

TRANSLATING & TRANSCENDING

Sitting here transiting at the Charles de Gaulle (Paris) international Airport, waiting for my flight back to Singapore, I began to reflect on my experience of the Magdalena Sin Fronteras II festival in Cuba (8 th Jan to 18 th Jan 2008).

I have many impressions and images in my head and my heart beats with excitement as I recall many of the performances, work demonstrations, workshops, forums, the exchanges - the informal dialogues that I have had at various meal times and/or even over mojitos and coffee.

However, in all of my conversations, the one thing that struck me was this: the various possibilities of the visual language of theatre. A poetic language that is able to transcend all cultures, communicating to one's soul. Yes, that is the magic of theatre.

What is this magic of theatre and how can we achieve or even attain this magic? Where can I go in search of this magic? These are questions that seem to be nudging me, and as I dig deeper into these questions, I am forced to look deeper into the concept of training and praxis, especially that of my own.

During the festival, many of the participants shared and spoke about our own practices and the inspiration from which we drew from. The impulse from which we work. As I delve deeper into the concept of training, a voice rings out in my head - because it is important to understand - 'why we train and why train'?

Training for actors is important and fundamental but we must be able to use this as a springboard to 'something else'. We must be able to gain mastery over our training and then throw our training and techniques away and dive deeper into this 'something else'. And this can be terrifying and crazy because you are entering into an unknown territory but it can also be rejuvenating. It is only when we begin to strip apart all that we know that the real search for the magic begins.

Attaining a high level of proficiency in one's craft is important and crucial. We cannot ignore the technicality and the aesthetics that are fundamental in the craft of performance/theatre making. However, beyond this, I am addressing a desire and a need to constantly re-invent and strip away the imaginary self so that what is standing is the core, the poetics of theatre.

After several years of practice, the training is found and can be seen in the 'blood-stream'. The training becomes you, or should I say, you become the training - you are able to attain an acute sense of awareness of your body and its relation to space. But this is only the first stage. The next stage is to translate this training so that it can transcend into the performing space.

It was at this festival, that we kept returning to the question of transcending. For the training to metamorphosis into 'something else': this means that we keep only the essence of the training and search for a context*.

Once we have found our own context, we need to break away again. Breaking away from any context or form, opens up a new creative force that can be described as a re-birth. This, then, will the magic begin and this will take patience and time. Patience can be cultivated and time is relative.

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* By context I am referring to the premise which we build/create our work on.