. It was not until the Medieval period (1333 - 1600) that Noh underwent a crucial development that galvanised its position as a major performing art under the patronage of the ruling class.

18 With the influence of Confucianism, the tutelary gods include, not only the animistic Shinto gods, but also common and familial ancestors. A custom, prominent in rural Japan, is centered around the idea that a spirit becomes deified 33 years after death and is subject to ancestor-worship thereafter.
In the turbulent economic and political climate of the Medieval era, philosophers and artists took refuge in Buddhist and Confucian beliefs of the “impermanence of the present and the eternity of faith”\(^\text{19}\). Rivalling animistic Shintoism, Zen Buddhism became one of the most important philosophies underpinning the self-cultivation of swordsmanship, the training of warriors, and the ceremonial practices of the aristocrats.\(^\text{20}\) Confucianism, on the other hand, had humanistic precepts to guide the ethical governance of the ruling class to promote social harmony amongst their people, with an emphasis on rites and arts, particularly music. As a prominent ruler, Shogun Yoshimitsu Ashikaga (1358 - 1408) used Zen philosophy and Confucian rituals as political tools to unite local warlords under his reign.\(^\text{21}\) Under the patronage of Yoshimitsu, Zeami Motokiyo 世阿弥 元清 (1363 - 1443), one of the most prominent playwrights and theorists in the history of Noh theatre, developed performance techniques of Noh where he put forward the purpose of Noh, not only to service Yoshimitsu’s politics, but also to the broader society.\(^\text{22}\) Zeami stated in his first treatise of Noh, Fūshikaden 風姿花伝 (Teaching on Style and the Flower), “the performing arts generally exist to mollify people’s hearts and create excitement in the high and low.”\(^\text{23}\) The phrase ‘high and low’ refers to all classes and strata of people.\(^\text{24}\) While maintaining the elements of mystique and the supernatural from the early form of Noh, Zeami devised ways to communicate his performance work and its philosophical messages effectively.

\(^{19}\) Komparu, The Noh Theatre, 346.
\(^{22}\) Shogun Yoshimitsu Ashikaga encouraged the entrepreneurial ventures with foreign countries especially China in the field of trade, arts, language and religion. During the Ashikaga era, aristocratic and warrior (samurai) classes profoundly adopted the philosophy of Confucianism and Zen Buddhism from China into their modus operandi which, in turn, influenced the Noh troupes under the Ashikaga patronage.
to his audience, not only the aristocratic and warrior classes, but to people of all status. With the underlying altruistic Confucian precepts and Zen path of rigorous self-cultivation through meditation, Zeami’s egalitarian view essentially positions the performer to encounter ‘fellow human beings’, or in a Buddhist term, ‘fellow sentient beings’. He believed that the empathy between the performer and audience must be cultivated particularly by the performers themselves, like a responsible member of the society.25 With the religious and philosophical precepts, Zeami developed Noh through precise and rigorous disciplines in training and performance to foster empathetic communication between performer and audience.26

26 Ibid., 32-38.

Fig.1.1: One of the oldest Noh stages in Japan at the Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima Island.


Zeami’s belief in relation to his audience inspires the philosophical standpoint in my artistic practice, that the audience are regarded as equal, and
that my performance aims to connect with them empathetically. Further, my practice of Noh repertoire provides a training as praxis to embody Zeami’s philosophy in my improvisation. With my Noh practice, I have learned to convey the clarity and intention of movement, kata, and the composition of shimaï to mutually share the performance with the audience. Similarly, in my solo improvisation the reciprocated sharing of the performance is instigated by myself, the performer, as the agent for the audience’s active involvement in the event, to facilitate the loop of empathetic communication between performer and spectator.

**The first encounter of the performer and audience**

To enable an empathetic experience with a diverse audience, Zeami emphasises the moment of the first encounter as crucial for the performer’s attunement to the spectators. In one of his treatises, *Kakyo* (A Mirror Held to the Flower), he points out the importance of the performer’s intuition in grasping the appropriate moment, at the height of the audience’s anticipation when they are ready for the performance to begin. In Zeami’s time, Noh stages were built attached to Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines with the audience area incorporating designated seats for the nobility and an open unseated area for “bystanders” – spectators who were commoners. In *Fūshikaden*, although he acknowledges that the sense of occasion in each performance is determined by the presence of the nobility, Zeami emphasises that the performer should place equal importance on the encounter with the seated nobility as well as the bystanders.

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Further to Zeami’s teaching in attuning to the audience in the first encounter, Komparu offered an idea derived from the word “encounter” in Japanese de-ai 出会い which means “meeting, rendezvous, encounter, confluence”. The word is divided into two parts: de 出 means “exit, go out, protrude”31, while ai 会い means “meeting, associate, join”32, suggesting a sense of involvement with something or somebody. Thus, de-ai implies a conscious awareness flowing from one person to the other. For Komparu, this moment of the encounter happens for the performer and audience alike, suggesting a sense of mutuality between the two parties communicating with each other in “a silent encounter, in a wordless dialogue”.33

To implement Komparu’s idea of de-ai in my practice, I began each studio session with the practice of Noh repertoire to gain a sense of centring, a state of balancing the awareness of my environment to the attention of my inner world, akin to meditation. The utai chanting repertoire helped to ground my breath into the abdomen, and the shimai dance repertoire connected my breathing to the rest of the body. The practice in centring myself through Noh repertoire is the vital first step in attuning to my audience by heightening a sense of being present spatially and temporally. In the first encounter with an audience, there is a sense of extending myself to them and joining in the field of their attention to share the performance space with their presence. I notice that, in return, the audience extend their gaze and join in the field of my attention as if we are mutually in a silent dialogue.

30 “Jim Breen’s WWWJDIC,” Jim Breen, Monash University, accessed on November 7, 2016., http://nihongo.monash.edu/cgi-bin/wwwjdic?1C
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
De-ai and the performance making of 17 Square Brackets

To investigate Komparu’s notion of de-ai with an audience, I held a series of one-on-one showings of a 20-minute improvisation, followed by an interview with each invited viewer. Each showing was in an informal setting as though each audience came to visit me in the studio, either in Studio 221, VCA Dance Building or Tutorial Room 2, Elisabeth Murdoch Building, VCA. Upon entering the studio, I greeted each person and invited them to find their own viewing positions anywhere they wished. I then informed them that I was about to start my improvisation. As I entered the performance area, I first extended the field of my attention to observe how each viewer settled into the space and tuned to their level of attention as the starting point of my improvisation. One of the viewers, BMC practitioner and dance artist Alice Cummins, reported in her interview that watching me organising myself to begin the improvisation, in turn, offered her a way of “settling in”\(^{34}\) to the performance space. On the other hand, another viewer reported that it took her around five minutes to ‘get into it’, and that she was constantly reorganising herself during the improvisation by changing her viewing positions.\(^{35}\) Other viewers reported a sense of introspection where they reflected on their own ways of watching as if creating a lens through which they could engage with the improvisation.\(^{36}\) Depending on the perceptual experience of the viewers, there was a process at the beginning of the improvisation in which each viewer and myself mutually reached into each other’s attention. (See Appendix II for the interviews of the invited audience page xxxi – xlix.)

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\(^{34}\) From interview with invited audience – Alice Cummins, Appendix II, p. xxxiv.

\(^{35}\) From interview with invited audience – Anonymous, Appendix II, p. xliii.

\(^{36}\) From interview with invited audience – Joanne Lichti, Appendix II, p. xxxix.
The feedback from the interviews regarding the notion of de-ai was carried through to the presentation of 17 Square Brackets. During the performance season, the attention of a larger audience was much more palpable in comparison to the informal settings of the showings. Here, the process of first encounter with the audience occurred before I entered the performance space. Backstage, while I could see them through thick curtains, I found that listening to the sound of the audience gave me a good indication of their attention. As they quietened down, which I took as an indication of their anticipation, I entered the space. There was a sense of openness about this listening as I brought my attention outward to the sound of the audience. As I walked into the space, there was a reorganisation on my part, which was crucial for me to attune to the audience and initiate the reciprocated space to share the performance with them. By listening and kinaesthetically feeling the space, I brought myself to the audience to the point where two-way communication with them became possible.

The set-up of the performance space of 17 Square Brackets was also important in crafting the shared space and creating a moment for the audience to settle themselves for the perceptual experience of the presentation. There were no designated seats, allowing them to choose their viewing positions and move around the space if they wished. As design elements of the performance space, I placed a selection of small objects, not only to create a spatial terrain within the performance space, but also to draw the attention of the audience to the delicate details of the objects. These objects were visible enough but did not present themselves outright – the audience had to spend a moment to notice what they were. In this way, I invited the spectators to enter the performance space with specific attention to detail. Each made decisions on their position in relation to the objects and other audience members as they
settled in. As I entered the performance space, many audience members continued to walk around choosing their viewing positions and settled there. Some changed their viewing positions during the performance, suggesting that, for some viewers, the shared space with the performer was a continually evolving process. My proximity with different audience members in different parts of the performance space also formed the spatial terrain of the performance.

In performance, the initial encounter between performer and audience is a crucial part of creating the subsequent process of reciprocation where two-way communication is possible. Through listening to the sound of the audience to gauge their concentration, I extended my attention outward to meet with their presence, akin to Komparu’s notion of de-ai. By commencing the performance while gauging their sense of anticipation, I encountered the audience as they began to settle into the performance space. This process enabled me to instantiate where I was in relation to the viewers to create an implicitly shared experience. Although it was not possible to determine what each individual experienced, I was able to initiate this mutual communication by inviting the audience to pay attention to the specificity of the performance of 17 Square Brackets.
Fig. 1.2: Image from 17 Square Brackets showing small objects in the performance space. Photo: Jeff Busby.
Chapter Two

The Intersubjectivity between Performer and Audience: ‘Self-Other’ Relationship

In Chapter One, I discussed the importance of the first encounter between the performer and audience, and how Zeami’s egalitarian view in relation to his audience inspired my approach to forming a type of relationship with the audience. This chapter furthers this idea by examining how this initial encounter can be extended to cultivate empathetic connection between performer and spectator throughout the duration of a performance. To do this, I first investigate the neurophysiological basis of empathy, that is, mirror neurons, in the work of neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese, which describes how empathy plays a crucial role in implicit relationships and in the identity of ‘self’ and ‘other’. I then examine the notion of self-other in performance, particularly in Noh Theatre, from Komparu’s analytical discourse, which informs my understanding of how the audience experiences a performance. Further, I consider research on perceptual experience from a phenomenological perspective and how sensory-motor knowledge is a crucial part of perception. I follow this with a review of scientific research on temporality in relation to empathy. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how neurophysiology and phenomenology, together with Noh theatre, underpin the intersubjective relationship between performer and audience in my practice, and in the creative process of my solo work 17 Square Brackets.

Whilst intersubjectivity goes some way to explaining how the audience and performer might connect, it does not fully address the notion of felt experience so crucial to performance. Empathy, like introspection, indicates a
quality of intersubjectivity. Originally derived from a German word *einfühlung*,
the word “empathy” is commonly used to describe one’s ability to experience
feelings, emotions and thoughts of others. In 1903, German psychologist
Theodor Lipps referred to empathy as “inner imitation” where he used the
term in relation to aesthetic experience whereby a viewer places himself within
the artwork. Later, the fields of psychology developed the idea of
intersubjectivity – the notion of ‘self-other’ based on the awareness and
receptivity of one another. The ability to empathise, not only with actions of
others but sensations, emotions, affect and anything in the perceptible world,
is the starting point for intersubjectivity.

Further to the establishment of empathy as the felt sphere of
intersubjectivity, the field of neurophysiology has advanced the understanding
of empathy. One of its leading scientists, Vittorio Gallese, has researched
mirror neurons and reciprocating relations, positing that the neural mechanism
of mirror neuron systems is the starting point to understand empathy and the
identity of self and other. Developed in the human brain during mother-infant
interactions, mirror neurons are a group of premotor neurons which are
activated when a subject observes an action executed by another. According
to Gallese, mirror neurons enable a process called “embodied simulation” where
the observer reproduces in his mind the action of others without
executing them. In another study, Gallese and his colleague Pier Francesco
Ferrari also found that in social situations, we understand one another’s actions

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through resonance. When a resonated action is observed, an integrated sensory-motor process is activated to create the internal copy of the action, providing a meaningful account and an implicit understanding of the observed action. Gallese and Ferrari conclude that mirror neurons and embodied simulation is the basis of implicit attunement to the world of others and, thus, is the basis of empathy.

**Self-other relationship: the shared manifold of intersubjectivity**

For Gallese and Ferrari, empathy is an implicit experience of the observed action, involving the observer’s integrated sensory-motor process that blends together the visual, auditory, emotional, sensorial, tactile, proprioceptive and olfactory content of the observed action. With this broad range of perceptual presentation of the observed action, they further propose the possibility of “a flow of social information” between the observer and the observed including possible sensations, emotions, perceivable context and intentions. They used the term “intersubjective space”, a “we-centric” space where the communicating parties mutually exchange the stream of information as a result of implicit attunement.

Further, Gallese hypothesises that, through the process of implicit attunement, the identity one experiences with others in a larger group of

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41 Ibid., 173-174.
42 Ferrari and Gallese. “Mirror Neurons and Intersubjectivity”, 74.
43 Ibid., 77.
44 Ibid., 74.
45 Gallese, “The Root of Empathy”, 175.
46 Ibid.
people occurs prior to the identity one forms of oneself as a unique, individual organism. The knowledge a baby gains by observing and identifying itself with its carers gradually shapes the self-identity as it grows up, differentiating itself from others. Gallese goes on to propose a conceptual tool to describe and understand the phenomenon of embodied simulation, reciprocating space and self-other identity. He called it the “shared manifold of intersubjectivity”.

To me, the starting point of Gallese’s shared manifold of intersubjectivity is comparable to Zeami’s process of gauging the attention of the audience prior to commencing a performance, and Komparu’s idea of de-ai or encounter. For Zeami and Komparu, as a performer listens and extends himself out to the space filled with the audience’s anticipation, he brings back the concentration of the audience to form a part of his own experience as a stream of shared information. This is similar to Gallese’s idea that one’s resonance with the group precedes and informs self-identity. When applied to performance, Gallese’s idea of shared manifold of intersubjectivity contains a broad range of perceptual experience, which is reciprocated between the performer and audience, and subsequently enables a form of empathetic experience in both.

Gallese’s idea of intersubjectivity informed my intention to create a reciprocal space for the audience to share experience in my solo performance. To understand this further, I invited six selected individuals to watch my performance of a 20-minute solo improvisation, and interviewed each of them on their experience of the showing. Whilst all interviewees reported a sense of active involvement in my improvisation, my perception of the shared

47 Gallese, “The Root of Empathy”, 175.
48 Ibid.
experience with each of them variously affected my kinaesthetic awareness and decision making process. For instance, when Alice Cummins watched my improvisation, I felt that her gaze could capture the smallest of movements or the subtle shifts of my consciousness. Her attention was so readily palpable that I had to lift my concentration to correspond to her gaze. I felt the liberty to articulate subtler material as though I knew it would catch Cummins’s attention. On the other hand, another viewer reported she took around five minutes to gain access into my improvisation, and subsequently she “felt like doing those [movements]”49, affirming a sense of mirroring or embodied simulation with my actions. This individual changed her viewing position throughout the showing which meant that the sense of spatial and aural connection between us was constantly evolving. Occasionally, when she stood further away from me, I peered over and moved with an increased density and weight in my body as if to grasp her attention. For other viewers, it took me a little longer to attune to their attention, and them to mine. Differently from Cummins, I had to occasionally slow down to gauge their attention. When I felt my connection was weakening, I took the time to re-attend to them. As they regained their attentiveness, I felt that our awareness of each other was mutually heightened.

In performing solo with larger groups of audiences during the season of 17 Square Brackets, however, the collective attention and concentration was felt more intensely than one-on-one. From one performance to the next, the sense of mutual awareness between myself and the viewers was only subtly varied. The audience’s concentration, which I ascertained in the moment of first encounter, helped me to instigate a sense of locality beyond the actual

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49 From an interview with an invited audience who wishes to remain anonymous. See the transcript of the interview in Appendix II, p. xliiv.
performance space. Here, I could perceive the sense of reciprocation between myself and the audience through their gaze and attentiveness, which gradually became more palpable. Over time, as the audience’s attention heightened, it was as though the air in the performance space thickened, and this, in turn, amplified my kinaesthetic awareness and informed my decision making during the improvisation. Throughout the performance, my attention shifted between the inside of my moving body and the environment. When I sustained simultaneous moving and noticing the audience, a palpable sense of collective attentiveness developed, a potential of introspective and empathetic experience between myself and the audience.

The ‘self-other’ relationship in performance

Whist Gallese’s proposal of the shared manifold of intersubjectivity can be understood as a conceptual tool for possible mutual intelligibility, there is a difference between social settings and performance. In social settings, communicating parties share a reality, whilst in performance, as Komparu said of Noh, the “fabricated” reality is what the performer intends to share with the audience. In my contemporary dance work, there is the underpinning creative and imaginative content developed over a long period of time, which is not found in general social settings. Thus, in my solo improvisation, the intersubjective space, which allows the stream of shared experience, is created through the content of the creative work and my perception of the audience’s attention. As such, I am required to extend my awareness outward to the audience while simultaneously monitoring how the improvisational material is unfolding. To find strategies to strengthen my capacity of attention in

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50 Komparu, The Noh Theatre, 17.
improvisation and increase my awareness of the reciprocation with the audience, I considered the knowledge in Noh theatre, specifically Komparu’s analysis of the self-other relationship.

Through his experience as a Noh practitioner, Komparu has extensively analysed the performer-audience interrelationship in Noh, which he calls the “self-other relationship” \(^{51}\). In his writing, he explains that, as the performer perceives himself with his mind, he sees a subjective view of himself, while the audience sees an objective view. Komparu calls the notion that the performer can also see himself as if from the eye of the other as “detached vision” \(^ {52} \), a meeting point of the minds of the audience and the performer where a shared experience between the two parties can be created. Komparu’s complete explanation of self-other relationships in performance extends to three tiers. The first is the self-other relationship within the performer; the second, between the performer and audience, and the third existing between the performance space (the stage) and the viewing space (the audience area).

**The first tier: within the performer**

In the first notion of self-other within the performer, Komparu focuses on the importance of the Noh mask which the performer dons to transform himself into a character. The function of the mask is linked to the Buddhist concept of detachment: the process of donning the mask is symbolic of the transcendence of the self. Komparu describes how a Noh actor prepares himself before going onstage by placing the mask on his face in front of a mirror, peering through small eyeholes. He begins to approach his internal self and ‘the other self’ in


\(^{52}\) *Ibid*, p. 16 - 17.
the mirror until the two become a single existence, and continues to focus his attention to this transformed image of himself in the role.53

When Noh repertoire is performed without masks, the sense of balance between the subjectivity and objectivity of the self remains. This is reflected in my experience of practising the foundation Noh repertoire as learnt from Udaka. The repertoire includes shimai (dance repertoire) of Oimatsu, Yuya, Shojo and Tsuru Kame; and utai (chanting repertoire) of Yuya and Tamura. In the repertoire, each character is “the other self” to which I approach. For example in the shimai from Tsuru Kame (The Crane and the Tortoise), the dance is performed by the shite character of Emperor Gen-so on the occasion of New Year celebration. In the play, a crane and a tortoise, the symbols of longevity, auspiciously appear to dance before the Emperor who solemnly performs this shimai as a reply to affirm his role as a ruler who ensures peace and prosperity for his subjects. To practice the shimai, I gathered the images of Emperor Gen-so, a crane and a tortoise from photographs, paintings and the footage of the performance by Udaka to capture and ‘embody’ the essence of solemnity. My embodiment of the Emperor is embedded in the framework of the kata (standard movement) of Tsuru Kame – the firm grounding of the Emperor’s footwork provides a counterpoint to the expansiveness of the arm movements. My kinaesthetic experience of performing the kata is a part of the subjective view of myself embodying the stateliness of the Emperor which I bring about to meet the audience’s objective view. Over a period of time of practising Tsuru Kame, the character (other) slowly merges into the awareness of my self as if seeing myself objectively and subjectively at the same time. (See the URL link to the footage of my practice of Tsuru Kame in page 91.)

53 Komparu, The Noh Theatre, 16-17.
Similar to the characters in Noh repertoire, in solo improvisation, a task or an exercise can be regarded as the ‘other’. For example, in my experience of a BMC exercise practiced during this research, I explore the double-layer membranes of the cells and body. The task is firstly to look out to the environment from the outer layer membranes of the entire body, then from an organ, a single cell and finally a floating DNA.\textsuperscript{54} The exploration continues with the process of looking in for all inner layer membranes, and looking out for all outer layer membranes. This exercise explores the shifts between the looking-in and looking-out, whilst differentiating or integrating the layers. Initially, I visualise the membrane layers in my mind’s eye as if I see those layers from the outside. I then become aware of the different sensations and tones of my body when looking out and looking in, as well as the field of attention inside and outside of my body. Subsequently, I become embodied in the task as felt experience, while the sensations permeate deep into the body, as though the cells in the deeper membranes have experienced looking-out and looking-in. The ‘other’ self, which was in my mind earlier, merges into this embodied one, as I am paradoxically moving but also witnessing at once, similar to seeing both subjective and objective views of myself practising Tsuru Kame. The practice of embodying these improvisation tasks facilitated my somatic experience, not only through the sensory-motor-feedback of the muscular-skeletal system, but also the myriad of other somatic possibilities to generate performative elements.

\textsuperscript{54} Cohen, \textit{Sensing, Feeling and Action}, 160.
The second tier: between performer and audience

For Komparu, each audience member resonates with the performative elements as internal drama is activated through free association, leading to a sense of introspection. To facilitate this resonance and enable a portal of shared experience between performer and audience, Komparu proposes the second tier of self-other relationship where the performer sees the detached vision of himself. According to Udaka, the practice is called riken noken 離見の見, or ‘self-separation’ where the performer observes his/her own practice or performance as if from the outside or from an invisible mirror. For the performer, riken noken creates a quality of presence that enables the audience’s attunement to the performer. When I interviewed Noh practitioners in Kyoto, Udaka told of an occasion when he saw a performance of a high-calibre Noh actor who was known to practice riken noken. He observed that the actor was not only attentive to the space in front of him, but also all around his body. As the actor performed a dance, he turned his back to the audience, Udaka among them, giving a profound sense of presence of the actor as if the viewers could attune to the performer’s attention to his own performance.

Comparable to Gallese’s shared manifold of intersubjectivity, the actor’s awareness of his kinaesphere generates the streaming, or portal, of shared experience eliciting the audience’s attention. In the interview, Udaka emphasised the importance of practicing the repertoire to gain confidence and anticipation of the performance. With this anticipation and implicit attunement, the performer is able to encapsulate the breadth and depth of his

56 Ibid.
57 Translated by Udaka.
58 From the interview with Udaka, see Appendix II p. lvii – lix.
59 From the interview with Udaka, see Appendix II, p. lvii – lviii.
performance to a point where observing himself, as if from the outside, is possible during the performance.

In this second tier of Komparu’s self-other relationships, the sense of simultaneous witnessing and attention to movement provides the means to expand the kinesphere of my performing body. As applied in my improvisations, the practice of riken noken enabled a particular physicality where I felt as if my body was transparent and porous, affecting how I generated movement. From the interviews with the invited audience, Alice Cummins noticed the sense of porosity of my body as I practiced riken noken. She remarked of my improvisation, “…you just open the space for me to perceive.” This porous performing body seemed to not only allow the gaze of the audience to penetrate, but also to amplify my attention to even the most subtle movements and all around my kinaesphere. In a sense, my practice of riken noken was a way of attracting the gaze of the observers which made the seemingly unnoticeable elements in the improvisation became visible and valuable.

The third tier: between the performance space and audience area

The performer’s field of attention can also expand to the audience, as the performer can witness himself further away from his kinaesphere to the viewing area. Komparu extends the self-other relationships to the performance and viewing space. Borrowing from Zeami’s theory of “detached viewing” where the performer sees himself as if from his observers, he suggests the third tier of self-other relationships as an enlarged version of riken noken. In his third tier of self-other, Komparu emphasises that the site of shared experience

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60 From the interview with Alice Cummins, Appendix II, p. xxxv.
is where the space surrounding the performer intersects with the one surrounding the audience, as shown in Figure 2.1. This intersected area is where the performance and viewing space is unified. For Komparu, the mutuality of shared experience can be created through the detached viewing of the performer and spectators alike. Moreover, each spectator resonates with the performance through individual experience resulting in “separate personal drama” \(^{62}\). Komparu suggests the idea of the third tier of self-other relationships can be understood through a diagram of an oval with two foci (Fig. 2.1) of two overlapping circles, one for the field of concentration of the performer and the other the audience. As they merge together, if the two foci are very close until the oval is almost circular, the viewers are unable to distinguish the reality and the fabricated world of the performance. Or if the two foci are too far apart and the oval becomes too flat, then the reality of the

\(^{62}\) Komparu, The Noh Theatre, 19.
audience and the fabricated world of the performer will be too far apart to connect. The optimal overlapping of the two circles represents the oval of the unified space of the viewers where the mutual sharing of the performance occurs.

Komparu’s self-other relationships can be applied in solo improvisation practice because, even before movement is performed, all the three-tiered concepts enable specific conditions and awareness of the body to be receptive and attuned to the audience. In my studio practice, while the first tier of self-other within the performer enhanced my embodiment of the improvisational score and allowed various somatic possibilities, the second tier, riken noken, created the porosity of my body to invite the gaze of the audience. The practice of Komparu’s third tier of self-other relationship in the performance space and viewing area emphasised the spatiality of reciprocation with my audience. In the reality of performance and in my improvisation practice, my attention shifted between the embodiment of the scores, observing myself from around my kinaesphere and from the viewing area. This physicality and awareness was the basis of 17 Square Brackets, where I offered the audience the mutually shared space to facilitate an experience of performance.

In Noh, the mutuality between performer and audience, or the knowledge of self-other, is facilitated through specific organisation of narrative and performative elements. In contemporary dance, however, narratives or storylines are most often absent. American dance scholar Susan Leigh Forster posits that the dance itself enacts the process where the knowledge of self-other is produced.63 Foster suggests that the “kinaesthetic specificity”64 of

64 Ibid.
each performance provides an invitation for the audience to participate collectively and to discover a common basis of the experience with the performer over time. Foster concurs with Komparu that the spectator enters the intersubjective space and perceives the performance through active participation. To facilitate the conditions where the mutual receptivity can be created in my performance, I investigated the phenomenology of perception to further understand the nature of perceptual experience.

**Enactive approach to perceptual experience**

Alva Noë, Professor of Philosophy at University of California Berkeley, proposes an ‘enactive’ approach to understand a broader context of perception. According to Noë, a perceiver, in this case the audience, uses implicit practical knowledge of various ways in which his/her own movement responds to changes of stimulation. In other words, to perceive is to practically mobilise our own sensorimotor knowledge in response to stimuli. Similar to Gallese’s proposal of shared manifold of intersubjectivity, this sensorimotor knowledge includes visual, tactile, auditory, proprioceptive and kinaesthetic skills and understanding. Noë argues that the perceiver organises his/her resource at the personal and sub-personal level often without distinctive divisions. On the personal level, the temperamental, habitual, cultural facilities and preferential history of the perceiver are assembled; and on the sub-personal level, the various nervous systems integrated with the work of perceptual organs are activated in the perceptual experience.

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66 Ibid., 30.
Noë’s assertion contradicts the notion of passive spectatorship to which many art and theatre makers have reacted by bringing the audience to participate in performance, leading to the emergence of participatory art. To me, participatory art focuses on explicit involvement of the audience, as opposed to implicit reciprocation as discussed in this research. Moreover, a high degree of audience participation could lead to the effect that the field of attention of the audience becomes so close to that of the performer, that the fabricated world of performance is indistinguishable from the reality of the spectatorship, or the spectator becomes performer, similar to Komparu’s diagram (Diagram 3 in Fig. 2.1).

Noë’s insight into personal and sub-personal perception in mutually shared experiences affirms my understanding that the audience are far from passive in watching performance. This was also evidenced in Phase Two of this research where I interviewed a group of invited audience after showing a 20-minute improvisation. Each showing specifically aimed to investigate the reciprocation between performer and audience without using any settings to facilitate the audience’s perception. As each viewer entered the performance space, the choice of viewing positions was responsive to my positions. Some viewers moved to different positions during the performance, which, in turn, affected the sense of space in my improvisation. This demonstrates a practical decision making process of the audience based on their sensorimotor knowledge. In contrast, for the presentation of 17 Square Brackets, I set up small objects in the performance space to specifically facilitate the audience perceptual experience. Upon entering, the choice of where to sit was open, as was the option to move positions in response to the choreography.
Noë’s notion that within perceptual experience, perception and thought can flow between each other is another key idea that informs this research. Although we may not capture every experience in thoughts, it is still accessible to us even if we are not conscious of it, hence we access parts of our experience tacitly.\(^{67}\) This means that not all the content of the world around us, or of a performance, is given to our consciousness all at once, but gradually we gain this content, or the world/performance is revealed to us, through active exploration and enquiry over time.

However, there is a difference between perceiving objects and events. Unlike perceiving objects, events are perceived through time. Noë states that events “are temporally extended in nature.”\(^{68}\) He uses an example of a soprano hitting a high note and holding that note for a period of time. We firstly hear the note the soprano holds, and after a sustained period, we hear not only the pitch and sound of the note, but we also experience its temporal extent, that is, we are aware that the sound has been prolonged for an amount of time. This event goes on as the soprano holds the sound until she runs out of breath and she stops. Looking back at the whole event, there is an arc or trajectory of the event that is, in Noë’s words, “world-presenting”\(^{69}\) where the content of the experience is meaningful to the perceiver. Through the soprano’s intention to hold the note, this arc is an intentional arc\(^{70}\) that projects the perceiver’s consciousness – the memory of the past, the awareness of the present and the anticipation of the future. The interface between performer

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\(^{67}\) Noë, Action in Perception, 118-119.


\(^{69}\) Noë, Action in Perception, 16.

\(^{70}\) Noë’s notion of the intentional arc is borrowed from French philosopher Marurice Merleau-Ponty who further describes that the intentional arc brings together the cognition, intelligence, sensibility and mobility of sensory perception. For Merleau-Ponty, the intentional arc subtends the temporal extent of an event, projecting around the perceiver the past, future, physical, ideological and moral situation in the present moment. It encapsulates the sensory-motor and cognitive function with intelligence and sensitivity to perceive an experience.
and audience is where the performer’s arc of intention to deliver an action intersects with the audience’s arc of perceptual experience.

**Empathy and its temporal dimension**

While Noë points out the existence of temporal extent and intentional arc in perceiving an event, time for reflection is crucial for a meaningful perceptual experience, particularly involving empathy. Research by neuroscientists Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and Antonio Damasio shows that not all kinds of empathy require time for reflection, but in the case of admiration and compassion, adequate time is necessary.71 Immordio-Yang and her team conducted an experiment on subjects to watch videos of people experiencing various social/psychological conditions. They found that the neural process of compassion provoked by video footage showing social and physical pain was activated approximately 10 seconds faster than the neural process of admiration evoked by video showing morally virtuous acts or commendable skills such as a musical performance. The latter requires the subject to focus their attention which leads to a process of introspection. This experiment suggests that, in activities which are “culturally shaped social knowledge”72 such as watching a performance, time is required for contemplation before empathy can occur.

Whilst Immordino-Yang’s experiment measures the neurological signals showing the gap of time required for the brain to process and trigger empathy

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72 Ibid., 8024.
for admiration, the felt experience of empathetic connection in performance may require accumulation of perception over time. For example, in my experience of watching a performance of *If I Sing to You* by American choreographer Deborah Hay in 2008, it took me around 40 minutes into the piece to reach an ‘ah-ha’ moment when suddenly I felt immensely moved by the performance without any specific signposts such as lighting changes, sound cues or any specific actions. It seemed that my experience accumulated to that point of empathetic connection between myself and the performance. The performance of *If I Sing to You* was an example of temporality in which the reciprocity between performer and audience is formed and has been constantly maintained specifically through Hay’s choreography before an empathetic experience is felt. It is notable that Hay’s extraordinary practice initially emerged from dealing with the challenge of being watched by an audience. Her strategies were to address the underlying narratives of consciousness in her performing and dance-making process, and they form a complex series of ‘what-if’ questions to distract the performer from the effects of adrenaline.\(^{74}\)

In conclusion, from the point of view of neurophysiology, Gallese and his research team propose that mirror neuron systems enable the embodied simulation of the observer, mirroring the observed actions of others. This

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\(^{73}\) Deborah Hay (b. 1941) is a world-renowned American choreographer based in Austin, Texas. She was a part of Judson Dance Theatre and a vital part of the revolution of post-modern dance in the 1960s. She was a part of Merce Cunningham Dance Company 1964 world tour. After the tour, she retrieved to find her own practice that went beyond specifications of movement to deep consciousness and somatic states, addressing the narratives that underlined her dance making process. Hay’s research on the “cellular body” is aimed to destabilise learned movement in order to access deeper perception of one’s performance. One of the processes in her practice was to imagine seeing the audience in her practice, while addressing the question, “What if here is now?” She continues to examine the understanding of her own creativity through passing on her solo works to professional dancers. Her published books include *My Body, the Buddhist and Lamb at the Altar*.  

\(^{74}\) *Turn Your F**king Head*, A documentary film screening by Deborah Hay, Q&A with Deborah Hay and Philippa Rothfield, Dancehouse, Melbourne, March 8, 2014.
internal embodied simulation produces the observer’s attunement of the actions and activates the sensory-motor integration process to understand actions as if the observer executes those actions themselves. Accordingly, the ability to empathise is a starting point of mutual intelligibility and the knowledge of self-other, where the identity with the group one lives in predetermines one’s self-identity. This intersubjective space is a ‘we-centric’ space where empathy is enabled in the observer’s perceptual experience.

In my research, I took Gallese’s idea of intersubjectivity to further my understanding of Zeami’s teaching on attuning to the audience’s concentration to establish my level of energy and attention, and enter into the reciprocation on the same level as the audience. In my experience, the reciprocity between myself and the audience informed my perception during the performance, which formed an arc of my experience through time. In this understanding, the stream of shared experience between myself and the audience is exchanged in the space, as described by Komparu, where fields of attention between the performer and audience overlap. This indicates the locality and spatiality of the shared experience which evolves throughout the performance.

In phenomenology, an event has a temporal extent through which the content of the event is revealed to the perceiver over time. This understanding intersects with Immordina-Yang’s research where the neurological basis of empathetic connection for appreciation takes time. If Noë’s claim that perception is the work of the sensorimotor knowledge of the perceiver is accepted, then the audience (the perceiver) is already kinaesthetically active in watching a dance performance. Together, the discourse from Noh, neurophysiology and phenomenology underpins my understanding of the mutuality and empathetic connection with the audience. In addition, the
temporal arc of an event, or a performance, can be a tool to reveal the world-presenting content to the audience tacitly through their sensory-motor skills and understanding.
Chapter Three
Temporality and the Modulation of Jo-ha-kyū

In Chapter two, I concluded that the audience are kinaesthetically active and rely on their sensorimotor skills and understanding to perceive an artwork or a performance, and that empathic experience involving appreciation and admiration requires time for reflection. I also established that according to Foster and Noë, the perceptual experience is not handed to the audience all at once, instead, through active involvement and enquiries, the perceiver gradually gains experience over time. Responding to Foster and Noë’s proposition through my improvisation practice, I needed to find strategies to coherently articulate improvisational material, informed simultaneously by my attention to performing and witnessing, and by the sense of reciprocity with the audience unfolding during the performance.

As outlined in the Chapter Two, Komparu’s three-tiers of self-other concepts brought about various levels of simultaneous performing and witnessing. In particular, the practice of riken noken has helped me to regulate the time of performance material to some extent, considering that it enhanced my attention as I moved. As a strategy, riken noken created a sense of porosity in my improvising body, attracting the gaze of the audience, thus, the presence of the audience felt more palpable in my consciousness. In this deep somatic state, I needed to also bring my attention outward to maintain a sense of reciprocity with the audience. Despite affecting my consciousness and physicality, the practice of riken noken did not fully address the articulation of improvisational material. To temporally articulate improvisational material is not only to perform through time, but to consciously, and at times
subconsciously, regulate the temporal extent and timing of improvisational material in relation to kinaesthetic and somatic experience. This involves consideration, discernment and the awareness of how the material forms an arc of experience while receptive to the environment and the observers. This chapter focuses on how the temporal flow of improvisational material can be modulated while attuning to the attention of the audience, enabling empathetic experience in solo improvisation performance.

I examine the flow of time in Noh theatre, particularly in a performance in which I felt an empathetic connection as an audience member. I then specifically explore the modulation of jo-ha-kyū as an apparatus to articulate the temporal flow of improvisational material, and examine the notion of ‘fractal structure’ as a model to understand and describe jo-ha-kyū in my improvisation practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of audience interviews after watching an improvisation, where the temporal arc of improvisational material through the modulation of jo-ha-kyū is considered.

**Temporality in Noh theatre**

On discussing the role of time and timing in his practice, American post-modern improvisation practitioner Steve Paxton comments that he is “very much interested in leaving our culture and going to Noh theatre…where duration seems to be much revered.” I believe what Paxton is alluding to, is

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the propensity in Western Culture to perceive time as a scarcity.\textsuperscript{76} In the global capitalistic economy, time is quantified financially, hence, a period of time when ‘nothing much happens’ is often considered wasteful.\textsuperscript{77} With the need to look outside the modern cultural paradigm to understand time in improvisation, like Paxton, I looked to Noh theatre where the treatment of time in performance was inherited through practices over many generations dating back to Zeami. In my own experience, the practice of Noh repertoire has offered me a sense of temporality deviating from my daily experience outside the studio. Furthermore, my research into the theory and philosophy of Noh shows that it also holds a specific performative device that allows the audience access to the world of the performance in counterpoint to the experience of time in everyday life.

At first glance, a Noh play proceeds slowly yet it unfolds organically in the sense that the play follows its own naturalised flow of time, even though the narrative of Noh plays is often not in a chronological order. Noh theatre uses duration and rhythm as crucial elements of performative material to elicit the attention of the audience. In 2009, I saw one of my first Noh plays, Ōmu Komachi 鳥鶴小町 (Komachi’s Parrot-answer Poem), attributed to Zeami Motokiyo. It is the story of a renowned poet Ono-no-Komachi, one of the six most revered poets of the Heian period (794 - 1185 AD), all of whom are male except Komachi. Although she is known for exceptional beauty in her youth, the play focuses on Komachi’s twilight years. Poverty-stricken and frail at the age of 100 years, Komachi’s glory days are far behind her. The character of


\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
Komachi, masterfully performed on this occasion by Master-actor Udaka Michishige, enters the stage with a sense of fragility. Then the character of Counsellor Yuki-ie (waki ワキ)\textsuperscript{78} comes to visit her in a small cottage on the outskirts of the city. They have a conversation about a poem in which the Emperor requests her assistance. Komachi transforms the poem into a masterpiece by changing one word. After the conversation comes to an end, they bid each other farewell.\textsuperscript{79} The play features the elements of poetry, chanting, movement and music, combining to create a terrain of positive/negative space: a topography consisting of performance elements integrated with silence and stillness. The subtle arc of the storytelling unfolds in a way that allows precise amounts of time for the world of Komachi to form in the mind of the audience. For the ageing Komachi, stillness and silence manifests as a part of her being, illuminating the emptiness of time in her old age. Over two acts, the simple storyline of Ōmu Komachi instigates an extension of time that is weighty and saturated with the breadth and depth of the history and presence of Komachi.

To me, Ōmu Komachi is an important example of how performative material can be temporally articulated to evoke specific perceptual experience and empathy in performance. I had a strong empathetic connection with the play, not only through the visibility of time and admiration of the performers’ immense skills, but also in the introspective reflection of mortality, portrayed in its melancholic beauty. The temporal arc in the composition of Ōmu Komachi is quintessentially tied to the structural sequence of jo-ha-kyū, one of the most important of the sequencing principles in Noh Theatre.

\textsuperscript{78} Waki: the supporting role in Noh plays. Waki usually functions as an orator of the play, drawing out the narrative from the leading actor, shite.


**Temporality and the modulation of jo-ha-kyū**

Jo-ha-kyū 序破急 is a concept of spatial and temporal progression prevalent in most Japanese traditional arts. At first glance, the concept of jo-ha-kyū pertains to a simple sequence of beginning-middle-end. In his book *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspective*, Komparu states that jo-ha-kyū emerged in response to the Chinese arts and architecture that flowed into Japan from the 6th century. The Japanese added a dis-ordering element into their own concepts and ideas by introducing odd numbers to break the rigidity of the symmetry characterised in the Chinese arts.

Komparu posits that jo-ha-kyū is a concept that unifies the elements of space and time in Noh. *Jo*, which means the beginning, refers to positions, suggesting a spatial element. *Ha*, meaning ‘break’ or ‘ruin’, refers to the destruction of the existing pattern. *Kyū*, which means fast, refers to a temporal element. Here the binary of spatial and temporal elements (jo and kyū) is unified through a breaking element (ha). Udaka offers a way to describe the dynamic progression of jo-ha-kyū through an analogy of driving a car: when the engine of the car starts, it moves slowly at first (jo); as the fuel burns and the accelerator is pushed, the car gathers the energy and speeds up as it’s driven (ha). When the brake is pushed, there’s a rapid change of speed in deceleration (kyū) until the car stops. In Noh theatre, the concept of jo-ha-

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81 To this day, the odd numbers have become a traditional preference in their cultural life, reflected in the layout of building complexes and temples in Nara, Kyoto, Edo (Tokyo) and a myriad of historical cities in Japan. The layout of these historical sites are balanced in dynamic visual flow featuring an open space, *ma* 茫, at every angle. Other Noh scholars observe jo-ha-kyū originating in Gagaku music 雅楽, the ancient court music used in Shinto ritual. As a principle of temporal sequencing, jo-ha-kyū is utilised in most Japanese traditional arts such as the tea ceremony, various forms of poetry, flower arrangement, Bunraku puppet theatre, Kabuki theatre and music (shamisen, koto and shakuhachi).
83 From the interview with Udaka. See Appendix II, p. 1 – li.
kyū is an overarching principle that can be applied in a single gesture, a single vowel, to a phrase of movement or chanting, the whole shimai or utai, the whole Noh play, the entire program for the evening, season, year and the whole career of a Noh actor.

In his first treatise Fūshikaden, Zeami utilises jo-ha-kyū as a principle of temporal progression to draw the attention and enable perception for the audience. As his performance theories develop, Zeami goes further to regard jo-ha-kyū as an all-encompassing pattern in nature intrinsic to our perception of the world around us. In his subsequent treatise Shūgyoku Tokka (抬玉得花 Finding Gems, Gaining Flower, 1428), Zeami reflects:

“In spring, trees swaying in the eastern breezes, and in autumn, insects crying in chill dew brought by northern winds... This being so, all voices, sentient and insentient, are intoning poetry. The exquisite impression that they create is based on the Fulfilment of jo-ha-kyū. Plants and trees undergoing the rains and dews and reaching the stages of flowering and fruition—they too embody jo-ha-kyū. The same is true for the voice of the wind and the sound of the water.”

Zeami brings the belief that jo-ha-kyū is the underlying principle of all phenomena into the practical application of his theories. He emphasises the importance of breath as the basis of implementing the progression of jo-ha-kyū. In Noh performance, the first encounter with the audience (de-ai), as

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85 Quinn, Developing Zeami, 213.
discussed in Chapter One, begins with the sound of the flute. The performer listens to the pitch of the sound and gathers the breath (jo), pushing out the breath (ha) to produce the voice (kyū). Thus, the performer perceives the sound as external stimulus from his environment and transfers this information to attune his energy as he harnesses the power of the breath in his lower abdomen, varying according to the pitch and tempo of the flute. Noh performers practice this process for various purposes: to regulate their breathing and timing in rendering jo-ha-kyū, and to attune to the musicians and other performers on stage as well as to the energy of the audience. Zeami puts forward that, with practice and experience, the performer can intuitively embody the progression and adjust the flow of jo-ha-kyū by variously allowing the spectators to affect his perceptual arc of performance.

The turning point of understanding jo-ha-kyū in my practice was in December 2015 when I travelled to Kyoto to further my Noh study. While there, I learned a new shimai repertoire, Tsuru Kame, and conducted a series of interviews with three Noh practitioners, Master-actor Udaka Michishige (Founder and Director of the International Noh Institute - INI), Ogamo Rebecca Teele (Associate Director of INI) and Dr Diego Pellecchia (Junior Director of INI). During the interviews, the notion of fractal structure was emphasised as an important quality of jo-ha-kyū. Like Zeami before them, these practitioners see jo-ha-kyū as a progression of cycles and renewal underpinning the philosophy of progression in life, including the different phases of their practice, which contain their own jo-ha-kyū. Full transcripts of the interviews with the Noh practitioners are available in Appendix II, page xlix - lxxvi.

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86 Quinn, Developing Zeami, 212.
87 From the interview with Udaka. See Appendix II, p. lviii.
88 Rimer and Yamazaki, trans., On the Art of Noh Theatre, 139.
“…the more you become accustomed to your practice, the more you can refine the idea and how you can control your jo-ha-kyū. The more elements you are aware of, you would know that there is never really a break in the continuing cycles of jo-ha-kyū. You are always continuing from one phase to a kind of exploration of what you’ve been introduced, then the closure. And then you start again.”

— Ogamo Rebecca Teele

“…jo-ha-kyū doesn’t work in a linear way. It’s a returning tripartite, so it goes around in circle. So, jo-ha-kyū doesn’t end with kyū, it ends with jo. Or it does not end! It continues.”

— Dr Diego Pellecchia

Fractal structure and jo-ha-kyū

To conceptualise the principle of jo-ha-kyū and how it might be applied to movement improvisation, as opposed to the set choreography of Noh repertoire, the notion of fractal structure emerged as important to provide a model for temporally organising improvised material. French-American mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot famously discovered fractal structure in geometry, hence fractal geometry is synonymous with “a Mandelbrot set”. In my practice, I found the layering quality of jo-ha-kyū akin to a simple fractal structure where each unit of the structure shows more details of similarity the closer we look, for example in the vegetable Romanesco broccoli in Figure 3.1. More complex fractal structures are called quasi-similar structures,

89 From the interview with Ogamo Rebecca Teele, Appendix II, p. lx – lxi.
90 From the interview with Dr Diego Pellachia, Appendix II, p. lxix.
example, a high-definition image of a coastline: when zooming in, further details can be found but not exact replica of the whole.92

Interdisciplinary researcher Susie Vrobel proposes the notion of fractal time through her research into the subjective perception of time. In her book *Fractal Time: Why a Watched Kettle Never Boils*, she begins by examining the idea of time as proposed by German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Considering the idea of ‘Now’, the present moment follows a preceding moment and is followed by the next moment. Husserl uses the term of *retension*93 for “the consciousness of the present”94, which retains our memory of a preceding moment or a previous ‘Now’. The present ‘Now’, forms a

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92 Vrobel *Fractal Time*, 18.
93 *Retension*, or retention (Oxford English Dictionary - OED) = In phenomenology: the continued consciousness of or existence in the present of a previous act or event; an instance of this. Vrobel uses retension in her book.
protension\textsuperscript{95}, anticipating the next 'Now' that follows. Similarly, as we listen to a tune of music, we hear a note in the present ‘Now’, but the preceding note which still lingers in our memory is still resonating in relation to the present note. Each preceding note is nested in the present note, and protending the next note, and so on exponentially. This illustrates that the individual note has its meaning in relation to the whole tune and our perception is formed from the memory of the preceding notes in relation to the spontaneity of a ‘Now’ note and in anticipation of the future note that we have not heard. In her theory of fractal time Vrobel proposes each ‘Now’ contains the previous ‘Now’ as a nested structure. So the longer the event goes on, the more self-similar structures of ‘Nows’ are nested and the more information each progressing ‘Now’ retains. In this model of fractal time, as illustrated in the diagram in Fig. 3.2, each successive Now can be defined as a “Level of Description (LOD).”\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{Fig. 3.2:} Husserl’s nested Nows – Now 1 is nested in Now 2 which is nested in Now 3, and so on.


\textsuperscript{95} Protension, or protention (OED) = In phenomenology: extension of the consciousness of some present act or event into the future; an instance of this.

\textsuperscript{96} Vrobel, \textit{Fractal Time}, 13.
The illustration in Figure 3.2 above shows a simple form of the fractal structure of time. Vrobel adds that not only does it describe a simple self-similar interval of time, but also the subjective perception of time. In chronobiology, the fractal structure of time can be used to describe a circadian rhythm where the internal rhythm of our biology is synchronised with the external ones such as the 24-hour cycle of a day. In much of the natural world, simple fractal structures weave and synchronise together to form a complex web of patterns that we can observe readily in everyday life.

Vrobel’s concept of fractal time has helped me to conceptualise jo-ha-kyū and how time progresses in my practice of Noh repertoire and in improvisation. What I learnt is that, each nested unit of jo-ha-kyū forms a coherent arc of a performance, similar to each individual note that forms a piece of music. Considering the simple form of Vrobel’s fractal structure of time in rendering jo-ha-kyū in the Noh repertoire, once I memorise the kata, or a sentence in utai, I then render the jo-ha-kyū of each kata or phrase in a successive sequence. The jo-ha-kyū of the preceding kata is nested in the present kata I am performing which builds the dynamic and temporal progression of successive and multiple kata until the whole shimai is performed. In other words, one kata with its nested jo-ha-kyū in each movement, protends successive kata in an exponential succession. Once I grasp the topography of the jo-ha-kyū of the whole dance, I then refine the articulation of the jo-ha-kyū of each phrase, each kata, each movement and each vowel, to gain further clarity in the terrain of jo-ha-kyū in every level of the repertoire. This demonstrates the fluidity in the rendering of jo-ha-kyū that can be refined through practice. Experienced Noh practitioners, such as Udaka, can astutely render jo-ha-kyū with optimal clarity for diverse audiences. In Ōmu Komachi, Udaka refers to the kinaesthetic experience of the footwork as a
significant part of rendering jo-ha-kyū for portraying the character of Komachi, not only to pretend successive movements, but also to build the relationship between each layer of jo-ha-kyū to the entire length of the Noh play.97

**Jo-ha-kyū in contemporary movement improvisation**

The concept of jo-ha-kyū has been absorbed into contemporary performance, mostly in theatre, since the English publication of Zeami’s *Nine Treatises* in the 1960s. Although still quite a new concept to contemporary dance, dance researcher and author Kent DeSpain includes jo-ha-kyū in “Artistic Form”, a chapter in his book *Landscape of the Now: A Topography of Movement Improvisation*. He argues that in movement improvisation, the improviser, as a performance maker, is constantly finding form or “engaged in the act of forming”98 the composition of a dance, and jo-ha-kyū offers a way to form artistic material. However, the post-modern improvisation practitioners interviewed by De Spain in the book, such as Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay, Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, Nancy Stark Smith, do not mention jo-ha-kyū in their interviews. There is a gap of understanding of how jo-ha-kyū can be applied to improvisation as De Spain does not articulate a methodology for its use. In this research, I examined how jo-ha-kyū might be formed during movement improvisation – from the nested kinaesthetic experience retained in the improviser’s previous experience, and protending forward to form interconnected performative elements within the intentional arc of the performance. I practiced noticing the arc of jo-ha-kyū at any level, from the subtlest movement to the whole piece, to articulate the optimal temporal extent of any level of jo-ha-kyū in the improvisation.

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97 From the interview with Udaka. See Appendix II, p liii.
98 De Spain, *Landscape of the Now*, 121.
**Jo-ha-kyū and intentionality**

There is a sense of intentionality in forming jo-ha-kyū in improvisation through the retention of the previous kinaesthetic experience and the protention of the next. In Noh, the intentionality of jo-ha-kyū is clear: the performer renders the jo-ha-kyū of each breath, movement, kata, shimai or utai, or the whole play as a set choreography. A degree of improvising occurs in attuning to timing, intensity and dynamic with the audience and other performers on the Noh stage. In my improvisation practice, whilst the intentionality is to form the arcs of jo-ha-kyū at various levels, this does not mean that I intend to perform specific activities, but to be conscious of, and to carry through with, the emerging trajectory of the improvisation. To articulate jo-ha-kyū as a temporal terrain of my improvisation, the smaller units of jo-ha-kyū generate their own temporal extents to form the larger arcs of jo-ha-kyū. The temporal extent of each unit of jo-ha-kyū, in turn, gives me specific kinaesthetic experience to pretend and form further arcs of jo-ha-kyū. There are occasions where peaks and troughs occur in the improvisational topography, where the arcs of jo-ha-kyū may not form smooth curves. As is the nature of improvisation, when impulses arrive unintentionally, the awareness of the arcs of jo-ha-kyū layers informs decision making, whether to follow on with the unintended impulses while constantly forming or reforming the landscape of the improvisation. With practice and experience, I become more discerning and gain a clarity of awareness of the arcs or patterns that emerge during the improvisation. If the new impulses are to be followed, jo-ha-kyū can be used to regulate the temporal arc of the movement generated.
The anecdotal evidence of kinaesthetic empathy from the interviews with the invited audience

After the one-on-one showings to the invited audience, without briefing them on the improvisation beforehand, I asked each viewer what they paid attention to. While the improvisation score was open to the discovery of new material, the improvisation I performed was developed with the arc of jo-ha-kyū from small units of movement to the overall structure. In each showing, I applied riken noken (self-separation) and stillness where appropriate. As indicated to allow the participants to mobilise their sensorimotor knowledge, they were invited to choose their viewing positions in the space and change the position if desired. As mentioned in Chapter One, I began the improvisation by practising Zeami’s teaching to enter into a shared space with the audience by gauging their level of attention.

Although all viewers had varying descriptions for their experience of the improvisation through terms such as reading, interpreting or simply witnessing, they reported that they were involved in the improvisation as if being a part of it and not feeling left out. All reported that they were drawn to how I paid attention to the movement exploration, and that the improvisation had a sense of progression they could follow without realising any patterns or meanings. The viewers reported a degree of kinaesthetic empathy, a sense of mirroring my movement, akin to Gallese’s embodied simulation as discussed in Chapter Two. They also reported a degree of introspection where they reflected on how they viewed the improvisation. Further, the temporal structure of jo-ha-kyū was shown to evoke the interplay between timing and the expectation of the viewers. From the interviews, there was a sense of anticipation in the early

99 See the questions of the interviews in Appendix II, p. xxviii – xxx.
part of the showing, the jo section of the improvisational score. I broke the jo pattern with different activities and physicality. The nested kinaesthetic experience from the jo section was developed into ha and gave a form of resolution (kyū) by drawing upon the associated material from the previous sections to shape the arc of the presentation. One participant, Alice Cummins, reported that the beginning part seemed laboured. But as the change came, her attention was brought back to my performance so suddenly that the laboured part built her expectation and laid a strong impetus towards the latter part of the improvisation. This showed that the construction of the choreographic shape through the concept of jo-ha-kyū could create a sense of temporality that elicited the viewer’s anticipation and the resolution thereafter.

Although the 20-minute improvisation material shown to this group of spectators was at a developmental stage, the ideas and practices have been effective strategies to enable a shared experience. The anecdotal evidence from the interviews indicates that these practices can potentially enable kinaesthetic empathy which creates a coherent experience that is potentially shared simultaneously between the performer and viewers. It is important to point out that while anecdotal evidence provides a glimpse of the possible experience for an audience, the reality of performing solo dance is that it is not possible to know the experience of each individual spectator. The reciprocity between performer and audience may vary in degree and quality, ranging from introspection to empathy. What a performer can do is to offer the potential for a sense of mutuality with the spectators, and to gain clarity in the articulation of jo-ha-kyū to affect their attention, whilst inviting the gaze through practicing riken noken.

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100 See Appendix II: Interview with invited audience – Alice Cummins p. xxxiv.
In the next chapter, I will discuss my improvisation practice and a choreographic process that enables a shared experience with the viewers, the practice of *riken noken* and the articulation of *jo-ha-kyū* as temporal structure in improvisation. The intersection between these practices and BMC movement exploration will be outlined in greater detail, along with the discussion concerning the creative process of the solo dance work *17 Square Brackets.*
Chapter Four
The Practice

This chapter discusses the studio-based research, aiming to give practical insight into how the layers of jo-ha-kyū are formed to modulate the temporal flow of improvisational material. I examine an approach derived from BodyMind Centering® (BMC), and its application to the movement exploration process, drawing on the notion that kinaesthetic and somatic experiences are registered through various nervous systems. This movement exploration process was documented through audio recordings, focusing on the actions attributed to different parts of the nervous systems. I then analyse the formation of improvisational material and how jo-ha-kyū layers are mapped out in my improvisation. This leads to a discussion of the choreographic process of 17 Square Brackets, which is the result of the studio research on the BMC movement exploration process and Noh theories as described in previous chapters. The chapter concludes with findings on how the understanding of the performer/audience relationship has informed the consideration of temporality in my improvisation and dance-making practice.

Along with the movement exploration process, my interest has also been in discovering the intricate relationships between a broad range of activities in the body as a resource for generating movement, an approach inspired by BMC. For Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, the founder of BMC, movements from the smallest to the largest activities are expressed through various systems in the body such as the musculoskeletal, organs, endocrine, fluid and nervous systems. While movement expressed through some systems may not be promptly perceived in our consciousness, Cohen proposes a
method of experiential study through visualisation and the subsequent process of embodiment, as kinaesthetic, proprioceptive and sensory experience accumulates. In movement exploration, she acknowledges the flow of experience from the conscious to subconscious realm, and vice versa, and the interconnections between various physiological networks of the body.

In my research, the lengthy movement exploration process focused on the nervous system as a mechanism for gathering experiential information. For Cohen, the nervous system “receives information and gives information to all the cells of the body”\textsuperscript{101}. It is a system where our perceptual experience is registered, particularly through the interaction between our awareness and environment. Although the nervous system operates continuously as an integrated whole, Cohen puts forward the idea of differentiating aspects of the sub-systems in order to embody the whole system more fully.\textsuperscript{102} In the studio research, I documented the patterns of differentiation and integration of diverse aspects of these nervous systems in my improvisations and later examined how the temporal flow of this material was experienced.

**Methodology: the reportage of improvisation**

One of the key methods I used to research Cohen’s notion of identifying aspects of the nervous system was reportage. According to dance researcher

\textsuperscript{101} Cohen, Sensing, Feeling and Action, 3.
\textsuperscript{102} The nervous system is generally divided into two systems: the autonomic nervous system and the somatic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system, governing functions of the body that are not usually under conscious control, is also divided into two categories: the sympathetic nervous system which is activated during the flight-or-fight response, and the parasympathetic nervous system which is activated during rest, digestion, tissue repair and recuperation. The somatic nervous system also has two aspects: the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord) and the peripheral nervous system (the cranial, spinal, and peripheral nerves). The somatic nervous system operates through the motor (action) and sensory (feedback) components to relay information and create a feedback loop between the brain, spinal cord and the peripheral parts of the body.
Kent De Spain, who developed a method of verbal reporting in his own research, reportage can be used to record experience during improvisation to find out ‘how’ it occurs. In particular, De Spain proposed this method to investigate various states of awareness, through a series of audio recordings of practitioners including himself, and later analysed the reporting focusing on patterns of language the improvisers used.

De Spain’s method of reporting consisted of two tape recorders, the first of which was a 45-minute mostly-silent track with his voice calling, “Report now!” at random durations. The second track was connected to a microphone to record the improvisers’ voice. De Spain conceded that any method of verbally reporting invariably affected the flow of experience of the improvisers with the need to transfer somatic experience into linguistic expressions. Nevertheless, he believed the reporting method proved invaluable for his investigation to reveal that improvisational awareness involves kinaesthetic memory and the intentionality of the improvisers.103

In the early stages of my studio research, I tried De Spain’s method. However, I found the random calls to report were not entirely congruous with my aim of examining the temporal flow in improvisation, which required a sustained and continuous recording of the experience. Moreover, the random calls occasionally broke in unexpectedly and disrupted my concentration. Consequently, with De Spain’s method, I was distracted by my own effort to be ready for reporting at any moment which did not intrinsically reflect my somatic awareness. For these reasons, I modified De Spain’s method by attaching only one small recording device to myself to report as I moved when possible.

During moments within a deep somatic state, the reporting was possible but not free-flowing and reflective note-taking was substituted for documenting those moments.

In each studio session, I began by practising Noh repertoire as a centring exercise reiterating the rendering of jo-ha-kyū in the repertoire. This was followed by a series of improvisations for movement exploration. Through the seven-month period of the studio research, the improvisation progressed from the timeframe of five minutes to 30 minutes. In each timeframe, I reinvestigated the same task up to four times while exploring the concept of jo-ha-kyū. In each session, I verbally reported and used reflective note-taking to document the kinaesthetic experience and the temporal articulation of the material. Over time, the note-taking and reportage helped me gain an insight into the improvisational material because speaking while moving often registered the moment before movement occurred. As a result, the awareness of the kinaesthetic and somatic aspects became palpable and, in turn, informed conditions for my body to generate performative material, along with the flow of thoughts and perception in my improvisation while forming the arcs of jo-ha-kyū. The text from the reportage was eventually collated and developed into the improvisational score of 17 Square Brackets, to be further discussed in “The Choreographic Process” in this chapter.

The BMC-derived movement exploration process

Although De Spain and Cohen are practitioners with separate concerns, a parallel can be found in the way they use the language of information gathering during improvisation. Unlike De Spain’s method, the reportage in my research was used to document five actions of information gathering
derived from BMC: tracking, sensing, feeling, yielding and mapping. In the studio research, these five actions were simultaneously utilised for movement exploration; as a process to investigate the accumulation of kinaesthetic and somatic experiences through time; and examining the flow of interconnecting patterns in my improvisations and the formation of jo-ha-kyū trajectories.

According to Cohen, the five actions are devised as measures to identify various aspects of the nervous system while acknowledging the overlapping qualities in terms of movement expressions. She posits that ‘tracking’ movement focuses on the musculoskeletal system, emphasising the sympathetic nervous system. For the ‘sensing’ process, Cohen states that it “is the process of consciously following spatially through inner vision” with the emphasis on the somatic nervous system. She describes ‘feeling’ as a process expressed “through the density of the fluid pathways” when the body follows the memory of the experience. Lastly, ‘yielding’ is understood to be expressed in a deep somatic state through the parasympathetic nervous system. Cohen goes on to suggest that ‘yielding’ is a process of deep rest and release following gravity, but with a quality of “rebound and resilience.”

In my studio research, I used the ‘tracking’ process to locate various parts of the body as I sought to establish specific kinaesthetic attention to movement through my bones and muscles. The ‘sensing’ process became more apparent as kinaesthetic experience accumulated and movement patterns or qualities began to surface in my awareness. My reportage often revealed the ‘sensing’ process as a series of questions as if I was following

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104 Cohen, Sensing, Feeling and Action, 187.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 194.
kinaesthetic or somatic possibilities that were still unclear in my consciousness, and I was speculating on what was unfolding as I moved. Although ‘sensing’ movement seemed uncertain, the reporting of the ‘sensing’ process showed a clear spatial and temporal reality of movement material, reflecting the heightened somatic awareness. Some of the questions from reporting the ‘sensing’ process were subsequently used to develop the improvisational score of 17 Square Brackets, see Appendix I, page xviii, xxii and xiii.

While the ‘tracking’ and ‘sensing’ processes occurred in any durations in my improvisations, the ‘feeling’ process were found more substantially in longer timeframes, at least 15 minutes. To me, the ‘feeling’ process arose as certain kinaesthetic or somatic experiences were recalled, not as muscular-skeletal tracking, but as felt experience. Often revealing non-realistic descriptions of my experience, the reporting of ‘feeling’ contained kinaesthetic information of a fluid-like quality delivering a physical manifestation which flowed to any part of the body – “I chew with my shoulder; and digesting with my foot”\(^{108}\).

In my explorations, the process of ‘yielding’ took place in longer periods of focus in the later stage of the studio research. Like the ‘feeling’ process, during ‘yielding’, my verbal articulation in the reportage was not free-flowing and only the moment prior to the action of ‘yielding’ was reported. Often, my memory of the ‘yielding’ process was like a rolling-out of kinaesthetic output as if my body accumulated enough somatic experience to simply allow material for improvisation to unfold. There was a sense of simultaneous performing and witnessing, comparable to Komparu’s first tier of self-other, where I deeply embodied the improvisational score. The ‘yielding’ process came to an end

\(^{108}\) From the reportage on May 7, 2015. Also see Fig. 4.1 and Fig. 4.2.
when the accumulated somatic experience reached its limit, often resulting in a stillness or a pause. This stillness did not signify an ending, but was a transition moment to improvise further.

MAY 7, 2015
Improv duration: 5:15 minutes

“Post human
My finger is made of atoms that have existed since the Big Bang.
These atoms have been recycled through various plants and animals.

How if my eyes are at the cushion of my fingers?
That’s how I see.
I’ve got 10 eyes.

How if I use my back to breath?
How if my diaphragm is able to move more in some dimensions than others,
Unlike the human diaphragm...
Right now that is expanding in all directions.

I point the cushions of my fingers somewhere, that means I can see it without the usual Naree’s eye.

I looked to the ceiling with my fingers.
And my other fingers are seeing my arm pit.

If I eat with my shoulder, when I get hungry.
I look at food and chew with my shoulder.
And digesting with my foot...

I think that’s 5 minutes.”

Fig 4.1: A complete reportage of a short improvisation, showing the actions of ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’ and ‘thought’ in the beginning. The action of ‘feeling’ emerges in the middle alongside ‘tracking’ and ‘sensing’.
My attention gradually shifted from ‘tracking’ and ‘sensing’, to a deeper cognitive process in ‘feeling’ and occasionally ‘yielding’. However, as the studio research progressed, these processes became less clear-cut. As shown in the short reportage in Figure 4.1, there was a flow between the ‘tracking’ and ‘sensing’ processes in the early parts that continued throughout as I sought to register movement and its spatial and temporal information. Towards the end of each improvisation as my somatic experience accumulated, the ‘sensing’ and ‘feeling’ process often guided my perception with occasional ‘yielding’ for rest and rebound in longer timeframe. Although verbal reporting was a limited method for articulating the deeper experience of ‘feeling’ and ‘yielding’, the reportage contributed to uncover invaluable information on how the improvised material was formed. Thus, it was an important method as it recorded much of the internal process and was a useful tool for recalling and developing material. The examples of longer reports can be viewed in Appendix II, page xiii - xxiii.

Furthermore, through the reporting practice, I discovered that my perceptual experience of improvisation took more forms than the five actions in the BMC-derived movement exploration process. The analysis of the reportage revealed that I articulated thoughts which did not describe movement but conceivably expressed my perceptual experience in broader terms, not only in kinaesthetic and somatic ones. ‘Thoughts’ flowed through the ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’ and ‘feeling’ processes as though to plant a seed for my attention. These emerging thoughts were not abstract, nor did I report the visualisation or embodiment. Thus, the ‘thoughts’ formed parts of my perception as I moved.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{109} See an example of ‘thoughts’ in the improvisation report in the Appendix page xii.
Mapping: Forming jo-ha-kyū as the topography of the improvisation

At this stage in the dissertation, I have discussed how my improvisations were formed from gathering experiential information through the actions of ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’, ‘feeling’ and ‘yielding’. In addition to these actions, the ‘mapping’ process was utilised for making spatial and temporal relationships of material from the movement exploration. Cohen states that the ‘mapping’ process is “a somatic act” utilising kinaesthetic memory to connect parts of the perceptual experience of improvisation. Differently from Cohen, in my studio research, the ‘mapping’ process was applied through the modulation of jo-ha-kyū, which underpinned the flow of ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’, ‘feeling’ actions, to form the topographies of my movement material. Occasionally the action of ‘yielding’ and pauses occurred as troughs in these topographies. In the process of the jo-ha-kyū mapping, I gathered the kinaesthetic retention as an improvisational milieu – the rise and fall of the dynamic of my improvisations – to inform the subsequent trajectory. From the reportage, the forming of smaller layers of jo-ha-kyū into bigger trajectories depended on the nested experience that was protending, or extending, forward. The consideration of temporality was articulated through my perception and kinaesthetic memory of the various arcs of jo-ha-kyū to construct a choreographic shape for improvised material.

110 Cohen, Sensing, Feeling, and Action, 188.
Fig. 4.2: The same reportage as in Fig 4.1, showing the analysis of the ‘mapping’ process in the five-minute improvisation.
The layers of jo-ha-kyū were mapped out in an analysis of the reportage shown in Figure 4.2. According to Komparu’s definition of jo-ha-kyū discussed in Chapter Three, I began the jo part with a thought of ‘posthuman’ and followed an impulse to move fingers. I then formed a small arc of exploration by sensing my fingers as organs of vision. The breaking element of this piece, ha, came as my attention shifted to a new element – diaphragm and breathing – where I gathered another segment of investigation and retained it as a nested element to resurface later. As I continued moving, the previous elements of fingers and eyes reformed as the second layers of exploration with other parts of the body. The element of breathing re-emerged and re-integrated with the movement of my shoulder as another layer. Consequently, as the nested elements became interconnected with emerging elements, the improvisation increased in intensity and complexity. For the kyū part, or a resolution, I tracked my foot in counterpoint with my eyes while retaining the nested kinaesthetic experience of posthuman functions explored with other parts of the body.

In the studio research, to choreograph from reportage, the language of my reporting was used for recalling improvised material after the analysis of the jo-ha-kyū mapping. For example, from the May 7 reportage, the nested elements of ‘eye’ and ‘fingers’ with thoughts of ‘posthuman’ could be used to begin the reinhabiting of this improvisation. There were several possibilities in which I could track the movement of my fingers and use my eyes, or seeing to generate movement, with various ways of organising my body in the fashion of

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111 ‘Posthuman’ is a term to describe the condition of existence beyond the evolution of homo sapiens. Posthumanism is a philosophical movement in response to anthropocentrism, which brings about irreversible changes in the global environment and ecology through genetically modified food, reproductive technologies for human and animals, and the use of robotics to generate economy. Posthumanism is prevalent in feminist philosophy, literary theory and post-colonial studies. In evolution, many philosophers and thinkers predicted that the lines between human, animals and robotics will not be clear cut in the future with the rise of robotic and genetic technologies.
a newly evolved human form, for instance, seeing through my elbows. To further articulate this material, I could choose to follow the mapping of jo-ha-kyū as in the analysis of the reportage. Alternatively, upon recalling, I could discover different nested experience and create other layers of jo-ha-kyū differently, which might alter temporal and spatial relationships between the elements. In this way, the recalling of the May 7 improvisation has a degree of kinaesthetic specificity, yet with several possibilities to articulate the material – an elastic choreographic shape.

**The choreographic process of 17 Square Brackets**

Essentially, the process of ‘mapping’ through jo-ha-kyū was a process of choreographing by creating interconnected layers of jo-ha-kyū arcs through the experiential information, collected from the ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’, ‘feeling’ and ‘yielding’ processes, to construct an elastic choreographic shape of improvised material. The language in the reportage did not prescribe movement, but the process prior to generating movement. It facilitated an organisation of various muscular tones of my improvising body – the process in which movement could generate with a degree of specificity while remaining discernible to unintended impulses and my environment, including observers. Selected texts from the reportage in the latter stages of the studio research were further developed into an improvisational score. For example, I selected a passage of the reportage on August 17, 2015 where I investigated an idea of ‘opposite’:

“The opposite of me is mirroring me.
So I can do anything on this side, it’d appear in the mirror as the opposite of me performing the same thing.
...

—
But would it make any difference if I'm actually aware of that imaginary other on the opposite side of the mirror, while maintaining this seed?

What does it affect?
I think it affects my speed.”

... How can it be an opposite, with me, just a small me at the edge of the boundary?
Opposite to the big volume of space?
Counterpointing that big space?”

In this passage, not only did I record my experience, I also assessed how improvising with the notion of ‘opposite’ affected a sense of space and the speed of my movement, which was slowing down. As I recalled the idea of ‘opposite’ and its movement quality, I refined the language of this passage while considering its effect on a dynamic of movement. In relation to other selected text, this passage required an awareness both of small parts inside my body and expansiveness of the space around me. Therefore, it was placed in the latter part of the final score for 17 Square Brackets where my somatic experience had accumulated: -

“What if there’s an opposite version of each of trillions of my cells somewhere in the space I measure?
Where does it exist?”

As another example sourcing text, I selected a sentence which resonated strongly from the reportage on September 25, 2015: -

“How if, what if the body is the organism of listening, perceiving information, figuring out the information as I move?”

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112 See the reportage from August 17, 2015: Appendix I, page xv – xvi.
113 See the reportage from September 25, 2015: Appendix I, page xxii.
At the time of reporting, this passage appeared around the middle of the improvisation. In collating text into an improvisation score, I arranged this sentence in the beginning because it facilitated an experience of extending myself to gauge the attention of the audience before forming a shared space with them. Once the text was selected, it was treated as an interim score. Through the process of recalling improvised material based on this interim score, the language of the text was further developed into the final score. The method of selecting and collating text from the reportage is indeed another layer of ‘mapping’ jo-ha-kyū, a process where I inhabited the role of a maker to construct an adaptable shape of the piece from the outside.

Furthermore, the spatial and temporal shape of 17 Square Brackets was mapped out through the mechanism of jo-ha-kyū of the improvised material, from the overall structure to each section and each sentence of the improvisational score. After an extensive trip to Kyoto in December 2015, I gained a greater understanding of the articulation of jo-ha-kyū through learning Noh repertoire and re-engaging in conversations with the Noh practitioners. The articulation of jo-ha-kyū in my improvisation practice went through a process of refinement to smaller and smaller units. The practice of finding seeds of movement material helped to pinpoint the jo, to be extrapolated in ha and which resolved in kyū. The seeds of nested experiences accumulated in my awareness. Each seed evolved with its own trajectory, then augmented to form a web of connections to the overall topography of the improvisation. As my studio research progressed and the duration of improvisation increased, the score gradually took shape through this jo-ha-kyū mapping process. Consequently, the temporal flow of the jo-ha-kyū articulation in my improvisations gained clarity in terms of speed and timing.
Throughout February – April 2016, while my familiarity with the improvisational score increased over the period of rehearsals leading to performance, the choreographic shape remained elastic as I gradually applied the self-view riken noken. My attention hovered between the embodiment of the score and observing myself as if from the outside where I shifted back and forth from my kinaesphere to the audience area. As a result, I could discern emerging impulses and articulate various arcs of jo-ha-kyū as it formed and reformed in each performance. Through practicing riken noken, the sense of porosity in my body increased as if the gaze of the spectators penetrated deeply into my consciousness. As a result, my attention sharpened.

Although my aim for the improvisational score was clear, it was important for me to employ a rigorous objective process for its development. To facilitate my role as the dance-maker in this creative process, I incorporated the “non-goal-orientated creative process”¹¹⁴ called the RSVP cycles, developed by American landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, whose work I came across as a landscape architecture student in Bangkok in the late 1980s. Halprin developed this process in collaboration with his wife Anna Halprin, post-modern choreographer and improvisation practitioner. Both in design and performance making, the Halprins utilise the RSVP cycles to enable continuous communication and learning amongst collaborators of the creative process, while retaining clear common goals.¹¹⁵

Each RSVP cycle is divided into four parts: ‘R’ for Resource, ‘P’ for Performance, ‘S’ for Score, and ‘V’ for Valuation.¹¹⁶ For Halprin, ‘Resource’ is

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 68.
¹¹⁶ See further details of the RSVP cycles in Appendix 1, page xxiv.
the creative elements of the project including all source material, the creative personnel, and their aims, concepts, ideas and intentions. For 17 Square Brackets, the resource was the selected text from the reportage which was to be tested in each RSVP cycle; Studio 221, Dance Building, where the performances took place; small objects hanging in the space to create a performance landscape; the concepts of riken noken and jo-ha-kyū; and the aim to create a mutually shared experience between performer and audience.

For ‘Performance’, in the same way as Halprin I looked to perform and test how the resources worked in practice. For ‘Valuaction’, Halprin uses a process of assessing and reconfiguring the Performance. In 17 Square Brackets, the Valuaction process was used to reflect on each performance of the score:- the spatial patterns, movement vocabulary, dynamics, energy and clarity, to gain further insight into the physicality of the improvisation and the jo-ha-kyū articulation of the score. In a similar way to Halprin, the result of the Valuaction process became the refined ‘Score’, which would then become the ‘Resource’ for the next cycle of reflection and refinement. For 17 Square Brackets, the selected text from the reportage provided the overall trajectory of jo-ha-kyū whilst facilitating specific kinaesthetic and somatic conditions for performing. The experimental and analytical process of each RSVP cycle helped me to gain understanding and depth in the improvisation score which opened a different possibility for the ‘Performance’ of the next cycle. The series of RSVP cycles provided a valuable methodical way to develop the blueprint of 17 Square Brackets through refining the interim score. The final score is made up of the series of ‘what-if’ questions, creating a sense of

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117 Poynor and Worth, Anna Halprin, 72.
potentiality to simultaneously speculate and organise the improvising body without predetermining movement pathways.\textsuperscript{118}

**Improvisational score of 17 Square Brackets**

What if the act of perceiving makes my body an organism of listening?

What if I measure myself and my space from the perception of dimensions of the body?

What if the information I take from this measuring includes the width, length, density, weight and volume?

What if parts of my body for measuring include head and coccyx as limbs?

What if this information shapes my movement, time and another layer of space and responds to what I perceive?

What if I dance from the space I see, counterpointing and alongside the objects in the space?

What if I dance from the shift of energy?

What if I shift the energy from the information I perceive in the body?

What if, while I shift the energy, I follow a sort of temporal trajectory, a temporal milieu?

What if the temporal milieu follows the resource of the body in the ever-rolling ‘now’?

What if there’s an opposite version of each of trillions of my cells somewhere in the space I measure?

Where does it exist?

What if each of these cells contains the atoms of C, H, O, N, that used to be in the dinosaurs over 100 million years ago?

What if some of these atoms in the dinosaurs are now in me and the Hubble Space Telescope orbiting the Earth?

What if the space I measure corresponding between the inside and outside of my body?
What if the world outside flowing into the world inside?
What if the world inside spreading to the world outside?

The set-up of the performance space in 17 Square Brackets

To invite the audience into a mutually shared experience, I selected small objects and set them up as the performance landscape, to create a spatial terrain with areas accessible by the audience, overlapping with my field of attention. Objects were hung and small enough not to compete with the available space, visible enough to be identified, while their small size functioned to draw attention to their delicate details. The objects: a wooden goose egg, a model of a whale shark, a Nanoblock model of a dinosaur, a model of a kitchen sink, a plastic insect, a model of a gum tree, and a model of the Hubble Space Telescope, associated with a passage in the final score:-

“What if each of these cells contains the atoms of C, H, O, N, that used to be in the dinosaurs over 100 million years ago?

What if some of these atoms in the dinosaurs are now in me and the Hubble Space Telescope orbiting the Earth?”

This passage contained the thematic notion of temporality – the span of time from the prehistoric to the future – emerging from ‘thoughts’ in the reportage on August 1, 2015:-

“…I have flesh and blood…with those original C, O, H, N atoms…
Those atoms are blood and bones and membranes and ligaments
And limbs and mechanisms and sensory feedback,
Composing together into something livable.”119

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119 From the improvisation report on August 1, 2015. See Appendix I, page xviii.
The selected objects contained the combinations of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen – the primary atoms that all living organisms, including the human body, commonly share. As I wondered about ‘thoughts’ in relationship to the audience, these objects were placed not only to break down the volume of space and craft a specific environment for the performance, but also to facilitate possible thought-association in the viewers’ imagination.

**Practice into performing 17 Square Brackets**

The improvisational score of 17 Square Brackets, refined through the RSVP cycles, helped to weave my connection with the audience as a part of the spatial terrain. This, in turn, affected the tonality of my improvising body in articulating the material through time utilising jo-ha-kyū. In the beginning part of the score, I objectively used my body parts as units of measurement to draw attention to the dimension of my body so as to become a kind of relational measuring system with the space. This activity enabled me to understand the space in terms of its volume, density and tensility as the first layer of the performing terrain. I took time to attend to emerging material – to embark on, explore/develop and accumulate various layers of the jo-ha-kyū arcs – for my awareness of what might be possible to become clear. At times my focus was inward, other times outward. I felt that ‘seeing’ the volume of space in front of me or the audience was a way of reconnecting and checking if the energy of my attention was overlapping with theirs.

Through the season stillness emerged, not only as the trough of the improvisational milieu, but also as transitions within the improvised material. As I settled in stillness, there was a sense of resetting my actions to catch up
with my attention in order to continue. During the pause, I performed with a certain kinaesthetic intensity without generating movement. This enabled my body and my attention to alter from my musculoskeletal system and kinaesthetic awareness of performance space to a deeper somatic experience, which was fluid-like, weaving in the background of my temporal experience. In return, I felt the audience’s attention more intensely during this stillness, thus the reciprocity became more palpable.

**Final reflections**

My aim for this project was to investigate how improvisational material can be articulated through time while enabling a form of empathetic
relationship with the audience. In the process, I found what can be termed as three layers of the process of ‘choreographing time’. The first is in the starting point of the mutual relationship between myself and the audience beginning when I took time to extend myself to listen and draw in the concentration of the audience. This process established my perception of time in performance – my temporality, and utilised my adrenalised energy to perceive the environment including the observers. I instantiated myself in relation to the viewer and thereby established the knowledge of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in my performance.

The second layer in which time was choreographed was through crafting a mutually shared space with the audience. Once the knowledge of ‘self’ and ‘other’ began to form in my improvisation, I invited the gaze of the audience through the practice of riken noken, observing myself from the outside. The audience’s gaze intensified my perceptual experience of the world inside and outside of my body as riken noken created a sense of transparency, enabling my attunement to the attention of the audience. This reciprocity affected the consideration of time in my embodiment of the improvisational score, not only to be of my own timing but to speculate how the audience might perceive my actions through time.

As my transparent physicality enabled by riken noken and the reciprocity with the audience affected my improvising body, the consideration of temporality occurred in the relationship between my kinaesthetic experience and the fractal web of jo-ha-kyū. In this third layer of choreographing time, I used jo-ha-kyū as the intrinsic apparatus to articulate time of the performance material – how long I would perform certain improvised material or how I discerned unintended impulses. These interconnected units of jo-ha-kyū
formed the terrain of the improvisation, a kind of elastic structure or choreographic shape adaptable to the reciprocal relationship with the audience. In the culmination of all three layers, the process of ‘choreographing time’ corresponded to create a coherent, and possibly introspective and empathetic, experience with the audience.

Choreographing Time gave an insight into how improvisational material can be articulated temporally to affect the attention of the audience, and to form a coherent experience that is shared mutually between performer and audience. Through Noh theatre, neurophysiology and phenomenology, this research brought together theoretical, scientific and philosophical discussions to inform the performance making of solo improvisation. The research highlighted time in performance as an important element to affect the perceptual experience of the audience, and that a solo dance performance can be a collaborative process between the dancer and audience.

The studio research showed that the temporal flow of improvisational material crucially depends on the degree of clarity in awareness and attention in improvisation. In addition, I discovered there is an area to examine further use of jo-ha-kyū through my study of Zeami’s treatises. Not only for articulating performance material, Zeami also theorises that jo is a device to create ‘Fascination’ (omoshiroki面白 き), an instant sensation arises before being conscious about what is being viewed. As the jo part of a jo-ha-kyū layer is used to hook onto the audience’s attention, the performer then develops ha in reciprocation with the audience. Zeami states that the performance should reach some form of resolution or ‘Fulfilment’ (jōju 成就) in

120 Rimer and Yamazaki, trans., On the Art of Noh Drama, 133.
the kyū part of the cycle in order to elicit ‘Fascination’ in the spectator.\textsuperscript{121} Further research is needed to ascertain how this deeper iteration of jo-ha-kyū can be experienced in improvisation for a richer sense of mutual connection between performer and spectator.

Furthermore, in constructing and reconstructing the jo-ha-kyū terrain of the improvisation, the Noh concept of ma 間, or the gap of space and time in between performative elements, presents as an area for further investigation. Ma, a pause that contains the fullness of kinaesthetic intensity, can potentially further the understanding of the temporal topography in solo improvisation. As I expand the choreographic palette through further exploration, I am intrigued to see how jo-ha-kyū, riken noken and ma can be used in contemporary dance-making to enable an empathetic experience with the audience.

\textsuperscript{121} Rimer and Yamazaki, trans., \textit{On the Art of Noh Drama}, 133.
Fig 4.4: The model of the Hubble Space Telescope used in the set-up of 17 Square Brackets. Photo: Shane Grant.

Fig 4.5: Image from 17 Square Brackets, showing one of the objects, the wooden goose egg. Photo: Jeff Busby.
Fig 4.6: Left, image from 17 Square Brackets, showing one of the objects, the model of a whale shark. Photo: Jeff Busby.

Fig 4.7: Below, image from 17 Square Brackets. Photo: Jeff Busby.
Fig 4.8: Image shows the set-up of 17 Square Brackets with the small objects forming the performance landscape. Photo: Jeff Busby.

Fig 4.9: Image from 17 Square Brackets, showing the Nanoblock model of a dinosaur, the model of a kitchen sink, the plastic insect and a glimpse of the model of a gum tree. Photo: Jeff Busby.
Fig 4.10: Above, image from 17 Square Brackets, showing the relationship between the performing body and two objects – the Nonoblock model of a dinosaur and the model of the Hubble Space Telescope. Photo: Jeff Busby.

Fig 4.11: Right, image from 17 Square Brackets. Photo: Jeff Busby.
Links of Video Documentation

Creative outcome of the research: 17 Square Brackets
Duration: 34.14 minutes
The video is available for downloading to watch in full via the link below:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/y4k8tjod0fbqmcml/160422_17%20Square%20Brackets.mov?dl=0

Concept, choreography and performance – Nareeporn Vachananda
Lighting – Shane Grant
Sound – Field recording by Toshiya Tsunoda (archive.org)
Video documentation – Kaitlyn McConnell and Joanne Lichti
Recorded at Studio 221, Dance Building, VCA. April 20 – 23, 2016.

Footage of Noh practice: Tsuru Kame
Duration: 4.10 minutes
https://www.dropbox.com/s/j8gppmhmjqaor0/151221_Tsurukame.mp4?dl=0

Performance – Nareeporn Vachananda
Vocal – Master-actor Udaka Michishige
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Appendix I

Creative process of 17 Square Brackets
Notes on ‘thoughts’ in improvisation reports

The analysis of the reportage revealed that I verbally articulated thoughts which did not describe movement but conceivably planted a seed of my attention somewhere in subsequent moments in my improvisations. The ‘thoughts’ flowed through the ‘tracking’, ‘sensing’ and ‘feeling’ processes as though to affirm my perceptual experience of the improvisation in a broader term, not only in kinaesthetic and somatic terms. These emerging thoughts were not abstract, nor did I report the visualisation or embodiment of the thoughts. Thus, the ‘thoughts’ formed parts of my perception as I moved. For example, I reported:-

“Body is curved, so you measure all the surface length
So it might not be… it’s probably longer if you flatten the body out
Something said that, oh, [it was] Jim Al-Khalili\(^1\)
...
He said that in quantum physics things don’t exist until you measure it."\(^1\)

In this reportage, the phrase, “Things don’t exist until you measure it” was a reassurance of my presence in the space. The dimension of space became clear to me, retained as cognitive information and re-emerged in the subsequent moments to form a map or topography of the improvisation.

\(^1\) Professor Jim Al-Khalili is a British theoretical physicist and Chair in the Public Engagement in Science at the University of Surrey. He is also a science broadcaster for numerous podcasts and documentaries on theoretical and quantum physics.

\(^1\) From reportage September 4, 2016.
IMPROVISATION REPORT

This improvisation report shows the flow of the information gathering process through various aspects of the nervous system, as described in Chapter 4. In the early part, the improvisation was experienced through ‘tracking’ and ‘sensing’ movement and ‘thoughts’. Gradually, the awareness of the improvisation shifted to mostly ‘sensing’ and ‘feeling’ movement.

AUGUST 17, 2015

Duration 25:33 min

The seed today is really tiny seed.
The seed is to bend my left elbow and to start with my eyes closed.
See what kind of information I’ve got from repeating this seed.

In that present moment while I’m performing this seed,
There is a possibility of the awareness of the rest of the body.

While I’m performing the seed, I can alter the speed, alter the range of the bending of the elbow of my left arm.
I can hold.
Release quite slowly or just let it drop.
Try to examine this action in details.
There’re a few possibilities of it.
Just talk about one pathway, one direction.

Can stop half way, then drop, let it sprung back.
Or I can actually have the equal speed all along the way.

So what’s the hands are doing, they just follow the elbow.
Just a line of the radius and ulna, and just start to flick...

The elbow is going up and down.
Does something else with the action of the elbow.

What about the rest of the body?
It’s only just improv, don’t know if I could perform this but do it as a performance but think about something there.

I’m going to try to bend elbow in the angle now.

If I turn my forearm, turn my humerus and tilt the elbow until it’s facing outside,
Have a totally different look of this elbow.
At the same time, the hand, the wrist is affecting the direction of where the elbow is going. I'm still keeping this seed. I'm persisting with it a bit before I would continue on.

I'm only aware of the...my perception as a whole. But you don't see the rest of the body. If you perceive your body as a whole, the more wholly it is, the better. I involve my torso in this. I'm still exploring one arm at the minute. Of the seed, by just bending this elbow.

Now if I add the idea of oppositing? At the moment, I have like a central axis of the body. I'm using the seed on my right arm and right elbow too. My left side and my right side are almost mirroring each other. But not quite.

At some point it did, but it dropped. We're not equal in the left and right brain, is it? I don't know why I don't like it to be equal, symmetrical between left and right. See I flick my hand like I'm turning a doorknob, kind of co-ordinating together. But maybe if I make it absolute symmetrical, almost even more revolutionised!

I like the idea of maintaining the seed, 'cause I'm figuring it out. The negotiation between what would I do with this limited seed, As oppose to free-form anything. I didn't really think about the look of the movement as such. I simply negotiate the task of trying to locate the opposite. At this point, my improv is very simple. Is that alright?

I'm still staying with this axis within me. I bend a bit, I broke the rule. But I keep the seed with me still.

How if this axis is twisting? It's not all mechanical.

The axis is curved and that make the configuration of something opposite tricky, isn't it?

It's tempting now to maintain the seed and now that axis is outside my body, like I'm performing against the mirror. The opposite of me is mirroring me.
So I can do anything on this side, it’d appear in the mirror as the opposite of me performing the same thing.

Don’t have to worry about what it’s going to be like.

But would it make any difference if I’m actually aware of that imaginary other on the opposite side of the mirror, while maintaining this seed.

The variation of the seed.

What does it affect?

I think it affects my speed.

Now my eyes are open...

It’s amazing how inside the improvisation can look really different.

I’m sure anyone who look at me at this moment,
You’ll see one figure dancing.

But I’m making the seed and negotiating the variation as if there’s an imaginary other dancing with me just across the mirror, beside me, mirroring me.

I can move, involve any other part of the body.

The question is how much I would be able to maintain that imaginary figure within my field of attention.

That kind of brings me to the detail of what’s going on inside.

The seed is still there, involving.

Both bending of the elbow and the hand.

The other still dancing out there opposite the mirror.

How detailed can you get inside?

And maintaining that image of the opposite.

Now I’m going to change the idea of the opposite.

A bit of jo-ha-kyū in an intentional sort of way, isn’t it?

Didn’t plan this before but it seems now that what’s going to happen.

I’m maintaining the seed but the other of me including the space outside of me that the kinetic energy...

What happens inside of me is as dense of the whole energy of the outside...

I have to breathe more to maintain that detail.

It’s not a kind of internal feeling of it only.

But making the opposite is just about as much energy or different density because it’s got a bigger volume opposite me.

How can it be an opposite, with me, just a small me at the edge of the boundary?

Opposite to the big volume of space?

Counterpointing that big space?

The more I pay attention to the details of my density, my veins

The tonality of the body, the ligaments, the blood vessels

The nerve neurons.
I send this message, send this intensity,
Thick message through to counterpoint the big space.

The cells, the wall of the cells is full of energy
Push from the inside.

I’m countering the energy of the big space
The area up to the boundary of my body.

The heart, the breath, the oxygen
I didn’t want ma to be the end.

I’m not generating the movement anymore
I’m just feeling the energy and existing in it.
This improvisation report shows ‘thoughts’, highlighted in pink (p. xvii), emerging in the reportage and developed into the thematic notion of time in the improvisation score of 17 Square Brackets.

AUGUST 1, 2015
Duration: 17:09 min

The cells.
Left hand often starts first. I thought I was right-handed.

The cells in my left hand.
The atoms that made up the cells have been existed for 13.7 billion years. It’s been reincarnated in various plants and organism.

The carbon atoms used to belong to a cobble.
The edge, the roughness, the unsmoothness of the cobble.
Some cobbles are smooth.

Somehow some sort of process like volcano eruption or something happened that the carbon atoms ended up in a plant.
Taking root somewhere into a soil, growing into living things.
The edge of the soil, the edge of the root that had atoms in it, going deep into the soil.

It’s a living things.
It draws other atoms into it.
It moves actually, it moves by itself.
That’s got to be a living thing.

It exchanges, it brings oxygen, it’s coupling with oxygen and hydrogen and nitrogen forms into an organic matter.

And grow into other things. A more substantial branch, a more substantial roots, more substantial leaves, fruits, flowers and spores.

I can feel that carbon coupling with other atoms that form an organic matter taking root in the body.
The roots are like the fingers themselves.
They go into my blood vessels that look like roots themselves.

I come alive.

Those carbon atoms forming into my blood.
Extended in my breath out.
Exchanging to the air to the space outside me.

I interact with the space outside me with those atoms.
Flowing by pull (?)
How we have these atoms by feeding through plants and animals.

Those atoms going into other bodies,
My body and other bodies.

It’s now outside of my body and my body is waiting here.

I just think about other atoms that’ve been there before.
I’m sure it used to be an insect of some description.

The hard shell, crunchy skin.
That tone of the body is different when you have the crunchy skin.

It feels different from the soft growth full of fluid.
From the soil into the vein, the vein that replicate the position, the shape, the network of the root of the plant.
It’s similar thing but insects are different.
It doesn’t bend, but it’s strong.

Somebody’s got to eat the insects.

I don’t know what animal is, but maybe me, I eat the insects.

I don’t have that hard shell, I have flesh and blood that goes through that with those original C, O, H, N atoms.
That was all in my blood, forms into...
Gee!, how small that is?

Imagining something very small that goes through the body right now.

Those atoms are blood and bones and membranes and ligaments and limbs and mechanisms and sensory feedback.
Compose together into something liveable.

Fluid flowing through the body.
IMPROVISATION REPORT
This improvisation report shows the detailed process of registering my awareness of movement. A passage highlighted in pink (p. xxi – xxii) was selected to feature in the beginning of the improvisation score of 17 Square Brackets.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015
Duration: 47:04 min

I use measuring to get the information from the space.
Here the length, two length of the foot at the edge of the space.

If I start from where I am, one length from there half the space, one length
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10 1/2
Am I actually finding a quantitative unit of measurement?
Am I doing that? That is one of the ways I suppose.
But I want to know other information
What other information I can take from this
That’s 10 1/2 length

If I go further in a diagonal line, maybe I have other units
10 1/2 length of the foot
I’m trying the diagonal… one leg, 2 legs that extend to 90 degrees
Three legs and that way is 3 and a half on 90 degree angles
Four legs and 2 and a half there
Five legs, and 2 and a half there
6 legs… so I measure what I see, but a kind of lateral information as well
The information that is in a lateral dimension not a straight forward one
5 legs, that’s 2 legs on that end
6 legs, 2, may be one and a half foot
One leg, one and a half foot on that lateral dimension
6, wasn’t it, and 3 quarters
This side also 3 quaters
At least I have proprioceptive, kinaesthetic information about the space
In a diagonal, 7 legs and three quarter, 10 and a half foot
Then again, not I start to measuring my own length from the foot is the length of my forearm.
The length of my forearm is the length of my thumb to middle finger stretching it as far as I can
Which is the length of my upper arm to the shoulder joint and a little bit actually
If I extend that I’ve got two and a thumb of those extending it away in space.
So from there, if I measure from a finger, 1, 2, 3 , 4, 5, 6, 7 and 1/2 thumb to finger from the floor to 3 and a thumb extending in front of me when I’m standing at the edge of the space.

Three and a thumb extending above my head
How about the width? Thumb to middle finger, thumb to collarbone
2 width of those is the width of my shoulder
The width of my hip is a rounder, round about 2 of those as well
So 3 1/2 hands in front of me, over head, extending away
How about the length of my side? 1 hand
Waist to greater trochanter: 1 hand
Greater trochanter to the floor: 4 hands

Now tip of the collarbone to the length of the sternum is one hand
From the xyphoid process to belly button: 3/4 hand
Belly button to pubic bone: 4/5 of the hand

4 hands for the length of the legs, 2 hands for the length of the torso.

So now if I go on the space with the length of the body
The unit is the length of the hand, collarbone and forearm
If I go on a bit more to find other dimension of the space

I didn’t count! Start again.
One forearm, 2 forearm, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, Exactly 19. 19 forearms.
So one foot… how about the swade of the space?

It’s interesting, isn’t it, if you’re not in the normal improv mode
This activity of measuring, yes it’s got movement, but it’s an activity
At which point, does it become a dance?
So maybe at this point, Komparu’s two circles are a bit too close
Audience can’t differentiate between their reality and mine…
You can’t make out the performance
(Or is it too far apart?)
But anyway, I keep going with the measuring.
So 2 x 90° angle of the space, two this way - one that way
Two this way - one that way still
One that way, one that way
One that way, one that way
Two of that leg now and three this way
Three that way, four this way
Three this way, five this way
Six this way, two this way???

{yawn!}

How does the audience empathise with this activity?
It’s only just gathering information
What is it for them to observe?

I think it’s three legs now, 4, 5, and a bit.
Now I’d like to measure the weight, so if I start from my hand on my thigh, so that can sense its weight.
The width of my hand, the width of my finger
The width, the heaviness of my arm
That’s from the forearm and the hand.
How about the density? How do we perceive the density of the forearm?
The whole arm now, the weight of the whole arm

I think what takes time for me is the feeling of the perception
What is it like to feel the weight of the arm, the hand and the forearm

How about the legs?
What it takes here is the feeling and the sensation of the weight of the leg
I use my hands a lot in order to manually lift the leg
In order throw it to the ground, have some experiment of perceiving its weight.
Can’t do that much with the torso
Can do a bit with my hip, the width of my hip, the three-dimensionality of my hip

It’s a little bit messier with the width, weight and density
In a way, the weight of the arm taking the weight of the torso
Hands and arms again, aren’t it?

How about the weight of the head?

The weight and the density is really sensorial
We have a sense of it, a feeling of it
We don’t know for sure
What if I take the information of the weight
I have a clear idea about what information I want to get
Of the weight and density of the body
The length is fine but I’d like to do weight as well
Weight of my arms, legs and head
Weight of my torso
How if that information now becomes the seed of my improv
I extend my arm while realising that weight
Temporally I take my time so that I can know to perceive this weight from the information of the space I measure
All of 10 1/2 foot, 10 hands, to quarter
The density of the weight of my finger, I use that for my dance
I’m bodying it
What is it like to have that weight
I think the thought
The thought happens before without enacting the feeling of the weight
It’s actually the experience of the weight
The weight that’s what give me the information
I’m not concerned about line, vector
I’m concerning about thinking, about figuring out as I’m moving
About bodying
How if, what if the body is the organism of listening
Perceiving information, figuring out the information as I move.

I don’t mind if it’s slow, I’m moving to figure out
Foresythe wants to do it fast
For me, it might come.
I’m moving now

He’s right in a way that once you get the information, the speed can come
Because I’m listening to that information
I have a memory of that foot
Three hands and one thumb (sic)

What is it that bodying and moving with information that I measure that the audience can empathise about?
What does it do?

I yield
I still have the sense of yielding in me
I got a lot of information from that labouring of measuring
Here, I won’t be afraid to go fast, to go slow
To go whatever, I’m yielding
Following the information I’m listening

I want to know how long this will take
That yielding
I’m not doing jo-ha-kyū as such
I’m exploring
Listening, following the material that is there
My attention is at the width of me and the space
What if I’m listening to the information of my body - the width, length, weight and density of my body talking to the width and the length of the space?

It’s crystalising
That moment I come to stillness
I think I still have the width and length of my body talking to the width and length of the space
I extend myself, my world, my density into the outside world of space
Nothing to assign in terms of movement

The sensation of width, length, weight and density here in the body
Extending in space
What if the exact copy of my cells is somewhere in space?
What if the opposite of me is somewhere in space?
What would it be? Where would that exist?

...

Exact opposite? Opposite in that way?
Just a copy of some where there
To yield, you have to trust, don’t you?

There’s a feel within the body
I don’t project the tension of the body
Not imagining it either
I feel like this side of me literally leading the opposite
I find where I am first then, reflecting the opposite
The body reflects ‘it’
What if the body reflects it in motion?

I dance with somebody

All of that talking information, what if that the porousness between me and the chair?
What is it like to bring them within my field of attention?
Not necessarily that I have to look at them
Can’t look at everybody
Sensing the chair at the back of my head, dancing with me
Watching me dance with this opposite
Body reflecting it
The dimension of my waist and my hip also reflected in the opposite of me on the other side of the room too

It’s the duality of me and the other
Might not leave enough space between me and the opposite

But I do now.
The RSVP Cycles

The RSVP cycles comprise of:-

‘R’ for Resources. Resources are tasks, experimentation, ideas, material, motivation, aims. Resource can be objective (physical space, sound, objects, etc.) or subjective (ideas, concepts, intention, etc.)

‘P’ for Performance. Anna Halprin describes the flow of cycles from the Resource to Performance‡, in this case improvisation, to test out the resource and develop further resource and ‘S’ for Scores.

‘V’ for Valuation. The term coined by Lawrence Halprin, derived from “value of the action”§. It is the process of feedback, analysis and decision making in regards to creative material. The resources are built through the performance/improvisation and valuation process, which can be a non-judgemental process, to create ‘S’ for Scores.

‘S’ for Scores. According to Anna Halprin, a score is made up of four elements: activity, space, time and performer.** The score can then be practiced through the performance/improvisation process. It can generate further ideas or resources which can be recycled through the performance and valuation processes.

§ Poynor and Worth, Anna Halprin, 112.
** De Spain. Landscape of the Now, 79. From an interview with Halprin.
Example of the RSVP cycles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE: February 11, 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One object in performance space = wooden goose egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The egg as a reference point to define space or to counterpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space between the egg and the wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALUACTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idea of 'super normal' object:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting the conventional scale but proportion of object, the goose egg warps the perception to see 'something normal' in a new way as if seeing it for the first time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fukasawa &amp; Morrison 2008, 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERFORMANCE: 22 min imporv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Updated from Sept 11, 2015)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I measure myself, my space from the perception of the dimension of the body?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if the measuring gives me information about me and my space: the width, the length, density, weight and volume?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if this information makes my body an organism of listening?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What if I dance from the space I perceive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What if I dance from the shift of energy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What if I shift of the energy from the information I perceive in the body?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if, while I shift the energy, I follow a sort of temporal trajectory, a temporal milieu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if there’s an opposite version of each of my cells somewhere in the space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if there’s an opposite of me in the room?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where does it exist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if the world the world inside spreading into the world outside?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if the world outside flowing into the world inside?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The score about the measuring can be used as a 'warm-up' to this. Break it down into each 'bracket' with the practice of 序破急 and 離見の見 “self-separation&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let the movement babble happens first in the warm-up. But in Performance, 一期一会 “once in a lifetime” that this moment will happen - for the first and the last time.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**DATE:** February 12, 2016

**RESOURCE**

**Objective:**

Three objects in space: the goose egg (rolling on the floor), the logo sink (on one of the benches) and the glue jar (on the stand)

**Subjective:**

- What if I measure myself, my space from the perception of the dimension of the body?
- What if this measuring gives me the information about myself, my space: width, length, density, weight and volume?
- What if this information makes my body an organism of listening?

**VALUATION**

SENSING: the sensation of perception. I can’t write it down and I don’t have words for it. But the sensing did register in the nervous system through memory.

FEELING: like time expands when I’m perceiving.

SENSING: like sinking when I’m perceiving.

SENSING = LISTENING

**PERFORMANCE**

Improv 1: approx 25 min. Report recorded 18 min. Improv 2: approx 10 min. The security was buzzing outside. This is just 序 in the improv!

**SCORE**

What if the ACT OF PERCEIVING makes my body an organism of listening?
Appendix II

The interviews with invited dance audience and Noh practitioners
The method of the interviews

The interviews in both parts were conducted by the Student Researcher as a one-on-one conversation so that each participant can express their opinions freely without being influenced by other participants.

The Student Researcher obtained permission from each participant to record the interview with an audio recording device and/or with a Facetime camera on the Student Researcher’s laptop, or similar device. If requested, a copy of the recording(s) would be made available to the participant, so that the participant could verify that the information was accurate.

PART ONE: Interviews with a group of invited audience

The purposes of this part of the interviews are:

1. To survey the experience of an audience in response to the performer when a time structure is considered in the improvisation.

2. To investigate the affect of the audience on the performer and what can be understood in the relationship of performing and watching movement improvisation.

The process of the interview in the research will be as follows:

- Each participant will be contacted by phone or email with a proposal to take part in the project.

- The Plain Language Statement and Consent form will be sent for consideration.

- Each participant will be required to return the Consent form in person or by email to the Student Researcher.

- Each participant and the Student Researcher will meet at the agreed time at the Dance Building, School of Performing Arts, Victorian College of the Arts, 234 St Kilda Road, Southbank VIC 3006.

- Each participant will be invited to witness one-on-one a solo improvisation, performed by the Student Researcher. The duration of the improvisation ranges from 15 - 20 minutes. Then the participant will be invited to have a conversation with the Student Researcher and answer questions about his/her experience of the improvisation.

- Audio and video material will be collected by the Student Researcher and reviewed at a later date.
• Excerpts and sections of transcripts may be incorporated in the final performance and written thesis.
• Participants will be invited to attend the final performance.

Key questions that will be asked include:-

• During the improvisation, do you pay attention ONLY to the performer?
• If not only to the performer, what else do you pay attention to?
• Are you drawn to the action of the performer immediately or does it take you a while?
• Does the improvisation sustain your attention throughout?
• Describe stillness in the improvisation.
• How can you describe the improvisation?
• How do you describe the way you watch the improvisation?
• How long do you think the improvisation lasted?
• Did that feel too long?

PART TWO: Interviews with experienced Noh practitioners

The purposes of this part of the interview are:-

1. To further knowledge and insights into the concepts of ma and jo-ha-kyū in order to more fully incorporate these concepts into contemporary movement improvisation.
2. To gain an understanding of the relationship between the performer and audience in Noh theatre.

The process of the interview in the research will be as following:-

• Each potential participant will be contacted by phone or email with a proposal to take part in the project.
• The Plain Language Statement and Consent form, in English or translated into Japanese, will be sent for consideration.
• Each participant willing to take part is required to return the Consent Form in person or by email to the Student Researcher.
• Each participant and the Student Researcher will meet at the agreed time and place in Kyoto, Japan.

• Each participant will be invited to a one-on-one conversation with the Student Researcher. The duration of the conversation ranges from 30 - 40 minutes.

• Audio and video material will be collected by the Student Researcher and reviewed at a later date.

• Excerpts and sections of transcripts may be incorporated, fully cited and acknowledged in the final written thesis of this research.

Key questions that will be asked include:-

• In your experience of practicing and performing Noh repertoires, what is ma? Please give examples.

• In your experience of practicing and performing Noh repertoires, what is jo-ha-kyū? Please give examples.

• What is your experience of time while practicing and performing Noh repertoires?

• Are aspects of time, such as timing and duration, important to performing Noh repertoires? If so, in which way?

• If possible, how would you describe the experience of stillness and/or silence in the performance of the Noh repertoires?

• In Noh theatre, are there other concepts or principles of time that are important in your opinion? If so, what are they?

• In Noh theatre, in your opinion, what are the concepts or principles on the relationship of the performer and audience?

• How do you relate to your audience in the performance of the Noh repertoire?
TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW WITH INVITED AUDIENCE

ALICE CUMMINS
Melbourne, September 4, 2015

Nareeporn Vachananda: During the improvisation, do you pay attention ONLY to the performer?

Alice Cummins: Not at all. Right from the beginning, you’re right with me all the time, to see the space, to see many things. To elaborate.. I am empathically in the piece still. The particularity which you began through that kind of constantly measuring. Marking and measuring was actually about your body as much as the space directly around you. And so with the light, the sound of the rain and the air-conditioner and the sound of the tram, all of it across the field of my attention in the background because you held my attention completely.

NV: I was wondering about that because this because the measuring is actually Meg Stuart’s exercise and it seems so objective, almost not embodied. But when you actually do it, there’s a bit of a question coming up to me. Like extending my arm, what’s the difference between extending my arm and using my arm to measure something? What kind of information you actually take in?

AC: Is that from Meg’s piece? Her solo?

NV: It’s actually from her book (Are We Here Yet?). I haven’t seen any of her performance with this exercise in it. She has a bit of a description. And I thought it’s really interesting, and I’ve been showing this to a few people now as a part of this series of interviews. When I do it (this exercise), I feel like a way of finding my connection to space...

AC: Can I tell you what I experience? What I’m aware of was almost like in three sections. But in that section, I was almost yearning for it to end. I felt like it was constraining you. And when you did change, I almost didn’t notice the moment when you did change. As though it cleared the room, as though it was so particular, …I like the particularity of your gestures… And I also felt like drawing a line, a border or a frame for the work. But I felt like I’m never that interested in the task only. I’m like, “Ok, I got it. …Ok, more..” And there’s a challenge there, but what interest me in the questions of your work and the questions you’re inviting me to contemplate in the empathic response is …oh, but it’s interesting to feel this constraint. It felt like a constrain to me. And sometimes like a mimetic rather than dance. I mean, they’re fine lines sometimes. And I can’t wait for Naree…. I love watching Naree moves. Then suddenly you were and I didn’t notice the moment. So I was actually been absorbed, so absorbed in the details that… But there was amazing relief, not like a dramatic thing. But from a dance point of view, it’s dramatic. Inside myself, …I felt almost more breathe in it…the imagination of it, the intelligence of it. Your intelligence is always present for me, but the imagination of it. But it felt like it’s a bit
of a constraint. But that doesn’t necessarily make it something I don’t want either. It’s really interesting to see you go through that state.

**NV:** That was pretty much answering all of the questions…

**AC:** I’m better off free roaming, you probably know that about me. I’d better to stay in my improvisation than to stay with the rigidity of [the questions]. If I cover your questions, great. If you want more detail, I have to say to you though, there’s an absurdity to this as well. You come across to the front and you’ve got a hole in your white pants. I think everything is so immaculate and then there’s this little hole in your bottom. She needs to know that. She must know that!

**NV:** I washed it the other day. I didn’t notice it at first. Joanne told me that. I’m wondering if I should patch it. This is from the costume department.

**AC:** I like the costume enormously. Get them to do it. Can they do it for you? You could do something of it but that would be clownish.

**NV:** I could wear white undies.

**AC:** I didn’t think your undies is a problem but just the hole is definitely visible.

**NV:** You could see my leg… Then I’d move on because you pretty much answered my questions about that [what you see]. How about stillness in it?

**AC:** I think the way you began was gorgeous. That’s what I like about… your particular quality of stillness… I feel like you really take me in. You invite me into the thinking, moving, decision making. And there’s this, like a, miraculous quality in that actually, …of my participation in the decision making actually. Not in a directorial way, but imaginative, relational way. Yeah, I really enjoyed the first few minutes before I had all those other questions. And I think in the ending, (closing her eyes) I just think it’s gorgeous. The way you… I was really in another state. What I find so persuasive about you as an improvisor is that there’s no excess. Like it’s never elaborated for the sake of it. But something else… [pause to think]… something intersects with that. …Perhaps that says it really. There’s something else perhaps it’ll come later. There’s a lot of intelligence in how you… I don’t use that word very much, but there I am using it again. There is a miraculous quality or a gasp… or… again, not a… It’s like a spaciousness. Gosh, look at that, she’s just rolled out of that. Unexpectedness! And there’s a lot of air in that. And yet you’re always very earth as well. So, you know, watching you dance in this piece is like… I’m always asking bigger questions and they always enter the space or they don’t. And there’s a question about what is my place? You know, I’m measuring myself. Why? Where’s my place here?

**NV:** As an audience?
**AC:** No, you. These are the questions emerging for me watching you. What is your place in this culture? What is your place in this dance world? They’re kind of lurking around in the depth of the material, not necessarily in the foreground, but I’m always interested in what emerges in that intersubjective, empathetic field.

**NV:** …Yeah, the reason why I choose this thing [score], I actually explore it from it being a practice for a bit. How if it gives you something else, you know. Helen and I was talking about how I make work, I probably end up performing in here. So then I thought, black room? White costume. And it’s easier to be lit. White gives in colour and black just blends in with the space. When I worked with this score a few months ago, it’s like an exercise of smashing things together. From Wim Wenders in his photographic book, he said this little thing. [I think] that’s interesting. Meg [Stuart] is interesting too. And just…choom… putting them in together. But by doing that, there’s a lot of questions coming with that too. And eventually I read Brian Massumi and Erin Manning, an article in their book that’s about William Forsythe on how, in this piece, he responds to Virginia Wolf’s text. It’s great to read about William Forsythe but it’s his wife Dana Caspersen whom I find really, really interesting.

**AC:** Absolutely!

**NV:** Anything she says, I feel like I’m more drawn to her than to him.

**AC:** I agree. What’s the piece she did with the diagonal? …Not Lexicon…she did it for the Melbourne Festival…

**NV:** The one that she wore a big yellow skirt? As Persephone and she didn’t wear top?

**AC:** What it’s called? …

**NV:** *Eidos Telos*?

**AC:** That’s right.

**NV:** So in that article when they talk about a what-if question which is a question of potentiality and possibility. And she just said one sentence, “What if the body is an organism of listening?” I love that. So this costume and the expansion of the place from this score to bring out the movement is what lifts it from being a studio practice to a performance.

**AC:** The costume does that in someway… Absolutely, I think it does.

**NV:** It’s like ushering it. And you as an improvisor, you have to...

**AC:** Step into that. And you need to practice it a lot.
NV: But from this realisation that can extrapolate a lot of things from it [the practice] too, doesn’t it?

AC: Yeah, I definitely experience your listening body. That’s what I mean be intelligence. It’s there, it’s palpable. The moment I see you organise yourself to begin. There’s a kind of settling. And I also like when you take time. Not taking your time, but take … time to perceive what’s emerging. Not too much time. Too much time would make it laboured. The first part is a little bit labourd for me. There is a little bit of deliberation. After a while, I’m over it. I don’t want to see anymore deliberation. But then it collapses, if you like, but you’ve established this strong reference from it. That, I think, without that, you wouldn’t get that [what comes later]. I’m intrigued by that. If you step straight into the second section, I wouldn’t have that experience, that same empathic experience. It’s the deliberation of it that, I find, sets the ground for the space or the stage, whatever you like.

NV: Interesting what you said. I have a love-hate relationship with this first score. I’m interested in it but I don’t know... I feel like I have to work really hard to maintain [the attention of] the person who’s observing it. When I do it by myself, it’s whatever. How about this or how about that. But when I do it with the audience...

AC: That’s apparent. Have you given yourself permission to break the rules? Once you establish something, you break the rules and see what happens?

NV: I haven’t. Because that’s how much time it takes me to take in all of this information. I spent all of that time because that’s what take me.

AC: Fantastic! Well, there you go. But sometimes when you practice, so that you don’t get switched off by it. Let yourself do what’s erupting. Something tells me that would be healthy for you, rather than stay in the labouredness of it. Keep the life in it.

NV: If it has to, it’s got to go...

AC: Maybe. Or maybe it doesn’t need that long. There’s a quality in it which is wonderful. See where else it goes. Make it yours rather than Meg Stuart’s. It’s not Meg’s now.

NV: ’Cause I write something about it too that goes into this score.

AC: Call it a reference, but then take it somewhere...

NV: That body unit from measuring but translate it into space. She didn’t write that into her exercise.

AC: Yes absolutely.
NV: Ummm… do you feel it too long?

AC: Not at all.

NV: It’s a silly question…

AC: Oh no, I feel so absorbed by the end of it. You’ve got me. Totally.

NV: You might’ve mentioned it already. How do you describe the way you watch the improvisation?

AC: In multiple ways. I’ve described to you already. I kind of sense the space inside me, watching you in the second and the third sections. In the third section, …it’s like a bird… There’s a porosity in your dancing. It feels as though that extends into my body. Of course, in the practice that I had is that I notice that. I’m aware of that. Breath and space…. But it’s almost like you compressed it in the first section. Compressed it so keenly with that measuring that I’m … [demonstrating holding her breath and release the breath]… there again. I’m allowed to breathe out again. And it’s difficult to describe that state. It’s not a big in-breathe, it’s a subtle … state of pleasure actually, profound pleasure at lots of levels that feels intellectual to me and imaginative in that I don’t know what’s going to happen but, god, it’s interesting. And that delights me. …Yeah… So in a way, I’m dancing with you. I think that’s what happens when I’m really in an intelligent decision making of somebody dancing.

NV: When you’re watching and other people watching, it feels really different to me. Because I know you. Whatever I pay attention to, I think you are seeing it. Everything. I get rid of the questions of, “How about this? Would they notice this?” I don’t think that of you [when I perform in front of you] anymore because I know you would notice anything.

…

AC: That’s even… That’s really interesting, isn’t it? How if you have to find… It’s almost like you have to seduce your audience in some sense.

NV: I don’t have to do that with you.

AC: No, you’re not seductive at all to me. To me, you’re so profoundly intelligent, like you just open the space for me to perceive. You actually really do that in yourself. And you’re very precise with your decisions. But they’re not so precise that they’re not without risk. I saw that and I like that a lot.

NV: It’s easy with a few practicing and writing of it. You collect [movement] vocabulary.
AC: It’s true!

NV: It’s a fine line between repeating that or would you, kind of keep it somehow but then maintain the sense that I don’t know what’s going to happen before me.

AC: You also have to be careful that you’re not editing out something, so may be repetition, … I think improvisors, …maybe you haven’t done class for a while but, …we’re actually paranoid about repetition. And I think it’s really interesting to use repetition, don’t shy away from it.

NV: It could be a tool for keeping perceiving something…

AC: It’s a research mode.

NV: It’s like, “Am I getting this or not?”

AC: And you’ve given me this space just now to… I mean I was thinking about many things while you’re dancing, and feeling. Thinking and feeling. And given that you use the term empathic in your question that invites psychological empathy as well as physiological empathy. And that’s also set the question for those other provocations that I had before… Why is this very clearly determined measuring? What is she measuring? What questions do this provoke? Maybe there’s more there yet. You still have to strop the floor a bit. Would that carry water?

NV: Umm. What does this give me?

AC: Yeah… Anything else?

NV: I think that’s it.

AC: Let me think about it. Is there anything I haven’t said… I think I’ve managed to say a lot of things that I experience which is always interesting for me to have that opportunity. And I think, when you shift people, Naree, from their lives outside work in here [the studio], it’s a shift of states. Somebody said to me the other day, …“Oh, when I watch dance, something that’s marvellous about it is that I have to shift states.” I said, “Yes, you do.” I think they’re …maybe not an artist or an academic or something…I don’t remember who it was but… I think you’re really appreciated ….just know that your audience is changed just by watching you, and they might not have access so quickly with language. It is non-verbal. It’s articulation but not necessarily at language.

Thank you. What a rich opportunity. Hope you get some good things there to think about.

NV: Thank you. Absolutely. You’re the fourth person, I’ve got a couple more to go. It’s good to have this material developed out of these interviews in a way.
AC: Fantastic, I can feel that. Plus I suspect you’ve got a lot of thing there for your thesis. That’s why you do research!

NV: I’ve been writing about the concept of “self-other” in Noh theatre. I also read Susan Leigh-Foster and one of her references was one of the neuroscientists called Gallese. He talked about embodied simulation that when you see somebody’s walking, you simulate something in the body without having to understand or theorise it. They do experiments on monkeys that part of the brain where mirror neurons. But when they gave monkey the miming, that part of the brain wasn’t activated. It has to be a real action for the monkey to actually mirroring that. So it’s not a visual thing that the monkeys take the information...

AC: It’s physical thing..

NV: It’s almost like tacit information that the monkeys mirror and simulate in the brain...

AC: That’s interesting.

NV: I mean acting it out doesn’t do it.

AC: There’s a moment here [pointing to the area in space where the actions occur] in the last section, and it’s something I’ve been thinking a lot, is actually about self and other, thanks for that. I could imagine you thinking, researching more about the relationship of what you’re doing and other, in that third section. It almost like it came in again. And I wanted it to come...just a couple of moment, just a bit more porosity between me and you. Is that helpful? You know what I’m talking about? It’s like an awareness about that I’m right here with you... Maybe that’s something too for you to really take a courage of going, “Bare with me. Trust there with me.” Not, “Oh, I wonder if this still interests them.”, which fragments what you’re doing in some ways. “Bare with me. I’m going to take them with me.” Do it. You do it very well.... Thank you!

NV: Thank you so much Alice.
TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW WITH AUDIENCE

JOANNE LICHTI
September 4, 2015

Nareeoporn Vachananda: During the improvisation, do you pay attention ONLY to the performer?

Joanne Lichti: No. Occasionally my mind wanders because I did a performance this morning. Your improv makes me think about my movement which is interesting. But then it comes back to what you’re doing.

NV: Is it part of that you see? Like in a field of vision?

JL: Yeah, like a figure in space. And when you do the movement of measuring, then I think about the room as well. The room can be measure in width and length as well not just your body. But I do feel that I watch you a lot. I don’t feel like I’m consciously taking in the space necessarily.

NV: Are you drawn to the action of the performer immediately or does it take you a while?

JL: Because you’re a figure in a still space, so I’m drawn to you. But I feel like I’m drawn to you more as it progresses. I feel like you accumulate a sort of language through what you’re doing. I don’t know what you’re doing at the start. I’m drawn to you more when I start to see some repetition. Your hands are measuring. I obviously don’t know what you’re doing but I start to read your movement from then on from those actions and distance, etc.

NV: Does the improvisation sustain your attention throughout?

JL: Most of the time, it does. But occasionally, maybe it’s different with dancers, it just brings back to what you do today. It’s like this measuring process is very objective. And you dress in white jumpsuit like a scientist. It’s like it’s about something in particular. Yes, I was drawn to you.

NV: Although, you’re really absorbed in the performance, but it’s not like your attention would be totally the same as the performer. You do wander away sometimes but you loop it back to the performance?

JL: Yeah, you need a bit of time to process as well. You might see something and you think about it and you bring it back to the room (performance).

NV: I’ve been thinking about this but it as if (as an audience) what I see triggers what I wander off about. And what I wander off about affects what I see next in the performance…
JL: Yeah, so it’s definitely impacting even though we don’t feel like all (my attention) is on you.

NV: This is great. Because when I see Meg Stuart’s measuring score, I thought, “Interesting. I don’t move that way. I’d like her to break my pattern a little bit.”

JL: I don’t have much dance training but Prue Lang, for example, is going back to the idea of constrain as a task. The (movement) language that came out seems to really flow. You didn’t have to know what it meant, but it came out with the movement. I didn’t feel like it was jarring at all. Which is interesting ‘cause I dance usually in silence. It’s kind of break your pattern?

NV: Yeah, it’s like with you do those somatic works, you do BMC and it’s great. But sometimes, I reported it this morning, we want to produce movement so much as opposed to listen to the information that’s given to you by these tasks. You have to figure out what to do with it. What does it mean by measuring the density of your hands. The way of figuring this out is giving you different information. And how if we just use this information rather than feeling the need to really produce something which cause us to fall into our mode of moving. I wouldn’t say it’s comfortable or pleasurable, but I think it’s interesting. I feel like I learn a lot from it. I still keep persisting with it a bit.

JL: Yeah.


JL: I feel like I see you’re trying to something, like a question there that you’re examining. I think, weirdly enough, it’s very objective, like you look like a scientist really going about to solve something methodically. Like, how much of these (length), the angle of that. For me, it’s in line with the angle of the room as well. I feel like, for me, I avoid the narrative at all times, so I don’t see narrative. But all these ideas, ’cause in my practice is to do with mind-body split, so language reinforces that even in dance as well. For me it’s very objective way to go about something (touch her wrist and arm) like questioning the body through movement, you know? What are we, all these physical things. And coming up close is really nice as well. I was stuck with this mind-body paradigm. My focus is on embodying the movement. It’s very very slow. Not really going against you because you’re trained. (I consider) what am I doing, what initiates, what leads? But this (NV’s improv) is completely different. For me, it’s like a contrast. I think my work is about embodiment. You’re already embodied but it’s about something else like investigating the physicality of the body or something. That’s what I’m processing when I’m looking at it. What is she doing?

NV: So you actually relate you what you are when you see that (improv)?
JL: Yes definitely.

NV: It’s like creating a point of view in which you see it (improv) somewhat?

JL: Yes.

NV: Everyone take themselves to come to see this (improv) you know. You can’t avoid it.

JL: And see it through your own reasoning, your own experience. Theatre students might try to establish some narrative but you still learn something by their interpretation about what you’re projecting. There’s something there. I really like it when I go to see dance and not putting any character there because all my friends do that. …I really like your use of proximity and the way you started it.

NV: Describe stillness in the improvisation.

JL: I didn’t feel like you set it around the task. You set it, you have the agenda. You set up some limitations. I watch what your attention is at. Even when you aren’t physically still, there’s still a bit of movement. The concentration is perhaps stillness. Specificity in the task is stillness for me.

NV: Think about overall, how can you describe the improvisation?

JL: An experiment of the human body, or exploration too. I don’t know… human forms.

NV: That’s good because the reason I’m drawn to this measuring task is that, for example, if I extend my arm but I think how do I actually measuring it? It (extending the arm) is actually a unit of measuring for me. So I got that (arm) length, then I got other length (collarbone) and forearm length which is equal to the foot. Length and width is easy but the density is more tricky. But then again you have to look at it as unit. You just can’t go on measuring it without taking the information of the whole…

JL: Of the space? Of yourself?

NV: Of whatever I measure. What’s the difference between extending the arm out and actually measuring it. What kind of information I get from it? How do you describe the way you watch the improvisation?

JL: Like I said from my personal experience and my knowledge of dance which is not great. Maybe based on other improvisation score that I’ve seen, or based on previous stuff I’ve seen of yours recently. You measure how it’s changed and compare. But it’s still you, you’re still moving so you’re still embodied Naree but there’s something else there as well. And I feel like today, what happens earlier in class (she attended). Maybe as dancers we circulate around similar things. But what happened
earlier today specifically which is dance-related, I brought that in as well. You can compare how you improvise that someone else doesn’t. Was it improv?

**NV:** Yes.

**JL:** Or the reasons behind improvisation, or maybe different sources.

**NV:** I find it’s interesting because the more I select the task, I select from that one that I still sort that out. Or from the one that… In Ros Crisp workshop recently, I wonder if there can be something more specific than that? We’re not practicing as many years as she does. She could arrive at a certain point and lift it to a performance. I don’t think we have things that she has in her practice and our practice. So I feel like I still have to make something and make it different from my last work. Even there’s something from the last work I still want to think about a bit more, it has to be a different direction from it. Then I’m drawn to the idea of limits and constrain to bring about different information about it.

**JL:** And a different approach to that thing of time that you’re interested in.

**NV:** I have a structure of that (improv). Over weeks, I start to have jo-ha-kyū of it and I still learn about how stillness can arrive. But we still have to discern tasks (worth pursuing). I had a class with Siobhan the other day, we talk about set of values we have as a maker. And this task is something that floats. Don’t know if it aligns (with our values) or not. If we reach a point where they align together, that’ll be great.

**JL:** The only way to know if it’s aligned is to do it. And then you know. Always. Like I used to think I’m doing improv, but now I’m not. Everything is fixed. Not improvised at all. I have to work it out on the floor. You know all of those ideas, you just got to be able to experiment. But I really like it where it forms. It’s more organic. My ideas, it don’t have to have it all there. It’s filtering through. It has to be on the floor than imagining it. For you, you have to go through it. You might stick to it or you might not. But you seem to be interested in improvisation, like different ways..

**NV:** But then again, people might argue that what I’m doing there is not improvisation at all. I don’t know where I stand with that. I don’t mind whether people will call it choreography or improvisation really, but the fact that I stick to a few ideas and repeating it, it has a vocabulary to it.

**JL:** In a way you improvise a certain score so many times it gets set in your body as well. It’s like the quality of the movement is fixed or something.

**NV:** What I do with the measuring score is that I start differently all the time. I started on the floor this morning and just then I start standing.

**JL:** Oh that’s good.

**NV:** So it (score) manifests in the body very differently but it’s something to do. But at the same time, I can’t expect to have the richness in the improvisation unless I keep working on it many times. So it’s spectrum of things. …I forget to time it but it went
about 17-20 min or so. Does it feel that long to you? **JL**: It went really quickly. It didn’t feel that long at all. So when you said it’s done, I went, “Really?”

**NV**: It’s round about 20 minutes, so we’re doing good. Thank you, Joanne.
TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW WITH AUDIENCE

“ANONYMOUS”
September 4, 2015

NV: During the improvisation, do you pay attention ONLY to the performer?

A: I feel like I look at the room and the light and the way you move. The room and all the components in it together.

NV: If not only to the performer, what else do you pay attention to? Do you pay attention to, say, volume of the space..?

A: Yeah I see the volume of the space, colours and the sensory information like sound...

NV: It’s funny, isn’t it? There’s a lot of sound in this room. This morning it’s got sirens and yesterday was helicopter..

A: Oh, really?

NV: Are you drawn to the action of the performer immediately or does it take you a while?

A: I found that it took me a while to get into it. Maybe about five minutes or so.

NV: It started off with something really basic, isn’t it? Like lying down on the floor, lift the head up…. After a while then you start to notice the action…?

A: I sort of tried to work out what is going on, so it took me a bit of time.

NV: Does the improvisation sustain your attention throughout after that?

A: Yes it does.

NV: Thank you! You could say, “No… I drifted off.” Because a lot of time people do. It’s part of the perception of the audience too. Because you come in here with an empty mind, you might’ve been through your day, your history, your experience, to watch this. Nobody comes in as a blank canvas or a tape recorder. You have your own way of looking at this…. And drifting off doesn’t mean you lost your attention to it but you still working it out. …That’s what Joanne was feeling like… So… what do you see in the improvisation? If you remember anything about it? Movement, feelings, emotions, narrative, stories?

A: I feel like the improvisation is in different parts. You’re measuring the space with your body and working out how you trace the space, and you move on to… I try to remember all the different parts... And then you move on to measuring your body,
not the space but the space of your body. And I think you went to the range of motion when you discover how far you can go or something... And weight. And then change again to how you move, becoming weightless almost, slow and drawn out. The weight is shifted and working out how to balance your body, which I really enjoy. The work is quite active and I was wondering how it feels like to do those movements. That was really interesting to me because I feel like doing those [movements].

**NV:** So you actually were wondering, while I was doing it, what it's like if I do that...

**A:** Yes, over there, where you move back and forward...

**NV:** Cool! That's really good. It's a nice way to say it. I do that sometimes. Sometimes I watch performance with movement, not intentionally. I'm not sure what I'm doing at the time but then I realise what I do. I move with the moving. So... describe stillness in the improvisation.

**A:** I find stillness on reflection. You're really internalizing everything. And I find the stillness is in reflection of everything. I'm not sure whether there is emotions but stillness is taking in everything and reacting to it.

**NV:** Like taking in and drawing out later... How can you describe the improvisation? I suppose you can do free-association with it. Any word that you can use to describe...

**A:** I have this thing like “the mind is the muscle.” The one in the beginning, I was thinking of the pendulum, the weight, tracing, spacing. In the middle... body parts are strangers, like the way you wave your arms around. I really like that. Looks really good.

**NV:** It's interesting how it turns out. This came from Meg Stuart exercise actually. She got the dancers to wake up their awareness. But the more I do it, the more I feel like I have the loop of being aware of my body but at the same time I treat it like an object.

**A:** I get that when you do it.

**NV:** [Demonstrating hand as alienated] ...but then I loop it back into my awareness.

**A:** Like an internal dialogue. You're talking to yourself about what you're doing, but I couldn't hear what you say.

**NV:** How do you describe the way you watch the improvisation?

**A:** I feel like it's active but it changes. I watch it then I start to think about what I make of it. Then I go back to just watching. I have phases when I feel like I was doing the movement, like one of those big ones... It's shifting. I feel like shift, the way I
watch. And then I move. I want to see it from a different angle. And I enjoy it more somehow. Seems like a traditional way of watching. I don’t know why I enjoy that angle more. Maybe the background? But I feel it’s shifting.

NV: Because each part does different things, don’t they?

A: Yeah.

NV: It’s good. I’d like the way you said you do it (the movement) with your body. How long do you think the improvisation lasted?

A: I think it’s about 20 minutes. I was wondering how you’d end it. I was wondering how does the feeling come? You know when you feel like the conclusion has been achieved. And towards the end, I was wondering how you would give me a signal that it’s finished.

NV: Sometimes I just tell people! I’m wondering, when I perform my piece, sometimes people don’t clap in the end. Last year I did a performance here, I had to walk out, as if to say, “I’m done! Don’t know about you? I’m off.”

A: It’s funny like that.

NV: When I go to see other shows, a lot of time people know when it ends and they clap. My show, people just don’t know it.

A: But it’s like a technique, but it’s not needed either. People sort of predict – oh, it’s coming to the end now. I don’t know which one I prefer.

NV: It depends, doesn’t it? In the end I felt like I’ve passed the peak. I wasn’t exhausted the information I’ve taken from you or the space or whatever I’ve done earlier. I have a little score in my head, but sometime I have other things I’m interested in doing so I leave the score behind a bit. Do you feel like the improvisation is too long?

A: No. I feel like it’s the right amount.

NV: So that’s the questions. I feel like you give me an interesting point about the way you watch the improv. Do you think you’re able to predict (or anticipate) what’s going to happen?

A: Do you mean for future performance or what’s coming next?

NV: What’s coming next in the performance.

A: No, but maybe when you do the measuring. I know what you’re trying to do, but I don’t know what you’re doing afterwards or what’s coming.
**NV:** What I was interested in improvisation is when the performer shapes things up as an offer to the audience, but at the same time, how much do you project this shaping up (or your own anticipation) that you have in your head beforehand? How much do you allow the moment to shape itself up?

**A:** I was wondering about that. What your roles were for this? If you have your roles – ok, I’m going to do this (the measuring) or I’m going to have a look at my joints – do you have any roles? Or you just see what’s important to you?

**NV:** It’s accumulating over time, this particular score. I first looked at Meg Stuart’s exercises which is the seeds – finding the seeds to continue on. So I stick with this seed until it gives you a variation. Instead of acting the variation, I allow it to tell me what the variations are, or the first thing that comes to mind. And sometimes, the seed itself is with that act of measuring. Sometimes I use the fold of my arms, but other times I’m going to use the body unit as the seed. The other thing is… Do you know Wim Wenders? The latest thing he did was the documentary about Pina Bausch.

**A:** Oh yes.

**NV:** He loves taking photographs. He’s both philosophical and embodied photographer. He went to, I think, Serbia and took a photograph of a ferris wheel. Then he went to the other side of the space where the ferris wheel was and took the same photo but on the opposite side. He said somebody says, “Everything exists with its opposite.” And I thought what would an opposite of something be? And where does it exist? I think that’s interesting. And I think that’s what I did in the improv was that I did the measuring of length, weight and density, then put the information together and explore what the opposite is.

**A:** Do you ever think of it as a negative thing? For example, the opposite of measuring is not-measuring?

**NV:** Not in terms of language sort of way, but more kinaesthetically. How do I have my attention to that opposite version of me over there? It’s interesting because sometimes when you do improvisation with this measuring score, you act measuring. I have to really think, for example, if I extend my arm, what kind of information I get from extending the arm or the space around it? I like the information I take from that action. Which goes into my thesis about time that it takes time to translate that action into information. It’s not that I deliberately slow it down. I need time to think, “Do I have this? Do I have my attention at the arm that’s extending? And how about the other (parts)? Ok.” It takes me a while to gather that information. These three scores are smashing together as an exercise for me really. Or it could be a part of a performance. I’m not sure yet.

**A:** I like the variations because it makes it quite unpredictable – oh, now she’s doing this – but it’s still connected to the sense of measuring somehow, or finding
NV: Yeah, because I work a lot with BMC and, in the past decade, people are doing a lot of embodiment. I read the new book that Erin Manning and Brian Massumi were written. They talked to William Forsythe who, instead of saying "embodiment", he said “bodying”. It’s like you embody something but you also treat your body like an object and perceive it back again. I think sometimes we enact embodiment – if you do something a lot (like embodiment) it becomes a habit – I know the feeling of fluidity of organs, as if I use my imagination to enact that embodiment.

A: But maybe while you embody something, you’re also ‘bodying’ it? You can’t separate them...

NV: I suppose in the mode of perception, if you try to separate them, say – I’m embodying this...

A: …you mean you don’t think too much about what you’re doing?

NV: Yeah. It’s like embodiment and bodying has a different kind of temporality about it. When you start bodying, you have the other looking from the outside, then you have to pay attention to what you’re doing differently. Like you perceive things in a different kind of time. Sometimes I feel like I embody something too fast and I question if I’m actually bodying?

A: Oh right… You know that mirror state, because I was looking at it myself in my research. I was looking at Elizabeth Grosz’s Volatile Bodies. There’s one chapter where she’s talking about movie strips – the construction where the inside becomes the outside, and vice versa, of the coin and of the self. That reminds me with this too – the information you’re taking in becomes your action..

NV: …like a loop of information you perceive and your action...

A: Yeah, like when you say embodying and bodying...

NV: It’s a bit like subjective and objective view somewhat, isn’t it? That’s why I’m interested in exploring these three things (three parts of the score) together because they have both sides of the equations, not entirely internal or external.

A: You wouldn’t go and get someone else to do it for you probably?

NV: Right… because there’s a kind of reflective quality while performing that if you get somebody to do the dance, you’d miss that information...

A: And what is interesting in this is that you perceive yourself as fragmented, but also as a whole. And that’s conflicting to the idea of the body as a whole but how fragmented it actually is.
**NV:** Even in the visual field, how is the back of my head.

**A:** …or the back of your ears or something…

**NV:** On one level, I perceive my body as a whole, but on a different level it’s so fragmented.

**A:** …like, how do you feel everything at once? I don’t know how you do that…

**NV:** That’s interesting, isn’t it? Every bit of things that I do, I’m trying to bring it back to the time that I spend on it. Once that contradiction starts, then I explore further for what is possible. It comes down to how much time I would spend on to receive the information from it (the action).

**A:** And the stillness. What kind of stillness is it to you (in your improv)?

**NV:** It feels like change. I gather information with my body, but also a kind of temporality that is expanding because the information I want to take at that moment is a lot. Sometimes in the generative mode, I feel there’s a lot of information I have to take, so I have to pause to take it in. Once I feel I have the information, I would explore a bit further. Towards the end, it’s about allowing the information that I pause to gather to grow something out for me. For shorter improv, there’s not a lot of time to pause and gather. It’s more about generating material, but you can do that sort of thing in longer improvis.

**A:** Yeah, I find that sometimes, particularly with sound improv, it can be quite immersive (for the improviser) and get really drawn out in one thing. And it gets drifted off and quite dreamy, and then it finishes. What I like about your improv is that it’s not just you doing things and going for it the whole time. I get more varieties with attention in and out. I don’t really like it if it’s just about one small detail, but that’s personal really.

**NV:** Yeah, I just talked to my partner last night that the making part of me in this improvisation means that it’s not about the performer immersing in the body or the work all the time. I also take the task out – this is the ‘thing’ that you and I are sharing together. And that doesn’t always happen in improvisation. Sometimes the improviser is having a great time but the audience has no idea what’s going on. It doesn’t mean you have to move big. It could be small as well. But because I put the task out there – I’m going to share this with you. You and I are meeting together there, and I’m going to reflect it back to me, do something with it and offer it back to you…

**A:** …more like a dialogue or something. Yeah, what I saw with this music improv was like…(demonstrating how the musician crouching over his instrument)…like this for half an hour.
NV: …which is fine (laugh) but you can have a cup of tea with it? I’m more interested in the improvisation that has the shaping of time and space in it.

A: And the audience has to be there as well…

NV: ..yeah, like an active participant. It’s not just a practice but also a dance making.

A: You’ve done a lot of work with it, like really onto what you’re doing. It’s great.

NV: Thank you so much for your time.
INTERVIEW WITH MASTER-ACTOR UDASA MICHISHIGE
Kyoto: December 17, 2015

Nareeporn Vachananda: As you’ve already mentioned about ma and jo-ha-kyū, I might ask you about that. In your experience, when you practice Noh and performing Noh, what is ma?

Udaka Michishige: On the movement, footwork, for example, the standing at daishomae in front of the tsuzumi, big drums (ōtsuzumi) and small drums (kotsuzumi), and to metsuke bashira. Metsuke means always something, …objects. Sometimes trees, sometimes people, sometimes crowd. That’s why we’re facing metsuke bashira. Metsuke means the eyes following the object. Focus, heading to sumi. In the movement, I’m just saying in the basic that we use 60 or 90% of footwork to go to sumi. And waki sitting here (pointing to waki-bashira) and then go to left and then back to daishomae. That happens many times in one Noh. Footwork started to move and stop. And sumi-tori and reach to waki-za, and stop and back to daishomae. When I teach students, if you forward until the sumi faster and stop, bending the knees is necessary. If your knees are straight, you cannot faster [accelerate]. Also rhythm call, and from the audience, it looks strong movement. It needs both to have the knees bend, and start and go and stop. The stop means that before the last two steps, need brake, you know. That means knees little bit down [bending further].

NV: I remember you showed me, because you’re tall but you still bend your knees a lot.

UM: That’s how the car starts. The beginning is slow, then speed and stop. This is exactly jo-ha-kyū. I think that’s a very good example. And also, before it stops, the car is a little bit down, mission’s down, then stop. Then, looks like, space or air. If the car goes at the same speed, like 20 km, to waki and daishomae. There’s no

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†† 大小 = large and small, various size; 前 = in front, before; へ [へ] indicating direction and goal; 帰り = [へ] return, coming back.
‡‡ 目付柱【めつけばしら】 = (へ) downstage right pillar (on a Noh stage) used as a positioning guidepost for actors.
§§ 角 = corner, in relation to 目付柱
*** ワキ in Nohdeuteragonist; supporting role
††† ワキ柱 = waki’s pillar
‡‡‡ 角取り = passing sumi corner
§§§ ワキ座 = waki’s seat
**** 序破急 = [じょはきゅう] (へ) artistic modulations in traditional Japanese performances; opening, middle and climax (end)
space, not alive, not “fresh”. And also the connection with the poem (the lyrics of Noh). The poems have meanings; emotions, people, human emotions, and also connection to seasons. And the story is a sad story or happy story. The main actor (shite), male or female or god or ghost, any kind of mystery behind the locations [on the stage]. It’s necessary to fit with the movement. For women [roles], the knees are closed, trying not to make big steps, but warriors or gods, stronger. Knees are separate, spread and taking strong steps. But all need jo-ha-kyū.

**NV**: So what you’re saying about after the car speeding up, and then stop, you’re saying that creates space. Do you think that’s ma?

**UM**: (Nodding) I think it’s almost ma. Correct. But ma is much more difficult [to describe] than jo-ha-kyū. Between movement and movement, and silence [in between] and not move [sic. stillness]. The connection of the movement before or new [movement] and between that. Most of the cases, following the movement, the audience have an image from the poem, what’s said and what the main actor performs/acts and [the audience] staying with that feeling. But now, stop. The main actor’s movement stops. Even this, the (audience’s) imagination stays, keeps staying. But nothing to do, the main actor stops completely. And something, the empty time, empty means time to think of the audience and also [reborn] what’s next. What’s going on next? Everyone, the audience, is waiting, “What’s going on next? He stops! But he carries that solo or happy feelings, but now is silence. What’s going on next?” Ma is between that movement.

**NV**: I recently saw your performance in Sanemori in Yokohama. I felt that you carried the story even when you stand still. You carried the whole history of Sanemori…

**UM**: And also his age…

**NV**: Yes. And the length of time that Sanemori has been a ghost in your body even when you stop. Because most of the Noh characters, particular for an actor of your calibre, are really complex. There’s a lot of stories and the length of time in that character. I feel that you have all of that in the moment that you stop. It’s really beautiful. And also I remember Ōmu Komachi …

**UM**: Oh, you saw Ōmu Komachi 鶴ヶ丘小町…

**NV**: I remember you walked from the bridge. You walked for a long, long time before you arrive at the space. Komachi is different (from Sanemori) because she’s an old woman. But you can imagine that if you live for that long, there is the history of the person that you carry in your character.

**UM**: When I did Ōmu Komachi, it’s a second challenge. The first one is Sotoba Komachi 卒都婆小町†††† when I was around 61. I was going to say that my physical

age was still young. It’s not enough to act as an older woman. I tried to be an older woman. My age and experience and feeling is not to bridge a kind of distance (between his actual age and the age of the character of Komachi which is over 90 years old.) It’s a challenge to [fill the age gap] of Komachi. The solution is to do a lot of okeiko お稽古. That’s not from a…real. There’s a distance still. Imitation of the footwork. The feet are not straight (using hands to demonstrate pigeon feet). And one step and the other step is slowly. It’s not smooth that’s why the weight on left and right foot...

NV: Like put one foot before the other...

UM: And the body is bending a little bit, and looking down. When seeing other people, you have to look up, eye to see other people. Many things, in the voice, everything is imitating. But the second challenge is Ōmu Komachi. The different between Sotoba Komachi and Ōmu Komachi that they both are old, but….. in Ōmu Komachi, when she was young, she was in the palace with a young Emperor. When young nobilities celebrates, they write poems. The young Emperor likes Komachi, saying that’s a good poem. But ever since, time has passed. Komachi reached almost 90 and she lived alone near a temple. Nobody knew who she was and her neighbour gave her food. The Emperor was worried about Komachi if she’s alive. [The wiki says] Yes, she’s alive. [Emperor] Where does she live? [Waki] Countryside. [Emperor] How old is she now? [Waki] Must be more than 80. He wanted to ask his [sic] customer. He wrote a poem and gave it to him to deliver to her. When she got the letter, she was so happy and felt like when she was young. [Komachi] “I wouldn’t answer but I would change one word as a way of answering to that poem.” The poem was asking if Komachi was feeling young, graceful and full of yuugen 幽玄? Are you?” She changed one word in the poem to “Yes, I am.” That’s Ōmu Komachi. Sotoba Komachi is just a list on a grave. Sotoba 卒都婆 means grave stone or wood big wood. [A monk said to Komachi.] “Do you realise that’s the Buddhist [sic] shrine? How come you sit on the Buddhist [sic] shrine?” Then afterwards when the monk realised that she’s very smart and a noble woman of the highest position before, the monk asked what is your name? Komachi replied, “Well, if you want to see [sic] my name, I will tell you. My name is Komachi and my father is Ono no Yoshizane.” And the monk said, “Oh, sorry!” And she still talked about Fukakusa no shojo ふか草処女 (one of Komachi’s suitors). Fukakusa no shojo loved her so much but she said “If your love is true. Everyday, visit me, even I’m away, and stand at the wood. But Fukakusa no shojo sometimes late, sometimes night....

NV: So if you look at the two stories that you did, Ōmu Komachi and Sanemori. They are different characters, different movement. When you perform movement, do you feel that time stops, or time goes quick or time go slowly?

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okeiko お稽古 = practice
yuugen 幽玄 [ゆうげん] (adj-na,n) subtle grace; hidden beauty; yugen; mysterious profundity; elegant simplicity; the subtle and profound; the occult
sotoba 卒都婆 = wooden grave tablet
UM: Do you mean jo-ha-kyū?

NV: Yes. Or as a performer performing the two Noh that are different. In Ōmu Komachi, your entrance was really slow. In that instance, do you feel like time move more slowly than in Sanemori? Or as Komachi, time moves quickly or slowly for you?

UM: I’m not sure I understand your question, but when I perform Sanemori, it’s a completely different feeling. The character fits my age and the thinking. Even getting old, dying and old, he didn’t like it. That’s why he wanted to die in a war.

NV: Is that why he dyed his hair black and wanted to die in the battle?

UM: The reason behind that is that young warriors were whispering, “Sanemori is getting old. He was strong before but now he’s an old man.” He really hated that. So he changed the colour of his hair and beard, making himself look younger. And he didn’t want to lose to younger warriors. And also it’s his last chance to die. He didn’t want to die of old age. I think that’s human. For me, exactly the same feeling. One day I get sick and painful and scared, worried about what happens. And I’d have to go to the hospital, take medicine, lie down in bed and cannot go out. Then getting weaker and weaker and die. I don’t want to do it. (Laugh) Everyone does (hate getting old, weak and dying.) That’s why in Sanemori, for a warrior, a battle is a very good chance to die. And honourable too.

NV: And about jo-ha-kyū in Ōmu Komachi and Sanemori?

UM: I think the actions: they both are different because one is female and the other male. There’s a kyū movement (not jo or ha). Kyū means getting old. Like the sun in the morning, is bright and strong. And in the afternoon, it’s getting warm and the heat coming up from the ground. And the air is getting warm but not clear as in the morning. The evening 3, 4, 5pm, the sun starts to set and prepares the night. The age is like that. That’s why jo-ha-kyū: jo is renewal, ha is like the mount/top, kyū is down. But in the down, there’s still jo-ha-kyū.

NV: And in Sanemori, what’s the experience of jo-ha-kyū is like?

UM: I think I’m almost not thinking. Good movement would completely fit with utai and trying to fit perfect the movement. That will fit naturally with jo-ha-kyū. Jo-ha-kyū will bear best movement. Best movement behind is perfectly fit with the singing and the [musical] instruments and the waki and also the audience. The audience must understand what’s going on and [understand] the character also. That’s why the audience to make images, his (shite) feelings may be so. And each audience compares and think solo [sic] [individually].

NV: That’s leading us nicely to the audience. When you perform, how do you relate to the audience?
UM: Ah, the connection with the audience. I think the audience is influenced by education, nationalities and easy to change. Like Japan, after WW2, there’s politics and the war. But they lost good education. They don’t care so much about history. And people are now curious about economy. The civic lifestyle is getting up [sic], everyone has TV, refrigerator, air conditioning. That is, of course, normal. And computer. And cellphone, note cellphone, and internet contacting with the whole world. And what’s next? People are not focusing on past things, history, just look forward to what’s going on next. That’s why there’s a new movie Star Wars.

NV: Do you think Japanese audience forget about Noh sometimes?

UM: Yeah, that’s what happens now. Now the audience is not full, maybe 60%. It’s hard to collect (the audience). Before, when I was young, every time, the audience was full. Now it’s very hard to collect people to watch. And also they don’t know. Before, giving the information (about the Noh plays) in the beginning is not necessary, but now it is necessary because people don’t know what happens in historical periods (Heian, Kamakura, Muromachi, etc.) Sanemori? Who is he? Which century? Is he a good man or bad man or..? Genji or Heike? Completely, they don’t know.

NV: So you think people’s education is important when they come to see Noh?

UM: Yeah. And also my opinion is that we are standing between the past and the future. We are at present but we are carrying the past with us. I was born from my parents, my parents were born from their parents. The past was handed over from generation to generation. We are now standing in between now. But they (young generations) don’t care about the past now.

NV: Such a shame...

UM: I think that human are like systems and it’s not perfect. You know three different systems of the human and animals still - the basic (bottom) one is to control breath and heart, the second (middle) one is emotions, and the last (top) one is essentially a grown-up. This (top one) is more about wanting new things. In the past, people have time to think about who they are and the three levels of systems support one another. But now, just focus on the top level that desires the new things. The new brain (top level) doesn’t know the old style (other two - the body and emotions). It forgets. And something happens like someone who is stuck or against [sic], then they become very angry and sometimes fighting and sometimes kills. The top system realises and wonder why I kill? If the three system communicate well together, the lower two system would say, “Don’t be angry.” The brain can be controlled. Always this (top level) is independent. That’s why, in anger, the other two level are lonely and not taking care of the top level. The two lower systems (body and emotions): “(When the top level’s actions are angry, fighting, making territory and kill, we have to tell him we are still here. He doesn’t realise us.”
NV: In Sanemori, I didn’t read the program before, but I feel that you project something I don’t quite know what that is. I feel that you project (the character of) Sanemori as if you share Sanemori with the audience. Do you feel that when you’re performing?

UM: Yah! I feel like a success, almost. But at a high level. I’ve got an email today from someone that felt he was moved by the performance. I think it (the role of Sanemori) really fits my age, also the fighting and dying (as part of the character). This person understands Japanese old style. That’s why a success.

NV: Can I ask you from my observation? Do you see the audience when you perform? Do you see their faces?

UM: No.

NV: Yesterday we talked about how practicing in the okeiko-ba is different from performing at Kongo Nohgakudo. Can you describe why it is different?

UM: For example, in Sanemori, I put more experience and more okeiko and I knew what’s going on. If I do 5 times, it almost at the same level. That means one time, the final performance, I’ll do “not think of movement” as if I do it “unconsciously”. Like, guuzen 偶然. (as an example of guuzen) As I said before when I practice Noh and in the morning I had a very hard lesson. And at lunch, I went out to the udon shop to have some udon. In the summertime, the window is open and a fly comes in, (demonstrating) I catch the fly with chopsticks. That’s guuzen. As if it happens accidentally but good level. [Meaning that when he practice Sanemori many times, the final performance happens almost by chance but at a high level of consciousness, almost subconsciously. – NV]

NV: Spontaneous? Serendipitous? Something that meets almost by accident?

UM: Close, close. But you intuitively know it. Because you know the fly is coming in and you make the action really quickly. But the next day, I came from the okeiko, I went out to lunch and the fly coming in (demonstrating) I can’t catch the fly.

So when you do a lot of okeiko, you are more ready for the audience to see you performing at Kongo Nohgakudo? Do you have a performance where the audience is really good tonight or the audience is really attentive to you? Or other night, you thought they fall asleep?

The audience’s concentration, like an old comic story Daguko. An old man Dagukoka. When he comes on stage, he’s got (demonstrating smiling face.) But before, he’s angry with his student. (Then turn around onstage smiling.) So changing very quickly (demonstrating ma). The young man coming from outside and accidentally he met a beautiful woman. There’s no more story to tell. But he takes silence. And the
audience (demonstrating the audience attention). That’s why *ma* creates tension and (allowing) the audience to come in.

**NV:** It’s like you open something for the audience.

**UM:** *(Demonstrating story telling without ma.)* A woman tells a story... *(speaking continuously with an even tone, no pause or punctuation).* This is without *ma*, no space. But if I tell with *ma*... *(demonstrating a story telling with obvious pauses to elicit anticipation in listeners).*

**NV:** We’ve talked a lot about *ma* and *jo-ha-kyū*. Are there any other concepts of time in Noh from your experience?

**UM:** I have a lot of experience in *Genshigumo* and *Yoma*. Because something happens in the society and that means a big history. And the focus for that is to reason why that (incident) happened. If we’re all happy, it will not happen. Someone is very unhappy. The reason is (that) all of the society will understand because of the human (conditions), also the connection with the period and society, economic and religious backgrounds, men and women. Then I think it adds good examples for the society in the future for the people to think that repeatedly seeing that performance and say, “Oh, I understand that.” And people must be not forgetting that. That’s why I made (performed in) a lot of Noh (plays.) And it’s necessary that new Noh (plays) are born with the new generation’s history. Because now Noh is like museum, staying back and getting older and older. Time is moving forward but Noh’s story is being pushed back day by day. Tomorrow is one day old. The day after tomorrow is getting older. Then it’ll become three years older.

**NV:** So as you write a new Noh, because there’s a different when you perform *Omu Komachi* or *Sanemori* and the new Noh. When you write poems in Noh,...

**UM:** Yes, I issue the period and locations in the society, what happens with Main actor (shite) and Sub actor (waki) what they want to do and also language, education and political (situations) also. Things are listed and I wrote down. But I still keep all Noh style that means to use *hashigakari* 橋掛かり. The bridge is the idea that *maku* 幕 inside the curtain is like a prefecture that is a ghost world. Not heaven, not hell, but in between. In between because they are so sad. They (the ghosts) stay at the same place because the emotions were so strong. They cannot leave, stay the same place, stick. They want to get enlightenment. They want to be reborn, but they can’t because the emotions were so strong at the stake there. That’s why (they stay in a) between (stage.) And they stay for a long long time, it becomes hell. Very deep and cold. And they don’t realise who they were, male or female or their names, just hatred. And the bridge links to the stage which is our world. The traveling monks

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††††† Hashigakari 橋掛かり = covered bridge passageway connecting the backstage (mirror room) to the Noh stage.

‡‡‡‡‡ Maku 幕 = curtain, bunting, act of play.
come along and the ghost watches on. He looks like a handsome monk but maybe not enough experience. Then next comes, and next comes. Then the next comes. “Ah, (the ghost thinks to himself) I believe he will understand.” Then the ghost comes to have a closer look. That’s the base of the stage idea. And the locations and the poems. Then Noh can have jo-ha-kyū. Jo means the monk is coming or someone who is like a monk, who is alive in this world. And the ghost is trying to talk to this person, to explain what had happened at this place. The waki (the monk or the person of this world) asks the ghost (who appears as a manifestation of the ghost in form of an old man or woman), “Why do you know the place so deeply? Do you have something connected to this place? Ghost: “Yes...” Then the ghost tells the story: “I’m the ghost of that [character].” Then, coming back get prayed and reaching enlightenment. The stick (attachment) is getting weak. And the spirit to be reborn. This is the cycle (of the Noh plays). This is also jo-ha-kyū. Any kind of new Noh must have Noh style: the water comes, thinner at the beginning in a long pipe. The water went through the long pipe to the pool. The water is getting hot and steaming up. That is needed.

NV: I feel that the new Noh is a way for you to relate to your audience, that you explained that they have mobile phones and computers. They have to be educated but you bring the tradition that passed on to you to the new audience through stories that means something to you and to the audience, so you share the meaning together. That’s very generous of you. I think I asked every questions and more. Arigato gosaimashita.

UM: I think it’s necessary to think about the new... Now it’s the time in Noh that people are changing. That’s really difficult. But, mentioned earlier about the ballet La Bayadère at the Mariinsky Theatre in (St Petersburg). I don’t know the whole story exactly, but I think, same with the Japanese audience. Noh stories might need explanations but (with the ballet) I was so shocked that it was beautiful and moving, can’t stop crying. But good performance would make good audience too.

NV: I feel like your performance, even I didn’t read the program beforehand, the audience is able to receive something of your generosity. It’s really moving inside, even though you don’t really know the stories.

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW WITH UDAKA-SENSEI

Subject: Notes on donning the mask and “self-other relationship”

Udaka-sensei uses the word riken noken 離見の見。In English, he uses the word “self-separation”. He once saw a high-calibre Noh actor (same age and built as his) who played the role of an old man. As Udaka-sensei observed, the actor not only had the awareness to his front. The profound moment was when the actor turned his back to the audience (Udaka-sensei amongst them). Udaka-sensei felt that the actor had
the awareness of his back to the audience as if he “separated himself”, observed himself from the outside.

Udaka-sensei emphasises the importance of practicing repertoire. Through practice, one gains confidence in the performance. With confidence, one has a sense of anticipation of one’s performance. This moment of anticipation is when the “self-view” is possible. The “self-view” or “self-separation”, Udaka-sensei says, can happen two ways: the performer sees himself and the audience are able to penetrate the performer's attention to his performance.

The sense of spontaneity in Noh – (see Rebecca-sensei interview). Is there a sense of anticipation in the spontaneity between the performer, the chorus and the musicians? 一期一会 (ichigo ichie) = once in a lifetime encounter, singularity.

On donning the mask, Udaka-sensei is aware of literature about the customs of wearing mask before entering the bridge of Noh stage. In his experience, he said it is not possible. Backstage of a Noh performance can be a hectic place. For him, though, the beginning of the performance is very important. A Noh play starts with what Udaka-sensei called “sound check”. The sound of the flute (noh-kan) from behind the curtain; the audience hear the sound of the flute as if it comes from afar. Then the waki enters the bridge. This is the moment when Udaka-sensei (as shite) puts on his mask, ever so slightly tilted down or neutral. He is an experience Noh performer and mask carver. He understands the relationship between the image of the mask and the character of the shite he’s playing. The “timing” or rhythm of the play is important here. Udaka-sensei uses the moment as the waki enters the bridge and after he puts on the mask to be in a moment of silence to “pay attention”. He experience the feeling of comfort and, not quite meeting Buddha, but of awareness and peaceful in silence. He took this moment for listening to the moment. The fact that Noh mask has two tiny eye-holes, Udaka-sensei says, is not a problem. In a practical sense, he often sees with one eye. The sumi post also helps with orientation in space.

The difficulty for him after the curtain is lifted is the journey on the bridge. He often feels his footwork heavy, like a car with fuel pumping before a proper start. His body feels like the blood is yet to circulate in his entire body. The moment between the curtain to the stage is linked by the bridge; the bridge is connecting between two planes or dimensions 次元 (jigen). Once he’s on the stage, somehow he finds the blood is now circulating his entire body.

Wednesday, 23 December 2015

離見の見 “Self-separation”: Udaka-sensei said it’s not possible to imagine what individual audience member can see, but objectively, one can have a performer of the same size and build to do movement on one’s behalf to see if one’s way of moving is ok. Another word, one can project oneself onto the stand-in performer to look at the
performance objectively. An example of this is when Udaka-sensei was rehearsing *Futari Shizuka* (a Noh by Zeami) with his son Tatsushige. The Noh has two characters of “Shizuka” who dance in unison. He taught *riken noken* to Tatsuyoshi in the dances that they perform together. The reasons are that because he can explore the “self-separation” idea more intimately with his son and the similarity of their physiques and voices.

The other idea about *riken noken* “self-separation” when he mentioned about the confidence in the performance that comes from a lot of okeiko. A high-calibre performer (which he gave an example in the Dec 21 interview) who know his artistry so well that he is not only aware about what in front of him, but also the back. It’s not from the eye of the performer but the sense of awareness all around the body. When that performer turned around (in one of the performances) facing his back to the audience, this made a profound impression on Udaka-sensei. This is similar to what Komparu means about “self-view” of the performer. When one practices to a level of confidence in one’s performance (in Noh), one can allow oneself to “watch” one’s performance unfold as if one is separate from oneself. This self-view is also creating 360 degree view of oneself (see the interview with Rebecca-sensei).

**Guuzen** 偶然, serendipitous moment in Udaka-sensei’s performance borne out of rigorous practice of his repertoire. He said if practice many times, one of the times, he would perform as if unconsciously or by accident. But he gave an example of *guuzen*; one time catching a fly in the udon shop, but not all the time. In applying this to improvisation, with the rigor of the practice, the improviser doesn’t need to watch or monitor the impulses that coming in constantly. She simply can watch the performance unfold or “follow what is there” or yield...
INTERVIEW WITH OGAMO REBECCA TEELE
Kyoto: December 19, 2015

Nareeporn Vachananda: As you’ve read from the PSL and from interviewing Udaka-sensei, I started to see the relationship from the point of view of the Noh practitioners. When I mentioned about the “audience”, he seemed to imply the relationship between the tradition of Noh and the audience. But when I framed it a bit more to the about the audience that’s already in the theatre, he mentioned straight away about ma \( m \). So I start to see the relationship with the audience from the point of view of the Noh practitioners as opposed to in a theoretical sort of way...

Ogamo Rebecca Teele: Coming from the Western tradition, outside the idea of jo-ha-kyū and that kind of convention, I think particularly I did have some background in music, so I have some ideas of certain pitches and instruments with Western traditions, given certain tempo indicated in the score. But I learned quite soon that in fact you start with a particular situation, or particular day, or starting with the God plays and going through with the rankings of the plays in the repertoire. But you start with the voice that’s comfortable for the performers as a warm-up beforehand. Everyone is prepared but your best is going out performing cold is not an idea that you’re going to do any kind of performance before you begin. So you start with everyone’s energy is at that time. And you go through with the introductory phase with your preparation through to the development phase. If you’re in an orchestra, you might prepare your instrument to a certain pitch, but in Noh you naturally go through stages of changes beginning as jo and as ha in the development. And it’s very natural to do that with the progression of the plays. You’re also going from the Gods, then you examine all kinds of different emotions, all kinds of characterisation. That’s the development. And then at some point you would come to a sort of resolution, and that is kyū. Then the tempo is faster and with a different kind of intensity.

If it’s a recital, a long day of performance, we may go through this kind of cycle several times. So you take the audience through to the kind of introductory phase, then to different scenes and then finding the solution and then going to another cycle. But this is very different from the Western kind of ideal for progression.

NV: From what you say, because jo-ha-kyū has a fractal quality to it, you can think about it as, say, from the movement we just did today, sashi mawari, the opening of the fan has jo-ha-kyū in it. Then you apply to the whole phase of movement, then the song. It’s almost like when you mentioned about the organic evolution of it, it seems like when we practice Noh, we go through the phrase of jo-ha-kyū too.

ORT: Yes, I think it’s continuous and the more you become accustomed to your practice, the more you can refine the idea and how you can control your jo-ha-
The more elements you’re aware of, you’d know that there’s never really a break in the continuing cycles of jo-ha-kyū. You’re always continuing from one phase to a kind of exploration of what you’ve been introduced, then the closure. And then you start again. You may go back to something and then you start again with this transitional phrase as well, or of each kata itself too.

NV: It’s really interesting, isn’t it?

ORT: And you do that with the voice too. Sometimes it’s very very subtle. The beginner might hear only one, maybe two, or three tones but in fact it’s a much greater progression and a much greater control of progression of tempo and song also. And again, this is through each line as well as each speech. And it’s very difficult to do. But once you understand that it’s the process you’re aiming for, you sort of doing something similar, but we still use jo-ha-kyū to describe it. But utai too can be very very subtle with the changes as well as the tempo changes. And also from jo-ha-kū, it goes to ma too and how you introduce the transition. And how important it is to use the ma to reset in different circumstance.

NV: Which then leads us to ma now. From your experience and you’ve already mentioned about ma, can you give an example of the experience of ma that is striking for you?

ORT: There are many, so... I think there’s an example when I was first learning and performing jonomai 女の舞 in Hagoromo 羽衣, making the transition from one dancing describing the spring scene to actually going into the dance. I had to be aware of ma and the taiko and the musicians were and the way they presenting the ma for me to interpret. So I became very aware of the breathing. And through that I was drawn in, invited, to their ma, to their sense of time. And then from that, I was able to interpret the jo-ha-kyū and the ma of the introduction to the dance and listen very carefully to the kakegoe 掛け声 or the sound which presenting me with the platform for doing the stamps at the right time. And it could be very very subtle.

NV: There’s a lot of listening skills into that, isn’t it? You practice (the dance) in the okeiko-ba then with the offering from the musicians for the time you go with them. It does involves a lot of listening skills...

ORT: And I think what the Noh training does is to make you aware of what kind of transition you’re going to make and that you don’t think of yourself as being necessary in the center. It’s not all about the performer herself but also about the supporting people on the side: the ensembles, the chorus. It could be easy to assume that. You have to understand that there is going to be a change and there’s going to be a

----- Jonomai 女の舞 = dance of a woman
‡‡‡‡‡‡ kakegoe 掛け声 = (n,vs) yell used to time or encourage activity (e.g. "Heave ho!", "On three ... One, two, three!" in English); enthusiastic shout from the audience (e.g. in kabuki); shouting (in concerts).
development of time. And be very aware of what the musicians are doing and what are their interpretation, so you can go with it. And then maybe also become..., just saying to Norishige before that sometimes movement comes a bit before the tense (the audience: “What did I just see?”), sometimes it comes at the same time. But sometimes the movement comes after the words, so you have an idea or emotional reactions to it first, then you see actions or what’s the character is experiencing. Sometimes in the music too.

**NV:** In a way you’re already talking about the sense of time. It’s one of my questions as well. Your experience of time while practicing or performing Noh repertoire, apart from ma, in the transition that you mentioned before, as well as jo-ha-kyū. Jo-ha-kyū is also about the sense of time too, isn’t it? It’s also something with the sense of space too. Like when we practice there (okeiko-ba), if I practice in a room and then practice at the okeiko-ba....

**ORT:** Yes, definitely. It informs the way you perceive the space. I remember the first time I performed Noh. Most of my practice is done in a format-sized room. I had always to imagine the expanded space and just try to create that in my mind and then in that small (space) and expand it. But that definitely affects how you use the space. Then come to think about the different part of the stage or something. You’re relating to different kinds of time and movement.

**NV:** In that way, I was trying to understand the experience of time. It seems like from the practice today that you describe, in a way, it’s the content for example the kata 型 of Tsuru Kame. It starts from seasons. It’s got a different kind of portrayal of the seasons to it which affects your presenting of that (kata). How much time you spend in the turning...

**ORT:** Yes how you express or make use of jo-ha-kyū in a particular situation. In the play, Tomoe 巴, for example. The first part, the kuse one is the description of what has gone on before the attack by the enemy and the wounding of Yoshinaka which is her (the shite) lover (or however one can interpret that relationship). It’s actually done on a stool. She is seated on a stool and acting and doing certain movement with the upper part of your body. Here, the shite is seated on a stool. We imagine she’s on horseback. Sometimes as herself, sometimes as Yoshinaka, describing his actions, that he’s struck and his horse getting mired in the snow. And he’s trying to get the horse to move, he whips and kicks in the side. It’s very condensed. The movement and, of course, the utai 訳 too. The intense action comes to a point to realise that nothing can be done. Then she, as always, goes to actually act out her finding that he would be told to leave, but she’s actually engaging with the enemy after supposedly going back taking for the keepsake and so on, which he kept in the bag with the armour and so on. And then she leaves. But it’s very very

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**Kata 型** = standard form of a movement, posture, etc. in martial arts, sport, etc.


†††††††† Utai 訳 = Noh chanting
interesting progression of jo-ha-kyū in a condensed space on the stool to then going out on the stage and using hashigakari.

Nitida: In this sense, there’s actually no traveling. So the space doesn’t actually have the role in jo-ha-kyū as much as the actual action itself.

Ort: But you have access to space. You do different levels, different kinds of development.

Nitida: I think you’ve answered some of these questions already. Aspects of time, timing and duration, is important to performing Noh repertoire. It feels like what you’ve answered earlier. It’s not only just the shite or waki performing. You have the timing with the musicians as well as the chorus.

Ort: And one thing.. in Yuki. When I performed Yuki. At the time of the actual performance, I forgot. I’ve been told the spirit of the snow is brought out inside tsukurimo is brought out inside and the waki prepares the scene. (Narrating.) It’s been snowing so heavily, now it stopped. And the garment around the tsukurimo was brought down. And the shite is not supposed to do or say anything until you hear the sound of the kohken folding up the cloth and gone off stage and close the door. That’s the cue to sing. But I was so nervous that I didn’t wait that long. I was sort of, “Oh, here I am. I’ve appeared. I’d better say something.” That’s the common thing that happens to actors saying something sooner. You don’t have to start your chant so early. You could allow (the character) appearing from the snow storm and suddenly appearing as a woman there. I didn’t give myself time for the audience to perceive, who or what was I supposed to be. It appeared as a half-formed (reluctant action). Afterwards I realised that allowing more time would’ve had a different affect. That’s something about Noh performances is that usually there’s one rehearsal with everyone. And this might boast the wonderful, but maybe dangerous, thing about Noh. You don’t have a lot of rehearsal (with the ensemble) or a lot of checks. So there is an element of spontaneity about it. And then there’re other actors or musicians. There might be something they didn’t do in the rehearsal, but it’s about how you make that work anyway, how do you work with that. Hopefully through preparation, you’re ready to respond to any kind of ma that’s presented to you. I thought I should’ve worked it...

Nitida: This reminds me of the introduction of Zeami’s Nine Treatises, I think in Kakyō. Zeami was saying for the performer to gauge the level of attention of the audience, then you start. I suppose as a performer myself, I sort of learned later. I’ve

Hashigakari = (n) covered bridge passageway connecting the backstage (mirror room) to the noh stage
Tsukurimo = (n,adj-no) (1) artificial product; man-made product; imitation; fake; sham; (2) fiction; (n) (3) decoration (e.g. for a festival); (4) theatrical prop (esp. a large prop in noh or kyogen, e.g. tree, well, etc.); (5) crop
Kohken = (n,vs) (1) guardianship; guardian; (2) (theatrical) assistant; prompter. Komparu: the translation of kohken is looking, guarding from the back.
been a performer for 30 years, but for 20 years earlier, I didn’t do that. I suppose you learn from experience to begin....

ORT: In the moment of stillness, whether in the transition between something or the moment of stillness. I gave this example to Udaka-sensei that in Ōmu Komachi that I saw him performing. There’s a complete silence. As an audience, I didn’t know that it’s a transition of something or anything. But it’s such a condense stillness and silence. And it’s such a profound moment for me. Do you have an experience as performer about that sort of silence or stillness?

Obviously, Ōmu Komachi is such a special role with a special sense of time is presented there. She is so old and she has so many memories. And she’s so alive to everything, very very conscious and very very aware. Hers is the character that is able to go to very deep places because of the concentration of the actor. Everyone is pulled into that. I think anything I’ve done has been quite of that intensity of the focus. So I think that (Ōmu Komachi) is a unique kind of play. I think I’ve had a kind of intensity of the moment that the audience was focused with me. Whether it’s similar or different with other forms of theatre, I think that you feel if the audience is with you.

NV: A lot of time in Western theatre, the most poignant part is just busy. Lots of elements in it. But for Noh, it’s entirely opposite that the most poignant moment, you have silence. Whether it’s the same with you or not, because Udaka-sensei seems to draw to this (silent) moment when he connects to his audience. It seems like an offering, opening for the audience to come in. Do you have that similar experience?

ORT: Yeah, I think so. One of the important things for you (performer) is that you feel the energy up with the audience and their concentration. And that happens when you give them time to do that. In plays like Hashitomi 半部 irresponsible, again there’re two hazzard tsukurimo. She’s in tsukurimo and the ladder is raised at a certain point. And you really feel that the audience is drawn to that. But I think that the more experienced kuse (kuse mai曲舞 irresponsible) dances or like Tsurukame when you have the kasashi, the snow, the sleeves. Moments like that are important for joining the audience in. There are certain gestures there becoming like epiphany.

In Yuki, towards the end, I remember having a sense that I’m going through this experience and it’s the only moment, the only time I would have seen this particular scene and the audience - are they going to this scene with me or are they going to have a sense of nostalgia after it’s finished. I wanted to make every moment special to enjoy and savoured.

NV: There is a question that I didn’t ask Udaka-sensei but maybe I’d ask you is that when you perform with a mask. I read in the Komparu book that there is a sort of ritual before the performer going out. You put the mask on and you’d imagine,

‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡ Kuse mai曲舞 = song or the dance performed during that song.
see yourself with the mask in the mirror. You almost take yourself out to notice that you, with the mask on, is the character. Could you please tell me about that experience as well because I’ve never performed with mask before?

ORT: Of course, the last thing that you put on is the mask. We’re told by our teacher to step back, first you’re sitting and then you can see the whole body. One thing I thought was interesting when I performed Tomoe was that when I was sitting in the kagami-no-ma 鏡の間 and the iemoto 家元 is checking different things. I thought of certain things about the collar (of my costume). Without saying anything, he went there. Whether or not that’s a natural progression but it’s a very… As the stage attendant was preparing, making sure that I had the best possible appearance of Tomoe and I had different points that I was concerning about. He was seeing those points as I was at the same time.

The other thing, with Aoi no Ue 葵の上, I remember one thing that really struck me after looking… and of course, you bow to the mask and so on. You’re all dressed, very focused and a bit nervous. And then I was in the position behind the curtain, preparing to go on stage and the curtain was lifted. But I had a strong sense of seeing through other eyes, of borrowing the other eyes that it wasn’t just me, that it wasn’t just my eyes. And so I think the more practiced the performer is, the more he/she’s able to become one with the mask. But that moment was as if there’s another pair of eyes in a different position (to see) this is who I’ve become. And I felt rather relaxed after that. I had the confidence to that face, that I could give myself up to that energy or that presentation was. And that’s I was there to do.

NV: I hope I can go back to ask Udaka-sensei about that. It would be interesting to hear what he had to say about it. But after I read about (the self-view) in Komparu’s book, I thought I was going to make a score for my improvisation, just that I see myself performing from the outside. One time I invited a friend to have a look. You’re saying that you feel relaxed. In a way, I felt like I invited the gaze of the audience. Without feeling like I am judged by the gaze, I felt like I invited to be watched. I was open to be watched. Does that make sense? Maybe the outside eye that you see yourself is kind of universal no matter what kind of performer you are. I thought.

ORT: I think in Hagoromo too. I experienced sort of feelings that I was aware of myself out, a kind of outer view of myself. I had a strong sense of where I was on the stage.

NV: That’s the beginning that you’re talking about that once you step on the stage..

Kagami-no-ma 鏡の間; 鏡ノ間 【かがみのみま】(n) (1) room behind the curtain of a noh stage, where the actors prepare; greenroom (noh); mirror room; (2) hall of mirrors (at Versailles).

Iemoto 家元 【いえもと】(n) head of a school (of music, dance); head family of a school.

ORT: Yes, you go into another dimension. You do your business, but you have to be aware of what you’re presenting, I think.

NV: That was what you and Udaka-sensei said. It seems to be the moment to invite the audience in. It’s an offering as a performer to… ‘I’m here. I offer this to you. Let’s do this together.’ As opposed to just me going to you…

ORT: Yes it’s much more of a communication.

NV: That’s great about Noh, isn’t it? Now, are there other concepts or principles of time that are important in your opinion in Noh practice as well? Jo-ha-kyū is one of the most important one.

ORT: That is right. The other one might be ichi-go ichi-eh 一期一会 (n) (yoji) once-in-a-lifetime encounter. It’s the idea that there’s one particular meeting that these people coming together is happening once, one particular time. It’s not something in the background and you thought, ‘oh well, I’ll do better tomorrow.’ This is a one particular moment. But it’s here like a once in a lifetime encounter.

NV: Is it like a singularity?

ORT: Yes. It’s the phrase that’s called a lot in tea ceremonies and other things where the idea of going to make the most of whatever the moment offers. It’s once in a lifetime. Whatever kind of serendipity or coincidence. You just go with it because that’s the life of that moment.

NV: Is there any kind of, as you gave me examples of the Noh that you’ve performed. How do you relate to your audience? By just arriving, have that time as you go into the (performance) space?

ORT: I think maybe the most interesting thing about Noh is the fact that you have so many people that are helping this creation. Talk about the flower (hana 花) in Noh and so on. Like a.. in the tearooms, you have various things that go in to be presented, maybe the flower. But in Noh, there may be essential that everyone has prepared and everyone is creating something in answer to what the shite is doing. Rather than insisting on your own performance, but to take advantage of what other performers have to offer, creating a much fuller representation, as long as everyone is at a certain level, I think. It becomes much richer. And also, when you are able to give yourself up to the costume, to the musicians, to the chorus, to the waki. Everyone is helping to create the presentation that also invites the attention of the audience also. And if at some point, you break the concentration, or something happens that the ego comes back, then you kind of break that and it doesn’t work

*********** Ichi-go ichi-eh 一期一会 【いちごいちえ】 (n) (yoji) once-in-a-lifetime encounter (hence should be cherished as such).
until you have that kind of openness and selflessness and giving yourself up to what you practice and what everyone else is offering. That’s all. But sometimes I feel sorry for Udaka-sensei because he’s such a fine performer and he doesn’t get the kind of support he needs, or he deserves, from the chorus. But interestingly, when he performed Teika this year, the musicians took him out for a drink because they were so happy, so appreciative to have a chance to perform with a really accomplished and highly intuitive and sensitive performer. In a way, it’s not done that often. They have to be mature and they have to be allowed to do it. But they really appreciated the level of his performance. I can think of another case of another performer, they might just say thank you and go home. But (with Udaka-sensei’s performance) they thought it was very special for them to have that experience of that interpretation. And it’ll allow them to also go to another level. I think.

NV: From what I see in Yokohama, the three shimai. I shouldn’t say this but it’s so different. Remember I spoke to you, chatted with you. I didn’t really read Sanemori in detail and I didn’t really know parts of the poems and what it says. But I really feel like the first shimai guy, really different from Udaka-sensei in a way that he almost shared Sanemori to us. And it’s really palpable even though I don’t really know the story. I suppose the complexity that’s layered in his performance. And it’s really incredible to watch that not even the full costume, but the way Udaka-sensei performed without outrageous facial expression because normally it’d be performed with the mask. With the subtlety of his performance, it said so much about Sanemori as if he offered to us. But some people fell asleep, I feel sorry for them.

ORT: Yes, maybe they’re resting their eyes. Or they nod to agree. But sometimes it can just be so intense that they fight against it to keep your own concentration at that level. It’s really difficult to hold the concentration.

NV: But I think Noh needs the concentration to watch.

ORT: Yes, the audience has to invest a lot to reach direct invitation to do that. But you need a kind of stamina, I think, to sort of continue.

NV: Continue with that attention.

ORT: Continue with that attention through. That’s why I said to the first time viewers to sketch, put it down in paper if you like to draw. Do other things to keep your attention, keep yourself up. And if you do falling asleep, it’s also natural because of the time and rhythm. But they are very organic to your body and sometime it’s a natural rhythm to fall asleep. But I think there will be something happens. There will be a change and you wake up. We hope the other audience applauding at the end. But usually there’s something whether the chorus or hayashikata that draws you back and your attention changes. You’ll become aware of that subtle change. People who are not used to it, their bodies respond naturally.

Hayashikata (n) (noh) musician; orchestra leader.
NV: It’s like meditation too, isn’t it? When you start meditation, you often fall asleep. But when you’re used to it, then you know that’s what happen. And also Udaka-sensei was saying that we have computers and mobile phones, our sense of time is very different. But what Noh offers is what good art offers, or so I thought anyway, that it shifts your behaviour. You have to shift yourself, your habit in order to watch it!

ORT: Yeah, quite true, I think. And because of this switch and it’s quite dramatic. I think the more you actually experience it, the more you get into another time and the more…. It may be gruelling and tiring but it’s also quite refreshing. I think. Sometimes in performance like the Takigi Noh or something when they do a lot of programs and introduce a lot of things. They modify or shorten, or they do a lot of cuts and abbreviated. You get too much and you don’t make that shift. And I think that it’s really less interesting because you don’t make that change. And I really think you need to make that shift into another time.

When I was in New Zealand helping the performers there with their production The Dazzling Night. It was the Noh play about Katherine Mansfield. It was interesting but they seemed to think that they have to be moving all the time. It (should) be more of an invitation to allow people to change and adapt and make a transition which is already the entrance music is doing. Or the fact that it’s more of the presentation that they’re facing front or maybe shift to face each other. But you don’t need to be continually moving.

NV: Just like in improvisation. Us, western improvisers… I think I saw… Because I start performing improvisation for round about 10 years. I gradually learned that actually stillness is an option. But it comes down to that singularity that you make the most out of all things that moment of improvisation. That is possible. You make the most of it. But a lot of time, in group improvisation, when you just ‘jam in’, you miss attention of things…

ORT: And you rather force people away rather than inviting them because there’s too much going on.

******** Takigi Noh 能【たきぎのう】(n) noh theater performed at night by a fire.
Nareeporn Vachananda: I interviewed Udaka-sensei and Becky-sensei earlier, we went straight to jo-ha-kyū. Shall we start from there? From your experience of practicing and performing Noh, what is jo-ha-kyū to you in your experience? Do you have an experience when you’re practicing it or what you think of it?

Dr Diego Pellacchia: I can think of jo-ha-kyū in two levels. One is an artistic device that can be found in Japanese arts, music and performing arts and also visual arts. It has to do with rhythm. So, it’s this movement of … it’s accelerating of rhythm principle and it’s in three parts. I don’t have to tell you this, right?

NV: Oh, just from your experience, what is it like?

DP: What I tell my students in the workshop is that we use jo-ha-kyū as a tripartite structure, but jo-ha-kyū doesn’t work in a linear way. It’s a returning tripartite, so it goes around in circle. So, jo-ha-kyū doesn’t end with kyū, it ends with jo. Or it does not end! It continues. So you have a dotted line before jo and a dotted line after kyū. After every kyū, there’s a little jo that invites to the returning of the circle. For example, at the end of a performance cycle that has five plays, you will have just a couple of lines from the play of the first category after the fifth category play has been performed. So jo-ha-kyū plays to anything in Noh, even to the construction of the plays with five plays. So you have the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and at the end of the fifth, you would have a little bit of the first. So to say, it’s not over, it’s not ended. And the circle is opened to a new cycle. The cycle continues.

This is something you experience when you perform as well. Something you need to be aware of. You have this ramp accelerates from one point to another point. As you reach your destination, you don’t just get to an abrupt stop, you … kind of slow down and be ready for the next Noh. [Continue on]. So jo-ha-kyū is what allows Noh dance to be interesting, you know. Without this, it will be boring and there will be so little rhythm or little flare.

The jo phase, the beginning phase is so slow. It’s slow and it’s the longest, perhaps, of the three phases. So it really isn’t necessary time to set the mood. For example when the dance begins, you need that ‘weight’ as in something heavy. That’s solemnity, if you want. And then things start to pick up speed, and then you’re kind of drawn into this. And you can’t stop anymore. It’s going and going and finally it comes to a halt, which is again, a slow movement. Jo-ha-kyū-jo, really!

NV: Yes, so like what you said, it doesn’t come into an abrupt end. It [ending] takes you into the next jo.
DP: That’s right, that’s right. That’s something…I don’t know how to explain this but there’s something really natural to it. Natural is a silly word, I suppose. It’s hard to define what it is. Since I’m now not speaking as a scholar but as a performer. …[laugh]…It feels very natural. So it feels very good to do that, to perform that. There’s something…[put hand on his heart, closing his eyes, finding words…] It feels very good to perform that slow movement.

NV: See, because we’re filming this. That expression [as if jo-ha-kyū is close to his heart — my interpretation] says a lot, doesn’t it?

DP: Yeah… And then another level of jo-ha-kyū that it’s not jo-ha-kyū that you’re performing on stage, I guess. This jo-ha-kyū I’m talking about is the jo-ha-kyū of your life in Noh. And thinking of the stage preparation and before one is going on the stage. And you realise how… For example, when I did my first and only full performance, there’s a year of preparation behind that performance. In the beginning, it’s mostly memorising the scripts, memorising the piece, so it takes a long time. It’s a slow beginning. Then I had to learn to sing with the rhythm and learn new things, so new elements came in. It starts to make sense after this. And that can be seen as a ha. And then finally you’re going on stage, then it’s a kyū for an hour, more or less. And then it’s gone! And you do it only once, right? So if we are to compare this to another type of theatre that has not just one performance but another one or more performances for another month or more,… maybe you could not apply jo-ha-kyū to it or to other things, but it would be like…jo-ha-kyū-kyū-kyū-kyū-kyū-kyū-kyū—until the season is over! But in the case of Noh, it really is a one-time cycle, then there’s another cycle which cannot be the same cycle as before. If you think about the cycle as a preparation of the play, then you have jo-ha-kyū, with kyū as the play itself, but it’s so short because the span of time when you’re preparing it. And then it’s gone. And a new cycle [begins].

NV: And then Becky was saying about the life of us practicing Noh, it has jo-ha-kyū even though you’re not performing. The knowledge that gets built in us. Kyū, in this case, it’s a longer span of time. You have to look back in order to know that…

DP: I think, if I am allowed to generalise even more, again I’m speaking as a person of 36 years of age, not 76. We experience our rhythm. But I mean when we apply to scenario. Many of us experience youth as a very long process. We can’t wait to get our first driving license, can’t wait to get out of school, can’t wait to get the key to your flat or whatever. That first part of your life is very long. And then suddenly you become an adult and things start to change. The rhythm of your life changes too. And from a certain age also, as you know, it’s gone! It happens so quickly, so quickly, you know. Time… [gone so quick], right. So this jo-ha-kyū thing is not something that somebody woke up one morning and think about what should we do with this rhythm in Noh, whether it’s kyū, jo, ha or whatever. It makes sense. It’s not artificial.
NV: That's a great way of describing it. When I first knew of jo-ha-kyû, I thought, surely it's so commonsense. But when you start practicing it, then you start to understand it not only in terms of performance, but also there's a kind of progression of things, isn't there?

DP: If you want to get into a deeper, all levels of analysis of jo-ha-kyû, I should say that it's something that's very hard to talk about. You really have to do it and feel it and learn how to perform it because jo-ha-kyû may exist as a concept but if you want to see it with an aesthetic property, there may be a good way to perform jo-ha-kyû and a bad way of performing jo-ha-kyû as well. For example, beginners don't know how to handle jo-ha-kyû. They tend to be flat when they dance. Even when they perform jo-ha-kyû, it's bad jo-ha-kyû. So it's not that jo-ha-kyû is one absolute unique thing there. There're many types of jo-ha-kyû and we may be able to judge it, evaluate it, if it's aesthetically good or aesthetically bad. If you practice a lot, you'd start feeling it. So it's rhythm, it's not something spiritual or mystical about it in my view. It really is something you can analyse, like you do it in a computer, right? What constitutes good jo-ha-kyû is the question, perhaps. In what context? In what artistic or stage context do we see good jo-ha-kyû? Or as a performer, how can we perform good jo-ha-kyû? How long is jo or how slow is jo? How do we perform the transition of ha? How do we perform the transition to kyû, or how fast is kyû? And you know this cycle, it's a concentric cycle, right? There's a jo-ha-kyû of the play. There's jo-ha-kyû of half play. There's jo-ha-kyû of this dance. There's jo-ha-kyû of kata.[1] So you can go on and break it down...

NV: Like a fractal...

DP: Yeah, right, right, right. Exactly. So in very experienced and very skilled Noh actors, they can put jo-ha-kyû in everything they do. They can control the minimal level of jo-ha-kyû and the macroscopic level of jo-ha-kyû. So it is a sense that one develops with practice. It took me a long time, not that I have achieved anything so far, but I think I understand jo-ha-kyû a bit more when I started 10 years ago because I've been exposed to much of it, not because I study the theory of it. Because in Noh we don’t play with that metronome [to realise rhythm]. And often times, in certain dances, they're seen first, alone, and then the musicians coming in. So the shite sets the time, …against what? There’s nothing before that. So you really have to internalise it so much so that you can perform it anytime. This is really special with Noh. There’s no conductor. In choir, there's a conductor that sets the rhythm with the baton and gives that cues, but in Noh, you have to adjust to each other’s speed all the time. That cannot be achieve without a long, constant practice.

NV: And experience as well. And that ties us to the thing about time because you’ve already started to mention about time. When I spoke to Udaka-sensei about what is his experience of time in Noh, he didn’t find it make any sense. I completely understand it and I think because in the Western culture, we have time
problem. We’re kind of not living our life like Udaka-sensei lives his life. Are there aspects of time, timing, duration or temporality that’s important to you, similar to what you’ve just said really, in your experience of practicing or performing Noh repertoire?

DP: I suspect this is not exclusively to Noh. I think sometimes it’s difficult to distinguish between the experience of practicing Noh or the experience of living our everyday life. For example when I did my only Noh Kiyotsune 清経 in 2013, one thing that I told this that I wasn’t surprised that how quickly, … how time fled on stage. From the moment I put on the mask and the moment I went back and took off the mask. What I’m about to say does not apply to the professionals like Udaka-sensei or other professionals but it applies to people like me who are beginners and amateurs in Noh. We struggle with time. We need to find the right time. And we need to be able to wait. It has to do with being in control when you’re on stage, right? Again, this applies from performance to university lecture. I have to be able manage time: this is what you have to say or this is what you have to perform given this timeframe, how you place yourself. That mastery comes with practice.

NV: And practice in life, not only practice in repertoire, isn’t it?

DP: What can I say? Perhaps what I can say is that Noh, as other arts, allows you to reflect on these things. It’s very good bore[dom] you can test this stuff or you can see. You can see things you don’t see clearly in everyday life. You can reflect it, practice it. And it’s all theatre! Perhaps the fact that Noh is a classical art with fine vocabulary and also defined practice method helps you even more to visualise this [reflection] because the colours you have on your palette, are set. You can’t really improvise. The tools are there, right? You can only choose from those tools. So if two colours don’t work well together, you still have to work with those two. You still have to find a nuance [to work those two colours out], but there’re not many other elements around that to disturb that process. Things are clearer when you have less ingredients, you know. If the cake is tasty or not, you know it clearly if the ingredients are only flour and sugar. But if you have many other ingredients, you don’t know what make the cake not turning out so well. So that’s what I like about Noh. Sorry it has nothing to do with time…

NV: I think it’s related…

DP: If I have to think of time, what I think is that I’m not in control of time. I would like to be in control of time in the future. I struggle with time. It’s one of the biggest concerns I have in my own practice. It’s one thing I’d like to do better that would

— NV.

******** Time that is experienced in the globalised contemporary culture is arguably distorted by capitalistic demand of time and activities as assets or commodities. The temporal property of activities is attached to it with goal-oriented mind-set, rather than the non-capitalistic notion that things (or activities) will take as long as it does. Time in Noh is a non-capitalistic one. The temporal property in Noh is attached to the body and the qualities in which time is taken to produce those activities. — NV.
make everything look better to control over time which means control over rhythm. That’s one thing that makes everything else look better on stage. It is a very very important thing for me.

**NV:** Yes. I suppose I started this thesis because I have this problem too. I do speed things up. Not only me though, a lot of post-modernist improvisors, you know, Deborah Hay. I went to one of her talks. She said that … when she danced with Merce Cunningham, with all his experimental method, rolling the dice, etc. Once the choreography was set, that’s it. You do it. She said that she almost had a nervous breakdown during a world tour. So once the tour finished, she went in exile on one of those islands off the coast of New York. She found that she had to distract herself [during the performance] not to worry too much about the audience or time. And that’s where the entire 40 years of practice came from. It’s actually from problems, rather than what we do well, you know. It’s not that we’re brilliant. The fact that we have problems, we have to find the strategy to deal with them.

**DP:** That’s right. It think that in case of masters like Udaka-sensei, you know. They fine-tune that. They will adjust their timing, perhaps to the mood of the day or the types of audience of the day. But in my case, I am still working on the basics. I tend to isolate myself [from the audience] too much. Sometimes I isolate myself. And on the contrary, I am the victim of the presence of the audience. I cannot be as good as when I practice along, you know.

**NV:** That is tied beautifully with your relationship with the audience as you experience on that majestic Noh stage. Do you wear mask?

**DP:** Yes I do [in Kiyotsune] once.

**NV:** How do I start? Shall we start from putting the mask on? Tell us what happened.

**DP:** In the case of the professionals like Udaka-sensei, they don’t wear mask like a few days before the performance. But because Udaka-sensei has a particular…, he’s a carver of the mask…

**NV:** I think there’s something to do with that to his relationship with mask?

**DP:** Yeah! He has many masks. And he’s interested in checking on the mask to see how the mask looks like as well. So he trains, when he trains on his own, he wears the mask a lot. But when he does the one rehearsal before the performance with other musicians, he doesn’t wear mask. In my case, I was an amateur, I don’t have a lot of experience with mask. I trained with the mask quite a few times. And also, I did my rehearsal with the costumes and the mask which is unusual. To put it shortly, one thing that the mask does to you… it does a number of things to you. One thing is that it sucks all of your energy, all of your energy goes to the mask. You lose your peripheral vision, so you lose track of your body that you’re visually aware of. Even when you don’t have a mirror [during your normal practice]. You know, you’re black
out, can’t see anything else. That’s when you have to rely on your practice you did, focusing on your feet, your legs, your weight, your koshi, so you have to perform without having to rely on your sight at all because it’s really minimal when you see through the eyeholes.

So you put on the mask, and you walk on the bridge. In the case of Kiyotsune, there’s a chorus. The wife of Kiyotsune and the waki finishes their conversation about Kiyotsune. The ghost of Kiyotsune, this warrior committed suicide by drowning himself in the sea, walks on stage as the chorus sings the last line. And you walk on the bridge and you face the front. Take a few steps you know and you walk around the left corner to the stage. And the chorus finishes the singing and the music stops. And then it’s silent. And then you sing this monologue. So you walk on stage [seeing through the eyeholes] and you see the musicians and the chorus. And you see the wife. And you pivot. You are in the dark and then you pivot, you see the audience. Music finishes and you’re standing there, alone. I felt so lonely at that time. I was in the dark, because it’s the world of darkness behind the mask. And also I felt, “I’m the shite now. The play is me.” The play itself has my name, Kiyotsune. So everything is depending on me. And all eyes are on me as well. It’s like Hamlet delivering his monologue, you know, I think. Everything else disappeared, just Hamlet alone.

It’s strange because you’re hidden behind this mask and it’s so dark behind the mask. You can see a little bit but there’re so many things I was thinking about at that time and I couldn’t really see anything. And this is for me and also the performers of Noh, you’re inside and outside of your characters. Sometimes you’re inside and sometimes you see…ah, [a member of the audience] she comes to see my performance. You recognise somebody in the audience. But your visuals are so limited.

The other thing that the mask does to you is that it limits your breathing a lot. So it becomes really hot. In the case of Kiyotsune, you have to stand with the heavy costumes and the mask. The first thing you sing [chant] is a long monologue. So no time for warming up psychologically. The main part of your character is already there [during that monologue]. And so tension already cuts your lung capacity, so you start to use only the top part of the lungs. And the mask is already hot, so you have to concentrate and try to relax and breath to the fullest of your lungs. I’m not sure if I’m answering your question or not.

NV: Yes because of the strategy that you use in that situation that limits your breathing, you have to find a strategy to relax. We talk a little bit there but the audience. How do you relate to the audience? How did the audience affect you?

DP: Well, I think that if you’re a performer, if you’re enjoying performing on stage, there has to be, hidden somewhere, a little bit of a narcissistic personality. I don’t

koshi 腰 [こし] = back; lower back; waist; hips; lumbar region.
believe people who go on the stage and saying, “I’m so shy!” and stuff like that. You go onstage because you want people to see you, otherwise you don’t go on stage in a public performance. I draw a lot of strength from the audience because I am under the illusion that they will enjoy what I’m about to do onstage, you know. As much as I can be nervous before the performance, when I get onstage actually, I’m not nervous anymore. I feel the responsibility, a lot of responsibility. The responsibility is that I have to live up to the expectations my teacher has of me and the perceptions of the audience, that people won’t understand Noh, that most of the performers are amateurs, and so on. I feel that pressure a lot but I believe that I can do well. I mean that moment, I believed very strongly that I can do well. I cling to that believe, otherwise it would be very hard. What I have at the back of my mind is that now I’m going to show you how to do it or I do it, you know. And so I have that oomph to forget about anxiety and enjoy that time. Because it’s my time and many hours preparing for that moment. So I draw the strength from the audience, because the audience is there and I can show them what I can do. Apart from that, you may have read many essays on [Noh] actors speaking how to communicate with the audience. They adjust their technique [to suit the audience]. I think all that applies to experience Noh actors. I don’t think that applies to inexperience actors or even some experience actors. I heard some of them said, “...Oh...oh year, the audience is there, right?” Many Noh performers forget about the audience. They just do little things and they expect the audience to be there. They don’t make efforts to convince the audience. They don’t make the efforts to adjust to the audience. They don’t make the efforts to open up to the audience. They just perform the homework, show the homework like on the powerpoint but it’s not interactive. They do not ask questions, they do not solicit the discussion. Udaka-sensei is often criticised for being showy or theatrical on the stage. But I think what he does really is ‘feel the audience’ and adapt a lot to the audience. Things that the audience needs are helping hands to get them into the performance that’s sometimes so archaic and cryptical that the audience not necessarily understand what’s going on. He exaggerates certain pathos or certain realistic movement. He wants them to understand what’s going on very strongly for the character he’s portraying. I think that’s not something to be criticised. It’s a good thing to be thinking about the audience.

NV: In the performance I went to last week in Yokohama, there’s a shimai performed by a guy, and then you see Udaka-sensei performed Sanemori. How different that is. So different. The way Udaka-sensei performs, I didn’t read the synopsis beforehand, and without the mask, you can actually sense the complexity of Sanemori that he shared with the audience. So extraordinary. Really incredible.

DP: He likes that shimai a lot.

NV: So now. We go to ma 間 now. The moment of time in between. Do you have the experience of that? You said that you draw the strength and the support from the audience in your performance. It tells me that you sensed them. You sensed the audience or at least the gaze of the audience on you. And ma is sometimes an
opening for the audience to arrive into your performance. Do you have that experience as well?

**DP:** First of all, *ma* is rhythm too, isn’t it? There’s something existing before *ma*. The beat, the note or whatever. I have a lot of *ma* in the way I talk as I do onstage! It’s hard to measure that because some *ma* can be long and people get bored and some *ma* is shorter. It’s a matter of good timing. As always in the public speech you know. People who are good at auditory skill, they know how to manage *ma* in their speech and in Noh too, of course. I think of *ma*, for example, when there’s a pause, that creates a lot of expectations. You go on the stage and you open the fan. There’s an instant before you start singing it. And in that moment, it could be intense. The audience may think how this voice is going to sound like? What are the first lines going to speak? So *ma* is filled with a lot of anticipation and expectation. It’s something that can be used in a meaningful way by those who can master it. It’s something I’m aware of rather than what I know. I’m aware of it. I enjoy playing with it. But that doesn’t mean I do it well. Again, if we think of it as an artistic tool, there is good *ma* and there is bad *ma*. There is a meaningful *ma* or an artificial, superficial or light *ma*. How you time it and how you charge that, again, it’s something that you comes with the mastery of your art. I think it’s close together with *jo-ha-kyū* in a way. It’s the rhythm.

**NV:** Are there other concept of time that are important to you in Noh? Other than *jo-ha-kyū* and *ma*?

**DP:** Now that we talk, wouldn’t it be nice to do it in taiko******** class. There are certain things I haven’t learned or expressed perhaps in relation to time or to rhythm. Because that’s when you do things and you feel them. Perhaps I’m thinking more of rhythm than time actually, of rhythm as musical property, being, object. One thing I can think of is something I’ve been telling my students a little bit about time in Noh is that it has to do with patience, I think. I’m not patient. I’m not patient at all. And I’m somebody who swallow everything very quickly. I’m very fast when I eat. I’m a very quick learner, but I forget very quickly too. So I am a gargatuan, taking in so much but that doesn’t mean that I can digest everything. And there are aspects of our lives that sped up dramatically. In very recent years, in the last 10 years. A lot of that has to do with technological advancement. I should speak for myself but it applies to a lot of people. I spend a lot of time on the internet, on the computer, working, browsing, having fun. Many things I do from jobs to leisure take place on the computer. And the computer is something that responds very quickly to your impulse. You ask for something and it answers immediately. You want entertainment, you have entertainment. You want work, you have work. You want any types of enjoyment from anything comical to sexual, instantly it delivers it to you. And you don’t have to fight for it. You just browse, look it up and it comes up. And how frustrated we get when the internet doesn’t work or the page doesn’t load

******** taiko 太鼓 [だい] (n,adj-no) = a type of drums used in Noh.
quickly. We’re now used to that. I’m not saying this is bad. It would be silly, retrograde almost to long for the good old days to send a telegraph or send a pigeon. That’s bullshit. But it’s a fact that we have sped up a lot. That’s not necessary bad but not exactly good either. I think it’s nice to be able to enjoy arts like Noh that teaches you that man can live at another pace like another time. That applies to the performance but also applies to practice that you have to accept that there’s another human being lives at a different time and pace. One of the thing that Noh challenges people today is time, especially the first half of the play. It’s very slow. Oddly enough, you know, things speed up in technology and Noh slows down. Noh was much quicker in the past. A century ago, Noh was performed much faster than today, almost like a Kabuki kind of speed. It’s a myth that Noh is always slow. When our time was slower because we have no computer, but faster because we now only live half of the year with the computer. And teenagers could almost ready to have families already! Noh was faster at that time. And when our time is faster around us, Noh is much slower. Some people is enjoying it [Noh] but some are frustrated to respond with the speed of time that they experience. I don’t know exactly what to think. Sometimes I feel Noh is very very slow and sometimes I feel bored that the performance is not interesting in its jo, in its beginning. But I find it’s a good exercise to challenge myself if I can endure it. And then when things get faster in ha and kyū, I realise that I appreciate that speed because the slow start in the beginning. If I didn’t have that [slow jo], I wouldn’t have enjoyed the speed that much. But it is painful sometimes. It might be frustrated to go through that beginning. Maybe some people will not admit it that they fall asleep in the first half. Because it feels natural to fall asleep then. So Noh is not something that you can enjoy like film or Hollywood films in particular or drama that you can go to entertain yourself, right? But it pays to see Noh. And it pays to perform Noh as well. It’s physically demanding. It’s straining you feet and your voice. It’s a torture for both onstage and offstage, but perhaps we need that torture.
Consent Form

CHOREOGRAPHING TIME - INTERVIEW PART 1

Researcher's names: Ms Helen Herbertson (Responsible Researcher) and Ms Nareeporn Vachananda (Student Researcher)

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep;

2. I agree that the researchers may use my contributions as described in the plain language statement;

3. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the student researcher;

4. I understand that my participation in this research project will involve:
   a. Watching a solo improvisation performed by the Student Researcher (Nareeporn Vachananda).
   b. Being interviewed about my experience of the improvisation.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that:

5. This project is for the purposes of research and the possible effects of participating in the research project have been explained to my satisfaction;

6. I am free to withdraw from this study at any point. Further, I am free to withdraw any of my contributions to the project at any time;

7. While every precaution will be taken to protect my identity if I choose to remain anonymous or be referred to by a pseudonym, the small numbers in this project may mean that I could be identified;

8. The confidentiality of any personal information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

HREC: 090001  ETHICS APPLICATION ID: 1544594.1  DATE: 21 June 2015
9. My contributions to this project will appear in the Student Researcher’s dissertation;

10. Outcomes of this research may be published in other forms such as journal articles or conference papers and my contributions will be acknowledged appropriately;

In the dissertation and any work arising from this research project, I would like to (please circle):

- Be identified with my name
- OR
- Be referred to by a pseudonym
- OR
- Remain anonymous as far as this is possible

**Please tick:**

- I consent to my contribution to the project being audio-taped  [✓] yes  [ ] no
- I consent to my contribution to the project being video-taped  [✓] yes  [ ] no
- I wish to be invited to any public performance emerging from this project  [✓] yes  [ ] no
- I wish to receive a copy of the Student Researcher’s dissertation  [✓] yes  [ ] no

Name of participant: [Handwritten name]

Participant signature: [Handwritten signature]  Date: [Handwritten date]
Consent Form

CHOREOGRAPHING TIME - INTERVIEW PART 1

Researcher's names: Ms Helen Herbertson (Responsible Researcher) and Ms Nareeporn Vachananda (Student Researcher)

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- I consent to my contribution to the project being video-taped  [✓] yes □ no
- I wish to be invited to any public performance emerging from this project  [✓] yes □ no
- I wish to receive a copy of the Student Researcher's dissertation  [✓] yes □ no
- I wish to receive a short summary report of the Student Researcher's dissertation  [✓] yes □ no

Name of participant: Joanne Light

Participant signature: [Signature]

Date: 3/9/15
同意書

CHOREOGRAPHING TIME（時の振付）—インタビュー：パート2

研究者氏名： ヘレン・ハーバートソン（Helen Herbertson：研究責任者）
ナリーポーン・ヴァチャナンダ（Nareeporn Vachananda：学生研究者）

1. 私は、説明とともに保持できる文書での概要説明書を提供された、このプロジェクトに参加することに同意します。

2. 私が提供する情報を概要説明書に記載された内容で研究者が使用することに同意します。

3. 私は、署名、返還後の当同意書は学生研究者が保持するものであることを理解しています。

4. この研究プロジェクトへの参加は、能楽における私の経験に関するインタビューを伴うこと理解しています。

以下の内容について知られることを承認します。

5. 当プロジェクトは研究目的であり、私がこの研究に参加することで受ける可能性のある影響についての納得のゆく説明。

6. 私は、当研究のいかなる時点においても参加を取りやめることができ、私が当プロジェクトへ提供した内容は、その如何を問わず撤回することができる。

7. 提供する内容については、身元保護のために匿名または仮名を事前注意として要請することができ、このプロジェクトの少数の項目については身元を明示する可能性がある。

8. 私が提供する個人情報の機密性は、法的要件に即して保護されるものである。

9. 私が当プロジェクトに提供した内容は、学生研究者の論文に記述されるものである。

10. 当研究の成果は、学術雑誌掲載論文または学会発表論文として発表される可能性があり、その際には私の提供内容に関して適切な認知がされる。
当論文ならびに当研究プロジェクトから発生するすべての業績に対して、私は以下の要請をします。（該当する項目に○印をつけて下さい。）

個人名を記載する
または
仮名を記載する
または
出来る限り匿名で記載する

以下の項目にチェックマークを付けてください。

私の当プロジェクトに対する提供情報を録音することに同意します。 ☑はい ☐いいえ
私の当プロジェクトに対する提供情報をビデオ撮影することに同意します。 ☑はい ☐いいえ
当プロジェクトから派生する公演に招待されることを希望します。 ☑はい ☐いいえ
当学生研究者の論文のコピーを受けとることを希望します。 ☑はい ☐いいえ
当学生研究者の論文の要約報告書を受けとることを希望します。 ☑はい ☐いいえ

参加者氏名： 宇震通成
参加者署名： Michishige Udaka
日付：2015/12/7

研究対象者倫理委員会（HREC）: 090001 倫理申請 ID: 1544594.1 日付: 2015年6月21日
Consent Form

CHOREOGRAPHING TIME - INTERVIEW PART 2

Researcher's names: Ms Helen Herbertson (Responsible Researcher) and Ms Nareeporn Vachananda (Student Researcher)

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep;

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4. I understand that my participation in this research project will involve being interviewed about my experience of Noh theatre.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that:

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In the dissertation and any work arising from this research project, I would like to (please circle):

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- [ ] OR
- [ ] Be referred to by a pseudonym
- [ ] OR
- [ ] Remain anonymous as far as this is possible

Please tick:

- [ ] I consent to my contribution to the project being audio-taped
- [ ] I consent to my contribution to the project being video-taped
- [ ] I wish to be invited to any public performance emerging from this project
- [ ] I wish to receive a copy of the Student Researcher's dissertation
- [ ] I wish to receive a short summary report of the Student Researcher's dissertation

Name of participant: Ogawa Rebecca Tolee

Participant signature: Helen Rebecca Tolee Date: 19 December 2015
CONSENT FORM

CHOREOGRAPHING TIME - INTERVIEW PART 2

Researcher’s names: Ms Helen Herbertson (Responsible Researcher) and Ms Nareeporn Vachananda (Student Researcher)

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OR

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Please tick:

I consent to my contribution to the project being audio-taped □ yes □ no

I consent to my contribution to the project being video-taped □ yes □ no

I wish to be invited to any public performance emerging from this project □ yes □ no

I wish to receive a copy of the Student Researcher's dissertation □ yes □ no

I wish to receive a short summary report of the Student Researcher's dissertation □ yes □ no

Name of participant: Diego Pellecchia

Participant signature: ___________________________ Date: 22.12.16
Author/s: Vachananda, Nareeporn

Title: Choreographing time: temporality in choreography from the perspective of a solo improviser

Date: 2017

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/198040

File Description: Master research thesis

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