

**UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER**

FACULTY OF ARTS

**The Acting Text, The Dancing Voice,  
The Singing Body**

*Towards a model of Somaesthetic Performance Analysis for Musical Theatre*

BENJAMIN JONATHAN MACPHERSON

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis offers a model for analysing live musical theatre performance through a focus on the embodied relationship between the actors and the audience. It presents a framework for analysing the bodily experience of performance, and the role of corporeality in understanding musical theatre. Throughout the study, this framework is developed by exploring aspects of performance studies and reception theory, along with related cognitive and neuro-biological research in support of such a position. The model is then tested through an examination of three contrasting musical theatre works in performance, analysing specific elements of the framework within – and against – conventional readings of embodiment, the actor/character duality, dance and movement, music and the singing voice. In conclusion this thesis finds that through a focus on the bodily relationship between actors and audience in live musical theatre performance, the many and varied theoretical approaches commonly taken to investigating such an interdisciplinary form can be set in discourse with one another, enhancing, challenging or generating alternative approaches to the way live musical theatre may be analysed.

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## STYLISTIC NOTE

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Throughout this thesis I refer to a number of musical theatre play scripts. Where these excerpts are cited, dialogue is in standard lower case type, and lyrics are capitalised. Any stage directions cited from play scripts are italicised in lower case type.

## INTRODUCTION

### How do you solve a problem like performance?

Bit by bit, putting it together [...] Small amounts, adding up to make a work of art.  
(‘Putting it Together’, *Sunday in the Park with George*, 1984)

Live musical theatre performance is an extremely complex event, made up of multiple elements which combine to create the ‘experience’ of a production or performance. In discussing its functions and mechanisms, Aaron Frankel has praised musical theatre as particularly worthy of attention: ‘theatre is [...] actor and audience addressing and reflecting each other. Musical theatre – spinner of words, dance, acting and song – is now its most alive storyteller’ (2000, p. 117). Frankel’s description of musical theatre, though perhaps subjective in its attribution, is a pertinent starting point to consider the complexities of the form and how these might be analysed academically.<sup>1</sup>

Developing Frankel’s definition, musical theatre – experienced through the reciprocal relationship between live actors and audience – is made up of dialogue, lyrics, and music, within a conceptual or literary narrative. In performance, musical theatre negotiates these elements through speech, song, and physical movement (musical staging and dance), enacted within a temporally, spatially, and culturally specific context. The presentation or conception of the various performative elements (including dance, set design and lighting) may not be prescribed explicitly in the script or musical score, and may result from a directorial, choreographic or design-based aesthetic or intention. Through the negotiation of this disparate set of properties, musical theatre is a good example of an interdisciplinary art form; or exemplar of how a multiplicity of elements is inherent in the creation and consumption of a work of art. As the sculptor George sings in Act Two of the Stephen Sondheim/James Lapine musical *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), art-works are most often products with multiple elements which ‘add up’ to make ‘the work’ suitable for consumption as an autonomous entity (Sondheim & Shepard, 1984).

The ways in which these disparate elements work together and are negotiated in live performance have a huge impact on the way a given work or production is received. This thesis seeks to explore the interplay of these elements in live musical theatre performance, examining how they may be understood in practice, and how

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘musical theatre’ is used here with specific reference to the popular, commercial Broadway (and West End) musical in its various forms, rather than to broader genres including opera and its sub-sets, vaudevillian variety entertainments, ballet, oratorio and so on. As a commercial, popular and cultural artefact ‘musical theatre’ here might traditionally invoke iconographic associations with chorus lines of dancing girls, yellow brick roads, or falling chandeliers in its usage.

they might be analysed academically. The primary objective is to develop a framework for analysing the experience of live musical theatre performance as a whole, acknowledging and examining all elements inherent in Frankel's description above. To proceed with this investigation, three fundamental questions need answering: Why examine the experience of live musical theatre performance? Why is it so complex to analyse? What situation exists in current analysis to warrant such an investigation?

### **I. Why examine the experience of live musical theatre performance?**

There are two specific reasons why this subject is worthy of exploration. The first reason concerns the complicated and at times pejorative view of commercial musical theatre in academic scholarship. The second reason is more conceptual, relating to the difficulty in analysing musical theatre as a multifaceted form, and the pursuit of an inclusive means of articulating its various properties in performance. A brief outline of these areas will set a specific context for this investigation.

Despite – or perhaps due to – its commercial appeal as a popular entertainment, certain critics, cultural theorists, and even theatre practitioners, have treated musical theatre disparagingly. Playwright Albert Innaurato dismissed early twentieth century musical comedy as 'ferocious fluff', as light-hearted populist kitsch (cited in S. Miller, 2007, p. 10). Similarly, a judgmental approach to theatre-as-art was seen in the years following World War II, when the cross-fertilisation of Broadway and Hollywood courted great cultural influence in America. Discussing the academic study of film musicals in 1947, Alexander Frazier lamented 'the substitution of an interest in "literary" and costume pictures for one in [...] musicals?' [sic] (1947, p. 89). Implicit in his comment is the seeming attribution of legitimacy to 'literary' theatre, which John Keenan has wryly suggested was the only form of theatre American college students were allowed to perceive as their cultural heritage (1963, p. 524).

However, such a perspective on popular musical theatre as somehow 'illegitimate' – as populist entertainment – has been open to challenge. Drawing on cultural theorists Dwight MacDonald (1983) and Clement Greenberg (1973), the pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman correctly suggests that popular art such as the musical, and its commercial success, deserves to be recognised – not in terms of a hierarchy of legitimacy and acceptance (or alleged lack thereof) – but in terms of its own validity; its socio-cultural and political status as 'serving other needs of life' (2000, p. 49). Arguing for the (re)validation of popular art, Shusterman continues: 'Intellectualist critics typically fail to recognize the multilayered and nuanced meanings

of popular art' (2000, p. 55). It is such multilayered nuances within popular musical theatre that concern scholars who are studying the form.

Along with Frankel, a growing group of researchers and practitioners laud musical theatre for its sophistication and complexity in writing and performance. Richard Andrews suggests that the form has 'the power to touch more people than any other' through its combination of words, music, dance, performance style and popular appeal (1997, p. 11). Likewise, in his book *Strike Up The Band: A New History of Musical Theatre* (2007), Scott Miller celebrates the 'unapologetic emotionalism' that results from the inclusion of song and dance in the aesthetic of the form, at a time when socio-cultural influences have 'civilised full-bodied emotions out of people' (p. 1). This thesis aims to contribute to the continuum of ever expanding musical theatre scholarship and implicitly give voice to these somewhat universalising claims.

An early example of the academic study of musical theatre can be seen in Cecil Smith's landmark book from 1950, *Musical Comedy in America*.<sup>2</sup> Since Smith's book, musical theatre scholarship has slowly increased to become an established and international field of study, with recent notable works including Bruce Kirlé's *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process* (2006) and Raymond Knapp's two part study of *The American Musical* (2005, 2006). Work in this field is now so active that the form has its own academic forum in the international journal *Studies in Musical Theatre* (First Issue: 2007), which is accompanied by the annual international conference series 'Song, Stage and Screen' (established 2006). Considering such areas as social analyses, structural critiques, musicological perspectives, historical discourse, and performer training, such scholarship recognises the complexities of musical theatre in all its incarnations. In doing so, research into musical theatre and its affiliated art forms has challenged the undercurrent of criticism and dismissal seen above. As Shusterman has noted, popular art forms can be multilayered and nuanced, and musical theatre is a notable exemplar of such complexities. Addressing the form as a complex plurality of elements will provide an answer to the second question posed above: why is musical theatre performance so difficult to analyse?

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<sup>2</sup> An informative study of Smith's book was presented by Larry Stempel at the 'American Musical Theater/ Song Stage and Screen III' conference, New York, April 2 – 5, 2008. In his paper 'The First History of the American Musical: Text, Context, Subtext' (2008), Stempel suggests that Smith's study grew in part from J.R Isaacs and Rosamond Gilder's attempts to elevate musical comedy to 'musical theatre' in their editorials for *Theatre Arts Magazine* during the 1940s. This claim seems accurate, for the tone of Gilder's 1943 editorial 'Spring Pleasures and Awards: Broadway in Review' (pp. 329-341) critically assessed the musical theatre offerings seen that year in a more academic rather than journalistic manner.

## 2. Why is musical theatre performance so complex to analyse?

Considering the complexities of the form, it is useful to consider Frankel's description of musical theatre as a 'spinner of words, dance, acting and song' (2000, p. 117). This acknowledgement of inter-disciplinarity provides a basis upon which to examine positions and perspectives from a range of disciplines related to theatre, music, performance and reception, and to borrow from these in the process of developing a conceptual framework.

First, drawing on contemporary performance theory to articulate such inter-disciplinarity, Marvin Carlson's description of live theatre performance as 'dialogic' is particularly applicable when thinking about musical theatre. With specific reference to experimental contemporary theatre, Carlson's essay 'Theatre and Dialogism' (1992) borrows from the formalist theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, using his idea of 'dialogism' as a foundation to discuss the interrelationship of elements at play in performance. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Bakhtin defined a dialogic work as being 'constructed not as a whole of a single consciousness [...] but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses' (1981, p. 324). Equating Bakhtin's 'consciousnesses' with the many elements at play in theatre, Carlson's use of the term to articulate the complexity of performance is appropriate.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps via its combination of music, language, dance, spectacle, comedy or tragedy, and often self-referentialism or self-reflexivity, musical theatre is a paradigmatic example of dialogism in theatre. In fact, it is this dialogic interplay in the form that proves so provocative to explore. The way in which dialogic elements interact and operate in musical theatre performance has been the subject of a fair body of scholarship over the past one hundred years, and whilst current scholarly perspectives will be assessed in detail in the first two chapters of this thesis, a brief outline here will set a context. Broadly, current approaches in musical theatre analysis might be explored through two lenses: the dialogic elements of the form in structure and presentation, and the subsequent effectual properties of such dialogisms in performance.

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<sup>3</sup> *Dialogism*, and its opposite term *monologism*, are used by Bakhtin with primary reference to the literary novel. Notably, Bakhtin saw theatrical drama as largely *monologic*, or made of up of one element: 'the rejoinders in a dramatic dialogue [...] do not make it multi-levelled' (1988, p. 17). Nevertheless, contemporary theorists have used dialogic perspectives to highlight the openness and complexity of live performance, and the interplay of the 'consciousnesses' involved. In this sense, there is a transferable connection between *dialogism* and the tenets of post-structuralism, which acknowledge and explore the multiplicity of elements and signs within a given work (see for instance the post-structural reading of Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author', 1977a). In essence, application of the term can be broadened further than linguistic and structural polarities, to represent the multiplicity of cultural, material, linguistic and other forces that create meaning. As John Fielder has noted, 'In other words, there are no authoritatively singular meanings', a claim which has particular resonance for the analysis of theatrical performance (1992).

### *The dialogisms of musical theatre structures*

Whilst not academically rigorous in their theorising, early practitioners and creators of musical theatre held strong opinions about how various elements of the form should interact. Jerome Kern, composer of *Show Boat* (1927) and many of the musical productions that played at the Princess Theatre between 1915 – 1920, held the opinion that ‘musical numbers should carry on the action of the play’ (cited in Bordman, 1980, p. 149). Suggesting a practical realisation of this theory is his own work, Richard Rodgers subjectively claimed that *Oklahoma!* (1943) was a work ‘created by many that gave the impression of having been created by one’ (1976, p. 227). Such perspectives on the dialogisms in musical theatre are among those that champion the ideal of ‘integration’: where all elements are held to blend seamlessly together in performance. In further exploration of musical theatre’s dialogic properties, recent scholarship has challenged claims to such performative or structural integration, as demonstrated in Dan Rebellato’s critique of the ‘politics of integration’ (“No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We’: *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Politics of the Integrated Musical’ (2009, pp. 61-73)); Andrea Most’s book *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (2004, pp. 12-31); D.A. Miller’s essay *Place for Us* (1998, pp. 1-6); and notably Scott McMillin’s book *The Musical As Drama* (2006).

McMillin’s discussion – which will be referred to consistently throughout this thesis – is particularly successful in re-casting the way the dialogisms of musical theatre are theorised, exposing the varying properties of the form. His exploration of musical theatre divides its dialogic properties into two primary groupings in performance: ‘book time’ and ‘lyric time’ (2006, p. 6). ‘Book time’ is concerned with the cause-and-effect progression of the plot, whilst ‘lyric time’ continually seeks to subvert or interrupt it, in favour of developing a musical or lyrical idea through repetition or stasis in moments of song (and dance) (2006, p. 9). The result is a framework which McMillin designs by setting these two ‘orders of time’ against each other dialogically. For him, musical theatre is dialogic in this sense on the basis of disjunctive relationships between the ‘book’ and the songs (which rupture the temporal progression of the plot). In this sense, McMillin argues that musical theatre is not ‘integrated’, but ‘coherent’: ‘things stick together, different things, without losing their difference’ (2006, p. 209). From this perspective, the dialogic properties of structural and performative elements are acknowledged and embraced rather than ‘integrated’. As will be developed in the next chapter, this thesis assumes the post-structural position of dialogic ‘coherence’ rather than ‘integration’ with regard to the interplay of elements in musical theatre.

Yet, whichever perspective one might take, the above summary of McMillin's analysis further serves to highlight some of the complexities at play in musical theatre performance. McMillin's structural poetics of the form focuses on the interaction of textual and musical 'consciousnesses' as they happen in performance. Implicit in attempting to map such interaction is a sense of immediacy and real-time negotiation between these two 'orders of time'. Relating the textual construction of a work to its function in performance highlights another facet of its dialogic construction: the fact it is performed live. There are two broad concerns which demonstrate the problems of assessing live musical theatre performance: the relationship between the written dialogic text of the script and musical score, and the relationship between the actors who perform, and the audience who receive the performance. These two areas are inextricably linked but for the purposes of this research might be delineated in discussion.

*Page to stage: Celebrating the unfinished*

With specific focus on popular musical theatre, Bruce Kirle (2006) suggests that the written elements of the musical are perpetually unfinished, only complete in the moment of their performance. Such a perspective on the relationship of the written theatre text to its live activation is articulated succinctly by performance theorist John Rouse in his article 'Textuality and Authority in Theater and Drama: Some Contemporary Possibilities' (1992). Notably, he draws on Roland Barthes' post-structural distinction between the 'work' and 'text' to explore how the written elements of theatre translate in performance. In Barthes' terms, a written text created for performance is termed 'the work': the literary, fixed materiality of the thing created, 'occupying a part of the space of books (in a library, for example)' (1977b, pp. 156-157). Only when this work is 'experienced [...] in an activity of production' does it become a 'text' imbued with meaning (1977b, p. 156). A 'work' is closed, whilst a 'text' is an 'open' *plurality* of co-existent meanings. Every 'text' then is by default an *inter-text* – which is to say – dialogic (1977b, pp. 159-160). Carlson also agrees that the written element of any theatrical performance is 'a text created with performance in mind', suggesting that its activation by performers 'introduces a new kind of openness into that [written] text' which allows the audience to experience it, or in Kirle's terms, to 'complete' it (Carlson, 1992, p. 318; Kirle, 2006).

Developing these terms used by Barthes and Carlson, this conceptualisation of the work-to-text relationship allows this research to distinguish between a discussion of the written and performed elements using the terms 'dramatic work' and

'performance text'. For Kirle (2006), the means by which the 'performance text' opens up and finishes the 'dramatic work' relates directly to the changing influence of 'cultural moments' on meaning and experience: the socio-cultural impact of external factors on the production and reception of musical theatre in performance (p. 20).<sup>4</sup> As an example of this, Kirle discusses the character of Lois Lane in *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948). In the 1940s she was portrayed as a dizzy, innocent, somewhat hapless blonde chorus girl. Today, would her character be read as quite so naïve by either performers or audiences? (2006, p. 13). Therefore, cultural mediation is not only a factor in how a work is read theoretically, but also how meaning is created by directors, actors, and audiences at a given time.

This aspect of analysis will be considered more fully through a study of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* in Chapter Five of this thesis, and is related directly to another area of Kirle's (2006) discussion, the reciprocal impact of musical theatre on society. Such impact is considered from a socio-cultural angle with reference to the notion of utopian escapism in Kirle's book. Such a culturally mediated trope is not uncommon when talking about musical theatre; Richard Dyer's (2002) seminal discussion of film musicals suggests much the same thing with regard to utopian ideals. When examining live musical theatre performance, this idea is at times directly related to the way in which the 'dramatic work' is completed by the actors and audience in 'performance'. Once again, such cultural mediation represents another element which is 'put together' in a live setting. It is negotiated dialogically through the reciprocity of the actor-audience relationship, one which Frankel suggests sees the actors and the audience both addressing and reflecting each other simultaneously (2000, p. 117).

So central is this relationship to an understanding of performance at large that in her book *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (2008), European theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte suggests that 'performance' can *only* exist when both actors and audience are present. After all, without actors the performance would not happen. Without the audience, it would be nothing more than a rehearsal in an empty venue. To analyse live performance is therefore to analyse the relationship between actors and audience. As Fischer-Lichte says, 'whatever the actors do elicits a response from the spectators, which impacts on the entire performance.' (2008, p. 38). What is particularly interesting is how she conceptualises this relationship as a perpetual loop of

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<sup>4</sup> In discussing these 'cultural moments' that Kirle refers to, I am using borrowing the term *cultural mediation* from sociologist Lev Vygotsky. The term relates directly to the influence of cultural and socio-political factors on a person's understanding and reception of experiences. For more information on Vygotsky's term, see Vygotsky, L.S (1978) *Mind in society*,

engagement: a 'feedback loop' between the actors and audience (2008).<sup>5</sup> Such a relationship has been described by other performance theorists as a 'heightened circle of awareness' (Elinor Fuchs, 1996), and as an 'energy exchange' (Jill Dolan, 2005). This feedback results from performative energy and a heightened awareness on the part of both actors and audience members. The audience directly respond to the actor's negotiation of the dialogic 'dramatic work' in performance, 'putting together' the disjunctive elements of dialogue, song, and movement.

For the actor, McMillin has further suggested that each time he or she negotiates the shift between speech and song and dance, they enter a performative 'space of vulnerability', a danger zone which simultaneously draws attention to the character in question, and the actor in performance (2006, p. 149). McMillin writes that in this space, 'the foot can slip, the voice can crack' (2006, p. 149). In other words, the real-time nature of performance is at its most obvious and thrilling. He also observes that '[All] theatre thrives on this danger, but the performers in a musical must also handle the enlargement of their characters into lyric time' (2006, p. 149). Such a duality between the performer and the character in performance has been discussed elsewhere by Knapp as being the 'double image' of musical theatre: the interplay between the real and the fictional in such moments of heightened expressivity (2005, pp. 12-13).<sup>6</sup> Yet it indicates an additional but crucial dialogic property which contributes to the perpetuation of the actor/audience relationship in performance. In these moments, audience members are presented with both the character of the 'book time' and the actors themselves – vulnerable and on display. To a certain extent, both McMillin's discussion and Knapp's use of the 'double image' pre-suppose awareness by the audience of the very disjunctions musical theatre operates upon; characters are not real but are embodied by the actors in that moment.

It is perhaps true to say that more or less all dramatic performance involves this interplay between self-consciousness and the embodiment of, and engagement with, fictional characters. However, as noted above, the additional dialogic forces of music and stylised physicality serve to intensify the interplay of these elements. The plurality of musical theatre in performance is thus activated by the recognition of its own artifice, and in this sense Kirle's perspective of the written 'dramatic work' as incomplete is entirely accurate. Not only does cultural mediation play a large part in the development and understanding of musical theatre performance, it does so through

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<sup>5</sup> Acknowledging Fischer-Lichte's use of the term, for the most part this thesis will simply refer to the 'feedback loop' without specifically referencing Fischer-Lichte.

<sup>6</sup> As with the term 'feedback loop' from Fischer-Lichte, and McMillin's orders of time (2006), the term 'double image' will become common-place throughout this thesis without consistent reference to its source.

the activation of character and situation *by actors*. Engagement with the disjunctions of the 'performance text' is in part perpetuated for the audience by their constant negotiation of the actor/character relationship in performance. After all, as Fischer-Lichte says, how the actors perform directly feeds the audience's responses (2008, p. 39).

To illustrate this point, a given situation might move an audience to tears (Tony's death in *West Side Story* (1957), or the leave-taking in *The Beautiful Game* (2000)), and yet both Dominic Symonds (2005) and Stephen Banfield (1993) have observed that an audience's willing emotional engagement with character is always in conjunction (or disjunction) with the imperative to acknowledge the performance, applauding specific moments of exhibited theatrical skill in discrete musical numbers or dance sequences. When this happens, it may be argued that applause, or similar expressions of acknowledgement, preferentialise the performance situation over engagement with the 'dramatic work'. Banfield suggests this serves to validate the self-conscious act of performance (1993, p. 172), momentarily acknowledging the artifice of the event, and rupturing any claim to integrated realism the musical might aspire to portray, like the claims above by Kern and Rodgers.

Therefore, Knapp's 'double image' relates implicitly to the way in which audiences (individually and collectively) receive, and engage with, the ongoing dialogisms of musical theatre performance. In doing so, they acknowledge the actor's portrayal of character; suspending disbelief in order to connect with the story via the multiple dialogisms they negotiate. This relationship, according to Knapp, is what produces the performative sense of a 'heightened reality' in musical theatre, where 'actors bursting into song at a moment's notice' is considered conventionally acceptable as part of the 'reality' of the performance (2005, pp. 12-13).<sup>7</sup> Thus, in addition to the already dialogic properties of live performance, musical theatre's 'orders of time' and its overtly energetic and physically stylised performance tropes intensify the complexities of the form. They introduce a further set of elements to be taken into account when considering how the dialogisms of performance might be more inclusively analysed. To an extent, these elements of performance analysis are already well established: performance and reception theories have developed concerning different conceptions of the actor/audience relationship, the heightened reality of the musical theatre form,

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<sup>7</sup> The performative aesthetic of 'heightened reality' in musical theatre is often closely associated with notions of 'camp'. 'Camp' here might be defined from Susan Sontag's (1964a) perspective, as an aesthetic which emphasises artifice (as in Knapp's discussion), intense frivolity and excess in popular culture. The overtly camp nature of musical theatre, and the expectation of such from its audience, is a result of its principles of heightened reality, or in the case of more operatically influenced aesthetics a continually heightened mode of through-sung vocal performance.

and the suspension of disbelief. Yet, if aspects such as these collude to create the experience of a 'finished' dramatic work in the transience of performance, how does analysis negotiate the continuing problem of 'liveness'? Considering this question will further establish why live musical theatre is such a complex area to analyse.

#### *The nature of 'liveness'*

The transient nature, and complexity, of live performance has been discussed using various philosophical and theoretical perspectives. For example, in her essay 'Reading Difficulties' (1996), Sandra Kemp draws on the phenomenological position of Martin Heidegger, terming live performance a 'becoming-object', in that the moment it begins it is both past and future; a trace, remembrance, and expectation (1996, p. 155).<sup>8</sup> For post-structural theorist Patrice Pavis, this transience renders performance and its dialogisms as an intangible object, 'only fixed at a given, arbitrary moment' (2008, p. 118), in which the audience may construct and experience meaning from the interaction of transient 'consciousnesses'. Live performance then 'is not the source of the dramatic situation [contained within the 'dramatic work'], but rather its consequence [...] its discovery' by the spectator who 'decides in the final analysis' what meaning they may take from the experience (Pavis, 2008, pp. 117-118). This notion supports Kirle and Carlson cited above, and by acknowledging such transient interplay, represents one of the primary methodological problems present in analysing live musical theatre performance.

The moments at which all of the above elements collide/collude to construct meaning for the actors and the audience are so ephemeral that Pavis continues by suggesting that performance enters its own self-perpetuating deconstruction the moment it begins (1996, p. 317). Implicitly echoing this idea, Kirle suggests that the multifaceted (dialogic) nature of performance continually creates, exploits, and negotiates the 'gaps and absences' within the 'dramatic work', through its transience. For Kirle, as for Frankel and Fischer-Lichte above, the thrill that comes from live musical theatre performance is in part provided when the audience 'try and fill [the gaps and absences, to] create a memorable, new theatrical experience' (2006, p. 40). This idea will be discussed in more detail throughout, particularly when considering John Doyle's actor-musician production of *Company* in Chapter Four.

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<sup>8</sup> Heidegger used the term 'becoming-object' to denote transience, (with the opposite term 'being-object' denoting stasis) in his discussions of experience and meaning-making (Heidegger, 1988; Kemp, 1996). Live performance cannot be made static or tangible – can never be rendered a 'being-object' in this sense – presenting a problem for analysis.

If the dialogisms at play in musical theatre can only be understood in a moment of transient, intangible self-deconstruction, perhaps the most important question to ask is not how performance can be analysed more inclusively, but if it can be analysed at all. Can such a complex interplay of dialogic elements be harnessed and analysed, or understood, when the moment one attempts to explore them they become a trace, a remembrance or an expectation? To an extent the answer is no, for any analysis of a 'live' musical theatre performance is constrained and limited by being an 'in theory' examination, or a retrospection. This research thus seeks to find ways of accounting for real-time experience, whilst acknowledging the problems of claiming the ability to articulate it.<sup>9</sup>

To more inclusively harness and articulate the way the dialogisms of live musical theatre performance collude to create a sense of experience and meaning is therefore a complex, and perhaps ambitious, objective. This being the case, before any attempt is made to write towards such a goal, the current state of scholarly approaches to musical theatre need to be assessed in more detail. As we have seen, theorists including McMillin, Knapp, Banfield, and Kirle, freely acknowledge the complexity of musical theatre. So why is there a need for this research? Returning to Rouse's article (1992) may help provide an answer to this question.

### **3. The Current State of Analysis**

When exploring the relationship between a study of the 'dramatic work' and its enactment as the 'performance text' in analysis, Rouse identifies an apparent hierarchy. He suggests that in the study of theatre as a whole there exists a competitive tension for validity *between* analysis of 'Stage vs. page', between a study of the 'dramatic work' and the 'performance text' (1992, p. 15). Whilst such an either/or binary may be a generalisation, it is worth considering in relation to a further discussion by Pavis, who identifies a similar trend in his paper 'On Faithfulness: The Difficulties Experienced by the Text/Performance Couple' (2008). Citing Stephen Bottoms, Pavis writes 'There remains a divide in theatrically oriented studies – the divide between those who address performance through a focus on the language and literatures [...] and those who see the performance event itself as their key concern' (2008, p. 119). In fact, it is due to the intense interplay, and interdependency, between the 'dramatic work' and 'performance text' that Fischer-Lichte finds seeking an 'aesthetics of the [dialogic] performative' difficult, particularly in terms of her own study of European theatre

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<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the case studies found in Chapters Four, Five and Six represent 'in theory' applications of the more inclusive methodology that will be developed throughout.

practice (2008, p. 181). For her, the consequence of delineating between interdependent, dialogic elements, is that each is then dealt with 'inadequately and frequently distorted' through not being viewed in the larger dialogic context (2008, p. 181). Such a discrete focus on the 'work', or the 'text', in analysing musical theatre performance logically appears problematic in light of Kirlé's above observation that the one activates the other (2006).

Yet, the inadequacy (or otherwise) of such individual focus on areas of literature, language, experience, or situation, is not the overriding concern here. In fact, the rigour of such specific study can only contribute to a fuller understanding of performance, and may be used to develop the elements necessary for a more inclusive analytical framework, one which can begin to account for the interplay of dialogisms in musical theatre performance. What is pertinent to this discussion is that recourse to such delineated and discrete analysis demonstrates the dialogic complexity of live performance, and that such a divide in approach can also be seen in musical theatre scholarship. The following two chapters will explore and critique this situation through an extended survey and review of current literature in the field, and current approaches to analysing musical theatre performance. As such, these first two chapters satisfy what might be seen as the first of two objectives for this research: to assess the state of musical theatre scholarship, in order to define what elements might be useful or deficient in inclusively analysing the dialogic properties of musical theatre performance. This literature survey will be divided – in line with Rouse and Pavis – between a focus on the 'dramatic work' and the 'performance text'.

#### *Analysis of the musical theatre 'work'*

Analyses which focus on musical theatre as 'dramatic work' commonly borrow from literary and dramatic theory, exploring the musicological, structural, or linguistic aspects of a specific composer, lyricist, or book-writer's work. For example, McMillin's approach (2006) has already demonstrated the structural analytics that can be applied when examining the 'work'. Other examples which borrow from literary or dramatic theory include Joanne Gordon's literary reader, *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* (2000). This edited collection contains articles such as Laura Hanson's 'Broadway Babies: Images of Women in the Musicals of Stephen Sondheim' (2000, pp. 13-35), in which she critically discusses the socio-cultural representation of women in Sondheim's work compared to their representation in the 'Golden Age' of musical theatre. Other approaches encompass psychological and socio-political concerns, in Judith Schlesinger's psychoanalytical reading of *Sweeney Todd* (2000), and Edward T. Bonahue

Jr's discussion of *Sunday in the Park With George* as a 'post-modern' musical (2000). These analyses reveal interesting facets of the 'dramatic work', the literary script, and the thematic or socio-cultural tropes therein. Such approaches are also salient when considering the conditions of a work's creation, and the impact this has on understanding, in line with Kirle's application of cultural mediation (2006).

Likewise, Steve Swayne (2005), Mark Eden Horowitz (2002), and Stephen Banfield (1993, 1996), have all conducted musicological studies of work by Sondheim, exploring his compositional processes, whilst Joseph P. Swain's (1990) musicological survey of musical theatre writing from *Show Boat* (1927) through to *Les Miserables* (1985) is an example of how structural analysis of the 'dramatic work' can be used to explore the written elements of the form, and their maturation, in contributing towards the creation of drama onstage. Such stringently music-centred analysis evidently has a very specific remit and purpose, exploring the development of compositional processes, and focussing on music as primary agent of the drama or narrative in musical theatre performance. The way in which music is wed to lyric and plot is also a matter which has been explored with regard to the 'dramatic work' by McMillin (2006), in Sandor Goodhart's *Reading Stephen Sondheim* (2000b), and Philip Furia's *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley* (1992). Such literary and musicological approaches – whilst a valuable set of perspectives within their own disciplinary boundaries – can be relativistic in their approach, and can serve to marginalise the fact such 'dramatic work' is written to be *performed*. These concerns are addressed more fully in Chapter One.

#### *Analysis of musical theatre in performance*

In exploring how musical theatre is analysed in performance, there are two sub-categories to consider: analysis of the performance and analysis of the performers involved. For such an interdisciplinary form as the popular musical, performance based approaches tend to be more philosophical and theoretical in their position and are not necessarily applicable in their design or approach to musical theatre. Developing notions of theatre semiotics for example, writers including Patrice Pavis (1996), Susan Bennett (1997), Eli Rozik (1999), and Mark Fortier (2002) defer to theorists and philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Charles Peirce or Ferdinand de Saussure in their analysis of how one might read theatre performance, relying on philosophical foundations which may, or may not, be applicable in certain instances, or which may be contested within their own discipline.

The problems of such approaches will be examined in Chapter Two, and applied to musical theatre performance, with a particular focus on how such issues as

logo-centrism, and metaphysical readings of music, may further demonstrate the difficulties in assessing the musical theatre form more fully. Other analyses based on performance or reception invoke discussions of movie musicals and film theory, to articulate perspectives on the 'integration' of live performance (see for example Richard Barrios, 1995; Rob Dean, 2007; John Kobal, 1970; Cecil Smith, 1951). Likewise, performer-focussed scholarship tends to take historical, iconographic, or bibliographic paths, such as Meryle Secrest's *Stephen Sondheim: A Life* (1998), or an assessment regarding actor-training and performance in musical theatre. As already outlined in this introduction, the most notable book in recent years to develop a performance-based analysis of musical theatre is Kirle's *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process* (2006). His position, including the foundations upon which he bases his arguments, including the socio-cultural factors he considers, will become ever more pivotal to this research in later stages. The following survey will therefore draw together, and critically analyse, the broad spectrum of perspectives currently in use, defining differences and similarities in approach, and highlighting pertinent elements which may contribute to the development of this thesis.

Having concluded this survey and fulfilled the first objective of this research as outlined above, Chapter Three will develop a conceptual framework of inclusive analysis, seeking to establish the centrality of the actor/audience relationship to understanding the dialogic complexity, and interplay apparent, in musical theatre performance. This will also include an extensive review of related literature used to explore the actor/audience relationship. In doing so, the second objective of this thesis will begin to be addressed: to write towards a more inclusive framework for analysing musical theatre in performance. Developing the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three, Chapters Four through Six will apply the subsequent methodology to three musical theatre productions as case studies, exploring the potential for a more inclusive analytical model. Finally, Chapter Seven will draw the findings of these case studies together, analyse the success of the methodology, and attempt to answer the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: how *do* you solve the difficulties of analysing musical theatre performance?

## CHAPTER ONE

### 'A Crack in the Foundation': The Dramatic Work

In order to analyse such an interdisciplinary form as musical theatre, scholarship in the field often focuses on the structures and content of the 'dramatic work', borrowing frameworks and approaches from literary, musicological, or socio-cultural studies. Such analysis is important, as it affords a better understanding of the various dialogic elements that constitute the 'dramatic work'. However, these perspectives have an understandably structural rather than performative focus, which does present a difficult situation in their application. Kirle (2006) has suggested that musical theatre as a 'dramatic work' is incomplete without performance, that it is written *to be performed*, and so to develop a framework solely focussed on literary or structural dialogisms does not account for the fullness of live musical theatre in performance. Nevertheless, as stated, such analyses do provide important principles and positions which better inform an understanding of what makes musical theatre performance possible. To explore the uses of structural, literary, musicological, and socio-cultural approaches to musical theatre analysis, and to assess the potential for further development of selected models within these areas, it is interesting to frame this part of the survey by examining certain sub-genres or forms of musical theatre. Thus, literary approaches and socio-cultural readings will be discussed with specific reference to the problematically termed 'concept musical', structural perspectives will be explored with reference to 'integration theory', and musicological concerns will be addressed in exploring the 'through-sung musicals' common in the 1980s and 1990s. To begin with, the uses or applications of the term 'concept musical' will demonstrate the difficulties in analysing musical theatre works through reference to social perspective or authorial intention.

#### 'Something Just Broke': Problems of the Concept Musical

The term 'concept musical' seems to have been applied in multiple ways in contemporary scholarship. This situation has led to many conflicting readings of musical theatre works, and the potential the form has for exploring story through the dialogic dynamics of song, dance, and dialogue. Initially coined by journalist Martin Gottfried, the term is in fact aesthetic and performative as opposed to literary, narrative, or structural in its application. For Gottfried, a concept musical is a show 'based on a stage *idea*, not a story, but a look, a tone – what the show will be like [...] The music, the dances, the story, the sets, and the style of the performance are all dictated by that production concept [which is] theatrical and pictorial rather than intellectual' (cited in

Bush Jones, 2003, pp. 270-271). Reading his definition in this way, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* (1981), and *Starlight Express* (1984), are rightly called concept musicals, being based on a design aesthetic or a theme rather than a progressive narrative. Yet, whilst Gottfried's definition is specific in foregrounding a directorial or conceptual 'idea', Scott Miller has acknowledged that the term seems to have 'as many definitions as there are people using it', and this accordingly presents problems for analyses focussed on the 'dramatic work' of such musicals (2000, p. 187).<sup>10</sup>

Much use of the term today is found with reference to experiments in narrative structure and form, rather than aesthetic or theatrical ideas. Nowhere is this more evident than in scholarship on the work of American composer Stephen Sondheim, whose output includes many genre-challenging structural devices, such as the reverse plot of *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), or the Kabuki-styled *Pacific Overtures* (1976).<sup>11</sup> Has the term itself changed? Perhaps it has; or perhaps its meaning or usage has developed to cater for the analytical foci of different fields of scholarship. The primary concern here is not the use – or misuse – of Gottfried's term, but rather the analytical tools used to explore the structural elements of the 'dramatic work' under its auspices. To that end, perhaps a redefinition or re-classification of what 'concept musicals' may be will aid clarity in this discussion.

*When is a 'concept musical' not a 'concept musical'?*

Using the term in reference to the structural facets of a musical theatre work is prominent in scholarship which assesses one of the first concept musicals, Stephen Sondheim's and George Furth's *Company*, first seen in 1968. Meryle Secrest aptly summarises the literary and cultural context of the work's creation, writing that the 1960s were 'filled with experimentation as novelists and poets [...] jettisoned what they considered anachronistic notions of structure and form, even the shape of the sentence itself, [and] wrote plotless novels or themeless poems' (1998, p. 192). Approaches to musical theatre were evidently influenced by this, with *Company* being a paradigmatic example. In this musical, songs function as vaudevillian commentary rather than serving a progressive narrative, and the episodic structure of the piece examines a situation through vignettes rather than developing any sense of linearity. Therefore,

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<sup>10</sup> For example, if the 'concept musical' is developed from a directorial idea or aesthetic concept, then Miller's own claim elsewhere that *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964) is a concept musical where 'every element of the show and every moment in it served a central metaphor' is itself problematic, for the piece was adapted from Sholem Aleichem's short stories, and contained a linear narrative with characters, situation and plot (2007, p. 98).

<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of structure and clarity, the primary body of work assessed in this section will be Sondheim's. This is not to infer that Sondheim is the only progenitor of so-called concept musicals, but his influence has perhaps been the most marked, and the critical sources on his work are readily available.

musical theatre scholarship which examines the so-called concept musical by focussing on the structural properties of the 'dramatic work' often examines the narrative shifts away from realism and linearity toward what might be termed a 'post-linear' musical theatre. This term is developed from Hans-Thies Lehmann's idea of post-dramatic theatre (2006).

Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999) was written as a response to Peter Szondi's 'crisis of drama', and the tensions existing between Aristotelian formalistic theory and the social themes occurring in modern theatre from Piscator and Brecht onward (2006, pp. 2-3). Accordingly, 'post-dramatic theatre' is akin to the Epic theatre of Brecht, the writing of Samuel Beckett, and the experiments of Peter Handke, where there exists an element of meta-theatricality within the tensions between 'work' and 'performance' (Lehmann, 2006, pp. 35, 145).<sup>12</sup> Such meta-theatricality might be observed in post-linear musical theatre as well, and in this sense Lehmann's use of the term 'post-dramatic theatre' may seem an apt label to use when considering the structural tensions in the concept musical. However, observations made by Karen Jürs-Munsby in her preface to the 2006 edition of Lehmann's text (pp. 1-15) suggest that such a direct transference of the term may be problematic. Jürs-Munsby remarks that the implications of a 'post-dramatic theatre' logically presume the existence of a 'dramatic theatre' in the first instance (pp. 1-15).

For Lehmann however, 'dramatic theatre' is one which unites both audiences and actors in the temporal experience of theatre: 'spectators leave their everyday time and enter a segregated area of 'dream time', abandoning their own sphere of time to enter into another' (2006, p. 155). He contrasts this with the 'post-dramatic' imperative: a dispassionate distance that is 'precisely not a manifestation of *one* shared temporal space' (p. 155). Even though the concept musical to an extent acknowledges its own theatricality, the term 'post-dramatic' would be problematic if used with reference to musical theatre, for it would negate a crucial element of the form's aesthetic, the audience's expectation of escapism into a heightened reality (essentially an incarnation of Lehmann's 'dream time'). Therefore, the term 'post-linear musical' more specifically refers in this instance to the area under discussion, focussing as it does on deconstructed approaches to structure and narrative, rather than the effectual properties of the 'performance text', which are discussed below.

In examining the approaches used by theorists and scholars to analyse post-linear musical theatre – including the use of psychoanalysis (Schlesinger, 2000), cultural

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<sup>12</sup> Such meta-theatricality and its implicit tensions will be discussed in Chapter Two, and become a pivotal element of the methodology developed further on.

theory (D. Walsh & Platt, 2003), and post-structural narrative theory (S. Miller, 2000) – it is important to note that these approaches developed out of the same literary-academic zeitgeist as experiments in the musical form itself, as mentioned by Secret (1998). Accordingly, they reflect an overarching post-structural perspective on the properties of literature, music, and theatrical performance, rather than a performance based focus which might have been more relevant to Gottfried’s original definition of the concept musical. It is interesting to consider that these approaches draw on multidisciplinary models, and are primarily concerned with the ontological and epistemological properties of structure and form. In examining such perspectives in the analysis of the post-linear musical, it is useful to divide them into three categories:

1. *Writer-Based*: Focussing on analysing authorial intention;
2. *Work and World-Based*: Focussing on intrinsic mechanisms and socio-cultural positions taken within a work;
3. *Reader-Based ('Pragmatic')*: Where the subject constitutes and imbues a work with meaning in the process of reception.

These categories are taken from the work of literary theorist Michael Sinding in his article 'Beyond Essence (or, getting over there): Cognitive and dialectical theories of genre' (2004). In essence, they focus on ideas of narrative construction and genre constitution as a means of understanding and experience. Both the centrality of the reader/audience and the ongoing process of the 'work' becoming the 'text', are implicit in the third category. In terms of musical theatre then, Sinding's 'Reader-Based' category echoes Kirle's position on performance completing a 'work', and has strong echoes of Barthes' post-structuralism (Barthes, 1977a; 2004, p. 379). So the idea of the necessity of reception in completing the reading or meaning of a 'work' is already highlighted when exploring the 'dramatic work'. The application of this to musical theatre analysis will be considered in more detail below, but a discussion related to each of Sinding's categories demonstrates potential problems, and possibilities, in examining musical theatre from the perspective of the 'dramatic work'.

#### *1) Writer-Based Analysis*

Writer-Based analysis (with particular reference to Sondheim) has a further two sub-areas that it explores:

- i) Authorial intention.

ii) Reading 'the author' *back* into the work.

The first facet of this category claims authorial intention as a legitimate means of analysing musical theatre. Most frequently, this is found in musicological analyses, such as Steve Swayne's *How Sondheim Found His Sound* (2005), Mark Eden Horowitz's *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details, Major Decisions* (2003), and Stephen Banfield's *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* (1993). All contain detailed examinations of Sondheim's compositional process, implicitly privileging the individual components of the 'dramatic work' over their completion in performance.<sup>13</sup>

An example of this approach is seen in Banfield's analysis of the mimetic properties of Sondheim's work (1993). Banfield develops a model for analysing the interplay between the semantic properties of words – their mimetic representation – and the syntactico-mimetic imitation of music. To do so, he draws on musicologist Leonard Meyer's 'implication-realisation model' as a means through which to study the unfolding of acute (discrete) musical units within the larger work.<sup>14</sup> He terms this model *melopoetics*, and focuses on the intrinsic, formalistic mechanisms of speech and melody. Also drawing on neo-Shenkerian analytics, Banfield expands his model by plotting the reductive elements of motif and repetition in a way which assigns mimetic properties to such intrinsic elements (1993, pp. 72, 107-113, 292-297, 343-351). What is particularly interesting to consider here is the extent to which Banfield draws conclusions regarding aural expectation and the attribution of meaning. In particular, his discussion of rhythmic, repetitive, and melopoetic units in the song 'I'm Lovely' from *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962), revolve around the diversions and resolutions found within the music, to suggest how these might contribute to meaning on the audience's part (1993, pp. 109-121). If such a structural focus on the 'dramatic work' produces an analysis of something that is by default 'incomplete' without performance, to what extent might this form of analysis be applied within a more inclusive framework?

The problems such musicological analyses face is that, to a large extent, the intricate mapping of *inter-* and *intra-* referring between musical structure and syllabic content excludes consideration of any extrinsic meaning in the transience of

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that these works (particularly Banfield and Horowitz's) are based upon extensive conversations with the composer himself, and thus the 'presence' of the author in these discourses is vivid. This both lends authority to the analyses but also colours the approach through relying on the subjectivity of the composer in the scholar's own reading of his work.

<sup>14</sup> See Meyer, L. B (1956) *Emotion and Meaning in Music*; and the application and critique of Meyer along with a comparative assessment with Shenkerian reductive analysis in Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990, 1987) *Music as Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, particularly Chapter 9.

performance.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps an audience member, in the fleeting moments of hearing a song performed, does not immediately register the intricacies of word-play or musical motifs. Likewise, can one ever fully analyse a sung melody line, aside from its activation through voice? This question will be more fully engaged with in Chapter Six, yet such a question is not intended to discredit such analytical tools in scholarship. Reading Banfield with reference to Carlson's earlier comment, such musical structures within the 'dramatic work' are written to be performed – with a story and an intention in mind. Indeed, Banfield's landmark work on Sondheim has allowed a fuller understanding of the way music (as a dialogic element) is used to frame, develop, or unravel, various elements of plot, narrative, and character, selected devices of which will be examined with reference to the use of parody in *Cats* (Chapter Five), and melodic repetition in *The Light in the Piazza* (Chapter Six).<sup>16</sup> Understanding how music operates and is structured within a work thus more fully supports analysis of that work *in performance*. To discuss musical theatre, one cannot divorce the structural properties of music or language from their use in – and for – performance. Therefore, purely musicological analysis of structural composition does not fully account for the performative effect of music.

Yet, what happens when these elements take precedence in understanding the 'performance text'? What can be said about analyses which claim to identify the 'presence' of the author in the 'work', and subsequently in the performance? In short, such an approach may serve to limit the efficacy of certain analyses, marginalising the actors, and the characters they embody. Analysis of authorial presence is found in considering the work of Sondheim, both in academic writing and journalistic criticism.<sup>17</sup> For example, in his book *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight* (1997), Canadian journalist Mark Steyn reflects on ideas of authorial presence and its effect. He suggests that the 'presence' of Sondheim in his music means 'you're distanced from the character because all you can hear is the voice of the author' (p. 144); 'there's no way to [perform the songs] apart from the way they're written' (p. 142); that Sondheim relies on 'obtrusive rhymes' (p. 143); and that in contradiction to his own principles, Sondheim's 'words run away with themselves. You can't follow the meaning [...] all you

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<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed discussion of extrinsic and intrinsic referring in musical structures, see Nattiez (1990, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the most pertinent example of this type of analysis in Banfield's work is his consideration of chromaticism, theme-and-variation, and Wagnerian technique in the score for Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George* (1993, pp. 343-381). The sound-world of this musical in performance, and the commonalities between the two acts which differ in time frame, are in large part a result of the way the music is constructed.

<sup>17</sup> Sandor Goodhart's 'Introduction' to his Sondheim reader (2000a) cites over thirty five critical examples of this claim, from the 1970s alone (p. 31).

hear are the rhymes – and the author’ (p. 143).<sup>18</sup> Consider the following example from *Into the Woods* (1987):

PRINCES:       NOT FORGETTING  
                  THE TASKS UNACHIEVABLE  
                  MOUNTAINS UNSCALEABLE  
                  IF IT’S CONCEIVABLE  
                  BUT UNAVAILABLE  
                  (‘Agony reprise’, *Into the Woods* (1987), Act II, Sc ii)

Steyn’s observation suggests that through such technical achievement lyrically, the ‘dramatic work’ may become viewed intellectually, rather than lyrics serving character and purpose within the performance. Of course, such word-play has its place in the enjoyment of musical theatre. Cole Porter’s writing stands as an early example of this:

LOIS:           MR. HARRIS, PLUTOCRAT  
                  WANTS TO GIVE MY CHEEK A PAT,  
                  IF THE HARRIS PAT  
                  MEANS A PARIS HAT  
                  BÉ-BÉ.  
                  (‘Always True To You in My Fashion’, *Kiss Me Kate* (1948), Act II, Sc. iv)

However, Steyn’s observation regarding Sondheim – that what the audience hear is ‘Sondheim’ rather than the character – has a profound effect on how an audience receives a work. Such self-consciousness, for Steyn, and Goodhart (2000a), serves to complicate the idea of the escapist, heightened reality of the ‘world’ of the performance. The result of this is the reduction of the actor to nothing more than a cipher for the author’s words, rather than words and music working to activate the character they represent in live performance. If, as Frankel and Fischer-Lichte suggest, theatre performance as a whole is contingent on the relationship between actor and audience, then surely this form of analysis ‘closes the writing’, rendering it in the singular, rather than a dialogic inter-text in performance (Barthes, 1977b, p. 159)? Of course, such studies do not claim to examine all facets of the musical theatre work or performance. Within their own disciplinary boundaries – as with musicological study – they are valid and worthy additions to the discussion and critique of the form. What they serve to demonstrate in review, however, is the complex and dialogic nature of

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<sup>18</sup> Sondheim has been cited as saying, ‘lyrics go with music [...] There’s a great deal to hear and get. Lyrics therefore have to be underwritten. They have to be very simple in essence [...] essentially the thought is what counts and you have to stretch [it] out enough so that the listener has a fair chance to get it.’ (in Adler, 2001, p. 44).

the live performance experience. Yet what of the other categories Sinding uses in his article?

## 2) *Work & World-Based Analysis*

In essence, the Work and World-based category represents the way in which narrative constructions within the 'dramatic work' might reflect – or be reflective of – the socio-cultural or political circumstances of a musical work's creation. Thomas P. Adler's essay 'The Sung and the Said: Literary Value in the Musical Dramas of Stephen Sondheim' (2001, pp. 37-61) examines the relationship between social conditions and narrative constructions in Sondheim's work, including the ideals of 'happy-ever-after' and its antithesis in *Into the Woods* (1987), or the bitter-sweet tensions which underpin *Company* and *Follies* (1972). However, Adler's most pertinent observation is one echoed by many scholars: that Sondheim examines the 'dark underside of the American Dream' as a thematic hallmark of his output (2001, p. 56). Supporting this, Steyn suggests that Sondheim views the ideology of 'The American Dream' as 'a nightmare' (1997, p. 142), and thus many of his musicals have been assessed using a 'Work and World-Based' approach for their anti-utopian ideals.

S.F Stoddart's (2001) analysis of the thematic content and narrative structures in *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981) suggests that Frank's 'selling out' to commercialism was a critique of American ideologies, ironically deconstructed through the reverse narrative structures of that work, and Mari Cronin aptly summarises Sondheim's position: 'Sondheim's vision [artistically and socially] is a complex one. He sees all sides of an issue. There are no easy solutions to the characters' problems in his musicals' (2000, p. 145). Perhaps seeing 'all sides of an issue' is what led to Sondheim's structural inventiveness and experimentation with form. This being the case, it also led to the related body of theoretical and scholarly output which explores post-linear musical theatre as socially reflexive: 'a critique of the one myth that has dominated the musical stage [...] the myth of a happy ending' (Goodhart, 2000a, p. 11). John Bush Jones argues that structurally, and thematically, the narrative presentations in Sondheim's work reflects the fragmentation of society (2003, pp. 269-304). Such a perspective aligns with Kirle's culturally mediated focus (2006), and thus an understanding of theatre in context – structurally and performatively – is an important facet of any analysis.

Whilst it might be argued that a deconstructed post-linear narrative presentation reflects the socio-cultural zeitgeist, or academic climate, of a work's creation in praxis and theory, this raises some questions. Such post-linear approaches

to both the 'dramatic work' and its subsequent activation in performance serve to fragment further an already disjunctive and dialogic form, demonstrating the potential difficulties for analysis (a situation which will be addressed specifically in Chapter Four). Returning to the paradigm upon which musical theatre is said to operate – an artificially heightened reality into which audiences might escape – where is the opportunity for emotional or imaginative investment with a character's situation through heightened escapism, when the work itself celebrates deconstruction? What is there for the audience to engage with, if characters are contradictory and displaced, in a work which offers little opportunity for utopia?<sup>19</sup> Can an audience engage with the sort of 'free-form exploration [...] that challenged all their preconceptions' [sic], common in the post-linear musical (Secrest, 1998, p. 192)? The third category seen in Sinding's article addresses these questions, and supports McMillin's and Pavis's earlier observations that all performance is dialogic; that in fact, it is this that produces the strongest means of engagement.

### 3) Reader-Based or Pragmatic Analysis

Sinding's third category allows these concerns to be addressed with specific reference to the way in which the structural disjunctions of a 'dramatic work' might be negotiated in performance. It suggests that through the fragmented, post-structural, and post-linear presentation of character and situation, the 'many sided' narrative constructs can more authentically comment on the human condition than the faux-realism of the 'integrated' musical (discussed in more detail below). Developing this position, Bush Jones argues that post-linear musical theatre is specifically concerned with character *not* story; that it is 'self-questioning [...] it's the feelings of the individual *as* an individual' that are presented onstage (2003, p. 272). In acknowledging the inherently contradictory nature of 'the self' as subject, and the chaos of life experience, Bush Jones concludes that 'by depicting fragmented individuals within the shows' fragmented structures, these [post-linear] musicals became some of the most *integrated* musicals ever created' (2003, p. 273). It has to be noted that there is limited performance-based analysis of such fragmented characters and post-linear musical theatre.<sup>20</sup> So a focus on the 'dramatic work' is perhaps the most appropriate method currently in use in this sense. Yet, if we consider that musical theatre is defined through the exchanges between audiences and actors addressing and reflecting each other (Frankel, 2000, p.

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<sup>19</sup> We might think here of Aristotle's recommendation that the characters represented onstage need certain qualities in order for the audience to relate to, learn from, or aspire to them in his *Poetics* 8.1 and 2.2 and Aristotle (1995) pp. xxxii, xxxiii and xxxix.

<sup>20</sup> A notable exception is Kirle's partial (and accordingly problematic) invocation of Brechtian principles in relation to emotional distancing in post-linear musical theatre (2006, pp. 116-122).

117), then perhaps post-linear musical theatre may allow an audience member to consider 'all sides' in performance, to reflect and engage with characters onstage, who more accurately embody the complexity of his or her own life.

Such a relationship between actor and audience is brought to the fore more fully in the suggestion that this category implicitly privileges actor over character, as seen in Joseph Swain's analysis of a non-Sondheim work, *A Chorus Line* (1975). Swain examines how the theatrical framing of the back-stage process foregrounds 'the chorus' in question, enabling the often anonymous ensemble of dancers to be individualised within the low-level frame of an audition (1990, pp. 309-319). Whilst such a frame-story might be read as deconstructive of the dramatic form, the focus on character – and in this specific instance, on the dancing body – draws attention to the human element on stage: the actor. Analysis of such a situation cannot simply explore the 'work'; its very meaning resides in performance.

Two specific perspectives have so far been presented: 1) the narrative constructs of Sondheim's work, which portray characters as human, complex, and contradictory; 2) the (meta-theatrical) framing of performances such as *A Chorus Line*, which foreground the very act of performance, and draw attention to the actor rather than the character. In both instances, these perspectives operate within the confines of a post-linear form, which is seen to celebrate the 'reality' of human nature as something which is never straightforward, never utopian, and never ideal. Structurally, the post-linear form achieves this through its self-conscious use of disjunctions and dialogisms. However, the two perspectives on complex character types, or self-conscious performance, cannot be read as mutually exclusive; in most instances both are at play together. This interrelationship between character and actor is explored and conceptualised in Bert O. States' essay 'The Actor's Presence: Three Phenomenological Modes' (in Zarrilli, 2002), and is particularly useful in discussing the actor/character dualism here.

Examining the way an actor might negotiate character and the situation of 'performance' in live theatre, States echoes Sinding's perspective on pragmatism, whilst at the same time implicitly acknowledging the conflict observed by Lehmann, between the fictional work and the theatrical 'text' in post-dramatic theatre (Lehmann, 2006, pp. 102, 145-155). This conflict and interplay concerns two specific states: *acting* – recognition of the actor-as-performer, and *enacting* – recognition of the actor-as-character.<sup>21</sup> This model implicitly suggests that part of the thrill and experience of live

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<sup>21</sup> States' dualism and the phenomenological modes of the actor that he develops will be considered in detail below. The distinction between 'acting' and 'enacting' will likewise be carried through this thesis.

performance is the actor *enacting* a role. Therefore, in addressing and reflecting each other, both actors and audiences are always at some level aware of both the fictional constructs *and* the theatrical 'reality' of the situation, in a manner which recalls Lehmann's discussion above (see Lehmann, 2006, pp. 35-47).

In a post-linear musical, an actor may *enact* a song in character, which comments on, psychologises, or subverts a scene, or character. This functions and operates as a theatrical act, signifying within the realm of an already suspended reality. At the same time, the *performance* of the song is entirely 'real'. The actor, therefore, is an embodied constant within, from, or onto which, the fragmented post-linear character may be inscribed. Using Sinding's model, the audience is aware of the constancy of the acting body onstage. This then allows them to become mentally and emotionally involved in constructing the post-linear situation for themselves. The breaking of narrative frames in this format thus mirrors the chaotic epistemology and ontology of the audience's everyday life, set within the heightened reality of musical theatre performance. This idea will be developed more fully in Chapter Four, in order to write towards articulating a performance-based understanding of these narrative constructs, rather than a purely structural and literary focussed analysis of the 'dramatic work', which can at times complicate understanding of embodied performance.

With the growth of the post-linear musical in America under the auspices of Stephen Sondheim, Harold Prince, James Lapine, John Kander and Fred Ebb, the British musical saw quite a different conceptual development. During the 1970s and 1980s, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and producer Cameron Mackintosh took a very different approach to the 'dramatic work' and its mediation as a 'performance text'. This approach did not attempt to deconstruct the means of storytelling as in the post-linear musical. Instead, it had aspirations toward homogeneity and a musical saturation of through-sung storytelling, seen from the inception of Andrew Lloyd Webber's and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar* as a concept album in 1970. Analytical models used to explore this form of musical theatre likewise present their own problems, and potential, in scholarship.

### **'It's better than an opera': Through-sung musical theatre**

During the 1980s in London, the monopolisation of the musical theatre form by producer Cameron Mackintosh saw 'The British Musical' become 'internationalised', with his name as sole producer above the title for four of the biggest grossing musical theatre productions of all time: *Cats* (1980), *Les Miserables* (1985), *The Phantom of the*

*Opera* (1986), and *Miss Saigon* (1989).<sup>22</sup> Approaches taken in this era of musical theatre in the UK heralded the development of ‘through-sung’ musicals. These works have many detractors due to their quasi-operatic aspirations, evidenced in their colloquial and pejorative label ‘poperettas’.<sup>23</sup> Yet, perspectives on the through-sung form as a ‘dramatic work’ are worth examination in the context of contemporary musical theatre analysis, particularly with regard to musicological analyses, and the debate regarding musical theatre’s relationship to another common form of the musical stage: opera. Are through-sung works opera? What constitutes opera, or ideas of what might be called ‘the operatic’? If these works are – or are not – opera, what impact does this have on the analytical tools available to assess them? Can commercial popular musical theatre be ‘operatic’? Perhaps an explicit statement needs to be presented first, to establish the boundaries of this discussion. Due to its socio-cultural function, status, content, and often through its performance aesthetic, musical theatre is *not* opera. Rather, via specific cultural and musical references, through-sung musical theatre works may aspire to the conditions or aspirations of ‘the operatic’, through devices or elements used in their construction or presentation. The term ‘operatic musical’ is itself vague and problematic, so for the purposes of clarity, the structural rather than semantic properties of the form would be the best point of reference in discussion. Therefore, unless discussing a specific citation or theorist, the term ‘through-sung musical’ seems the most appropriate expression to use here.

The devices or elements which are discussed in current scholarship and associated with ideas of the ‘operatic’ in through-sung musicals, specifically relate to the structural nature of the ‘dramatic work’, and in particular, the musical constructions within the score. Moreover, the devices in question are analysed from a very specific perspective on what it means to be ‘operatic’, referring in many instances to the ideal of nineteenth-century Grand Opera, and often specifically using a common reading of Richard Wagner’s ideals of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or ‘total art-work’ (2002). This section, then, will address two specific areas: musicological analyses of the through-sung musical, and the specific perspective implicit in much scholarship as to what ‘operatic’ musicals may be.

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<sup>22</sup> For more information about the success of Cameron Mackintosh, see Margaret Vermette’s *The Musical World of Boublil and Schönberg* (2006) and Jessica Sternfeld’s *The Megamusical* (2006).

<sup>23</sup> The term ‘poperetta’ is now in common usage in musical theatre criticism and journalism. For instance see Ben Brantley’s *New York Times* review of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *The Woman In White* (November 18, 2005). Andrew Lloyd Webber’s numerous through-sung works include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), *Evita* (1976), *Aspects of Love* (1989) and *The Woman In White* (2004).

### *Musicology and the through-sung musical*

In Knapp's *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2005), and Swain's *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (1990), musical devices evident in the construction of through-sung works are assessed and critiqued with specific reference to Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), and *Evita* (1976), and also Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* (1979).<sup>24</sup> For example, implicitly examining musical construction for its dramatic properties, Swain criticises Lloyd Webber's use of *contrafactum*, *leitmotif*, and *recitative* as 'weak' (1990, p. 298). He compares the uses of the melody for 'Don't Cry for Me Argentina' in *Evita*, with its earlier variation in the work. As the closing song of Act One, this is Eva's torch song; her love song for her country. However, Swain criticises Lloyd Webber for the pre-emptive use of this melody in the variation sung by *Evita*'s antagonist Che to open Act One ('Oh What A Circus'), arguing that such musical *contrafactum* here is not dramatically satisfactory (1990, p. 301). Che's song is a barbed and cynical assessment of Eva's premature death. For Swain, the fact it employs the melody of Eva's torch song is dramatically confusing, not 'operatic'. Of the same pairing, Knapp takes the opposing (and more psychologised) view: '[I]f it is in "Don't Cry For Me Argentina" that *Evita* claims an indestructible bond with the Argentine people, Che's pre-empting her song is almost obligatory, since this is precisely the basis of his conflict with her' (2006, p. 346). As seen earlier with reference to Sondheim, Knapp's rather more literary assessment relies on musicological approaches in analysis to suggest possible authorial intentions within the work. This leads him to claim that 'operatic traditions clearly support the idea that music matters a great deal more than words' in such a scenario – a position with which Swain has difficulty (2006, p. 334).

For Knapp, Lloyd Webber's use of extended *contrafactum* and *recitative* asks the audience to surrender completely to the music, to be taken into its 'world' (2006, p. 317). Similarly, Mark Steyn's cynically humourous assessment of the inappropriateness of *recitative* in Lloyd Webber is seen in his criticism of setting the request for a cup of coffee to music in *Aspects of Love* (1989). The melody for the line 'Would croissants and

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<sup>24</sup> Musicologist Swain terms the above three works 'explicitly operatic' (1990, pp. 294-295), and both he and Knapp openly discuss these works as opera (2006). It is worth acknowledging Knapp's circumspection in approaching the development of the through-sung form as more a 'prestige-oriented enhancement' and a desire to saturate the form in music; not necessarily however for such saturation to be driven by the dramatic needs of the work (2006, p. 317). In particular, Knapp's reservations are applied to Lloyd Webber. However whilst suggesting that 'the musical dimension of [*Sweeney Todd*] is [...] deliberately operatic' in its structure, Knapp does not conclude whether *Sweeney Todd* is an opera or a musical, preferring to classify it as a blend of melodrama and farce, wherein the dramatic force of the story comes from its narrative tensions both in music and plot (2006, p. 333). In his discussion, he draws a sharp and explicit distinction between the tendency of Lloyd Webber's aesthetic for musical saturation, and the narrative use of *leitmotif* and *contrafactum* in *Sweeney Todd* (Knapp, 2006, p. 349). Ultimately Knapp concludes that where *Evita* traded as 'opera', *Sweeney Todd* is ultimately unwilling to relinquish that play-off between opera and musical theatre; a hybrid 'operatic musical' (2006, p. 349).

fresh coffee do?’ is used subsequently in a love song, and a moment of regret, confusing the dramatic validity and appropriateness of melodic re-use in *recitative* (Steyn, 1997, pp. 278-279). Such musicological analysis is insightful, and presents varying interpretations for discussion, demonstrating further the difficulty in providing a definitive reading of such a dialogic art-form. In doing so, it also crucially highlights the importance of the audience member in the creation of meaning as well. However, in both Knapp and Swain, complete surrender to the musical world of the works concerned is explored with recourse to Wagnerian ideals, to a specific kind of music drama not generically representative of opera, or ‘the operatic’ *per se* (a genre which also has many sub-sets and presentational variants).

#### *Unification versus complementation*

Deference to this ideal subsequently presents problems for analysis. Recently, notions of a Wagnerian ‘total art-work’ (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), used when discussing the ‘operatic’ nature of the through-sung form, have been challenged in post-structural theory. In particular, Nicholas Cook’s *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (1998) presents an interesting reading of Wagner’s original intention. Examining this in relation to analysis will provide the basis for exploring how scholarship on the through-sung musical – and musical theatre performance in general – may be further developed. Outlining a schema for multimedia analysis, Cook presents three specific approaches: *conformance*, *complementation*, and *contest* (1998, p. 99). Each of these approaches articulates various facets of his conception that multimedia analysis is based on a combination of similarity and difference. Considering ideas of the Wagnerian totalising *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Cook discusses similarity and difference in the inter-disciplinary form of live performance, using the idea of complementation. Relating complementation to the concept of separateness, where each element is held to have a separate role but work together, Cook suggests two aspects of complementation: essentializing and contextual (1998, p. 104). The first of these holds that each element within a multimedia work has its own properties, which work via difference; the second suggests that in context, a conflict will arise between the different elements, affording new meaning to the composite (1998, pp. 104-105).

Whilst some musical theatre scholars implicitly (or overtly) refer to Wagnerian ideals of totality and integration,<sup>25</sup> Cook’s reading of Wagnerian ideals as

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<sup>25</sup> Writers who defer to Wagnerian aesthetics in their discussion of Rodgers and Hammerstein and integration include Andrea Most (2004); Knapp (2005, pp. 20, 49, 198-201; 2006, pp. 303-306, 333-335); Bush Jones (2003, p. 46), McMillin (2006, pp.3-5), Swain (1990, Chapters 12 and 14) and Lehman Engel (2006).

complementing rather than totalizing is telling, for Wagner himself acknowledged the dialogic and multifaceted nature of art, rather than any ideals of totalising unification: 'The nature of man, like that of each of the arts, is in itself [...] many-sided: yet the *soul* of each individual is but *one thing*' (2002, pp. 209-210). In this sense, Wagner seems to imply a form of the complementation that Cook later discusses. Importantly, where musical theatre is concerned, this complementation is contextual rather than essentialist, for it is through the conflict between the dialogic elements of the 'dramatic work' and 'performance text' that meaning might be produced. Notably, this idea is similar to McMillin's use of 'difference' and 'coherence' instead of 'integration' in his post-structural analysis outlined earlier (2006).<sup>26</sup> Reading Wagner through the lens of 'difference', rather than 'integration', has far-reaching consequences for musicology, and theatre scholarship as a whole. Considering the idea that such a recasting suggests multifaceted complementation rather than totalising integration, it would perhaps be more fitting to assess the post-linear musical as an outgrowth of Wagnerian operatic approaches, rather than the through-sung musical, although this is understandably a topic for discussion outside the boundaries of this research.

The important point to consider here is not the musico-dramatic success of the works themselves, or the specific techniques borrowed in their analysis. Rather, what is interesting is the fact that the operatic paradigms used within scholarship such as Knapp's and Swain's tend towards reliance on Wagnerian principles, which are contested in post-structural scholarship. As suggested earlier, if all live performance is dialogic, then to assess through-sung musicals through a Wagnerian lens of complementation would be appropriate, as the totalising integration of performance is an ideal rather than a reality. The primary concern is therefore not the assessment of the through-sung musical itself, but rather the philosophical or theoretical foundations from which the analysis of this type of musical has developed. Notably, questions of similarity and difference between 'Broadway' and notions of 'the operatic' are not new; earlier musical theatre works prompted similar debate, with such landmark works as *Porgy and Bess* (1935) and *West Side Story* (1956) coming under scrutiny. For example, in citing *New York Times* critic Olin Downes, David Horn asks 'is *Porgy and Bess* an opera?... "The style is at one moment of opera and another of operetta or sheer Broadway entertainment"' (1996, p. 111). Horn concludes that the debate surrounding this musical (as with *West Side Story*, *Sweeney Todd*, or indeed many of the through-sung musicals produced by Cameron Mackintosh) is 'connected to a particular view of

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<sup>26</sup> Cook broaches the subject in Chapter 3 of his book, but his reliance on textual structures somewhat assigns music to a subservient rather than complementary position. The premise upon which he begins his mapping of multimedia analysis is nonetheless worth consideration.

opera', its artistic unity, and the ability of theatre to comment on human nature (1996, p. 112). As seen above, this 'particular view of opera' often refers to a theoretical position that has since been challenged, the artistic unity of which might be present in intention but not in practice. Yet, it is not only the through-sung musical to which Wagnerian principles are often misapplied: the 'integrated musical' (or 'book musical') is also a format for which Wagnerian 'totalising' has been a benchmark.

### **'Only Make Believe': The mythology of 'integration'**

Despite 'integration' as a concept having been challenged above with reference to Wagnerian aesthetics, the conventions of integration, particularly within the musicals of the so-called 'Golden Age', specifically relate to ideas of structure and dramaturgical integrity (N. Cook, 1998; McMillin, 2006).<sup>27</sup> The traditional teleology of the integrated musical begins with a brief mention of New York's Princess Theatre shows (1915-19), includes a reference to 1927's *Show Boat*, and then credits Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's 1943 musical *Oklahoma!* as a landmark work of integration.

*Oklahoma!*'s constructs were said to create a complete and unified narrative, told through dialogue, song, and dance. In the year this show opened in America, *Theatre Arts* magazine critic Rosamund Gilder proclaimed that the show escaped 'the dull devil of formula that so often haunts the musical comedy stage' (p. 329), whilst Olin Downes in the *New York Times* asserted, 'The songs, as matter of fact, serve as a springboard for the dance numbers and the singing that usually goes with them. It is all of a piece...', concluding that *Oklahoma!* 'looks ahead to something [...] urgent today – to a compellingly native art of lyric theatre' (1943).

Contemporary scholarship often lauds this work as the benchmark for dramatic unity in musical theatre. Bush Jones (2003) writes that the songs 'continue the dramatic action [...] provide character revelation [...] reveal the development of relationships between characters', and that 'Not one song in the show is superfluous or irrelevant to story or character!' (pp. 142-143). Speaking of Hammerstein's approach to musical drama in general, Swain (1990) writes that 'songs [...] instrumental music [...] dancing [...] all arise from events in [the] plot. Nothing is extraneous' (p. 15), and Steyn actively promotes Hammerstein as 'the first dramatist of the American musical. When the songs started, the story didn't stop, but forged on, illuminating and enlarging' (1997, p. 66). In addition, Hammerstein's collaborator Richard Rodgers has been widely quoted as saying, 'When a show works perfectly, it's because all the individual parts

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<sup>27</sup> In her book *The Golden Age of American Musical Theatre* (2010) Corinne Naden refers to this period as between 1943-1965.

[...] fit together [...] In a great musical, the orchestrations sound the way the costumes look' (1976, p. 227). Despite the fact that as Rebellato has observed, such a mantra was a 'significant misrepresentation' of Rodgers and Hammerstein's working methods, this ideal quickly became the touchstone for the musical theatre in America (2009, p. 64).

Academic and journalistic histories of the form have likewise seized upon the teleological lionisation of Rodgers and Hammerstein, as demonstrated in the following example from Symonds;

...musical theatre theoreticians such as Geoffrey Block separate the history of musical theatre in 'Act I: Before Rodgers & Hammerstein' and 'Act II: The Broadway Musical after *Oklahoma!*'. Whilst there may be more controlled assessments of the show (Gänzl, 1995, p.152)... Lahr [for example] is unequivocal: "After *Oklahoma* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945), America had musical theatre" (Lahr, p.251). So too Mast: "Oscar Hammerstein II is the American musical theatre" (Mast, p.201). (2005, p. 62)

There is little doubt that Rodgers and Hammerstein promulgated integration as a structural ideal in their works, and this mythology of integration as a concept for the creation and reception of the musical stage in performance has been an overarching one in discussions of the form, as Symonds and Bush Jones demonstrate.<sup>28</sup> Yet, how has the term 'integration' really been defined? For example, do Richard Rodgers and John Bush Jones mean the same thing when they speak of integration?

#### *Integrated... what?*

It appears that in fact, there are two ways of analysing the 'dramatic work' for its integrated properties: structural and dramaturgical. Whilst these require very different analytical approaches, the above survey suggests something of a conflation between the two approaches. Much contemporary scholarship has already identified the problems in viewing integration as a structural tenet of the 'dramatic work'. Whilst space does not allow for an extended discourse regarding this, Symonds' research outlines four primary techniques through which the structural ideals of 'integration' are said to operate:

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<sup>28</sup> For additional specific discussion of the legacy of Rodgers and Hammerstein, see Andrea Most (1998) and Frederick Nolan (1978).

- 1) *Eradicating the transition*  
The song appears at the start of a scene – such as ‘Oh What A Beautiful Mornin’ from *Oklahoma!* (Symonds, 2005, p. 68), or ‘The Old Red Hills of Home’ in *Parade* (1998).
- 2) *Manipulating language*  
Heightening the dialogue to move into song, such as the beginning of ‘Make Believe’ in *Show Boat* (Symonds, 2005, p. 69), or ‘Around the World’ in *Grey Gardens* (2008).
- 3) *Underscoring and the preliminary verse*  
Here, Symonds references film music and Adorno’s suggestion that such goes unnoticed (which Symonds contests), such as ‘The Heather on the Hill’ from *Brigadoon* (Symonds, 2005, pp. 73-78), or ‘Popular’ from *Wicked* (2003).
- 4) *The musical scene*  
Such as the ‘Bench Scene’ in *Carousel*, where music is at base the dramatic agent which conveys the extended scene to the audience (Symonds, 2005, pp. 78-84), or ‘Putting it Together’ in *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984).

These techniques present a comprehensive model of what might termed ‘Integration Theory’, and its use in structuring the ‘dramatic work’ to focus attention away from the changing dynamics between speech, song, and sometimes dance (Knapp, 2005, p. 12). The effect in performance has long been seen as smoothing over the disjunctions, creating a unified fictional world into which the audience might escape. As Rodgers and Hammerstein’s biographer Frederick Nolan has argued, ‘the integration of music and text should be paramount’, and the effectual nature of this will be considered more fully in the following chapter (1978, p. 17). However, there are some problems with this position, particularly in light of contemporary scholarship, including Symonds’ subsequent critique following the construction of the above model (2005), and discussions by Rebellato (2009), and others.

Reading integration by means of Cook’s (1998) revised understanding of Wagnerian theory, and McMillin’s (2006) ideas of disjunction and coherence, structural integration is less a dramatic device and more a mythological ideal. The interplay of complementation that Cook suggests is conceptualised in a similar way by McMillin through his two ‘orders of time’ (2006, pp. 5-7). Using this framework, Symonds’ four techniques would be recast from a means of producing integration, to the means by which ‘book time’ was interrupted by ‘lyric time’. Rather than progressing plot,

McMillin suggests that this introduction of song or dance provides 'a formality of expression that the book [time] does not have [...] Lyric time can be well paced, book time can be well paced, but what matters most is the alternation between the two' (2006, p. 33). Such formality in 'lyric time' comes not only through the poetic use of language, but primarily through the use of music, which specifically alters the experience from 'book time'. Musicologist Anthony Storr notes that 'music structures time' and imposes an order not found in speech (1997, p. 30). As Knapp says, the moment music appears, it requires a change in time, and mode of engagement (2005, p. 10). This being the case, just how integrated can 'integration' really be? As established, this thesis argues that the dialogisms at play in musical theatre performance (and implicitly in its 'dramatic work') are what provide the means of best engagement, but also what make full analysis so difficult. Returning to some of the discourses that at first seem to champion ideals of structural integration, it is pertinent to note that they all refer to the unity of dramatic intention, *not* the unity of performance presentation.

When Bush Jones suggests that moments of song 'provide character revelation [and] reveal the development of relationships between characters', this is surely true not only of 'People Will Say We're In Love' from *Oklahoma!*, but also of 'Barcelona' in *Company* (Bush Jones, pp. 142-143). Likewise, just as in Rodgers and Hammerstein's musicals, 'songs [...] instrumental music [...] dancing [...] all arise from events in [the] plot' in *Merrily We Roll Along*, or in *Cabaret* (1966), even if they don't appear to follow chronologically (1990, p. 15). Whilst Steyn credits Hammerstein with developing songs that illuminate and enlarge the plot, surely each musical scene in *Lady in the Dark* (1941) serves exactly this purpose, even though they are non-linear (1997, p. 66)? In fact, Lehmann Engel's 1972 book *Words with Music: Creating the Broadway Musical Libretto* (2006) argues that such techniques may not be used simply to overcome the problem of the division between speech and song, but may explicitly draw attention to this divide, enhancing the interplay between the two elements.

Ideals of integration thus perhaps more accurately refer to the way the various dialogic elements interrelate to progress the story or explore the situation, a position which aligns once again with McMillin's ideas of coherence, difference, and repetition (2006), and recalls Cook's ideal of complementation. If this is the case, and no 'dramatic work' is complete before its activation in performance, then two questions need to be addressed. Firstly, why has the mythology of integration and structural unity been – or become – so popular in scholarship? Secondly, if the dialogic properties of the integrated musical, as with the through-sung and post-linear musicals, operate on the basis of disjunction and coherence, or complementation and difference, how might the

plurality of elements in performance be harnessed into a more inclusive model of musical theatre performance analysis? The second of these issues will be addressed in exploring the second objective of this research, but here, the first question is worth considering.

### *Integration and Ideology*

The era in which ideals of integration came to the fore was a formative one for America as a nation. Understanding this helps to contextualise the development of the musical theatre form, but also of the mythology of integration. Discussing the emergence of integration as a tenet for musical theatre, Walsh and Platt (2003) suggest that it was America's growth as a superpower during (and after) World War II that created the breeding ground for ideals of a unifying escapism, and a national 'American' entertainment, delivered here in the form of the 'book musical';

The book musical is, in a whole series of ways, a complex and reflexive engagement with [...] Americanism in a mainly celebratory fashion [...] Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, this constitutes an artistic development in terms of the theatrical, dramatic and musical sophistication of the musical as a popular form of art that comes to steer itself within and around the ideological and mythological boundaries of post-Second World War America.

(2003, p. 100)

Reading Walsh and Platt, or Bush Jones, Knapp, or Kirle, there is a definable sense of American 'ownership' of the integrated musical form, and part of this ownership is socio-political. Walsh and Platt note that between the second and fifth decades of the twentieth century, America embarked upon an 'international mission on behalf of a vision of capitalism, modernity and democracy', insisting on a break away from its European cultural roots in favour of its own 'voice' (2003, p. 95).

This 'voice' is exemplified in the utopian themes, and celebration of unity, found in such shows as *Show Boat* and *Oklahoma!*. *Show Boat* (written three years after the American Immigration Act severely restricted movement from outside Northern Europe into the USA) dealt with racism, miscegenation, gambling, spousal desertion, abuse, alcoholism, and bigotry, as 'integrated' themes in contemporary life aboard the *Show Boat*. Almost two decades later, *Oklahoma!* dealt explicitly with the unification of America's territory, and nationalism, but also with issues of 'otherness' in the character

of Ali Hakim, and included reference to taboo issues including lust and pornography.<sup>29</sup> Regarding these issues, Sean Griffin's essay 'The Gang's All Here: Generic versus Racial Integration in the 1940s musical' (2002) presents a relativistic reading, which provides a collective assessment of integration as a vehicle for promoting an ideology or mythology of 'the American Dream'. In short, integration almost formed part of a large public relations exercise in American culture: a socio-political device, rather than a structural or artistic reality. The influence of socio-cultural factors on the development of the musical theatre form is therefore seen, not only in the deconstructed nature of the post-linear musical, or the cinematic or globalising aspirations of the through-sung musical, but in the ideological force of the integrated musical as well. Additionally, just like the development of the through-sung musical, the integrated form was also influenced by the rise of cinema.

#### *Integration and the silver screen*

Whilst film theory and the frameworks used for assessing cinematic integration fall largely outside the scope of this research, the parallels we might draw regarding the changing expectations of film and theatre during the 'Golden Age' present some interesting conclusions. The rise of the integrated musical, the Hollywood movie musical, and early scholarship on popular musical theatre, all occurred concurrently. This contextualisation is pertinent, as parallels between these events have been drawn in both contemporary theory, and in scholarship of the time (Knapp, 2005, pp. 1-18). Smith suggests that the structural ideology of integration was, at base, cinematic: 'The musical stage was especially hard hit by the perfection of the rival medium, for the first all-talking picture, Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* [...] and the host of cinema musical comedies and extravaganzas that followed this first experiment took away from the living musical stage a large audience that never came back' (1951, p. 297). Smith's analysis suggests that cinematic integration, and the introduction of sound into movies as an integral part of their audio-visual presentation, wrought changes in audience demographic and expectation. If the Broadway musical wanted an audience, it had to pay 'ever greater attention to art as well as to craft' (1951, p. 298). The implication here is that movie musicals are in large part responsible for both the development and rise in popularity of the integrated musical, for with the seemingly cinematic 'perfection'

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<sup>29</sup> For extended discussions of these themes, see Bush Jones (2003, pp. 74-77), Knapp (2005, pp. 185-194). In particular, Walsh & Platt discuss *Show Boat* as embodying 'the ideology and mythology that would continuously fuel the book musicals that followed': Americana (2003, p. 102). This Americana, and the nationalist traits such an ideology embodies is seen in Kirle's discussion of Ali Hakim in *Oklahoma!*, and how in Trevor Nunn's 2002 revival – six months after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 – the 'Other' had changed from the Jew, to the Arab. An Arab actor was thus cast in this role, demonstrating the thematic 'openness' of musical theatre, and the fluidity of text in performance (Kirle, 2006, pp. 141-143).

of such a neatly produced package of music, dance, dialogue, and performance on screen, the live nature of musical comedies on stage seemed outmoded.

Such a position highlights two specific facets that are evident in the development of musical theatre during the 'Golden Age'. Not only does it highlight the relationship between musical theatre and cinema, commodifying the former as a mass-produced form under the auspices of popular taste, but it also once again recasts the notion of 'integration' as an aspiring neo-Wagnerian aesthetic. Such a dual viewpoint which reads both artistic developments and commercial influence together can likewise be seen above in the critical perspectives taken toward the work of Andrew Lloyd Webber. With these different positions and readings of integration, and the post-structural challenge to its mechanisms and ideals, is there a possible redefinition one might assign to the form when viewed structurally rather than ideologically?

#### *Towards a redefinition*

For whatever reason, and in whatever application, integration is a problematic term when discussing musical theatre structurally or performatively. It seems appropriate then, that as with discussing the concept musical as 'post-linear' in reference to its structural techniques, a different term of reference is needed if a more inclusive – and less ideological – framework for analysis of the form might be explored. In representing the structural and dramatic intentions of the integrated musical, it seems logical simply to remove the prefix 'post-' from Hans-Thies Lehmann's as discussed above, referring to such musicals as 'dramatic musical theatre'. In fact, such a term would be consistent with Lehmann's own use of the phrase 'dramatic theatre', and the heightened escapism, and iconography, of popular theatre as a 'dream world' (2006, p. 155). Yet, having specifically termed the concept musical 'post-linear', perhaps a better assignation would be to term these musicals 'linear', in direct reference to their narrative conceits of cause-and-effect: how song and dance are seen as chronologically and psychologically active developments within the ongoing trajectory of the plot.

This definition has three principal advantages: 1) it acknowledges the narrative conceits promulgated within the integrated musical, without giving undue credence to ideologically problematic elements of 'Integration Theory'; 2) it allows for post-linear musical theatre and through-sung musical theatre to be afforded dramatic sensibilities, developing and delineating Lehmann's terminology; 3) its relatively neutral ideological connotations allow assessment of the validity of its structural conceits from socio-political and cultural perspectives. 'Integration', then, may refer to the ideals of dramatic coherence and the interplay of dialogic elements within the 'dramatic work'.

Yet, through its completion in performance (after Kirle), such integration only occurs through the live presence of both the actors performing the work, and the audience who receive and engage with it. It is the audience who may choose to cross-reference Sally Bowles' emotional turmoil following her abortion with the bitter-sweet disjunction of 'Cabaret' (*Cabaret*), or who may smile wryly at the show of feminine strength and cunning in 'Marry the Man Today' (*Guys and Dolls*, 1956). In short, 'integration' cannot exist as a structural device within the 'dramatic work', for as demonstrated, the orders of time, and modes of reception, necessarily change between dialogue, song, and dance. These may directly develop each other in a linear format, or may subvert, comment, ironically enhance, or undermine each other in post-linear approaches. In through-sung musical theatre, integration is still a contested ideal, being based on an ideologically specific – and perhaps misguided – interpretation of Wagnerian ideals. As Nicholas Cook (1998) suggests – and in line with the perspectives taken in this research – Wagner, too, may well have celebrated the interplay and dialogic complementation of the various elements as they interact to create the 'dramatic work', and its meaning in performance.

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In surveying the current state of theory and scholarship which focuses on literary, musicological, and socio-cultural aspects of musical theatre as a 'dramatic work', several comments can be made, and conclusions drawn, regarding the potential and problems of this form of analysis. As noted at the beginning of this survey, the intention here is not to challenge the validity of any particular disciplinary approach, but to demonstrate that such a dialogic form as live musical theatre performance cannot be constrained by specific disciplinary focus. This being the case, what does the foregoing exploration of analytical approaches to the 'dramatic work' highlight?

Banfield's (1993, 1996) analysis of Sondheim's techniques, and Knapp's (2005) and Swain's (1990) discussion of Lloyd Webber's through-written approach shed light on the ways in which music is used within the fabric of the 'dramatic work', as a dialogic element which may underpin, explore, enhance, or subvert the drama of the story. Yet, if musical theatre is only complete in the moment of performance, then deference to intrinsic structural analyses serves to 'close the work', limiting the analytical breadth needed to fully appreciate musical theatre in performance (Barthes, 1977b, p. 158). The same situation exists when analyses reference authorial intention or 'presence' in the experience of performance, marginalising the performers, and

complicating the actor-audience relationship, which is crucial in understanding and analysing live musical theatre. In fact, this relationship has proved to be so pivotal that Bush Jones (2003, p. 273) suggests the post-linear 'dramatic work' serves to highlight the 'many-sided' nature of real life, and that audience members may engage more with this format as a result.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the through-sung musical, and linear musical, were also seen to be problematic in their use of Wagnerian theory when viewed from the perspective of totality rather than complementation. However, Cook's conception acknowledged the multifaceted nature of art-work, in line with the dialogisms in musical theatre.

Importantly, socio-cultural factors also have a bearing on understanding the ideals of 'integration', yet the influence of cinema in discussing or assessing musical theatre performance serves once again to marginalise the very dialogisms which play off against each other in live performance. Despite the fact that 'integration', and the cultural influence of mediums such as cinema on musical theatre, may be well documented, the transient and dialogic interplay of live performance – experienced and exchanged between the actors and the audience – may not be. This is the fundamental concern when privileging analysis of aspects of the 'dramatic work'. Whilst socio-cultural discourses on the relationship between Hollywood and Broadway, or 'integration' and 'the operatic', provide a useful context for discussing the experience of musical theatre, it is the influence these factors have on the audiences who engage in the performance that may be the most vital component. With these concerns in mind, how might performance-focussed analyses engage with these ideas and difficulties? Do performance-centred readings of musical theatre provide further means with which to analyse the form? This is the subject of the following chapter.

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<sup>30</sup> This particular idea will be explored in depth in Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 'Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance': The Performance Text

#### The 'feedback loop' and the formal discontinuity of live musical theatre

In order to explore the relative potential, and problems, of the way in which the performance of musical theatre is analysed in current scholarship, it is perhaps appropriate to return to Fischer-Lichte's definition of 'performance', and consider in more detail how this might be understood. Her definition prescribes that performance consists of the bodily co-presence of actors and audience members (2008, p. 39). This condition is not limited to a particular theatrical form or genre, but applies to all types of theatre including the musical. We have already noted the difficulty for analysis in assessing the transient nature of live performance, and yet Fischer-Lichte's definition contains another primary element that proves problematic in analysis: the notion of bodily 'presence'.

For Fischer-Lichte, this presence of the actors and the audience is the fulcrum of performance, and yet how are we to understand or conceptualise this? Phenomenologically, presence is understood in relation to ontology – to a state of being in the world (Kemp, 1996). If this is the case, then the shared state of performance, between actors and audience, is a shared state of being. Yet, as outlined in the Introduction, performance is transient, intangible, deconstructive, so how can it rely on any sense of an identifiable 'presence'? To resolve this apparent paradox, it is important to distinguish the bounds of reference between performance as a 'becoming-object' (transient) (Kemp, 1996), and the concept of performance as a (shared) state of 'being', which phenomenologically may imply ontological stasis. In a real sense, 'performance' can be said to be both at once. To understand this, Steven Connor (1996, p. 108) draws a distinction between the state of 'performance' – the active experience of completeness, and the state of 'the performative' – the immediacy of that experience. Connor's use of the term 'performative' is similar to Fischer-Lichte's conception of the 'feedback loop': the experience of being at a performance (2008, p. 39). In application to musical theatre, the 'performance text' may be the completion of the 'dramatic work', but this can only take place, and be experienced, as a result of the presence of the actors and the audience in a 'feedback loop'. 'Presence' in this sense then, relates more precisely to ideas of the actor/audience relationship, rather than the characters onstage. Outlining ideas on presence will provide a foundation for exploring analytical perspectives on the musical as a 'performance text', and the related problems

and potential that various approaches might have for analysing musical theatre performance.

### *Presence and the 'feedback loop'*

In a similar manner to the multiple uses of the term 'concept musical' seen in Chapter One, the term 'presence' has been applied to various aspects of performance and the 'feedback loop'. Phenomenology has often applied the term with reference to materialist principles, and literal bodily presence at a performance. Specifically, this sense of presence is felt between the actors and the audience as the co-presence which constitutes the performance event. This is discussed not only by Fischer-Lichte, but also by Jill Dolan in her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* (2005). Dolan suggests two qualities of such physical presence. Firstly, she suggests that it prompts what she calls a sense of 'event exchange' between those performing and those receiving. This 'exchange' aligns with ideas of feedback between actors and audience members, in which they simultaneously address and reflect one another (Frankel, 2000, p. 117). Secondly, Dolan suggests that this 'exchange' and experience of presence results in a feeling of shared 'intimacy'; an experience only possible at a live event. This intimacy is 'invasive' and 'reassuring' for those engaged in it, providing a sense of authenticity and energy for the performance itself (Dolan, 2005, p. 27). It is through this sense of co-presence and energy that the dialogisms and disjunctions of the 'performance text' may be negotiated. Supporting the suggestion that presence is experienced within the 'feedback loop', Eugenio Barba has observed that the energy which results from such presence exists in a 'pre-linguistic' state for both the actors and the audience, even before the 'dramatic work' has been activated within the 'performance text' (in Mullis, 2006, pp. 104-119). So, the 'feedback loop' of performance – the sense of presence felt between the actors and the audience – is a bodily one: a physical experience. It is not contingent simply on the creation of relationships between the fictional characters, and the audience members, activated within the 'performance text'. Rather, such activation relies first on the co-presence of the actors and the audience.

This initial presence of embodied actors and audience members is a crucial factor in understanding performance, and in this, the challenges and problems of analysing musical theatre with recourse to the 'dramatic work' alone may become more evident. In fact, the centrality of bodily presence to an understanding of live performance is highlighted by feminist scholar Peggy Phelan, who claims that the body is 'the ethic of theatre [...] where aesthetics and opportunity collide, where mutual

transformation can take place' [sic] (2004, p. 576). Bodily co-presence then, established and perpetuated between the actors and the audience in a 'feedback loop', allows the aesthetic of performance (the 'performance text') to translate into 'mutual transformation' between the actors and the audience, a fundamental claim when exploring how we might better understand the sense of heightened energy and presence in the enactment, and reception, of musical theatre.

The sense of intense presence and energy in musical theatre performance is often associated in analysis with a specific convention or aesthetic, that of 'camp'. 'Camp', as defined by American cultural theorist Susan Sontag (1964b), and discussed as a convention of the musical by Knapp (2005, pp. 10-13), refers to an excess of performative energy which emphasises the artifice of the drama, while intensifying the sensory experience of the performance, through its heightened presence and 'unapologetic emotionalism' (S. Miller, 2007, p. 1). Such an excess of energy, and intensified presence, in musical theatre performance produces a heightened sense of reality, both for the actors and the audience, and in doing so allows the dialogisms of the 'dramatic work' to be negotiated and brought to life. Within the aesthetic conventions of musical theatre performance, such a dramatic exchange of McMillin's 'book time' for 'lyric time' is accepted – indeed, expected – by the audience. Knapp suggests that this convention of heightened reality and artifice in musical theatre performance is so ingrained in cultural expectations, that spectators will feel cheated if a moment of song or dance does not happen when, where, and how, an audience at large think it should (2005, p. 13).

The co-presence within the 'feedback loop' then – an immediate bodily state between the actors and the audience – seems to be the basis upon which this heightened energy and sense of camp operates; necessary elements for negotiating the dialogisms of the 'performance text'. Yet, for scholarship to try and analyse bodily presence is an abstract objective, for 'presence' is a conceptual and experiential concept. Nevertheless, the above summary demonstrates that ideas of 'presence' have an essential bearing on the experience of the 'performance text', and so it is crucial to understand more about the concept. If notions of bodily co-presence are seen to provide a phenomenological or material point of reference for analysis of the actor/audience relationship, then performance analysis at large is presented with a dilemma. How does such a position reconcile with the earlier suggestion that the transient nature of dialogic performance renders it within a state of constant flux? How can presence in the 'feedback loop' be a reference point for a transient and dialogic 'performance text'?

Chapter One demonstrated the dialogic interplay of structural elements within the 'dramatic work', and the discontinuity that resulted. Yet, in performance, such dialogic interplay becomes even more apparent, activating the discontinuity of the 'dramatic work' in performance. The relationship between presence, the 'feedback loop', and the dialogic nature of the 'performance text' then, can be best expressed by analysing the tensions that result from what might be termed the 'formal discontinuity' of musical theatre in performance. In discussing this, and the analytical approaches taken in exploring it, it is useful to return to McMillin's concept of a shift in temporal order (2006). Having established that 'book time' progresses the plot, and 'lyric time' stops it for enlarged expression via song and dance in the 'dramatic work', McMillin points out that these two temporal elements are set against each other (2006, p. 31). This creates enormous tensions in performance, involving two separate but related facets of the formal discontinuity of musical theatre's 'performance text'. Exploring these two facets establishes the centrality of the audience's presence in the 'feedback loop' of performance, and also allows a conceptualisation of the dialogisms of the 'performance text'. The two elements are:

1. Musical theatre's performative 'double image' (Knapp, 2005).
2. The experiential properties of music in performance.

#### *Musical theatre and the 'double image' of performance*

Just as McMillin identifies two distinct factors which unlock and unleash dialogic interplay within the 'dramatic work', Knapp's concept of the 'double image' identifies and develops the liminal moment between 'book time' and 'lyric time' in performance (2005, p. 6). In many ways, it represents the point at which the antagonism that McMillin identifies takes place. Specifically, Knapp links the 'double image' to the presence of music, writing that the temporal and structural impositions of music introduce an artificial or 'camp' aesthetic 'that both conceals and calls attention to the performer behind the persona' (2005, p. 12). This duality, then, relates to how the character of the 'dramatic work' is understood in tandem with the presence of the actor in performance. Just as McMillin's duality represents something of a structural poetics for the musical, Knapp's 'double image' here perhaps writes towards a means of articulating the formal discontinuity of musical theatre in performance.

This formal discontinuity is seen through the tensions of negotiating the actor/character duality mentioned earlier in Chapter One, and in a sense this serves again to deconstruct the conventions of the form in performance. Banfield has

discussed what equates to the inevitable result of Knapp's 'double image': that at the end of a song or dance performance in linear or post-linear musical theatre (or at the end of scenes or sections in through-sung musicals), there is an imperative for the audience to applaud (1993, p. 172). With specific reference to the song 'Being Alive' from *Company* – but with a generic application to all musical theatre – Banfield argues that such an 'imperative' validates the character's presence and situation in the diegesis, whilst also functioning as an acknowledgement of the self-consciousness of performance itself (1993, p. 172). This recognition is extra-diegetic, implicitly reinforcing notions of the inter-text of performance, and perpetuating the temporal and conceptual dislocation of scene and song. Such a framework presents a situation where the fiction of the 'dramatic work', and the bodily co-presence of the actors and the audience within the 'performance text', forcibly and continually negates each other. Symonds' challenge to ideas of integration in this case is supported, and in fact he further confirms Banfield's position by suggesting a hierarchical approach to reception; 'If the songs are so embedded in the drama of diegesis and character, one would assume that they would resist separation from their context: evidence points to the contrary' (2005, p. 103)

The effectual and experiential properties of this 'double image' then, seemingly create a dynamic of distance and depth in the performance, between the fiction of the 'dramatic work' as activated in the 'performance text', and the sense of self-conscious engagement present in the feedback loop: an ebb and flow which heightens the audience's sense of drama, tension, and emotional response, through stepping outside the plot and into the realm of musico-dramatic expression.<sup>31</sup> The constant tension between these elements serves to emphasise intensified moments of the 'dramatic work', whilst simultaneously drawing attention to the actor rather than the character. It could be argued here that the break away from the diegesis in favour of acknowledging the mechanics of performance distances the audience in an almost Brechtian manner of estrangement or 'alienation' from the narrative.<sup>32</sup>

Stephen Halliwell (2002) has discussed the often-stated claim that Brecht rejected theatrical 'realism'. In exploring the paradoxes and contradictions in Brecht's

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<sup>31</sup> This dynamic *cannot* be analysed as a performance specific event; it necessarily has to be a generic assessment, for one audience on one night will provide a completely unique and non-repeatable dynamic engagement with the performers onstage at a given moment. The theoretical models to examine this therefore become necessarily *a priori* in their application.

<sup>32</sup> Whilst Kirlé (2006) only makes passing mention of Brecht, McMillin argues that the disjunction he championed is typified by the stratified elements of musical theatre (2006, pp. 25-30). Foster Hirsch's biography of Harold Prince (2005) regularly refers to Brechtian techniques in discussing the influence of Epic theatre on Prince's approach. Brecht's theories on the *alienation effect* and the 'new technique of acting' in Epic theatre which regularly get applied are contained in John Willett's *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (1978, pp. 26-29, 91-100, 136-148, 236-239).

own theories, Halliwell suggests Brecht in fact desired a theatre that was 'world-reflecting', not 'world-creating' (2002, p. 373). This position may well be linked socio-culturally to discussions of the post-linear musical above, but in terms of performance, it demonstrates the tensions and dialogic disjunctions at play between characters that 'exist' and negotiate the dramatic 'orders of time', and the reality of the performance event. In short, the 'double image' of the actor/character dualism in musical theatre performance establishes the dialogisms within the 'performance text', draws attention to the actor's bodily presence, and in doing so, activates the 'feedback loop' with the audience, who also negotiate the 'double image' in reception. Such complex negotiations are commonly associated with the heightened emotionalism and energy required – or resulting from – performance, and are held to overcome the disruption between the two 'orders of time'. As George C. Wolfe says, moments of song and dance dislocate character in favour of celebrating the actor's presence: 'the smallness of the human figure, reaching for something God-like, mythic, pure' (1999). The result of this may produce the formal discontinuity of performance, but how does it suggest 'lyric time' might be understood in performance?

The state of shifting from one 'time', or mode of communication, to another not only serves to produce an interplay between the fiction and reality, but implicitly foregrounds the presence of the actor in doing so. As they negotiate the dislocation, McMillin suggests that moments of song and dance become conceptual 'spaces of vulnerability' for the actors (2006, p. 192). Such a term of reference has two important ramifications. First, the idea of 'vulnerability' highlights the fallibility of the live event, a factor only present in a live 'feedback loop' between actors and audiences, prompting the audience's appreciation and engagement. Whilst such 'vulnerability' is present in all performance, in musical theatre its intensity is increased, during the shifts between the two 'orders of time', drawing attention to the 'double image' of performance; a factor that more fixed literary text-based positions cannot readily account for.

With specific regard to musical theatre, it is this shift from speech to song that represents the second ramification of McMillin's concept of 'vulnerability'. Such susceptibility and sense of heightened emotional expression in performance relates to the heightened rhetoric of the musical theatre form. According to social-cultural theorist Carey Wall, such representation allows the exploration of the 'full self' in performance, exposing the emotional centre of the character(s) through song and dance, elements which 'represent freedom [...] and deny the limitation of the body to daily routine' (1996, pp. 30-31). This exploration, however, is achieved only via recognition of the presence of the actor, and the ensuing tensions in the 'double image'.

Therefore, it seems that awareness of presence in the state of performance, and the conventions of suspending disbelief, are inextricably linked rather than conceptually separate, in understanding performance and negotiating the dialogisms of the musical theatre 'performance text'. The ramifications of this consideration prompt a return to the opening question: how do you solve the difficulties of (analysing) musical theatre performance? In order to engage fully with this question, there is a specific dialogic element which Knapp sees as responsible for the creation of the above 'double image' and dislocation of fiction and reality: music.

### **Music performance and reception**

Within the dialogic conventions of musical theatre performance, music intensifies given moments, disjunctively shifting the mode of communication from speech to song, forcing a renegotiation of time and means of engagement. Chapter One has already considered compositional and semiotic approaches to interpreting or understanding the structural make-up of musical theatre scores for their dramatic coherence and function. With specific regard to performance, however, there are several areas to consider: the relationship between music, words, and narrative, and the link between music and emotion in performance and reception.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Music, words and narrative*

Through the disjunctive interplay of elements in theatre, we might suggest that the potential power of music in musical theatre is directly related to onstage context, lyrics, choreography, and character in performance. Whilst Paul Barker (2006) has suggested musical theatre composers remain 'stubbornly traditional in their textual alliance with writers and poets, seeking meaning primarily through language adorned [...] by music', does this mean that music is of secondary importance in the musical theatre aesthetic?<sup>34</sup> This cannot be the case, for as Symonds has observed, musical theatre in fact 'favours song over scene. Even terminology essentialises "the song" as distinct from the syntagmatic flow of the whole piece' (2005, p. 103). So, what is the relationship between words and music in live musical theatre performance?

Musicology has long held two opposing analytical positions on this question. One school of thought implicitly assigns music as a subservient, or merely

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<sup>33</sup> These areas necessarily cross over, but will be artificially separated for the clarity of argument. Likewise there are elements of this discussion which will be returned to later in constructing the methodology.

<sup>34</sup> Barker speaks from a pejorative position here, questioning the validity of preferentialising language in meaning construction on the musical stage. His perspective in this sense is reminiscent of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer discussed below. This position has been discussed in detail by (among others) Deryck Cooke (1982) and Paul Hindemith (1961) with particular reference to the theories of Igor Stravinsky.

complementary, device to the words. Theatre critic Eric Bentley, and semiotic theorist Jean-Jacques Nattiez, have both discussed the seeming incompatibility of music's syntactic and abstract nature with the Western orientation to the 'concrete' semantics of language (Bentley, 1946, p. 284; Nattiez, 1990, 1987).<sup>35</sup> Bentley's preference for a conceptual and analytical separation of music and words might seem appropriate given the dialogic and disjunctive nature of performance, and its paradoxical function within the 'double image'. Yet, where does this lead when constructing meaning from the interplay of music and words together in the immediacy of performance? The opposing viewpoint expresses the preferentialising of music over language. Nietzschean perspectives, for example, suggest that music overreaches language, with meaning being constituted internally by the listening subject (1968). Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer even suggested that through its own internal harmonies, melodic structures, and compositional forms, music may be 'completely effective even without the text' (1966, p. 449). However, once again, such an analytical position poses problems if we acknowledge the dialogic nature of musical theatre in performance. Indeed, bypassing or marginalising words in this manner would serve to apply a specific set of musicological and historical parameters to analysis (derived from metaphysical paradigms). Such parameters may in fact serve to invalidate and close down the function of music with words in the narrative context of live performance. Such conflicting perspectives can be problematic for analysis, as demonstrated in Chapter One when considering the differences in approach between Knapp's and Swain's discussions of musical theatre and ideas of 'the operatic'. It is also true that conventional musical theatre relies both on words *and* music in its storytelling. So neither school of thought is entirely applicable here.

Regarding the relationship that words have with music, Nicholas Cook suggests that in the reception of song lyrics in performance, 'word as narrative gives way to word as song' (1998, p. 151). This paradigm shift from 'narrative' to 'song' indicates that the unique semantic *and* syntactic quality of words, when coupled with the syntactic and emotive quality of music, changes the reception of both within the performance gestalt. In line with this, theoretical musicologist Francis Sparshott remarks that 'musical utterance in song would be a merging of verbal communication [...] with voice communication' (1994, p. 30); an aspect discussed with specific reference to the technique of vocalise in Chapter Six. In both instances, the change of properties between spoken language and sung voice is clear, and as detailed in the next

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<sup>35</sup> Bentley has argued that 'When drama takes on the abstract character of pure music [...] it ceases to be drama; when, as a compromise, it tries to combine the abstract with the concrete it is invariably the drama, the words that suffer' (cited in Swain, 1990, p. 3).

section, this change is not merely a theoretical one. Music does not 'overreach' language, and neither is it merely a complementary tool, having its own internal narratives and motivic structures. So, how might this relationship of words set to music be conceptualised?

In considering this relationship, Cook's models for analysing multimedia once again become pertinent (1998). His concept of 'complementation', as discussed in Chapter One, seems an appropriate framework to consider the way in which words and music may work together. For Cook, the syntactic nature of music and its internal semantics share the same field of operation as those of the words, whilst operating differently (something Sparshott hints at when referring to the 'double-codification' of song in performance (1994, p. 30)). Importantly, Cook is careful to avoid establishing a binary of connotation/denotation in outlining the interaction of words and music in song. However, he does suggest that in any musical setting, the resultant complementation is contextual, and may produce several different outcomes. For each of these outcomes, examples from musical theatre might be suggested, and in each case the combined function of music and words as narrative becomes a point for consideration. The three outcomes of Cook's perspectives on music and words in song are as follows:

1. A congruence or conformance between musical construction and lyrical content.
2. A conflict between the media that forges new meaning in interplay.
3. The creation of gaps into which meaning might be suggested by the listener.

(N. Cook, 1998, pp. 104-105).

*1. Congruence (or conformance) between musical construction and lyrical content.*

In this instance, the music and words seem to fit each other perfectly, and for Cook this actually represents something of a different model of multimedia analysis – that of 'conformance', rather than complementation. However, this thesis argues that in all cases, musical theatre 'performance texts' are dialogic and disjunctive. A song made up of lyrics and music, and activated in performance through voice and context, cannot therefore be 'conformant' in the manner Cook describes (1998, pp. 98-99). Rather, the music and words may cohere in structure, form, phrasing, or intention, given the *contextual complementation* of their place within the dramatic work.

Perhaps two examples of this might be the relationships in phrasing, tonality, structure, melody, and lyrical content, in the songs 'Send in the

Clowns' from *A Little Night Music* (1977), or 'As If We Never Said Goodbye' from *Sunset Boulevard* (1993). Whilst in the first instance, the song itself is bittersweet, the rising melodic sequences, short phrasing, and harmonies, seem to deepen the meaning of the words through a seeming congruence or consonance. Likewise, in the second example, the build of the music and its relationship to the words, with extending melodic lines, and a consistent ebb and flow of uncertain excitement in its dynamics and shape, fit the narrative moment. One could perhaps even suggest that the bitter-sweet anticipation of this song, with words, music, and moment all combining, creates such 'conformance', that it makes complete dramatic sense that 'As If We Never Said Goodbye' remains in its home key of E flat major from beginning to end. There is no need in this case for the music to heighten emotion through a key change when the dialogisms of the 'dramatic work' and 'performance text' interact in such a way. What though, of complementation that produces conflict, or new meaning?

2. *A conflict between the media that forges new meaning in interplay.*

In this instance, Sparshott's discussion of music and words in performance as a powerful 'double-codification' of the dramatic moment is particularly telling (1994, p. 30), opening up and allowing for the interplay of music and words in the 'performance text'. For example, if the two operate independently, but in complementation, then it explains the powerful use of music to enhance the drama, whilst also recognising that music can contain its own narrative potential or motivic references (as discussed using Knapp and Swain in Chapter One). An example of such dissonant conflict between music as a dramatic agent and the words of the narrative is 'A Little Priest' in *Sweeney Todd*. In this instance, the black cannibalistic comedy of the situation belies the light-hearted music hall styling and waltz-time of the music. Such jarring disjunction may serve to reinforce the dark humour of the 'dramatic work', whilst extrinsically referring to a specific musical style the audience are familiar with from elsewhere, momentarily reminding them of the means of engagement with this story: the heightened presence of the performance.

Likewise, 'Maria' from *West Side Story* (1956) appears to be a swelling love song, except for the fact that as a dramatic agent, the melodic pattern for the phrase 'Ma-ri-a' is produced from an augmented fourth chord, known as the 'Devil in Music'. Thus, the conflict between the infatuated yearning of the

lyrics, and the dissonant chromaticism which melodically accompanies Tony's repetition of Maria's name, is used to signal tragedy through its dialogic interplay.

3. *The creation of gaps into which meaning might be suggested by the listener.* Perhaps this is the most complex of all outcomes for the 'complementation' of music and words in performance. As Cook highlights, the idea of 'gaps' as spaces for meaning is something his schema has in common with reader-response criticism (1998, p. 104). How might this be conceptualised with reference to the relationship between words and music in musical theatre? In many ways this outcome represents a fundamental position taken in this thesis with regard to performance and reception: that both are based on a succession of dialogic gaps or sequences into which – or from which – meaning may be created. Specifically, the notion of gaps between the music and the words in musical theatre will be considered in Chapter Five and Chapter Six of this thesis. The song 'Il Mondo Era Vuoto' from *The Light in the Piazza* (2005) is a good example of this interplay. Sung entirely in Italian, the music and lyrics operate via contextual complementation in performance to convey their meaning.<sup>36</sup>

With specific reference to musicological theory, this area of complementation might be outlined using formalist musicologist Christopher Butler, who recognises that whilst music has its own internal narrative potential through harmonic syntax or intra-musical reference, it cannot independently commodify, objectify, or subjectify anything external to itself (2000, p. 120). Its ability to represent states or events in a theatrical narrative then, relies on contextualised semantic references or associated situations, such as its relationship with words. It has contextual 'gaps' which are filled, complemented by the words. To this end, Jerrold Levinson has suggested that music in song does not act as a narrative agent, but rather as a dramatic agent, underpinning or expanding facets of the verbal or physical narrative (2004, p. 433). Whilst such a position is slightly simplistic – for the semiotic study of music can identify semantic and syntactic patterns of narrative within musical scores – it does serve to demonstrate the different roles music and words may have in contributing to performance. This is perhaps another instance of Sparshott's 'double-codification' argument: acknowledging the independence and interplay

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<sup>36</sup> A fuller analysis of this song is carried out in Chapter Six.

of the varying properties of music and lyrics in performance (1994, p. 30). If the two operate independently but in complementation, then it explains the powerful use of music to enhance drama in this sense. Crucially, such powerful 'double-codification' (Sparshott, 1994, p. 30) only exists in the immediacy of performance and reception, and thus as Knapp suggests (2005, p. 10), music serves to enhance the impact of the work by its presence as a dialogic element.

As a dramatic agent, music has a forceful effect on the performance experience. It is through music that notions of 'transcendence' and heightened emotional expression might occur. It is music that introduces excess and 'camp' into the musical, and which creates that 'space of vulnerability' in the performance (Knapp, 2005, p. 10; McMillin, 2006, p. 39). If music simply complemented words, would these facets and tensions exist? To examine this question, the emotional impact of music in performance – which is more experiential than diegetic – is of particular note.

#### *Music and emotion*

There is no question that music has deep resonance in human beings. Of this resonance in a dramatic context, opera theorist Joseph Kerman suggests that the power of performance is related to the immediacy of music and its sensory 'sensitivity', rather than its rational denotation or complementation with words (1956). Music then – in its immediacy – may be more effectual in experience than in an analytical context exploring the interplay of words and music together. This further demonstrates the problems of the traditional semiotic analysis of music, as discussed in Chapter One. As with Levinson above, John Sloboda and Patrick Juslin present a more psychoanalytical view of music in performance. In *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (2001), they conceptualise the relationship between music and narrative context (language) as a catalytic one. In a manner similar to Cook's theory of conflict and interplay, they suggest that '[w]hat is needed to turn the structure-induced proto-emotions [from music] into full-blown emotions is semantic content [narrative in context]' (2001, p. 93). In this way, both music and words are necessary elements to understanding. Whilst Sloboda and Juslin are not specifically talking about dramatic musical theatre works, and in many instances are concerned with analysis of classical texts or works from the classical repertoire, the same principles apply. Therefore, Cook's concept of 'contextual complementation' may in actual fact be the most appropriate means of acknowledging both the dialogic multi-media of music and words, and also their interplay, or the 'gaps' they operate within (1998).

This psychological and emotional view of music in performance is supported by neuro-scientific research and neuro-musicology. For example, the work of musicologist Anthony Storr (1997) and neurologist Paul Robertson (2007) provide a very interesting frame to explore these ideas in more depth. Independent discussions by Storr in his book *Music and the Mind* (1997), and in a colloquium presented by Robertson (2007), provide fascinating insights into the cognition and corporeal effect of words and music on the listener. Outlining the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain, the marriage of words and music is a complex, and at times conflated, one. For Robertson, the creation of meaning through the interaction between words and melody in song is achieved through what might be termed *cross-hemispheric lateralisation*. This represents the process whereby a dialogue is opened up between the sensory appreciation and emotional processes of the right hemisphere (responsible for engagement with music), and the rational and linguistic based functions of the left hemisphere (which process words). According to Robertson, it is the relationship between the two that allows for fullest engagement with song.

His claim, however, appears somewhat problematic when read in line with Storr's observation that 'when words and music are closely associated, as in the words of songs, it seems that both are lodged together in the right hemisphere as part of a single Gestalt' (1997, p. 38). At first, Storr's claim might suggest that music overreaches words in the experience of song. Elsewhere in his discussion however, Storr validates the necessary presence of the left hemisphere as the point for linguistic comprehension in the first instance (1997, p. 37). Thus, Storr's argument does not suggest that the independent qualities of words and music are negated, but rather – whilst being retained in complementation – the emotional power of song is primarily a result of the immediacy of music's emotive properties. Meaning, therefore, is not only present through music's internal structures, shape, form, and harmony, but through those things working in complementation with the contextual information of both a verbal and physical narrative. The relationships between these aspects will be specifically addressed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

If *cross-hemispheric lateralisation* occurs in the reception of a musical theatre performance, this may explain the experience which leads theorists such as Miller to celebrate the 'unapologetic emotionalism' of the musical theatre aesthetic (2007, p. 1), negotiated through the dialogisms of the 'performance text' (music, words and context), and enabled by the energies in the 'feedback loop'. This neurological explanation for the function and impact of music and song neither confirms, or challenges, either side of the hierarchical debate seen above between music as a force

which overreaches language, or music as a property subservient to language. What it does however, is establish the problems that exist in music theory, and musicology, and importantly provides an additional scientific basis for exploring musical experience, acknowledging the free-play of elements in performance that are developed further throughout this thesis.

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Drawing the above perspectives on musical analysis together, we arrive at some complex, and at times contradictory, conclusions. Whilst many theories agree that music may contain internal narrative voicings, structures, or shapes, the abstract nature of music means that in conventional musical theatre it has a specific relationship to context. Yet, the function of music within that context is still a matter of some confusion and debate. Does music operate syntactically as an accompaniment to words? Does it overreach words? Levinson and Sparshott have acknowledged the intrinsic difference between words and music, and Cook's concept of complementation allowed these differences to be realised with regard to congruence between them, conflict, or 'gaps' and meaning. Neuro-scientific evidence also provides a basis for engaging with music cognitively, assigning it emotional and dramatic value in complementation with the narrative context of performance and reception. On this basis, music as a dramatic device within musical theatre performance derives its agency from its own emotional resonance, its intrinsic mechanisms, *and* the narrative potential of its context. Therefore, an audience member may impute and derive emotional depth within the 'dramatic work', whilst also being aware of music's disjunctive presence as having altered the temporal state of communication.

Commenting on the relative complexities of the above debates and perspectives, perhaps Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben's observation aptly sums up the problems in analysis: how can you talk about music, emotion, or 'narrative' in the same sentence without changing the subject, and yet, how can you divorce them from each other? (2001, p. 67). This conflict is perpetually present in the work of the theorists seen here, and the artificial separation of these elements will be addressed within the development of the methodology below. However, there are two specific observations mentioned above that crucially impact the way in which music affects the 'double image' of musical theatre:

1. Whilst music may affect drama and context, and perpetuate the disjunctive energies of performance through 'structuring time' in a different way (Storr, 1997, p. 30), it also draws attention to the act of performance itself. Francis Sparshott's comment that 'musical utterance in song would be a merging of verbal communication [...] with voice communication' hints at something crucial: the activation of a musical 'work' in performance by an actor/singer (1994, p. 30). This merges verbal communication (semantic context) and voice communication (which calls attention to the presence of the actor/singer). Extending this to its logical conclusion, we might recast Sparshott's comment to suggest that musical utterance in dance would be a merging of physical communication with musical communication. Thus, music draws attention to the presence of the actors as they sing, and also to the presence of the musicians as well, an aspect considered in Chapter Four.

2. The second perspective worthy of note directly relates to this dual mode of attention enabled by music. Storr and Robertson both suggest that music in performance is negotiated and understood neurologically. Thus, the presence of the musician and actor might activate music's emotional properties and meaning in performance, but in line with Fischer-Lichte's definition, such activation is then received and understood only by the presence of the audience, who listen and create meaning within the transient deconstructions discussed above. Music then, serves to drive through the very centre of musical theatre performance, simultaneously enhancing the rhetoric and power of the drama, whilst drawing attention to, and deflecting focus away from, the presence of the actors and the audience in the 'feedback loop'. The energies this creates are what sustain the sense of heightened reality in performance. Music enhances the presence felt in live performance. As suggested, this presence is not negated by the transient interplay of dialogisms in performance; in fact, it is just such a sense of co-presence that might activate the interplay within musical theatre performance. In developing this phenomenological position, there is one element of contemporary performance yet to be outlined; current perspectives on the use, and influence, of audio technology in live musical theatre performance.

### **Technology and 'presence' in live performance**

The use of technology in contemporary musical theatre includes microphone amplification for singers and musicians, as well as hi-tech sets, and more recently, the mixing of multi-media, computer generated graphics, and animations, into the aesthetic of a production. The implementation of these elements, from the small scale use of

vocal amplification, to the large scale technical aspects of productions such as *Wicked* (2003), has prompted academic criticism related to the mediation and reception of the live event. In his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (1999), Philip Auslander suggests that with the influence of technology in an era of television, cinema, and now new media, the theatre today feels the implicit need to replicate the cinematic experience to be accepted.

This position is worth interrogating, for we have already seen the influence of cinema on the musical theatre form, with Cecil Smith's suggestion that technological advances affected the developments of the linear musical (1950), and Bush Jones arguing that these influences were also brought to bear on the through-sung musical (2003). In discussing the influence of technology on the reception of live performance, Auslander borrows terminology from Jacques Attali, and argues that the *representational* quality of theatre – the live, transient, irreproducible quality which relies on presence in the 'feedback loop' – is replaced by theatrical *repetition* through technological means (1999, pp. 25-26). Ultimately, Auslander argues that 'ontological analysis does not provide a basis for privileging live performance as an oppositional discourse' to the mediatised (1999, p. 159). Commenting particularly on the use of microphones in live performance, Auslander argues that the live event has now become, in essence, similar to Jean Baudrillard's notion of the 'hyperreal'; literally at one remove from itself (1999, p. 31).<sup>37</sup> It seems that Auslander views this as a simple heightening of the performance experience, rather than a problematic or potential displacement of the 'intimacy' and 'immediacy' of co-presence which Dolan has championed (2005).

This perspective is accordingly problematic with regard to live musical theatre performance, for as Kirle wryly comments: 'My own suspension of disbelief is not heightened when I hear an amplified voice but do not know where it is coming from [...] What happens to realistic dialogue scenes [...] when all the songs are amplified?' (2006, pp. 124-125). For Jonathan Burston (1998), the answer to this question is that the performance loses its 'liveness', the immediacy and presence which produces energy and promotes engagement with the 'performance text'. Returning to Sparshott's (1994) equation of verbal communication and voice communication in song, Burston's position here also seemingly displaces the voice, and the actors become commodified bodies rather than corporeal presences (1998). The effect of such a claim distances Dolan's ideal of shared co-presence and 'event exchange', which is a primary requirement of the experience and understanding of live musical theatre (2005). After

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<sup>37</sup> In his essay 'The Precession of Simulcra' (2002), Baudrillard uses the term 'hyperreal' with reference to the idea of contemporary presence and experience being consistently simulated via technology.

all, if the heightened reality of the form relies on energies produced and perpetuated with the 'feedback loop' between actors and audience, surely a technologically induced 'remove' which mediates the 'work' in performance, compromises the opportunity for 'exchange' and 'feedback'? If the audience witness technologically mediated performances, to what might they respond: the 'intimacy' of the performer, or the amplified reproduction of their voice?

Herein then, as technology, multi-media, and the musical stage, become ever more inter-related, it would seem that theories may further challenge, and deconstruct, notions of presence in the way performance is received and understood. In this instance, the reception of performance may well become seen as an experience where the very presence of the actor, along with the character they embody, are subsumed within a technological space. Nevertheless, one thing has to be acknowledged as fundamental to this research and the very concept of 'live' performance. No matter how mediated or technologically advanced certain aspects of live musical theatre performance are, the basic foundation for live performance is the co-presence of human beings – actors and audience – who all engage in activating the 'dramatic work' as a 'performance text', negotiating dialogic elements including any technological facets of the production. With reference to a particular truism discussed further on in this research, an actor may be onstage surrounded by technology, but if his microphone fails, a property or set breaks down, or she forgets her lines, the audience will be reminded of something that cannot be attributed to cinematic forms – the 'liveness' of the moment and the presence of the actors on stage in the 'feedback loop'.

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Having considered elements of performance theory, reception theory, and various analytical frameworks used for articulating the interplay of dialogisms in performance, along with music, and the impact of technology on the experience of the live event, what conclusions might be drawn about analysing live musical theatre performance? A crucial element of live theatre is its transient nature, a difficult factor for any analytical model, and one which has to be acknowledged and accepted. However, perhaps more pertinent to this discussion with regard to the development of a more inclusive model, is the continual return to ideas of co-presence between the actors and the audience in the 'feedback loop'. This sense of presence is 'invasive' and 'intimate', only experienced between these two specific groups of people in performance. The shared state of presence heightens energy within the 'event exchange', establishing the basis upon

which the disjunctive artifice of the 'dramatic work' might play out. Ultimately, whether considering the relationship between the actor and the character, or the way in which music might be experienced as a dramatic agent in musical theatre – all of it requires the co-presence of the actors and the audience at base.

Yet, the idea that bodily co-presence constitutes a fundamental element of the performance event, and is the basis upon which the suspension of disbelief may operate, seems to stand at odds with the formal discontinuity of the musical theatre form. Echoing post-structural perspectives on performance and reception, Pavis (1996) has suggested that any performance engages in its own act of self-deconstruction. In this sense, the dialogic interplay and transience of performance seemingly negates the means of analysing a tangible or identifiable 'feedback loop'. However, such a challenge to the idea of presence as a foundation is reconciled if we acknowledge that whilst any 'dramatic work' is inherently deconstructed through the live nature of performance, the presence of those engaged in such deconstruction is the very thing that allows it to take place, and allows meaning to be derived from the dialogic interplay of the plural 'performance text'. As Halliwell writes, 'if human thought and imagination are feasible at all [...] then artistic [authenticity] has the only basis it requires' (2002, p. 30).

The presence of actor and audience thus facilitates deconstruction, and concurrently the creation of meaning, in live performance. Because of this, the formalistic assignation of semiotic paradigms to performance, as discussed in Chapter One, appears too restrictive. However, whilst semiotic analysis may function on the basis of a signifier and a signified, Knapp's 'double image' seemingly operates within the confines of a similar binary. Yet, this is also problematic because the interplay of all elements within the deconstructive transience of performance is perpetually unstable, and Knapp's 'double image' *simultaneously* draws attention to – and away from – the actor's presence and the character's embodied representation. This perpetual instability is often facilitated and exploited by music, which all at once confirms and conceals the presence of the performer, drawing attention to the artifice of the form in performance. In this way too, performance is understood through recourse to presence.

However, as the foregoing survey of approaches used to analyse musical theatre performance demonstrates, much scholarship on the form favours an analytical focus on structural, literary, or socio-cultural elements. These approaches are both necessary and valid, demonstrating the dialogic complexity of the form, and enabling some of the 'fixed' properties to be analysed. As Kirle (2006) rightly states, any 'dramatic work' needs the activation of live performance to be complete. Nevertheless,

certain perspectives on the live experience of musical theatre performance (and live performance in general) challenge the idea of presence in activating and completing the 'dramatic work'. In particular, the impact of technology has problematised notions of an 'event exchange' between actors and audience. However, Dolan and Phelan, and by implication Pavis too, have insisted that it is the very immediacy of presence in the shared spatio-temporal event of performance that gives live (musical) theatre its power. This presence is corporeal, it is bodily.

Yet, whilst this presence has been identified in the 'feedback loop', the standard means of engaging with the 'double image' of performance has been through the convention of suspending disbelief. This is a surely a mental, cognitive process on the part of the audience member. What is the relationship between shared corporeal presence in the 'feedback loop', and cognitive engagement with the 'performance text'? If performance is described as an 'exchange' between the actors and the audience, what are the relationships between their shared bodily presence and cognitive processes, as these two groups collectively and individually negotiate the dialogisms of live musical theatre in the 'feedback loop'? Building on salient aspects of the foregoing discussion, the following chapter will more fully explore the idea of co-presence and the 'feedback loop'. In doing so, it will develop a potential theoretical position, and conceptual framework, which will better enable a more inclusive analysis of performance through a focus on the bodily co-presence of the actors and the audience.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Razing Plato (or why the body should be taken more seriously)

A focus on the body in live performance is vital, yet contentious. It is important because a broad range of performance and reception theorists, including Dolan, Phelan, and Barba, cited above, have located the excitement, energy, and meaning-making process of live performance within the bodies of the actors and the audience members. In fact, drawing together theories which focus on the body, a strong framework can be established which places the bodies of both performer and spectator as central to understanding performance.

For example, Maaïke Bleeker's article 'Disorders that Consciousness Can Produce: Bodies Seeing Bodies on Stage' (2002, pp. 131-160) suggests an interactive relationship between actors onstage. Richard Schechner's performance theory recognises the interaction between audience members, necessary for confirming the sense of ritual, event, gathering, and co-presence at the theatre (2003, pp. 188-197). It is this sense of interaction that enables group energy, and helps create and sustain the 'feedback loop' of performance (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 39). Interestingly, Stanton B. Garner's book *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (1994, pp. 45-102), draws the foregoing relationships between actors and audiences into one coherent discussion, implicitly confirming Dolan's concept of performance as an 'exchange' between the presence of the actors and the presence of the audience. These theoretical analyses celebrate bodily presence as the basis for theatre, both for the actor and audience.<sup>38</sup> How this scholarship understands 'the body' in performance will be unpacked, and developed, through a specific frame of reference as this chapter progresses. However, before commencing with this, it is helpful to explore the opposite side of the argument, for the corporeal body has long had a contradictory, and complicated, relationship with ideas of performance. This will set a context for demonstrating another way in which this research might contribute to scholarship.

#### The body as the 'prison-house' of the mind

Opinions on the body in performance have been a source of debate since antiquity, and find their genesis in Plato's pejorative view of the human body. For Plato, writing in ancient Greece, there existed two 'realities'; the metaphysical divine 'reality' of the

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<sup>38</sup> The term 'body' in these theories, and as applied in this research, specifically refers to the material body of a human being. Related terms may include *corpus*, *organism*, or *soma* (a term developed below). So the material, chemical and fleshly mass which we call our 'body' is the literal subject/object of this analysis.

cosmos, and the imperfect reality of the material world. This duality between divine reality and imperfect materiality was used by Plato as a means of discoursing on the human body.

According to Platonic doctrine, men possessed a spiritual soul quite separate from the corporeal 'prison-house' of their bodies.<sup>39</sup> In simple terms, the soul was divided into three elements: *logos*, which related to the epistemological understanding of reason and divine reality; *thumos* (temper or 'senses'); and *ethos*, which more directly related to the material body (from Ley, 1999, p. 21). It was only through epistemological knowledge (*logos*) of their soul that men might attain to a deep metaphysical sense of reality, achieving their full potential. The fact that drama and performance claimed to represent such reality did not enhance reason, but inhibited it. For Plato, such imperfect representation (on the basis of 'mimesis') appealed to 'that senseless part which cannot distinguish great and small... [the poet] is a [mimetic] image maker [*sic*] whose images are phantoms far removed from reality', and whose imperfect imago engaged the *thumos* and *ethos* of the body, rather than the *logos* of the mind (1995, p. 485).<sup>40</sup> Plato argued that the experience of drama aroused emotions, appealing to the humour and the senses, sacrifice reason and rational thought. Thus, in *Republic*, he called for the banishment of unwholesome and impure representational art from his ideal society.

Whilst space does not permit a full discussion, it is useful to note that Plato's dismissal is based on the representational properties of drama and art, its mimetic qualities, which in contemporary terms relate to the heightened reality of the 'dramatic work' in live performance. For Plato, mimesis was ineffectual because it did not sufficiently represent reality. For his pupil Aristotle, however, mimesis was not representative, but imitative. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle suggests that such imitation in a work can be by 'medium' (the type of art); 'object' (the persons or situations represented); or 'mode' (its structure), none of which constitute 'reality' in a metaphysical sense, but which might 'represent' the reality of a given concept or situation (1995, pp. 3-6). Yet, despite this development of the term, Graham Ley observes that Aristotle achieved only a 'partial emancipation of drama from its condemnation by Plato': he 'failed to question the inadequacy of mimesis as a definition in Plato's writing' (1999, p. 51). Ley's observation here is an important one.

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<sup>39</sup> The term 'prison-house' was used by Plato in *Phaedo*.

<sup>40</sup> It is important to note here that Plato's own definition of 'mimesis' as representation is inconsistent, and the application and misapplication of the term by Plato and other writers in antiquity has contributed to the debates which surround the capacity of art to represent or imitate. For specific examples of internal inconsistencies, see *Republic* 373b; 395a-d; 598a-b; 603c; 604e and 605a-b. Scholars who have identified similar discrepancies or conflation include Jonathan Barnes (1995) and Graham Ley (1999).

Contextualising the result of this troubled relationship between mimesis, performance, and the body, Ley observes that the result has been the subsequent development of a Western philosophical tradition perpetually trapped by the metaphysical ideals of Platonic doctrine (1999, p. 51). Likewise, pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman, in his book *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (2000), examines how the metaphysical dissatisfaction with the body as an 'organon' or 'medium' of communication were still present as late as the eighteenth century. Both Ley and Shusterman see the result of this as a philosophical foundation that marginalised the body in favour of championing the workings of the mind for self-awareness, experience, and consciousness. Such a marginalising of the body was epitomised in the duality proposed in 1637 by Rene Descartes: *cogito ergo sum* ('I think, therefore I am') (Descartes & Doney, 1968). In this case, rational epistemology constituted an understanding of ontology, just as Plato had reasoned it should.

The result of this historical mind/body divide is aptly summarised by sociologist Henri Lefebvre: 'Western philosophy has *betrayed* the body; it has actively [...] *abandoned* the body; and it has *denied* the body' through its perpetual deference to mental transcendence or external epistemology (1991, p. 407). Applying this situation to performance, the formalistic emphasis on the 'dramatic work' marginalises the effectual nature of performance, and the workings of the 'feedback loop'. Developing foundations established in the preceding chapter, such a marginalising of the body in analysis negates or diminishes the co-presence that is necessary between actors and audiences to experience and understand performance, focussing implicitly on the mental aspects of dialogic negotiation, suspension of disbelief, and meaning-making. Yet, when experiencing live performance, such processes can only take place through the body's presence, via the interaction between actors and audience members. The insistence on performative engagement in a bodily sense extends this research *beyond* the mental element of willing suspension of disbelief, and implicitly centralises bodily action and intervention in the processes and experience of performing *and* receiving. In what ways do acting and spectating bodies correspond? What might such a focus add to current scholarship on musical theatre performance analysis? What theoretical framework might be used to explore these questions?

### **Bodily presence as an analytical platform**

If we acknowledge that the locus of the performance/reception process begins with bodily co-presence to activate the 'feedback loop' and create a platform for suspending disbelief, it is necessary to explore theories of corporeality and the body in

performance. There is already a large canon of scholarship and writing on the performing body, both from theoretical perspectives, and more practical or applied positions. For example, Jade Rosina McCutcheon's textbook *Awakening the Performing Body* (2008) draws on and develops some of the theoretical principles, and embodied processes, found in the work of Constantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, and Rudolf Laban. In addition, McCutcheon introduces holistic and shamanic ritual in her body-centred actor training; developing what she terms 'Body Energy Centres' in performance practice. These techniques represent a move away from the neo-Platonic marginalising of the body, and whilst McCutcheon's implicit focus is on application rather than analysis, journals including the *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* (Intellect, 2010) and *Perfformio* (Amory; T. Smith, 2010) do explore the embodied performer from a theoretical perspective.

However, it is not solely the performer that is the focus here. In successfully writing towards a framework for analysing musical theatre performance, the fact that both actors *and* audiences are central to the 'feedback loop' of performance is what is most provocative. If actors and audiences 'co-create' performance together, as Schechner suggests (2003, p. 230), then it is the mapping of activity within that 'feedback loop' that must be the focus of this research. As Bleeker has highlighted, in transient performance there is an ever present 'relation between the body seen and the body seeing' (2002, p. 131). It is through this that the 'performance text' is opened up, interacted with, deconstructed, and created anew. Such a foregrounding of the bodily relationship between the actors and the audience as addressing and reflecting each other in live performance, positions this research within a particular theoretical frame. Essentially, it seeks to invert the Cartesian dualism of Western philosophy, and re-position the experience of theatrical performance as a bodily event.

In doing so, this research assumes a pragmatist foundation, and on this basis a specific conceptual framework needs to be developed to demonstrate how such a repositioning in analytical approach may work. This framework needs to achieve four specific objectives:

1. It must successfully champion the body.
2. It must answer the implicit challenge to Cartesian duality by enabling a discussion of the relationship between the ontological reality of the body, and the epistemological understanding of that reality. Specifically, it must explain the dialogic relationship of the 'double image' in musical theatre performance.

3. It must articulate the bodily *relationship* between actors and audience members in performance.
4. It must enable a fuller understanding of musical theatre in performance in order to satisfy the objectives of this thesis.

The first three objectives will be covered in this chapter, as a conceptual framework is developed for exploring how the bodily co-presence of actors and audience might enable a more inclusive approach to analysis. In meeting the fourth objective, Chapters Four, Five, and Six, will apply the methodological principles from this chapter in order to test the application of the theory through case study analysis. Having completed this testing ground, the concluding part of this thesis will analyse the extent to which a more inclusive framework for musical theatre analysis has been realised. So, how might a focus on the body be developed in theory? As a starting point the pragmatist philosophy of 'somaesthetics' is a provocative concept to consider.

*Richard Shusterman and why the body should be taken more seriously*

In establishing the theoretical and philosophical foundations for seeking to assess the bodily relationship between performer and spectator in live musical theatre performance, Richard Shusterman has developed a theory of 'somaesthetics' or 'body consciousness'.<sup>41</sup> Shusterman's theory may be positioned along a continuum of theoretical and philosophical thought that has challenged the Western metaphysical traditions of the mind-body divide seen in Plato and Descartes, and bemoaned by Lefebvre and Ley. Exploring Shusterman's theory of 'somaesthetics' will establish a basis upon which the body may be viewed as central to experience. In his book *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (2008), Shusterman draws on the thinking of key pragmatist philosophers to explore a body-centred approach to life experience. Before specifically developing his concepts into a framework for performance analysis, a consideration of the philosophical derivation of somaesthetics will help satisfy the first requirement of this methodology: it must champion the body.

Shusterman defines 'somaesthetics' as the 'critical study and meliorative cultivation of how we experience and use the living body (or soma) as a site of sensory appreciation (*aiesthesis*) and creative self-fashioning' (2008, p. 1). Analysing this

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<sup>41</sup> Whilst not explicitly detailed in Shusterman's writing, the term 'somaesthetics' is closely allied to the field of 'somatics', defined as the pursuit of inter-relational unity between awareness, biology and environment, and developed as an alternative health strategy by Thomas Hanna (2004). The definitions and approaches set down by Hanna are in fact markedly similar to Shusterman. However, the term 'somaesthetics' implies a cultural and critical faculty within self-awareness which is not so explicit in Hanna's work, and yet more aptly applicable here.

definition, Shusterman suggests that body consciousness involves two cause-and-effect pairings:

- Sensory appreciation through experience.
- Self-fashioning through use.

Somaesthetic philosophy therefore involves two stages; the experience of situations, leading to a sensorial appreciation of them (resulting in self-knowledge), and self-fashioning through the use of the body in response those situations.<sup>42</sup> In short, body consciousness is a cyclical paradigm: to speak of the experience – or the appreciation of the experience – is to imply one within the other. The body then, is all at once progressive and reflexive, negotiating experience whilst modifying itself in relation to the experiences it engages in/with.

For Shusterman, the result of these cause-and-effect situations renders the body as a site of transformational life experience, rather than a purely ‘foundational’ property (in Mullis, 2006, p. 108). To support this, Shusterman draws on the psychoanalytical concept of the ‘transformative’ (after Jacques Lacan) (2008, p. 9). Such a notion of the body engaging in – and experiencing – ‘transformation’, recalls Phelan’s ethic that the body in performance undergoes ‘mutual transformation’ (2004), and may be linked to the common trope of escapism in musical theatre, where utopian ideologies of heightened reality are accepted via the ‘transformation’ of the audience in performance. Before establishing such connections, the complexity of negotiating and understanding the reflexive and interrelated processes of bodily experience, sensory appreciation, self-constitution, and use, require further exploration. In doing this, we might refer to Shusterman’s theoretical framework. When outlining his somaesthetic theory, he divides its elements into three categories:

- I. *Analytic*. This category explores the relationship of the subjective ‘body’ to the external world.

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<sup>42</sup> Shusterman’s objective then is to use body knowledge and body consciousness for understanding oneself and the world more completely, a goal he sees as the entire *raison d’être* of any philosophy (2008, p. 3). A primary means for such somatic empowerment – philosophically at least – is to acknowledge and understand one’s bodily place in the world; both as a subject of experience and a being-in-the-world (that is to say, an object). As Lefebvre has acutely commented, ‘The body serves both as point of departure and as destination’ (1991, p. 194), a perspective which perhaps gives credence to Jean-Luc Nancy’s remark that to analyse the body is a ‘double failure’ – the moment one begins to analyse it, one changes what they are analysing (1993, p. 190). Evidently, acceptance of this paradox is necessary before understanding the interrelationship between self as subject and self as object. Where spectators are concerned, it might be suggested that they consistently negotiate themselves as subjects experiencing the sensory world of the dramatic work, and as beings sharing the performance with other audience members and actors.

2. *Pragmatic*. This category develops and applies holistic body practices such as the Feldenkrais Method or the Alexander Technique for increased body knowledge, awareness, and life-enhancement.
3. *Practical*. The third category draws the first and second elements together.

The second category is perhaps the least applicable in terms of this research. *Pragmatic Somaesthetics* are methods of somatic improvement based upon the presupposed *analytic*. Shusterman divides this area into two further caveats, ‘representational’ and ‘experiential’, which deal with external appearances and aesthetic properties respectively: ‘Cosmetic practices [...] exemplify the representational side of somaesthetics, while practices like Zen meditation [...] are paradigmatic of the experiential’ (Shusterman, 2000: 142). Shusterman also introduces what he terms ‘performative somaesthetics’ here, a term which differs in its application to the use of ‘performative’ in this research (his application refers to body building or weightlifting). However, in drawing together this area with the *Analytic* perspective, the *Practical* facet of Shusterman’s theory establishes the *raison d’être* behind his research, a factor that applies equally to its use here:

...it is not a matter of producing texts about the body [...] it] is about physically engaging [...] This dimension, not of saying but of doing, is the most neglected by academic [...] philosophers, whose commitment to the *logos* of discourse typically ends in textualizing the body.

(Shusterman, 2000, p. 143)

Such a textualizing, or ‘fixing’, of the body might be implicit in some of the analytical approaches explored in the preceding chapters. In order to move away from this textualizing, and having outlined the philosophical and theoretical tenets for a somaesthetic analysis of performance, the following chapters will develop a series of applied case studies. These will demonstrate the possibilities of reading live musical theatre performance through a focus on bodily interaction.

In doing so, the above perspective on the body as a cyclical and self-modifying object helps in articulating the transient nature of live performance. If performance enters its own deconstruction, part of the experience for both actors and audience in a bodily sense is surely the continual negotiation of self and meaning, creating excitement and a sense of heightened presence. In any case, the *Practical* and *Pragmatic* perspectives Shusterman discusses are both contingent on an *Analytic* foundation. A specific outline of this category will further establish why Shusterman views the body as central to

experience, enabling ideas of embodied presence to be established regarding actors and audiences in performance.

### *Shusterman and 'The Analytic'*

Analytic somaesthetics concern the bodily practices (both ontological and epistemological) which are involved in constructing notions of 'reality'. This involves viewing the body in relationship to the world as a whole, as a site for self-knowledge and self-improvement, through the 'transformative experiences' mentioned above. The *analytic* category is based upon what phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty has called 'reflective body consciousness', through which a subject is aware of his or her body in relation to the world, and to other bodies within it (Merleau-Ponty in Shusterman, 2008, p. 50).

Merleau-Ponty's idea of 'reflective body consciousness' relates to Shusterman's exploration of how the ontological constitution of the body may be used for epistemological self-awareness. However, there appears to be some confusion in what Merleau-Ponty actually meant, for he first suggests that our bodies instinctively guide us 'only on the condition that we stop analyzing it' [*sic*] (Merleau-Ponty in Shusterman, 2008, p. 50). Even though he champions this ideal of the body as *la cachette de la vie* ('the hiding place of life'), he somewhat recants by suggesting that in fact 'one cannot really feel oneself somatically without also feeling something of the external world' (2008, p. 70). This seeming contradiction is negotiated by Shusterman, who sees the body and the external world as separate but complementary: reflective body consciousness is subjective only through the body's relationship to social/external/objective factors.

Establishing this link, Shusterman develops the thoughts of William James, who explored the reciprocal relationship between the mental-corporeal constitution of meaning for the subject, and the object of their experience. Shusterman summarises:

Our bodies [...] help create a sense of common space. When I see your body, I focus on a place and object that is also the focus of your experience, even though your experience of your body is from a different perspective. In the same way, bodies provide a common place for the meeting of minds, whose intentions, beliefs, desires, and feelings are expressed [...] bodily.

(2008, p. 145)

In this sense, the body is what Shusterman calls a 'unifying space' between two things: the inner self and the outer world. Shusterman concludes that 'the body is not a mere

passive register but an active integrator of such sense perceptions' (2008, p. 143). It acts as a meeting place for experience, sensory perception, subject, and object. This function of the body as an active agent in both an ontological and epistemological sense is what forms the basis of Shusterman's *analytic* category. However, for the body to be a 'unifying space' between the inner self and the outer world, these two elements need to be defined in more detail. Doing so, the second criteria for the development of a methodology will be explored: the bodily relationship between ontology and epistemology.

### **The Body as 'Unifying Space'**

#### *Outer World*

The outer world, which impacts a subject's understanding of self, refers primarily to socio-cultural and environmental factors. These are highlighted by Shusterman through reference to the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Dewey. In particular, Wittgenstein (1967) suggests that bodily action and somatic consciousness can only be understood in relation to context and a form of personal and cultural mediation: 'the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action' (p. 577).

Shusterman's use of Wittgenstein to discern the body's place as being-in-the-world initially seems at odds with Shusterman's deference to James. Wittgenstein is critical of what he sees as a narrow definition of the self in James' work: 'the idea that the 'self' consisted mainly of 'peculiar motions in the head and between the head and the throat' (in Shusterman, 2008, p. 118).<sup>43</sup> Yet, as Shusterman rightly points out, James' metaphorical view of the body as 'the storm centre' suggests a multiplicity of elements, which James himself highlights in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890, p. 308). Introducing Dewey's perspective, however, we find a particular means of negotiating Wittgenstein and James. With reference to art, Dewey and Wittgenstein both suggest that the sensory experience of reception constitutes a reciprocal process of 'doing and undergoing' for the subject, whose internal consciousness mixes with the external environment to constitute aesthetic experience on both an ontological and epistemological level (Dewey, 1980, pp. 43-45). Shusterman suggests that the result of this is that 'one's body [...] incorporates its surroundings' (2008, p. 214). Once again, context becomes an important factor in the mediation between subject and object. Whilst James may have centred experience within the mind of the subject, his acknowledgement of the plurality of influences which mediate such experience agrees

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<sup>43</sup> See James, William (1920) *Collected Essays and Reviews*, New York: Longmans.

with Dewey and Wittgenstein. This aspect of external, cultural, and world-based factors will become important in examining how audiences 'read' musical theatre performance in given spatio-temporal circumstances, and aligns with Kirle's discussion of cultural mediation introduced at the outset.

Returning to Dewey's comment in *Art as Experience* (1980), the sensory appreciation of art is experienced through a process of 'doing and undergoing' (p. 43). As a basic position, this process highlights the transient and temporal nature of meaning-making and the event. It also suggests that it is the ontological experience of the outer world that constitutes epistemological meaning, satisfying Shusterman's first condition of somaesthetic theory: that sensory appreciation is gained *through* experience; that the body's relationship with the outer world feeds the internal experience of the senses. If this is the case, how does the body act as a 'unifying space' for socio-cultural and external objects, and the 'inner self'? Surely, if Shusterman champions the body as an 'active integrator of sense perceptions' (2008, p. 143), then distinguishing between the ontology of the outer world and the epistemological constitution of that world by the 'inner self' implies a division in experience?

This criticism has been levelled at Shusterman by Eric Mullis in his article 'Performative Somaesthetics' (2006), suggesting that whilst Shusterman speaks of closing the neo-Platonic mind-body divide seen in the somatic philosophy of William James, he predicates this on an acknowledgement of the fundamental division between consciousness and action (pp. 104-105). To support his criticism of Shusterman, Mullis uses Shusterman's own reference to the work of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994, 2000), who (much like James) acknowledges that there are different aspects of consciousness and self-constitution. However, a closer look at Damasio's position reveals an interesting foundation upon which he acknowledges the differences. In exploring this, the 'inner self' may be more clearly understood; a crucial element in the development of a somaesthetic framework for analysis.

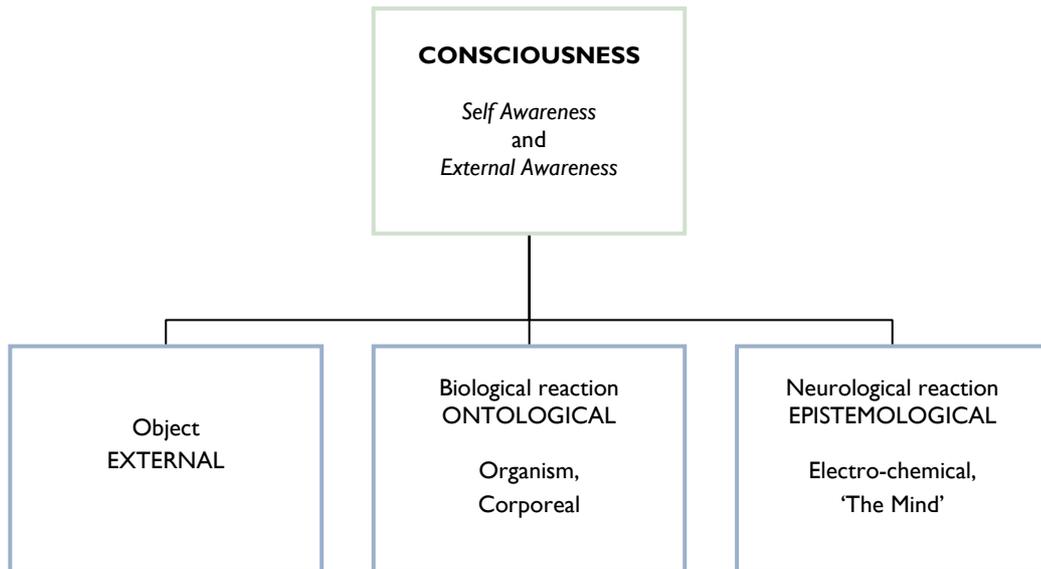
#### *Inner Self and Damasio's hierarchy of consciousness*

In *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (2000), Damasio explores the formation of self with reference to 'consciousness' (commonly, the cognitive awareness of being-in-the-world). In doing so, Damasio constructs a hierarchy of 'consciousness', through which Shusterman's discussion of the body as a 'unifying space' may be recast and clarified. Exploring Damasio's neuro-scientific foundation for the development of his philosophy of consciousness, the second criteria for a model of analysis is completely satisfied; Damasio argues for a negation of any sense of a mind/body divide in experience or sensory appreciation. His hierarchy of

consciousness is not a separable paradigm; the states and stages necessarily interlink and auto-regulate each other.

The first level of consciousness, for Damasio, is the *proto-self* – the ‘current representation of the state of the organism’ – a subconscious chemical and neurological regulation of the corporeal ‘being’ in existence (2000, p. 173). The second level is the *core self*, which regulates present ontological awareness of self in relation to both the external world and internal consciousness, corporeally and neurologically. Core consciousness here comprises of non-verbal, electro-chemical signals, relating to the organism and the object external to it; it is not a separate neurological sense (Damasio, 2000, p. 125). Crucially, this constitution of the basic *core self* leads Damasio to suggest that ‘consciousness begins as the feeling of what happens when we see or hear or touch [...] that accompanies the making of any kind of image [...] within our living organisms’ (2000, p. 26).

In short, consciousness – the opportunity for sensory experience and self-knowledge – begins as a corporeal event, induced by factors or objects external to our biological machinery, but from which electro-chemical and neurological *images* may be produced within our minds. In satisfying the second requirement of a body centred methodology, the above statement by Damasio represents an inversion of the neo-Platonic and Cartesian dualism in which the mind constituted self-awareness (1968). Instead, Damasio appears to render it ‘I am, therefore I think’, concurrently constituting an epistemology of the object, whilst ontologically rendering the body as self-aware in the process. Neurologically and biologically, Damasio locates ‘the sense of a self in the act of knowing’ (Damasio, 2000, p. 11). To summarise such a connection between ‘mind’, body, and external object, the following model provides a visual aid to this reading of Damasio:



**Figure 3.1 – Damasio’s hierarchy of consciousness**

There is, then, an intrinsic link in Damasio’s theory between bodily sensation, ontological and neuro-chemical *imaging* of the object in question, and an epistemological understanding of the object (the outer world). Together, these form ‘consciousness’ within the subject, the reciprocal awareness of self in relation to the external world; sensory appreciation through bodily experience. Importantly, ‘consciousness’ does not begin with an epistemological image in the mind, but with the organism’s corporeal engagement with the outside world. In Damasio’s view, this induces the related electro-chemical signals within the brain and body, all of which then combine to create self-awareness and external-awareness. Such a hierarchy – and neurobiological framework – centralises the body as Shusterman’s ‘unifying space’, facilitating conscious constitution of the external world by the internal (neurological) self, activated and engaged with through the body. Thus, reading Shusterman in the light of Damasio, the suggestion that the body is an active, somaesthetic ‘integrator of [...] sense perceptions’, and a ‘unifying space’ between conscious self and external world, seems accurate (2008, p. 143). This also supports James’ notion that bodily sensation is ‘cognitively crucial’ in providing our sense of external spatio-temporal reality, which has a bearing on the presence of the body in engaging with, and understanding, live performance (in Shusterman, 2008, p. 144).

Using Damasio’s hierarchy of consciousness, and Merleau-Ponty’s acknowledgement of the constitution of self within the external world, ‘reflective body consciousness’ becomes contextualised as a necessary awareness of the body and its status within meaning construction; as a site for the negotiation of the ‘inner self’ (the hierarchy of Damasio) and the external world. For Shusterman, this body

consciousness allows for Michel Foucault's ideals of 'transformative experience', through which sensory appreciation may develop into self-knowledge.<sup>44</sup> This is particularly applicable to the ideals and conventions of musical theatre performance as discussed above, and thus Shusterman's use of Foucauldian theory, and ideas of 'transformative experience', are worth examining further.

#### *Somaesthetic body consciousness and 'transformative experience'*

Whilst not explicitly advocating Foucault's hedonism, an understanding of the body through somaesthetic body consciousness means actively engaging in 'transformative experiences' (Shusterman, 2008, p. 9). Such transformation involves the way sensory appreciation is derived from an awareness of, and engagement with, the external world and the experiences it may offer. Notably, the idea of transformation in this sense derives from psychoanalysis, from the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. It is defined in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* as a process 'whereby a subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed [...] after the model the other provides' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 205). The use of such a term by Foucault and Shusterman provides a link between somaesthetic self consciousness, and a necessary awareness of the 'other', in the process of self-identification and self-constitution. This 'other' may be a person, as suggested by Damasio (2000) and defined in relation to the performer in theatre by Bleeker (2002), or an object, as referred to by Dewey in *Art as Experience* (1980).<sup>45</sup> The somaesthetic appreciation of 'transformative experiences' is seen in Shusterman to be influenced by the cultural mediation of subject and object, a further element of the outer world which impacts on body consciousness. Cultural mediation was established in the Introduction to be vital to the way an audience member engages with musical theatre performance. This element, therefore, has a specific theoretical and somaesthetic basis which will be developed further through the course of this thesis.

However, an important element of the transformative potential of sensory appreciation is the way in which bodies understand, experience, or display emotion. This is particularly relevant to musical theatre performance because, as Miller has highlighted, its performance aesthetic exists in its 'unapologetic emotionalism' (2007, p. 1). Damasio argues that an 'emotion' felt is the outward (external) manifestation of an

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<sup>44</sup> Shusterman explores Foucault's ideas of 'technologies of the self' and the relationship between bodies and pleasure. He specifically refers to Foucault's *History of Sexuality (Vols. 1 and 2)* (1980, 1986) and *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984* (1997) in his discussion.

<sup>45</sup> The 'object' of art in this case may be the intangible and transient 'text' of musical theatre performance, within which the performer constitutes a meta-theatrical 'object' themselves, through which a spectator vicariously 'transforms' into the character. Such a perspective may well be discussed with reference to Lacanian 'mirror theory', which falls outside the remit of this research.

internal feeling, and is culturally bound and programmed. Therefore, the emotional extent of these ‘transformative experiences’ – be it the impact of abstract emotive music, or the more direct and heightened realism of a linear narrative – is seemingly culturally mediated and pre-conditioned. Damasio reasons that ‘In all probability, development and culture [...] shape what constitutes an adequate inducer of a given emotion; [...] they shape some aspects of the expression of emotion; and [...] they shape the cognition and behaviour which follows the deployment of an emotion’ (2000, p. 57). These intrinsic links in Damasio between body, feeling, emotion, consciousness, and the outside world, will be explicitly defined here as a means by which a discourse can be initiated regarding a subject’s emotional and corporeal engagement with the transformative potential of musical theatre.

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In summary then, the theoretical basis upon which somaesthetics is developed champions the body through the philosophy of body consciousness. ‘The body’, in this case, is seen as a ‘unifying space’ between the inner self and the outer world; between body consciousness, and sensory appreciation of experience, and the object of that experience. Using Damasio’s hierarchy of consciousness (2000), somaesthetics inverts the neo-Platonic Cartesian duality of a mind/body divide, and instead suggests that consciousness is the ontological awareness of self in relation to the external world and others. Being-in-the-world, therefore, is knowing-that-you-are. Both being, and knowing, the sensory appreciation and self-knowledge achieved through ‘transformative experiences’, are always mediated by external and internal factors of culture, social conditioning and life experience.

The above outline of somaesthetic theory suggests that it may be a potential platform from which to develop a framework for analysing the body as central to the experience of live musical theatre performance. The philosophical basis upon which somaesthetics is formed certainly champions the body, and the reference to neuro-biological perspectives such as that of Damasio allows the inversion of Cartesian dualities in analysis. However, how might the above be developed within an analytical context when considering musical theatre? Can the principles extrapolated from somaesthetic theory provide a means to negotiate the dialogic interplay of musical theatre’s ‘double image’? Can a focus on the body help explain the actor/character duality? Does it provide a basis upon which to account for cultural mediation? And importantly, does somaesthetics enable a discourse which articulates the above

concerns through a focus on the co-presence and relationship between the actors and the audience in live musical theatre performance?

*The 'double image' of musical theatre and the formal discontinuity of the form*

One of the primary conceits of the musical theatre performance aesthetic is exemplified in its 'double image', the antagonistic duality which seeks to pull the audience in two different directions; acknowledging the artifice, whilst succumbing to the heightened reality of the fiction. How might somaesthetic principles contribute to an understanding of musical theatre's 'double image'? First, in focussing on the actor's own duality of presence and his fictional embodiment of character, the tripartite phenomenology of States helps to establish a means of articulating this experientially. In a similar conceptualisation to Knapp, States' maps the 'opposing worlds' of the theatre as cultural institution and fictional world along what he calls the 'pronominal axis' (in Zarrilli, 2002, p. 23). For States, the engagement for the actor between themselves, the audience, and the character of the text, takes the form: I – YOU – HE. He outlines this tripartite state through two phenomenological lenses. For the actor as themselves, in the state of *Acting*, this engagement takes the form: I = Actor/ YOU = Audience/ HE = Character.

However, when the actor embodies the character, and is *Enacting*, engagement takes the form: I = Character/ YOU = Other characters/ HE = Absent/marginalized/deictic characters. States develops this further, and presents the following tripartite phenomenology of the actor:

I	=	Self Expressive mode
YOU	=	Collaborative mode
HE	=	Representational mode

These phenomenological states are interactive, and exemplify the 'double image' from the point of view of the actors rather than the audience. As States suggests, no matter how much an actor becomes a character, 'there is always the ghost of a self in his performance' (2002, p. 24). Kier Elam's reductive paradigm also bears this out, as cited by Fuchs: 'An *I* addressing a *you* here and now' (1996, p. 71).

So, there is always a trace of the self-conscious in the actor's performance. Ideas of presence and energy are thus contextualised as a means by which the actor negotiates the duality of self and character, and handles the changes in communication style between the disjunctive elements of dialogue, song, and dance. It is interesting to

consider a potential somaesthetic perspective on the actor in this regard. 'Characters' only exist in States 'representational mode'; they are not physical entities but textual visages enacted by an actor. As such, the actor's presence on stage, and the energy he exhibits, is not that of a character. Or is it? It may be suggested that 'character' in performance is negotiated by a recognition of the presence of the actor themselves (the *core self*), within the 'here and now' of the performance, and simultaneously played out within the supposed 'here and now' of the situation being enacted. This element of enactment is produced neuro-chemically in the audience member, and is commonly referred to as the suspension of disbelief. However, if ontology and epistemology are reciprocal and co-dependent, then it might be suggested that the 'here and now' of the performance (the bodily presence of the actor), and the 'here and now' of the character he assumes, become simultaneously experienced in the process of performance.

This claim is contentious, and open to challenge on the basis that the formal discontinuity of musical theatre – the constant structural and audio-visual disjunctions in the 'performance text' – does not allow the same level of constancy or *status quo* as might a play or other form of theatre. As the previous chapters demonstrated, various narrative or dramatic structures in linear or post-linear musicals, and the function of music in performance, serve to constantly require the actors to negotiate States' modes of presence, and to navigate McMillin's 'spaces of vulnerability' (2006). However, it might be suggested that – within the individual spatio-temporal units of 'book time' and 'lyric time' – actors somaesthetically embody characters, wherein their physical performance through movement, voice, and song (which is ontological), constitute both elements of the 'double image' as one, where the consciousness, the 'actions, intentions, feelings [of 'character'] are expressed [...] bodily' (Shusterman, 2008, p. 145). This not only demonstrates the cause-and-effect nature of presence and heightened reality, but provides a somaesthetic reference point for the 'double image' whilst in a constant state of flux. Whilst an actor may assume the mantle of a textual character, and embody it in performance, how do the audience perceive this with reference to the idea of the 'double image'?

#### *The audience, somaesthetics and the 'double image'*

As succinctly articulated by Fuchs, an audience's perception has two specific constituents: 1) The presence of character in the 'here and now' of the narrative, 2) The presence of the performer in the 'here and now' of the performance itself:

The sense of presence in the theatre has always had two overlapping, but still separable components, the “double ‘now’” of which Thomas Whitaker writes: one related to the dramatic narrative as embodied in the total *mise-en-scene*. Here, the narrative becomes so present as to be happening *now*. The other has to do specifically with the circle of heightened awareness in the theatre flowing from actor to spectator, and back that sustains the dramatic world.

(1996, p. 70)

Somaesthetically, the presence of ‘character’ is not only a result of the willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience. Whilst this is perhaps part of the culturally mediated conventions of the form, the external world which ‘meets’ the inner self of each audience member in the ‘unifying space’ of their bodies, is a two-fold construct, equivalent to the ‘double now’ Fuchs’ refers to (1996, p. 70). This duality is the world of the fiction, and the reality of the performance. Experiencing this ‘double now’, the musical theatre audience then negotiate a constant rupture of that *status quo* through Knapp’s ‘double image’, which requires an ongoing revision of orientation on the part of the audience member. Does this not feel like a return to a binary of presence and enactment; of ontological presence, and mental suspension of disbelief? Referring back to Damasio (2000), the ontological and the epistemological are interlinked in experience, for both the performative presence, and the fictional constructs within the ‘performance text’, represent elements of the world external to the audience member as a human subject. Yet, if both parts of the ‘double now’ are constituted ontologically, processed epistemologically, and construct a conscious awareness of the experience for the audience, then is there a distinction? Does this challenge the premise of Knapp’s ‘double image’?

The recent application of cognitive neuroscience in performance and reception theory is of particular use in answering this question. Apart from the neurobiology of Damasio, a specifically performance based neuroscience is emerging in scholarship. In particular, Bruce McConachie’s use of ‘conceptual blending theory’ suggests that the distinctions which exist cognitively can blend conceptually and corporeally. In his book *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (2008), McConachie draws on Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s idea of ‘conceptual blending’ (p. 39). Whilst this concept will be specifically developed in the case studies which follow, it essentially represents the way in which an audience member might cognitively negotiate the fictional ‘presence’ of a character within the narrative, in direct parallel with the presence of the actor himself. Such blending can be selective: an audience member may

choose to focus on one specific element of the 'double image', according to his or her preference, cultural understanding, or a variety of other reasons. This serves to further confirm Kirle's suggestion that it is the audience who ultimately 'complete' the work in performance (2006), and somaesthetically, the link between ontological constitution of 'character' or 'actor', and the cognitive engagement with them through conceptual blending, seems reciprocal and perpetual. So, whilst conceptual blending is a cognitive facet which acknowledges the distinction within the 'double now' of performance, it is facilitated through the ontological bodily presence and negotiation of the audience's inner self with outer nature. This demonstrates the means by which the body, as a 'unifying space', might open up the interplay of dialogisms in musical theatre performance.

One of the reasons why this blending is successful in merging or blurring distinctions relates directly to the intensified sense of presence in the 'feedback loop'. Extending an earlier quote from Barba, it is the ontological bodily presence of the actor that is felt first, after which the character is created, imbued with presence, and blended into the experience. Barba speaks of the tensions of acting bodies in the state of performance:

These [...] tensions [pre-language and corporeal] generate an extra-daily energy quality which renders the body theatrically "decided", "alive", "believable", thereby enabling the performer's presence or scenic *bios* to attract the spectator's attention *before* any message is transmitted.  
(cited in Mullis, 2006, p. 110)

The dualism of the 'alive' body on stage, attracting the audience before the character is 'activated', is discussed here with reference to the notion of 'extra-daily energy'. Barba sees the body's cultural and physical habits as 'daily techniques'. On stage, the heightened reality of the actor-as-character manifests itself in a 'waste and excess of energy' in performance (in Mullis, 2006, p. 111). It is this energy which engages the actors with the audience. Notably, this also seems to be the case for audience members as well, who identify with the 'extra-daily energy', and if Fuchs' notion is correct, correspondingly heighten their own bodily awareness and receptive capabilities in experiencing the performance. A 'feedback loop' is thus established. It is through this heightened awareness within the 'feedback loop' – the heightened reality of live performance – that the 'transformative experience' of theatre can take place.

### **Musical theatre as transformative experience**

Having established a neuro-chemical and bodily response to the situation of theatre, this section will examine how the performance may constitute a 'transformative experience' *between* the actors and the audience. This methodology of somaesthetics thus relies on notions of theatrical presence: the presence of embodied actors and audience (see Fuchs, 1996, p. 70). Fuchs' suggestion that it is this heightened spatio-temporal awareness of bodily presence that 'sustains the dramatic world' is important here. It is not just within the performance, but in activation of the enacted 'dramatic work' (p. 70). This may seem an obvious statement, but it is the combination of bodily presence, and the initiation of cognitive conceptual blending, that allows the activation of the 'dramatic work' into the 'world' of performance. Through this, the individual subject constitutes meaning by way of a 'transformative experience'.

As a critical implementation of this idea, Maaïke Bleeker's 'Bodies seeing Bodies Onstage' (2002), analyses and critiques modernist dance theorist John Martin, who develops an almost Foucauldian theory of bodily exploration; the idea that the 'inner mimicry' of dance can be vicariously translated into ontological meaning by a spectator. In particular, another neuro-scientific discovery links embodied experience to sensory appreciation as the catalyst for 'transformation'. Developed in detail throughout the following case studies, musicologists, performance theorists, and dance theorists, have recently begun to borrow a specific finding from neuroscience: the discovery of the mirror-neuron system in the brain. Pioneered in research by Giacomo Rizzolatti and Vittorio Gallese (1996), mirror-neurons exist in the pre-motor cortex. Rizzolatti and his colleagues have presented evidence that suggests that when a subject watches another subject's action or movement, their brain vicariously mirrors that action, prompting motor-sensory simulation in the body of the spectator. If we were to apply this to musical theatre, along with Martin's theory, it would seem that at the very least the physical stylization inherent in many musical works are experienced by the audience as subversive self-expression, self exploration, and experienced vicariously. The outer world of the 'performance text' (including the 'dramatic work'), experienced through the body, and combined through conceptual blending, are vicariously negotiated via the mirror-neuron system. This reaction of the inner self then feeds back into the body, modifying the corporeal presence of the audience member, producing sensory appreciation, self-knowledge, and 'transformative experience'.

This does not simply mean that we might engage in deviant sexual self-gratification with the Emcee when we witness a performance of 'Two Ladies' in *Cabaret* (1977), but it may mean that our deepest desires are fulfilled by corporeal (human)

subjects onstage, facilitated by the heightening of the moment through music and physical stylisation, as demanded by the 'dramatic work'. Perhaps this is why, when watching a performance of 'Singing in the Rain', or 'Shall We Dance?' from *Crazy For You* (1993), or even simply witnessing a love song onstage between Tony and Maria in *West Side Story* (1956), Fabrizio and Clara in *The Light in the Piazza* (2003), or Maria and the Captain in *The Sound of Music* (1956), we can either fulfil escapist fantasies of utopia (Dolan), or relate to the experiences through the medium of vicarious enactment (Martin). To return to Foucault, this constitutes an active engagement in private sensory-aesthetic pleasure for self-knowing. In fact, such a notion – whilst contested to an extent by Bleeker – has been supported and echoed by Mullis, who reasons that if John Dewey's somatic theory is correct (also used by Shusterman), then 'watching a dancer perform is necessarily a participatory affair [...] when they watch other embodied beings move on stage, they vicariously move with them' (2006, p. 115). In short, theatre is a transformative experience.

This is particularly pertinent to discussing reactions to music, and the voice in performance, which will be examined in depth with specific reference to Paul Robertson's work on neuro-chemical reactions to music in performers and listeners (2007). Damasio's hierarchy of consciousness crucially links neuro-chemical reactions and image 'tracing' in 'the mind': a scientific theory which might support Martin's notion of vicarious 'inner mimicry' when watching a performance (Damasio, 2000; Martin, 2002). However, an important factor to consider here is that all of this (according to Wittgenstein, Dewey, Shusterman and Damasio) is contingent on, or influenced by, culture and the external environment. According to Damasio, cultural factors influence how we read and receive emotions, and crucially, how we perceive and develop strategies for expressing them (2000, p. 57). He reasons that whilst chemical and muscular reactions are induced universally, the electro-chemical reactions in the brain are regulated by our *proto-self* according to the external situation (the 'world' of the musical), and he offers scientific support for such a claim (2000, p. 67). This not only suggests the intrinsic link between bodily and neurologically induced reactions, but also the relationship between 'inner self' and the outer world through culturally dependent means.

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The foregoing discussion of somaesthetics, and related neuro-biological theories, demonstrates that the body is a worthy subject of study when considering how one

might engage with, and experience, live musical theatre performance. It inverts the Cartesian duality, and in doing so provides a basis upon which to discuss the 'double image' of musical theatre performance as a primarily corporeal and ontological experience. The fiction of the 'dramatic work' is not given life through a simple process of suspended disbelief, but rather, a careful interplay of the two states of ontological presence and epistemological understanding.

Through the conceptual blending process, and via the mirror-neuron system, consciousness (or epistemological experience) begins 'when we see or hear or touch [...] it is a feeling that accompanies the making of any kind of image [...] within our living organisms' (Damasio, 2000, p. 26). One primary outcome of this position is the suggestion that in experiencing the 'double image' of musical theatre performance, the 'feedback loop' can never remain a stable entity, delineating between corporeal engagement and the cognitive suspension of disbelief. As the body is a cyclical 'unifying space', the 'outer world' and the subject's experience of it necessarily meet, blend, merge, collide, and negotiate. To this end, a binary consideration of the 'dramatic work' and the 'performance text' in analysis seems limiting, and does not fully acknowledge the interplay of dialogisms within the 'double image', and the inter-text of live performance.

Therefore, borrowing from (and extending) terms used by Pavis (1996), the following section will re-cast the 'dramatic work' and the 'performance text' as *spaces*. This allows for a sense of interrelation, overlap, and interdependence, rather than a delineated sense of 'closed' work or plural 'text'. In both instances, the concept of space here allows for the dialogic interaction of different performative and dramatic voices at any given time, both in the 'dramatic space' and the 'performance space' (which may, or may not, be fully accounted for in the developing framework, but which are implicitly acknowledged through application of this framework).

To talk about 'dramatic space' or 'performance space' then, there is a need to define what we might mean by 'space' in this context. It is notable that performance theorists including Pavis, Garner, and Schechner, along with Shusterman and Lefebvre, have used conceptions of 'space' in their writing. Whilst drawing on these, the boundaries of terminology used here need clarification and contextualisation. This is particularly the case when assessing the tensions, and dialogical interplay, in live musical theatre performance, between the 'dramatic space(s)' of the text, characters, and narrative, and the 'performance space(s)' of the actors and the audience. The two are inextricable, one being positioned *within* the other, but with free-flowing negotiation, overlap, feedback, dialogue, and subversion, between them. In reality, perhaps it could

be suggested that it is impossible to analyse one without analysing the other. However, the in-theory binary between them in the following section will allow for these terms to be defined analytically, in order to forward an understanding of their properties, and utilise this in the development of a more inclusive framework for musical theatre analysis.

## **Bodies, Performances, Spaces**

### *Dramatic Space*

Dramatic action in live performance might be seen to take place as a conceptual 'dramatic space', which Pavis defines as 'the fictional location, the characters, and the narrative' (1996, p. 152). The dramatic space then, refers to the textual, structural, and fictional properties of the work in performance: the narrative, the characters, the dialogue, the lyrics, the music, and the dance (if diegetically driven). These elements constitute the 'dramatic work' in performance, activated and assembled temporally by the actors, and engaged with as a heightened reality via ontological presence, conceptual blending, and the mirror-neuron system, by the audience. The dramatic space then, is transient and conceptual; a dialogism in, and of, itself. It is also incomplete – fragmented and in need of activation – within the 'performance space', for as Garner suggests, the drama is *nested* within the performance (1994). As seen above, it is the space which many textual analyses of the musical focus on in terms of emotional engagement and distancing through the 'double image' of musical theatre.

However, from the dialogic perspective of spatial interaction, the dramatic space is not merely confined to the *mise-en-scène*, or the proscribed 'specular field' of a proscenium arch, or stage area (Garner, 1994, p. 45). Through the 'feedback loop', both actors and audience activate and perpetuate the dramatic space, broadening its dialogic field into the auditorium, where the audience give consent to the seeming 'reality' of dancing balletically down a street on the upper West side, or singing wistfully whilst slitting someone's jugular vein with a cutthroat razor. This bears out the earlier suggestion that the 'double image' and the 'double now' 'overlap' in performance, further confirming the appropriateness of approaching this research using the concept of inter-relational 'spaces' (Fuchs, 1996, p. 70).

The dramatic space, then, is perpetually incomplete, disjunctive, and fragmented, activated and rendered 'present' (or complete) by means of the 'feedback loop'. As Pavis (1996, 2008) has discussed with regard to performance at large, this relationship is what gives credence to, and authorises, the performance. After all, musical theatre works are written to be performed, and therefore received in this

manner, placing the actor/audience relationship at the very heart of its mechanisms and conventions. If this is the case then, what might be said about the 'performance space'?

### *Performance Space*

The 'performance space' consists of two elements: a) the physical space in which the performance takes place and the audience reside, and b) the 'feedback loop' between the actors and the audience as an experiential 'space'. The first element is the physical space created for the performance. Aspects of theatre architecture are also applicable here, and are considered in relation to audience engagement by Schechner (2003, p. 180). This element of space will be considered in Chapter Five of this thesis.

The physical space is essentially comprised of two further sub-spaces: the playing space for actors and the receiving space for the audience. The playing space is read by the audience as inert until actors physically inhabit it: 'With the actor's entrance, the stage as a whole becomes a differently oriented field' (Barba, 2002; Garner, 1994, p. 47). The playing space then, with primary reference to the proscenium arch theatre, 'offers itself to the audience as a specular field, framed [...] for objectifying vision', a space where the dramatic space can be embodied and presented (Garner, 1994, p. 45). Within this playing space, negotiations can be observed between the bodies which inhabit it, the subject/object relationships onstage, and across the boundary between the actors and the audience (Bleeker, 2002). In this sense, the playing space is not only physically positioned as a framing device for the *mise-en-scène*, but in a literal sense is defined by the darkness which consumes the house and gives the 'playing space [stage space] its boundaries' (Garner, 1994, p. 40). Yet, what of the performance space in an experiential sense? How does an audience read the performance in space?

This second element of the 'performance space' relates directly to the creation of the 'feedback loop'. As Schechner observes, the uniqueness of live performance is that 'artists and audiences *co-create together* in exactly the same time/space', giving life to the fiction of the dramatic space (2003, p. 230). The performance space thus requires that we acknowledge the physical presence of the actor(s) and audience in the creation of the event. This particular facet of analysis has been discussed implicitly by Pavis (1996), Schechner (2003), Fuchs (1996), Carlson (1994) and others, but has also been overtly central to the phenomenological or experiential theories of Dolan (2005), Barba (2002), and Garner (1994). The centralising notions of Garner position the experience of performance as a negotiation of perception, between the bodies of the audience (present in the performance space), and the embodied actors onstage:

As soon as an actor steps onto the stage [...] a fundamental shift takes place [...] oriented in relation to the body... a rival perceptual centre.

(1994, p. 46)

The performance space here is no longer inert, no longer just a field of expectant spectating bodies. It now contains forms of what Pavis has called *active space* (1996, p. 152), and what is essentially the establishment of the 'feedback loop', activated through the reciprocity of the energies flowing between actor(s) and audience (cited in Mullis, 2006, p. 110). The result of this is Dolan's 'event exchange', as actors and audience share, negotiate, and input meaning, into the dialogism of the dramatic space.

The physical spaces of actors and audience may be conceptually separate, but the use of 'spaces' as a means of discussing the work in performance allows for the dialogic interaction between the self-conscious reality of performance, and the structural and narrative properties of the work being performed. Performance then, embodied and enacted by the actors in the playing space, is authorised and made complete through the presence of the audience, culturally mediated by their 'horizon of expectation' (after Hans Robert Jauss), who applaud, or laugh, at the *act* rather than the narrative itself (Banfield, 1993, p. 172). Therefore, the actor/audience relationship becomes central to this discussion as the means through which one space is inhabited and activated, and the other is given life through embodiment and engagement (which is why a rehearsal is never a performance). It is this bodily relationship that the following will explore in more detail.

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As a conceptual framework for potentially analysing musical theatre, the pragmatist theory of somaesthetics seems an apt platform upon which to consider the bodily relationship between the actors and the audience in live performance. On a subjective basis, the way in which a human subject might experience performance has been seen to involve more than a sense of escapism via suspended disbelief. Whilst cognitive elements of conceptual blending do have a role to play in negotiating the complex disjunctions and dualisms of the 'double image', this is only possible through the ontological constitution of the 'feedback loop' between the actors and the audience. It is on this basis corporeally, cognitively, and neuro-chemically, that sensory appreciation can take place during the experience of musical theatre.

Drawing the primary elements of the above discussion together, the following definition of somaesthetics, as a means of analysing live musical theatre performance, might be presented:

**SOMAESTHETIC PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS:**

*A framework to analyse live musical theatre performance through an exploration of the shared, heightened corporeal consciousness exchanged between Subject A [Actor(s)] and Subject B [Audience (members)] in the 'feedback loop' of performance; through which physiological experiences may induce cognitive responses, produce emoto-sensory engagement, and result in 'transformative experiences' within a given spatio-temporal event.*

Encompassed within this definition are concerns with the live nature of performance, the heightened sense of presence, the 'event exchange', the 'feedback loop', the bleeding of boundaries between dramatic space and performance space, the 'double image' of musical theatre, the centrality of physiological engagement and cognitive negotiation, and the transformational potential of experience. Using texts by Shusterman, Damasio, and McConachie as primary theoretical works, the following chapters will apply these principles to a set of case studies, considering aspects related to the body, performance, and the above philosophical and neuro-biological theory.

The first case study explores John Doyle's actor-musician production of *Company*, and will focus on specifically articulating the 'double image' of musical theatre, and the relationship this has to the negotiation of spaces within the 'feedback loop' of performance. It will explore this using a deliberately explicit means of rupturing the 'dramatic space', and in doing so, consider the way in which conceptual blending might temper or influence the making of meaning and sensory appreciation. The second case study will develop these ideas through reference to cultural mediation in analysing the 1980 musical *Cats*, exploring ways in which a body-centric approach might produce a sense of narrative cohesion, in an otherwise vignette-based work. Finally, drawing elements of the first two case studies together, the third and final case study in Chapter Six will focus on embodied perspectives of the singing voice, exploring the relationship between the language of the 'dramatic work' and the vocal qualities of the 'performance text', in the musical *The Light in the Piazza*. First, however, Chapter Four will explore ideas of bodies in space, and conceptual blending in reception.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 'Make Me Aware of Being Alive': *Company*

#### 'One is lonely and two is boring': The 'double image' and the actor-musician

Working at The Watermill Theatre in Newbury, England, director John Doyle, and his long-term musical director associate Sarah Travis, have in recent years commercially popularised actor-musicianship as an alternative 'language' for musical theatre performance (Pender & Doyle, 2006). Doyle's black-box productions are commonly performed in a small venue, with minimal cast of around twelve performers. During his residency at The Watermill Theatre, Doyle designed and directed *Sweeney Todd* (2004), *Mack and Mabel* (2007), *Merrily We Roll Along* (2008), *Company* (2006, USA), and other musicals using this aesthetic.<sup>46</sup> In a literal sense, actor-musicianship introduces a very specific element to the phenomenological dynamic of musical theatre performance: musicianship. Whilst it might be argued that the act of singing in conventional musical theatre renders the performer a musician through the use of their voice, the specific designation 'actor-musician' involves the physical – bodily – action of playing a musical instrument, in tandem with the dualism of acting and enacting.<sup>47</sup> The performers, embodying fictional characters, thereby induce their own heightened expressiveness in a vocal and musical sense, via their bodies.

In some ways, this might even recast Knapp's 'double image' as a 'triple image' of actor/character/musician, but how might such an aesthetic be understood? Are the instruments diegetic, extending the corporeality of the character into the heightened realm of musico-dramatic expression? Are they extra-diegetic, grounded within the playing-space, and therefore consistently rupturing the dramatic space? Can the performance of musical instruments be both an enactment *and* a performance? Do the audience receive these objects as confirming the 'double image', or extending musical theatre into the realm of a 'triple image'? These concerns will be implicit in the following case study, which uses Doyle's 2006 production of *Company* as a basis for discussion and analysis.

At first, the actor-musician aesthetic may seem an extreme and peculiarly specific platform to choose in exploring the relationships between actor and character, and actor and audience. However, the nature of the aesthetic visually and corporeally exploits the continuous dialogic interplay in musical theatre performance. So, whilst in

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<sup>46</sup> Other actor-musician productions originating at The Watermill Theatre include Craig Revel Horwood's productions of *The Hot Mikado* (2004), *Martin Guerre* (2007) and *Sunset Boulevard* (2009).

<sup>47</sup> As an example which this chapter will further consider, Doyle's production of *Company* utilises a total of thirty-two separate instruments in differing combinations between thirteen actor-musicians onstage.

itself it is a specific form, the following analysis will allow for, and develop, broader debates and conclusions, which will then apply throughout the development of somaesthetic analysis. Before looking specifically at Doyle's production, it must be acknowledged that there is little formal scholarship on actor-musician technique, theory, or practice. In order to examine actor-musicianship somaesthetically, the following section will present two different approaches to the way actor-musicianship may recast an audience's engagement with the actor/character duality, and serve to enhance the 'exchange' between embodied actor and audience member.<sup>48</sup> To do this, we will return to States' paradigms above, and think of these approaches in broad terms as *enacting* and *acting* approaches.

### **Somaesthetics and actor-musicianship**

#### *Enacting Actor-musicianship (Perspective I)*

As Knapp has observed, the presence of music in theatre sets a given moment in relief dramatically: 'the effect of adding music to a dramatic scene that might otherwise play naturalistically serves to exaggerate its content [...] at the same time [striving] to tap into a deeper kind of reality, one accessible only through music' (2005, p. 12). The power of music has already been discussed in the preceding chapters. It is music that Knapp has suggested typically exposes the 'double image' of musical theatre performance, and it is during musical numbers or sequences that McMillin suggests actors might enter their metaphorical 'spaces of vulnerability' (2006, p. 192).<sup>49</sup> It is within these spaces of vulnerability that the thrill and danger of live performance in the 'here and now', dislocates the dramatic space of the characters, and intensifies or enhances the dramatic, or psychological, full bodied emotions of situations which dialogue cannot (McMillin, 2006, pp. 192-195). As Knapp suggests, music accesses this 'deeper kind of [heightened] reality' (2005, p. 12). If this is the case for conventional musical theatre, how might the actor-musician aesthetic alter the 'double image'?

Conventionally, whilst Banfield (1993) and Symonds (2005) have argued that audiences consistently rupture the unity of the dramatic space with their acknowledgement of the performance space through applause or laughter, the shift from speech to song – however disjunctive – occurs by means of an often concealed pit

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<sup>48</sup> Colin Sell, former course leader for Actor-Musicianship at Rose Bruford College (UK) suggests that 'at present [...] actor-muso shows, because of their provenance from [...] small-scale, superficially-entertaining touring shows and companies, are still perceived as either gimmicky or just more lightweight than even a conventionally mounted musical. This, despite the work that Doyle and others have done' (Personal email communication, 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Knapp's discussion of the heightened reality of musical theatre in his two volume thematic study of *The American Musical* develops the idea of a dual mask of song and dialogue in what he further terms MERM (Musically Enhanced Reality Mode) (2005, 2006). Whilst Knapp's MERM is principally a lens through which he assesses film musicals, its transferral here also provides a suitable analytical framework.

orchestra.<sup>50</sup> Such a situation has consequences, meaning that character's shifts from speech into song are inevitable, unstoppable (which perhaps is part of the reason Miller sees for audiences engaging with the form's emotionalism) (2007, p. 1). Thus, an unseen musical force licences the actors to negotiate the 'double image' of musical theatre performance. In this respect, opera scholar Carolyn Abbate has suggested that 'performance is an embodiment, which makes the force of the music palpable', attached to narrative, or stylised physical expression, and creating intense responses (2001, p. 18). So, the production of music here is directly linked to embodiment and corporeality. Likewise, music may order time and tempo (Storr, 1997), and establish group rhythms for the performers and audiences (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Lippman, 1999). It may reference character and situation through motifs (Swain, 1990), and at any rate exists outside the temporal space of the plot (McMillin, 2006). It enhances and toys with the acting/enacting dualism for the actors on stage. The presence of music therefore becomes an additional element to the aural dialogisms of the performance space and dramatic space (a property explored in detail in Chapter Five).

If this is the case for conventional musical theatre, how might the actor-musician aesthetic operate? From an *enacting* perspective, the production and performance of the music which affords characters that heightened emotional expression is explicitly part of the specular field of actor-musician performance. It is produced by the very same bodies that enact the characters for whom the music affords an expressive platform. So then, there is not only the trope of heightened reality, which conventionally exists in musical theatre as a means to overcome or negotiate the disjunction and interplay of speech-to-song, but also a *further* heightening above this; perhaps the need to suspend disbelief twice, once for the actor as character, and then for the actor-cum-character as musician. In reference to Knapp's 'deeper reality' (2005, pp. 12, 13), the fact that these performers produce their own musico-dramatic emotionalism renders the actor-musician aesthetic a more intensified form for audiences to negotiate, over and above conventional musical theatre. This first perspective suggests that actor-musicianship calls for the *additional* element of 'musician' to be negotiated through conceptual blending. As a result, an intensified suspension of disbelief is required on the part of the audience. In essence, States' dualism here becomes a trivium of 'Acting', 'Enacting', and 'Musicianship'. In this sense,

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<sup>50</sup> McMillin argues that unlike characters in the dramatic space whose story is revealed through the dramatic trajectory, or the performers, whose skill is applauded by the audience in the performance space, 'the orchestra knows everything [...] is the infallible element of a musical' (2006, p. 127). Likewise, with the exception of the actor-musician convention, or musicians onstage in other specific productions, McMillin suggests that "'Theatre" is literally a place of seeing and being seen [...] and one indication of the omniscience of the pit orchestra is that it remains invisible' (2006, p. 146).

a continuous negotiation occurs when the musical instruments become an extension of the performing subject's corporeality (in the performance space), potentially intensifying the character's medium of expression in the dramatic space.

*Acting Actor-musicianship (Perspective II)*

The second perspective does not call for an intensifying of 'heightened reality', or suspension of disbelief, but with reference to the idea of a 'triple image', acknowledges and allows for the dialogisms at play in performance. From this approach, the actor-musician aesthetic intensifies, exploits, and utilises, the disjunctive nature and inherent (paradoxical) liminality between States' modes, allowing them to play out one against the other during performance (in Zarrilli, 2002). This perspective suggests that the dramatic space is consistently ruptured by the presence of the actor-as-musician in the performance space; that the *mise-en-scene* becomes a playground or battlefield between the dialogic elements of the performance.

For example, such a perspective assumes that the physical instruments are seen as objects within the playing space. As Garner argues in his discussion on the spatial orientation of objects within the *mise-en-scene*, props (here, instruments) are both 'a spectatorial object and object of handling for the performer who must encounter it' [sic] (1994, p. 46). In this sense, each time a performer starts to play an instrument, or simply handles one in the course of moving within a scene, they draw attention to the act in which they are engaged, either stepping out of character momentarily to provide extra-diegetic musical accompaniment, or confirming their own bodily presence on stage.<sup>51</sup> Whilst this is not always the case with States' performer/actor/character triad, the rupturing, subversion, interruption, or contradiction, of the dramatic space by the performance space, in this instance foregrounds the embodiment of the live event, highlighting the ontological presence of the actor-musician themselves, and the physical act of musical performance. In doing so, this second perspective consistently draws attention to that liminal moment between acting and enacting, rather than embracing a 'heightened' fictional world created in a 'framed' *mise-en-scene*.<sup>52</sup>

The following case study of John Doyle's 2006 production of *Company* will draw on and utilise these perspectives, comparing and contrasting them by means of somaesthetic principles to explore how focussing on the acting body as presence might enhance, challenge, or revise, an understanding of a given musical work in production.

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<sup>51</sup> Colin Sell has termed instruments in this context 'big theatrical upstaging statements' (Personal email communication, 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010)

<sup>52</sup> This latter assumption relies on fixed parameters of reception surrounding the conventional proscenium arch theatre design.

In doing so, it will enable comment to be made regarding the usefulness of somaesthetics as a model for reading the actor/audience relationship as well, exploiting the actor/character dualism, and prompting a broader understanding of 'spaces' in performance.

### **History and background of *Company***

Originally produced in 1970, *Company* is a noteworthy musical to study for its iconic status as an early example of post-linear musical theatre. *Company* focuses solely on a single thematic idea and situation: the emotional and romantic indecision of Robert (Bobby), a thirty-five year old bachelor living in New York City, who Michael Ratcliffe sees as 'a large question-mark and an empty space: a hero who is too indecisive to move' (cited in Secrest, 1998, p. 199). Presented through a series of vignettes, it is Bobby's ambivalence regarding commitment and relationships – heterosexual or otherwise – that provides the catalyst for many of the conflicting, though often humorous, discussions and situations, during which Bobby's married friends try and give advice or match-make, from their own individually dysfunctional perspectives.

For example, Bobby finds himself being advised by the pensive and resigned Larry, and his impetuous and cynical wife Joanne; the newly-divorced Peter and Susan who claim to be 'so much more married now than when we were married' (Doyle, Furth, & Sondheim, 2008); and the passive-aggressive parents David and Jenny, who experiment with marijuana, and are not quite sure who they are. Bobby also maintains friendships with Harry and Sarah, who both struggle with addictive personalities, and also Paul and Amy – the one constantly optimistic, the other neurotic and insecure. In addition to this circle of dysfunctional marital bliss, Bobby is seen to be romantically (if ambiguously) involved with three 'girlfriends': Kathy, who suddenly announces she is to marry someone else during a romantic stroll in Central Park; April, the conservative air-stewardess with whom Bobby has a one-night stand; and Marta, the ebullient bohemian.

The fact that these relationships, and friendships, and the scenarios within which they occur, play out in a seemingly non-linear fashion, exploring the themes of commitment, relationships, love, and marriage, makes *Company* a 'concept musical' after Gottfried, and a work which Foster Hirsch essentially terms 'plotless' (2005, p. 85). However, it was not only the single thematic focus on Bobby that led to *Company* being hailed in the media as a 'landmark' piece of musical theatre, but also the structural disjunction through which character and situation was explored (Douglas Watt in Secrest, 1998, p. 195). As briefly highlighted in Chapter One, the creative team behind

*Company* exposed, explored, and utilized the dialogisms and disjunctions inherent in musical theatre to develop and examine ideas around a theme, rather than progress a linear narrative, or cede to the conventions of narrative integration between speech and song. As Sondheim has explained, the songs interpolated within the scenes are themselves built on internal contradictions and paradoxes (see Bush Jones, 2003, pp. 276-277): ‘all the songs in *Company* are either self-encapsulated entities or Brechtian comments on what is happening’, acknowledging the open and incomplete constructions at play in the dramatic space (Sondheim cited in Secrest, 1998, p. 192). An example of self-encapsulated commentary in song might be seen, for example, in ‘The Ladies Who Lunch’, a cynical bite at 1970s bourgeoisie, or ‘Marry Me A Little’, which expands and explores Bobby’s indecision, with little (if any) resolution at the end of Act One.

As with ‘Marry Me A Little’, Joanne’s embittered ode to marital bliss (‘The Little Things You Do Together’) comments and critiques rather than progresses the narrative, establishing an aesthetic and thematic feel rather than a plot point. The song is an extra-diegetic observation of Harry and Sarah’s antagonism during the second scene of Act One (in which they competitively engage in a karate contest). Joanne wryly sings of relationships operating on the basis of,

CHORUS: “I DO” AND “YOU DON’T” AND “NOBODY SAID THAT”  
AND “WHO BROUGHT THE SUBJECT UP FIRST?”  
(‘The Little Things You Do Together’, *Company* (1971), Act I, Sc.ii)

Such a moment of reflexive and referential extra-diegetic commentary is not in direct response to Harry and Sarah’s competition, or even addressed to them, but rather an interruption of the scene in an alienated fashion, psychologising the dynamics of the scene thematically. In this, it considers the macrocosm of the subject, rather than the microcosm of any given narrative moment.<sup>53</sup> Such musico-dramatic fragmentation was a risk in conventional musical theatre when *Company* was first produced in 1970: ‘Would people who arrived at a theatre expecting escapist entertainment accept a free-form exploration of a theme that challenged all their preconceptions?’ (Secrest, 1998, p. 192). Would playing with the dialogisms of the dramatic space fragment the creation and reception of the work in the performance space, between the actor and audience?

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<sup>53</sup> Another example of this would be ‘Another Hundred People’, which comments on the isolation felt by an individual such as Bobby in the bustle of Manhattan. It is interspersed into a scene in which he engages in somewhat strained conversations with his girlfriends, and lyrically – structurally – demonstrates the emotional solitude he feels. As Sondheim has suggested, the inherently Brechtian influence here adds to the play of emotional distancing within performance for an audience, a subject which will be discussed further below with reference to somaesthetics.

The means through which this musical explores its subject matter thus exemplifies the dialogic properties inherent in the form's structural conceits, making it a suitable platform from which to explore the disjunctions and dialogic nature of musical theatre in performance. Likewise, due to its importance in contemporary musical theatre history, the literary critiques of *Company* provide an interesting and provocative body of work, using the disjunctions and narrative fragmentations within the dramatic space to theorise on how the character of Bobby may be 'read' and understood.

As the following analysis of this work from a dialogic perspective progresses, various literary interpretations of the work's ambiguity will be assessed and revisited somaesthetically, with a focus on how exploring the actor/audience relationship might enhance, or revise, current perspectives on the work itself. Doing so, an exhaustive assessment of Doyle's production would be time-consuming to say the least, and so the following focuses on two specific elements of the work in performance, using often cited literary readings to prompt a re-examination of the piece from a somaesthetic perspective. The first element to be discussed is the use of the ensemble, which relates directly to the actor/audience relationship in performance, whilst the second element focuses on Bobby's ambivalence.

*'Poor baby, all alone': Company and the ensemble problem*

One of the primary fascinations within the dramatic space of *Company* is the troubled relationship Bobby has with his 'company' of friends. McMillin writes that Bobby seemingly 'cannot fit into the ensemble. This is a sign of the limit he would like to overcome', but which – in the end – both Bobby and the audience are seemingly denied (2006, p. 97). The ambiguity of *Company's* closing moments will be considered more specifically below. However, in order to discuss this successfully, it is interesting to set the solitude of Bobby's character in the dramatic space in relief against ideas of ensemble, and explore how the use of his character, and the ensemble, may – or may not – constitute a subversion of a conventional 'chorus'.

In examining *Company*, Bush Jones highlights that Sondheim's musical focuses on the isolated individual(s) within a collective, rather than the homogeneity of community (2003, p. 270). Numbers such as 'Company', 'Side By Side', and 'What Would We Do Without You?', portray dysfunctional individuals shot through with contradictions and paradoxes, as Gerald Berkowitz highlights in his article 'The Metaphor of Paradox in Sondheim's *Company*' (1979). These individuals come together to observe and comment on the central character of Bobby. As Ratcliffe suggests, Bobby doesn't fit in: he is so indecisive as to be in stasis (Secret, 1998, p. 199). Even though paradoxes do exist in Bobby's own dramatic space, his reticence to accept them as part of life is what

causes his 'stuckness', as Doyle has termed it (2008).<sup>54</sup> The implication here then, is that the actors/characters who constitute the 'company' of the work have accepted such paradoxes and dysfunctions, an implication borne out in the conversations they have with Bobby.

From a literary perspective, the tensions and dynamic this creates in reading *Company* are interesting. For Bush Jones, Bobby's solitude in the dramatic space renders *Company* a work which reflects the 'me' mentality of the era of its creation, catering to 'audience narcissism, since introspective people enjoy watching themselves' (2003, p. 270). In short, the individualistic focus of this work is contrasted with the community utopia of the Golden Age musical. Bobby's inability to join the chorus therefore *subverts* the unity of a chorus, with self-concerned contradictions, ambiguities, and the isolation of the post-war generation, replacing the community spirit of works like *Oklahoma!*, or *Fiddler on the Roof*, which celebrate musical theatre as a form for 'all the people [...] in a collective' (cited in Wall, 1996, p. 33).<sup>55</sup>

In analysing this point, Barbara Means Fraser's reading of the ensemble effect in Sondheim's works is provocative. Whilst arriving at similar conclusions to Bush Jones and Ratcliffe, Fraser's 'Revisiting Greece: The Sondheim Chorus' (2000) suggests that choruses of the 'Golden Age' musical also pitted individuals against community: 'The traditional musical chorus is subordinate to the individualism of the leading characters' (2000, p. 226). Fraser argues that this hierarchy of 'leads' and 'chorus' prompts the audience to 'identify with the individual' (2000, p. 226) rather than become absorbed into a world of community, as suggested by Kislán (1995), or Most (1998).

Developing this, Fraser draws on the function and make-up of the chorus in ancient Greece, and identifies similarities in Sondheim's work, wherein community is celebrated 'in terms of the individual *and* society' (2000, p. 223). With this in mind, Fraser's reading of *Company* differs from those presented by McMillin (2006), Berkowitz (1979) and others, for it positions the ensemble at the heart of the work, rather than focussing on Bobby. She suggests that whilst Bobby is ambiguous dramatically, 'the

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<sup>54</sup> Berkowitz's article (1979) highlights several key moments where contradictions are evident in Bobby's indecision. For instance, Bobby wants to marry, but only 'a little', and 'not exclusively' (Doyle et al., 2008). The girl he wants is a 'Susan sort of Sarah' and a 'Jenny-ish, Joanne', who he urges to 'hurry' and then immediately complicates, by asking to 'wait' (Furth & Sondheim, 1973, p. 677). We learn in Act Two that Bobby has also experimented with homosexual relationships, and we witness his fear at the mere possibility of commitment, following a one-night stand with April.

<sup>55</sup> McMillin likewise argues that musical theatre's emotional potency occurs within and via the collective 'voice' of the chorus (2006, pp. 79-101). This voice, these communities, are often headed by the 'leads' themselves. For example, Curly and Laurey join in the chorus of 'Oklahoma', and Tevye leads the celebration of 'Tradition'. In *Company*, Bobby is *not* part of the ensemble that his friends freely move in and out of. Thus, in a far cry from Rodgers and Hammerstein's preoccupation with summertime, springtime, and beautiful mornings of utopian community-mindedness, journalist Mark Steyn has (perhaps hyperbolically) noted that Sondheim views the 'American Dream' propagated in Broadway's Golden Age, as 'a nightmare' (1997, p. 142).

married couples [...] have rediscovered their bonds of love partly through their interactions with Robert' (Fraser, 2000, p. 229). Such a perspective makes sense in line with the idea presented in Berkowitz, that Bobby's married friends 'deal with paradox as a fact of life' (1979, p. 98). Bobby, however, 'tries to approach situations and events as if they were simple and one-sided' (Berkowitz, 1979, p. 98). Hence, whilst his friends freely move in and out of the 'ironic... jarring... anticarthartic...' ensemble, Bobby cannot integrate with them (Kirle, 2006, pp. 121-122). As McMillin and Fraser both observe, the ensemble has a grip in *Company*, and its separation from Bobby is the overreaching metaphor in the drama of the work (Fraser, 2000; McMillin, 2006, pp. 96-98). Ultimately, whether or not *Company* is read via a focus on Bobby's indecisive ambiguity (Bush Jones), or the ensemble's learning something of themselves as individuals and couples (Fraser), the fact remains that within the post-linear framework of the dramatic space, Bobby is seen as an outsider to the ensemble who – from the outset – are able to join each other as a chorus (albeit a chorus of individual, embodied paradoxes). It is this idea of the ensemble *and* the individual that is of particular interest in considering how the actor-musician aesthetic may be read somaesthetically, as contributing the 'ensemble' feeling of the work.

The actor-musician aesthetic by its very nature is an ensemble event. Therefore, its use in presenting *Company* perhaps lends itself to a reading which aligns well with Fraser's conditions for the use of the chorus in Sondheim's work (2000). Perhaps in this sense, the use of the actor-musician aesthetic for *Company* does in fact foreground the ensemble rather than Bobby. What is interesting is how the two perspectives on actor-musicianship outlined above might be applied to this position. How might the actor-musician(s) be read by an audience? How does the presence of musical instruments alter the ontological 'energy' of the ensemble in performance? Might a somaesthetic reading of this production aesthetic confirm, revise, or enhance current analysis on the ensemble nature of *Company*? A consideration of these questions will inform a subsequent reading of Bobby's final song, to explore the potential of somaesthetic analysis to this form of musical theatre, and how 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' might enhance our understanding of the complex dialogisms at play in musical theatre performance.

### **Side by side: Actor-musicianship as an intensified reality (Perspective I)**

The *enacting* perspective sees actor-musicianship as requiring an additional level of heightened reality over and above conventional musical theatre; that States' binary of acting/enacting is augmented by the performer-as-musician too. To read the additional

element of 'the musician' within the performance space, and its effect on the actor/audience relationship, is interesting when considering how this might be experienced and understood somaesthetically. On initial assessment, a simplistic reading would highlight the fact that Bobby's feeling of 'stuckness' (Doyle) is demonstrated in that he is physically 'outside' this intensified ensemble of actor-musicians. Until the last song, he does not play an instrument, remaining an ostensibly conventional musical theatre character, residing within Knapp's conventional 'double image', whilst uncomfortably negotiating this world of actor-character-musicians. In essence, both in the dramatic space and the performance space, his corporeal and ontological presence on stage seemingly betrays his emotional solitude. How can 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' articulate this heightened (alternative) reality of the actor-musician which Bobby cannot access? It appears this may be achieved by considering that the musical instruments, as part of the performance space, conceptually (and perhaps literally) extend their performers' corporeal presence onstage, and subsequently the audience's engagement with those musicians. How might this be the case?

Returning to Barba's suggestion that in any performance the onstage actors exhibit a heightened corporeal 'energy' as part of performance, the actor-musician's instrument extends his or her corporeality; extends their spatial presence and 'energy' within the performance space (in Mullis, 2006, p. 111). With reference to the actor-musician, two specific biological factors may be presented in articulating this idea somaesthetically. First, Amy Cook's article 'Interplay: The Method and Potential of A Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre' (2007) is pertinent when considering performative embodiment and the extension of the actor's corporeal presence. In her article, she discusses the neurological phenomenon of 'phantom limb syndrome' in application to performance. Explored in detail by neuroscientist V.S Ramachandran (1999), a common experience for amputees, and paralysis patients, is to sense or react to limbs that are no longer present or functioning.<sup>56</sup> With reference to the brain's mirror neuron system (introduced above, and discussed more fully further on), Cook cites the experiences of actor Anthony Sher when playing Richard III. She recalls how he needed a masseuse on standby for the cool-down after every performance, since 'the body he plays in performance begins [sic] to colonize the body of the actor' (2007, p. 592). Likewise, an actress Cook knew reported feeling the weight of her costume (a fat suit) even when it was not in place, and the sensation of tenderness in her ligaments

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<sup>56</sup> Ramachandran has found that 'highly precise and functionally effective pathways can emerge in the adult brain as early as four weeks after injury', linking the neural signals in the patient to 'wishful thinking' for the absent limb (1999, p. 13).

when her suit got hit, or punched, or touched, in performance (2007, p. 592). Cook writes that: 'After weeks of rehearsing and performing with a prosthetic body or body part, an actor's brain can begin to rewrite his/her sense of self' (2007, p. 592). For the actor-musician then, their reliance on (and use of) an instrument in the performance space (and in the dramatic space too), might become part of their own extended bodily presence, and an extension of themselves as a corporeal subject/object, a *phantom limb*.

This interconnectedness between the actor-musician and their playing of an instrument is not just borne out in research on mirror neurons or phantom limbs. As the second factor in explaining the intensified corporeal presence by the actor-musician, Paul Robertson's musicological research highlights the musician's connection to the physical act of instrumental performance, and its release of chemicals in the performer's brain (including serotonin and dopamine). Thus, the actor's energy and character's embodiment is directly influenced by the physical act of performing the musical instrument. The instrument is all at once part of the 'embodied' performer, and the act of performing it releases chemicals into the actor's bodies, intensifying his or her experience of being. In a poignant colloquium on this subject, presented at King's College, London on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007, Robertson wryly suggested that 'when a performer, playing an instrument, seems in their own little world, well biologically that is because *they are*' (2007). The ironic humour behind this comment, which prompted a ripple of acknowledgement from the audience, does not detract from the implication that in application to actor-musicians, the act of performance itself intensifies their 'reality' within the performance space. The fact that Bobby does not have such a corporeal extension of being – does not experience the intensity of embodiment until the last number – renders him 'distanced', even within the performance space onstage, in a solitude which accords with current readings of the dramatic space. An interesting reading arises however, when ideas of intensified embodiment and conceptual blending are paralleled with an assessment resulting from the *acting* perspective on actor-musicianship.

### **'Another hundred people' (Perspective II): Dialogic Actor-musicianship**

This perspective works on the basis that it is the disjunction of acting/enacting that provides the thrills and tensions experienced in musical theatre performance; that the audience's receptive space is a playground for dialogic tensions, between a corporeal performance space and a fantastical (cognitive) dramatic space. Here, in line with McConachie's observation that the conceptual blending of each audience member can be selective, the 'double image' of actor and character might continually cede

dialogically, rupturing and challenging any sense of *enactment*, subverting any hierarchical blending preference toward the dramatic space (2008, p. 43).<sup>57</sup> The hierarchical dynamics of the second actor-musician perspective thus constantly play off against each other: continually negotiating, dislocating, and renegotiating the dialogic relationship between the dramatic and the performative. As highlighted in Chapter One, these dislocations and renegotiations are enabled by the free-form vignette structures within the ‘dramatic work’ itself. How do these negotiations and subversions take place?

One example is seen in Joanne’s percussive use of a bourbon glass and mixing spoon, which punctuate her sardonic comments in ‘The Little Things You Do Together’. From a somaesthetic perspective on embodiment and disjunction, this action is remarkably complex. As Garner explains:

...a drinking glass becomes both a spectatorial object and an object of handling for the performer who must encounter it [...] this perceptual duality is further complicated by the fact that this glass also exists as both a spectatorial object within a fictionalised setting [...] and as object for the characters.

(1994, pp. 46-47)

Both the actor and with the audience (who are co-present in the performance space), recognise the drinking glass as two things: an object or prop, and an instrument to punctuate the off-beats of the music. For the actress playing Joanne, the glass is both an extension of her performative presence – in which she becomes a percussionist – and it is also the character’s bourbon glass.<sup>58</sup> The glass may be all at once diegetically integrated, whilst at the same time separated as part of the musical performance space. Somaesthetically, the object extends the performer’s ‘self-expressive’ potential as character. The bitter-sweet and barbed content of the song is accented by the ring on the bourbon glass. It does not come from an orchestra pit, as a knowing wink to the audience, it comes directly from the performer, arising from within the performance space itself; percussive, hard, punctuating. Not only does this heighten the bodily presence of the performer (for her timing and precision are crucial), but it may also serve to demonstrate the character’s sense of intensity and bitterness, through

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<sup>57</sup> Bobby remains an actor/enactor; perhaps more ‘stable’ or fixed than his companions. Somaesthetically, Bobby only embraces this third element of disjunction (performing an instrument) at the very end; for the most part he appears to be a conventional musical theatre ‘character’ actor, almost caught unwillingly in the liminal paradoxes of the performance space.

<sup>58</sup> Barbara Walsh, in her role as Joanne in this production, also played the triangle as percussion when not ‘in character’.

recourse to the performer's physical action of sustaining the rhythmical accents through movement. Thus, the dramatic space and the performance space continually negotiate with each other, ceding dominance at various points in the spatio-temporal set up of the playing space.

Susana Bloch notes that actors transmit information 'by word, gesture and posture' (2002, p. 219), whilst Garner places the embodied performer as asserting a 'physiological irreducibility' in the act of such a transmission (1994, p. 44). Therefore, this second perspective on the actor-musician aesthetic foregrounds the way in which the performer *enacts* the character, through their role as musician. The argument for corporeal irreducibility, the 'rootedness in the biological present' of the embodied performer, can also be seen when Marta, Kathy, and April, form a saxophone trio during 'You Could Drive A Person Crazy' (Garner, 1994, p. 43). As Colin Sell has suggested, these instruments are large spatial objects, and could 'upstage' the characters of the dramatic space. The audience could then momentarily focus on the performance space of the actor-musician, rather than the embodied *enactment* of character (Personal email communication 5 January 2010). These tensions serve constantly to foreground the corporeality of the performer, heightened through their dialogical, liminal negotiations of the three modes of actor, enactor, and musician.

Some comments might be made regarding the aesthetic choices of the performance space. Whilst the *enacting* perspective in this chapter argues that conceptual blending enables the heightening of reality, to accommodate for the presence of instruments on stage, the assignation of instrument in the performance space, to character in the dramatic space, is important to the performative language and subsequent reception of the work. For example, discussing Doyle's production of *Sweeney Todd*,<sup>59</sup> Sell takes issue with Doyle's use of the aesthetic: 'there were times when frankly the instruments hindered the action and the image: Joanna playing a cello - very bad, non-virginal idea' [*sic*] (Personal email communication, 5 January 2010). This perhaps serves to highlight the intrusive nature of the musical instruments within the liminal space, between the performance space and dramatic space, drawing attention to the disjunctions at play between the musician and character, not actor and character.

For the trio of girlfriends in *Company*, however, their 'dysfunctional' morality is aptly expressed by the 'non-virginal' connotations of their saxophone trio, with the instruments becoming part of their characters' emotional texture, as they list a litany of Bobby's faults ('You Could Drive A Person Crazy'). The disjunction between the upbeat comedic music of the dramatic space and the coarseness of the instruments in

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<sup>59</sup> Another actor-musician revival produced at the Watermill Theatre, Newbury in 2004.



commit. The dramatic and psychological claustrophobia this causes is represented by the chorus of friends and lovers resuming their refrain:

CHORUS: BOBBY  
BOBBY  
BOBBY BABY  
BOBBY  
BUBBI  
ROBBIE  
ROBERT DARLING...  
(‘Being Alive’, *Company*, Act. 2, Sc.iv)

Building to a climax, Bobby shouts for them to stop. What is he asking them to stop? Is Bobby asking for a reprieve from the contradictions? Is it a rhetorical cry for help? Reading this moment of the dramatic space through related literary commentary is apt for a somaesthetic discussion of Doyle’s staging of this scene. The silence, which follows Bobby’s desire for the noise to ‘stop’, is punctuated only by his resigned and slightly tenuous question ‘What d’ya get?’, which he then answers defensively in the opening of ‘Being Alive’. For Bobby, you get;

BOBBY: SOMEONE TO HOLD YOU TOO CLOSE  
SOMEONE TO KNOW YOU TOO WELL<sup>60</sup>  
(‘Being Alive’, *Company*, Act.II, Sc.iv)

Aaron Frankel’s observes that during the first half of this song, Bobby’s defensive cynicism leaves him unable to complete the affirmation ‘being alive’, which lyrically ends each verse (2000, pp. 136-137). Instead, his friends provide words of encouragement in its place, suggesting that ‘It’s all much better living it than looking at it’ (Furth & Sondheim, 1973, p. 717). However, part way through the song, at Amy’s prompt for Bobby to ‘want *something*’ from life (Furth & Sondheim, 1973, p. 718), his cynicism seemingly changes to an openness and vulnerability:

BOBBY: SOMEBODY HOLD ME TOO CLOSE  
SOMEBODY KNOW ME TOO WELL.  
(‘Being Alive’, *Company*, Act. II, Sc.iv)

Bobby shifts perspective, from talking pejoratively about ‘you’ being in a relationship, to ‘me’; that ‘somebody’ hold ‘me’. This shift in character voice sees Bobby apparently

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<sup>60</sup> Despite the dramaturgical clumsiness suggested by Sondheim, Furth and Prince, the dramatic trajectory of ‘Being Alive’ as Bobby’s torch song, exemplifies the contradictions seen throughout his dramatic space.

affirm that having someone there results in 'being alive'. Indeed, it is only now that he successfully completes each verse ending. Frankel suggests this textual construct may be read as follows: 'present a song in fragments or parts which are [then] completed *when the character comes together*', suggesting Bobby's embracing of the paradoxes in life, and rise to the social echelons of his more emotionally 'developed' friends (2000, p. 137, italics ours).

Opinions on this turn in the song, and Bobby's ultimate viewpoint, are divided. Bruce Kirle sees the song as affirmatively suggesting 'the only possibility for any sort of happiness is love and emotional commitment' (2006, p. 180). Nevertheless, after two hours of vacillation and ambiguity from Bobby, such readings also admit unease with the somewhat rapid turnaround. Hirsch writes that far from Bobby embracing his friends' paradoxical and contradictory views on companionship, this song ignores such ambiguities in its simplistic and prescriptive content (2005, p. 91). The sudden change from Bobby's defensiveness (as someone who cannot accept the contradictions Berkowitz identified), to a man desperate to embrace commitment and stability is, in Stephen Sondheim's own words, 'a cop out [...] you don't believe it' (cited in Bush Jones, 2003, p. 278). What then, might the performative choices made by Doyle in the actor-musician production suggest regarding these conflicting readings of 'Being Alive' and Bobby's denouement? Do they enhance, or contradict, the textual readings derived from conventional performance presentations or literary analysis?

#### *'Want... something'*

As already discussed, by applying either of the perspectives on the actor-musician aesthetic above, Bobby has been separate from the company of his friends through his lack of instrumental engagement. His performance space has been markedly different from that of the ensemble. Before asking the question 'What d'ya get?', and being watched intently by the ensemble, the Bobby in Doyle's production walks from his seat stage-right, to the grand piano downstage-left. Cautiously lifting the lid of the instrument for the first time, he seats himself on the piano stool, and begins playing the introduction and the opening verse of the song. Until this moment, he played no instrument. He had not joined the performance space of his friends, and he had not been provided any 'affordances' to negotiate (in McConachie, 2008, pp. 73-74), a spatial concept of onstage dynamics, such as properties or effects (and implicit in Bleeker's discussion of subject-to-subject relationships in the playing space (2002)).<sup>61</sup> Within the

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<sup>61</sup> The one exception is during 'What Would We Do Without You?' when the couples perform call and response motifs on their instruments. Reaching Bobby, he pulls a kazoo from his jacket pocket – plays a note, and looks to the space the female characters had inhabited onstage, to find it void. Returning to the

*enacting* perspective on actor-musicianship – which reads the actor-musician’s instruments as an extension of their bodied space in the performance space – Bobby now transcends that ‘empty space’ he once seemed to be (cited in Secrest, 1998, p. 199). In commencing the physical act of playing the piano, Bobby’s corporeal presence onstage is now intensified to the same level as that of his companions. He shares the performance space equally, his corporeal energy extended through the physical object of the instrument; a situation which may momentarily appear to resolve some of the tensions in the dramatic space (and the performance space). In this respect, Doyle’s production perhaps appears to confirm the prescriptive simplicity of the lyric.

From the *acting* perspective, however, which argues for the actor-musician aesthetic foregrounding the performer’s physical presence, an alternative reading might be given. It has already been argued that Bobby’s lack of instrumental engagement renders him a conventional musical theatre character/actor, with whom the audience engage more or less completely as an *enactor*, caught unwillingly in the paradoxes and shifting levels of engagement in the dramatic space. Doyle’s staging here, however, does not call for a heightening of sensitivity toward the character of Bobby, who has accepted the need for companionship, but instead toward the physical act of the actor-musician (Raul Esparza), who in this moment embodies that which he has thus far avoided: the paradox of liminality between the dramatic space and the performance space. This destabilizes his actor/enactor status, joining the ensemble in their negotiations between actor, character, and musician.

Viewed from either position, as with the analysis of the ensemble above, the aesthetics of Doyle’s production somaesthetically conveys the isolation of Bobby in the dramatic space, which Esparza’s embodiment and his subsequent playing of an instrument conceptually alters, seemingly changing Bobby’s emotional isolation in the dramatic space to an acceptance of the contradictions embodied by his married friends. Once again, the affirmative nature of ‘Being Alive’ may be attributed to this song, whether that be through an intensification/extension of Bobby’s corporeal energy, or the additional ‘input space’ of ‘musician’ into the blend of his presence onstage (A. Cook, 2007, p. 581). Yet, there is another reading we may present of this staging, one which aligns itself with the alternative, and more ambiguous, understanding of this song.

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mantra ‘side by side’, the ensemble busy around him on their instruments, which he stands staring at the empty space. At the outset of Act Two, this could be seen as the pivotal moment driving toward the work’s denouement.

*'Make me confused...'*

Whilst playing the piano – being part of the 'company' – Esparza is only accompanied momentarily by embellishments on the flute and violin from the other actor-musicians in the ensemble. A change occurs however, when he begs that someone be there to;

BOBBY:           MAKE ME CONFUSED,  
                      MOCK ME WITH PRAISE.  
                      LET ME BE USED  
                      VARY MY DAYS.

(*'Being Alive', Company, Act. II, Sc.iv*)

This sees him step away from the piano and move down-stage centre, as the ensemble takes over instrumentally. The confirmation of his apparently new credo,

BOBBY:           ALONE IS ALONE  
                      NOT ALIVE

(*'Being Alive', Company, Act. II, Sc.iv*)

sees Bobby step one foot at a time into a spotlight front-centre stage. Accompanied upstage by his friends in their actor-musician ensemble, this affirmation is presented with Bobby alone spatially and vocally. Has Bobby resumed his diegetic character at his most vulnerable moment, resisting joining the ensemble in the instrumentation, whilst seemingly embracing Berkowitz's paradoxes lyrically? From either perspective on this aesthetic, does Bobby ever actually embrace the emotional contradictions and paradoxes his married friends live with? Or does he shy away from them through Doyle's staging of the dramatic space, moving away from the piano to resume the simple duality between actor/enactor?

If the latter of these is the case, then the actor-musician aesthetic here affirms, and enhances, the ambiguities and interpretations of *Company*, and indeed of any live musical theatre performance to which it might be applied. It serves to assuage the criticisms levelled at the ending, by playing with the conceptual blending of Bobby, presenting an inconclusive dramatic space through a performance space which toys with the status quo Bobby may have finally found, calling for further negotiations of actor, musician, and character. This interplay demonstrates the essential dynamics of live performance, and draws attention to the dialogisms at play between the spaces of drama and performer, negotiated onstage by the embodied performer as character, actor, and musician. Questions arise though, concerning the audience's relationship with these onstage dynamics. Whilst the above analysis focuses on theoretical readings

of actor-musicians, set against structural criticisms and readings of the dramatic work, the somaesthetic response of the audience may provide a further means to assess the validity of actor-musicianship as an aesthetic. More crucially, it may also highlight the central role the audience play in creating and reading the 'meaning' of a work in performance, through their bodily co-presence in the 'feedback loop'.

*'We'll look not too deep...'*

The foregoing analysis suggests that in the realms of the dramatic space and the performance space, Bobby does not fit in with his friends. If the actor-musician aesthetic intensifies the performer's energy and extends their corporeal presence within the performance space (reducing Esparza's presence onstage as both an actor and character), it seems that this confirms the literary readings of the dramatic space surveyed above. The question remains, however: if Bobby is that indecisive, and his outcome that ambiguous, then with whom do the audience engage more intensively? Do they increase their receptiveness to the actor-musicians onstage, or – in terms of the dramatic space – do they find themselves sympathising with Bobby in his solitude? The answer to this question is crucial, for the whole tenet of a somaesthetic analysis relies on the 'circle of heightened awareness' between actor *and* audience, merging performance and reception theories with neuroscience and textual analysis (Fuchs, 1996, p. 70).

This chapter has presented two approaches to reading *Company*, from the perspective of the ensemble, or the outsider, and both avenues have been explored primarily from a performer focussed perspective. Somaesthetically however, in the 'feedback loop' of the actor/audience co-presence, does this analysis confirm claims that the work caters to audience narcissism by its focus on a fragmented and insular solo figure, or do the audience perhaps relate more to the ensemble of actor-musicians? If musical theatre intensifies the emotionalism of performance and reception through its heightened means of expression, and if the actor-musician aesthetic intensifies this further through the performers 'manually' accessing the musical plane of the work, *choosing* to introduce the songs on their instruments, then it might be argued that the audience relate more intensely to the actor-musician ensemble rather than Bobby.

This may seem especially plausible when approached using McConachie's work on audience cognition and engagement (2008). For McConachie, such awareness and identification by the audience of the intensified and heightened reality of the actor-musicians may be explained cognitively. Along with Amy Cook, and (to some extent)

Robertson, McConachie uses current neuro-scientific findings on the brain's mirror-neuron system, and work on cognition, and conceptual blending theory, to explore an audience's cognitive reception. Notably, the link between the brain's mirror-neuron system and conceptual blending theory provides some fascinating insights into how the audience corporeally engage with the actor-musician, in a manner which demonstrates the audience's active role in the performance space.

Taking McConachie's belief that conceptual blending theory presents a cognitive answer to the way in which audience members blend 'the actor and the character together into one image, one concept of identity, to enable affective immersion in the performance' (2008, p. 43), it appears that conceptual blending supports the *enacting* perspective on actor-musicianship above, and provides neurological affirmation of States' dualism of acting/enacting. However, McConachie continues to assert that 'conceptual blends are selective' (2008, p. 43). Whilst he primarily uses the idea of selective conceptual blending to demonstrate its use in various arenas of life (sports, film, and theatre all require different forms of blending), there is an interesting extension that might be suggested here. Ramin Setoodeh's *Newsweek* article 'Straight Jacket' (26 April 2010), and Marvin Carlson's book *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (2001), both discuss the idea that in certain theatrical situations, the performer's personal life may well take precedence over an audience's engagement with them as character, even while accepting their portrayal of a character at the same time.

In this sense, one could use the term 'selective conceptual blending' to refer to a hierarchy of shifts in blend make-up from a *character-dominant blend* (when Harry sings 'Sorry/Grateful'), to a *musician-dominant blend* (the character's use of their musical skills as comedic asides in 'Side by Side'), to a more-or-less equal mix (Joanne's percussive use of the bourbon glass, as mentioned above). Thus, an audience member engaging with the actor-musician has to negotiate additional properties of musicianship within his or her conceptual blending, in order to selectively blend the performer-as-musician into the experience. This position demonstrably highlights the dialogic nature of performance and reception, but also crucially suggests that the perception of actor-musicians in this regard is, in fact, perhaps more of an amalgam of the *acting* and *enacting* perspectives presented above, rather than a clear demarcation of one or other.

Here, then, we might introduce a third perspective on actor-musicianship: the *mixed* perspective. This third approach is perhaps the most reductive of the three outlined, and suggests that actor-musician performance is a continual amalgam and

negotiation between the two foregoing perspectives. Actor-musicianship does not so much render the performance a doubly heightened reality, or overtly and consistently rupture the cognitive blending which might allow engagement with character, but rather, through the interplay between these two positions, it represents an alternative form of heightened reality. It does so by playing the dialogisms of acting and enacting off against each other. In this sense, actor-musicianship is perhaps simply a different 'language' of presence, as Doyle has suggested (2006). Yet, it is one which crystallises the interplay of the 'double image' in constructing meaning and sensory appreciation in musical theatre performance.

The intensification of corporeal presence may well occur on the part of the actor, and phantom limb theory may be applicable in articulating the extension of corporeal energy and presence emitted by the actor. With regard to somaesthetic engagement by the audience however, they identify with these facets ontologically, enabling them to then cognitively blend the various hierarchies of dominance from the *acting* perspective, and engage with the characters. This simultaneous process of corporeal experience and cognitive appreciation might be called the 'mix'. Clarifying such a position, in *Bodied Spaces* (1994), Garner uses the term 'reorientation' when discussing how an audience shifts perspective 'as soon as an actor steps onto the stage' (p. 46). Likewise, Barba's discussion of performers manifesting an 'excess of energy', and the use of phantom limb theory, suggests an intensified corporeal presence which may be read in parallel with the 'mix' of actor-character-musician, via the mirror-neuron system and body consciousness (in Mullis, 2006, p. 111). As Shusterman has suggested, thoughts, feelings, and actions, can be expressed – and received – through the body, something which the audience will engage with via the extended or intensified sense of corporeality in actor-musician performance (2008, p. 145). Yet, what is the relationship between corporeality and cognition as outlined in Chapter Three, and how might it apply here?

### **Conceptual Blending Theory and the corporeality of cognition**

Recent cognitive studies have suggested that all humans have an inbuilt neurological capacity for vicarious imitation in their mirror-neuron system, and if Shusterman's and Damasio's somaesthetic and corporeal theories are correct, such cognitive processes have a direct impact on the bodily engagement of the audience with the embodiment of the actor-musician here. Summarising the findings of neuroscientists including Giacomo Rizzolatti (2008), Amy Cook has outlined the mirror-neuron system this way: '[it] links the actions and intentions of others with our own perceptions and actions', citing a

scientific study in which transcranial magnetic readings detected ‘motor-evoked potentials – in certain muscles – when subjects viewed actions that would require the evoked muscles to do that action’ (2007, p. 588). In other words, Martin’s concept of ‘inner mimicry’ (2002) in the reception of dance is supported by the mirror-neuron system. Thus, where the actor-musician is engaged in the physical act of playing an instrument, an audience member – via his/her mirror-neuron system – may extend their blend for that performer in the performance space, or shift dominance at varying points from character, to actor, to musician.<sup>62</sup> In addition to this – and with specific reference to Bobby’s solitude in the performance space – McConachie highlights the importance of mirror neurons in somaesthetic engagement with music.

Citing neuro-musicologist Michael Thaut, McConachie discusses the fact that rhythmic and tonal elements (and shifts) in music and sound also affect the brain’s mirror-neuron system, ‘spectators paying attention to performers will automatically mirror their rhythms [...] Spectatorial empathy appears to be strongest when combinations of sounds and movement entrain our bodies’ (2008, p. 71). Likewise, Robertson’s findings (2007), and those of Katie Overy in her article ‘Being Together in Time: Musical Experience and the Mirror Neuron System’ (2009), highlight the simultaneity of chemical reactions in both spectator and performer. Therefore, for every point at which the heightened energy of the actor-musician translates into the physical act of producing music – in large ensemble group numbers such as ‘Company’, or in smaller, sparser songs like ‘Sorry/Grateful’ – the audience will mirror them, via extended and intensified conceptual blending, experiencing the emotions related to the vicarious enactment of physically creating music. McConachie says that ‘embodied rhythms and sounds involve much more than spectatorial toe tapping, although that may be one outward expression of this complex [...] neurological response’, just as laughter or applause are physical responses to the situation of performance (2008, p. 68).

This mirroring in the motor reflexes of the individual has certain specific ramifications for the actor-musician aesthetic. As it is not simply a pit orchestra producing an auditory stimulant but a visual one, the mirroring is perhaps more intensified in this instance in the performance space, where the audience’s engagement is forcibly altered due to the corporeal extensions of the performers. Likewise, the actor-musician aesthetic may intensify the audience’s engagement with the dramatic space as well, through the enhanced corporeal energy of the embodied character

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<sup>62</sup> This particular perspective has recently been developed with specific regard to dance by Corrine Jola (2010a) and by Katie Overy and Istvan Molnar-Szakacs (2009) with regard to music. These articles will be considered in more detail in the following chapters.

producing their own music.<sup>63</sup> The argument for the audience's intense identification with the ensemble of actor-musicians thus appears to be corroborated, and Fraser's (2000) perspective on *Company* being primarily focussed on the ensemble, seems to be correct. Corporeally, the audience cannot identify with Bobby's embodied presence in the same way because for the most part it does not 'extend' as far. The actor-musician/audience 'exchange' may therefore be more intense, more corporeally responsive, than that between Raul Esparza as Bobby, and the audience. This is because as a non-actor-musician for the majority of the performance, an audience member's blended space is less intensely dialogic for Bobby than those characters for who the audience are also required to negotiate the additional level of musicianship. This is why Bobby's playing the piano at the start of 'Being Alive' is so poignant, but also why his stepping away when he asks to be 'confused' and 'mocked' is so heart-rending (see Amy Cook on the psychological effects of language on cognition in this respect (2007; also Storr, 1997)).

In essence, the audience negotiate two 'reorientations' of Bobby (after Garner) in this closing song; in the moment when he extends his corporeal presence on stage by playing the piano, and then when he resumes the dualism of actor/enactor for the final part of the song. What this may serve to do – for an audience – is actively undermine the content of the lyric, rendering the dramatic space less prescriptive when presented in this way. As an audience member, the conceptual blending required for Bobby throughout the production has been mono-selective: a single mix of States' actor/enactor binary. The poignancy of Bobby playing the first few chords on the piano necessitates the reordering of the hierarchy, and the introduction of a third input space to the blend. The mirror-neuron system may well serve to merge the dramatic space and the performance space for the audience, who could feel 'relief' that the character has finally ascended to the ranks of his ensemble companions, or perhaps – subjectively – even frustration at this very same event.

Likewise, Bobby's swift escape from the performative aesthetic of the actor-musician renegotiates the blend back to its original hierarchy (see Figure 4.1). Whether or not this once again serves to foreground the actor-musicians in an overreach of Bobby's climactic denouement, or whether the audience may conceptually retain the fact he *played* the piano (albeit for a moment), is an individual preference, and one which would alter each audience members' reading of the ending to this musical.

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<sup>63</sup> If, as Abbate has reasoned in *In Search of Opera* (2001), Orpheus's disembodied singing head represents the power of music in performance, then how much more so might the characters playing their own music produce an intense effect?

Mix hierarchy prior to 'Being Alive'	CHARACTER ACTOR
Mix hierarchy during the first half of 'Being Alive'	MUSICIAN CHARACTER ACTOR
Mix hierarchy during the second half of 'Being Alive'	Possibility 1: CHARACTER ACTOR
	Possibility 2: CHARACTER ACTOR MUSICIAN

**Fig 4.1 – Conceptual Blending Theory and the mix hierarchies for Bobby**

On the one hand, the fact that Bobby cannot bring himself to complete the song as part of the ensemble's performance space could be read as pride (or insecurity), rendering this musical's central character a poster boy for a narcissistic audience (Bush Jones, 2003). Conversely, however, one cannot ignore that the actor-musician aesthetic – whether from an *enacting* perspective, an *acting* perspective, or a 'mix' of the two for the audience – is primarily an ensemble based event. Therefore, whilst the dramatic space may revolve around Bobby's indecision, the performance space of the actor-musician aesthetic in which the audience co-create, functions as an ensemble space. In this case, Bobby not only achieves temporary oneness with his onstage companions, but also with the audience, who are likewise engaged in the performance space.

This series of potential exchanges between Bobby and his friends, the ensemble and the audience, and Bobby and the audience, demonstrates the complexities of musical theatre performance and reception, and in particular, that of the actor-musician aesthetic, which both exposes and intensifies the dialogisms at play in musical theatre performance. The focus here is on reading the embodied performers as actors, musicians, and characters; and the spectators enliven their cognitive processes accordingly, which is as much a corporeal as a mental process (after Damasio). Does this particular means of engagement work in more 'conventional' settings without the complexities of actor-musicianship? Does 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' allow a reading of fantastical characters onstage, whose phenomenological mode is more explicitly character-based than that of actor-musicians? The constant rupturing of the performance space and the dramatic space in the actor-musician aesthetic may also

have served to frustrate that crucial element of theatre: 'transformative experience'. As Peggy Phelan argued, the performing (and spectating) bodies undergo 'mutual transformations' in the co-creation of performance (2004, p. 576). Perhaps with *Company*, the very frustrations of those facets serve as the momentum which propels Bobby towards his inevitably ambiguous finale. Perhaps all the others onstage with him – through their actor-musician presence – were *too human* in the paradoxes they embodied.

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This case study has established the delicate interplay between the dramatic space and the performance space in musical theatre. In doing so, the dialogic nature of performance has been explored, and the 'double image' of the musical exposed as a primary dynamic within performance. It was also suggested that through corporeal intensity, conceptual blending theory, and the individual subject's mirror-neuron system, different blend mixes may provide a variety of readings in reception. Whilst this has a broader application to demonstrate the way the 'double image' of musical theatre performance might be understood at large, 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' also served here as a springboard, developing a frame for assessing the peculiarities of the actor-musician aesthetic, something which holds potential for further use.

It has to be acknowledged, though, that this case study focussed on a small section of the performance, and space does not do justice to the full complexities of interplay in the actor-musician aesthetic in Doyle's *Company*. However, if somaesthetic theory recognises the continual process of being, the continual modifications and blend mix renegotiation that take place throughout performance, rather than at a fixed point, is it possible to map an entire performance through exploring the bodily and spatial relationships between the actors and the audience? The following chapter will explore this using Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* (1981), which will also include a consideration of transformative experience, and the influence of cultural mediation in the experience, and sensory appreciation, of live musical theatre performance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 'Moments of Happiness': *Cats*

In exploring the potential way that 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' might be able to map the bodily interactions of the actors and the audience across a performance, *Cats* provides an excellent platform. Like *Company*, it is a post-linear musical which relies heavily on the ensemble dynamic of its performers. This chapter will develop a specific method for somaesthetically mapping the 'feedback loop' of *Cats*, and in doing so it seeks to engage with the most common question asked regarding the show: just what is *Cats* about?

When the musical opened on Broadway in 1982, a confused T.E Kalem of *Time* quoted the song 'Moments of Happiness', and remarked 'We had the experience but missed the meaning'; a common criticism levelled at the work (cited in M. Walsh, 1997, p. 127). Likewise, before approaching the show's director Trevor Nunn about the project, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber had been turned down by producer/director Harold Prince when he denied that *Cats* was a social metaphor for British politics, but was simply 'about cats' (Lloyd Webber cited in Coveney, 1999, p. 88). Can somaesthetic principles be applied to enhance an understanding of the mechanisms, nature, and appeal of this often derided popular musical? If *Cats* has a storyline, then how strongly can an audience engage with it? If it is just 'a series of charming vignettes', then what holds the work together (Cushman cited in Sternfeld, 2006, p. 121)?

The preceding chapter suggested that in the process of experiencing or understanding performance, the audience may subjectively choose to select, shift, or mix, either a *character-dominant* or *performer-dominant* blend type at any given point. Likewise, the inherent connection between the cognitive blend selected and the spectator's corporeal engagement has also been established.<sup>64</sup> This argument for the subjective selection and inter-changeability of blend types may be applied to *all* performance, not simply the actor-musician aesthetic, a point echoed in Marvin Carlson's book *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine* (2001). Therefore, this chapter will explore the subject matter of *Cats*, and interrogate the shape of the vignettes in performance through a negotiation of both blend selections, rather than a discrete analysis of either/or in a binary set-up. To commence this discussion, some

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<sup>64</sup> As discussed in an earlier chapter, Damasio equates feelings, energies, and cognitive awareness (contagion) with physiological processes and responses (2000). To analyse how the conceptual merging of dramatic space and performance space affects the actor/audience relationship, the bodily collision of these two groups becomes a point of focus developed throughout this chapter.

background on the musical and its unique spatial arrangement will provide a foundation for developing this case study.

### **‘A difficult matter’: Production history**

Originally premiering at the New London Theatre in the West End on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1981, the dance-based musical *Cats* grew from composer Andrew Lloyd Webber’s combined boyhood love of felines and the poetry of T.S Eliot. Until setting these poems, Lloyd Webber had largely written melodies which had words put to them retrospectively; interested to see if he could work the other way around, the rhythms and rhymes of Eliot’s poetry attracted him (Richmond, 1995, p. 72).<sup>65</sup> The piece was originally intended to be a song cycle, but when presented with old drafts and fragments by Eliot’s widow Valerie at a workshop in 1980, Lloyd Webber declared ‘What you’ve just given me is the difference between a song cycle that could be done by children in school and a musical’ (cited in Richmond, 1995, p. 73). Among Eliot’s notes for the poems were ideas of a conclusion that centred on aspects of the physical: the dance of cats. It was this that first prompted Lloyd Webber to consider staging the project, and ultimately shaped the work’s form, as *Cats*’ choreographer Gillian Lynne notes: ‘there is no limit to what cats can do with their bodies, if you watch’; such is the driving force of movement in the production (Richmond, 1995, p. 75).

Under the watchful eyes of producer Cameron Mackintosh and director Trevor Nunn, *Cats* developed into a post-linear musical celebration of cats, engulfed within John Napier’s huge set design, which enveloped both actors and audience in this fantasy world of the Jellicles. Echoing T.E Kalem above, Keith Richmond suggests that in this sense *Cats* became more ‘an experience than a musical’, a claim which seems accurate considering its level of spectacle when set against the looseness of its narrative structure (1995, p. 76). Indeed, as poetry, the eccentricities in these characters work well to engage the reader. Onstage however, when the *flâneur* Bustopher Jones sings of his extravagances in ‘the season of venison’, the Gumbie Cat tap-dances with her military tattoo of well-trained Boy Scout beetles, or the petty thief Rumplesnort challenges her partner Mungojerrie over who exactly smashed the family’s Ming vase, the unrelated nature of these vignettes – with cats being showcased, and then potentially never seen again – seems to provide little dramatic drive in the performance for the audience to engage with.

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<sup>65</sup> Earlier collaborations had lyrics by Tim Rice (*Joseph*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*), Alan Ayckbourn (*Jeeves*), or Don Black (*Tell Me on a Sunday*).

Yet, literary analyses of the work in production – primarily those by Kathryn Lowerre (2004) and Jessica Sternfeld (2006) – do make some attempt to extrapolate a narrative arc, based on themes of redemption and reconciliation. Focussing on the character Grizabella, an ageing and bedraggled outcast who becomes accepted and celebrated by the other cats (under the watchful eye and guidance of the Jellicle Leader Old Deuteronomy), there are convincing arguments that suggest thematic links to Lloyd Webber's earlier work *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), wherein the remorseful fallen woman Mary Magdalene (here, Grizabella), finds acceptance and redemption through the Messiah (in this case, Old Deuteronomy).<sup>66</sup> Yet, even with these tropes read into the work, they seem to be handled superficially.

Whereas in *Company* Bobby was hardly off-stage, providing an anchor for the continuity of the work's vignettes, the development of Grizabella's character is more basic. She is only seen three times during the show, and despite the fact that her torch song 'Memory' is one of the primary musical moments in the performance (as well as the musical's biggest popular hit song in its own right), Sternfeld has observed that the thematic construction of Lloyd Webber's score is pre-occupied with answering the question 'What's a Jellicle cat?' (2006, p. 133). In turn, Lowerre has suggested that where the production does not appear to have a coherent narrative arc, it works 'through the juxtaposition of characters, rather than through their development' (2004, p. 303). With regard to the dramatic space, this is an accurate observation, for in between the rejection and eventual acceptance of Grizabella, 'characters come and go [seemingly arbitrarily] without disturbing the pleasures of high-energy presentation' (Lowerre, 2004, p. 303).

So, what is *Cats* about? If the performance is more of an 'experience' than a musical with a conventional narrative or definite thematic centre (as in *Company*), how might the audience engage with it throughout the performance? Is there more to this work in a narrative sense than a superficial exploration of redemption through the characters of Grizabella or Old Deuteronomy? Or is it simply entertainment? If the musical operates via the juxtaposition of character, then how is this understood

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<sup>66</sup> Certainly, Kathryn Lowerre's reading of the work focuses on just such a thematic thread. Interestingly, Lowerre's article 'Fallen Woman Redeemed: Eliot, Victorianism, and Opera in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats*' (2004) presents a literary and cultural reading of Grizabella as typical of the aged Victorian actress, sickened, embittered and remorseful over her once sexual aggressiveness and social disgrace. Informed by Lloyd Webber's love of Victoriana, Lowerre's reading essentially casts *Cats* as allegorical of the 'Victorian values' of Margaret Thatcher's Tory government in Britain at the time. However, perhaps the resonances with tropes of the theatrical fallen femme fatale come more from Nunn, with his background in classical literary theatre and the social hierarchies and gender conditions of 19<sup>th</sup> Century opera. As Nunn says of the elements which go towards making a production successful, 'Those things don't get there by osmosis. They get there because a director is working them out and making them happen' (cited in Sternfeld, 2006, p. 130). Notably, the character of Grizabella was developed from the second fragment of Eliot's to attract Lloyd Webber, the story of the outcast whom Eliot had considered too depressing for children.

somaesthetically? These questions implicitly focus on the way the audience might engage with the actors/characters, and create relationships within, and between, the juxtapositions. Therefore, whilst the analysis of *Company* ably demonstrated the interplay of spaces, and explored the 'double image' of specific instances in musical theatre performance in order to recast or confirm readings of the work itself, an analysis of *Cats* needs to consider the trajectory of the juxtapositions as a whole. Developing the concept of the interplay of the dramatic space and the performance space, this cannot simply rely on a textual reading of the way the characters appear sequentially. Instead, a somaesthetic reading needs to explore the interrelationships and interplay of the juxtaposed bodies onstage – actor/character to actor/character – and how the audience might read into these juxtapositions, and the 'gaps and silences' that inevitably arise (Kirle, 2006). To do this, the following will explore the juxtapositions and interaction between the performing cats using a visual schema to examine what we might term the 'dynamic shape' of the performance. This term refers to the ebb and flow created somaesthetically: the corporeal and cognitive negotiations which take place between the actors and the audience in the 'feedback loop'.

In doing this, the latter part of this chapter will use a 'dynamic shape schema' of the juxtapositions in the performance space to analyse the way these may relate to, subvert, or enhance, textual analysis of the juxtapositions within the dramatic space. Implicit in this analysis is a development of the actor/character relationship somaesthetically, and importantly, Kirle's (2006) idea of the centrality of cultural mediation in understanding performance will become pivotal to the discussion further on. However, in order to develop the above ideas of juxtaposition, dynamic shape, and cultural mediation in meaning-making, an important element of the production aesthetic of *Cats* needs exploring: the relationship between the actors and the audience. As the following section highlights, this relationship is complex in *Cats* due to the interplay between the dramatic space and the performance space, and as such may demonstrate further potentials or problems in the application of somaesthetic analysis to performance.

### **The collision/collusion of space in *Cats* and the negotiation of blend selection**

Whilst not unique in theatre, the relationship between the dramatic and performative spaces in *Cats* is peculiar in this research. In the original production, the whole auditorium was architecturally modified to become a complete playground for cats, with the audience placed *in situ*. The physical playing space, in which the dramatic space was enacted, enveloped the whole performance space, spilling out into the seats and

aisles from a thrust stage in the centre.<sup>67</sup> Such a lack of distance between the fictional ‘there and then’ of the dramatic space and the ‘here and now’ of the performance space thus created a heightened sense of intensity, and immediacy, in the production and reception of performance, blurring delineations of the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional’ spaces. The effect of such immediacy as intensifying the workings of the ‘feedback loop’, and the sense of ontological and bodily presence has already been discussed in Chapter Two. Developing this, the interplay of spaces in such literal and conceptual immediacy has further ramifications which alter and enhance the actor/audience relationship, and progresses an understanding of the somaesthetic position this research might assume. This interplay and its consequences can be discussed with reference to the collision/collusion of spaces, blend selection, body energies, and the creation of an ensemble.

#### *Spatial collision/collusion and blend selection*

It could be argued that with the audience sharing the playing space in which the dramatic work is experienced, the lack of conceptual or physical separation (spectatorial distance) intensifies cognitive feelings of transformation, of a fantastical reality, in a *character-dominant blend*. Yet, according to both Schechner (2003) and Fischer-Lichte (2008), such immediacy more readily draws attention to the theatricality of the performance. In fact, Fischer-Lichte suggests that it is physical and conceptual *distance* that might allow for emotional engagement with character over actor, implying that in cases such as this, the physical and conceptual immediacy draws attention to the mechanisms of the performing bodies rather than the representation of embodied character (2008, pp. 60-61).<sup>68</sup> Such a position may be given further credence through *Cats*’ vignette structure, tenuous narrative trajectory, and the bodily immediacy between actors and audience seen in action during the Overture, where the cats run riot in the auditorium, clambering on audience members, and playing in the aisles. Literally closing down the distinctions between the actors and audience, and destabilising the conventional boundaries between reality and fiction, the audience become aware physically of the humans portraying cats and ‘invading’ their space.

Which perspective is accurate? As demonstrated through the shifting blend mixes in *Company*, it can be either, depending on the overarching blend type selected by the individual audience member, or through continual negotiations of the blending

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<sup>67</sup> As developed throughout this chapter, the lack of a vivid narrative trajectory may complicate the idea of a ‘dramatic space’. In this context then, such a designation refers to the mental engagement with ‘the world’ of the cats in performance, and an engagement with the characters embodied and enacted.

<sup>68</sup> For Schechner, such distance (physically and conceptually) allows the audience to contemplate the action in a safe, mediated manner, to engage with the performers without intimidation or fear (2003, p. 190).

mix throughout the performance. The resultant effect however, is the same for either blend: a huge intensifying of corporeal presence and energy, and a sense of the transformative experience spoken of by Phelan (2004) and Shusterman (2008) in Chapter Three.

#### *Body energies and transformational potential*

Even before the performance commences proper, the playing space (often seen as 'inert' prior to performance if framed by a proscenium arch) is rendered 'active' by the audience's physical presence within it. 'Activated' space allows for energy exchanges between performer and audience (Garner, 1994, pp. 47-49; Pavis, 1996, p. 152). Unlike *Company*, in this instance it becomes the audience's heightened sense of presence and energy that first creates corporeal momentum here, arising from their curiosity and intrigue, through the collision/collusion of receptive and playing spaces in the performance space (in Mullis, 2006, pp. 110-111).<sup>69</sup> Thus the 'feedback loop' is established and a certain transformational experience already takes place for the audience *before* the performance begins. The energies the audience exhibits here, prior to the performance, are bodily, pre-linguistic, and not determined by blend type. This heightened energy bonds the audience members together, initiating a feeling of shared experience, of community, of ensemble. This is subsequently reciprocated and perpetuated by the actors in the immediacy of this production's 'feedback loop', and together allows for a sense of intensified presence and transformational potential.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Performers and spectators as ensemble*

In addition, Fischer-Lichte reasons that where there is no clear delineation between performative and spectatorial boundaries – or spaces merge and collide – 'The opposition between acting and observing collapses' (2008, p. 59). If this is correct, then by sitting within the cats' junkyard the audience are transported, from a spectatorial position of distance, into communion with the actors (Garner, 1994). This potentially renders the mutual co-presence of the audience and the actors as forming a large ensemble. Such a position is supported by Chiel Kattenbelt's (2006) idea of the equal

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<sup>69</sup> Perhaps in this sense, the rhetorical questioning of the opening song, gives approval for the audience being there, in that secret fantasy world of cats.

<sup>70</sup> In conventional proscenium arch theatres, Schechner has observed that part of this sense of ensemble and shared experience is achieved by the intermission which confirms "the gathering" [...] giving the spectators a chance to see themselves', to confirm the ritualised event of performance (2003, p. 196). In the case of *Cats* the spectators see themselves seated among the performers, the directness and experience of which creates an even more intensified exchange between the bodies of the performers and audience. As seen above, Barba has reasoned that such a heightening of energies in performance is what renders the body 'theatrically "decided", "alive", "believable"' not only for the performers, but for the spectators as well (in Mullis, 2006, p. 110). The resulting 'intimacy' of presence and event exchange then becomes ever more intense, irrespective of the blend type selected (2005, p. 27).

relationship between actor and audience in performance, which Schechner sees as the state of 'co-creation', inevitably intensified here by the audience being *in situ* (2003, p. 230).<sup>71</sup> In this context then, the term 'ensemble' encompasses both actors and audience in the one space, acknowledging the immediacy of interaction between them in a somaesthetic sense, giving rise to increased energy exchanges and a heightened sense of community. Such a sense of community accords with Dyer's conditions for the creation of 'utopia' in the musical genre (2002). Whilst specifically referring to film, his prescription of the need for 'community' and 'intensity' are certainly borne out through both actors and audiences sharing both conceptual and physical spaces in *Cats* (2002).

The spatial properties of *Cats* then, create an intensity and immediacy in the experience of performance. Whether one chooses to engage with the musical through a *character-dominant* or a *performer-dominant* blend, the end result is still an intensified sense of corporeal co-presence and energy. From a *character-dominant* blend, an audience member may choose to engage with the characters of Eliot's poems; and yet, if characters here come and go arbitrarily, what sustains an audience's engagement from this perspective? It would appear that it is the corporeal immediacy and energy in the space. Surely then, this suggests that *Cats* encourages a *performer-dominant* blend, in the way the collision/collusion of spaces draw attention to the theatrical constructs at play? If that is the case, then why does the production go to such lengths to immerse the audience within the dramatic world in a literal way? Perhaps it was partly a cultural fashion at the time of the work's creation (as discussed in Chapter One). Citing Haynes Johnson, Bush Jones writes that 'Public appetite for the new and dramatic, fed by the increasing ability of television networks to record everything [...] virtually ensured that spectacle would triumph' in popular culture (2003, p. 322). Nevertheless, if Fischer-Lichte and Schechner are correct to suggest that immediacy draws attention to the theatrical presence of the performing body rather than the character, then the dominant element of any blend will always be the recognition of the state of performance. The primary results of this are the perpetuation of the 'feedback loop', and the feeling of co-presence and ensemble. In exploring the dynamic shape of the work in performance, this aspect of ensemble is a good starting point for assessing the way a *performer-dominant* mix might produce engagement.

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<sup>71</sup> In addition to Schechner's discussion, for an extended theoretical discourse on ideas of co-presence, see Chapter 3 of Fischer-Lichte (2008), particularly pages 38-67.

## Ensemble and dynamic shape

The sense of an otherworldly, utopian community, which is shared by both the actors and the audience, is borne out first by the spatial arrangements outlined above.

However, it is the intensity of interaction between the bodies sharing the dramatic space and the performance space that sustains this sense of the 'otherworldly' in a somaesthetic sense. Charting this throughout the performance, the logistics of the production and the bodily ebb and flow of the ensemble provides some interesting results, which the dynamic shape schemas below visually represent. Out of the thirty-four separate vignettes which make up *Cats*, twenty-nine of them see the majority of the actors onstage, or sharing the performance space with the audience, throughout the performance.<sup>72</sup> Only five sequences have less than three performers onstage: Victoria's solo ballet, 'Invitation to the Jellicle Ball', Mungojerrie and Rumpleteaser, Grizabella's dance at the end of Act One, and Bombalurina and Demeter's ode to Macavity.<sup>73</sup> Of these, only Victoria's dance sees the space inhabited by a solo performer for a sustained period of time.<sup>74</sup>

The result is an immense sense of corporeal presence and energy, sustained throughout the performance by the sheer immediacy of interaction between the dramatic space and the performance space. Discussing the co-presence of multiple bodies onstage – and by extension the ongoing negotiation of differing levels of intensity between them – Marvin Carlson suggests that the audience are forced to negotiate these 'multiple individual psyches, each bringing its own surplus [of presence] to the dialogic process'; a collision of bodies/minds, in the immediacy of performance (1992, p. 320).<sup>75</sup> Such an amount of body energies existing together in the space forcibly narrows both the conceptual and physical distance between the actors and the audience. When the audience and actors share both spaces, then the individual 'psyches' of each individual become even more numerous.

Echoing this, but with a more corporeal and somatic perspective, Fischer-Lichte analyses the co-presence of actors and audience together as a meeting place for

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<sup>72</sup> This is several more than might otherwise have been deduced from the song list in the original musical score or even souvenir programme. In the original production for example, Victoria's solo dance early in act one was part of 'Invitation to the Jellicle Ball'. Here, it becomes a separate vignette due to its dynamic shift in staging, as do the individual occurrences of 'Memory'.

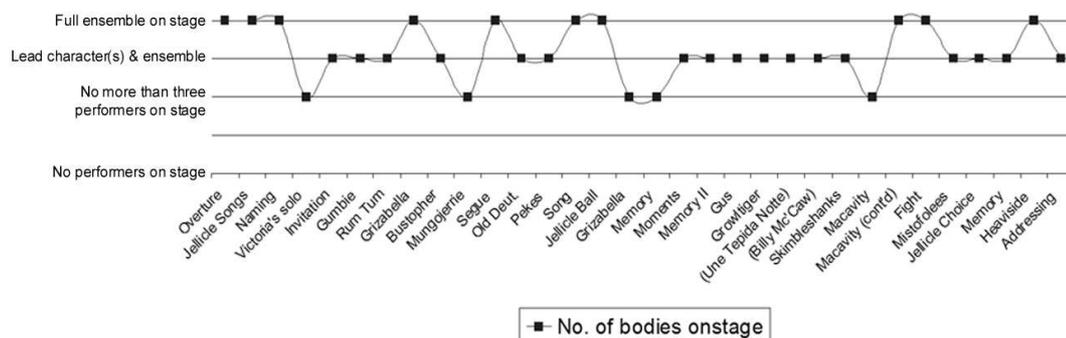
<sup>73</sup> The thirty four sequences include song numbers with more than one presentational style, including 'Invitation to the Jellicle Ball' (which as mentioned is separated into the actual song), Victoria's solo ballet, 'The Old Gumbie Cat', 'Grizabella: The Glamour Cat', 'Magical Mister Mistofolees' and 'The Addressing of Cats'. For the purposes of exploring this with regards to the number of bodies on stage, a distinction has been made between Bombalurina and Demeter's expository passage and the choral refrain in 'Macavity: The Mystery Cat'.

<sup>74</sup> Although Grizabella's dance at the end of Act One is a solo, the presence of Old Deuteronomy upstage cannot be denied as altering the dynamic of the space.

<sup>75</sup> Carlson's 'psyches' in this context might refer to the subject's sense of self somaesthetically, and not merely to a mental constitution of presence as may be inferred in Carlson (1992, pp. 313-324).

biological ‘body rhythms’. According to Fischer-Lichte, each subject has his or her own unique (circadian) body rhythms, which can be used to negotiate and interact with other subjects in the external world. Fisher-Lichte suggests that when these rhythms collide in performance, it results in a ‘body rhythm struggle’ that allows the sense of corporeal presence and energy to be sustained (2008, pp. 58, 59). Such a ‘struggle’ is surely intensified in the immediacy of the spatial relationships of *Cats*, not only enhancing the sense of ‘event exchange’ within the ‘feedback loop’. This intensity, in turn, contributes to Dyer’s sense of utopia, and is a sustained corporeal force that perpetuates the existence of the ‘dramatic world’, composed of the juxtapositions that Lowerre discusses, and which are explored below.

How does this intensity of ensemble – this almost unrelenting presence of community – work to create a sense of dynamic shape? One may initially argue that it would lessen the dynamic textures available. On closer inspection however, the way in which the ensemble is used adds a corporeal ebb and flow to the performance in its presentation of the juxtapositions in the dramatic work. As listed above, this ranges in the use of bodies from full ensemble numbers, to group numbers, duos, and two moments which focus on a solo character (as outlined above). The following schema demonstrates the dynamic shape of the ensemble in the colliding/colluding spaces of *Cats*:



**Figure 5.1 – Number of bodies (Ensemble) on stage**

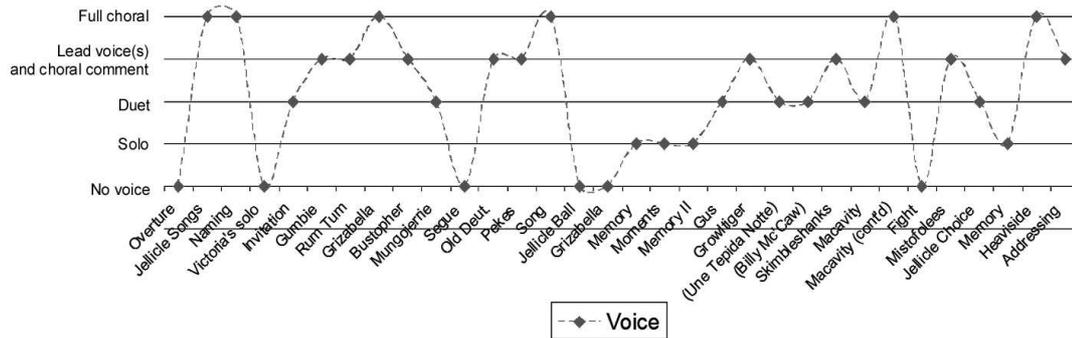
So, it is not a simple case of a consistent intensity being maintained by a full ensemble. Rather, as the above schema highlights (Fig 5.1), there is a definable shape to the way in which the actors inhabit and negotiate the space, and consequently create a corporeal dynamic shape in the immediacy or distance experienced by the audience. Whilst the dialogic plurality of ‘body-rhythms’ sustain an intensity of presence in the space, the dynamics of the performance space require consistent renegotiation throughout the performance. This negotiation by the audience involves a constant awareness of

themselves in the space, in relation to the dynamic shape of the actors they are in communion with, consistently shifting the corporeal energies in a somaesthetic ebb and flow. Yet, this momentum is not simply a specular or spatial one, emanating from the physical placement of bodies. There are two other areas worth consideration with regard to the dynamic shape of the performance: the use of voices in performance, and the dynamics of dance and movement.

### **Voice as dynamic shape**

There is no dialogue in *Cats*, and so to explore the use of voice is to explore the way 'characters' sing Eliot's texts, set to the melodies and styles of Lloyd Webber's music. The use of choral voices, solo voice, group voices, and vocal techniques, throughout *Cats* likewise creates a dynamic shape to the aural intensity of performance, a momentum and musical texture which may possibly contribute to a sense of shape in the performance space. Specific discussion of the somaesthetic effect of voice in performance will be developed in the following chapter, but briefly it is worth assessing its use here, working from the basis that the voice is explicitly corporeal. As Fischer-Lichte suggests 'Vocality [...] brings forth corporeality', contributing to the sense of bodily presence and intensity (2008, p. 125). On this basis, the ebb and flow of voices in *Cats* not only creates a juxtaposition of characters, but a sense of dynamic shape to the interplay of immediacy and distance within the aurality of the work, increasing or decreasing volume and density within the performance, set against the backdrop of sustained and shifting bodily intensity (Fig. 5.1).

Less than half of the musical settings are written to include the voices of all the ensemble, even while as Figure 5.1 demonstrates, the ensemble are onstage for just over ninety-percent of the time. Songs such as 'The Old Gumbie Cat', 'The Rum Tum Tugger', 'Bustopher Jones: The Cat About Town', or 'Magical Mister Mistofolees', all include solo lines, usually with a lead narrator cat and comment from the chorus. 'Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats' and 'Heaviside Layer' are both chorally based, and 'Memory' and 'Moments of Happiness' are the only moments of extended solo voice. This multi-layering and dialogic interplay of bodily presence and vocal texture creates a further shape within the performance space. In *Cats*, the use of voice may be grouped into five categories: full choral community voice (which may also include anonymous or arbitrary use of solo or group lines), lead voice and choral commentary (where the lead voice is character based), duet, solo voice, and no voice. Figure 5.2 shows the varied parallel dynamic use of voice to give life to the characters and performers:



**Figure 5.2 – Voice in Cats**

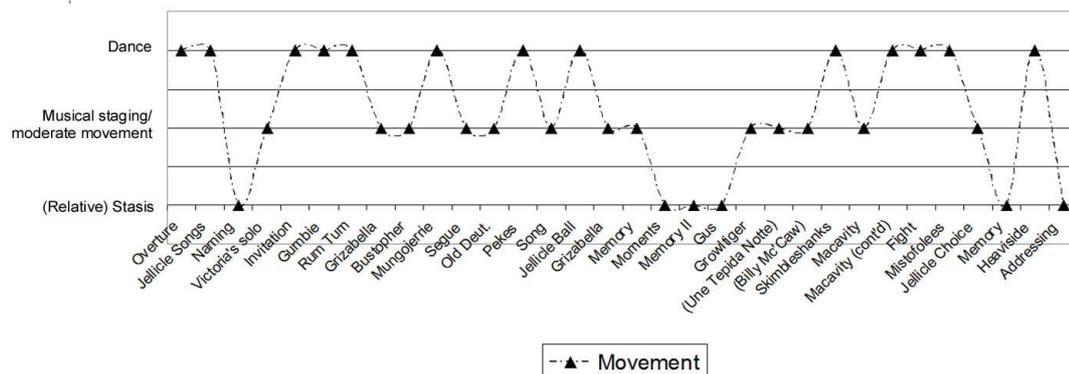
As noted, the opening and finale of the performance contain elements of choral voice, and there are only three real moments of extended solo voice, in between which the lead vocal/ choral comment dynamic dominates, as named characters are juxtaposed against each other in the vignettes. These elements will be assessed as the discussion progresses, with particular reference to the words and melodies that are sung, embodying Eliot’s poems and creating a vocal arc through the performance. However, before exploring this detail, the final element of the dynamic shape is dance and movement.

### **Dance and movement in Cats**

Returning to the discarded conclusion by Eliot that *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* should end with a poem about the dance of cats, the juxtaposition of movement and stasis within the work, aligned to the dynamic shape of voice, ensemble, and character juxtaposition, adds another layer to both the dramatic space and performance space. *Cats* has often been lauded as a ‘dance musical’, but perhaps the word ‘movement’ is more appropriate here, for the performance rarely stops moving.<sup>76</sup> Dividing this element of the dynamic shape of *Cats* into discrete categories, the sense of movement directly relates to the ebb and flow of the ensemble outlined above. Just as there are moments of full ensemble, groups, and solo performers onstage, there are corresponding (and at times divergent) moments of choreographed dance, musical staging, and something that may be called ‘relative’ stasis:<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Before the production opened in London, Lloyd Webber has been quoted as saying: ‘We are creating a world of dance not seen before, to this degree, in a British musical’ (in Richmond, 1995, p. 75)

<sup>77</sup> This last category includes movement by characters as part of the stage direction, but which does not constitute ‘musical staging’, such as the show’s finale.



**Figure 5.3 – Movement in Cats**

As with voice, the schema for movement and dance in *Cats* demonstrates a permanently changing dynamic shape in the performance space, one which very much oscillates between musical staging and choreographed dance pieces. The moments of relative stasis then provide either respite, or an interruption to the proceedings, the arguments for which may be seen below. Specific analysis of dance as a performative ‘language’ falls largely outside the remit of this case study, and this research as a whole. However, the corporeal effect of dance has to be acknowledged here, specifically with regard to mirror-neuron theory and the ideas of vicarious enactment introduced in previous chapters. As argued below, the effect dance has on its receiver draws specific attention to the performing body rather than the character portrayed. Dance (movement) in this sense then, may potentially disrupt or complicate any notion of character in the all consuming space.

Enhancing the corporeal momentum of the performance space in this way, does the movement-based dynamic shape of *Cats* perhaps give credence to it being more sensory ‘experience’ and less ‘meaning’? In discussing this perspective, and analysing the foregoing schemas in more depth, it is interesting to see what happens when the dynamic shapes of ensemble, movement, and voice, come together. To visualise this, Figure 5.4 (see below) represents what might be called the composite dynamic shape of *Cats*. This composite dynamic shape demonstrates the intensely dialogic nature of the performance, and in many ways this sort of analytical schema might be used to explore much musical theatre in performance. It visually maps the complex interrelationships between ensemble intensity, and the use of voice and movement, throughout the course of the performance.

The schema also shows that whilst there is an intense concentration of the performing ensemble on stage throughout the performance, the dynamics of voice and movement are far more fluid and divergent. These textural shifts and movements add a

feeling of shape, and shift, of pace and levels to the performance. In the experience of these dialogic interactions, the corporeal energies of the performance will be fuelled between the actors and the audience, through the immediacy of the space. The schema also highlights, for example, that there are only three moments of extended solo voice in the entire performance: at the end of Act One, during the opening scene of Act Two, and when Grizabella sings her 'torch song' *Memory*. Aurally then, these are the only three moments in the show where the attention is focussed on one individual character, perpetuating a sense of shared community voice throughout the majority of the performance.

This sense of community is evident in four specific sections of the schema in which the full ensemble come together on stage in full choral voice and movement. These moments are represented by the numbers 1 – 4 in Figure 5.5, as shown below. In essence, they serve to book-end the performance at the opening and finale, and lift the energy at approximately the mid-point of the performance. It is interesting to consider a possible dramatic arc these moments of ensemble might create:

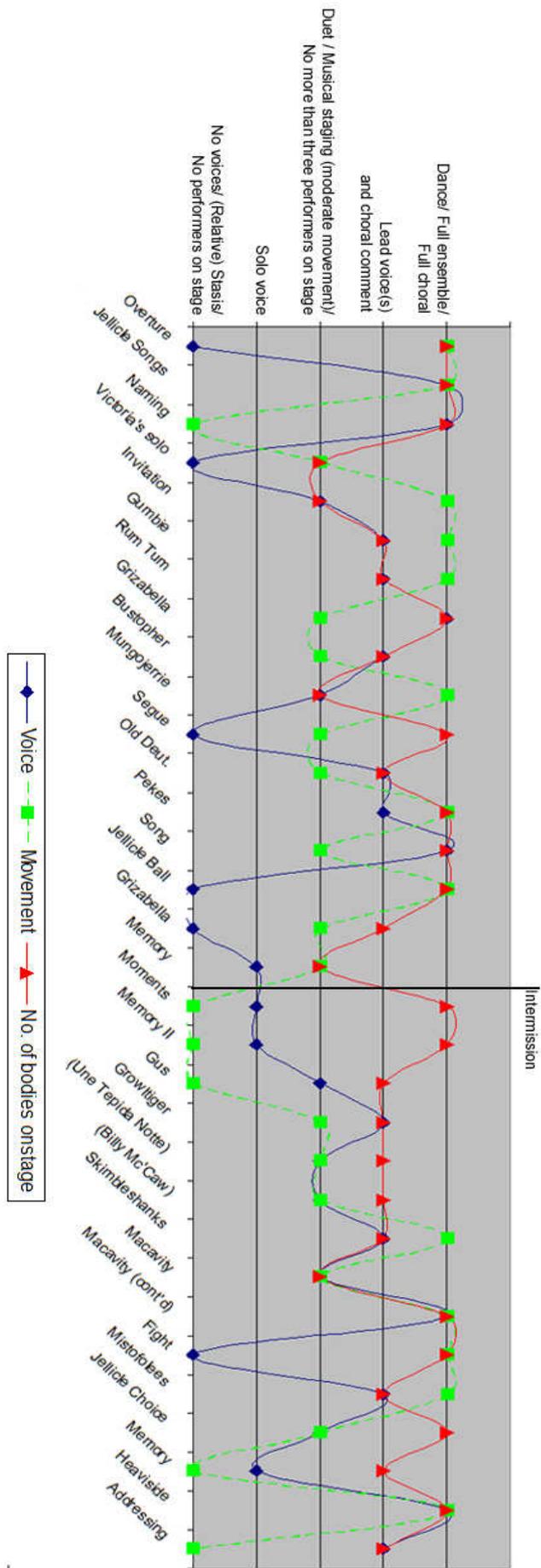
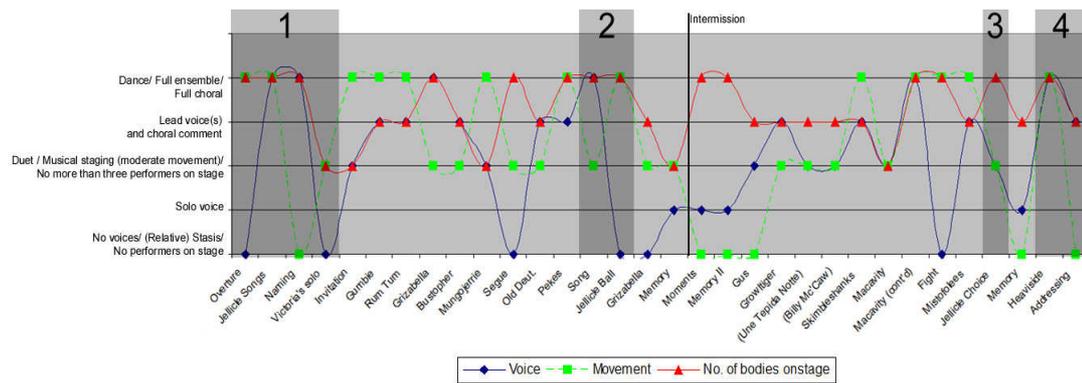


Figure 5.4 – Composite 'dynamic shape' schema of *Cats*



**Figure 5.5 – Moments of ‘the ensemble effect’**

### Ensemble, character and dynamic shape

As demonstrated in the above schema (Figure 5.5), the key points at which the ensemble appear in the dynamic shape of the work serve as reference points for the performance, literally occurring at the beginning, middle, and end. The content of each of these moments is the question of Jellicle identity, confirming Sternfeld’s (2006) remark that the overarching concern in *Cats* is the quest to define what exactly a Jellicle cat might be.<sup>78</sup> Structurally then – as far as one could ever describe *Cats* as having a dramatic arc – these moments of intense ensemble, where this recurring question comes to the fore, create a sense of order, unity, and coherence. Somaesthetically, the way these moments frame the character vignettes is fascinating. Exploring this relationship, it is interesting to analyse the first section from Figure 5.5, from the Overture through to Victoria’s solo dance.

#### *Overture and ‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’*

At the opening of the performance (No. 1, Figure 5.5), the sense of ensemble and movement builds gradually. At the opening to the show, the slow build up capitalises on the heightened sense of corporeal energy and transformational exchanges that already exist in the performance space, which is active due to the co-presence of the audience in the space. The collision/collusion of bodies in space, and the interplay between the actors and the audience in the Overture, has already been mentioned, with cats running through the auditorium, feeding off – and reciprocating – the heightened sense of corporeal presence. Such an opening serves to confirm the ‘ensemble’ that the audience have become part of, and intensifies the potential for a transformational experience of ‘utopia’ (Dyer). Following this, ‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’ begins with individual cats asking rhetorical questions:

<sup>78</sup> For a specific discussion of the ‘Jellicle theme’ in music which Lloyd Webber develops through these sections, and in *contrafactum* throughout the work, see Sternfeld’s discussion (2006, pp. 133-144 ).

VARIOUS CATS: ARE YOU MEAN LIKE A MINX?  
ARE YOU LEAN LIKE A LYNX?  
ARE YOU KEEN TO BE SEEN  
WHEN YOU'RE SMELLING A RAT?  
WERE YOU THERE WHEN THE PHAROAHS  
COMMISSIONED THE SPHINX?  
IF YOU WERE AND YOU ARE  
YOU'RE A JELLICLE CAT!  
(‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’, *Cats*, Act I, Sc. i)

Following this questioning, the song climaxes with a full choral refrain set to choreographed movement in unison. The build is gradual both vocally and bodily, with individual cats and solo voices slowly multiplying until all thirty-three cats are onstage, singing and dancing. The progression to simultaneity acclimatises the audience – likely overwhelmed by the conceptual and physical placement of spaces – to the corporeal immediacy and engagement they will experience through the performance.

Once at its peak, the celebratory ‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’ creates what McMillin has termed ‘the ensemble effect’ (2006, p. 78). In defining this effect as a mechanism of musical theatre performance, he suggests that it achieves two things at once. Dramatically, it allows for ‘characters to express themselves simultaneously’, as seen above in the opening number of *Cats* (2006, p. 79). Lyrically, this song seems to alienate the audience. They have not been to the Heaviside Layer; they cannot find their way blind when lost. So, perhaps this also draws attention to the sense of performance, rather than drama. Appropriately, this situation is the second property McMillin identifies in his ‘ensemble effect’. Such a moment of ensemble transcends the limits of the individual characters embodied in the drama, becoming a universalised mechanism: ‘the voice of the musical making itself heard’ (2006, p. 79/80). Thus, ‘the ensemble effect’ here serves to conceptually blend the two facets of the ‘external world’ (the dramatic space and the performance) which the ‘inner self’ of each audience member may engage with and negotiate. The effect of this is intensified by the spatial collision/collusion of these two elements anyway: the ‘external world’ of the spectating body – the dramatic space and the performance space – is already merged.

In this sense, it might be suggested that when all thirty-three cats sing the refrain of ‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’ (Section 1, Fig. 5.5) or ‘Journey to the Heaviside Layer’ (Section 4, Fig. 5.5), they assume a sense of anonymity, become a community voice, questioning and challenging the audience with whom they share the space(s). Likewise, when words give way to dance in ‘The Jellicle Ball’, the ensemble effect is the same; the ‘voice’ of the musical becomes embodied in thirty-three

physically energised, intensely present dancers. Such an effect is somaesthetically provocative in terms of the dynamic shape of the performance as a whole, and how the body acts as a 'unifying space' between this 'outer world' and the 'inner self' of audience members. The intensity of bodies in space has already been established, but with respect to the ensemble effect, neuroscience provides further explanation for cognitive engagement independent of the alienating rhetoric of the lyrics. Studies suggest that responses to dance and movement through the mirror-neuron system are inherent: 'even without physical training, spectators can simulate the movements they are visually familiar with, and that empathy increases resonance' (Grosbras, Jola, Kuppuswamy, & Pollick, 2010). So, an audience member may see movements associated with felines – Skimblehanks twitching his whiskers prior to the opening of 'Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats', or Alonzo slinking along the back of the junkyard set – and vicariously relate to those visual cues, by fictional character-based association with a pet, or perhaps through a culturally mediated process of anthropomorphism.

In these ensemble-based numbers, which largely focus on the build to synchronised movement and dense vocal presentation, such a vicarious reaction on the part of the audience becomes amplified.<sup>79</sup> Literally, corporeal motor-simulation occurs through a focus on the dancing body, and the audience members' body rhythms attune to those of the dancers, intensified in these moments by a factor of up to thirty-three.<sup>80</sup> This consistently enlarged set of movements by the actors, which build from the Overture and are sustained through the opening song, create a real sense of intensity and immediacy in the colliding/colluding spaces, one which may entrain the audience at large to engage and react as a community. This is particularly the case in the middle chorus of 'Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats', when all performers dance in unison, recalling McMillin's 'ensemble effect' (2006, p. 79), and is achieved here through a discrete dynamic shape within this song's structure. As seen on the 1998 David Mallet video production, the cats 'wake up' one by one, or in pairs, until this point in the song, creating a variety of ensemble sizes, shapes, heights, and voices. Such a sensory experience of ensemble can be suggested here in light of specific neuro-biological research into music and movement, which finds that when these two elements occur together there is greater synchronicity in the sensory appreciation of experience

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<sup>79</sup> The unison of choreography may well create simultaneity of motion, a huge energetic visual stimulus of one single set of movements which become enlarged. However, the moments of separate movement by individuals or groups of performers during these points creates its own visual energy and spatial variety that forms a bustling and bristling sense of motion. The spectators will also somaesthetically respond to this as part of the dramatic event, a heightened sense of body energy, within the performance space.

<sup>80</sup> If we account for every 'individual psyche', as Carlson terms it (1992, p. 320).

between audience members; a synchronicity which enhances feelings of community, unifies body rhythms in space, and intensifies the sense of shared bodily co-presence.<sup>81</sup> In this case, such a situation might be expressed as follows. The ensemble effect of these moments serves to merge or set in motion a relationship between the characters in the dramatic space and the actors in the performance space. The immediacy and directness of this negotiation directly impacts the audience, positioned as they are within the playing space of the actors. This immediacy induces an intensified sensory appreciation of the music and movement as both dramatic and performative properties. The entrainment that results is experienced corporeally in the first instance, and then, using Damasio's hierarchy of consciousness, prompts engagement via the mirror-neuron system through vicarious enactment and motor simulation (2000). Such a response to the effect of ensemble renders these moments in performance, 'a dramatic event in itself' [*sic*], which serves to establish the 'voice' of the musical and the sense of co-presence and community (McMillin, 2006, p. 79).<sup>82</sup> The fact that this entrainment occurs to a factor of at least thirty-three for each audience member (not including a recognition of other audience members), suggests an intensely corporeal engagement in the performance space, which both begins with – and results in – sensory appreciation within the body.

What is particularly interesting here is the link between this engagement through a shared corporeal immediacy (in the ensemble effect), and the bizarrely alienated rhetoric of the song itself. Throughout 'Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats' the words challenge and alienate the audience. However, the closing moments provide a basis for negotiating the performance space and the dramatic space together. Admetus runs downstage with Munkustrap and says:

ADMETUS:	THERE'S A MAN OVER THERE WITH A LOOK OF SURPRISE. AS MUCH AS TO SAY 'WELL NOW HOW ABOUT THAT?'
MUNKUSTRAP:	DO I ACTUALLY SEE, WITH MY OWN VERY EYES? A MAN WHO'S NOT HEARD OF A JELLICLE CAT?

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<sup>81</sup> For this research, see Bruce McConachie's *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (2008, pp. 39-74, 92-114); Katie Overy and Istvan Molnar-Szakacs article 'Being Together in Time: Musical Experience and the Mirror Neuron System' (2009); Corrine Jola, 'Merging Dance and Cognitive Neuroscience' (2010a).

<sup>82</sup> Identifying the community based utopia such sustained ensemble dynamics created in the work of Rodgers and Hammerstein (discussed in McMillin (2006, p. 83)), the same sense of a dramatic event and community spirit can be found here in the opening of *Cats*. The confirmation of ensemble is important to sustain the rest of the performance, and so once established it is maintained for an extended period.

(Spoken mockingly)      What's a Jellicle cat?  
(‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’, *Cats*, Act I, Sc. i)

The ‘ensemble effect’ which book-ends the entire performance, and introduces the audience to these characters, has created a heightened sense of presence, engagement, and community, through the process outlined above. The effect of this establishes the relationships between the actors and the audience in the overwhelming space they share. It is perhaps used here to introduce the sense of community and fantasy, two elements of Dyer’s prescription for ‘utopia’ as a transformative experience in performance (2002). The fact that Admetus and Munkustrap draw attention to the audience (the ‘man over there’), and challenge the audience *not* to know what a Jellicle cat might be, cognitively produces a sense of intrigue and engagement in the dramatic world of the performance. The somaesthetic result of the ensemble effect here however, has produced an energy and momentum through which the audience might continue to engage with the performance, and suspend disbelief enough to try and find an answer to the question: what’s a Jellicle cat?<sup>83</sup> In pursuing an answer to this question, and the quandary of which cat will ascend to the Heaviside layer, the dynamic shape of the performance then shifts from a focus on ensemble intensity and bodily immediacy to a focus on the characters in the piece. Considering the juxtapositions through which this occurs (using Lowerre), the moment of transition between the ensemble and the first character vignette is particularly fascinating to consider somaesthetically.

#### *Dance as transition*

After the intensity and up-tempo ensemble of ‘Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats’ the poem ‘The Naming of Cats’ slows the pace of the performance. Intoned by the ensemble in relative stasis, physiologically the audience’s heart-rates and body rhythms likewise attune to a slower tempo. Following this poem, the cats gradually exit in groups, a transition in the dynamic shape of the work which focuses the audience’s attention on a solo performer in a single spotlight. This is no longer the multiplicity of performing energies and bodies for the audience to come into confrontation/collusion with,

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<sup>83</sup> Importantly, this effect is achieved at two other key points of the work: at the high-point of Act One just before Grizabella’s second entrance, and as a means to signal the moment of *peripeteia* in Act Two immediately after Grizabella’s redemption, concluding the performance in a celebration of community. Thus, the ensemble effect in performance is used as a dramatic device to propel the quest along, and also to highlight Grizabella’s importance in the work by setting her entrances and redemption in relief. Somaesthetically such an analysis of the ensemble effect might be applied to many moments of heightened song and dance in musical theatre performances.

exuding or reflecting an intensified sense of embodied presence. There is simply one character – Victoria – who doesn't speak or sing, dancing centre stage.

Conceptually, this relatively sudden shift in the dynamic creates a performative, conceptual, and physical distance, between the audience and actor. The ensemble effect which opened the show built upon the physical and conceptual claustrophobia of merged spaces, quickly establishing a community of bodies in spatial immediacy with one another – the 'feedback loop' of *Cats*. However, as Fischer-Lichte argues, it is immediacy that draws attention to the *actor* rather than the character, whereas distance encourages dramatic engagement (2008, pp. 60-61). If distance therefore foregrounds engagement with character, the change in dynamic shape to Victoria's solo dance not only changes the means of engagement somaesthetically, but from the intense immediacy and theatricality of the ensemble, the focus changes from the performative to the dramatic.<sup>84</sup>

Is this the case? From the position of a *character-dominant* blend, in line with Fischer-Lichte and Schechner, then potentially it might be argued that the distancing allows for an engagement with the 'feline' qualities of Victoria, preening herself pensively in her solo dance. The words which precede this moment of tranquillity (from 'The Naming of Cats') suggest that a feline's primary contemplation is 'the thought of his name' (Eliot, 1969c, p. 209). So, perhaps one might conclude that the slower, considered vignette here – forcibly extending the distance between actor and audience – represents Victoria in such a contemplative state.

Yet, such a reading seems somaesthetically problematic, for if the collision/collusion of spaces suggests a preference for the *performer-dominant* blend – or at least an even interplay between blend types – this moment is surely just a dance. Such a perspective in no way diminishes the effect of the shift in dynamic shape. Until now, no character names have been established, and thus this dance is still by an anonymous performer. To apply Barba's discussion of energy and engagement here, an audience's response to Victoria is 'pre-linguistic' (in Mullis, 2006, p. 111); so this moment is perhaps still experienced as part of the performance space. Nevertheless, somaesthetically the pace has slowed, the 'body rhythm struggle' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008) has simplified, and a physical distance has been effected. Perhaps, then, the dynamic shape has not shifted from an anonymous ensemble to a character, but from a Jellicle ensemble to an *individual* cat. This focus on the individual continues through the vignettes which follow Victoria's dance, and which (as Lowerre suggests) juxtapose

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<sup>84</sup> Of course, even here, the mirror-neuron system and vicarious enactment may occur, maintaining corporeal engagement throughout this slower and less immediate moment.



and patriotism. It is upbeat, sung in a high register, and complete with a deliberate musical borrowing from 'Rule Britannia'.<sup>85</sup>

By contrast, The Rum Tum Tugger is written as a contrary and mischievous cat, who when offered pheasant would rather have grouse, and once let indoors wants to exit immediately (Eliot, 1969a, p. 214). So, within the dramatic space, the character type which follows the bustling Gumbie Cat is already disjunctive, juxtaposed against what preceded it. This cat is characterised musically by soft rock, with physicality and vocal inflections reminiscent of Elvis or Mick Jagger. He flirts with all the female kittens, gyrating his pelvis to the upbeat electric guitars of his musical setting.

As mentioned earlier, the poem which told of Grizabella was not included in Eliot's *Old Possums Book of Practical Cats*, because he felt it too depressing for children (M. Walsh, 1997). Used in the musical to speak of the outcast cat that longs for redemption, Demeter snidely remarks:

DEMETER:       AND THE POSTMAN SIGHED  
                      AS HE SCRATCHED HIS HEAD  
                      'YOU'D REALLY HAVE THOUGHT  
                      SHE OUGHT TO BE DEAD'  
                                  ('Grizabella: the Glamour Cat', *Cats*, Act I, Sc. v)

Such a depressing tone is matched in Lloyd Webber's music, through its slow, sombre, slightly blues tonality and harmonic progressions, in sharp contrast to both of the preceding songs. Finally, the juxtaposition which sets Grizabella's character in relief is that of 'Bustopher Jones: The Cat About Town'. Set to a moderately paced wistful hymnal, this cat is characterised by Eliot as fond of gentleman's clubs, and he is even known on St. James's Street (Eliot, 1969a, pp. 230-231).

From this brief consideration of textual juxtaposition, it is clear that *Cats* utilizes the many and varied personality types that Eliot's poems contain. From the hustle and bustle of the Old Gumbie Cat, to the stately reserve of Bustopher Jones, Lloyd Webber's settings enhance these characters through the use of intertextuality. As noted by Jessica Sternfeld in her book *The Megamusical* (2006), the score for *Cats* achieves momentum and interest, not simply through its textural or rhythmical shifts (which directly affect emotional contagion), but crucially by its use of pastiche and parody in characterising each cat. Consistently throughout the work, richly varied musical references and borrowings occur. In addition to the pre-war nostalgia of the Old Gumbie Cat, or the rock and roll of the Rum Tum Tugger, *Cats* borrows from a

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<sup>85</sup> The 'Rule Britannia' borrowing did not occur in the original production, and was expanded in later productions of the show.

broad range of musical idioms including jazz ('Macavity: The Mystery Cat'), rock ('The Jellicle Ball'), romantic ('Memory'), music hall ('The Ballad of Billy Mc'Caw') and liturgical ('Journey to the Heavyside Layer'). Such inter-textual references pulse through the score and have far reaching effects, which go 'beyond the [simple] recycling of references, tropes, even structural elements' (Carlson, 2001, p. 17). In providing a musical representation of character-type, these musical choices enhance the disjunctive nature of the juxtapositions in the dynamic shape. Such intertextuality highlights another important element of somaesthetic analysis not discussed so far: cultural mediation.

*Extrinsic reference, cultural mediation and blend selection*

As Kirlé suggests, an audience member's experience, appreciation, and understanding of live musical theatre can only be completed when considering the influence cultural factors have on his or her reading of a particular work, at a given moment in time. In capitalizing on extrinsic cultural references here, Lloyd Webber assists the audience in engaging with the performance through prior knowledge, memory, or associations. Importantly, this cultural mediation via intertextuality operates whether one reads *Cats* from a *character-dominant* or *performer-dominant* blend. In fact, it might be suggested that this intertextuality opens up a discourse between the two in the spatial immediacy of the performance. From a *character-dominant* perspective, such pastiche musically serves to intensify the 'caricatures' from Eliot's poetry by attributing characteristics of an era or a personality onto the cat concerned.

Yet, such 'ghosting' (to borrow from Carlson) within the fabric of the dramatic space becomes a gap or an excess which extends beyond the *character-dominant* blend, perhaps further drawing attention to the theatricality and artifice of the performance, increasing the dialogic interplay. In tandem with the bodily immediacy of the performance itself, this interplay excites both present senses of the live experience, and conjures pleasant mental associations of cultural icons from the past. As a *performer-dominant* position, the audience may in fact not respond to the Old Gumbie Cat, Rum Tum Tugger, or Bustopher Jones, but instead engage in these juxtapositions through an association with Joyce Grenfell, Elvis Presley, or Beau Brummell.<sup>86</sup> In effect, the characters become ciphers of human beings. Perhaps in this sense, when Old Deuteronomy concludes by suggesting that cats 'are very much like you' (Eliot, 1969a, p. 234), the definition of a 'Jellicle cat' is simply 'another human being'.

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<sup>86</sup> In a similar but not exact parallel, the 'juke-box musicals' of recent years may be seen to operate via a similar mechanism of nostalgic referencing, although the issue is of course, more complex than this.

The ensemble moments create a sense of a ‘community’ and shared experience between the actors and the audience. They do so through the immediacy of the performance, which draws attention to the actors onstage. As the dynamic shape schemas above highlight, the intensity of ensemble does change throughout the performance, although the presence of the ensemble rarely does. Thus, each character that is highlighted within the vignettes, steps out of the ensemble momentarily, but is experienced within that sense of community and ensemble. The fact they may then be read as ciphers of people from everyday life suggests that the ensemble created may act as a metaphor for society at large. In this case, the order of the vignettes and the sequence of juxtapositions are crucial to engaging with the performance. As Figure 5.6 demonstrates, the juxtapositions of the section examined above may produce what might be termed a ‘micro-narrative’ within the work’s otherwise arbitrary showcasing of cats.

For the Old Gumbie Cat and Rum Tum Tugger, the micro-narrative shifts from ideals of domesticity and social order to playful rebellion and contrariness, enhanced by the musical references of Lloyd Webber’s score. Such social tropes are set in direct contrast to each other, and dependent in their impact on cultural associations from the audience. Thus, the ‘outer world’ of the performance space directly affects cognitive engagement with the dramatic space, which in turn is presented in direct collision/collusion with the bodily presence of the audience. It is the intensity that inter-textual referencing creates which unifies the disparate vignettes of the dramatic space, sustained in performance through the intense energy of the ensemble’s continual presence throughout.

The micro-narrative of the section considered thus seems implicitly concerned with social order and society:

	<i>Eliot’s character type</i>	<i>Musical reference (cultural)</i>	<i>Micro-narrative (juxtaposition)</i>
<b>The Old Gumbie Cat</b>	Fun, order, domesticity, ‘Nanny’	Glen Miller, Pre-War, Jazz	Social <b>Order</b>
<b>The Rum Tum Tugger</b>	Mischievous character, disruptive, playful, flirtatious, Anti-establishment.	Elvis, 1950s, Mick Jagger, 1970s, rebellion, youth, fun, freedom, sexuality.	<b>Rebellion</b> against the social order
<b>Grizabella: The Glamour Cat</b>	Bedraggled, Solo, Outcast	Blues, Dirge, Minor key	<b>Exclusion</b> from social acceptance, transgression

<b>Bustopher Jones: The Cat About Town</b>	'The Cat about town', Social order, Class, Caricature, Beau Brummel	Hymn-like, Wistful	Celebration of social <b>status</b>
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**Figure 5.6 – Act One Micro-narrative**

This micro-narrative then, progresses from order through a gradual decline of playful rebellion, demonstrates the painful consequences of taking things to extremes, but eventually restores the *status quo* with the arrival of Bustopher. Perhaps with classical theatre director Trevor Nunn at the helm, the way in which these cats interact, and the order in which their stories are placed, is not as arbitrary as it may first appear. Additionally, the fact that these poems are set in a different order to the way in which they were originally published in Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, suggests too that *Cats* does have 'meaning'. Perhaps its spectacle and base material contains a deeper dramatic arc. The micro-narrative above directly relates to the question of what defines a Jellicle cat, for as mentioned it represents different individuals within a community. Specifically, it directly portrays the overall thematic concern of *Cats*: Grizabella's exclusion (and eventual redemption). This theme is therefore present as an ongoing concern through the whole performance.<sup>87</sup> Somaesthetically however, the above analysis is problematic, for in exploring the dialogic interplay between text, music, and cultural mediation in the dramatic space, the collision/collusion of the dramatic elements within the immediacy of the performance space needs addressing. In what way does the performance space embody the micro-narrative of the dramatic space through its dynamic shape?

### **Dynamic shape as narrative**

It is particularly interesting to consider how the dynamic shape of this section develops. Victoria's dance focussed attention on the individual performer, and during the brief 'Invitation to the Jellicle Ball', many of the ensemble re-enter the space, re-establishing the sense of co-presence and community introduced in the opening number.

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<sup>87</sup> Such micro-narratives are not limited to this specific section of act one. The majority of act two could be seen as an extended micro-narrative in its own right ranging from the innocence of Jemima's rendition of 'Memory', to the social disorder of 'Macavity'. Spending time on this is properly a subject for further development outside the remit of this thesis.

### *The Old Gumbie Cat*

In addition to the presence of the ensemble, which is a corporeal experience, there are two aspects worthy of comment here. Firstly, the dynamic shape of the voice changes. The opening ensemble section relied on shared solo lines and full choral groups, after which Victoria's dance solo was silent. Here – in the first of many vignettes to use this pattern – the vocal style is presentational and in the third person: Munkustrap and three female cats describe and comment on the Old Gumbie Cat, with only occasional interjections from her. Performatively, the aural shape has changed. The full embodied voices of the ensemble give way to attention on solo voices. As considered in the next chapter, a somaesthetic perspective on the voice sees it as corporeal, establishing the presence of the body which produces it. Somaesthetically then, the sense of intensity and directness changes here, and a sense of bodily presence is established by specific characters through their voices. Notably, a form of corporeal distance is created through this use of voice, for it is Munkustrap and his companions that vocally provide most energy, through their commenting on the Old Gumbie Cat. The distance created, in terms of bodily immediacy through the dynamic shape of the voice in the performance space, is supported in the dramatic space by the use of the third person narrator, creating a distancing effect between the audience and the character portrayed. It is through the collision/collusion of these distances – textual (dramatic) and vocal (performative) – that the intertextuality of the dramatic space can play out.

Secondly, whilst the intertextuality and content of the dramatic space highlights the Gumbie Cat's domesticated, organised, and orderly personality, the dynamic shape of the performance space embodies this, when she marshals the ensemble into a dance troupe. The ensemble tap-dance which develops creates a sense of excitement and nostalgic recall to musicals of a bygone era, prompting a different set of cultural associations, and providing a physiological lift to the performance in much the same way that the opening sequence did. The ensemble effect once again celebrates the creation of community, in the immediacy of the performance space, and heightens bodily presence and energy exchange as the dancers perform in perfect unison. Again, the sense of entrainment and synchronisation identified on the receivers' part also comes into play (Jola (2010a), McConachie (2008)). The lyrical description of this cat – distanced through its aural shape and use of the third person – gives way here to a return to performative immediacy and energy. The dynamic shape has shifted even within this one vignette, creating a real sense of interplay between the immediacy of the ensemble, and the dialogic elements of the dramatic space in performance.

*The Rum Tum Tugger – Grizabella – Bustopher Jones*

By contrast, the dynamic shape of the Rum Tum Tugger's song is chaotic and boisterous. The ordered ensemble, with their body rhythms synchronised in Old Gumbie's tap-dance routine literally collapse into chaos, with small groups of kittens and cats all doing different things. The element that unites this now disparate ensemble in the performance space is the dynamic shape of the voice. In unison, the chorus continually exclaim:

CHORUS: THE RUM TUM TUGGER IS A CURIOUS CAT!  
(*'The Rum Tum Tugger'*, *Cats*, Act I, Sc. v)

whilst Rum Tum Tugger himself celebrates his contrary mischief. This more direct address creates an immediacy and intensity in the performance, whilst the corporeal exchanges between the actors and the audience that were synchronised, once more engage in a 'body rhythm struggle' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 58). Corporeally, the immediacy of presence and chaotic energies in the performance space aptly embody the character of the Rum Tum Tugger as portrayed in the dramatic space.

The dynamic shape of Grizabella's song however, is relatively static, providing a contrast to the previous vignettes, and the ensemble conclude by literally – physically – grouping together in a mob. Their physical energies in the concluding section of the vignette are intense and still, challenging Grizabella, and vicariously creating a sense of mob-mentality in the 'wall' of bodies used to usher Grizabella off the stage. From the multiple body rhythms engaged with in 'The Rum Tum Tugger', and the heightened sense of unison in 'The Old Gumbie Cat', here, the bodies are together but in stasis. Physically, this shift in corporeal energy prompts an audience member's motor-simulation pattern to change, physically stopping him in his tracks as the music changes. Grizabella's dramatic space suggests a sombre outcast, and the performance space here literally embodies this isolation through the ensembles physicality. In addition, the vocal shape of this vignette builds in a similar way to 'The Old Gumbie Cat', from two or three solo voices, to the full chorus chanting in mocking tones. After a short and embittered solo, Grizabella is silent as the other cats tell of her exploits. In this sense, an aural distance is created between her, the ensemble onstage, and the audience. The fact that Grizabella's presence is 'muted' when the other cats sing literally seems to embody their dominance over her.

The ensemble returns to small groups for the entrance of Bustopher Jones. Literally larger than life, Bustopher is dressed in a morning suit, with a monocle and a walking cane. Importantly, the anthropomorphism of the actor/character is here

subverted by the human costuming of this character. The audience's physical and visual orientation from the mob physicality, and gradual crescendo in the music of 'Grizabella', now focus on this imposing figure in a fat suit. Being placed centre stage, his presence is different again to that of Old Gumbie, Rum Tum Tugger, or Grizabella. If Bustopher Jones represents social status and respect as part of the community shared by the actors and the audience, then the physical costuming represents this: his corporeality is more intense than Grizabella's, for example. For part of the song he is seated on a large top hat centre stage, with all of the younger male cats sat at his feet, listening intently to his exploits. In a literal sense, this concentrates the audience's focus on the character, and is a visual sign of respect and status. So, here too, the dynamic shape and spatial arrangements in the performance space support the content of the dramatic space.

\* \* \*

In the case of all four vignettes highlighted above, the sense of presence and interplay within the dynamic shape of the performance coheres with the intertextuality of the dramatic space. Thus, the performance space embodies and gives a sense of corporeal immediacy to the dialogisms of the dramatic work, using the physical staging to highlight the micro-narrative within the collisions/collusions of spaces. These relationships might be represented as follows:

	<i>Micro-narrative (Juxtaposition)</i>	<i>Dynamic Shape</i>
<b>The Old Gumbie Cat</b>	Social <b>Order</b>	Order and unison
<b>The Rum Tum Tugger</b>	<b>Rebellion</b> against the social order	Chaos and movement
<b>Grizabella: The Glamour Cat</b>	<b>Exclusion</b> from social acceptance, transgression	Relative stasis and a group dynamic
<b>Bustopher Jones: The Cat About Town</b>	Celebration of social <b>status</b>	Respect, status and order

**Figure 5.7 – Dynamic shape of Act One micro-narrative**

Despite being immersed in the collision/collusion of spaces which physically creates an immediacy of conceptual engagement, the dynamic shape of *Cats* is in constant flux, negotiating different characters on stage through the audience's own cultural

associations. These associations can help create micro-narratives based on socio-cultural tropes within the macro-narrative of the Jellicle community. Such micro-narratives are developed through the interplay of the ensemble at large, a focus on specific characters, the use of extrinsic musical reference, and the dynamic shapes these elements create. Through the interplay of these relationships, the audience can cognitively engage with the caricatures and archetypes presented, whilst also corporeally responding through vicarious enactment, the ebb and flow of movement, ensemble intensity, and vocal textures. Whether this engagement preferentialises character or performer in the blend type selected, the interplay and intensity of the dramatic space and performance space together unleash huge corporeal energies which intensify the feeling of shared experience. This allows both actors and audience work together to answer the question: what's a Jellicle cat?

\* \* \*

This chapter has focussed in large part on the way bodies in space can create a sense of dynamic shape. Having developed the actor/audience relationship through the interplay of dramatic and performative spaces in *Company*, the immediacy of spatial collision/collusion is seen here to intensify the sense of presence and community, establishing the energies within the 'feedback loop'. As Barba has suggested, such energies are what render the actor/character as 'alive', 'embodied', 'authentic' (in Mullis, 2006, p. 111). Thus, the characters of Eliot's poetry were given life through the intensity of corporeal exchange.

This allowed an engagement with the claim that *Cats* is all spectacle and little substance. In analysing the bodily interactions within the colliding/colluding dramatic and performance spaces, the immediacy of blend selection was discussed, and the theatricality of the production exposed. This then allowed perhaps the most important facet of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' employed in this chapter to be explored: cultural mediation. With reference to *Cats*, cultural mediation has proved an important element in exploring the way an audience member might relate to the cats as ciphers, representative of archetypes from his or her own life experience. In this way, the relationship between the 'inner self' and the 'outer world' engages in a direct process of meaning-making and association.

Thus, the corporeal dynamic of the ensemble, whose presence is intensified through the collision/collusion of spaces, creates a sense of bodily community with the audience, who may duly respond through body-rhythms, synchronicity, entrainment, conceptual blending, motor-simulation, and vicarious enactment. On one level, the

dynamic shape of the performance itself creates a somaesthetic 'experience' for the audience. Yet, when merged with the cultural mediation through music, and the immediacy of performance, the relationship between the bodily engagement and the mental associations with character and 'caricature', can produce powerful effects. In this case, a somaesthetic analysis finds the criticisms levelled at *Cats* as being spectacle without substance to be superficial and problematic. Rather, the juxtaposition of its elements – both textually and performatively – serve to engage the audience on all levels: using the idea of community, and the bodily use of ensemble, to manipulate engagement and attention throughout the performance, creating subtle micro-narratives within the seemingly post-linear vignettes of the work.

Importantly, this case study also demonstrated that, in addition to the interplay of spaces and dialogic properties highlighted above, *Cats* achieves the 'transformative' potential of musical theatre performance as well. The primary means through which this occurs is the use of the ensemble effect, and the neuro-biological effect of music and movement in unison (Jola, 2010a; McConachie, 2008). In this, we can see the strong link between the influence of cultural mediation, corporeal engagement with the bodily actions in the 'feedback loop', and an audience's cognitive engagement with the dramatic situation. In short, it is through cultural mediation that these two elements may be reconciled or negotiated.

As Damasio (2000) has acknowledged, corporeal (ontological) and cognitive (epistemological) facets of consciousness and experience are mediated within socio-cultural boundaries. This point is particularly important regardless of blend, because it acknowledges the challenge often aimed at neuro-scientific explanations of perception and reaction, particularly regarding the mirror-neuron system. Whilst critics suggest no intention or emotional content can ever be inferred through the motor-simulations of mirroring, 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' necessarily includes both socio-cultural factors and neuro-biological responses in presenting a possible reading of *Cats*, operating on the basis of the actor/audience relationship established earlier in this thesis.<sup>88</sup> Importantly, mirror-neuron responses as an embodied reaction to experience are not based solely in movement or action. Paul Robertson (2007) has presented evidence that suggests mirror-neuron responses also induce sensory appreciation through the experience of music and the singing voice. These elements are fundamental in the way musical theatre operates, and so the final case study will explore the relationship between music, voice, and reception, from a somaesthetic perspective.

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<sup>88</sup> Critics of mirror-neuron theory on the basis of the absence of meaning and intention include Gregory Hickok, who lists eight problems with mirror-neuron theory (2008).

## CHAPTER SIX

### 'I know the sound of touch me': *The Light in the Piazza*

One crucial area of musical theatre performance not yet addressed in detail is the expressive potential, and rhetoric, of the live singing voice.<sup>89</sup> In exploring the voice, this chapter will draw together the previous discussions of embodied presence, and the creation of meaning through context, to develop and apply a somaesthetic reading of the voice in musical theatre. How might the voice be read, understood, and engaged with, in line with the preceding discussion and application of somaesthetic principles? Can the voice also be read as embodied? As a corporeal presence? If the voice in musical theatre is a facet of embodiment, then who is it that is singing? The discussion of *Company* highlighted the duality of the character and performer, using States (in Zarrilli, 2002), and McConachie's model of conceptual blending (2008). In line with these foregoing arguments, is the voice that of the character or the performer? Can it be both? To address these questions, certain perspectives on the voice need to be outlined and explored.

Thinking on the human voice in general – and the singing voice in particular – is complex, and as with performance theory, or dramatic theory, is a field of scholarship in which multiple perspectives conflate and conflict. Differing philosophical labels may be applied to the varying approaches. For the sake of clarity, there are two prevailing schools of thought which have developed since antiquity, and for which we may use the umbrella terms 'dualistic' and 'monistic'.<sup>90</sup> Through understanding these opposing positions, the theory, transformative potential, and power of the embodied voice might be better understood and applied using somaesthetics.

#### The 'voice-object': A dualistic singing voice

Dualistic perspectives on the singing voice emerged during the Renaissance as the result of revised thinking on the continuous ontology between the material (bodily) and immaterial (cognitive) realms of the human. Prior to Descartes' assertion of the *cogito*,

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<sup>89</sup> To discuss 'voice' here is with specific reference to the human singing voice in musical theatre – rather than abstract or theoretical notions of 'the composer's voice'. A particularly applicable and analytical discussion of 'the voice' as a concept is seen in Carolyn Abbate's *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (1991), particularly as outlined in pages 10 – 14.

<sup>90</sup> Such a division is 'in theory' and will serve as a framework for this discussion. Gary Tomlinson's discussion of song and the singing voice in *Metaphysical Song* (1999) determines four historically specified eras of philosophical thought regarding the sung voice as dualistic or monistic: Ficinian, Cartesian, Kantian and Nietzschean. In brief, the Ficinian perspective was largely monistic, whilst from the seventeenth century advent of Cartesian dualism, the material and immaterial realms are seen as separate, and accordingly reflected in perspectives on the singing voice and the human body of the performer. In using this term, the monistic approach equates to Fischer-Lichte's discussion of the 'materiality' of the voice in *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (2008).

which created a void between mind and body in his *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), earlier schools of thought held that there was in fact a harmonious union between them (Tomlinson, 1999, pp. 11-14). The singing voice was seen as an embodied representation of that unity between body and mind. The early writings of Marsilio Ficino (circa. 1489 (1996)) demonstrate this, in which Ficino argues that the human subject was an autonomous (monistic) spiritual subject within the cosmos. Gary Tomlinson's discussion of Ficinian thought suggests that 'song' in this context was seen as a 'cosmic entity', channelled through the monistic spirit of the human singer in performance (1999, pp. 11-12). However, the influence of Cartesian thought during the Renaissance, which conceptualised divisions between the materiality and immateriality of the known and the unknown (secular and divine), revised this early monistic perspective on the voice. As Tomlinson continues, 'the Cartesian era [...] would ultimately help determine nineteenth century musical ideologies', and it is these ideologies that can be seen with reference to the singing voice in much operatic scholarship (1999, p. 42). Indeed, such perspectives are at the root of many of the theories seen earlier in Chapter Two.

In a dualistic sense, the singing voice is not embodied. Rather, it is held to transcend the material, separated from the imperfect 'sensible' realms of the performing body. Abbate (1991, 2001) suggests that the concept of voice as possessing a quasi-divinity is one of the primary attractions of live musical performance (particularly, of opera). She observes that a dualism which assigns separate attributes to the voice and body constitutes a 'radical autonomization' of the human voice: 'The sound of the singing voice becomes, as it were, a "voice-object" and the sole centre for the listener's attention' (1991, p. 10). Such a focus on the voice as separate from the body which produces it – both for performer and audience alike – renders the performer a mere vessel in what Abbate terms 'a chimerical state between aliveness and deadness' (2001, p. 118). Reduced to this function, Abbate succinctly observes that 'operatic fiction declares that a human body is not actually there' (2001, p. 152). Such a position is neo-Platonic in its development, marginalising or silencing the corporeal body of the performer, the basis for which was discussed earlier in this thesis.

Whilst this might be a generalisation, such a marginalizing of the performing body in favour of lauding the voice as accessing realms of the divine in performance, is part of what Symonds has termed a 'cultish mystique' of the singing voice and is fundamentally problematic for a somaesthetic conception of voice in performance (2007, p. 167). Symonds' article 'The Corporeality of Musical Expression: 'The Grain of the Voice' and the actor-musician' draws on a range of scholarly perspectives to

present and critique the common theoretical conception of the voice as ‘an autonomous object detached from the body that produces it’, (see Poizat, 1992, p. 35). This dualism is accordingly problematic for Symonds, Abbate, and for a somaesthetic reading of the voice, for it prompts a very obvious question: what is the voice, if not part of the body?

If the voice is detached from the body of the performer when they begin to sing, surely this compromises the potential power of their embodied presence in the ‘feedback loop’ of performance? If the actor surrenders to the voice, what happens to the embodiment of character; to the authority such bodily presence affords them? How does this affect the audience? Such questions are among the concerns which might be raised from dualistic perspectives on the singing voice. Such concerns are inevitably problematic from a somaesthetic viewpoint, which focuses on aspects of embodied performance and reception. However, does a monistic perspective relate to the idea of embodied vocality more appropriately, and if so, does it allow a somaesthetic reading of the voice in performance?

### **Monistic perspectives on voice**

In concluding his discussion above, Symonds suggests that it is the very presence of the embodied performer in the performance space that ‘constitutes [the audience’s] most obvious and rewarding encounter with music [and by extension, voice]’ [*sic.*] (2007, p. 168).<sup>91</sup> Reinstating the voice within the body, the often resonant nature of the sung voice is linked directly to the shared bodily experience, of both the actors and the audience. Using Barthes’ notion of the ‘grain of the voice’ as ‘the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue’ (1977, p. 182), Symonds’ article argues for the idea of the voice as a *monistic*, embodied entity within the performer, and not a separate object. For the audience then, the embodied presence of the performer ‘is not only aurally but also visually, kinaesthetically and corporeally witnessed’ (Symonds, 2007, p. 168).

If vocality is a direct invocation of the corporeality of expression and presence, then the singing voice in musical theatre – the heightened form of vocal expression accompanied by music (as discussed in *Company*) and/or dance (as seen in *Cats*) – does not attain its power by means of voiding the body in favour of sensorial accession. Instead, monistic perspectives on the voice suggest it is by means of embodiment and the materiality of the human subject that the voice exists.

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<sup>91</sup> This presence of corporeality that Symonds’ discusses corresponds well with Fischer-Lichte’s idea of ‘materiality’, embodiment and presence, which ‘marks not an expressive but a purely performative quality [...] The spectator’s sense that the actor is present in an unusually intense [bodily] way’ (2008, p. 96): a view echoed by much performance and reception theory that implicitly draws on concepts of embodiment.

As mentioned above, Robertson (2007) has identified chemical changes in the corporeal make-up of those who perform music or sing. Through clinical tests, he has identified a series of chemical changes in the body of the performer when they engage in producing music. Interestingly, while the body's sensitivity to aspects of rhythm, pace, tempo, tone, and vibration, is increased through performance, chemicals including adrenaline, dopamine, and endorphins are released into the performer's bloodstream, creating a heightened emotional state and intense sensory experience of physical presence. At the same time, other chemicals become inhibited, limiting the performer's sense of spatial awareness. Therefore, to say a performer is 'in their own little world' when singing (or playing an instrument), is not a cliché or an understatement, but is chemically, and corporeally, accurate.

Robertson's findings serve to confirm the bodily effect of music and voice, enabling a discussion of the singing voice in performance to focus on the bodies of both actors and audience members without undue recourse to an external consideration of additional musical effect.<sup>92</sup> Crucially, Robertson's study also confirms mirror-neuron theory, for while the body of the performer is chemically and corporeally altered by the music or singing they produce, matching chemical reactions were identified in the audience. This evidence suggests that just as with the vicarious enactment of movement in dance (*Cats*), or the bodily response to theatrically intensified presence through extended corporeality (*Company*), engagement with the singing voice is also a crucial part of the 'feedback loop' between the actor and the audience. Situating the performance and reception of the singing voice within the body suggests that a somaesthetic reading of the voice as embodied is appropriate. In fact, a large body of scholarship has already been produced which discusses embodied perspectives on voice in performance, so this study cannot claim simply to explore the concept of embodied vocality (or, we might say, corporeal vocality) as contributing to somaesthetic analysis.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, this case study will develop a somaesthetic perspective on the embodied voice in performance through examining the 2005 musical, *The Light in the Piazza*, to explore how embodied vocality may contribute to a reading of performance.

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<sup>92</sup> Further neuro-scientific studies have located the experience of music for both performer and audience within the body, along with the production (and experience) of voice. It has been demonstrated that music's rhythm for example, affects heart-rate and blood pressure (Sakamoto, 2002; Sutoo & Akiyama, 2004).

<sup>93</sup> A representative portion of this scholarship is used throughout this thesis, and includes work by Bruce McConachie (2008), Fischer-Lichte (2008), Eugenio Barba (2002; 2002) and Roland Barthes (1977c).

### **Dolar, voice, language, and the body**

Based on a 1960 novella of the same name by Elizabeth Spencer, *Piazza* has a score with lyrics by Adam Guettel, and a book by playwright Craig Lucas.<sup>94</sup> The story centres on Margaret and Clara Johnson, a mother and daughter on holiday in Italy from their home in Winston-Salem, America. In the very first scene, Clara meets and falls in love with the somewhat hapless young tie-shop employee Fabrizio Naccarelli, and so begins a series of bittersweet and often charming endeavours to form a romantic relationship. Through both the dialogue and songs in this musical, the growing romance of these two young lovers is often fraught with complication because Guettel and Lucas exploit the obvious, and sometimes comical, barrier of language, a primary factor in considering the use of voice in this work, particularly in the relationship between music, voice, and language.<sup>95</sup> Whilst Paul Barker (2006) has noted that conventional musical theatre performances often rely on a 'stubbornly traditional' relationship between music and lyrics to communicate meaning and intention to the audience, in *Piazza*, Guettel and Lucas often give no translation in their use of Italian. Fabrizio's aria 'Il Mondo Era Vuoto' for example, is never expressed in English, despite the fact that *Piazza*'s major productions have been in English speaking countries (America and England). Can the effect of this be expressed somaesthetically? Does it make any real difference analytically if the voice, in this instance, is viewed dualistically or monistically? To begin exploring this, the following case study will use Mladen Dolar's key work *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006) as a provocation for constructing a somaesthetic relationship between voice, language, and the body, in performance.

In his book, Dolar develops an ambivalent, and at times paradoxical, reading of the voice as a Lacanian *objet petit a*. He seeks to establish a psychoanalytical theory of the voice as the unattainable object of desire, the by-product of experience and cognition.<sup>96</sup> In doing so, he discusses three specific elements of the voice which relate to a consideration of *Piazza*:

- The common conception of the voice as linguistic (a carrier of meaning).
- The voice as aesthetic property (such as in song).

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<sup>94</sup> Unlike *Company* or *Cats*, this musical is presented as a traditional linear piece, and thus somaesthetic principles are not limited to an exploration of the body in post-linear or non-linear work; facets of embodied presence and response are also transferable to this more 'conventional' form.

<sup>95</sup> Finding her naiveté appealing, Fabrizio falls in love with her, and she reciprocates. However, Margaret consistently attempts to come between these two lovers. She is overly (if understandably) protective of Clara who – despite being twenty-six years old – has the mental age of a twelve year old following a childhood accident. In the end, Margaret tempers her views as the musical climaxes with the two lovers exchanging wedding vows.

<sup>96</sup> For a fuller exploration of Lacan's theories of desire, drive and experience, see *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1979), in which his theory of the *objet petit-a* is explained in detail.

- The paradoxical relationship between the voice and the body.

Ultimately, Dolar believes that each element has two levels. The first level relates to the paradoxical or ambivalent function of the element in question. For example, in considering the linguistics of the voice, Dolar's ambivalence is clear. He suggests that the voice is concurrently a carrier of meaning, but also inactive as to the meaning itself: the voice is 'what does not contribute to making sense', but rather 'the material element recalcitrant to meaning' (p.15). If this is the case, the voice is a non-linguistic element: 'the place where what cannot be said can nevertheless be conveyed [...] by not meaning anything' (p.31). So at the first level, the voice as language is both linguistic and meaningless at the same time.

The second level for Dolar is the voice as *objet petit a* – the by-product of the first level, inaudible, and related to the psychoanalytical theories of desire and drive found in Lacan's writing. This voice 'does not coincide with any existing thing, although it is always evoked only by bits of materiality' (2006, p. 74). To a certain extent, such a psychoanalytical position falls outside the realms of this thesis, but nevertheless, Dolar's discussion of the first level – the paradoxes of the voice in relation to language, song, and the body – are directly relevant to a consideration of *Piazza*, and provocative to recast somaesthetically when exploring how we might better understand or analyse the voice in live musical theatre performance.

The way in which Dolar conceptualises the relationship between language, voice, and the body, is a good starting point for considering *Piazza's* use of the Italian language somaesthetically. Having established the ambivalence of the voice with regard to linguistics, Dolar writes in Chapter 3 of his book:

The voice ties language to the body, but the nature of this tie is paradoxical: *the voice does not belong to either.*

(2006, pp. 72, original emphasis)

He then reiterates the point by summarising his position:

*What language and the body have in common is the voice, but the voice is part neither of language nor of the body.*

(2006, pp. 73, original emphasis)

A somaesthetic perspective already calls into question the idea of a separable voice and body, recasting the voice as an inherent part of the body itself. This recasting will be explored further below in light of Dolar's writing, but of particular interest here is Dolar's conception of the relationship between language and the voice. In exploring two songs from Act One of *Piazza*, questions of language, meaning, and voice will be addressed, and the musicological theory outlined in Chapter Two will also be brought to bear on the discussion.

#### *Song as 'voice communication' in Piazza*

It might be argued that *Piazza* exploits a focus on the linguistics of the voice through the use of language in its libretto. Considering Dolar's ambivalent reading of the voice and language, he suggests that the voice is *not* language but rather a carrier of language, a semantic agent through its pitch, intonation, and aural properties. In essence, Dolar seems to draw a distinction between words and voice, between linguistics and speech. Notably, such a distinction bears a strong resemblance to one in musicology mentioned in Chapter Two of this research. Francis Sparshott has suggested that in song, lyrics transmogrify from 'verbal' communication to 'voice' communication; that it is the musical signifiers in the voice (intonation, patterns of pitch, and melody) that become the primary means of communication and meaning making (1994, p. 30). To a certain extent this is perhaps true, and in fact Dolar argues such a situation leads to the fetishizing of the singing voice in performance (2006, pp. 30-31). However, as discussed in Chapter Two, words do not altogether disappear behind the music or the voice; they are an inherently semantic agent in the narrative and a key means of expression in performance.

Where a foreign tongue is concerned however, do words just become sound? Do Dolar and Sparshott's complementary positions help in understanding the relationship between voice and the Italian language in *Piazza*? Even with a focus on the voice as embodied, can Dolar's credo that the voice 'ties language to the body' be realised somaesthetically (2006, p. 72)? In engaging with these questions, the first song to be sung entirely in Italian ('Il Mondo Era Vuoto') is a good example to consider. In this instance, how do the words relate to the voice as embodied, and how is meaning created? To reiterate Sparshott's position (1994, p. 30), linguistic communication seems to be less important here; it is the musical communication by the embodied voice that conveys meaning. It does so through three main elements: context, musical phrasing and embodied vocality.



each time the perfect fifth rises in pitch by a whole tone, building towards the song's climax (Bb. 53-55, 61-63, 68-70. See vocal score (2005)). Whilst this use of Clara's name (and a foreign tongue) draws attention to the linguistic properties of voice, on each of the three occasions it is sounded in full-bodied open voice, reminiscent in its quality of Poizat's 'vocal cry' (1992, p. 7). Reading this somaesthetically – reading the voice as part of the body – the voice expresses the 'full self' of the character in the dramatic space through the heightened bodily expression of the actor, complemented by the shape of the melody, the context, the harmonic construction, and the musical accompaniment (Wall, 1996, p. 30).

The embodied effect of a vocal device such as the repetition of Clara's name in this song is interesting to consider. A similar aspect is discussed in detail below when analysing the song 'Say it Somehow', but in this instance, it is interesting to return to some observations made above by Storr (1997) and Cook (1998), with reference to Dolar's idea of the voice linking language to the body. For Storr, the experience of song placed the primary syntactic and semantic effects of the music and words in the right hemisphere of the brain, which is responsible for emotional and sensory response (1997, p. 38). To this end, the singing voice becomes a Gestalt of linguistic content (also processed in the left hemisphere), and vocal and musical elements, regardless of the language used. Perhaps even the repetition of 'Clara' reduces the semantic properties of the name, transforming it into a vocal utterance used to signify Fabrizio's intense desire, rather than communicate via language.<sup>98</sup> If this is the case, it is the embodied expression of vocality here that conveys meaning through context, musico-vocal intonation, and phrasing. This raises a dilemma, however, for it seems to suggest that in song, the words do not matter – even if they are in the mother tongue of the performer and receiver. Likewise, it also suggests that Fabrizio and Clara could communicate using Italian and English and still understand each other perfectly. How can this be?

As an example to problematise such a claim, the fifth scene of Act One sees Fabrizio and Clara taking a romantic stroll together, when Fabrizio demonstrates a naively humorous side to the linguistics of the voice – the obvious semantic language barrier between him and Clara:

FABRIZIO: YOUR MILK. YOUR MILK IS... EH.

CLARA: My milk is what? What milk?

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<sup>98</sup> A similar effect might be seen in the repetition of 'Maria' in the song of the same name from *West Side Story*.

FABRIZIO: NOT MILK, IS LIKE MILK

CLARA: LIKE SNOW?

FABRIZIO: EH SE, BUT NO  
I KNOW SNOW  
NON E'SNOW  
IS...

*(He touches the back of her hand)*

HERE.  
COME SI DICE?  
HERE?

*(He touches her neck)*

AND HERE?

*(He touches her cheek)*

AND ALSO HERE...

CLARA: MY SKIN!

FABRIZIO: YOUR SKIN IS LIKE MILK!

*(‘Passaggieta’, The Light in the Piazza, Act I, Sc. v)*

This confusion between the words ‘milk’ and ‘skin’ draw attention to the performance of language, not of voice, and the difficulties of negotiating language through the voice as a carrier of the symbolic. This suggests that the linguistics of the voice have a limit where understanding is concerned; that they can only achieve so much in their ‘rational’ form. Such a constraint is overcome in ‘Il Mondo Era Vuoto’ by the use of musical construction, phrasing, harmony, and context. Additionally, however, it is also negotiated through the idea of the ‘verbal’ becoming – to an extent – the ‘vocal’; a development thrown into sharp relief by the use of the voice in the closing scene of Act One. In particular here, the interplay of semantic and syntactic properties highlights the embodied nature of vocality in performance, and importantly too, the embodied nature of reception by the audience. A consideration of this through the song ‘Say it Somehow’ will provide a somaesthetic reading to challenge Dolan’s conceptual separation of the body and voice in analysis.

*Say it... somehow?*

The idea of the ‘verbal’ transmogrifying into the ‘vocal’ is particularly applicable in the closing scene of Act One, during which Clara receives a surprise visit from Fabrizio to

her hotel room, panic-stricken that she did not meet him earlier that evening as they had arranged.<sup>99</sup> Fighting for the right words, Fabrizio stumbles in broken English:

FABRIZIO: I think maybe you have meet someone better. [...] I don't know how, how do I know... It is... I think... Impossible for me to say what I feel. I am so tiresome to talk... [...] If I could say in Italiano it would be best...

(*The Light in the Piazza*, Act I, Sc. IX)

This request to 'say in Italiano' is not unusual by this point; as we have already seen, the Italian tongue is used extensively throughout this musical. However, in this scene Fabrizio refuses to explain his emotions in his mother tongue. The reasons for this are never specified, although one could assume his reticence to enter the room when Clara was alone is still on his mind. Specifically too, he does not want Clara to rely on suggestion or mere indication. As demonstrated in 'Passeggiata', the linguistics of the voice has evident barriers for these two lovers. Perhaps, then, the voice as a carrier of language here has served its purpose. If this is the case, how does a position of embodied vocality, of the *monistic* voice, come into play to overcome this barrier to full emotional expression? It is here that Dolar's relationship between the voice and the body becomes problematic. In exploring what happens at the 'end of language' in this scene, somaesthetics can be applied in challenge to Dolar's thinking.

With Fabrizio nervous of saying anything further, Clara suggests a more direct – if problematic – solution to his linguistic quandary:

CLARA: WHY DON'T YOU TRACE IT ON MY HAND?  
OR MAKE A SONG, DO ANYTHING  
SAY IT SOMEHOW  
I WILL UNDERSTAND  
I KNOW YOU...  
(*'Say it Somehow'*, *The Light in the Piazza*, Act I, Sc. viii)

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<sup>99</sup> Having developed in Seattle and Chicago at various points, the Broadway production of this show (Directed by Bartlett Sher) opened on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2005 at the Vivian Beaumont Theater, Lincoln Center, and starred Victoria Clark as Margaret, Kelli O'Hara as Clara and Matthew Morrison as Fabrizio. It has since then had several other productions, including a European Premiere which played in May 2009 at Leicester's Curve Theatre, UK; directed by Paul Kerryson. Due to this production having closed this case study will make reference to the PBS television recording of the Broadway Production, which was aired on 15 June 2006 in the US. The similarities between Kerryson's staging and that created by Sher are numerous, allowing for such general discussion here.

Textually, and linguistically, the words indicate and invoke physical desire: to trace on the hand, to sing. In this sense then, the voice has directly linked language and the body. These desires develop and progress to the two lovers declaring:

CLARA & FABRIZIO:

I KNOW THE SOUND OF TOUCH ME

I THINK I HEAR THE SOUND OF

'WRAP YOUR ARMS AROUND ME'

(‘Say it Somehow’, *The Light in the Piazza*, Act I, Sc. viii)

These characters sing of their desire for bodily expressions of affection; the linguistics of the voice (such as they are) foregrounds the physical – embodied – desires of the two lovers. However, despite the semantic indication of physical attraction, Clara and Fabrizio remain physically separate. The corporeal reality of the performance space, and the ‘rational’ intentions communicated through voice in the dramatic space, contradict each other.

This is exemplified in the fact that not only do the words seem to lose their ability as carriers of meaning, but the language barrier finally reach its peak following the plea to ‘wrap your arms around me’. Having expressed this desire through the singing voice, Fabrizio and Clara shift their mode of expression from the ‘linguistics’ of the voice into *vocalise*.<sup>100</sup> Defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Music* (2007) as a wordless melody sung on one or more vowels, *vocalise* has often been used in a romantic context and was made famous in the works of Gounod, Rachmaninov, and Ravel. What effect does such a shift in the song achieve? After begging each other for physical communion through language, and using the singing voice to articulate the relationship between speech and the body, these two lovers still remain physically separate in the performance space and ostensibly run out of words. Does this not seem dramatically misplaced? Somaesthetic analysis, which argues for the embodied monistic voice, would suggest that this is in fact dramatically logical and emotionally fulfilling. A closer look at these moments of *vocalise* will support this idea.

*The word of your body: Vocalise as corporeal expression*

With regard to its use dramatically – particularly in opera – Paul Robinson has suggested that monosyllabic singing such as *vocalise* occurs ‘precisely at the moment of

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<sup>100</sup> *Vocalise* occurs at three notable moments in *Piazza*. Firstly, before Clara’s surprise proposal of marriage and what can be assumed as the initiation of sexual intimacy in this scene; secondly, before the wedding when Clara’s own self-doubt becomes too much to bear (‘Clara’s Interlude’); and finally when Fabrizio assuages her fears in ‘Love To Me’. It is the extensive use of *vocalise* in ‘Say it Somehow’ that provides the primary basis for somaesthetic analysis here.

greatest dramatic significance, when the text [the linguistics of the voice] in theory, ought to matter most [...] the musical logic [...] exploits vocal altitude to express particularly intense or significant responses' (1988, p. 334). So, perhaps the 'verbal' communication is replaced by 'voice' communication. Discussing the use of vocalise in writing this song, Guettel has suggested that 'the kind of virtuosic singing that they [Clara and Fabrizio] both get to at certain points in the story I think is a way of describing without depicting how sexually drawn to each other they are' (Seward, 2009). Considering Guettel's intentions here, the idea that non-linguistic vocality can be *descriptive* is interesting, for it supports Dolar's suggestion that the voice can 'convey' meaning (2006, p. 30). Such a position appears to result in the same reading of wordless singing as presented in analysing the effect of the foreign tongue in 'Il Mondo Era Vuoto'. How does the effect of vocalise differ dramatically? Through a somaesthetic perspective on the embodied voice, vocalise may act as more than a simple addition or replacement for language: it becomes an embodied substitute for the physical activity Clara and Fabrizio desire to engage in. How does it do this, and can this be expressed somaesthetically?

In answering this question, Dolar's conception of the voice as separate from the body becomes contentious. In his schema of the voice-body paradox, Dolar borrows from Michel Chion's (1982) work on voice, and uses the term 'acousmatic' to describe his subject: a voice detached from the source of its production with no fixed origin (2006, p. 60). In contemporary music, this voice is disembodied through electronic or technological means, but with regard to live human vocal performance, such acousmatization is commonly a quality found in opera studies that treat the singing voice as divine. However, somaesthetic analysis locates the voice as an explicit part of the living body that produces it. In this instance, the embodied singing voice becomes 'disacousmatized' (to borrow from Dolar again). Here then, vocalise renegotiates Dolar's relationships between language, voice, and the body. No linguistic element is involved. So the voice communication – embodied and corporeal – is what the audience are left to focus on.

'Detached from language' says Fischer-Lichte, 'the voice emerges as the opposite of logos [...]', in this case the opposite of the linguistic 'trace' of character in the dramatic space (2008, p. 128). 'The voice no longer transmits language [as seen here in the wordless vocalise]; it is language, in which a bodily being-in-the-world expresses him/herself and addresses the audience purely' (2008, p. 128). Whilst Fischer-Lichte's claim that non-linguistic vocality is a 'pure' form of address may be problematic, her implicit connection between the voice as 'language' and the bodily

presence of the actor is important. Such a focus on the use of the voice foregrounds the bodily mechanisms involved in its production: heightening the corporeal presence and energy of the actors onstage (2008, pp. 89, 128). The voice is explicitly 'disacousmatized' in this instance, inverting Dolar's argument.

Unlike the comedic problems of 'Passeggiata', where language explicitly activated character, here, the energy and sense of corporeality derived from the voice exudes from the actors themselves. As a voice utterance without language, the energy created is *pre-linguistic*, which Barba has argued forms the most intense experience of bodily presence on stage (in Mullis, 2006, p. 116). Fischer-Lichte summarises this by suggesting that 'Vocality [...] brings forth corporeality [...] in screams, sighs, moans, sobs and laughter' and in this case, vocalise (2008, p. 125). This relationship between the body and the voice is so strong that Fischer-Lichte continues by saying that 'The materiality of the voice reveals the performer's materiality in its entirety' (2008, p. 129).<sup>101</sup> The neuro-scientific affect of singing on the performer, which leads to chemical and corporeal transformations (as outlined in Robertson above), thus serves to locate the voice within the body, creating an intense sense of corporeal presence, energy exchange, and transformational experience.

So, the use of vocalise serves to lay bare the materiality of the body through the voice in the performance space. Such a change in the mode of expression here further shifts attention from the logocentric focus on the language barrier, to an intense state of 'voice communication'. To this end, it might be suggested that rather than ascending to sensorial heights of a realm which negates the bodily presence of the performer in favour of an acousmatic voice, the 'pure' expression of vocalise here is actually the exact response needed from Clara and Fabrizio. The characters may run out of words in the dramatic space, but in surrendering to an explicit expression of vocal embodiment – the language of voice, the language of the materiality of their bodies – Clara and Fabrizio do 'touch' and embrace sensorially, in response to the semantic information of the lyrics that precede the vocalise.

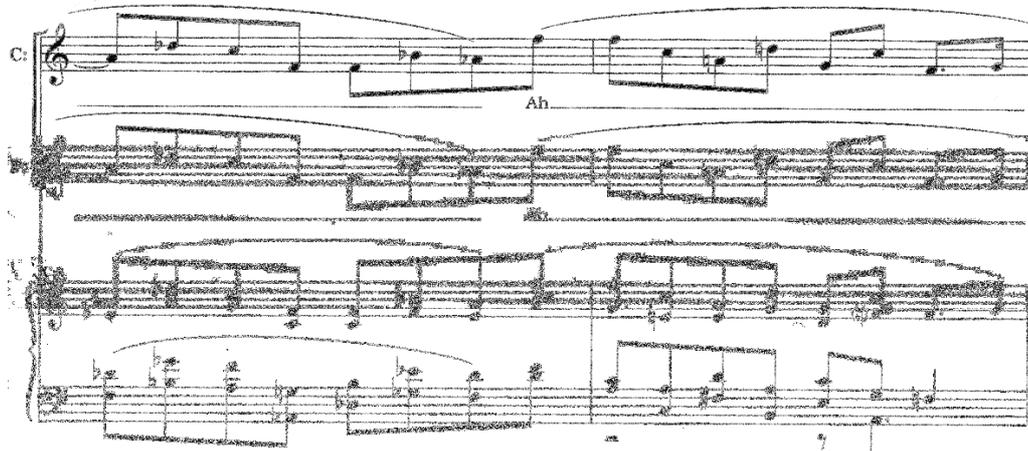
#### *Say it with music*

Of course, as with 'Il Mondo Era Vuoto' above, it is the interplay of semantic and syntactic information in context that completes the experience, along with the musical information present. On each occasion, the vocalise consists of a melodic rise and fall

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<sup>101</sup> This connection between the voice and its human mechanism is seen in David Burrows' discussion of the infant's cry in the 'thetic stage' of development. In line with Julie Kristeva, Burrows suggests that a baby's cry is the first bodily expression of being-in-the-world, through the negotiation of diaphragm (body) and larynx (voice) (in Symonds, 2007, p. 173).

pattern, performed legato, and most often with Clara and Fabrizio's voices in unison. The complexity of the music increases the tension in the vocalise by shifting tonality through different keys and chromatic harmonisation, but always returning the home key of C major (see Figure 6.1):



**Figure 6.1 – The first passage of vocalise in ‘Say it Somehow’ (Bb. 25-26)**

The orchestration for the sections of vocalise become awash with tremulous strings, and *glissando* on the harp, with the rhythmic tempo of the piano offsetting the fluidity of the other instruments. As in ‘Il Mondo Era Vuoto’, the dynamic markings in the score begin as *piano* and end as *forte*, and yet the expressive range here consistently shifts; it swells and subsides, forging ahead and then recanting. The effect of this on both the actors and the audience cannot be ignored here, and forms a crucial part of understanding how somaesthetics might apply in understanding the experience of voice and music in performance. Storr has suggested that ‘If we find that a piece of music moves us, we mean that it arouses us, that it affects us physically’ (1997, p. 184).

The measured tempo, and flow of the melody line, here affects the performers and audience, ‘entraining’ their body rhythms as discussed in the previous chapter (see McConachie, 2008). The slowly ascending melodic phrases of the vocalise – which rise in pitch and intensity – aurally create a sense of expectation for the listener (the resolution of which is discussed below). The fact that Fabrizio and Clara are most often melodically in unison in these moments of vocalise seems fitting as a vocal demonstration of corporeal togetherness. Melodically, their bodies once again can be seen to become one.

Somaesthetic analysis of the voice then – from a performance perspective – challenges Dolar’s argument that the voice does not belong to the body. Neuro-

chemically, musically, and theoretically, an embodied perspective on the voice creates a reading of *Piazza* where a foreign tongue does not necessarily matter in song, but the language barrier is a necessary element of the drama. In the case of 'Say it Somehow', the voice does not 'tie language to the body', as Dolar suggests (2006, p. 72), but is rather seen to overreach language in expressing dramatic intention. However, its power in acting as an expression of corporeal desire for Clara and Fabrizio functions dramatically, because the embodied vocality of the performance space is directly related to the linguistic intentions expressed in the dramatic space, when the characters sing of wrapping their arms around each other. The question remains then, how do the audience understand such vocal and linguistic interplay?

#### *Embodied vocality and reception*

The foregoing analysis suggests that performers (or at least their bodies) are not paradoxically mute whilst singing, but are enlivened through the voice. Ernst Bloch (1985) sees the human singing voice as paradigmatic of presence in performance, over and above instrumental music, or any claims of ascent into super-sensible realms. How might the audience experience this? Can the negotiations suggested above – between the dramatic space and performance space – be supported through applied use of reception theory and neuroscience? Robertson's findings already suggest that music causes similar chemical changes in both performer and receiver, and the brain's mirror-neuron system provides cognitive and neurological support for Fischer-Lichte's claim that 'spectators do not merely witness [performances], they physically experience them' (2008, p. 40). In terms of the voice then, ideas of embodied vocality – the 'disacousmatized' singing voice – might lead to the suggestion that the bodily transformation experienced by both actors and audiences may equate to, or be more intense than, the abstract notions of vocal transcendence seen in dualistic perspectives on the voice (2007, p. 588).

Having established the corporeality of vocal expression, it is interesting to return to a consideration explored throughout the previous two case studies. A heightened sense of vicarious enactment on the part of the audience is strongest when, as in *Cats* and *Company*, 'combinations of sounds and movement entrain our bodies' (McConachie, 2008, p. 71). The embodied vocality of the vocalise here may well affect an audience member, and intensify the sense of corporeal presence and longing. However, during the first two instances of vocalise, Clara and Fabrizio remain physically separate within the *mise-en-scene*, with Clara even moving away as Fabrizio reaches for her hand. If the brain's mirror-neuron system registers not only musical performance,

but the 'intentions of others with our own' (A. Cook, 2007, p. 588), then this creates a dialogic tension between the expectations of the dramatic space, and the physical reality of the performance space.

The embodied vocality of vocalise bridges this tension in these instances, and the audience will have been emotionally affected by the intensified sense of bodily presence, and the neurological affect of the music. Yet, the third occurrence of the wordless melisma is particularly interesting, for in the closing moment of this song, Fabrizio climbs onto the bed, and Clara begins unbuttoning his shirt. Thus, by the time the climax of this song occurs vocally, it is not merely the body-object of the voice that prompts a corporeal reaction, but the multi-sensory combination of vocal embodiment *and* bodily contact in context. The intentions of the dramatic space and the physical expression of voice and body are now in unison. Thus, the voice as a sonorous body-object has the power to communicate character, intention, and meaning through performance, and does so by its embodied presence for both the performer and the receiver, where – in the exchanges between them in the 'feedback loop' of live musical theatre performance – they too may know the sound of 'touch me'.

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Theories of embodied vocality seem to apply here, and in both a literal and conceptual sense, give voice to the characters through their vocal embodiment by the performers. The phantom-limbs of actor-musicianship aided and enhanced the interplay between performers and characters in *Company*. Additionally, the use of movement and musical content within the dynamic shape of *Cats* was seen to affect engagement through the continual negotiation between *performer-dominant* and *character-dominant* blend mixes in musical theatre's 'double image'. In *Piazza*, it is the voice that acts as a corporeal bridge between the performance space and the dramatic space. In particular, the quality of the voice as representing and confirming bodily presence and reactions, in both the actors and the audience is applicable not just to *Piazza*, but to all musical theatre performance. Indeed, in the case of *Cats*, *Company*, or *Piazza*, the models developed here are not discrete and may apply elsewhere. Yet, before drawing together broader conclusions regarding somaesthetics as an appropriate methodology for more inclusively analysing live musical theatre performance, it is interesting to return to a consideration of technology and presence as considered in Chapter Two, particularly with regard to the singing voice.

### **Technology and the re-(dis)embodied voice of musical theatre**

As discussed earlier, the use of microphones and amplification does, to an extent, complicate or challenge a somaesthetic reading of voice. Jonathan Burston, in his article 'Theatre Space as Virtual Place: Audio Technology, the Reconfigured Singing Body, and the Megamusical' (1998), suggests that productions lose their 'liveness', and commodify the actors, when technological enhancements are used throughout. He argues that the sound becomes 'cinema-sized', and actually proposes that this results in a loss, with the singers becoming dependent on microphones: 'Microphones, amplifiers and loudspeakers do the rest for [the actors]' (1998, p. 207). If this is the case, does the corporeal presence of the actors diminish? One argument supports the idea that this is true, reinforcing the duality between corporeal presence and vocal 'acousmatization' – an almost techno-duality. Reading the voice in this way, the use of voice *Piazza* would become 'acousmatic', disembodied, and twice removed, through the technological mediation of amplification, distancing the audience from the intensity of emotional and physiological response (1996, p. 70).

However, as stated in Chapter Two, live theatre is *live*; it relies on the bodies onstage producing the voices. The actors still enter McMillin's 'space of vulnerability', even if they are amplified in doing so: 'The foot can slip, the voice can crack, the memory can fail [...] All theatre thrives on this danger' (2006, p. 149). The immediacy of the live singing voice then, even when amplified, still contains a sense of embodied presence. As Fischer-Lichte has stated 'when a sound resonates in the listeners' chests [...] they no longer hear it as something entering their ears from outside but feel it from within as a physical process [...] Through sound, the atmosphere opens and enters the spectators' bodies' (2008, p. 119). Perhaps then, the distinction to make here is between ideas of *mediation* and *mediatisation*. A voice may be mediated, amplified, even intensified, and the performer's embodied sense of presence will still remain. It is only *mediatisation* – the technological displacement of ideas of presence for specific theatrical or dramatic effect – that might cause problems in discussing the effect of the embodied voice in performance. However, this particular concern falls outside the remit of this thesis. The voice then – so central to musical theatre performance – consistently serves to intensify the presence of the actors, and embodies the expression of the characters given voice through the 'double image' of musical theatre performance.

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Having considered the 'double image' of musical theatre in *Company*, the importance of cultural mediation to the meaning-making process in *Cats*, and the sense of heightened

embodied presence evident in musical theatre's use of embodied vocality in *Piazza*, the above case studies represent applied explorations of some of the key tenets of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis'. Each case study was set in the context of the 'feedback loop' of live performance, and the negotiations which take place between the dramatic work and the performance space. As these case studies progressed, findings were developed and presented from a somaesthetic perspective, recasting certain approaches to analysis. For example, the three categories for analysing actor-musicianship in Chapter Four were developed from the recognition of States' phenomenological modes of the actor's presence onstage. These categories could be used and applied to other actor-musician productions, or perhaps productions which use an onstage band or orchestra as part of their aesthetic. Additionally, the discussion of voice as embodying Dolar's paradox demonstrates the way in which somaesthetic principles can uncover and articulate the dialogisms of musical theatre in performance. Specifically, the influence of cultural mediation on a reading of *Cats* enabled the comparative analysis of its juxtaposed vignettes, to challenge the claim it has little or no meaning. Yet, these readings apply specifically to the above case studies, and do not satisfy the primary objective of this thesis. Therefore, the following chapter will draw these findings together, and examine the way in which 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' was used in the case studies, analysing its implementation as a more inclusive means of exploring the dialogic, transient, and multifaceted art form of live musical theatre.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Towards somaesthetics as an analytical model

Using the pragmatist philosophy of somaesthetics as a touchstone, this research has constructed a conceptual framework through which the transient, dialogic, and heightened, emotional world of musical theatre performance might be better understood and analysed. Connections, comparisons, and contrasts, have been drawn between some of the many and varied interdisciplinary approaches currently used in scholarship to talk about live musical theatre performance. Chapter Three discussed and defined a conceptual framework of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis', which was then used and applied throughout the three case studies presented. It was defined as follows:

#### SOMAESTHETIC PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS:

*A framework to analyse live musical theatre performance through an exploration of the shared, heightened corporeal consciousness exchanged between Subject A [Actor(s)] and Subject B [Audience (members)] in the 'feedback loop' of performance; through which physiological experiences may induce cognitive responses, produce emotio-sensory engagement, and result in 'transformative experiences' within a given spatio-temporal event.*

Considering what has been achieved in developing 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' as an analytical framework, a review of key findings will form the basis for exploring the potential for this research to develop beyond this thesis, and the possible problems with the methodology as applied here.

As defined at the outset, analysing 'performance' means analysing the relationship between the actors and the audience in a live setting. This relationship has been variously conceptualised as a 'circle of heightened awareness' (Fuchs, 1996) and a 'feedback loop' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 39). To analyse performance somaesthetically is therefore to analyse the exchanges between actors and spectators in live musical theatre performance. In exploring this relationship, this thesis used well established multi-disciplinary principles of performance analysis, revising, adapting, or expanding their application through a somaesthetic focus on the 'feedback loop' between the actors and the audience. Borrowed from Fischer-Lichte (2008), somaesthetic principles broaden the term to include neuro-biological and corporeal properties. However, in a similar manner to Fischer-Lichte, the idea of performance has been conceptualised as a relationship of 'spaces'; the dramatic space and the performance space. As Chapter Two demonstrated, rather than drawing a distinction between 'work' and 'performance', the idea of 'spaces' opens up and allows links to be forged between

various approaches to analysis. It is the way that somaesthetics has helped uncover and articulate the relationships between the actors and the audience, the dramatic work and performance text, and the interaction of spaces, that has proved particularly interesting in this research.

### **Somaesthetic Performance Analysis as a contribution to scholarship**

'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' is derived from pragmatist philosophy and focuses on a particular conception of the human body. Developing Shusterman's definition of somaesthetics, as 'a critical study [...] of how we experience and use the living body (soma) as a site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning' (2008, p. 1), this research explored specific aspects of the experience and sensory appreciation of the living body in live performance. Therefore, drawing the ideas of 'somaesthetics' and 'performance' together, this framework is literally an analysis of the bodily experience and sensory appreciation of performance, as shared and exchanged between the actors and the audience in live musical theatre.

The somaesthetic conception of the living body in this case is exemplified by the idea of 'heightened corporeal consciousness'. This term inclusively links notions of corporeality and consciousness together, states often viewed as separate in theories derived from the Western philosophical tradition, but presented here as interconnected, and vital to the sensory appreciation of live musical theatre performance. This heightened corporeal consciousness occurs in both the actors and the audience concurrently, and directly impacts the way the dramatic space and the performance space might be understood and negotiated. Somaesthetically it is developed from the pragmatist position that Damasio refers to as 'the neurobiology of consciousness' (2000, p. 11).

This heightened corporeal consciousness occurs through the mutual interaction of the mind (the conscious), and the body (the corporeal being). It is a process which allows 'being' (ontology) to be given meaning through experience (epistemology). As discussed earlier, this position challenges the idea that humans constitute their being-in-the-world on a primarily cognitive basis. Closing down philosophical divisions between mind and body, it allows the active connections between the ontology and epistemology of the subject to be analysed equally. Yet, this is not merely philosophical; such a perspective is supported by applied neurobiology. Through neuro-scientific research, Damasio directly links conscious (cognitive) awareness and bodily experience, suggesting that 'consciousness begins as the feeling of what happens when we see or hear or touch' (2000, p. 26). To analyse the 'feedback

loop' of performance somaesthetically, the heightened corporeal consciousness through which a subject might experience and negotiate musical theatre performance became the primary focus of the case studies developed in this thesis. Only through articulating this heightened corporeal consciousness could the relationship between the actors and the audience begin to be negotiated.

It is here that the uses of dramatic space and performance space come into play. Both the actors and the audience share these two spaces, and all negotiate the two states of fiction and reality through heightened corporeal consciousness. Understanding this negotiation is not simply a case of delineating between the 'reality' of the performance as an event experienced corporeally, and the fiction of the dramatic space processed cognitively. As consistently demonstrated throughout this research, somaesthetic theory suggests that there is an immediate and ongoing reciprocity between the corporeal situation of 'being' (the performance space), and cognitive engagement with the fiction played out in the dramatic space. Crucially, it is the corporeal awareness of 'being' that provides the catalyst for cognitive engagement. The cognitive engagement, in turn, then subsequently affects corporeal responses.

The links and relationships between these aspects of experience, cognitive negotiation, and corporeal conditioning within performance, are inextricable and reciprocal. To attempt to discuss them discretely is perhaps an impossible ideal. As Jean-Luc Nancy poignantly observes, to analyse a body's relationship to space is a 'double failure', for 'the body serves as both a point of departure and as destination' (1993, p. 194). Nevertheless, in acknowledging this cyclical relationship in somaesthetics, the exchanges which have been identified within each subject's heightened corporeal consciousness allow the relationship between ontological and epistemological states of the body in performance to be identified, if never quite 'fixed'. In fact, this fluidity between states, such as that between the fiction and the reality (the internal conceptual blending, and the external stimuli of the dramatic space and performance space), demonstrates the dialogic complexity of live performance, and highlights the peculiarity and complexity of its transience. The above definition of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' therefore does not so much represent the applied use of somaesthetic philosophy to performance, but a framework for talking about performance, using somaesthetic principles to open up and explore the discursive relationship between the heightened corporeal consciousness of the actors and the audience, as they all engage in performance.

How, then, have the dialogisms of reality, fiction, cognition, and corporeality been conceptualised as interrelated and interactive elements within each human

subject? Drawing on neuro-science, performance theory, dramatic theory, reception theory, musicology, psychology, and cultural studies, the development of each case study might be reduced to a set of overarching principles which allow these dialogisms to be articulated somaesthetically. These principles can be grouped into the following areas:

- Heightened Corporeal Presence and Sensory Experience
- Conceptual Blending, Mirror Neuron Theory and Cultural Mediation
- Context and Dynamic Shape

Exploring these principles, the following section will discuss specific examples of their application in each case study, in order to assess whether ‘Somaesthetic Performance Analysis’ has the potential to draw together the multiple analytical tools evident in current scholarship through a focus on the body in performance. To consider this on a case by case basis would involve much repetition from the case studies themselves or within this concluding analysis. Likewise, the individual findings for each case study are not what this analysis seeks to address. In summarising key findings, it is the use – and usefulness – of somaesthetic principles, and what they demonstrate methodologically, rather than how they revised thinking on specific productions, that is of interest here.

### **The principles of Somaesthetic Performance Analysis**

#### *Heightened corporeal ‘presence’ and sensory experience*

As Fischer-Lichte has highlighted, many performance theorists have intangibly drawn on ideas of the actor’s ‘energy’, ‘presence’, or ‘heightened materiality’ (2008). The relevance or appropriateness of these terms is properly an issue for discussion outside the realms of this thesis. In essence, they all relate to the idea that the bodily force of the actor is so intense in performance it might be sensed and fed back to them by the audience as part of the ‘feedback loop’ of live performance (2008, p. 49). In musical theatre, such ideas of energy have sometimes been linked to notions of ‘camp’ (from Sontag, 1964b) and performative excess in cultural studies, as a means of overcoming the formal discontinuity inherent in the form. Through its focus on the body, ‘Somaesthetic Performance Analysis’ engages with these ideals of heightened corporeal ‘energy’ and ‘presence’ in performance, both on the part of the actors and the audience members, discussing them in the context of a causal connection between experience and sensory/corporeal appreciation.

The three case studies demonstrated different perspectives on this idea of heightened corporeal presence/ consciousness. Chapter Four used the actor-musician aesthetic, not only to demonstrate the dialogic nature of musical theatre performance, but also employed Amy Cook's theoretical application of phantom-limb syndrome to actors in performance (2007). Applying it to the physical presence of the musical instrument each actor used, these instruments literally extended the actor's performance space, alongside the interplay with their dramatic space (when, for example the piano is used by Bobby to poignant dramatic effect in the closing scene). However, Cook's original application of phantom-limb syndrome to performance drew on plays rather than musical theatre. She concludes her article by suggesting that 'onstage every body is a phantom limb' (2007, p. 594). Thus, the actor's heightened corporeal consciousness in the extended performance space directly affects an audience member's reading of the dramatic space.

In this sense, the embodied vocality of the singing voice in *Piazza* also becomes a corporeal extension – a phantom-limb – wherein the voices of the actors playing Fabrizio and Clara reach out and sensorially 'touch' each other, as well as the audience. Moreover, the idea of corporeal 'presence' for the actor in *Piazza* introduced a neuro-chemical perspective into the discussion. As Robertson's neuro-musicological studies highlighted (2007), the physical act of music-making prompts specific chemical changes in the body of the performer, intensifying their own sense of corporeality. This happens then, in every musical, to each performer who sings, dances, or plays an instrument. It happens in *Company* to each of the actor-musicians, and in *Cats* – in any music theatre production where singing is involved. The voice may be a phantom-limb conceptually, but it also serves chemically to induce a heightened corporeality for the actor concerned.

However, as performance takes place *between* the actors and the audience, they both share in the 'feedback loop' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 49), and share the dramatic and performance spaces. This heightened corporeality is not simply the preserve of the actors. The analysis of body energies in *Cats* demonstrated that, in fact, audience members too exhibit a heightened corporeal presence and intensity when engaged in performance. If sensory appreciation begins with the experience of the body, and is initiated through sight, hearing or touch (Damasio, 2000), then for spectators, being in the auditorium with each other prior to the performance, hearing the conversations, the tuning up of the band, seeing the empty stage (or perhaps being denied that by the presence of a curtain), intensifies the sense of the performance as an

'event'.<sup>102</sup> The experience of this intensity leads to a heightened sensory appreciation; a heightening of the spectator's own sense of presence. This exact process was identified in the case of *Cats*, wherein the conceptual and physical immediacy of the space served to increase the sense of 'presence'. This presence affects yet another aspect of corporeal consciousness. Again discussed with reference to *Cats*, each subject has their own body rhythm which is metrical, biological, and circadian (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, pp. 58, 59). Fisher-Lichte has suggested that on an ontological level, the energies experienced in performance result from the combination of multiple 'body rhythms': with multiple actors and audience coming together in one space. The negotiation which then takes place between the heightened corporeal consciousness of the audience member, and that of the actor in performance, creates enormous tensions which serve to perpetuate the energy in the 'feedback loop'.

The audience then feed off the experience of the 'event' prior to the performance, either through the immediacy of space in a production, such as *Cats* or similar musical theatre productions such as *Starlight Express* (1984), or through the intrigue and excitement of being 'denied' knowledge of the dramatic world by a curtain or tab. Such an experience is cognitive – recognising the event and heightening awareness, and corporeal – in reacting to the situation. Presence and energy are experienced corporeally, and intensify the conscious sensory experience through increased body-rhythms and other physical or physiological reactions that condition the spectator to engage more readily with the fiction to be performed. Again, this demonstrates the link between the dramatic space and performance space through the feedback loop. In performance, the actors exhibit themselves, and somaesthetically this might be conceptualised through the idea of embodied vocality or 'presence', read via chemical changes which constitute their own sense of being onstage. This sense of presence, experienced by an actor, possibly through neuro-chemical changes in their bodies, translates into energy in performance as they corporeally and cognitively negotiate the shifting textures of musical theatre performance. The audience, who may have become cognitively attuned to negotiate the dramatic space through a process of heightened corporeal awareness prior to the performance, then respond to the heightened corporeal presence of the actors with whom they are engaged in the 'feedback loop' of performance.

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<sup>102</sup> As Schechner (2003) has highlighted, part of the excitement of live performance is the sense of 'a gathering' with other human beings.

### *Conceptual Blending, Mirror Neuron Theory and Cultural Mediation*

Whilst heightened body consciousness articulates a discourse between corporeal awareness and cognitive experience, the cognitive experience of any performance creates meaning through the disjunctions present between the dramatic space and the performance space. Ultimately, through the consideration of actor-musicianship in *Company*, and ensemble in *Cats*, the heightened sense of corporeality on the part of the actor was seen to draw attention to the artifice of the event, increasing cognitive interplay on the part of the audience. Whilst the corporeal concepts of phantom-limb syndrome, embodied vocality, and increased awareness of body-rhythms extend the idea of embodied presence, they logically affect how an audience read, experience, and negotiate the dramatic space too, through the sensory appreciation of the embodied character presented. This negotiation occurs through conceptual blending (McConachie, 2008).

As seen in *Company* and *Cats*, such blending allows the spectator cognitively to select and negotiate their preference of engagement, with either the actor-as-performer or the actor-as-character within the dramatic space. Either blend, or a mix of them when selected, work together with the heightened corporeal energy, physical extension, and intensified sensory appreciation, to render either the actor or character more 'present' for an individual spectator at a given time. Such a concept has far-reaching implications for different forms of musical theatre and other performance genres (some of which are briefly outlined below). However, when applied to fictional or dramatic performance, what it serves to demonstrate overall is that whilst an audience may experience a sense of community through the sharing of physical and conceptual spaces, colliding body rhythms and energies, each individual selectively engages with the performance in a different way. What 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' attempts to do in light of this, is encourage an active discourse between different theoretical readings.

The sense of heightened corporeal presence then, sustained through body energy, is enhanced in performance through the consistent negotiation and orientation of spaces, via conceptual blending. As seen in the analysis of 'Being Alive', or specific characters (caricatures) in *Cats*, a focus on the actor-as-performer, or the actor-as-musician, or the actor-as-character, can cognitively alter the conceptual and emotional engagement a spectator has with a specific character onstage. As heightened corporeal consciousness suggests, this will subsequently alter an audience member's sense of corporeal engagement as well. Having identified the cognitive means through which a spectator might engage with a given actor/character, responding to their energy and

reciprocating it, how does somaesthetic performance analysis suggest this engagement might produce meaning? The neuro-biological event of mirror-neuron theory was applied in all three case studies to identify how spectators and actors alike might 'vicariously enact' the actions they witness by other subjects.<sup>103</sup> Herein lay a direct link between the bodily actions of the actors, and the bodily engagement with those actions by the spectators. Mirror-neurons in the brain's pre-motor cortex have been identified as causing unconscious motor-simulation within subject's bodies. As suggested in discussing the response to ensemble and solo dance in *Cats*, spectators may vicariously enact the actions of those bodies they see onstage, increasing both physiological and emotional engagement with the performance. This perspective is neuro-biological, and is discussed in applied terms by Corinne Jola in the book chapter 'Research and Choreography: Merging Dance and Cognitive Neuroscience' (2010b), in which she draws together various perspectives on mirror-neuron theory, cognitive neuro-science, and biology. Of course, whilst vicarious motor-simulation may be the result of a focus on an actor or character through conceptual blending, somaesthetic analysis acknowledges that larger dance numbers literally increase the opportunity for mirror neuron activity and intensify the corporeal energy and excitement felt in performance.

Mirror neurons, linking the actions and intentions of actors with those of the spectators vicariously, also contribute to the physical extension of Raul Esparza's Bobby when he sits down and begins playing the piano at the start of 'Being Alive'. Having not conceptually intensified his corporeal presence through the physical extension of an instrument until this point, the motor-simulation, and the physical response it engenders, becomes very poignant indeed. Such poignancy is made ever more intense by further neuro-scientific findings in musicological studies (2007). For, whilst the audience might physically and vicariously register the action of Bobby/Raul Esparza here, the addition of him playing music likewise intensifies the sensory experience of the moment somaesthetically. Drawing on the findings applied to *Piazza*, actor's bodies undergo a chemical change in singing or musical performance, and the sensory appreciation of music by the receiver prompts similar chemical changes, mirroring those of the performers. Thus, in musical theatre performance, a heightened sense of embodiment and corporeality for both the actors and the audience members can be seen in the production and reception of music. When this is experienced in tandem with movement, it is also held to produce a more in-depth physiological and emotional response (Grosbras et al., 2010). In this sense, the bodily movement and neuro-

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<sup>103</sup> For the development of mirror-neuron theory, see the article 'Action Recognition in the Pre-motor Cortex' (Gallese et al., 1996).

biological experiences of the actors are directly experienced by the audience members, intensifying the feeling by all of a heightened, shared, bodily experience of performance, as the disjunctions between dramatic space and performance space are negotiated in the 'feedback loop'.

In considering *Cats*, a crucial element to understanding how these factors contribute to the making of meaning in the 'feedback loop' was considered: cultural mediation. Kirle (2006) discussed the way in which culture and society impact an audience member's reading of the dramatic work, which, when considered along with Shusterman's (2000) and Damasio's (2000) attention to cultural conditioning, combine in this framework to suggest that understanding and meaning are negotiated via external factors of culture, social awareness, and politics. Not only do vicarious enactment and heightened corporeal consciousness add ebb and flow to engagement within the 'feedback loop', but as demonstrated in *Cats*, cultural mediation imbues a seemingly arbitrary set of vignettes with a form of narrative. Likewise, in *Company*, cultural mediation affects the way Bobby's emotional make-up is understood in various productions, a mediation of character-type which will affect the blend-type selected.<sup>104</sup> In the actor-musician production then, cultural mediation plays a large role in subjective understanding by each audience member as to whether Bobby was resisting marriage or commitment, struggling to accept those ideas, or simply left 'alone' in life. In addition, cultural mediation here effects, or colours, a spectator's opinion about Bobby's sexual orientation within the dramatic space. If such mediation for a given spectator rendered Bobby homosexual, even bisexual, then his difficulty fitting in with the actor-musician aesthetic of largely married hetero-sexual couples in the performance space, would result in quite a different reading.

Cultural mediation also works in harmony with context. Crucially, part of this contextualisation relates to the musical styles used in the dramatic work. In *Piazza*, the harmonic construction, tonality, dynamic progression, lyrical repetition of 'Clara, Clara!', and the song's dramatic placement in Act One, informs the audience of all they need to know in 'Il Mondo Era Vuoto'. In 'Say it Somehow', the extensive use of chromatic shifts and extended lines of vocalise was seen directly to reference particular cultural cues in order to affect the music's function in storytelling. Therefore, cultural mediation not only affects the understanding of actions vicariously through the mirror-neuron system, but directly impacts the blend type selected and the relationship

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<sup>104</sup> This particular issue is demonstrated in John Olson's chapter 'Company – 25 Years Later' in Joanne Gordon's reader *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* (2000), in which theme, situations, period references, design, and changes in audience perspective are assessed from the original production (1970) and the 1995 London production.

between the dramatic space and the performance space for audience members on an individual and communal level. In addition, context and the trajectory (or 'dynamic shape') of the performance as a whole have a large bearing on the experience and response to the work.

### *Context and Dynamic Shape*

As a framework through which to construct analysis of live musical theatre, 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' considers the experience of performance through analysing the somaesthetic properties of the 'feedback loop' between actors and audience. The above summary of the 'heightened corporeal consciousness' which occurs for each actor and audience member attempts to articulate the relationships between corporeality and cognitive engagement in shared performance. In each of the case studies presented, various facets of the 'feedback loop' have been related to specific aspects of given productions. Conceptual blending was applied specifically to a consideration of 'Being Alive' in *Company*, embodied vocality was applied to 'Say it Somehow', and body energy to the means by which *Cats* is engaged with, through the conceptual collision/collusion of spaces. However, the success of each of these, along with the application of mirror-neuron theory and other neuro-biological principles, is always contingent on the larger context in which they occur.

More than this, cultural factors and structural elements of narrative progression in the 'dramatic work' specifically impact the discourses spectators might choose to engage with or respond to. As applied in *Cats*, the mapping of a production's 'dynamic shape' allows both its performance space and dramatic space to be explored together, drawing on all elements of somaesthetic analysis. To discuss the 'feedback loop' of this production is therefore to refer to the mapping of its 'dynamic shape'; the way in which the dialogisms of the performance might be harnessed and assessed together. Such a framework for assessing the relationships between dramatic trajectory, music, voice, movement, space, character/performer relationships, and external social influences, might be applied to other musical theatre performances, providing an interdisciplinary framework within which to focus somaesthetic analysis.

For example, what commonalities, intersections, comparisons, contradictions, or disjunctions might be further highlighted in John Doyle's production of *Company*, if a dynamic shape schema identified the frequency of interplay between the actor-musicians playing their instruments in character or 'out' of character? How would this allow further crystallisation of the interplay between conceptual blending, immediacy, and distance? What would such a schema highlight if it was used to map the discrete

uses of vocalise in *Piazza* against the dynamic shifts in musical texture and the placement of the Italian language? In short, it could be argued that the use of a dynamic shape schema opens up the possibility for mapping the 'feedback loop' of any given performance, utilizing the principles of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' to explore and discover elements of the relationship and interplay between many facets of a performance. Having said this, it is important to recognise that 'dynamic shape' schemas in this sense harness the disparities and dialogic exchanges that traditional performance analysis sets in motion. It then allows these to be recast, or approached differently, with specific recourse to principles of somaesthetics, heightened corporeal consciousness, and embodiment. Such a schema represents one key aspect of this thesis that contributes to scholarship and analysis in the field of musical theatre research. To discuss the potential for developing this aspect of the methodology, along with further areas of study which derive from somaesthetic principles, it is appropriate to give thought to what 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' contributes to scholarship as a whole.

### **Critical reflection on Somaesthetic Performance Analysis**

As the foregoing summary has highlighted, this methodology is not an explicit application of Shusterman's philosophy to performance analysis, but instead uses a focus on the body to construct a platform from which to understand the shared exchanges and relationship between actors and audiences in live musical theatre performance. In this sense, 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' is less a prescriptive methodology and more a framework from which analyses might be constructed. By assessing the relationships within the 'feedback loop', and each subject's heightened corporeal consciousness, this framework achieves two things. It acknowledges the intensely dialogic nature of live musical theatre performance, and articulates the dialogisms common to the form, whilst at the same time acknowledging the validity of varying analytical positions. To this end, this framework not only identifies the interactions which take place within actors and audience members in performance, but does so by identifying the potential for interdisciplinary discourses in analysis.

As demonstrated above, the free interplay of elements that this framework employs allows for multiple dialogues between many disciplinary models. There is less a focus on 'page versus stage' in this analysis; less a delineation of analytical methods as competing or opposing. Rather, it appears that through the application of somaesthetic principles in the case studies, this framework recognises the necessity and validity of all philosophical, textual, performative, and neuro-cognitive models, drawing them into

discourse around one specific hub: the 'feedback loop' in live performance. This relationship with its dialogic spaces, negotiated in the 'feedback loop', might be mapped and articulated with reference to a production's overall 'dynamic shape', which might visually schematise the varying facets at play in live musical theatre performance, as demonstrated in Chapter Five.

The success of establishing theoretical or analytical discourses can be seen, for example, in the employment of neuroscience and cognitive studies to enhance and support various aspects of performance theory and reception theory. Neuro-scientific findings provide strong support to confirm the more philosophical scholarship of Eugenio Barba, Patrice Pavis, or Erika Fischer-Lichte. Particular aspects of this include the use of phantom-limb theory and mirror-neuron theory, which both find a voice in application for the actor and spectator. In fact, it is the applicability to both parties in 'performance' that is one of the primary contributions to current knowledge in musical theatre scholarship. Yet, the way in which actors respond to an audience, whilst documented anecdotally, seems to be a less developed or examined area. Aside from motor-simulation occurring in both actors and spectators as seen in *Company* or *Piazza*, or the body-rhythm collision of actors with spectators and the process of energy exchange identified in *Cats*, this area remains less developed in theory. Perhaps, as Garner astutely remarks 'the living body [of the actor] capable of returning the spectator's gaze presents a methodological dilemma for any theoretical model' (1994, p. 49).

Nevertheless, the extent to which cross-disciplinary theories may be brought to bear in this framework is seen by the fact that whilst mirror-neuron theory has supporters (Keysers & Gazzola, 2010) and detractors, with specific criticism levelled at its partial application to understanding (Hickok, 2008), a full appreciation of the emotional poignancy to 'Being Alive' in *Company*, the corporeal shape of *Cats*, and the response to embodied vocality in *Piazza*, is only possible through an application of mirror-neuron theory, conceptual blending, and cultural mediation. Yet, whilst social or cultural studies of commercial musical theatre such as John Bush Jones' *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* (2003) may be based on a particular world view, informed by a particular cultural moment or zeitgeist, cultural mediation also has importance for the further applications of this framework. 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' has therefore opened up dialogues between neuro-cognitive studies, musicology, performance and reception theories, and literary theory. The principles it marshals, and the interdisciplinary dialogues and discourses it appears to open, present numerous possibilities. A question therefore arises. The sub-

title of this research suggests that the overall intent is to write 'towards' a model of somaesthetic analysis. Having done this, what else can be said about this research, and how this framework might develop from here?

#### *Somaesthetic Performance Analysis: Problems and criticisms*

There are several potential problems or criticisms which might be levelled at 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis'. It could be argued that the development of this framework was based on too much of a philosophical paradigm to be successfully applied in analysing practice. However, as mentioned above with reference to Fischer-Lichte's use of the 'feedback loop', the inclusion of neuro-biological research in the development of this thesis provides a more quantifiable basis for application. Moreover, such a specific position on the body as central to experience and understanding may not take other arguments into account in its formation or application. Theoretically, whilst it has demonstrated the potential for opening up dialogues between the many and varied positions used in musical theatre analysis, there are some that have not yet been considered: gender studies, for example, or queer theory. Additionally, 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' does not account for the way the experience of musical theatre is affected, or altered, by physical (or mental) disability or impairment on the part of actors, or audience members, either side of the 'feedback loop'.

Crucially, the embodied nature of somaesthetic principles also meets with difficulty when considering the impact of technology in live performance. The dialectic present in Chapter Two and Chapter Six of this thesis – between Dolan (2005) and Auslander (1999) – is one that champions Dolan's argument for embodiment. However, multi-media is undeniably becoming more and more a factor in live performances and musical theatre productions. This being the case, if cultural mediation plays such a large part in determining the way audiences are conditioned to engage with performance, then the cultural impact of multi-media cannot be ignored, and is properly one of several areas worth addressing in detail in light of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis', an area to consider when reflecting on the possibilities for further research outside this thesis.

#### **Somaesthetic Performance Analysis and beyond**

The numerous readings that are opened up through applying 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' aim to embrace subjectivity, and yet this might at first appear problematic; a benign conclusion from the presentation of a framework which simply validates the multiplicity of approaches, positions, and perspectives already in use.

However, there is more to this analytical framework, and in particular, its focus on the body. Numerous times throughout this thesis reference has been made to areas of interest, or potential development, that fall outside the focus of this study. Broadly speaking, these subjects fall into three groups: additional musical theatre study, other areas of research as a result of this thesis, and potential developments of the subject area itself.

#### *Somaesthetics and additional musical theatre research*

Firstly, as the actor-musician aesthetic is such a specific style of presentation, which exploits the interplay between the phenomenological states of actor/ character/ musician, it would be interesting to chart an actor-musician production using the dynamic shape schema applied to *Cats*. How would the interplay of performers as extra-diegetic musicians, and then diegetic musicians in character be charted? What might this show about the way the aesthetic contributes to the drama as a whole? This would be a particularly interesting way of extending either this case study, or using 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' to further develop a model of actor-musician theory.

Other structural elements can also be explored further. It has been suggested that the thrill and excitement of musical theatre is often experienced via the disjunctive shift between 'book time' and 'lyric time' (McMillin, 2006, p. 6), explained somaesthetically using Knapp's 'double image' (2005, p. 12). However, what about through-sung musicals, where the aesthetic shift between speech and song is altered or renegotiated as recitative and 'arias' or set-pieces? Musicological theories from Knapp, Sternfeld, Swain, or Kirle, might be used in conjunction with 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' to discuss the cultural aspirations of the through-sung musical, and to explore the qualities and properties of possible 'feedback loops' for the performance of these works.

Along with through-sung works, another form of musical theatre that would be particularly fascinating to consider from a somaesthetic perspective is the 'jukebox musical'. John Bush Jones has suggested this form of musical trades on nostalgia (2003). Even as a basic comment here, it could be suggested that using cultural mediation and conceptual blending, somaesthetic principles could give voice to the complexity that belies Bush Jones' comment. For instance, at the performance of a jukebox musical containing the songs of a popular cultural icon, who is it that the audience 'see' as embodied onstage by the actor? Is it the performer, the character they are embodying in the dramatic space, or the performative 'presence' of the popular artist or icon

themselves? Or, a complex blend mix of all these elements? How might different blends affect different readings and experiences on a subjective basis? These questions could be interrogated by a further examination of this form of live musical theatre performance. Interestingly, these contemporary questions regarding presence, embodiment, and the nature of the 'feedback loop' were identified in theories from antiquity, and so the second category for further research might begin with a historical consideration.

*Additional areas for research as a result of this thesis*

The marginalising of the body in performance began with Plato's duality of the corporeal body and the metaphysical soul, leading to the dismissal of embodied analysis in Western philosophy (see Ley, 1999). A fuller history of the genesis of this philosophical situation would be interesting to document, particularly with regard to the different approaches found in Hellenic theories from Plato and Aristotle, and the Roman theories of Juvenal, Horace, and Cicero. Perhaps the development of embodiment versus disembodiment in philosophy and analysis would make an appropriate precursor to a historiography of somaesthetics. From the historical potential for further study, Chapter Three also noted that the body in performance has been both explicitly and implicitly used in a number of key approaches to actor-training, from Antonin Artaud through to Peter Brook. Further exploration into the usefulness of somaesthetic principles in practice – perhaps even developing a neurobiological approach to training – would create different ways of thinking about practice.

Theoretically, there are several areas worthy of further academic consideration. First, the relationship between somaesthetic analysis and Lacanian theory was briefly mentioned in Chapter Three respecting subject-to-subject identification (see Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). Lacanian theory was also present in the discussion of Mladen Dolar's theory of the voice. So, the relationship between psychoanalysis – a less definable, or more theoretical discipline – and the cognitive neurology of certain elements of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' may be an interesting avenue to explore. It would appear from the foregoing discussions that, in fact, somaesthetic principles challenge psychoanalytic perspectives. Exploring possible intersections or dialogues that arise from this contention would be a provocative field of research. Likewise, the theories of Roland Barthes, mentioned several times throughout this thesis, merit attention from somaesthetics, particularly in relation to his ideas of *jouissance* and *plaisir* (1977c) and the 'feedback loop' of performance. Perhaps the heightened corporeal consciousness of the receiver in 'Somaesthetic

Performance Analysis' might be a good place to consider some of the post-structural positions on reception, genre constitution, authorship, and hermeneutics, from an embodied perspective.

Additionally, Chapter One highlighted the differences between film and theatre performance: how might the lack of live, embodied actors affect an audience's corporeal reception of the cinematic presentation? How could somaesthetics contribute to film theory in this area? Likewise, could 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' help articulate the conventions and properties of Integration Theory and its Wagnerian associations, as mentioned in earlier chapters? Could this methodology clarify and develop McMillin's 'orders of time' and 'space of vulnerability' (2006, p. 6)? Chapter Two and Chapter Six discussed the interaction between technology and live performance, concentrating on aspects of embodied presence, but where do ideas of embodied presence end up when bodied spaces become virtual spaces? As highlighted above, this could potentially raise questions regarding the use of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' in research. Do technological advances in live performance negate, enhance, or challenge a body-centred approach to experience, or do they serve to dis-embodiment performance, complicating the 'feedback loop' between actors and audience? These questions are additional areas of interest worth further consideration, but of particular note is Fischer-Lichte's prescription of performance as a 'feedback loop' (2008). Considering the use of this phrase in other disciplines, the potential for expanding the methodology of 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' further can be suggested.

#### *The potential for expanding 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis'*

The term 'feedback loop' is particularly provocative when applied to the actor/audience relationship, for it cannot be coincidence that it is a term found in biology, and in certain scientific theories. Feedback loops are not a constructed paradigm used to assess the experience of performance; they are a biological and ecological fact of life. Feedback loops serve to generate a result from the relationship between positive and negative energy, or pressure and release in physics, between teacher and student, or questions and answers in education. Biologically, feedback loops have been seen in gene regulation and cell conversion processes, identified by Francois Jacob and Jacques Monod (1964), which once again suggests the importance of the body as a site of experience and sensory appreciation. A relationship between two groups in exchange, that address and reflect each other, is therefore far from alien to each human subject's sense of being and experience. In fact, feedback loops, ontological as they may be, form

part of the sense of bodily being-in-the-world. As Shusterman (2008) highlights in his work on body consciousness, it is the reciprocal process between subject and subject (object) that constitutes the self and experience. So, to enter a 'feedback loop' with other human beings in performance then – whilst a constructed situation – operates on a basis familiar to each subject, through which the mirror-neuron interactions which take place form yet another 'feedback loop', perhaps representative of the 'performance' situation on an internal level. Yet, there is a further example of the use of feedback loops that perhaps presents an alternative way of thinking about performance.

#### *Performance as the beginning of chaos*

The idea of a 'feedback loop' has been used in discussing the 'butterfly effect' in chaos theory. Developed and associated with mathematician Edward Lorenz (1963), the butterfly effect represents the concept of sensitive dependence on initial conditions in chaos theory, where one element diverges at the moment of a seemingly minor event, resulting in significantly different outcomes. This effect is based on a 'feedback loop' of simple mathematical systems, which through their feedback can create both order and chaos at the same time. In a television documentary on BBC4, Professor Jim Al-Khalili summarised this relationship between order, chaos, and the feedback loop at its base, by suggesting that very complex and divergent (seemingly 'chaotic') systems can emerge from a predetermined set of rules or systems (Stacey, 2010).

In essence, this typifies the experience of performance. The 'feedback loop' contains pre-determined structures and patterns, which then produce a sense of order and chaos through their interplay. Perhaps in a very basic and reductive explanation, the textual structures and patterns found in the 'dramatic work' are the elements that elicit feedback between the actors and the audience in performance. Even though the interplay may be predetermined, and articulated through textual analysis or performative conventions and conditions, small changes can affect the result for each individual within the 'feedback loop' of performance. These changes can be subjective, cultural, or temporal, and no analysis can account for them, whether somaesthetically based or not. As suggested earlier in this thesis, any analysis of a performance is only ever in retrospect, and to an extent 'fixes' interpretation. Yet, what 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' attempts to achieve, is recognition of the 'chaos' of performance as a means of understanding its complexity. Performance as chaos is a particularly interesting idea. Chaos theory is one branch of philosophy concerned with the analysis of what are called 'complex systems'. Defined in a special issue of the magazine *Science*

(1999), 'complex systems' are seen as highly ordered but condition sensitive. They are plural systems, and are characterised by the state of being in constant temporal flux. Performance bears all the characteristics of a complex system under this definition: the construction of its 'feedback loop' is highly ordered, and contains a plurality of bodies and dialogic elements represented in the performance space and dramatic space. It is condition sensitive: no two live performances can ever be identical. Finally, it is live: in constant temporal flux.

In this sense, perhaps 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' represents the beginning of a theory; the theory of *performance as chaos*. The link between performance and chaos goes further than this, for a recent study at the University of Cambridge suggests that the human brain of each individual chemically and neurologically organises the non-linearity of life experience ('chaos') into a coherent order (n.a, 2010). Constantly on the liminal cusp between chaos and meaning, this point of ongoing negotiation is referred to as the 'Edge of Chaos'. Could it be that this 'edge of chaos' is systematically engaged through the corporeal 'feedback loop' of live performance? That comprehension and meaning in the transience of performance are negotiated on that 'edge'? If this is the case, then 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' has only identified one element of a complex system: the 'feedback loop', which acts as a base for the creation of performance. This opens up a whole range of possibilities for performance and reception analysis outside the bounds of this research. This may only be the beginning, but of course, the beginning is a very good place to start.

### **Concluding comment: Problem solved...?**

So, how do you solve the difficulties of analysing musical theatre performance? Defined by Frankel as the 'most alive storyteller' (2000, p. 117), musical theatre has been seen to actively include and negotiate a multiplicity of texts, voices, properties, and devices, within the rhetoric and heightened reality of its 'double image' (Knapp, 2005, p. 10). The dialogic nature of the form is continually changing, within a single performance, or within the course of a single scene or song. The shifting modes of communication from speech, to song, to dance, in the linear musicals popularised by Rodgers and Hammerstein can do no more than draw attention to those liminal moments when the artifice is exposed, the actor's 'vulnerability' uncovered, revealing the vital and human element which makes live performance so thrilling (McMillin, 2006, p. 192). The post-linear musical, with its thematic drive and individualistic concerns, deconstructs the very conventions it claims to uphold, in exposing the many sides of the subject it may seek to handle. In between the inevitable gaps, absences, silences, subversions, and

moments of sheer dislocation, perhaps the actor can sense himself expressing the chaotic psychology of reality, and perhaps in these moments the audience might address and reflect those concerns to a greater extent than they would ever care to realise or admit (Kirle, 2006). Likewise, maybe the through-sung musical does bear cinematic tendencies in its homogenised presentation. This is very often linked socio-culturally to spectacle and technologically driven production values, which combine to challenge the ‘intimacy’ of human contact that is the bedrock of live theatre performance.

Issues such as these demonstrate the sheer magnitude of understanding a form so socially reflexive, commercially driven, and artistically complex. The interdisciplinary nature of popular musical theatre, highlighted in the Introduction to this thesis, and demonstrated throughout the literature survey and case studies analyses, is something which is never fixed, perpetually unstable in its own ‘arbitrary moments’ (Pavis, 2008, p. 118). Perhaps such an intensely dialogic art form is a true example of entertainment on the edge of chaos. The play off and tension between moments of artifice and theatricality – the sheer ‘feats of negation’, which D.A Miller reasons make the musical theatre so utopian (1998, p. 57) – are what characterise an audience member’s most engaging experiences, the very mechanisms which heighten sensory appreciation, and reward those willing to accept the ‘unapologetic emotionalism’ of the form (S. Miller, 2007, p. 1). So, in writing towards understanding these issues, has ‘Somaesthetic Performance Analysis’ proved a worthy method of investigation?

It may certainly be seen that a focus on the interrelationship between the actors and the audience has proven useful in assessing musical theatre experience from the inside out. Somaesthetic theory’s recognition of the self-modifying nature of bodily experience has allowed for the problem of ‘liveness’ to be accepted rather than avoided, and yet, it has to be said that this very property is what makes musical theatre *human*; the moment we try to analyse it, perhaps we risk losing the very essence of the form. What ‘Somaesthetic Performance Analysis’ may serve to suggest is that a fixed recourse to textual analyses of a form so intrinsically linked to ‘liveness’ can never fully harness the complexities of a work written to be performed. The formality and order one may assume in a musical score, libretto, or other written text, will get re-written in the subjective chaos, and culturally mediated experience, of live performance. To this end, a textualising of the body – the *in-theory* spectator present in any critical or analytical discourse – is perhaps a necessary foundation of scholarship. As Nancy (1993) ironically acknowledges, perhaps there is no other way of understanding the point from which we experience life and the object upon which such becomes

inscribed. Shusterman's criticism of Western philosophical and theoretical traditions at large – that they represent a 'fixing' of the body, a textualising, or at worst a denial – can be seen as historically accurate. However, perhaps the influence of neuro-scientific discoveries and cognition studies in performance and reception theory will allow the ontological and corporeal to come to the fore in articulating the experience and process of performance.

The analytic models found in the foregoing have demonstrated the interdisciplinary nature of the musical, and at the same time highlighted the complexity inherent in all live performance. Amy Cook's article (2007) cited in Chapter Four, for example, used mirror-neuron theory and phantom-limb syndrome to consider Shakespearean theatre, whilst somaesthetic philosophy finds its foundation in the same root concerns as many acting theories and training techniques. The body in performance then, is the fulcrum to understanding all live events, from the entertainment of Broadway to more experimental theatre, and even outside the area of theatrical performance itself. The sense of ritual, event, and shared community empowerment arising from any live performance provides ample material for 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' to be adapted and applied; its principles and discourses extending far beyond the bounds of this research.

Nevertheless, in concluding this thesis by returning to musical theatre: have the difficulties of live performance been solved? Does 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' write towards this in any way? The dialogisms opened up and identified through the case studies, and articulated in this chapter, suggest that what 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' can do is present a set of principles from which performance and reception may be analysed together, through the 'feedback loop' of the live musical theatre event. To harness this dialogue, body-to-body, is the main achievement this research presents. Perhaps solving the difficulties of musical theatre performance analysis means accepting the paradoxes they embody: the edge of chaos, the dialogic dislocations, the tensions and non-linear relationships that one might readily experience in life itself, subject-to-subject, at one specific and special moment of performance. Perhaps this is why musical theatre performance is so life affirming; no matter whether it is found down a yellow brick road, or in a barber shop.

In conclusion then, this thesis may ultimately serve to demonstrate one thing. Whilst the intangible and ever changing dynamics of a dialogic, sophisticated, and culturally mediated live form such as musical theatre can be discussed through a consideration of the embodied aesthetics of its performance and reception, the moments of happiness we may derive from its existence are simultaneously 'becoming',

and at the same moment, consigned to our memory, as moments to treasure of when 'we were *there*'. The articulation of such intangibles may well be enhanced through the somaesthetic relationship, largely unwritten or unconscious, between those acting and those spectating. Yet, this very relationship – the interplay that produces the thrill, the energy, the *jouissance*, and allows space for subjective meaning – is felt by its almost paradoxical intangibility. Neuro-scientific methods, cognition theory, somatic practices, and the ever increasing body of scholarship on musical theatre, may well extend far beyond the realms of this thesis, and yet perhaps at the end of the day, what 'Somaesthetic Performance Analysis' demonstrates is that analysing musical theatre is to write towards understanding a form best summed up by Old Deuteronomy: something that is probably quite ineffable (Eliot, 1969b, p. 137).

**Word Count: 67,424 (excluding footnotes)**

# APPENDIX I

## Case Study resources

As a reference aid for the songs and scenes explored throughout the case studies, the following lists internet links for viewing the scenes discussed.

### *Company*

Music and Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim      Book: George Furth  
Director: John Doyle (2006 Revival)  
Filmed at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York

'BEING ALIVE' • Performed by Raul Esparza and the ensemble  
Youtube link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjrA93\\_O6Dw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjrA93_O6Dw)

### *Cats*

Music: Andrew Lloyd Webber      Text: T.S Eliot  
Director: David Mallett (after Trevor Nunn) (1998 video recording)  
Filmed at the Adelphi Theatre, London

JELLYCAT SONGS FOR JELLYCATS • Performed by the company  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaHbZqqxUQg>

VICTORIA'S DANCE • Performed by Phyllida Crowley-Smith  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePQ-wnllcTs&feature=related>

THE OLD GUMBIE CAT • Performed by Suzie McKenna and the company  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGQzKpqhDrs>

THE RUM TUM TUGGER • Performed by John Partridge and the company  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDZ5QJOSNs>

GRIZABELLA: THE GLAMOUR CAT • Performed by Elaine Paige and the company  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JU8NtL9QKoo>

BUSTOPHER JONES: THE CAT ABOUT TOWN •  
Performed by James Barron and the company  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXWUzIRF2Dg>

### *The Light in the Piazza*

Music and Lyrics: Adam Guettel      Book: Craig Lucas  
Director: Bartlett Sher (2005 Original Broadway Cast)  
Broadcast on PBS; filmed at the Vivien Beaumont Theatre, Lincoln Centre, New York

'IL MONDO ERA VUOTO' • Performed by Aaron Lazaar  
Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4TEbwhvTyA>

'SAY IT SOMEHOW' • Performed by Aaron Lazaar and Katie Clarke  
Youtube link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lob\\_JngT2Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lob_JngT2Y)

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