

The Performance of Body, Space and Place

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There exists today in the world a wealth of performance traditions that are challenged with extinction. After centuries of acculturation through colonization, missionary zeal, economic exploration and political machinations, the remains of these once highly evolved and complex traditions have been relegated to the status of anthropological interest, tourist attraction, or cultural curiosity. The overwhelming onslaught of Western culture's imperative has either appropriated or marginalized these traditions in a careening, mindless drive for cultural, commercial, and political homogeneity. Western culture's cultural steamroller has displaced or destroyed, abused, and traumatized every indigenous group that it has encountered, invariably forcing itself upon overwhelmed and helpless people, taking what it needed and then leaving them to fend for themselves. The history of Western cultures expansionism is a history of shame, abuse, and destruction that is only now becoming fully recognized. No culture on the earth today remains untouched by Western culture's influence and the shape of the future will be profoundly influenced by its philosophical, political, economic and cultural values.

The Western imperative is however, also reaching its limits, and is, out of necessity, in a process of re-evaluation and transformation. The finiteness of the earth's resources has become obvious. Our ideas about earth, air, oceans, animals, and forests are shifting from the status of infinite resource to be exploited, to an understanding that these limited resources are in need of regulation, protection, and stewardship, a concept new to Western thought but central to an indigenous worldview. Where will the material necessary for tomorrow's microwave ovens and television sets come from? Where are the jobs to come from for those

people in the world's developing nations to buy the clothing, food, and material happiness proposed to them by the Western consumer utopia? Limits are being met and adjustments are taking place accordingly. The influences of science, Western medicine, and technology are now offset by countervailing ideas from such sources as religious fundamentalism, holistic healing and alternative medicines, and mainstream environmental awareness. "New Age" thinking, which is but a reimagining of ancient ways and wisdom, is being absorbed into the mainstream of Western culture, an instinctual adjustment to the complex issues that now confront the world. Formerly esoteric and exotic practices from both Western and non-Western cultures are being absorbed into a larger, emerging global culture. Indigenous people are increasingly finding a voice and re-embracing the worldviews and lifestyles of their ancestors (<http://www.indianpueblo.org/>). The earth and its inhabitants are moving, with fits and starts, into an era that will require a fundamental personal, social, and cultural re-evaluation of where and what we are, how we relate to one another and self, and our relationship with the earth.

Performance for indigenous people put the everyday into the context and perspective of the continuum of living on earth. Performance (in the form of ritual, ceremony, and social expressions) gave humans their early understanding, interaction, and sense of some control. It gave humans a power by which to apprehend, consider, and create a place in the part of the earth they inhabited, comprehending the everyday mysteries that surrounded them, enabling survival and sustainability. Indigenous performance relied on culling elements from the surrounding world—bird calls, animal movements, the sounds of a certain wind, the pursuit of a hunted animal, and the feelings evoked by a spirit, for example. The sights, sounds and rhythms of a particular place on the earth were momentarily held and celebrated. Indigenous performance danced, sang and drummed their part of the earth into being. This type of

performance was came about through a complex, spontaneous intuition, a trial-and-error interaction and process. When humans performed, it was as much for themselves as it was for the spirits, ancestors, elements, and animals. Place was not limited to geography and the material world, but a reflection of a gathered community, a manifestation of a totality, a system, concomitantly tactile and abstract, subject and object, witness, and participant. Place was animated. It was the whole that gave order and significance, and it healed (Kawagley, 1995, p. 11-12, Riccio, 2003, p. 6).

Indigenous performance was as primary and necessary to existence as thinking, It was another kind of thinking, the collective's way of stepping out and viewing itself. Performance was a haptic, heuristic, and psychophysical way of community thinking, making visible and tangible, for a brief moment, the invisible and ephemeral. It was a way to see and feel the deeper structures of reality: myth, archetype, and ritual.

Thinking and being through performance, was a practical and tactile means of facilitating refection, adaptation, survival, and evolution. Thinking and being through performance, was alchemy of mind and body which metamorphized, and shaped images, objects, methods, memory, and feelings into systems of order and meaning. The origin and necessity of performance is rooted in survival. It is the way the human species captures and reveals time, space and systemic ordering; it is a vector, a community gathering, affording reflection, transference, affirmation, and transformation. It is a place where the transitory "being" of the community comes together for a moment of apprehending. The indigenous community of place includes humans, animals, the elements, the earth, spirits and ancestors. In indigenous performance is where time does not exist. The community steps outside of time, history and other constructed notions, and encounters the current manifestations of the eternal (Eliade, 1961, p. 21). Performance in this context is extended from, and coherent to, place ordering systems—asserting the ordering of the individual's

roles, beliefs, and values from the perspective of a larger social, cultural, and cosmological whole.

Modern, non-indigenous performance however, has lost connection with its origins, power, and potential—the connection to the origins of its culture. Moreno posited that such *cultural conserves* underlay all creative activity and determine all creative expression. What activated the cultural conserve in Moreno's view was the spontaneous/creative process, which was at the matrix and the initial stage of any cultural expression. All forms of spontaneity are linked to creativity. All forms of the cultural conserve are linked to spontaneity. They exist together (Moreno, 1987, p. 45-46). When connection to one's cultural conserve is lost the spontaneous/creative is severely limited with the vitality of the expression diminished.

Overwhelmingly, the theater relegates place, environment, animals, spirits, and ancestors to the role of marginalia, backdrop and/or antagonist. This emphasis can be explained, in part, by Western culture's foundational and organizational assumptions, namely 1) a hero in conflict centered tradition, as defined by the dramaturgy of ancient Greece, whereby the audience follows empathetically the action of an individual that refers to platonic, idealized abstractions instead of lived manifestations; 2) an Aristotelian objectifying and rationalizing perspective that seeks to categorize and qualify component parts (from a human perspective) which implicitly separates and divides; 3) and the notion of time, which divides space and events, rendering reality as a sequential and progressive phenomenon rather than a fully lived eternal present. The last assumption has facilitated the Western cultural tendency to separate past, present, and future, viewing reality as linear rather than cyclical, more centered on progress and extensions in time and space, than about maintenance and balance of place.

The Western tradition of performance began with reference to place and its gods --Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, or Jesus-- who were and still are, in a limited way today, active participants or witnesses of the action (Tarnas, 1991, p .20 and 27). As this focus diminished, it was accompanied by the loss of a place-based sense of responsibility, a loss might rightly be cited as the cause of many of the problems facing the planet today. A place-centered reality as opposed to a human-centered reality requires a significant adjustment in thinking and being; it requires us to re-imagine humans as an informed and responsible participants. By playing for an audience of gods, spirits, animals, climate, and ancestors, one expresses, implicitly, both a greater and more humble sense of self and context (Lowenstein, 1993, p. 102). Our predicaments require us to change. My hope is that the wisdom and experience of the indigenous world will be recognized and reassessed and used to combat the Western history of exploitation and acquisition.

In summary: performance is a frame within which a community of place interacts. Indigenous performance differs in form and function from the Western dramaturgical model in that it is participatory and by its nature and necessity, interactive. Performance demands interaction and participation for its efficacy in the use of all the elements of a community. Movements, objects and linguistic expressions along with music—singing, drumming, rattling, or chanting—are endowed codes and texts which, when applied dissolve the boundaries between elements to create community. In this way performance can heal, demonstrating the responsibility and interaction of the individual to their community through the active creation and celebration of wholeness— of a particular place.

My work with indigenous and mixed cultural populations is based on this premise. I believe performance is a process of practical and immediate interaction and, through application, a means by which to help an individual, community and the world become whole again.

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

What happens when a group of people has lost the originating context of place and the rituals that reflected, connected, and celebrated that place? What happens when all that is left is the gesture of the ritual, a gesture of being in a particular place in the world? How does a culture reconstruct, re-connect with its cosmological narrative? The plight of indigenous and non-indigenous people may differ in degree but not effect—a non-indigenous, urbanized and acculturated person has just had a longer time to adjust to homelessness, find substitutes, and come to accept the abstractions and simulacrum of place. May Overlie, a graduate student in Drama Therapy at the California Institute of Integral Studies, reflected on homelessness after taking a class I offered.

I took this class seeking to find a window into the holistic, spiritually balanced, and mythic reality of indigenous people. I had a fantasy this would provide relief from the pervasive alienation of city life and disassociation from nature. Like many others who have allowed the grief of this loss to rise to awareness, I wonder if I could soothe the sadness of my own lost connection by studying indigenous cultures. There are so many strangers one must deal with every day that I feel envious of cultures with small intact communities. My pain is based on the instinctual need for communities that is disrupted by life in an urban environment [...] what stood out for me most was my need to embrace my own culture. To do so is to embrace elements intrinsic to what we call Western and move in and through them rather than to "cut them out" (Overlie, 4 December 1995) .

Like indigenous people, people of our post industrial, technological era are left to wander and fend for themselves. We work like archeologists with fragments, bones and pottery shards, to reconstruct cultures as we search for meaning systems and ways of being of and with the world we have inherited.

Work as a researcher and performance creator in the area of indigenous performance, ritual, and shamanism has brought me to an awareness of ways of being and expressing—ways of being that still lie buried within the deep structure of contemporary cultures to a greater or lesser degree. We are all, wittingly or not, part of a globalizing world that is formulating a new culture of planetary indigenesness. We earthlings are all part of becoming and constructing a new, more broadly conceived place -- earth.

This is a short essay, and out of practical necessity cannot explore fully the many issues it provokes I will provide examples that highlight some of the techniques of working with indigenous and mixed cultural groups (urban and Western among them) that have proved practical and effective. It is only a very broad outline, giving a sense of progression and intent, one diagram for reinventing self and culture. This is one way to examine and define self in a larger context, resourcing and dialoging with the ways and knowledge of traditional and modern worlds. I am not a therapist, but rather an artist/scholar/educator who has stumbled into a journey that may be useful in the telling to others. At the heart of the work is the process of expressiveness as a tool for cultural rediscovery and reinvention. I believe performance and the process of creation to be therapeutic—to perform is to take action, and to take action as an individual or as group is inherently positive for it affirms as it aspires to understand, participate in, and create anew the impulse of the human endeavor. Collective and individual creativity and creation can vitalize a

community's sharing and works toward healing historical, cultural, and in turn, individual wounds.

(Re)CREATING INDIGENOUS PERFORMANCE

The process of creating performance with indigenous people has no set formula. This is as it should be. The variables of creating performance with indigenous people, given the vicissitudes of personalities, support structures, and outside circumstances, are mercurial and require constant adjustment, accommodation, and negotiation. The work is a constant initiation, learning, improvisation, and dealing with surprises. Working in a foreign culture demands sensitive communication, understanding, and patience. The social, political, economic, psychological, and cultural tumult (if not trauma) which generally surrounded my work with indigenous people (and to a lesser extent culturally mixed populations) gave me a great sense of responsibility. Indigenous cultures are small, fragile, threatened, and much abused. The indigenous performance projects I have been involved with have often taken on high profiles, accompanied by much public interest, curiosity, and skepticism. They have also been invested with much hope, which, in turn has made me acutely aware of my responsibility to a people and their culture. I was aware that a betrayal of such a responsibility could easily damage a culture representing a meddlesome, counterproductive neo-colonialism rather than the sincere assistance intended. The potential of such projects—the challenge and apprehension of so many unknowns, the pleasure and adventure of creating and discovering something through experiment—is astounding. As an artist I have never felt so connected, alive and fulfilled—the work is personally meaningful, creative, and educational.

The performance traditions of indigenous people provided me with a profound and useful insight into the fundamental functions and necessity

of human performance, which in turn helped me to develop working methodologies. These methodologies were successfully applied in my work in a number of diverse cultural indigenous settings, among them, the Zulu and !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen of South Africa, in Zambia, Kenya, Greenland Inuit, Sri Lankan Tamils, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Sakha, (central Siberia), and Korea. Non-indigenous applications have been as varied as Finland, Russia, Italy, England, Sweden, Denmark, and the United States. In no group was there a set methodology, only traces of what preceded me to be followed, applied and adjusted according to practical need. Like the notion of indigenous itself, the work was shaped by its local social and cultural setting, the personalities, and external circumstances. The flexible blending of the interpersonal, emotional, psychological, and physical sensitivities can result in agreements which permit the group to work together in a combination of the old and the new. To work in such a way demands negotiation and flexibility, patience and an even temper, devotion and methodical persistence, heightened sensitivity and integrative intelligence, and the ability to read an environment, trusting self and others, for the work is much like that of a new kind of hunter-gatherer.

BODY

At the core of the methodology is the action of locating and articulating a human body in relation to space. The objective of such articulated action is to situate the body relationally in a space and by so doing create a place—the systemization of layered spaces. By creating a performance place (be it a circle, stage, film, or other communal gathering point) an assembly site is actualized. The performance place is both literal and metaphoric, serving to organize many formerly disparate spaces, objects, and actions into a meaning system. A performance place is a site of agency, simultaneously catalyst, metaphor and mnemonic and ultimately a

dynamic, microcosmic, and tactile diagram of how societies and cultures are expressed and formulated. Humans do this instinctually, for this is how the species enhances a body's ability to reflect, take stock, and survive. The stage, acting, language, and content of Shakespeare in his era are a diagram that makes visible the invisible currents of his time and place. Similarly, the theatre of David Mamet is a revelation of America of the late twentieth century. Both are places that articulate that which is greater than their specific expression – they reveal implicitly a worldview and reflect changing patterns and evolutions of individual, social, and cultural condition,

The body is the sensory receptor through which we perceive and interact with the world. Space(s) is that which surrounds us—the environment, climate, objects, other bodies, energies, feelings, spirits, unintelligible and uninterrupted codes, signs, social and cultural conventions, and symbols. Space(s) consists of elements without inherent connected meaning. Place is both a noun and verb in that is the act of signification of spacial elements, a systematization to create an integrated meaning system from multiple spaces. Sense of place comes from being able to read and connect to patterns, codes, and bodily relationships as to create a greater sense of being, purpose, and perspective. In popular usage, the word space evokes emptiness, the undefined, and what exists between things. Space is only given meaning when it is connected, inhabited, and/or endowed by some bodily-mental-emotional interaction with the world, thereby creating and becoming a place.

Performance (e.g. ritual, ceremony, drama) is, in essence, a microcosmic paradigm of for how a body lives, comprehends, and organizes a variety of overlapping spaces and defines place. For many performance traditions the corporeal body is the unifying power of recreation (Riley, 1997, p .271) with its ability to hold together different worlds (i.e. spaces) and embody all times (all ancestors) and all constructs

(e.g. heaven, earth, myth, gender, culture). In performance, the articulating body is able to unify, equalize, harmonize, and control the cosmos and put this world back to rights (Riley, 1997, p. 282). In the Taoist tradition, which is at the origins of the Chinese theatrical tradition, performance “is intended to cause the gods to manifest themselves in the festival, the community assembly. The liturgy thus aims at integration and order, and moreover to ‘pass’ all being to a higher level in one vast movement, so that the whole world may obtain a natural, spontaneous order of the heavens and be at one with the cosmological system” (Schipper, 1993, p. 66).

Antonio Damasio articulates how a sense of body is primary, in neurobiological terms, to understanding environment, thinking, and in turn, to conceptualize space and place.

Complex organisms such as ours do more than just interact, more than merely generate the spontaneous or reactive external response known collectively as behavior. They also generate internal responses, some of which constitute images (visual, auditory, somatosensory, and so on), which I postulate as the basis for the mind...The overall function of the brain is to be well informed about what goes on in the rest of the body, the body proper: about what goes on in itself; and about the environment surrounding the organism, as that suitable, survivable accommodations can be achieved between organism and environment. From an evolutionary perspective, it is not the other way around. If there had been no body, there would have been no brain (Damasio, 1994, p. 89-90).

Human life begins and ends with the human body. Human life is defined, and would be inconceivable, if it were not for the corporal,

sensual, and aware body in relationship with an environment, the spaces around us. We breathe in and breathe out the world; we sit to rest and gain perspective; we walk and map our world, we see the sky and comprehend proportion and distance; the sun warms us and we are delighted; the clouds drift by and we travel for a moment with them; an eagle takes wing and we feel soaring flight in our body; a squirrel chatters and the sound vibrates our bones and tissue; it grows dark and the cold passes through us and our feelings become more reflective; our emotions, thoughts and biology shifts; our imagination creates fear to compensate for our diminished sense of space; and then our imagination, emotions and biology shifts again with the warmth of a spectacular dawn.

The human body teaches us where and how the world is constructed. Our interactions with other bodies, animals, objects, environments, and the sensations they evoke, are what we call the world.

When my body thus responds to the mute solicitation of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my sense some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. By this process my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of this other presence--to the way of this stone, or tree, or table--as the other seems to adjust itself to my own style and sensitivity. In this manner the simplest thing may become a world for me, as conversely, the thing or being come to take its place more deeply in my world (Abram, 1996, p. 52).

But the body and the space around us are without inherent meaning or system. It is the felt, habituated and codified, set relationally between body and space, that creates meaning, and it is the systemization of this meaning that creates place. It is place that gives us a sense of belonging, continuity, and identity. It is place that aspires,

enables, and functions for the survival of the body in multiple and overlapping spaces. Place is the ether of human society and culture. Place is a construct devised to function as a comfort, for it is a vehicle-vessel-device charged with emotion, value, memory, and significance. Place is what is familiar and known. Place is a system of meaning—a reflexive, interrelated grouping of otherwise disparate elements—creating a pattern of relationships designed to best enable consistency, functionality, and ultimately survival.

It is through the body narrative, cultural, and social spaces are given expression. The somatic event of performative expression gives life and is the dynamism sustains and integrates an individual with their culture. Theresa John, a Yup'ik Eskimo performer and director with Tuma Theatre speaks about the importance of performing one's culture.

When I was growing up I always learned the old stories through hearing and they had to ask us to imagine this in our minds what going on in the story, never really performing it. The dancing and singing is the way we present our stories in a motion form. That's when our stories come alive, when we sing and dance them. With Tuma I incorporated what I know about traditional dance and song with what I learned about theater and Native stories. That's how we created plays from and through all the dancing and singing that relates to all the issues brought up in the stories (John, 18 July 1997).

For the uninitiated, a walk through the Australian outback is a journey though a vast space. For an initiated aborigine it is a place, full of depth, inter-connected meaning, identity, myth, geography, physicality, history and spirituality: an inseparable part of a larger place-based cultural system. To directly perceive any phenomenon is to enter into relation with

it, to feel oneself in a living interaction with another being, (Abram, 1996, p. 117) and in this way begin the construction of the world. For indigenous cultures, spirit and material worlds were one and the same, one reflecting and revealing each other. Yupik Eskimo elder Harold Napoleon articulates a worldview, an inspirational template for my work, whereby spirit, body, and material spaces reflexively reveal the material, spiritual, ancestral, mythic, and ritual ways of being in the world. *Yuuyaraq* is the Yup'ik word for the “the way of the human being”, simultaneously a place and way of being.

Yuuyaraq encompassed the spirit world, which the Yup'ik lived. It outlined the way of living in harmony within this spirit world and with the spirit beings that inhabited this world. To the Yup'ik, the land, the rivers, the heavens, the seas, and all that dwelled within them were spirit, and therefore sacred. They were born not only to the physical world of the Bering Sea, the Yukon, and the Kuskokwim rivers, but into a spirit world as well. Their arts, tools, weapons, kayaks and umiaks, songs and dances, customs and traditions, thoughts and actions—all bore the imprint of the spirit world and spirit beings. When the Yup'ik walked out into the tundra or launched their kayaks into the river of the Bering Sea, they entered into the spiritual realm. They lived in deference to this spiritual universe, of which they were, perhaps, the weakest members. *Yuuyaraq* outlined for the Yup'ik the way of living in this spiritual universe. It was the law by which they lived (Napoleon, 1996, p. 5).

The past ways of being with the world are gone. But that does not mean they are forgotten and that their wisdom cannot be mined and reinvented in response to the new, emerging, indigenous world many are in the

throes of making—a new indigenous system of place. Ecological, political, cultural, and economic forces are becoming increasingly interrelated, forcing a reconsideration and reformulation of how we see our world, our responsibilities, and ourselves. We are all becoming earthlings.

Body + Space = Place. The work I do is about locating the body in a space and defining relationships in order to make to make, negotiate and re-imagine a (new) place.

THE CIRCLE

From pre-historic cave drawings onwards the circle, and its abstracted metaphor the cycle, has served as an expression of humanity's desire to identify and participate in wholeness, to grasp the essence of being, to be integrated with harmony, perfection, patterns, and cycles of the natural, material, metaphorical and metaphysical worlds. The circle is the symbolic representation of the cycles of life and death, ecology, cultures, and history that surround and move through us all. We live within circling cycles of day and night, the ebb and flow of tides, the passing of seasons, the circling of planets, lunar cycles, and cycling of breath and blood as you read this.

The cycle is a recombinant energy, one that returns and permutates itself with the power of life being manifest through eternal cyclical movement (Riley, 1997, p. 264). The cycle and circle motif is a mainstay of indigenous cultures worldwide, reflected in music, dance, performance, architecture, and worldviews. For African drummer Sule Greg Wilson, the cycle, as embodied by drumming and rhythm, is a vehicle of healing,

Each stroke you put in to the drum or bell must be part of a cycle that returns the energy that you put out back into your person and into the people before you. If you play down into the instrument, all you are doing is breaking it to pieces,

dissipating your energy, and disappointing those whose chakras wait to catch your sent emotions (Wilson, 1992, p. 75).

A circle-cycle has no beginning or end. No front or back, offers no positions of hierarchy, is ancient yet modern, egalitarian, simple and elegant, organic, constant, unifying, inclusive, accepting, comforting, and communal—a refuge from the world, a place where the group creates and can leave one way of being for another. Defined by Van Gennep and Victor Turner (Van Gennep, 1984, p. 11, Turner, 1987, p. 25-26) it is a transitional or liminal place of separation where spaces can be transformed and adjusted, and re-integrated into the individual's life and community at large.

For the !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen in the lower Kalahari, the ancestors were active and attentive contributors to the circle-cycle of their everyday lives. Working with the Bushmen healers I learned that they were able to hear their ancestors. From an interview,

“It is the ancestors that help us to survive,” proclaimed Silenga. “It is the ancestors that pass on information on how to live and heal,” said George. “They got the information from god.” To demonstrate his point George showed how he sees and talks with the ancestors (Riccio, 2007, p. 125).

The circle-cycle is the guiding mnemonic that encodes the inspiration, process, and objectives of all that follows. Within the Inupiat Eskimo worldview, the cycle is greater than the individual, indeed it is the pattern enabling the world's continuation.

All they discover is eventually dispersed in further cycles--as they know they themselves, and the things they have made, will be dispersed in coming generations. Each generation

hunted the same animals. The places stayed as the ancestors had known them. But where the ancestors had fought or died, seen visions or shamanised, they left knots, whorls, vortices or human implication on the landscape. To be in a place of death or vision was to relive the story and extend its relationship with the present (Lowenstein, 1993, p. 35).

The circle also meant to establish a way of viewing the world, a perspective, and in turn a structure from which all subsequent work flows. Some of our beginning exercises established working methods, habits, and, significantly, the practice of side coaching.

The group --whether it be a tribal, performance, or lay-- circles and then the re-establishing body-centered awareness cycle begins. Such exercises serve many functions, creating community, stress release (making the performers more available to self and the work), and significantly the establishment of a routine the group can call its own as the exercises are adjusted to reflect cultural circumstances.

THE MOUNTAIN

The performers stand easily with their eyes shut—circle formation with the facilitator in the center. The performers take a comfortable stance and imagine themselves as a mountain. Their heads are the mountain peaks and their feet are planted into the earth. The rhythms of their bodies, their blood flowing, their breath, heartbeat, the pressure sensation on their skin, are all like a mountain--rooted, solid, and living. Their breath, heart beat, blood flowing through the body are like streams on a mountain. Side-coach the performers, asking them to take stock: Ask the performers to clear their minds and focus on nothing but the movement within their bodies. It is important that they be able, at any time, to find a mountain calm

within themselves and to be able to get into contact with their fundamental life rhythms and actions.

In subsequent sessions, once the mountain is established, ask the performers to begin to recognize feelings and thoughts. “If you have a thought or emotion that arises, recognize it, accept it, and then let it go. If you suddenly feel a part of your body, a flash of warmth, an itch, a tension or twitch, likewise recognize it, accept it, and let it go. Listen to the mind and body talk, recognize the conversations and chatter that is constant while remaining calm and observant, like a mountain. You can see far and wide. You re connected to earth and sky and through you animals, vegetation, live, grow, and die. You are the host and the winds, climate, and streams of water and blood flow through you. Choose what to concentrate on and engage and recognize what is the chatter and what are the ongoing events of your life.”

This exercise sets the frame and perspective from which all other exercises and the process and methods of working emanate. Beginning in a circle and stillness became an operating motif (circle, cycle, return) and is an organic evolution of the circle motif prevalent in every indigenous culture where I have worked. The circle is central: from the *Ohuokhai* circle dance that is central to the Sakha people of central Siberia, to the healing circles of the !Xuu Bushmen, to the kashim (the traditional community house) of the Yup’ik Eskimo. It is not just a circle; it is a mnemonic of a way of being in and of the world (Eliade, 1961, p. 81).

The group can always return to the circle. The circle is both form and forum, a place where discussion, demonstration, and performance takes place. Within the circle, anyone can say anything and no subject is off limits, including criticism of the leader’s work. When working with the

Zulu shortly after the last apartheid laws were abolished, my admonishment of a tardy performer was called into question within the circle. On another occasion the refusal of two Zulu men to dance “women’s dances” as part of a skills exchange, was called into question because “Zulu men do not do women’s dances!” The discussion resolved itself when the connection was made between sexism and racism, and the initially reluctant Zulu men became staunch advocates and practitioners of women’s dances. On another occasion, the circle was the place where one Zulu man explained how, when he was a teen, he had been caned and jailed by the police. Within the safety of the circle, it was revealed that he had never told the story of whip marked scars on his back because he was, “A Zulu, a warrior, besides, there are others who had died.” As others in the group revealed how they also had been beaten or jailed, it became obvious to the group that they too, had lived through a collective trauma (Riccio, 2007, p. 30). In the same circle, it was resolved that the performance we would create must help others (their audiences) to deal with the same unspoken pain. Not only for the Zulu, but every indigenous group I have worked with, the circle was a place of revelation, truth and safety. The role of facilitator demands that s/he determine out how best to access and shape the multiple spaces of their lives and inheritances. Paramount to the work was the understanding that I was a participant as well, offering myself and my skills to help the group work toward its own solutions. As participant, it was important to reveal my own thoughts and feelings honestly, calling things as I saw them without positioning myself in a superior or privileged position but rather as an equal with different responsibilities, bringing to the group a skill set and experiences that are focused on the promotion of the group work. To affect this sensibility I outline how I see my function and responsibly, opening a discussion that will be on going and ultimately leads to group members identifying and

articulating their function and responsibilities. Such discussions assist greatly in the organization and execution of the work as it identifies working methods that participants may, in turn, bring to their own work. Often roles and responsibilities shift and adjust as the work progresses, ultimately leading to my leaving with my responsibilities being either concluded or assumed by others. In essence, we are all participants, who, like others, offered unique skills and perspectives that might adjust and evolve along with the process of the work. A constant theme, informing the work was the limit of my time with the group. The fact that I would be leaving played an important part in establishing the need that the group must take responsibility, on their own terms, for their own culture and predicament. As the process evolved, I intentionally and gradually exchanged the role of facilitator with group members taking turns leading and facilitating discussions—in this way new leadership skills were developed. .

RHYTHM

The second stage of the body awareness work is rhythm awareness. My experience with a variety of indigenous and non-indigenous groups has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of re-establishing an awareness of rhythm in a performer's body and in their life. Performer, in this sense, refers to the members of the groups who have joined me in this work, not exclusively to professional performers. Rhythm also awakens and invigorates another kind of perception of attunement or synchronization between bodily rhythms and the rhythms of the things themselves, their tones and textures, (Abram, 1996, p. 54) what I term *rhythm reality*.

The initiation of rhythm awareness leads to the re-establishment of personal and then cultural rhythm awareness, and it is from this foundation that subsequent work flows.

Initial exercises bring awareness to the basic rhythms of life; the heartbeat and breath. Often semi-meditative, these exploratory exercises establish the basic biological self and one's basic rhythm. Such explorations also remind the performer of a simple and basic truth: that the self is the origin and medium of performance. The body expresses the internal-external-eternal self. By apprehending the internal self one can better express the social, cultural, spiritual and potentially eternal sense of self.

The heartbeat became an immediate and tactile building block in my work from which to reiterate, reaffirm, and re-imagine, self, space and place. I view the heartbeat as the measure and foundation of life, community and culture. Everything else is a variation on its theme. A daily heartbeat/breath exercise in my groups:

DIAPHRAGM BREATHING

PART I: Standing still with hands resting on the upper abdomen.

Ask the performers to breathe as they normally do. Side coach the performers, "Inhale and exhale normally and to observe you breathing. Inhale deeply through their nose to allow the upper abdomen to rise." As the lungs fill, the diaphragm pushes down and the stomach pushes outward. Advise that they should not force the breathing. Ask them to visualize the lower lungs (front and back) filling. Allow the performers time to breathe easily and deeply for the entire body. Advise them to feel the breath invigorate the lower limbs, lower body. They exhale through their mouth. Repeat this section of the exercise several times until it become natural.

PART II: Ask the performers to then breathe in through their nose as fully as possible, filling the lungs to the point where they can hold no more air and their lungs feel that they are bursting. They

should hold this breath for as long as possible then exhale fully with sound until every bit of air has been expelled from their body. The performers should visualize the exhaling of every bit of air and that their lungs are flat. After a few normal breaths of breathing though the nose and out through the mouth, return to breathing in to fill the lungs to capacity and then exhaling all breath from the lungs.

HEARTBEAT EXPLORATIONS

This exercise works well as a continuation of the Mountain and Diaphragm Breathing (noted above) or may work separately. Begin quietly with the performers breathing through their noses and out through their mouths. Performers may be seated or standing. Ask the performers to do this for however long it takes to establish the simple rhythm of their everyday breathing. As an easy unforced breathing rhythm is established then ask the performers to hold their breath for two full heartbeats--"lub-lum, lub-lum." With stillness in the body the performers should become aware of their heartbeats. If the performer is having difficulty, ask them to put one hand over their heart to assist in identifying their heartbeat. After holding their breath for two heartbeats ask them to exhale and return to their normal breathing, in through the nose and out through the mouth. They may exhale with a small sound if they so choose. Then ask the performers to hold, with the next inhalation, their breath for three full heartbeats. After three heartbeats they exhale and again return to their normal breathing. Easily and gradually, increase the number of heartbeats they will hold their breath. For the initial presentation of the exercise repeat as the exercise develops, holding their breath for up to ten to fifteen heartbeats. This exercise may be presented repeatedly

and even become an established part of the group's warm-up daily program. As the performers become familiar with the exercise you may choose to begin at seven or ten heartbeats and then progress, for example, from ten to 13 to 17 to 21 heartbeats. However, in any event, it is important to allow the performers time to regain their normal/regular breathing rhythm before increasing the number of heartbeats that their breath is held. This is a good exercise not only for body rhythm and heartbeat awareness, it is also a great way to increase lung capacity as it develops mind/body discipline.

Physiologically, the exercise enabled the performers to expand their lungs in order to breathe more deeply, filling and feeling more of the body as a consequence. People who are stressed often breathe so shallowly that less oxygen gets to the mind and body. Performers can use deep breathing to achieve a sense of power, calm, and awareness. The heartbeat-breathing exercise also instills discipline and self-control. Interestingly, what would seem to be a simple exercise is often met with some initial difficulty. Despite the fact the control is entirely in the person of the performer, those acculturated to following instructions from an external source (e.g. as instilled by the Soviet educational system in Russia and Siberia of the early 1990s or the apartheid era Zulu) often found it difficult to simply listen to their own bodies and trust themselves. So institutionalized was their way of thinking that many wanted reassurances from me about what they should be feeling, and if what they were feeling was a "correct heartbeat." Some were fearful their heartbeat was not constant and thus out of sync with the others in the group. This exercise, and others like it, demonstrated how thoroughly imprinted various social, political and cultural ways of being in the world are on people. In my view, the act of

listening and honoring one's heartbeat and breathing is the beginning of self re-discovery and the assertion of individual uniqueness.

The heartbeat and breath are the basic rhythms of all life. These are the essential indigenous rhythms that link all of humanity and the animal kingdom (Abram, 1996, p. 57 and 127). All subsequent rhythms including the rhythms dance, music, language, and life, evolve from these rhythms. It is too easy to lose these fundamental rhythms in the multiple loud and conflicting rhythms of the contemporary world.

An awareness of the evolution of community, cultural, and environmental rhythms evolve basic bodily rhythms. The rhythms of the heart, revealed in dance, song, chant, and drum are in dialogue with the rhythms of the animal, climate, spirits, and the earth that surrounds. Rhythm is the ephemeral catalyst, conduit, and conductor of any culture. For Eliade rhythm was the revelation of the world incarnate,

Rhythms have their model outside of the profane life of man; whether they reproduce the movements of the totemic or emblematic animal, or the motions of the stars; whether they themselves constitute rituals (labyrinthine steps, leaps, gestures performed with ceremonial instruments) a dance always imitate an archetypal gesture or commemorates a mythical moment. In a word, it is a repetition, and consequently a reactualization, of *illud tempus*, "those days" (Eliade, 1959, p. 28-29).

Every indigenous culture I have worked with has, at its musical core, simple rhythmic beat(s)--many cultures have several. I call these primary beats. These beats often provide the basis of dance and performance movement. According to American Ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, "In most musical styles, the performer or performers employ a

single, over-all rhythmical scheme, or ‘ground plan’, which serves as a point of reference for the infinite variety of rhythmic detail possible within the scheme” (Lomax, 1978, p. 49). This simple meter is double, triple, or compound: 4/4, 3/4. 6/8, 9/8, 12/8 or any other similar meter that relates to the rhythms of human anatomy. Lomax goes on to say that, “Rhythmic relationships link a group together within one overall metrical patterns” (Lomax 49) becoming a sort of ether of connectivity—a rhythmical space.

Defining the beat and articulating the beat in the various body parts, is an important step in advancing rhythm (both personal and traditional) into a contemporary and globalized context. Below is an exercise that suggests how this theme is explored:

HEARTBEAT INTO MOVEMENT

Once the performer has become familiar and comfortable with the Heartbeat Exploration ask them to express the rhythm of their heartbeat into various parts of their body—for example into their fingers, hands, head, and feet. Advise the performer that an exact connection to their heartbeat rhythm is necessary at first, but as the exercise evolves, their movement will be less exact and more an internalized interpretation of their heartbeat. Once the heartbeat rhythm has been established and expressed in a variety of isolated body parts allow the performer to move in the space propelled/activated/inspired by the rhythm of their heartbeat. It may assist them to concentrate by closing their eyes. Encourage and suggest that they alternate how their various body parts express the heartbeat. For example they may move their hand then shoulder, then take several heartbeat inspired steps, then move the chest. Encourage them to create a multiplicity of variations. If at any time the performer becomes too removed from their basic heartbeat inspiration suggest they return to

stillness to regain their internal rhythm and then proceed again. Once the exercise has taken hold ask the performers to improvisationally create a dance like movement based on their heartbeat rhythm. Depending on how the performers take to the exercise you may choose to develop into other variations.

EXERCISE VARIATIONS: Have the performers interact and/or dance with one another using the heartbeat inspired rhythm. Suggest that they evolve a sound or series of sounds that are connected and expressive of their rhythmic movement.

EXERCISE ALTERNATIVE: If space for movement is limited or if you so choose, the same exercise may be conducted with all the performers seated with eyes closed or in a dark space. The exercise in this instance is less concerned with physical movement, which is limited to what movement can be generated while seated, and instead becomes primarily a vocal heartbeat expression exercise. Sticks to beat out the heartbeat rhythm may also be used. This exercise has proven successful on several occasions and with a variety of different cultures.

Each subsequent session, to a greater or lesser degree, would build on the rhythmic exercises, and, if appropriate, sticks were introduced to augment the work. While working with groups who lack or have lost their 'rhythm reality,' I have found that the use of sticks to augment the externalization of the beat, assisted in establishing the beat and its vibration in the performer's body. A Slavic group devoted to pre-Christian ritual I worked with in St. Petersburg demonstrated this principle. Many cultures have lost their cultural rhythms due to acculturation, missionary education (which deemed rhythm 'heathen') or urbanization. Other groups, such as the Zulu members of the Kwasa Group I worked with in Durban, South Africa, carried within them a strong and vital folk

culture of dance, song, drumming, and ceremonial traditions. The Zulu “rhythm of resistance”, was denied free expression under the repressive apartheid rule. However it lived on in performance (Riccio, 2007, p. 40).

Long after the destruction of the Zulu kingdom, when independent African power had become a distant memory, these dances continued to resonate in the minds of dockworkers, domestic servants, and farmhands with the glory of the Zulu heritage. Above all the songs articulated the most deep-seated desires of the expelled, dehumanized, and dispossessed black masses: the cry for land, the longing to regain the land the forefathers had lost to the white settlers (Pratt, 1990, p. 87).

In contrast, in my workshops with the Greenland Inuit, participants insisted that I teach them involved teaching the drumming and dance techniques of Alaska native traditions. Most Alaska natives retained some semblance of traditional rhythm continuity; in contrast, most Greenland Inuit bore the brunt of early 17th century Danish colonization and missionaries who forcibly forbade drumming and traditional spiritual practices. The use of individual rhythm sticks went far to re-introduce traditional rhythms, and subsequent development of dance signing, chant and performance, to the group.

Work with sticks can include group members finding and preparing the sticks they would use for the exercise—going to the woods, stripping and cleaning bark and drying the sticks. Such sticks should be no longer than the length between their wrist and elbow. Once everyone had their sticks, the heartbeat exercise evolved. Now the expression of the beat would be focused with the beating of the sticks, the first steps in expressing externally cultural rhythms and endowing objects with

significance. Beat explorations evolve according to the inclinations of the group and might include a wide variety of rhythmic expression and several rhythmic *stick-jams*. One such exercise was the rhythmic and chant expression of their own lives. Such expressions would vary according to culture and group objectives. The Greenland Inuit, many of whom lost their traditional drumming as a consequence of forced acculturation, viewed the rhythmic exploration of traditional drumbeats as a re-awakening of their cultural identity. With mixed urban groups, the iteration of personal rhythms (their heartbeat, breathing, and walking rhythms) helped to distinguish their personal rhythms from those of the densely rhythmic city. With these rhythm explorations, along with other exercises, group members found comfort, play, and expressive form for their imaginations. The group rhythm provides both a reference and focal point for all subsequent work, becoming a simple and effective way to enable each group's somatic interaction with their cultural roots. Rhythm became a home within themselves as well as their cultural tradition and the link that shaped a fundamental communication between people. With this expressive awareness a pathway between group members and cultural traditions were established.

CULTURAL RHYTHM

After a culture's traditional rhythm has been identified (e.g. two beat for Yup'ik Eskimo, three beat for Russian Slavs), establish a constant drumbeat. Once established the performers are asked to improvisationally work off of the cultural rhythm. Starting seated, ask the performers to isolate body parts and explore the rhythm in each of those body parts: head, face, arms, shoulders, chest, feet, legs, hands, pelvis then whole body from seated position.

Then ask the performers to stand and explore the cultural rhythm while on their feet. Combine various isolated body parts. When

ready ask the performers to move in the space with the cultural rhythm with any variety of expressive suggestions (depending on context and objectives), and might include: Walk, Journey, Praise, Water, Sun, Moon, Animal(s), Dance with spirits, and Calling spirits or ancestors. Allow time for each expression to be defined as a separate and specific expression. This is the building of an expressive vocabulary with emotional, psychological, and personal content and interaction. Then ask the performers to create a simple dance using their feet only. Once established ask them to apply any of the elements explored above to create a dance using any or all of their bodies. Ask them to create a dance that is expressive of who they are--a dance that is short and precise and repeatable Once accomplished and repeated ask the performers to explore established traditional cultural dances.

EXERCISE ALTERNATIVES: Using their personal dance and the traditional dances, ask the performers to create a dance scenario. Dance scenarios may be suggested and/or linked by themes. For example: a journey, a metamorphosis, animal, spirit, or mythological character. A well-known cultural myth or legend may also be suggested.

The above noted exercises are indicative of those I have successfully applied with a variety of groups groups as varied as the Riksteatren in Stockholm, the Center for the Arts in Zambia, and students at the Korean National University of the Arts. They are basic and provide group members with a way of centering and establishing a methodology, by which to locate the self in a direct, somatically induced cultural space. The intent of the process is to re-trace, re-discover, and re-build sense of self and culture and in this way orient the self within a larger, more complex context.

The rhythm work evolved into expressing the beat externally by way of hand clapping, body slapping, dance, movement and then instrumentation, chant and song vocalizations. In this way the internal came into dialog with an external beat. What lives inside one's self is expressed and reflected upon when it is externalized. The external beat then becomes an entity on to itself, however, inspired by and evolved from the internal. And significantly, it was collectively shared—the essence of performance, music, and ritual expressions.

A next step in the progression of externalizing internal rhythms include the vocalization of internal rhythms. Initial sounds evolved first into chants and song and then into its own expression inspired by, but separate from the literal heartbeat. Rhythm and voice explorations then led to group rhythms, chants, songs, and movements, which became expressive of the group feelings. A few examples of vocal exploration exercises:

THE VOCAL SEASONS

The performers may be standing, seated or ideally, they are lying on the floor with their heads arranged together at the center of a mat. They only use their voices to create the seasons. Starting with autumn, give various qualitative visualizations/physicalizations. The exercise is a wonderful way to expose the group's seasonal perceptions to themselves and you. Climate, geography, and the animals that inhabit a land are the foundation of a culture's performance expression. This exercise vocally demonstrates their reality. With Tuma Theatre (Alaska Native) the exercise was very instructive, indicating the types of birds, the shifts in weather, and seasonal rhythms typical of the tundra. A few of the performers mentioned that the exercise made him homesick.

MANTRA

Ask performers pick one short culturally specific phrase they would like to work with either individually as a group. The performers are asked to close their eyes and repeat the phrase for several minutes -- in the same way each time -- using the same inflection and rhythm. Advise them to let the sound from the phrase reverberate through their bodies. Which sound and words affect which part of the body? Which bones vibrate? Allow the repeated phrase to become a “mantra.” Ask the performer to slowly increase the volume of the phrase but maintain the inflection and rhythm/cadence initially established. Allow the volume to increase until everyone is almost shouting. Then recede to where the phrase -- the mantra -- fades to deep within the performer and then vanishes.

EXERCISE VARIATION: After the performer has established and recited the phrase mantra for several minutes, allow them to freely explore the phrase in detail. Advise the performers to go over each syllable and consonant. Repeat, extend, distort, shorten, and whatever else they can think of, the phrase and the elements of the phrase. They may re-arrange the words, consonant, syllables, and inflections inherent within the phrase. Advise them to explore each element of the phrase closely and in detail as to make emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual connections with the sounds. Allow the exploration enough time to evolve--it may take 15 minutes for the performers to begin to free themselves to explore--this exercise has lasted nearly an hour in several cultural contexts. After the exploration ask the performers to bring the phrase back together and to return to how they recited the phrase initially as a mantra. The exercise may also evolve to

allow the performers to move in the space, however it is best in that situation to have dim lighting in order for the performers to concentrate on the vocal and personal exploration.

EXERCISE VARIATION: The exercise may also be applied as a way to bring a performer to explore the potential of sound. While working with the Sakha National Theatre the exercise had the performers suggest several Sakha phrases and chose one that the entire group used. “Nihau Ojugay” (a popular expression that means “very, very good!”) was explored as a mantra and for its communicative-connection potential. The performers sat in a large circle, with eyes closed. The Sakha, who have a powerful throat singing traditions, extended the exercise into an opera of songs, with performers instinctually working together and playing off of one another. The exercise lasted over an hour and seemed inexhaustibly to keep expanding. Such exercises also serve to release tension through vocalization as it brings the performer back to their core emotional expressivity.

These and similar exercises conveyed a fundamental idea, namely, how the body is the origin, qualifier, and reference of all expressiveness. Beginning with their body the group members were not simply adopting external convention, script, thinking, or technique, but rather re-establishing the particular perspective from which to evaluate all else they encounter in the spaces of their world. Again, a very brief for instance. Initial rhythm and voice explorations establish a process and perspective for all subsequent explorations in traditional and contemporary rhythms, movements, objects, personal-group-cultural expressions, ideas and narratives—serving to deepen and develop rhythm memory, group and individual confidence, perspectives and expressiveness. Rhythm has a way of expanding into and uniting

momentarily with the larger world, liberating the body and conscious, self-critical mind, enabling playfulness and spontaneity essential for performance creation and a celebration of life. Rhythm established a was both the ether and venue for performance expression and creation where all cultural and personal resources were vitalized and at their disposal. Poet Tom Lowenstein lived with the Inupiat Eskimo of Point Hope, Alaska for several years and commented poetically on the transcendent event of performance and place.

Whether it is character that flows though the weaving-without-person that the dancer created with his first design, or the force of dance-form that drives hands, voice, arms and feet it's uncertain who is dancing there: Man, spirit, ancestor or some compound of these? While from the dancer's centre the amulets fly outwards, tails, beaks, teeth and feathers flung and shaking. Till the spirits approach and the dance is spirit.

The dancer is a loon, he juts his neck, retracts, recoils, his hard eye flicks, and his half-open mouth, non-human with dance cry, reveals his own shadow. As the souls in the dance-joints loosen and stream free (these are souls that live in the joints of animals and some humans) the birds'-neck rhythm of his nodding from a straight trunk jerks the chin through regulated spasms; hands and feathers mask and unmask, and the dancer's face disc, opening to show it fore bearers, merges and dissolves with them (Lowenstein, 1993, p. 106)

After establishing the body/cycle/mental/group/rhythm themes, the work can move into any number of directions, depending on the objectives of the project. Warming up the body, stretches of any variety

are appropriate and can initially take the form of a traditional Western style or culturally specific stretches such as yoga, or going around the circle with each group member contributing cultural movement or stretch for a different part of the body. What is important at this point is engaging the body. Projects that have more time – at least two months of workshops are necessary due to the time, discussion, and exploration necessary -- might develop culturally specific warm-ups, such as a “Ritual Preparation”, which will be outlined below.

With a fully engaged the body, the development of the psychophysical self in a group can germinate. In a sense, the group begins to consciously “dialogue” bodily with one another with a unity of action linked by rhythm establishing a shared space and purpose. Shared physicality being a way to establish psychophysical, emotional and experiential connections functioning much in the same way that shared physicality connects members of sports teams. The psychophysical dialogue is not just between the active participants but also serves to connect to the predecessors of culturally specific movements, much in a way that rugby or football players across generations share an experience articulated by a vocabulary of emotionally endowed movements. In a culturally charged context the active participant is ultimately participating in and sharing a vocabulary of movements that reveal more significant if not foundational cultural values thereby connecting them to a greater sense of self. In this way shared movement becomes a sort of ether in which the active participant communes beyond the temporal – much in a way a Roman Catholic priest, through their ritualized communion movements, communes with their spiritual and mythical antecedents. For many performance traditions, movement does not induce the spirit to be present but is rather the manifestation of the spirit’s and a culture’s presence (Riley, 1997, p. 210).

In my method, we proceed with a series of exercises with the goal of getting performers to express the body languages and cultural vocabularies of their daily lives. These exercises are presented without the scrutiny or pressures of “performing.” Nonetheless, they provide a way of easing into the act of performance, serving much like the sociodramatic warm-up exercises of Sternberg and Garcia noted elsewhere in this volume. These exercises identify an important underlying principle, namely that everything the group needs to know already exists within them—that they are living containers and conveyors of a culture’s text. Again, the starting point is simple and non-threatening, a half step from the quotidian. Walking is basic to all human beings—how we walk on and connect and relate with our part of the earth determines all that follows.

MOVEMENT IN SPACE

Performers are asked to move easily, in their everyday walking manner, in the space. Gradually they are asked to increase their pace and to intermingle, crossing each other's paths without making physical or eye contact. The performers are asked to increase their walking into a jog, then a run. Always avoid physical and eye contact, always intermingle and cross each other's paths. On occasion remind the performers not to become predictable in their pattern of movement. Ask them to change directions on several occasions. Increase the movement to as fast as the performers can run. Always avoid physical and eye contact. Then slow the run gradually down to a return to their normal, everyday walk.

EXERCISE VARIATIONS: 1) Ask the performers--while running--to get as close as they can to other performers without touching. Ask performers, when they seem to be getting into a movement

pattern, to turn to their right, their left, turn around. 2) Side coaching, ask the performers to move as inspired by a variety of emotions allowing time for each emotional way of walking to be explored: “Move with strength...with fear...with love...power...confusion spiritual, ...” etcetera as the setting, personalities, and objectives dictate. 3) Side coaching, ask the performers to move as inspired by a variety of physicalizations of body part leadings: leading with the forehead...the chest...the stomach...chin...knees...genitals...nose...eyes, etcetera. Allow time for each body part leading exploration with side coaching asking performers to be aware of how leading with various parts of their body adjust how they walk, their attitude towards others, what sort of personality is evoked by walking and leading in such a way, and what their body is holding. Whenever one part of the body leads another part of the body compensates by holding. The combination of the leading and holding creates an altered and unique walking rhythm. If appropriate, performers are asked to observe three different walks of people from daily life and to bring those observations to the group through their body. The performers are asked to identify and explore what each of the three observed people are leading with, holding, and the unique rhythm of their walk. Each of the walks is then presented in the group at large. This exercise augments the work’s psychophysical approach, develops observational, expressive, and transformational skills, and significantly identifies how their local community and culture is a resource.

Evolutions of the walking exercise series vary according to objectives, circumstances, and group dynamics. The theme of walking, like the theme of the circle, becomes an oft repeated motif elaborated as the

work progresses towards performance. In this way the organizing structure is consistent and expressive of return, evolution in increments, and deepening group confidence, all of which reflexively reaffirm the work of the individuals as they create community. It should be noted that although both the circle and walking exercises are central working themes, they are meant to be augmented and elaborated with a composite of other explorations such as vocal exploration, musical work, imagination building, storytelling, skills sharing, physical training, and ensemble building. The limited purview of this paper can only suggest working methods and approaches. As an example, a continuation of the walking theme might include:

MOVING WITH OTHERS

Ask the group to walk easily in the space. Ask them to walk avoiding others. Then to walk with others for a moment, but then peel off and walk with another. Walk with another and try to adapt as quickly as possible imitate and harmonize their walking rhythm. Ask them to find another person and adjust to their walk--paying close attention to the other's rhythm, stride, way of walking, and attitude, what they lead with and what they hold. Adjusting to one another, they evolve to walking in synch with one another.

Walking the same, capturing as many aspects of one other's walk as possible. Walking as one. Ask the performers to change their walk radically--to an extreme--and then do as above, find the way to walk, as one with its extreme. Introduce, or ask them to find a different situation, attitude, objective, situation, whatever to motivate this radical change in their walk. The situation can be a cultural or socially specific event, condition, a local geography, and/or a situation from a mythology or traditional story. Augment and vary according to objectives and/or observations.

WALKING MINDFULNESS

Performers are asked to establish a slow, methodical, walking meditation. While they walk they are to maintain complete silence, with no verbal or gestural communication, not even eye contact. An initial 20-minute meditation period might be repeated or evolve into 40 minutes, an hour or more, depending on need and circumstances. A meditative session need not necessarily be all walking and may include standing still, occasional sitting, and observing; however, the performer must maintain mindfulness and attempt to free themselves of daily concerns. No side coaching and the facilitator participate in the exercise as well. Encourage performers to let whatever thought come to them as it may and that they should not try to guide the way or what they are thinking. Simply let the thoughts occur. The walking meditation can occur indoors or out, in the woods, a field, or a combination of indoors and outdoors. It is important that the environment be quiet and undisturbed. Advise performers to attempt to maintain their sense of mindfulness for whatever they are doing throughout the balance of the rehearsal and their day. The exercise helps establish a sense of self and an ability amongst the group to establish a new level of co-existence, a co-existence not based on social or verbal interaction.

GIFTING AND SKILLS EXCHANGE

Once the frame of fundamental working methods are established the process of the work shifts to a phase I call “gifting.” When working within the context of another culture (indigenous or not), there must be an assessment of what performance languages, expressions, and

vocabularies already exist in the group. However, beyond the obvious and practical field examination of living expressions, such skills exchanges establish an essential theme of a different interaction, namely, exchange and giving. Fundamental to many indigenous cultures is the notion of gifting, which is consistent—in my view—with living with an earth that has given everything to humans. In many of the cultures I have experienced, the proper response is for humans, in turn, to give of themselves and/or their goods to keep the world in balance. For the Inupiat Eskimo, wealth was marked by how much a person was able to give away, a tradition of the Kiviq, the Eagle–Wolf Messenger Feast, which is celebrated to this day in Barrow, Alaska. One could argue that the entire feast is predicated on gifting and exchange. Essentially, the story goes, the Eagle Mother gave humans the drum and rhythm, the wolves taught humans how to dance and live on the land, and the best way to repay them—because humans benefit greatly and are part of the cycle—is to exchange gifts. Gift exchange is simultaneously a material, communal, and spiritual act—to make the Eagle Mother happy and give thanks to the wolves, and give gifts to one another (Riccio, 2003, p. 49). It is not about the object, it is about the spirit of giving, return, and being part of something larger than self.

Lewis Hyde elaborates on the act of giving and exchange as a blending of spirit, material object, and way of being in the world.

Although these wider spirits are part of us, they are not “ours”; they are endowments bestowed upon us. To feed them by giving away the increase they have brought us is to accept that our participation in them brings with it an obligation to preserve their vitality [...] For where we maintain no institutions of positive reciprocity, we find ourselves unable to participate in those ‘wider spirits’ [...] unable to enter gracefully into nature, unable to draw

community out of the mass, and, finally, unable to receive, contribute toward, and pass along the collective treasures we refer to as culture and tradition. Only when the increase of gifts moves with the fit may the accumulated wealth of our spirit continue to grow among us, so that each of us may enter, and be revived by, a vitality beyond his or her solitary powers (Hyde, 1983, p. 38-39).

In my work, no two cultural settings are comparable. In order to become acquainted with a particular culture, I will ask the group is to simply have a *show and tell*—with each giving something they know to the group. In Zambia, for instance, the workshop I conducted included performers that were Western trained and urban, many of who were earning a living performing community theatre plays sponsored by international NGOs. Such plays might dramatize, for example, HIV/AIDS prevention, hygiene, political corruption, and/or FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) for an audience of rural villagers. The Zambia workshop also included traditional performers who had no theatre experience, but were tradition bearers, such as mask dancers, drummers, and storytellers from a variety of ethnic groups. The two-week workshop I conducted in Lusaka as was a prelude to a six-week performance development period, included nearly forty participants, some of them traditional “enemies”) from thirty-two ethnic groups throughout the country. The objective of our work was to demonstrate how all of the diverse ethnic groups comprised the nation of Zambia. The Western trained, urban actors had little or no exposure to traditional performance of any sort, while, the others had experience only in their own performance traditions or those of surrounding groups. For this project, skills exchange was imperative. In the context of ethnic divisions which constitute a root problem in much of sub-Saharan Africa, such a diversity of traditions

performing together on a national tour proved to be a vivid demonstration of national unity, healing, and understanding.

In the beginning of our work, the group needed to learn to give to one another in order to give to their community—the spirit of giving needed to be central to the enterprise.

Moving the Zambian group from the exploration of personal rhythms into cultural rhythms was easily achieved, as it was easy for group members with strong ethnic performance traditions to give their dances, songs, and rhythms to the larger group. This practical skills exchange created an expressive and expanding vocabulary for the group at large. However, it is important to note that in terms of working methods and spirit within the group, this practice amplified the process of community and place building as it re-awakened traditional gifting values. Those performers from urban areas, many of who were deficient in their own traditional performance expressions, offered theatre and acting exercises. Interestingly, as the Western trained actors, who initially looked down upon the rural participants, became involved in the exchange, they developed a healthy respect for the cultural knowledge held by others. Skill sharing proved to be a great equalizer as the gifting created social bonding much like it does in traditional communities (Hyde, 1983, p. 47-49) Also, within the context of skills and gift exchange, inherited ethnic issues (some groups were traditional “enemies”) were identified and openly discussed.

All of the skill exchanges, gifting (facilitated by various gifting exercises) and discussion took place within the group circle, which was becoming a shared and endowed space of exchange and openness. In working with several ethnic groups in Zambia, many of which had a history of inter-tribal and ethnic conflict, gift and skill exchange was a necessary starting point. Group-wide skills exchanges of dances, stories and personal histories were a starting point. From this evolved

discussions as to why certain groups were historically in conflict, which went far to dispel pre-conceived notions, assumptions, and prejudices. The ability to openly discuss what was formerly left unspoken went far to establish a group openness and trust. Those participants with historical “enemies” in the group were then asked to make an offering in the form of a gift to their “enemy”. The group circled as traditional enemies exchanged songs, dances, and apologies.

From this spirit of openness, the group resolved that ethnic strife had held Zambia back and, as artists, they now saw themselves as leaders who had an opportunity to contribute to the healing of ethnic differences by demonstrating that they were all Zambians. As the performance developed, that theme was evolved and linked to a traditional legend, which showed how they were created as one people and led astray by greed, fear, and pettiness. As a gesture of camaraderie those who were “traditional enemies” taught each other their traditional dances and portrayed the tribe of their former enemy in a performance that resulted in a nation-wide tour. The performance, which toured throughout the nation (often times to thousands of spectators gathered in fields and marketplaces), evoked the intended response from performers, audiences, and press alike, all of whom saw the process as demonstrating a new, enlightened perception of self and nationhood.

The performance is inspired by a Lozi creation myth, however elements of dance, ceremony, mask performances, and song from several other tribes such as the Bemba, Luvale, Chewa, Ngoni, Tonga, Tumbuka, and Soli have been incorporated into the performance. ‘Imipashi’ re-imagines Zambia’s rich recourses in mythology, songs, dance, ritual, and ceremonial practice to

create a ritual performance today. Actors, dancers, and traditional performers from throughout the country are in the cast of the production representing several Zambian cultural traditions [...] The performance, using traditionally inspired performance language, explores the collapse of traditional values in modern Zambia. The story continues with the evolution of a renewed cultural awareness and creative spirit of a renewed cultural spirit that ultimately establishes a new hope for a modern, multicultural Zambia (Tembo, 16 April 1994, p. 18).

Within the context of skills exchange and gifting, I in turn, gifted a variety of theatrical exercises from my tradition of performance expression. What and how the exercises are introduced depend on the expressed interest of the group (which is openly discussed as well as my perceived needs. With nearly thirty years experience of working in the field of performance training and creation in a wide variety of settings and cultural contexts, I draw on what I know and intuit, adjusting or creating new exercises that serve the group's needs and objectives. It should be stressed that throughout the entire process, the work is discussed and reflected upon openly, its rationale outlined, and exercises explained and assessed in order to further share and make the work transparent. My intention supercedes the discussion of a particular process; in addition, I want the participants to learn to share the process and create possibilities of working. An essential goal of my process is to empower participants to understand and, if they so choose, continue and elaborate on the work in their own way.

SPACE

All the work previously discussed is prelude. Having established the body as a reference point in space, with themes of circle, rhythm and gifting established, the work now begins to focus on extending and/or projecting self—mind, body, voice and action—into articulated imaginative, cultural, and creative spaces. If space is created by the ability to move, then movements, which are often directed toward or repulsed by others and objects, are what give space dimension and begin the process of the creation of place (Tuan, 1977, p. 12). I view place as the systemization of interactions and relationships resulting in the concretization of meaning and value.

Like concentric circles, the work expands outwardly revolving around the central themes of body-cycle-rhythm-walking. From this the work moves into the orientation of the body through the identification, exploration and articulation of space, others, and objects. Below are examples (selected from hundreds of options) to indicate how the work might evolve. The work is always shaped by particular circumstances and objectives. The process is overlapping and circular, intertwined with discussion, free play and improvisation, as well other exercises applied as deemed appropriate. All of the exercises within this paper were developed and refined in response to particular circumstances and are adjusted as needed. All have been applied in a variety of cultural and social settings and have proved resonant and adaptive.

SPOT JOURNEY

PART ONE: Performers are asked to identify a spot, any spot or mark, on the opposite wall or side of the room. The performer is asked to concentrate on the spot and then to move as slowly as humanly possible toward the spot. Movement towards the spot should be as quiet as possible. No vocalizations. If the performer is crossing the room and another performer comes between them

and their spot they should maintain their concentration and their movement towards the spot. They must move towards their spot as if it is the most important thing in the world. The slow movement will bring the performer to an awareness of how their body parts move and how the body shifts balance at such a slow pace. This is also a concentration exercise that blends movement and mind as a sort of meditation. The slow movement towards the simple and single objective becomes a metaphor and a journey that brings patience, endurance, and life's progression into awareness. Once the performer arrives as close as they can to their spot they are to stand facing it with eyes closed, breathing in through their nose and out through their mouth. If some performers are moving too quickly side coach and encourage them to slow down. Once three or four performers arrive at their spots ask them to turn (with eyes still closed) and then open their eyes. Ask these performers to identify the first spot that they see on the opposite side of the room or wall, and again move towards it as slowly as possible.

PART TWO: Ask the performers to vocalize as they move towards their spot. Ask the performers to begin first with low breathing sounds or hums then to increase vocalizations (if they so choose) to reveal their increased anticipation/emotional development as they approach their spot. Once arriving at the spot they are to "sing" or vocalize in celebration of achieving their goal/objective.

PART THREE: As the performer arrives at their spot and has "sung" in celebration of their reaching their objective, ask them to shut their eyes and to continue to sing. Once the majority of the calls/workshop performers have reached their spots (there will be some variance in travel speeds) have them turn in to the room

and allow their "song" to go within. Then ask the performers to open their eyes and to identify another performer across the room as their next objective. Ask the performers to move slowly towards that person as slowly as possible and to slowly develop a vocalization that responds to how they feel about that person and their journey towards that person. Some performers will move slower than others, this is fine. When the slower moving performers are ready to turn into the room have them likewise identify a person across the room and to begin moving towards them with their journey vocalization. Once the performers have journeyed across the room and have arrived at their destination, face-to-face with other performer(s), ask them to close their eyes and vocalize or "sing" together. Suggestions such as "singing" a song of arrival, journey, destination, or hope are usually good suggestions. At this point in the exercise sequence the performers are more focused and sensitized to their ability to express self through vocalizations.

PART FOUR: *This section is optional.* Its use should be determined by how well the above three sections have progressed and whether or not the vocalizations want to evolve further. Ask the performers to move slowly and combine with other groups of vocalizing performers. Once with a larger group the performers should close their eyes and continue to vocalize. Ask the performers to evolve a collective song of destiny, hope, or arrival. A song of collective journey is also an evocative choice. The exercise may conclude with all of the workshop performers combining to create a larger "song" or vocal composition. The use of words and identifiable language should be avoided because of its tendency to take the performer out of the instinctual mode and into an intellectual, and self-censoring mode.

THREE MOVEMENTS

Partners are asked to present three movements each for a total of six movements. The three movements may be anything they think is interesting. Each partner must be able to do the other's movements. Generally a short period of time is allowed for the movements—3 minutes at the most. The partners then present their movements to the larger group. Generally the movements presented are very telling, indicating pre-occupations and often culturally or socially specific indications. When the movements are present the facilitator gives no comment or judgment. After all partner grouping have shown their 6 movements, they are asked to develop the movements into a scenario. Advise the performers to allow the movements to suggest a scenario organically. The movements may repeat and can be in whatever order that best serves the scenario. The scenario need not make logical or narrative sense. Each of the partners must do each of the six movements at least once in the course of the scenario. Sound may be added during this second round or saved for a third round of development. Again, the scenarios are presented before the larger group. As the next developmental step, sound may be added or even dialogue. I have used the above exercise as a way to initiate performance development on a low-risk, small scale with a variety of groups. It is also a good way to loosen the performers up creatively and to assess a group's creative abilities performance vocabularies—drawing from self and the spaces they inhabit to create something new.

EXERCISE ALTERNATIVES: The above is often applied as an introduction to the process of performance development. Once the process of the Three Movements exercise is made familiar it

can be applied again. The second application asks the performer (no partners) to select three movements. However, the three movements must respond to the following: one is cultural, one is personal, and one is spiritual. (The movements requested may vary according to need, context, and objectives). In this variation of the exercise the performer presents the movements to the group. From this the process of Ritual Preparation (noted below) development takes place. The process of the three movements in this variation of the exercise provides the raw material by which to begin exploring, discussing, and developing the group's unique Ritual Preparation. It is important not to indicate the objective of the Three Movement exercise; otherwise group members have a tendency to serve the result rather than the immediate objective.

When applied in mixed cultural or Western theatre workshop settings, participants overwhelmingly referred to Greek-style, classical, heroic body mythology, archetypes and arrangements in response to 'traditional' movements. This was a starting point. One must start with what is familiar. As I asked the performers to investigate their movements further, to explore their origins and archetypes, deeper meanings began to emerge. In a workshop given at the Karamu House (intercity Cleveland) an African-American group began to uncover the mythology of movement relating to archetypes of slavery, Pentecostal belief, inner city life, and tribalism. In a workshop Krakow, Poland, several women began to discover the body mythology of traditional male-female relationships and social-cultural-historical gender roles. The exploration of gender roles, which was not an objective of the workshop, evolved when the participants were asked to play the opposite gender. The passivity of the women played by men and the aggressiveness of the men played by women, immediately struck a cord highlighting a

disparity of perceptions and gender roles. Following this thread and continuing the playing of opposite genders, the work evolved into scenario building exercise. At first the exercise focused on a contemporary domestic scene and then stepped back generationally until the time of their grandparents. Aspects of various scenarios were collapsed into one emblematic collective memory scene for each generation. These emblematic scenes played out with participants adding detail and even side coaching as the scenarios unfolded which added a collectively experienced sense to the exploration. This unexpected turn of events was a revelation which re-defined the workshop objectives and shaped the course of all subsequent work, which went on to explore gender issues and their relation to sexual and emotional abuse in a changing Polish society. One cannot anticipate what the process will provoke or reveal; it is essential that the facilitator be alert and responsive. The group speaks in a multi-leveled way; it must be attended with the totality of the facilitator's being; it is intuited as much as it is thought. To apprehend through one's body, to be present and intensely observant: those are the goals for the workshop leader so that the necessary information can reveal itself.

The advantage of working somatically with other bodies exploring space is that the body does not lie. Initially, a performer's body may need to uncover layers of inhibition and self-image but, ultimately, through the establishment of trust and the use of playful exercises, bodily expressions will become increasingly uncensored and often reveal deep-seated personal, social, and cultural expressions. I believe that Learning to read the body in its interactions, patterns and relationships to others, emotions, and spontaneously emerging reactions, will reveal far more essential information about a person and group than verbal statements. Performance can serve as a protective and positive container for the exploration, discussion, remediation, and expression of

deeply seated personal and group issues. Performance makes visible the invisible spaces that live in and between people. The ability to recognize and shape these spaces for the will and good of the greater whole is the essence of the facilitator's work.

Social and cultural role models are the performative mnemonics of what humans consider normal in human interaction. Our behaviors are built on the behavior patterns of those who preceded us and reveal the social and cultural ways of living and surviving in the world. The need for performance lives in the dissonance between socially and culturally inscribed roles and behaviors.

In our daily lives, we perform variations of what was performed before, what Richard Schechner (Schechner, 2002, p. 22) calls "twice behaved" or "restored behaviors" and scripted what Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1959, p. 28) referred to as the "presentation of self in everyday life." For Jung, the archetype was fundamental to identity, an individual's life script, and what he called a "psychic organ present in all of us" (Jung, 1998, p. 11). "Since the archetype is the unconscious precondition of every human life, its life, when revealed, also reveals the hidden, unconscious ground-life of every individual" (Jung, 1998, p. 38). The individual's archetype was for Jung only the beginning of corresponding thought forms—in myth, laws, social, cultural, political, religious, economic patterns" (Jung, 1998, p. 40).

Today, archetypes are often derided as being simplistic and reductive, a betrayal of the complexity of the modern understanding of complex personality and identity. Mindful of this, my work with archetypes is meant to be another tool and a complimentary exploration that touches on vital, fundamental mechanisms and templates of cultural experience. The process of how the indigenous cultures, which hold and enact primarily through physical manifestations of form, differs in means but not intent, from the Western cultural perspective, which valorizes the

disembodied-idealized Platonic priori as a cultural and archetypal touchstone.

The world of the archetypes of Jung is like the Platonic world of Ideas, in that the archetypes are impersonal and do not participate in the historical Time of the individual life, but in the Time of the Species--even of organic Life itself (Eliade, 1959, p. 54)

While working in urban (indigenous and mixed cultural contexts) I have often applied a variety of archetypal explorations to identify, explore, and evolve cultural and social roles. Within the archetype lives the incarnate reference—a historically honed pattern of social/cultural behavior—by which all humans model, compare, and contrast their own behavior.

CULTURAL ARCHETYPE STUDY

Ask the performers to choose an archetype specific to their culture—when working with indigenous people physical manifestations of archetypes are usually derived from dance, ritual, mythology, and daily behaviors. The sources will vary according to cultural context. Some examples applied in previous workshops: Odin, Raven, Coyote, Krishna, Zulu warrior, and hunter. Side coaching, the performer is asked to develop the archetype's movement and walk. Define the rhythm of the archetype. The way of moving: Sharp? Curved? How is the body aligned? Bent? Straight. Where does the archetype's energy come from? Where is their center? What part of the body do they lead from? What is their attitude towards the world? Are they happy? Sad? Angry? Explore a variety of emotions. What is it that attracts you to the archetype? How are you similar? Different? What comforts you about the archetype? Frightens you? Add and

subtract questions according to need and the archetypes revealed. There should be no advanced preparation or research for the study. The performers should work out of what they know. If their images and ideas about the archetypes are vague ask them to expand and extrapolate from what they know. Research and more in depth explorations might evolve if you choose to develop the exploration. The exercise is meant to explore the archetypes that attract the performers. Several different archetype explorations may occur in one session. The facilitator should note those archetypes that have a special connection with the individual performers. This exercise provides a psychophysical foundation from which performance and/or characters may develop.

The globalization of media has shown us that archetypal character modeling becoming increasingly prevalent in popular culture and thus relevant to the exploration of our emerging culture. Globalization has a tendency to level and essentialize human social interactions, and with the dominance of American (Hollywood driven) narratives and characters, Western dramaturgy and characterizations are disproportionally dictating the sense and shape of the new world narrative. Witness the international success (and recognition) of American films and video games (and their characters) such as *Rambo*, *Spiderman*, *Batman*, and *Star Wars* and the international dissemination of television programs such as *Bay Watch* and *Friends*. In response, I have been able to apply archetypal explorations enabling performers to develop an awareness of their own performance of self in relation to acculturated archetypes. By exploring and articulating archetypes, the performers are able to step outside of self to examine fundamental human role models macrocosmically. In so doing, the performer

considers self not only in a social-cultural perspective but also in terms of media, advertising, and other popular influences. Archetypes are the deep-structures of all cultures and mythologies, the agent-avatars, container-propagators of the inherited cultural patterns that shape our world. Paradoxically, perhaps, in our age of globalization the archetype is making a resurgence in popular entertainment in video games and the action movie, which simplify plot, character, and themes along archetypal lines. This may be a result of the need to simplify and essentialize, a sort of cut through today's welter of images and information to create a broadly outlined expression. Or it may be reflective of a return to basics, a settling in, a return to something fundamental and authentic to serve the creation of a new global mythology. In an uncertain and transformational time, reviving and repeating an archetype appears to be reassuring as it reiterates and reaffirms shared cultural-social spaces. Whatever the underlying motivations, archetype and myth are concomitant vessels that structure, maintain, and propagate cultures and social order.

Archetypes, impressions of ever-repeated typical experiences, at the same time, they behave empirically like agents that tend towards the repetition of these same experience...for when an archetype appears in a dream, in a fantasy or in life, it always brings with it a certain influence or power by virtue of which it either exercises a numinous or a fascinating effect, or impels to action (Jung, 1998, p. 78).

My more recent archetypal explorations (with mixed and non-indigenous groups, among them the Chicago Director's Lab in 2008) have included: the Lover, the Hero, the Warrior, the Outlaw, the Innocent, the Explorer, the Ruler, the Magician, the Jester, the Caregiver, the Creator, and the Sage. These explorations are centered

on defining the archetype through a series of questions and psychophysical responses/explorations. The questions are:

What is your core desire?

What is your goal?

What is your fear?

What is your strategy?

What is your gift?

Side coaching suggests some basic attributes of each archetype. The archetype of the Explorer, for example has brought the following characteristics: desire, freedom to explore the self with the goal of experiencing a more authentic and fulfilling life; the fear of being trapped in emptiness, nonbeing; the strategy of embarking on a journey to seek out new things; the trap of aimless wandering, the possibility of becoming a misfit; the gift of autonomy, of the ambition to become and remain true to one's own soul.

I have found, in my experience with a variety of Western and non-Western groups, that archetypal work reawakens as it retraces deeply seated social and cultural behavioral patterns that are at the heart of an individual's personality and identity. I have found that archetypal work reveals to the participant an opening toward self-analysis. Primary modes of behavior and identity passed on through myths, stories, and social-cultural signifiers can be enacted. It is sort of a rebooting, enabling the participant to see his or her self in a mythic, trans-historical, and often trans-cultural perspective.

Eliade (1959, p. 34) wrote that archetypes reveal a striving to transcend one's own local, provincial history and to recover some "Great Time." In the "ritual origins and mythological structure of the drama or the film, there is still the important fact that these are two kinds of spectacle that make us live in time of a quality quite other than that of

‘secular duration’, in a temporal rhythm, at once concentrated and articulated, which, apart from all aesthetic implication, evokes a profound echo in the spectator (Eliade, 1959, p. 35).

A student in a Drama Therapy course at the California Institute of Integral Studies commented on the effectiveness of the archetype work in one of my classes,

In the process of taking on qualities of the archetypal role of the Shaman, I may experience being called to express the collective grief of my urban community. When I lead a drama therapy group and we work with the issue of alienation, this is the urban version of the indigenous performer expressing the collective quest balance in his performance. The shamanic role of community healer and guide is called up from the individual psyche in response to the need in the collective. [...] If actor and director are attuned to the Shamanic archetype, and are supported in embodying the role, the healing that is in the air and right for the moment will be expressed in performance (Ray, 12 December 1995)

Cultural and archetypal explorations lead to the articulation of a performance vocabulary from which subsequent performance explorations derive. The establishment of a vocabulary is an important step in reiterating and reaffirming a group’s shared and collective identity. Such a vocabulary—which represents the braiding of the physical, vocal, emotional, mythological, intellectual, and psychological ways of being in the world—serves as a focused wellspring for the group. The vocabulary is, in essence, a series of bundled codes, dense mnemonics that are worked elements outlining a psychophysical way of being in the world. The interactive use of such a vocabulary is

individually, socially, and culturally affirming, reestablishing disparate elements as a system and reconstructing a commonly held sense of place. I have found that this system charges elements (both new, old, and re-imagined) with a sense of relationship and order, and in this way recreates a sense of place—the systemization of space, objects, values, relationships, and behaviors. Another, related exercise:

CREATING ELEMENTAL FORMS

Performers study one specific group of people or their own culture. The group studied may be indigenous to the group such as the Zulu or the Greenland Inuit, or Korean. The exercise may also explore the psychophysical vocabularies of sub-cultures if that is the context and objective. Such sub-groups as Pentecostal Baptist, Hindus, Catholics, Afrikaners; or even a certain type of industry or occupation: welder, auto workers, street gang members, police men; or organization: Hell's Angels, Ku Klux Klan, or suburbanites. The study should be limited to those groups that can be studied in person and/or by way of field research and/or media/video. There must be ample performative records to engage in the study. Using performed actions as the point of focus for the study, the performer is asked to identify, examine, and define those movements, gestures, vocalizations, objects, and use of space that are typical and specific to the group of study. Written and video notation is recommend in addition to the performers physical interaction with the group's movements. The performer should attempt to understand the movement in terms of it origin and reference. Questions specific to the culture or sub-culture studied need to be addressed. This study is being presented as both a demonstration and talk of the movements meaning and origins. The study can provide the basis of a performance language from which a performance or

performance style may evolve. This exercise has been particularly useful assisting indigenous people (that have been urbanized or removed from their original land and lifestyle) to revisit and examine their own culture and traditions through their movements. Many movements from an indigenous culture survive urbanization and location removal, however an understanding of origin and original function are lost or transformed. The exercise is a building block for defining and evolving a performance vocabulary. Combining and reinventing the new and old to create a performance expression that is reflective and conducive to the culture it bespeaks.

PLACE AND THE RITUAL PREPARATION

Bodily movements, gestures, actions, and vocalizations, combined with rhythm, create a sort of coded, hieroglyphic expression of a culture or sub-culture. Unbundled, their charged meanings reveal a living sense of the culture, its place and worldview. To participate in, and express self through, a coded language is to actively, corporally, and intimately live the culture. For marginalized indigenous groups, such an iteration and participation is reaffirming and empowering for it is a psychophysical model of their way of being in the world. In my experience, because it is an expression of their culture, the work serves a social/cultural therapeutic value. But the identification and manifestation of social/culturally specific element ultimately requires a completion, in my view: namely the systemization of the excavated performance expressions. The performers need to make it their own by re-engaging and re-configuring the performance elements, a living example of a culture's vitality. A performance produced by this process can serve as a demonstrable project that the group has created, a participatory

process which, in turn, allows the greater community, as audience, can join..

The reaction of a Yup'ik Eskimo audience member demonstrates how one of the participants—having negotiated the multiple spaces of his modern and traditional world—was able to enter the place of performance, a place of understanding, change, and healing.

I was raised in Dillingham during the 1940s and 50s and I went to B.I.A. (Bureau of Indian Affairs) schools. It was during a period where Yup'ik speaking children were being punished very much for speaking their native languages in school. So, what was going on in the play was something that I had experienced first-hand, myself, and from seeing from that point of view. It was something that I never really understood and I always felt really badly for my friends who were always very punished and humiliated for just speaking their native language. So, during that transition period, a lot of things are set in motion that still are reverberating in Alaskan culture today. I think that taking a play, like Tuma Theatre's *Qayaq*, where people can see, is very helpful to people. Because a lot of what happened to native Alaskan people is not easily described in words or at an academic level. But I think what happened in the play is very easily understood by any person from their heart and their spirit (Hooper 3 March 1991).

The process of Ritual Preparation becomes the group's microcosmic diagramming of place with the goal of public performance. The exercise of creating Ritual Preparation serves to organize previously identified and explored performative elements into a working system, an affirmative act uniting self and culture. In so doing, Ritual

Preparation becomes a site of cultural and personal renewal, blending creativity, participation, and cultural inheritance as an affirmation of self, group, the larger community and their way of being in the world. Like any ritual, the performance can serve as an entry point into a timeless, metaphoric, and culturally inscribed reality. Becoming a pathway and touchstone, The participants step out of a contemporary, Western-influenced world and “re-boot” their worldview by reawakening their rhythms, performance language, and community to prepare for the work that follows. All the elements, all the spaces, all the participants coalesce in the place of performance.

I have applied the Ritual Preparation in a variety of indigenous and non-indigenous settings—with Alaska Natives, in Zambia, with the Zulu, Korea, the Sakha of Siberia, a Slavic group in St. Petersburg, and with a variety of folk and multi-cultural groups in Europe and the United States—all with positive results. Ritual Preparation represents the action of systemizing and enlivening performative elements. Such an event can only be accomplished by the agency of the performer in the present tense—whereby the spirit and imagination of the performer becomes a synapse connecting and invigorating otherwise inert elements.

Ritual Preparation becomes a system that organizes and contains all the spacial/rhythmical/somatic/conceptual elements heretofore shared and explored by the group. In essence it becomes a sub-cultural forum—a sequence of events and actions not unlike the time-honored performance formations created by shamanic practices (often codified by their traditions) in evidence worldwide. My experience as a field researcher of shamanic and ritual healing practices in a variety of cultures—Sakha (Siberia), Zulu, Miao and Yao (China), Korea, and !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen (lower Kalahari)— has led to the identification of a similarity of pattern, method, and function among shamanic healing rituals. These deep structure similarities are the inspiration and model to

which the Ritual Preparation refers. My role as facilitator is not unlike that of the traditional shaman whose primary function is “to create a state of interaction, to bring out both his own task as mediator and also the role of the supernormal figures in the ritual performance” (Siikala, 1978, p. 28). The ultimate goal of a shamanic ritual event enables communication and creates a state of interaction between this world and another world. Ritual Preparation accesses culturally encoded wellsprings (Riccio, 2003, p. 13). Fundamentally, such an action demands that participants join in the art of social role-changing, a transformation that often entails ecstatic role taking techniques enabled by rhythmic drumming, singing/chanting, and dancing (codified movements) that bring on a gradual alteration of consciousness induced by sensory stimulation that opens the gates include working at a deep psychological level (Siikala, 1978, p. 43). The system of group and culturally derived actions creates a state of consciousness molded by many factors, among them: external stimuli, personal expectation and motives, social, cultural and situational demands and elements connected with the inherited psychophysical make-up of the participant.

Ritual Preparation begins once initial walking, using patterns such as the Three Movements exercise noted above as well as cultural vocabulary exercises have been established. The process often takes weeks to develop and, like many traditional rituals, dances and culturally specific expressions, draws on a vocabulary related to place-specific geography, climate, animals, and elements, which explore spiritual belief, social/cultural expression and organization and function within a their cultural context. Like any living language new expressions are created, adjusted and evolved according to need.

RITUAL PREPARATION

Each performer is asked to bring to the group three movements they deem cultural, traditional, and/or spiritual (such definitions

often overlap in an indigenous cultural context). The three movements are presented to the group and often some movements individually presented will be similar. When working with Alaska Natives many movements were derived from social dances, local and subsistence hunting significant animals (e.g. raven, walrus, eagle), actions (e.g. spearing a seal or ice floe hopping) and spiritual belief (e.g. praising the owner of the universe, Stimuli). Depending on the size of the group there can be a few dozen movements presented. The facilitator then leads the group in a discussion to determining how to begin the preparation. Listening to the movement and its meaning is essential as is associating a sound or rhythm to the action. Ritual Preparation elements have only a half-life without a rhythm. The use of rhythm, either internalized, vocalized in chant and song or pounded out percussively, are what bring the movements to life. As in indigenous ritual and dance traditions, the rhythm is difficult to perform without implicating a performative action and vice versa—they are inseparable and indistinguishable.

STICKS

To heighten rhythm awareness, bringing its vibration into the body, sticks (18 to 24 inches long) can be given to each performer—or an exercise of acquiring and personalizing sticks can be initiated. The idea is to bring each performer into rhythmic contact and participation. The use of the sticks was inspired by the traditional Yup'ik Eskimo dance sticks, which traditionally richly decorated and used as a baton in which the spirit of the rhythm lived. In addition to the performers being able to participate in the beat by variously beating one against the other or against the floor, sticks also served as a prop that could

variously transform into a bow and arrow, a fishing pole, a kayak paddle, and bird wings among other culturally specific objects.

RHYTHM

Variations of traditionally identified rhythms are necessary to give shape, drive, and substance to the exercise. Often, concurrently developed with performed movements are vocal chants and song, which like the movements and drumbeat were pulled from the established cultural vocabulary. Though many chant sounds have no literal meaning, they nonetheless communicate a wide variety of feelings and ideas by way of vocal placements (e.g. high nasal/forehead complimented with back of the throat sounds), repetitions, and intensity changes.

The creation of Ritual Preparation is collective and full of trial and error, discussion, negotiation, give-and-take, and compromise. It demands patience and flexibility. It is the first group project, taking a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of a month. The process requires every action, rhythm, dance step, and vocalization to be understood, detailed, and coordinated with other elements. This often means that, for example, when a tribal dance step is introduced, its context needs to be explained, discussed, and learned, comparisons and similarities to other traditions noted, and then adjustments and adaptations made to suit the project's needs. The process is community-building, becoming a positive and participatory template for not only the subsequent performance work, but for the development of a creative and educational perspective of the world. The process has the goal of teaching that 1) everyone is a creator and has ownership, 2) a new-old process is revealed and experienced, 3) cultural sources are identified, 4) the narrative of the past and future is re-vitalized, and 5) a demonstrable and shared expression is completed and exists in the world. Participants have

variously described Ritual Preparation as “a healing”, as “walking with my ancestors”, and comments such as “I feel proud of who I am and my culture”, and “With it I don’t feel so alone now” abound. The work is democratic and collective in essence, which, in my work with diverse cultural settings --in post-Soviet Russia, Siberia, and post-Apartheid South Africa—can lead to a profound adjustment in former ways of thinking and participating in the world.

Ritual Preparation is a term that I coined when the processes I used originally invariably resulted in ritual-like behaviors (hence the name). All have started with a group circle and with moments of silence before the beginning of a rhythm or chant. Below is an example from the opening sequence of a Ritual Preparation developed in Zambia which developed from experience with twenty-six different tribal/ethnic groups—and that of Tuma Theatre, an Alaska Native performance group.

ZAMBIA OPENING

Circled group, kneeling in position of reverence, both knees on the ground. A minute of silence, quiet and centering of the individuals and group. Then the simple low beat of the drum. The participants shift position as if coming alive, to one knee on the ground reverence position, then begin to clap their hands in welcoming of the spirit of performance. The drum increases and the participants convulse with the approach of the spirit of performance into their body. Their hands over their heads rise up to the sky then the movement reaches a climax. The participants wipe their feet, twice on each foot, to wipe away any evil spirit that may have followed them. Woman’s initiation dance from the Tambuka tribe, shuffle step with arms and hands in and out. The group moves counter clockwise in the circle...

ALASKA OPENING

Around the fire, the performers in a circle on their knees, eyes closed, their sticks gathered at center. From the silence the faint drumbeat is heard, increasing. Slowly the performers pull their sticks from the “fire” and begin to accompany the beat to awaken the earth. The chant begins softly and builds as it is repeated: *new-knumb nah-llun-ghit-dah ma-knee ma-knee ma-knee wee-dall-but* (spelling of Yup’ik chant is phonetic for “the earth knows that we are standing here”). The chant, drum and stick beating increase in tempo and build into a climax that transforms all of the performers into their power birds. Transforming into birds and flying the drumbeat is frantic then slows into a steady two beat each bird performing their story/dance/song. The birds return and land in a circle then stand as humans and await a signal from the drummer(s)...

Most Ritual Preparations take approximately 30-minutes in duration and are physically and vocally demanding, becoming the group’s physical, vocal, mental, cultural, and spiritual warm up for each work session. Ritual Preparations are complex and detailed expressions that communicate the values, reality, and validity of each group’s worldview. Although performance is and was not the objective, they become performances in many respects, and have been performed for the public. The Ritual Preparation established during my first year with Tuma Theater in Alaska evolved and changed over the next five years becoming a touchstone by which old and new members of Tuma could participate in a shared and continuously evolving body of shared knowledge. My work as an artist and performance creator also evolved. I essentially moved from the position of performance as the creation of an individual vision to a collective vision. My work becoming more that of a facilitator as opposed to sole author. The process presented personal

challenges and mandated adjustments that ran contrary to how I was trained and to the prevailing methods, perspectives, and expectations of Western theatre and performance. The work is not for commercial consumption and not for a wider audience but rather, like the process of performance creation and development itself, a collective and community event. Performance is simply a way of marking and finding completion. Even if no one outside the group experienced the performance—as was the case with my work with the !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen—it was nonetheless a performance no less vital to the community. In many ways the formulation of performance was in many ways a return to ritual origins, whereby a community presented itself to itself and to their community of ancestors, spirits, animals, and place.

True to its cultural inspiration and origins, the resulting performance (be it public or privately presented), like the Ritual Preparation, functions like an indigenous cultural legacy passed generationally— always remaining practical, meaningful, and alive. Not only a pathway to further performance work—for that was the practical objective but an exploration of how the body articulated and organized cultural and personal spaces, and in so doing reconstructed the place they could call home.

The proof of any ritual, system, method, process, therapy, or performance is its ability to change and enrich the lives of the individuals and their community. Wilma Brown, a Tuma Theatre group member participated in all of the exercises and explorations noted above. Wilma was a shy Inupiat Eskimo woman from the isolated village of White Mountain (population 350) when I first met her—I later learned that her brother and uncles had sexually abused her for several years. She had undergone years of individual and group therapy, but it was the retracing of ancient pathways that transformed her. In an interview with Dale Seeds

from the College of Wooster, Wilma's description of her experience provides a good summary of the effects this work can have:

Before you could understand what Tuma did for me, I think it's important for you to understand from what world I come. For some, Tuma could be fun and interesting, but it was a powerfully transforming time for me. Before I joined Tuma, I had inherent questions about my heritage and place in the universe. I grew up with drinking, drugs, gambling and abuse with a small light of hope and love from my grandparents. Going to college was my escape from tragedy. My rage propelled me through the White Man and I left my home with many questions my people could not answer for me, like where do my people come from? What are my responsibilities here? What is good and what is bad here? I was traumatized in many ways spiritually and emotionally before I joined Tuma. When I joined Tuma, I faced some of my greatest fears about who I was, what I was, what I was doing here, why I was the way I was ... why I felt like a sick person. Tuma and Tom Riccio changed me forever. My world began to open. Wrongs toward my people were being acknowledged, the power of the people who once were was being asked for, and it was safe for me to grieve and ask for myself. I was with Tuma for three years, and with every year, I grew. I was extremely shy in the beginning and harbored much hurt that I did not understand. I became empowered, confident, and learned to focus my rage in a different way. Now I am more expressive and have a deeper

understanding of what happened in my people's past
and what is happening now and what I can do about it
(Riccio, 2003, p. 7).

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