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Windows into Revolutionary Recovery:
Check-Ins, De-Roling, and Debriefing Practices for Rehearsal and Performance

By Kate Busselle and Hannah Fazio

In theatre, and especially in theatre education, there is an expectation that performers learn how to prepare for their rehearsals and performances. In other words, there is an expectation that performers "warm-up"—we encourage students and actors to warm-up before class. We often lead them in warm-ups before class or rehearsal. Warm-ups prove to be an accepted standard across the globe through Ian Maxwell, Mark Seton, and Marianna Szabó's "The Australian Actor's Wellbeing Study: A Preliminary Report," which found that "[a]n overwhelming majority of respondents—84%—reported that they regularly used a warm-up routine prior to performance; only 20 (2.6%) respondents reported that they did not (the balance did not respond to the question)."[1] While warm-ups are a given in professional and educational performance, check-ins and cool-downs often fail to appear unless physical activity such as dance or intensive movement necessitates them (and sometimes not even then). This leaves the responsibility of coping during and post-performance up to the actors to navigate. Maxwell, Seton, and Szabó's study finds that if actors do a ritual post-performance (about only 60% do) and if they do so because they had difficulty leaving a role behind (38.7% of them did), they

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[1] Maxwell, Ian, Mark Seton, and Marianna Szabó. "The Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study: A Preliminary Report." *About Performance* 13 (2015): 69-113.

tended to talk to family and friends, distract themselves with reading or television, exercise, or drink alcohol.[2] In this article, we suggest practices for check-ins, de-roling, and debriefing to help students and performers reengage and recover so that they can function most optimally in this period of high stress in which we live.

As two intimacy professionals and scholars, we merged our two workshops from the 2022 Mid-America Theatre Conference into one article of tools, games, and activities designed to support performers where we have noticed support has not always been a given. This article is geared toward educators in theatre but the ideas and practices could be applied more broadly to directors, intimacy professionals, and actors in professional or community settings. We offer tools for practitioners to identify when students may need a break and suggestions for what to do to reengage them afterward; we also offer closing practices to create a clear delineation between work and everyday life. Both the check-in and closing practices are particularly useful when working with heightened or charged content but can be useful when working with any play or devised work. The information and suggestions in this article are designed to help leaders in performance spaces respond to everyday stresses and ongoing traumas with the understanding that theatre can be therapeutic, but it is not therapy (unless you are a drama therapist).

We borrow from Donald Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory of the "good enough mother"[3] to suggest some practices for being "good enough" leaders, leaders that cultivate spaces of learning, responsibility, creativity, and clear communication. According to Winnicott, a good enough mother begins parenting by attending to her child's every need but then gradually decreases her responses so that her child learns to care for his own needs. The child comes to tolerate what he perceives as his mother's failure and develops coping mechanisms to carry him

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[2] Maxwell, Seton, and Szabó, 92–93.

[3] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971).

forward in life. By practicing check-ins and closing practices, we carve out time and space for

care so that participants can learn to tolerate failures (ours and theirs), stress, triggers,

imperfections, setbacks, and disappointments. By practicing good enough leadership, we support

participants' self-reflection and resiliency, which may lead to greater growth and creative risk-

taking in rehearsal, performance, and life.

In suggesting these check-ins and closing practices, we also draw from Tavia Nyong'o's

concept of the "good enough holding environment" for the staging of historical trauma without

re-enacting it. Nyong'o suggests a good enough holding environment understands that many

individuals have experienced different types of traumatic events and everyone has different

backgrounds, so a space cannot be completely safe for everyone all the time. A good enough

holding environment holds space for unsafety and trauma. He says:

> The concept of a holding environment may provide a more a robust alternative to the
> more popular contemporary concept of 'safe space' in so far as it is more direct and
> realistic about what is offered within it. As many commentators have pointed out, a
> totally safe space it is impossible to achieve and dangerous to promise. By contrast a
> holding environment is a basic requirement that all humans have even if the requirements
> for what makes a holding environment a holding environment will differ among
> individuals and across cultures. There is no such thing as a one size fits all holding
> environment, which is one reason why a holding environment can occasionally be,
> occasionally *should be*, unsafe for someone who enters it. What the good enough director
> does is attend to the state of the holding environment they are co-creating with the cast
> and crew, ensuring that the boundaries between 'play' and 'reality' (key concepts for
> Winnicott) are fostered rather than prematurely overloaded and shut down.[4]

Nyong'o discusses the good enough holding environment in the context of *We Are Proud to*

Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa,

From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884 - 1915 by Jackie Sibblies Drury.

Drury's excellent play attends to the boundaries between play and reality by staging a play

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[4] Tavia Nyong'o, "Does Staging Historical Trauma Re-Enact It?," in *Thinking through Theatre and Performance*, by Maaike Bleeker et al., Thinking through Theatre (London, UK ; Methuen Drama, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019), 205.

within a play about historical trauma that persists today under different disguises. Nyong'o says the play creates a good enough holding environment for historical trauma by acknowledging its own theatricality, unreality, and artifice after moments of staged trauma. This attending to delineations between play and reality allows the heightened content to not re-traumatize the audience.

We propose practices of good enough leadership in which we create specific time and space for play and cognitive processing throughout lessons and rehearsals. By introducing theatrical check-ins and closing practices (separate but flowing into and out of everyday happenings), we create space for participants to play, check in with themselves, respond to their own needs, and cope with failure. Gradually, participants learn to create that space for themselves. We support the implementation of check-in and closing practices with research from performance theory, drama therapy, psychology, and neuroscience.

Check-Ins

Do you stop lessons or rehearsals to hit reset? If one component of a lesson does not take, how do you adjust? How do you reengage when energy lags? Have you tried playing theatre games mid-lesson? It might be helpful according to neuroscience.

Psychologists have long recognized the importance of play in well-being and creative productivity. Winnicott says "It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative…Bound up with this is the fact that only in playing is communication possible."[5] Winnicott's theory, first published in *Playing and Reality* in 1953, has more recently been corroborated by neuroscience research which suggests that a relaxed, curious, playful mind

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[5] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 54.

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frame is essential to cognition, social engagement, and communication.[6] This means our treasure

chest of old theatre games may have distinct cognitive benefits.[7] According to the Polyvagal

Theory popularized by psychologist Stephen Porges, trauma and high stress can inhibit bodily

awareness and social engagement systems making it difficult to process new information,

respond spontaneously to incoming stimuli, and communicate with others.[8] That is to say, trauma

and stress can make education and performance difficult because these activities rely on

spontaneous processing and interpersonal communication. As leaders, our work becomes more

effective when our participants are in states to receive it. Possessing cursory knowledge about

trauma does not qualify us to practice therapy but it can make the work we have been trained to

do more effective. Practicing check-ins, introducing theatre games when energy seems "off" can

help participants get back into a state of play, which neuroscience shows to reengage neural

circuits that support social responses, learning, and creativity.[9]

      Understanding the effects of stress and trauma is more important now than it's ever been

as the pandemic has led many students and performers to experience traumatic events,

institutional trauma, or extreme stress, all of which can lead to long-lasting psychophysical shifts

that affect learning and performance. Being educators and/or performance-makers it is not our

job to diagnose or treat students— it is our job to educate and/or co-create a performance. At the

same time, stress and dysregulation can cause individuals to be less able to perform and less self-

aware (so they cannot as easily help themselves regulate). When the body is spending significant

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[6] Stephen Porges "Play as a Neural Exercise: Insights from the Polyvagal Theory," in Debra Pearce-McCall (ed.), *The Power of Play for Mind Brain Health,* (p. 3-7), https://mindgains.org/bonus/GAINS-The-Power-of-Play-for-Mind-Brain-Health.pdf.

[7] Porges, "Play as Neural Exercise: Insights from the Polyvagal Theory."

[8] Stephen W. Porges and Deb Dana, *Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory: The Emergence of Polyvagal-Informed Therapies*, First edition., The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2018).

[9] Stephen Porges "Play as a Neural Exercise: Insights from the Polyvagal Theory," (p. 3-7).

energy counteracting a perceived threat, cognitive faculties of interoception shut down.[10]

Interoception is the awareness of internal sensations or stimuli. Most people know

proprioception— the awareness of the body in space. Interoception is the awareness of the

internal happenings of the body. This is damaged by traumatic events and periods of high stress.

In extreme stress, we become disconnected from our body/minds, unable to sense our own

internal states. So, the recognition of stress cues is particularly helpful for group leaders, because

people under extreme duress often cannot recognize their stress for themselves. As leaders, we

can learn to identify the cues of extreme stress and dysregulation and offer theatre games that

might help a performer bring themselves back to a state of equilibrium (and get on with the

show!).

Below is a brief overview of psychology and neuroscience literature around stress and

trauma in order to provide justification and understanding for the practical check-in suggestions

in the next section.

Stressed States

We've all been there: You're in rehearsal and an actor seems "off." He seems irritable,

gets snippy with the director, and appears red-in-the-face angry when given notes or feedback.

Or we notice mid-rehearsal that another student seems "not herself." She seems very quiet,

dissociated, and disconnected from the work and the rest of the group.

Through a trauma-informed lens, we might recognize these two seemingly antithetic

states as different manifestations of a post-traumatic stress response.[11] The first is called

hyperarousal, characterized by the overactivation of the sympathetic nervous system resulting in

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[10] David Emerson and Jennifer West PhD, *Trauma-Sensitive Yoga in Therapy: Bringing the Body into Treatment*, Illustrated edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015).

[11] Stephen W. Porges and Deb Dana, *Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory: The Emergence of Polyvagal-Informed Therapies*.

increased heart and breath rates and feelings of anxiety, irritability, chaos, and overwhelm. Many are familiar with these mechanisms as the fight or flight response— the body gears up to address the perceived threat by combating or getting away from it. On the other side of the stress-response spectrum is a state called hypoarousal, characterized by the excessive engagement of the parasympathetic nervous system resulting in decreased heart and breath rates and feelings of depression, lethargy, and numbness. Many are familiar with these mechanisms as the freeze response— the body shuts down to avoid confrontation with and/or protect itself from a perceived threat. In states of hyper and hypo arousal, no new learning can take place and the person experiencing dysregulation may unintentionally hurt or offend people around them by either lashing out or disengaging. Both hyper and hypo arousal inhibit a human's ability to access higher-level cognitive faculties needed for effective information processing and communication.

The presentations of hyperarousal and hypoarousal exist along a spectrum. Some individuals experience traumatic events like homelessness, natural disasters, or sexual assault which leave them feeling shocked and helpless.[12] They may have post-traumatic stress and their states of hyperarousal and hypoarousal may be extreme and long-lasting. Other individuals experience extremely stressful events like bad breakups, job loss, or moving which are upsetting but still allow for some personal agency and movement within the situation. They may have high levels of stress and their states of hyperarousal and hypoarousal may be more subtle and short-lived. Even individuals who experience the same traumatic event may develop different degrees of stress and PTSD.[13] As facilitators, learning to recognize cues of hyperarousal and hypoarousal

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[12] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence— From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror,* Second Edition, (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

[13] Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma,* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

in their varying degrees may help lower our stress levels because it might help us empower

stressed and distracted participants to come into play so that they can then return to work

refreshed. It would also be unwise to assume that every individual who is red in the face has

undergone some trauma. Check-in practices can be useful for any student needing a pick-me-up

or a cool down.

Windows of Tolerance

The state of equilibrium where one can process information and act effectively has been

described as the *window of tolerance.* Originally described by Dan Siegel in his book *The*

Developing Mind, a window of tolerance is the psychophysical state in which someone can

process information and behave with balance and effectiveness.[14] This is the window between

two dysregulated nervous system states (hyperarousal and hypoarousal). While those states are

characterized by chaos and rigidity respectively, the window of tolerance is a state in which a

person can effectively adapt to given and shifting internal and external environmental

circumstances. Within the window of tolerance, someone can access the brain's faculties of

communication and creativity because the body is not expending a bunch of energy in

hyperarousal or hypoarousal. Someone working within their window of tolerance can take notes,

ask questions, respond to feedback, and think of creative solutions to problems that present

themselves in the rehearsal room. The window of tolerance is the physical, mental, and

emotional state in which creative, collaborative work is possible.

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[14] Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: Toward a Neurobiology of Interpersonal Experience,* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999).

As a check-in practice, maybe introduce a theatre game to help students regulate themselves.

Below are some suggestions:

Hyperarousal

Games to bring the energy down, grounding exercises

- Columbian Hypnosis from Boal to focus

- Mirroring for focus and concentration

- Meditative counting as a group where no one says the same number at the same time and everyone speaks at least once

- Object Visualization from Viola Spolin

- Extended Sound from Viola Spolin

Hypoarousal

Games to bring the energy up, enlivening exercises

- Sun Salutations

- Shake-down

- Zip-zap-zop

- Person-to-Person from Boal

- Ships and Sailors

- Run to Center from Viewpoints

De-roling and Debriefing in Theatre

      While the previous section focuses on ways to recalibrate and check in with students in the active processes of learning and stress management, this section will examine ways to step away from manifestations of character that could be stressful on the body, psyche, or emotions of the actor creating the character. As theatre explores moments where characters experience

extreme states of emotion and (often) showcase the worst (or best) days of a character's life, the

actors who bring these stories to the stage need to implement tools to leave this work in the

rehearsal room or on the stage. To counteract the adverse effects of heightened emotional states

in creating character, methods of de-roling and debriefing can be utilized.

In theatre, there have been several calls for a method of de-roling and theorizing what de-

roling could be. Actor and psychoanalyst Janice Rule was the one of the earliest to discuss the

impact of a role on an actor in 1973 when the husband of a client she had began to behave like

his abusive character, but was unaware that he was doing so. After the show closed, he returned

to his regular, day-to-day self.[15] Theatre scholar Suzanne Burgoyne (Dieckman) begins the

inquiry into de-roling practices in "A Crucible for Actors: Questions of Directorial Ethics." In

this article, Burgoyne reflects the techniques she used to immerse the actors into their characters

for a production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, and how the processes used inadvertently

harmed her actors in the process. From this experience, she embarked on a journey to have a

better understanding of how to ethically support actors with difficult roles by studying

psychodrama. Burgoyne also is the first to directly link debriefing and de-roling in theatre

scholarship:

> Psychodrama includes methods for deroling participants and for providing some
> resolution to traumatic experiences. Ongoing discussion with psychodrama colleagues
> also suggests that keeping student actors in character rather than bringing them into direct
> work on personal analogies may provide a psychological cushion. Interdisciplinary
> dialogue on the ethics of actor training could help develop ways of working which are
> psychologically sound, as well as artistically effective.[16]

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[15] Janice Rule, "The Actor's Identity Crises: Postanalytic Reflections of an Actress.," *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 2, no. 1 (1973): 51–76.

[16] Suzanne Burgoyne Dieckman, "A Crucible for Actors: Questions of Directorial Ethics," *Theatre Topics* 1, no. 1 (1991): 7, https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2010.0006.

Building on her theory, Burgoyne partnered with psychologist Karen Poulin and theatre student Ashley Rearden to do a qualitative study of the impact of acting on student actors. Their study concluded that boundary management played an important role in creating good practices for actor self-care:

> Although actors' skills at handling boundaries may evolve over time—and some of our interviewees describe individually developed strategies for maintaining boundaries—it seems to us preferable for theatre educators to help actors discover how to handle boundaries rather than to ignore the problems and let students flounder.[17]

Burgoyne contributed greatly to the development of de-roling theory, and this study validated the need for methods to assist actors in transitioning out of character.[18]

De-roling: The Individual Methods

One de-roling method to be presented in theatre scholarship comes from Susana Bloch, the creator of Alba Emoting technique. In her article "Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions," Bloch offers a brief description of her "step-out" technique:

> In order to avoid what I call 'emotional hangovers,' we developed a 'step-out' technique which consists essentially in ending each emotional reproduction by at least three slow, regular, and deep, full breathing cycles followed by a total relaxation of the facial muscles and a change in posture. Such a procedure brings the person back to a 'neutral' state. This sort of 'reset' of the emotional arousal will take more or less time, depending on the degree of activation attained by the emotional control system.[19]

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[17] Suzanne Burgoyne, Karen Poulin, and Ashley Rearden, "The Impact of Acting on Student Actors: Boundary Blurring, Growth, and Emotional Distress," *Theatre Topics* 9, no. 2 (September 1, 1999): 170–71, https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.1999.0011.

[18] For more on the lineage and history of de-roling and debriefing practices, see Busselle's "De-Roling and Debriefing: Essential Aftercare for Educational Theatre," *Theatre Topics*, Volume 31, Number 2, July 2021, pp. 129-135.

[19] Susana Bloch, "Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions," *Theatre Topics* 3, no. 2 (1993): 128, https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2010.0017.

Bloch's technique is ritualistic in nature and its goal is to achieve a neutral state. In other words,

Bloch's "step-out" technique is a purgation of the emotional state that the actors just experienced

so they can transition back to stasis—a form of catharsis.

Several individual de-roling techniques have been proposed by drama therapists Sally

Bailey and Paige Dickinson in their article "The Importance of Safely De-Roling." Many of the

methodologies suggested in this article enforce the idea that actors are not the characters they

play; they are additional layers that an actor puts on, like wearing a coat made of the character.

Unlike many of the inside-out acting approaches popular in the United States, these strategies

reinforce the idea of an outside-in acting approach. The first methodology they suggest is

reclaiming the name of the actor once rehearsal or the performance has ended:

> For instance, if an actor named Sandra Miller is playing Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, she can say, 'I am no longer Blanche! I am Sandra Miller!' To make it more effective, the actor can throw the character off while saying, 'I am taking off Blanche and leaving her here! I am now back to being myself! I am Sandra Miller!'[20]

This method encourages the actor to create a clean break from the character they are portraying.

Should this declaration not be enough for the separation, Bailey and Dickinson suggest

additional steps such as "think[ing] of a number of ways in which she is different from the

character she is playing."[21] By listing out how the actor is different from the character, the actor

then reinforces for themselves that while the actor may be pulling truthful elements from their

acting to create the character, they are not fully represented in that character.

Another method that Bailey and Dickinson suggest is treating the character as a tactile

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[20] Sally Bailey and Paige Dickinson, "The Importance of Safely De-Roling," *Methods: A Journal of Acting Pedagogy* 2 (2016): 13.
[21] Bailey and Dickinson, 13.

layer, like a second skin. Actors can physically shake off the character with vocalizations, unzip the character layer and step out of it, or peel the character off with as much or as little resistance as necessary.[22] One critical element of these processes is that the actor leaves the character layer in the rehearsal space and does not take the layer home with them, but instead "leave it in the theater or classroom space. This is where it is supposed to be until it is brought to life in the next rehearsal or performance."[23] By leaving the "second skin" of the character in the theatre, the actor leaves all associated emotions, feelings, and beliefs of the character in the theatre rather than taking the emotional baggage home with them.

De-roling: The Partner Method

This iteration of a Partner Method of de-roling comes from our background in intimacy work.[24] The Partner Method helps to navigate moments of heightened content where the actor's brain understands that the performance, rehearsal, or classroom exercise with the scene partner was not real, but the body has activated emotional hangover in response to the actor's work with the "magic if" (such as fear, lust, love, or heartbreak) that may make it difficult for the actors to continue forward as if their relationship has remained unchanged offstage. In this methodology, the two actors re-introduce themselves to each other after the rehearsal or performance has concluded before they leave, preferably outside of the rehearsal or performance space. If the actors would like to engage in physical contact to assist in reinforcing this reintroduction, a handshake or hug has been suggested based on the actors' boundaries. We encourage the actors to have a debriefing session to discuss what went well, what could have gone better, and what

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[22] Bailey and Dickinson, 13–14.
[23] Bailey and Dickinson, 14.
[24] For more on our approach to theatrical intimacy pedagogy, see Heartland Intimacy Design and Training, https://www.heartlandintimacydesign.com.

adjustments (if any) need to be made for the next rehearsal or performance. The final step of this process is for them to look at each other and remind each other that the emotions they were experiencing in rehearsal were part of their acting and none of what they experienced was real. This last step is particularly crucial especially for actors who are experiencing physiological responses to the emotional journey of their characters to help reinforce the barrier between acting and reality.

De-roling and Debriefing: The Group Methods

As theatre artists work in collaboration, many versions of de-roling and debriefing have been developed for group and collective settings. In the group methods, there is often an individual functioning as the facilitator encouraging the process to occur. Sally Bailey and Paige Dickinson advocate for a variety of group de-roling strategies such as the "Character Washing Machine." In this method, "Cast members line up facing each other in two lines to create the walls of the machine and engage in 'cleaning' actions and sounds similar to those heard in a car wash. Each actor takes a turn going through the machine to have his character washed off."[25] Again, the methods suggested by Bailey and Dickinson reinforce the external removal of a role, but this form is a collaborative and playful process.

Theatre practitioner and scholar Artemis Preeshl conducted the only mixed methods qualitative and quantitative study on the impact of reflection post-rehearsal through work on a production of Michel Tremblay's play *Albertine in Five Times*. Preeshl employed multiple strategies of reflection throughout the rehearsal process including self-journaling, a daily check-in as an ensemble, and writing letters to self. In her study, Preeshl found that the most effective form of processing self-reflection was through a group check-in after rehearsal each night:

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[25] Bailey and Dickinson, 14.

The actresses perceived that bonding experience through the daily verbal check-in circle increased focus, allowed for catharsis, and/or enhanced the experience of the cast as an ensemble. In this pilot study, self-reflection was perceived as impactful and informative in personalization and characterization in rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*.[26]

This addition of the reflective process gave these actors the tools to have a cathartic release and transition from character back to actor.

De-Roling and De-Briefing: The Space Methods

An indirect method of de-roling and debriefing proposed by Bailey and Dickinson is to use the boundaries of the performance space to assist in the de-roling process. They suggest that having separate performance space and feedback spaces are vital to the separation between character and actor:

> When rehearsing in a theatre, while actors are in character, they are onstage. But when the director wants to give notes, the actors need to go back to themselves in order to take in and process the notes…This makes the stage space the only place where the actors are in character.[27]

This separation encourages the boundaries of the character's world in which they play and the actor's world in which they work on their technique and craft. In addition, this separation creates an environment in which a dialogue between actors, artists, directors, and other collaborators can occur as they are firmly in the "production" and "process" side of the construction of a play instead of living within the world of the play itself. This can also be reinforced by linguistic choices of the director when speaking to the actor or character:

> When the actor is on stage, the director can address him or her by the character's name, but when the actor is off stage, the director should use the actor's actual name. This

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[26] Artemis Preeshl, "Past Meets Future in the Present: Self-Reflection as a Rehearsal Method in Albertine in Five Times," ed. Zoe Strecker, *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 3, no. 1 (September 28, 2016): 12, https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1236435.

[27] Bailey and Dickinson, "The Importance of Safely De-Roling," 11.

creates another clear separation for the actor between "being in character" and 'being myself.'[28]

This distinction of clearly separating actor technique from character behavior is vital for intimacy work as the *actors* are not enacting truthful intimacy with each other; *actors* are following the choreography given to them. Their *characters* are enacting truthful intimacy with each other, and this distinction is crucial to make for burgeoning theatre artists.

De-roling: The Audience[29]

Suzanne Burgoyne's work with de-roling principles have not concluded with her writings in the 1990s–they continue to this day through her work with the Center for Applied Theatre and Drama Research (CATDR). One additional form of de-roling that she introduced was through the work of the performance branch of CATDR—the Interactive Theatre Troupe (ITT). In these Forum Theatre performances, actors perform a scene for the audience in which something problematic is said by one of the characters and a breakdown in conversation occurs (these range from issues around gender, freedom of religion, body image, and delivering news to a patient regarding a breast cancer diagnosis). The facilitator invites the audience to ask questions of the *characters* as to why they said or did certain things or how their background may inform the choices that *character* made in the scene. The facilitator then restarts the scene and invites audience members to yell "Stop!" and try out interventions to create solutions to the problems presented in the scene. After the interventions have completed, the facilitator (usually Burgoyne) will invite the *actors* to de-role in front of the audience by stating their real name, the character's name that they portrayed, and giving some information about the real person (for example, their

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[28] Bailey and Dickinson, 11.

[29] The practices discussed in this section were observed by Busselle during her time as a doctoral student at the University of Missouri, where Burgoyne was a faculty member and where the Center for Applied Theatre and Drama Research is based.

major, and what year they are in school). In conversations with Burgoyne about this practice, this was to help break the impression that these actors *were* the characters they were portraying for the audience. Until she implemented this practice, actors were seen at parties on the weekends and were treated differently by those who witnessed these performances as the audience could not distinguish the difference between the actor and the character. This practice attempts to distinguish that the actors in these short performances are *not* the characters they play, not just for the actors, but for the audiences that witness their performances.

This practice has also been implemented in more traditional theatrical forms prior to a talkback. In 2016, the University of Missouri produced *Good Kids* by Naomi Iizuka (directed by Carrie Winship) in which the actors de-roled in front of the audience as the talkback began. This was particularly helpful for the actors as it helped them feel that there was separation from their characters that the audience could visibly see, especially for those whose characters perpetrate sexual violence or are complicit in sexual violence within the play.[30]

Conclusion

Our hope with this article is to provide a wide array of tools to assist actors (student or professional) in being even more engaged in the art that is being made in healthier, more responsible ways. Just as the mindfulness and care has been taken to implement and encourage warmup processes for actors, the same attention must be paid to strategies to reengage and revitalize a group while working in class or rehearsal and to give actors the tools they sorely need to depart from these characters after the rehearsal or performance has concluded. As with

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[30] For more on this production, see Busselle's "When the Problem Is Personal: Working on Naomi Iizuka's Good Kids as a Sexual Assault Survivor." *Fight Master: The Journal of the Society of American Fight Masters* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 9–13.

any acting technique, none of these methods are one-size-fits-all. Our hope is that some of these methods make their way into your pedagogical tool kit to provide a "good enough" array of exercises and techniques for a variety of circumstances in hopes that even if the tool may not benefit every student in that moment, the tool is still offered as it may be used later when it may be beneficial. As you transition out of the end of our article, we encourage you to examine if you have added any tension to your body. Are you clenching your jaw? What adjustments do you need to make to find comfort or stasis? Take a moment to reflect. What are your major takeaways from this article? What might you implement into your practice next time you read an article?

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