



Maria Brigida De Miranda

PLAYFUL TRAINING

TOWARDS CAPOEIRA IN THE PHYSICAL TRAINING OF
ACTORS



LAMBERT
Academic Publishing

Maria Brigida De Miranda

PLAYFUL TRAINING

**TOWARDS CAPOEIRA IN THE PHYSICAL
TRAINING OF ACTORS**



LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing

Impressum/Imprint (nur für Deutschland/ only for Germany)

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Alle in diesem Buch genannten Marken und Produktnamen unterliegen warenzeichen-, marken- oder patentrechtlichem Schutz bzw. sind Warenzeichen oder eingetragene Warenzeichen der jeweiligen Inhaber. Die Wiedergabe von Marken, Produktnamen, Gebrauchsnamen, Handelsnamen, Warenbezeichnungen u.s.w. in diesem Werk berechtigt auch ohne besondere Kennzeichnung nicht zu der Annahme, dass solche Namen im Sinne der Warenzeichen- und Markenschutzgesetzgebung als frei zu betrachten wären und daher von jedermann benutzt werden dürften.

Coverbild: www.ingimage.com

Verlag: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing AG & Co. KG
Dudweiler Landstr. 99, 66123 Saarbrücken, Deutschland
Telefon +49 681 3720-310, Telefax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Herstellung in Deutschland:
Schaltungsdienst Lange o.H.G., Berlin
Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt
Reha GmbH, Saarbrücken
Amazon Distribution GmbH, Leipzig
ISBN: 978-3-8383-6041-6

Imprint (only for USA, GB)

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Any brand names and product names mentioned in this book are subject to trademark, brand or patent protection and are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders. The use of brand names, product names, common names, trade names, product descriptions etc. even without a particular marking in this works is in no way to be construed to mean that such names may be regarded as unrestricted in respect of trademark and brand protection legislation and could thus be used by anyone.

Cover image: www.ingimage.com

Publisher: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing AG & Co. KG
Dudweiler Landstr. 99, 66123 Saarbrücken, Germany
Phone +49 681 3720-310, Fax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Printed in the U.S.A.
Printed in the U.K. by (see last page)
ISBN: 978-3-8383-6041-6

Copyright © 2010 by the author and LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing AG & Co. KG
and licensors
All rights reserved. Saarbrücken 2010

Maria Brigida De Miranda

PLAYFUL TRAINING

Table of Contents

Summary	4
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	9
Chapter One: European Masters	14
Stanislavsky's Scientific Approach	15
Adaptation of Yoga	23
Applications for Rehearsal	25
Meyerhold's Use of Popular Forms	27
Biomechanical Training	30
Copeau's "Renovation" of the Actor	37
"Natural" Training	40
Decroux's Body Shaped by Reason	46
"Natural" Boxing	49
Grotowski's "Via Negativa"	51
Intercultural Physicality	58
Chapter Two: Docile Actor Bodies and Scientific Training	61
Spatial Distributions	66
Controlling the Activities	69
Organising the Geneses	73
Composing the Forces	75
Punishing Regimes in Actor Training	77
Gendered Bodies in Physical Training	81
"Gender Blindness"	82
(De)Materializing the Female Body?	87
Resistance or (Non) Docile Femmes	91
Chapter Three: Shifting Cultural Contexts for Training	96
Barba's Adaptation of Eastern Techniques	97
Suzuki's Physical Grammar	104
Boal's Freeing of the Body	112
Spolin's Games Manual	119

Chapter Four: Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training	125
Militarised, Meditative, Secretive	126
Crossing Cultures	130
In Western Actor Training	131
Practical Applications	136
Militarised Bodies	141
Training as Performance	146
Regimented Bodies in Western Theatre	147
Chapter Five: Considerations About Capoeira	154
For an International Audience	156
As a Practice of African Slaves	160
In the Twentieth-Century	167
During the Military Dictatorship	172
In Actor Training	175
Developing an Actor's Physical Dialogue	180
Circular Spaces	184
Similarities with Gardzienice	190
Chapter Six: Innovative Female Practitioners	196
Approaches to Performance Making	196
Female Performers "Making a Spectacle of Themselves"	202
Performative Bodies	204
Female Bodies Crossing Interculturally	209
The Female Body in Training	212
Chapter Seven: Developing a Training Method	218
The Practical Project: <i>Beyond (So) Frida</i>	219
The Title	220
The Script	222
Training and Rehearsal	223
Body in Ritual	228
Devoured Body	232
Body in Pain	234
United Body	237

Conclusion	239
Appendix:	
The Performance <i>Beyond (So) Frida</i> (description)	242
Bibliography	245

Table of Contents

Summary	4
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	9
Chapter One: European Masters	14
Stanislavsky's Scientific Approach	15
Adaptation of Yoga	23
Applications for Rehearsal	25
Meyerhold's Use of Popular Forms	27
Biomechanical Training	30
Copeau's "Renovation" of the Actor	37
"Natural" Training	40
Decroux's Body Shaped by Reason	46
"Natural" Boxing	49
Grotowski's "Via Negativa"	51
Intercultural Physicality	58
Chapter Two: Docile Actor Bodies and Scientific Training	61
Spatial Distributions	66
Controlling the Activities	69
Organising the Geneses	73
Composing the Forces	75
Punishing Regimes in Actor Training	77
Gendered Bodies in Physical Training	81
"Gender Blindness"	82
(De)Materializing the Female Body?	87
Resistance or (Non) Docile Femmes	91
Chapter Three: Shifting Cultural Contexts for Training	96
Barba's Adaptation of Eastern Techniques	97
Suzuki's Physical Grammar	104
Boal's Freeing of the Body	112
Spolin's Games Manual	119

Chapter Four: Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training	125
Militarised, Meditative, Secretive	126
Crossing Cultures	130
In Western Actor Training	131
Practical Applications	136
Militarised Bodies	141
Training as Performance	146
Regimented Bodies in Western Theatre	147
Chapter Five: Considerations About Capoeira	154
For an International Audience	156
As a Practice of African Slaves	160
In the Twentieth-Century	167
During the Military Dictatorship	172
In Actor Training	175
Developing an Actor's Physical Dialogue	180
Circular Spaces	184
Similarities with Gardzienice	190
Chapter Six: Innovative Female Practitioners	196
Approaches to Performance Making	196
Female Performers "Making a Spectacle of Themselves"	202
Performative Bodies	204
Female Bodies Crossing Interculturally	209
The Female Body in Training	212
Chapter Seven: Developing a Training Method	218
The Practical Project: <i>Beyond (So) Frida</i>	219
The Title	220
The Script	222
Training and Rehearsal	223
Body in Ritual	228
Devoured Body	232
Body in Pain	234
United Body	237

Conclusion	239
Appendix:	
The Performance <i>Beyond (So) Frida</i> (description)	242
Bibliography	245

Summary

This book questions whether the practice of martial arts in physical actor training encourages a physicality with its origins in masculinised regimentation. The training of the body of the actor in physical practices, historically connected with the martial and military sphere, assumes that disciplining methods can lead to a 'neutral', 'natural' or 'universal' body, which leaves out of account the question of cultural context and gender identity. The book examines key training methods theoretically and explores how actor training might resist such masculinised regimentation.

This book seeks to analyse physical exercises derived from martial and militaristic spheres in well-established actor training approaches of the twentieth-century. It discusses the work of key figures who set the precedent for the explicit adaptation of Asian martial arts, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of these appropriations in light of what Michel Foucault calls the "insidious militarization" of society (1995:138).

While there is no doubt that an actor's practice of martial arts disciplines his or her physicality, it is the contention of this book that the adaptation of Asian martial arts into the physical training of Western actors can signify an intensification of disciplinary mechanisms that transform the bodies of the actors into "docile bodies" (Foucault 1995:135). This analysis of "docile bodies" can be extended to include the disciplining of gendered bodies.

The book proposes an alternative training structure inspired by capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art. The findings of the research support the use of capoeira for the training of actors, because of its multicultural origins, non-regimented structure of training and its history of political and cultural resistance.

The book concludes with a discussion of the application of these ideas to a theatre production and performance, *Beyond (So) Frida*.

Acknowledgements

First, and most importantly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Peta Tait for her tireless work in the supervision and revision of the Doctoral thesis that forms the basis of this work. Without her support the thesis, and this book, would not have been possible.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of CAPES, the Brazilian Ministry of Education, for granting me the scholarship which made my studies in Australia possible. Likewise I would like to acknowledge the support provided to me by La Trobe University throughout the work on my doctoral thesis. My gratitude to Julian Meyrick, Geoffrey Milne, Meredith Rogers and Ian Carruthers for their kind support and help with settling in at the Drama Department. Thanks to my colleagues at La Trobe University, especially Maryrose Casey, Jane Mullet and Suzanne Sandow who made sure I became well acquainted with Melbourne.

I would like to thank Robin Laurie, Peter Eckershall, David Pledger, Margareth Kirby, Women's Circus and Mike Finch for granting me interviews and introducing me to their work.

Special thanks to Stephanie Barnaud for her active collaboration in the performance of *Beyond (So) Frida*, and thanks to collaborators Jill Orr, Jill Perry, and crew members Bob Pavlich, Adam Casey, Amanda Kerly, Adam Griepelis, Paul Farrell, Sarah Lyford, Michael Cove, Glen Moore, and university staff Antony Yin, Julie Hughes, Loretta Calverley and Ian Armet for their supportive work in *Beyond (So) Frida*.

I would like to thank *mestre* Val Boa-Morte and Capoeira Filhos da Bahia School for teaching me and for giving me access to indispensable material about capoeira and Afro-Brazilian traditions. My gratitude to Kerrie Sinclair for introducing me to kung fu wing chun and for collaborating in the shooting of capoeira pictures, together with Leonardo Pimentel and Jacinta Hicken.

Thanks to Phillip B. Zarrilli and Roberta Matsumoto for giving me access to their books, and thanks to my dearest friends Cesário Pimentel and Simone Reis, and to my sisters Maria Isabel and Cecília, for sending me valuable material from overseas. Thanks to Maryrose and Gillian Kehoul for proofreading my final draft and giving me 'sisterly' support and encouragement. Thanks both to my friends from Brazil and to the friends I made in Australia for keeping me sane while I undertook my research.

Special thanks to my partner Daniel for taking care of me, and making sure I was eating delicious food and still laughing in the most stressful moments. I would like to express my gratitude to Daniel's family for their love and kindness. Special thanks to David, Luke and Anja, proofreaders extraordinaire.

My eternal gratitude to my dear parents for their unconditional support and for being a source of strength. Thanks to my brothers and sisters for their advice and inspiration.

*To my parents, siblings,
and my beloved Daniel.*

Introduction

This book asks whether adaptations from martial arts into the physical training of the actor encourage regimentation and should be resisted. It is the contention here that there is an implicit process of making “docile bodies” (Foucault 1995:135), within martial arts-derived, physical training for actors that must be counteracted. The main theoretical criticism of the adaptation of most martial arts is the forging of a very specific corporeality: one that originates in male dominated military traditions and which possibly reflect the “insidious militarization” of many social practices (ibid:138). This book questions the physical effects on the actor’s body of a martial arts training that was developed within a specific gender and cultural context.

This book theoretically argues that the physicality of the body is not devoid of a cultural and gender identity. The framework for this analysis uses theories of discipline and power developed by Michel Foucault. It is informed by Joseph Roach’s (1989) insightful discussion about the body of the opera *castrati* in the eighteenth-century. Importantly, Roach suggests that Foucault’s theories of disciplining the body should inform any discussion about the body in theatre practice (1989:101).

Rather than rejecting martial arts in actor training, an alternative approach to training, exemplified by capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art, is used to investigate theoretically and practically the idea of ‘resistance’ in disciplining the actor’s body. When discussing Foucault’s theory of “disciplinary power”, Lois McNay argues that it is necessary to consider, in depth, Foucault’s idea of resistance as part of power relations (1994:100-1). Given capoeira’s history of social, political and racial resistance, this research asks whether it can also be a bodily practice of resistance with regard to gender identity? To examine these questions this book explores how intercultural and gender identities intersect with physical regimes of contemporary actor training.

Chapter One is a general analysis of ideas about a disciplined and controlled body, shaped through physical training as expressed in the writings of, and about, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jacques Copeau, Etienne Decroux and Jerzy Grotowski. In the majority of these training methods, the physical training borrows techniques and even physical exercises from the regimented training linked to combat and military cultures. This chapter questions the assumptions that justify ‘discipline’ as a condition for ‘freedom’ often proposed in later methods. It is argued that as theatre discourse assumes an ascetic promise of self-realisation through corporeal training it

paradoxically becomes increasingly militarised. It is also argued that, using a discourse of freedom, the major twentieth-century training methods introduced a discipline that undermined physical freedom because it reproduced regimented and docile groups of bodies. Furthermore, these methods sought to mould an actor's body type so that it becomes interchangeable with other actors.

Chapter Two theoretically examines examples of actor training methods since the early twentieth-century through Foucault's argument about the "insidious militarization" (1995:138), of society. The strategies for forging "docile bodies" (ibid:135), as described by Foucault, are presented and then compared to examples of actor training strategies. It is argued that through the actors' physical training, the relationships developed by a body with its surroundings and with other bodies, are permeated by complicit regulations and constrictions. These define the actor's embodiment and perceptions of time, space and communication and affect the way he or she works with other actors and with groups. A belief in the idea of a neutral and natural body is fostered that is in fact belied in practice. But, as theorists of gender identity who explore ideas about bodies in society and social behaviour have asked in different contexts, it is necessary to ask how and why theatre training has engaged in such contradictory reductionist principles?

Chapter Three discusses the approaches to training actors of Eugenio Barba, Tadashi Suzuki, Viola Spolin and Augusto Boal. It comments on the influence of the European masters on their work, and how the work of these four directors proposes new avenues for training the actor. The chapter investigates how Barba, Suzuki, Spolin and Boal's innovative approaches to training actors reflect different ways of articulating ideas about the body of the actor, discipline and resistance to dominant models of power relations. It considers how specific social, cultural and political contexts of these four directors influenced the objectives, structure and exercise of their approaches to actor training. Boal and Spolin are a counterpoint to Suzuki and Barba because their training approaches are based on making theatre practice available to a wide range of students. Boal's method, informed by his reflections on Latin American culture, created the ideas of a 'politicised' body, while Spolin is one of the few female theatre practitioners whose manual for training actors has gained international recognition over decades.

Chapter Four presents some of the American and European projects and experiences of adopting Asian martial arts into the process of training actors. The chapter discusses Phillip B. Zarrilli's body of work in the field of martial arts as applied to actor training. The chapter shows how Asian martial arts became an accepted alternative physical practice for forging the Western actor's body. It is