

***Karate-dō* as an Actors' Guide to Performance:  
An Exploration of Karate in Actor Training**

**Josephine Calvo**

Tutored by Prof. Frank Camilleri  
Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
PhD in Theatre Studies

Department of Theatre Studies  
School of Performing Arts  
University of Malta

September 2025



L-Università  
ta' Malta

## **University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository**

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

## Abstract

This research explores the advantages and limitations of incorporating *karate-dō* in actor training by means of (1) a comprehensive literature and practice review of the subject, (2) the identification of different categories of training and performance principles, and (3) the proposal of a practical Karate for Actor Training (KAT) programme. The research starts from the premise that if the adapted application of *karate-dō* in actor training improves a practitioner's relationship with their body, mind, and the surrounding world, then such training also benefits an actor's ability to express themselves physically and mentally during a performance. There is a lack of research directed toward theatre practitioners who wish to use Shotokan Karate for the preparation of actors in physical theatre. However, various institutions have used different martial arts as part of their theatre programmes. This research is conducted in conjunction with actor workshops to create an approach that uses *karate-dō* for actor training. The project's long-term outcome is to provide a resource and practical guide for actors.

For Santo and Lella, my parents

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Frank Camilleri, for his patience and guidance throughout the writing of this thesis. His availability, resourcefulness, and insights have consistently surpassed my expectations. I am also grateful to the Department of Theatre Studies at the University of Malta for providing the support I needed throughout my studies. My heartfelt thanks go to my friends and family, whose encouragement and steadfast support enabled me to overcome challenges along the way. Finally, I would like to thank God for providing me with the strength and perseverance I needed throughout this journey.

# Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Figures</i> .....	<i>viii</i>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>001</b>
What is Karate? .....	005
Judging a Book by Its Cover .....	013
Evil Art? .....	016
Method to the Madness .....	019
Chapter Outline .....	023
<b>Chapter 1: Martial Arts in Actor Training: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly</b>	<b>027</b>
1.1 Martial Arts Revisited: The Pros and Cons.....	027
1.1.1 Does it Work?.....	028
1.1.2 Wax On, Wax Off.....	033
1.2 Zarrilli Paves the Way.....	035
1.2.1 Becoming ‘All Eyes’ .....	036
1.2.2 It’s a Draw .....	041
1.3 Mroz’s Stepping Stones .....	045
1.3.1 Why Martial Arts? .....	046
1.3.2 Why Not? .....	051
1.4 Women to the Forefront.....	053
1.4.1 Not Everyone is Kung Fu Fighting .....	054
1.4.2 Fast as Lightning .....	058
1.5 Conclusion.....	060

<b>Chapter 2: Principles of Performance Training: The Body</b> .....	062
2.1 Organising Structures .....	062
2.2 Body .....	067
Pelvis and Torso .....	068
Feet and Legs.....	072
Hands and Arms .....	077
Face and Eyes .....	083
2.3 Breath .....	087
2.4 Rhythm and Tempo .....	091
2.5 Conclusion.....	096
<b>Chapter 3: Principles of Performance Training: The Mind</b> .....	098
3.1 Organising Thoughts .....	099
3.2 Awareness and Focus .....	101
3.3 Balance and Harmony .....	105
3.4 Ki.....	109
3.5 Meditation .....	115
3.6 Improvisation and Playfulness .....	119
<b>Chapter 4: Principles of Performance Composition</b> .....	126
4.1 Compositional Building Blocks .....	128
4.2 <i>Kihon</i> .....	133
4.3 <i>Kata</i> .....	139
4.4 <i>Kumite</i> .....	147
4.5 Creating a Performance .....	153
<b>Chapter 5: KAT Project: Framework and Practice</b> .....	164
5.1 Introducing KAT .....	167

5.2 Researcher’s Role as Practitioner-Scholar .....	171
5.3 Phase 1 Workshops .....	177
5.3.1 Structure and Execution .....	179
5.3.2 Insights and Observations.....	189
<b>Chapter 6: KAT Project: Developments, Insights, and Possibilities.....</b>	<b>198</b>
6.1 Phase 2 Workshops .....	199
6.2 Phase 3 KAT .....	214
6.3 Parries, Counterattacks, and Opportunities for Growth.....	229
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>235</b>
Of Hybrid Cultures and Practices .....	236
Limitations and Further Research .....	242
Final Reflections .....	251
<b>Glossary of Terms .....</b>	<b>255</b>
<i>Karate-dō</i> Terms .....	255
KAT Findings: Terms .....	266
KAT Findings: Phases .....	270
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>296</b>
A. Copy of Questionnaire.....	296
B. Research Ethics Consent Form.....	297

## List of Figures

1. Karate jump in <i>kata</i> known as <i>Heian Godan</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	067
2. Demonstration of <i>kata</i> known as <i>Jion</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	071
3. Demonstration of <i>kata</i> known as <i>Jitte</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	072
4. Demonstration of <i>yoko geri</i> (sidekick) (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	075
5. Demonstration of <i>mae tobi geri</i> (forward jump kick) (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	076
6. Demonstration of <i>kata</i> known as <i>Unsu</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	077
7. Demonstration of <i>Bassai Sho kata</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	080
8. Demonstration of <i>morote uke</i> in <i>kokutsu dachi</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	081
9. Demonstration of <i>empi</i> in <i>kiba dachi</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	082
10. Demonstration of <i>yama zuki</i> in <i>zenkutsu dachi</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	083
11. Demonstration of gaze placement in <i>kata</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	087
12. Demonstration of <i>gyaku zuki</i> (Josephine Calvo 2024).....	134
13. <i>Zenkutsu dachi</i> foot placement (Nakayama 1977: 30).....	137
14. White belt <i>kihon</i> table (Yale Shotokan Karate 2024a).....	138
15. Line of Movement (Funakoshi 1973: 41).....	142
16. ‘Modes of Knowing’ (Nelson 2013: 37).....	165
17. ‘The Integrated Reflective Cycle’ (Bassot 2023: 181).....	172
18. ‘ <i>Tora no Maki</i> ’ design on <i>Karate-dō Kyōhan</i> (Funakoshi 1935).....	178
19. KAT Workshop held at the Valletta Campus, University of Malta (2023).....	179
20. KAT Workshop at the Gateway Basement Studio, University of Malta (2023) ....	189
21. KAT Questionnaire Results (2023).....	196
22. Phase 2 KAT Workshop at the Happy Holidays Event Space in Mellili (2025) ....	199
23. ‘ <i>Taikyoku Shodan</i> Line of Movement’ (Funakoshi 1973: 43).....	207

## Introduction

When one looks at Hollywood actors like Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris, and Steven Seagal, one can conclude that their success ‘rests almost entirely on their martial arts skills’ (Donahue 1993: 106). Inherent in that statement, however, emerges the question of whether the knowledge of martial arts can help an actor better use the human body and mind for more than combative roles. Consequently, the present thesis evaluates incorporating the martial art of karate into an acting process by devising a tested training programme that outlines an effective method of application.

During a 1971 interview, Bruce Lee revealed how a student of martial arts demonstrates similarities with a student of acting. He argued that both potentially seek a means of expression through movement, stating:

They want to learn to express themselves through some movement, be it anger, be it determination, or whatsoever. So, in other words, what I am saying, therefore, is that he [the student] is paying me to show him in combative form the art of expressing the human body. (Minutemen 2018)

His interviewer, Pierre Berton, replied: ‘Which is acting in a sense, isn’t it? Or it would be a useful tool for an actor to have’ (Minutemen 2018).

The overlap between martial arts and acting is perhaps better understood by an account of how actor training has altered into different semblances over time. Beginning with the twentieth century, Europe and North America witnessed an important turning point in actor formation thanks to the efforts of Konstantin Stanislavski, who proposed that actors harness and develop their abilities through ‘disciplined techniques’ served by a psychologically informed approach (Hodge 2010: xvii, xx). Rather than dictate a

fossilised form of actor preparation that opposed innovative ideas, Stanislavski's process provoked those who came after him to develop their own processes, such as in the case of Vsevolod Meyerhold, who advocated what some perceive as a 'sociological' process for the actor (xx). Another noteworthy advancement in performance training occurred in the 1960s when the actor transitioned from 'interpreter of text' to 'co-deviser'. During this period, in an environment that emphasised the need for actors to develop their skills in technical approaches, practitioners like Jacques Lecoq encouraged the actor to embody the role of 'co-creator' in collaborative 'ensemble-based' settings (xxii). By the end of the twentieth century, theatre-makers like Eugenio Barba and Anne Bogart advocated practices like 'physical scoring' and 'composition work', which favoured the 'formalisation' of the actor's ability to create a performance 'with or without the director' (xxii).

Italian theatre historian Franco Ruffini describes the journey of the 'so-called Founding Fathers of the theatre of the twentieth century' as expressing 'an unalienable love of the theatre' and a resistance to representation (2014: 150). One can speculate that the openness to new ideas that accompanied advancements in actor training was what propelled the search for performance 'secrets' as far as the East. Some of the influential practitioners who threaded Eastern ideas into their work include Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht, Joan Littlewood, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Bogart (cf. Hodge 2010).

Many Eastern performance traditions that have inspired Western theatre practitioners include martial arts principles that recur in various guises in many exercises that have been adapted to the training of actors. Barba and Nicola Savarese explain that: 'If one considers traditional theatre in China and Japan such as Peking Opera and Kabuki, one again becomes aware of the strong bond between martial arts and performance in

Asia' (1991: 198). However, one will find that the influence of martial arts on performance practices is not confined to the East, for the 'relationship between theatricality and the arts linked to fight techniques has also been documented in Occidental culture since antiquity' (200). An example dating back to ancient Greece includes the *pyrrhic*, a performative dance that represented different 'phases of a battle'. Meanwhile, in mediaeval Europe we find accounts of a 'sword dance' that derived from armed and soldier dances, setting the 'basis' of 'theatrical performances' in which the 'dancers also spoke dialogue' (200).

In more contemporary times, Richard Nichols notes that: 'Judo, Okinawan karate, and various Korean forms [of martial arts]' have been featured in 'Western actor training programmes as early as the mid-1960s' (1991: 43). In regard to the effectiveness of martial arts as a form of actor training, Nichols explains that: 'There is no other experience outside of mask training that so consistently impels me toward Jacques LeCoq's [sic] "neutral state," that condition of union between economy, efficiency, and availability to change' (1991: 54). Nichols adds that if the study of martial arts 'leads only one student out of ten to a deeper understanding of the place of discipline in an artist's life, then on that basis alone' the practice demonstrates its 'worth in actor training' (1991: 55). Consequently, one may consider building upon the discoveries of those who have reaped the benefits of martial arts for performance instruction. Therefore, if actor education is permitted to evolve based on earlier findings, further investigation could unveil additional avenues for preparing the actor through martial arts.

Barba and Savarese describe one of the reasons why martial arts have inspired theatrical performance processes in that the 'concrete physiological processes' inherent in the practice 'destroy the automatism of daily life' and 'create another quality of energy in the body' composed of 'behaviours' that do not follow 'spontaneity' (1991: 197). In

other words, martial arts provide aesthetic performers like actors and dancers with alternative ways of embodied behaviour on stage. Therefore, the end product displays a commonality between martial artists and performing artists: '[a] decided body ready to leap and to act', comparable to 'an animal ready to attack or defend itself' (1991: 197). Martial arts impart how to remain 'present' and in the 'moment of action', a 'common objective' with the performer 'in spite of different results' (197). Examples of martial arts that birthed performance practices include the Indonesian art of self-defence, *Pentjak-Silat*, which sprang forth *Pentjak* dance, or the Balinese military movements known as *Baris*, which originated seven different types of dance (197).

In the case of Shotokan karate, Scott Dare describes the benefits of the practice for actors as providing an 'embodied understanding of a heightened psychophysical awareness that enhances a performer's relationship with themselves, the imagined world of performance, and the external environment of the audience and theatre' (2015: 23). Dare describes his experience teaching karate to actors as drawing 'parallels between concepts in acting discourse (i.e. stage presence and vitality) and Japanese concepts deeply ingrained in martial arts philosophy (i.e. *ki* energy and time)' (2015: 7). *Karate-dō* or the 'karate way', influences a student's physical and emotional health by teaching valuable principles such as breathing, awareness, focus, balance, stamina, endurance, memory, flexibility, tempo, rhythm, self-confidence, courtesy, integrity, humility, courage, self-control, and efficiency. Accordingly, Gichin Funakoshi, the 'Father of Modern Karate' (Martin 2007: 6), advises applying 'the way of karate to all things. Therein lies its beauty' (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 64). Since karate plays a central role in this thesis, it is important to provide some information about its history and practice.

## **What is Karate?**

The expression ‘How do you eat an elephant?’ applies to the ‘loaded’ definition of ‘karate’, granted the task is achievable ‘one bite at a time’. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* makes a valiant effort to define ‘karate’ as an ‘unarmed martial-arts discipline’ that employs ‘kicking, striking, and defensive blocking with arms and legs’, which deems ‘timing, tactics, and spirit’ ‘at least as crucial as physical toughening’ (2023b). However, the depth of ‘karate’ requires a more ample definition, better served through a combination of emic lore and etic historical contextualisation.

As much as many would like to provide elaborate details concerning the ancient origins of karate, master Gichin Funakoshi explains there is little documented evidence as to when and how this practice developed (Funakoshi 1981: 29). The mystery that shrouds the origins of karate is partially ascribed to the destruction of written records during World War II (Martin 2007: 2), and an ‘iron-clad’ ritual of secrecy’ where *kata* were only passed to the ‘very best students’ (McCarthy 1999: 48). Therefore, emic lore describes most of what one knows about the birth of the practice as attributed to legend (Funakoshi 1981: 29). Of the different hypotheses about the birth of karate, one of the most popular traces the practice to the efforts of a Buddhist monk, known as Bodhidharma, during the sixth century, who journeyed from India to the Shaolin Monastery in China, teaching monks the path to ‘enlightenment’ and ‘physical health’ (Martin 2007: 2). Speculation conveys that the martial arts training that Bodhidharma brought to the Shaolin Temple later trickled its way to Okinawa by means of trade with Southern China (Funakoshi 1981: 31), possibly as early as the Chinese Tang Dynasty, 618–906 AD (Martin 2007: 3). The martial art that most likely reached Okinawa through these dealings with China was a form of *kempo* (*quanfa* or ‘fist method’) or what

Funakoshi describes as ‘boxing’ (1981: 31), which later evolved into what we know today as ‘karate’.

In master Funakoshi’s bibliography, one finds the claim that Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) observed a ‘small kingdom’ in the ‘Far East’ that did not possess weapons (Funakoshi 1981: 30). The unarmed people that Bonaparte was said to have ‘observed’ referred to the inhabitants of the Ryukyu Islands who trained their bodies in the ways of physical combat in response to an edict banning weapons (Funakoshi 1981: 30–31). History (and not legend) dictates that Okinawa, a Ryukyu Island, underwent two decrees that prohibited the possession of any type of weapon, the first in 1429 under the Sho Dynasty and the second in 1609 by the Japanese Satsuma Clan (Martin 2007: 3). Emic lore reports these edicts as driving Okinawans to secretly practise a martial art that was initially known as ‘*Okinawate*’ or simply ‘*te*’. Speculation as to whether peasants or nobility practised *Okinawate* favours the improbability that the arduous workload of the lower class permitted extra time and energy for demanding underground training in martial arts (Martin 2007: 2–3). Thus, practitioners believe that the upper class and a ‘kind of 19th-century secret service’ practised martial arts covertly (Martin 2007: 2). Present-day Okinawan folk dances still feature visible residues of martial arts movements that date back to the concealment of the practice (Funakoshi 1981: 32).

Historical accounts highlight the Okinawan cities of Naha and Shuri as springing forth ‘soft-style’ and ‘hard-style’ martial arts, respectively (Martin 2007: 3). Thus, ‘*Shuri-te*’, the martial art of Shuri, was the precursor to Shotokan karate (2007: 3), a ‘hard-style’ martial art, characterised by more linear and forceful movements. Several influential Okinawan masters from Shuri were responsible for handing down that which precedes present-day Shotokan karate. One of these karate experts included Sokon ‘Bushi’ Matsumura (1779–1893), a royal bodyguard of three Okinawan kings, acclaimed for

defeating a bull by using only the power of his gaze (Martin 2007: 4–5). Another great master and royal bodyguard who worked alongside Matsumura was Anko Itosu (1830–1915), who was instrumental in including martial arts as part of physical education in Okinawan schools (Martin 2007: 5). Anko Azato (1828–1906), like Itosu, was a student of Matsumura and hailed as one of Okinawa’s ‘greatest experts in the art of karate’ (Funakoshi 1981: 3). Gichin Funakoshi, best known for disseminating the knowledge of karate, secretly studied martial arts under the guidance of Itosu and Azato (Martin 2007: 6) during the government’s ban on martial arts during the beginning of the Meiji period (Funakoshi 1981: 29), which lasted from 1868 to the early 1900s (Britannica 2023c). Funakoshi explained that his karate journey began as an antidote for his health issues when he was a ‘frail child’ (1981: xiii). Funakoshi later recognised karate as responsible for his excellent health, strength, confidence, and longevity (1981: xiv).

The efforts of the above karate masters shaped the karate that we know today. For example, Itosu simplified *kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents) for middle school students, giving form to the *Heian Kata* (Martin 2007: 5), used today for those advancing through the karate belt system. Funakoshi further simplified Itosu’s *katas* into *Taikyoku Kata* and *Ten No Kata* for elementary school students (Martin 2007: 7), now used to train beginners of any age. Another influential karate master who altered the practice into what it is today includes Funakoshi’s son, Yoshitaka ‘Gigo’, who introduced low stances and different kicks such as *yoko geri kekomi* (side thrust kick) and *mawashi geri* (roundhouse kick) (2007: 7).

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed karate emerge from secrecy thanks to a convincing letter Itosu wrote advocating karate training in Okinawan schools (Martin 2007: 5). The timing of Itosu’s letter to the Okinawa Prefecture Educational Department appeared to relate to the death of the Ryukyuan King Shō Tai because of

vows of secrecy the karate master might have made while serving as a royal bodyguard (2007: 5). What followed was the acceptance of karate into the Okinawan educational system (2007: 5) and a boom in popularity with people of all ages (Funakoshi 1981: 42). In 1921, the opportunity arose for the Crown Prince and future emperor of Japan, Hirohito (Britannica 2023a), to witness a karate demonstration spearheaded by Funakoshi, which further propelled the popularity of the practice (Funakoshi 1981: 43). The increased praise of the martial art from the Okinawa Prefecture led to a demonstration organised by Funakoshi in Tokyo (Funakoshi 1981: 68). The success of this karate presentation further propagated the demand for instruction, which convinced Funakoshi to remain in Japan where he continued divulging the practice to a significant number of students over time (1981: 71). Funakoshi's 'life mission' of diffusing the knowledge of *karate* continued to progress through his publications, such as with *Ryūkyū Kempo: Karate*, his first book in 1922 (1981: 30, 77).

As we understand it today, the name 'karate' requires explanation because it is a title that Funakoshi laboured to propagate. Using Chinese or Japanese characters to write 'kara-te' causes the word's meaning to alter, although the pronunciation remains the same. The more straightforward definition is 'te', which means 'hand(s)', and was how Okinawans often referred to the practice of unarmed combat (Funakoshi 1981: 33). However, the Chinese character for 'kara' was often written with 'te', causing 'kara-te' to signify 'Chinese hand', a definition that Funakoshi found inappropriate for the practice (1981: 33), despite the probable introduction of martial arts to Okinawa from China. Instead, Funakoshi advocated the use of the Japanese character that signifies 'empty', tracing back to how the practice most likely developed in conjunction with the island's weapon ban and how a *karateka* (student of karate) should free 'heart and mind of all

earthly desires and vanity' (Funakoshi 1981: 35). Thus, 'karate' is written today using the Japanese characters that signify 'empty hand'.

'Shotokan karate', the martial art associated with Funakoshi, also calls for some commentary. Funakoshi's talents included writing poetry that he signed with the pen name '*Shōtō*', which means 'pine waves', a title reminiscent of the sound of wind blowing through pine trees (Funakoshi 1981: 85–86). To Funakoshi's surprise, the first karate *dōjō* (training hall), erected in Japan in 1935, bore the name '*Shōtō-kan*' over the door, a title chosen by a 'nationwide committee of karate supporters' (1981: 83–84). '*Shōtō*' referred to Funakoshi's pen name, and '*kan*' signifies 'house' (Martin 2007: 7), undoubtedly a title selected by fans of the karate master.

Karate's history of concealment appeared to continue when the practice was prohibited by the occupying United States military forces following World War II because of martial connotations (Martin 2007: 8), a setback after the prior success in freeing the practice from secrecy. However, as karate became recognised more as a 'way of life' with spiritual and physical benefits, the ban against the use of martial arts was eventually lifted (2007: 8). Thus, the emigration of Okinawan karate masters to Japan and the embracing of the practice by nations like the United States paved the way for the worldwide expansion of karate (2007: 8).

Thanks to Funakoshi, the karate we now know features a characteristic belt ranking system that encourages students to achieve different coloured belts that fall between white and black, with the former symbolising a novice and the latter more advanced students. According to historian Patrick McCarthy, part of the incentive for introducing a belt system included making karate appear more 'Japanese' (McCarthy 1999: 80–81). This approach can be traced to the influence of judo founder Kanō Jigorō, who recognised the importance of distinguishing proficiency levels through sashes, and later belts (1999: 76).

Legend would have it that as a white belt student arduously trains in karate, their belt collects ‘sweat’ and ‘dirt’ until the white colour morphs into ‘the well worn, sweat-encrusted black belt’ (Fontaine 2002: 218). Conversely, following the years that have turned the white belt into black, the surface of the black begins to wear away, revealing a hidden white belt. Thus, although the white belt highlights a student’s inexperience in karate, a black belt signifies someone who has ‘not given up’ yet still has the capacity to learn. That is why today, one sees karate masters with black belts that have become so weathered that the belt material gives way to glimpses of an underlying white fabric: a symbol of great honour and humility.

Aside from the history of karate, one may also find a better understanding of the essence of *karate-dō* in principles advocated by karate masters like Funakoshi. His lessons dive more profoundly than the surface level of physical instruction, including topics like training with heart and soul rather than focusing solely on theory (Funakoshi 1981: 106) and encouraging avoidance of ‘self-conceit and dogmatism’ (1981: 108). These principles underscore the importance of achieving admirable characteristics that surpass the aesthetic. Other important lessons taught by Funakoshi include the significance of abiding by the rules of ethics, whether someone is watching or not (1981: 109), or teaching students to see themselves for who they ‘really are’ (1981: 109). The above ‘life lessons’ highlight an underlying theme of becoming a better version of oneself, present in Funakoshi’s ‘Twenty Guiding Principles’:

1. Do not forget that *karate-do* begins and ends with *rei* [bow].
2. There is no first strike in karate.
3. Karate stands on the side of justice.
4. First, know yourself, then know others.
5. Mentality over technique.
6. The mind must be set free.

7. Calamity springs from carelessness.
  8. Karate goes beyond the *dōjō*.
  9. Karate is a lifelong pursuit.
  10. Apply the way of karate to all things. Therein lies its beauty.
  11. Karate is like boiling water: without heat, it returns to its tepid state.
  12. Do not think of winning. Think, rather, of not losing.
  13. Make adjustments according to your opponent.
  14. The outcome of a battle depends on how one handles emptiness and fullness (weakness and strength).
  15. Think of the opponent's hands and feet as swords.
  16. When you step beyond your own gate, you face a million enemies.
  17. *Kamae* (ready stance) is for beginners; later, one stands in *shizentai* (natural stance).
  18. Perform *kata* exactly; actual combat is another matter.
  19. Do not forget the employment or withdrawal of power, the extension or contraction of the body, the swift or leisurely application of technique.
  20. Be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful in your pursuit of the Way.
- (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 19–114)

Delving deeper into the above principles of instruction reveals *karate-dō* as an art of creative expression with the power of one's thoughts at the core.

As a martial art, karate highlights the value of human beings in their craft, expressed in that 'art does not make the man, [it is] the man that makes art' (Funakoshi 1973: 5), and imparts a comportment of humility, altruism, respect, and justice. Although Funakoshi does not appear to specify his religious affiliation, his writings suggest a slant towards Zen Buddhism, which may have been a choice to encourage acceptance of the practice in Japan (Martin 2007: 18). One may find that Funakoshi's spiritual beliefs most likely influenced his guiding principles, though *karate-dō* does not advocate a particular religion. Instead, karate is a 'moral code' and path to self-discovery (Layton 1997: 108). Not to say that by endorsing principles such as simplicity, honesty, and courage, the practice may not lead one to search for deeper spiritual truths, such as those that point to

the potential belief in God or what occurs after death. In one way or another, Funakoshi describes *karate-dō* as a ‘way of life’ (1981: 110). As will be discussed in more detail in this thesis, an actor might follow Funakoshi’s advice in applying *karate-dō* ‘to all things’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 64). To illustrate a preliminary example of such application for the purposes of this Introduction, here follows a modification of Funakoshi’s guiding principles that can be beneficial for aesthetic performers like actors:

1. Remember that performance ends and begins with respect for everyone, from the audience to those performing with you.
2. Never mistreat anyone to benefit yourself on your acting journey.
3. Seek always to do what is right.
4. Learn to know yourself before attempting to analyse others.
5. Pay attention to the power of your thoughts.
6. Free your mind from what hinders your creativity and expression.
7. Keep safety precautions first.
8. Make appropriate choices even when you think that no one is watching.
9. Your training never ends; it is an ongoing journey.
10. Apply the knowledge and wisdom you receive to everything.
11. Acting is like boiling water; without heat, it returns to its tepid state.
12. Refrain from trying to beat the competition. Instead, be the best you can be.
13. Pay attention to your scene partner and adjust accordingly.
14. Pay attention to the nuances of weakness and strength within a scene.
15. Use the power of your imagination to heighten your reality.
16. Although you will encounter opposition, your job is to be prepared.
17. What might appear elementary will later help you achieve what is advanced.

18. Be a person of excellence; it will carry over in whatever you do.
19. Keep technique in the foreground of your practice.
20. Be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful as you pursue your acting career.

Concrete examples of such guiding principles from martial arts and their modification for actors are considered and discussed in this thesis, both in the context of the extensive literature review in Chapter 1 that surveys the field and as specifically adapted and pursued in my practice as laid out in the subsequent chapters.

### **Judging a Book by Its Cover**

As the historical and contextualising window on karate in the previous section has highlighted, there is more to martial arts than ‘just’ purely physical phenomena. And yet, despite the many benefits of martial arts, Paul Turse argues that:

Performers are aware of the *extrinsic* value of martial arts activities as an aid to their careers, but many performers may not be aware of the *intrinsic* value martial arts training can have in the preparation and performance of a role. (2003, emphasis added)

One may speculate that limitations to the perception of martial arts ensue when the practice is understood more as an athletic endeavour than as an art. This trend is evidenced by how one may find martial arts as widely acknowledged as a sport. Although there are those who train in martial arts with athletic aspirations, traditionalists still view the practice as a form of creative expression. On this subject, Funakoshi explains that society is misguided to think of karate solely as a combative sport: ‘If the principles of karate are applied to dealings in society as a whole, your understanding of life, in general, will be

greatly increased' (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 114). Therefore, adjusting one's interpretation to acknowledge the practice as a 'martial *art*' veers one away from a potentially superficial view of training, thus also increasing the possibility of grasping both the 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' benefits of the practice.

To this end, the guiding principles in *karate-dō* demonstrate the potential to impart an education that prepares acting students for more than what meets the eye by transmitting lessons that set the standard for ethical and moral ideals. Writing in the context of different forms of autonomous and curriculumised practices, Frank Camilleri explains that 'performer training in the twenty-first century seems to have outgrown the twentieth-century need of a formative ethical dimension as it becomes increasingly implicated in the processes and procedures of institutionalisation' (2013a: 26). Camilleri here refers to the widespread sophisticated 'packaging' of training courses and approaches that tend to focus more on the result (becoming a certified actor after a year or two) than on the time-consuming (and more costly) process of becoming a holistically better human being as an actor. No wonder performing is now viewed and accepted as an 'industry' rather than as an 'art'. Therefore, if one can say in general terms that contemporary actor training is responsible for not instilling ethical standards by focusing more on the end product rather than on the process, then one may question if institutions are also accountable for raising actors that Stanislavski describes as 'small men [and women] eaten by vanity' (1967: 130).

However, Turse does not view egoism as a global issue that includes all actors. He argues that:

A Kabuki actor, it seems, attempts to wipe out his ego so that he may unconsciously identify with the organic growth and form of the role. Many Western actors live their parts so that their egos may thrive and live through their performances.

Regardless of how talented these actors may be (and they may be the finest in the world), it is often their egos that live on the stage and not those of the characters they are playing. (2003)

If actor training in contemporary Western society focuses on improving abilities to overcome competition, thus encouraging a hyper-focus on the self, the actor consequently runs the risk of ‘egocentrism’. The prospect of developing such a ‘habit’ of ‘self-focused attention’ is described by the American Psychological Association as associated with ‘several mental health disorders, such as alcohol abuse, depression, and anxiety disorders’ (2023), which appears alarming in regard to the Western actor’s educational journey.

Not only do actors who receive performance instruction run the prospect of jeopardising their ‘mental health’, but research has demonstrated that only 2% of these actors actually succeed in ‘making a living’ out of performing (Williams, Lacasa, and Latora 2019). Therefore, as instructors, ‘[w]e are selling our students short if we strictly focus on their job placement and prospective careers in the conventional sectors of the entertainment industry’ (Zazzali and Klein 2015: 262). Consequently, one might question if, as theatre educators, we might pursue imparting lessons that align with seeking a better quality of life through altruism, exemplified by an alleged Chinese proverb:

If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap.  
If you want happiness for a day, go fishing.  
If you want happiness for a month, get married.  
If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune.  
If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody else.  
(Lyubomirsky 2010)

From the field of Positive Psychology, Sonja Lyubomirsky uses the above proverb as an illustration that ‘practising kindness’ increases happiness because generosity improves

‘self-perception’, a sense of interconnectedness with others, and produces a ‘cascade of positive social consequences’ (2010).

In this regard, Nichols describes martial arts as able to ‘influence, however indirectly, the life and craft of the actor: [by] the relinquishment of personal ego to the art form and the inculcation of a firm, uncompromising commitment to excellence’ (1991: 55). Nichols affirms that martial arts can act as a resource for the actor who desires to achieve a deeper understanding of altruism and inner creativity (1991: 56), which is also an important aspect of the research that informs the practice and discussion in this thesis. An educational option in institutional and autonomous contexts could include teaching practices like *karate-dō* to impart values like selflessness, respect, pacifism, responsibility, justice, and humility to assist actors in their prospective societal roles.

### **Evil Art?**

Funakoshi explains that applying karate for a ‘good purpose’ allows the art to spring forth ‘results of great value’ (1973: 5). In contrast, he adds that if ‘misused, then there is no more evil or harmful art than karate’ (1973: 5). Despite the latter statement, martial arts instructors believe that karate instils what is needed to become a ‘pacifist’, including how to avoid fighting. Defending oneself should occur if there is no other option, such as if there is no escape. For instance, if confronted by a burglar, one should ‘hand over the money’ rather than start a fight, as one’s life is more precious than material possessions. Still, a karate *sensei*, or teacher, must assess the maturity and character of students before introducing advanced techniques, which in turn require a greater level of responsibility. In this regard, safety has been a point of contention with theatre practitioners who express concern regarding the introduction of what some perceive as potentially violent movements in an actor training class.

A glimpse at the arguments against a combat sport such as boxing allows one to arrive at conclusions that also pertain to Shotokan karate, although such a comparison does not imply equating the two disciplines. Safety activists advocate the elimination of boxing on the grounds of the irreversible damage it can cause practitioners, especially regarding the repercussions of blows to the head (Dixon 2007: 402). For years, those in the medical profession have echoed the safety concerns associated with boxing (Toon 1988: 69). Alternatively, some believe that supporting a combat sport like boxing glorifies violence in ‘the name of sports’ (Simon 2007: 384), which runs the risk of propagating a practice that is ‘morally repugnant’ (Dixon 2007: 398). The concerns associated with boxing lead one to ask where to mark ‘the fine line’ that divides protecting a person’s health from the infringement of autonomous rights. Comparatively, should physicians abolish American football because of the documented evidence that athletes receive repeated brain damage, which leads to underlying consequences such as dementia (Reynolds 2023)? After all, ‘the Human cranium is not designed to have repeated blows directed to it’ (Toon 1988: 69). However, the premise for the above arguments in favour of banning a combat sport like boxing appears ‘too slight’ in light of ‘paternalism’ or restricting a person’s freedom in exchange for good (Simon 2007: 380). In other words, one cannot limit another individual’s liberty of choice on the grounds of potential injuries that may occur (Simon 2007: 382), even when referring to sports.

After addressing different arguments against boxing, Nicholas Dixon, a philosopher who has critically examined the ethics of combat sports, specifically boxing and mixed martial arts (2015), proposes implementing a regulation that forbids hitting the head as sufficient in making the practice a safer sport (2007: 402), a rule that Shotokan karate already follows. When considering the safety regulations in a Shotokan karate tournament, only ‘light contact’ is permitted, which means that sparring must not leave a

‘red mark’ or bruise. Any hit that results in blood equates to immediate disqualification of a participant. If the judges or *sensei* suspect that a participant purposefully initiated ‘full contact’ with the intention of harming an opponent, then dire consequences ensue, such as removal from the tournament and eradication from any Shotokan karate training environment. Shotokan karate teaches students to avoid conflict, includes regulations that enforce safety precautions, and rewards technique rather than a ‘knockout’. The grounds for omitting karate from the theatre classroom compare to those allegations against boxing. In that case, a student’s knowledgeable consent, along with a ‘no-sparring rule’, and the redefinition of the purpose of training for performative purposes, increases the actor’s safety while still permitting access to the benefits of the practice. Therefore, theatre practitioners who wish to reap the advantages of martial arts have access to tools that increase the level of safety in their learning environments.

As will be discussed in Chapter 1, there are various gains to practising martial arts. One such advantage involves how these practices often promote gender equality, including the empowerment of women in patriarchal contexts, a benefit that Sarah Crews describes as shared with boxing (2024: 3). Gender equality is of particular interest for the actor in light of how studies demonstrate that men are more likely to find full-time employment in such a profession (Williams, Lacasa, and Latora 2019). Other benefits of practising martial arts include fostering a sense of community. Activities that develop a ‘sense of belonging’ are explained to cultivate what is described by the field of psychology as ‘vital’ for ‘psychological well-being’ (Stein 2023). Research shows that people who are part of communities often experience ‘lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, and a lower risk of obesity’ (Stein 2023). Thus, one could say that the ‘sense of belonging’ that accompanies those who train in a practice like karate aids physical and mental health.

Martial artists also experience a sense of empowerment and freedom, a characteristic that Crews describes in relation to boxers (2024: 11). This ‘release’ from inhibitions echoes with the work of theatre-makers who advocate liberating the actor from what stifles the potential for creative expression. Stanislavski advocates the elimination of superfluity in acting, such as when removing unnecessary muscular tension (1973: 92–94) as a pathway to improved performance abilities. Comparatively, Jerzy Grotowski describes his process of uprooting performance ‘blocks’ as the ‘via negativa’ (1975: 17), consisting of a ‘stripping down’, devoid of ‘egotism or self-enjoyment’, so that the actor might remain ‘bare’ and presents a ‘total gift’ to the audience (1975: 16). Shotokan karate resonates with this aim in that it advocates economy and efficiency of movement, a characteristic that is not shared with all martial arts. Thus, one might say that although martial arts serve as ‘one of the many useful tools’ for the actor (Ziółkowski 2022a: 366), Shotokan karate assists in eliminating what does not serve performance so as to supersede inhibitions to creative expression.

### **Method to the Madness**

To the best of my knowledge, and as becomes evident in the literature review in Chapter 1, there is a lack of systemised research dedicated specifically to how *karate-dō* functions in relation to Western theatre, which might appear surprising despite how various theatre programmes have chosen to incorporate martial arts within their performing arts courses. Some recent examples (see Chapter 1) include the use of traditional Chinese martial arts by Daniel Mroz at the University of Ottawa in Canada, aikido by Przemysław Błaszczak at the Kokyu Studio in Poland, judo by Ellie Nixon at La Mancha Theatre Company in Chile, and Russian martial arts by Slade Billew at Stephen F. Austin State University in the United States. Nichols argues that more performance training programmes could reap

the benefits of martial arts practises that ‘have much to offer’ actors who desire to pursue ‘the Way’: ‘Because of misconceptions about the martial arts or because we got stuck in traditional actor training modes, martial arts influences are more prevalent in business schools than in acting/movement studios. Therefore, a valuable and available resource goes largely untapped’ (Nichols 1991: 43).

Accordingly, the inspiration behind the present doctoral research stems from the perceived need for more research in this area as well as from my experience with martial and performing arts. During a Shotokan karate lesson intended to teach a new *kata*, I was struck by how the gestures reminded me of physical theatre. This led me to embark on a journey that explores the similarities between karate and movement-based theatre. Various practitioners have arrived at a similar conclusion as to the overlaps between martial arts and performing arts, such as the Japanese sculptor Shigetsugu Wakafuji, who commented on how Dario Fo’s mimed pose in a performance of *The Story of a Tiger* resembled the beginning of a karate move called *nekoashi-dachi*, or cat stance (Barba and Savarese 1991: 197). Based on the perceivable benefits of the practice, I chose to evaluate Shotokan karate as a training platform for the preparation and execution of physical theatre.

In light of the abovementioned advantages of incorporating *karate-dō* in an acting regime, I have explored teaching Shotokan karate as part of a conservatory for the arts known as The Culture House in Kansas, USA, in the winter and spring of 2022. This experience encouraged me to continue researching the impact of karate on the actor’s body, mind, and relationship with the world. To this end, this research examines how *karate-dō* can be adapted and applied in principle and in practice. Accordingly, this study has the potential to become a valuable resource to those in the performing arts, especially concerning actors, students of acting, and their teachers. My experience as an actress,

theatre instructor, Master of Fine Arts in Acting graduate, and second *dan* black belt in Shotokan Karate has informed the development of a programme of work that I call ‘Karate for Actor Training’ (KAT). Any bias I may have acquired through training was restricted so as not to influence the results of this research. Although I describe KAT in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6, it is worth providing an overview here for the purposes of this Introduction.

The process for delivering the KAT programme includes a ‘presentation’, ‘practice’, and ‘performance’ format, modelled after how children learn their native language, a process I implemented when teaching Italian and English as second languages at a Berlitz language school in 2006–2011. As I elaborate in section 1.3, Mroz explains that he also teaches students martial arts for actor training following a system inspired by how one assimilates their mother tongue, which indicates the potential for such an approach as adopted here. During the KAT sessions, the ‘presentation’ phase features new concepts where students learn the fundamental building blocks of karate. The ‘practice’ stage follows that of the ‘presentation’ of new material, allowing students to apply the new knowledge with feedback from the instructor. An example of the ‘practice’ phase would include using movement patterns within a given scenario. I have found that coupling martial arts with theatre exercises, particularly during the ‘practice’ stage, constitutes a better-tailored class for acting students. Some of the activities I use in conjunction with KAT include improvisational scenarios outlined by Lecoq because of the sense of ‘play’ these exercises add to the practice. Following the ‘practice’ phase is the ‘performance’ stage, where students employ what they have learned without interruptions or guidance from the instructor.

A typical Phase 1 KAT class begins with inner reflection and breath work. Next, students engage in a physical warm-up that includes stretching the body and *kihon* (basic

techniques), which typically comprises matching exhalations with the blocks, punches, and kicks to imaginary opponents. The next portion of the class focuses on *kata*, which unites the different elements of *kihon* into a choreographed sequence. *Kata* requires students to engage skills such as stamina, agility, memory, *kime* (power/focus), imagination, balance, tempo, and proper breathing. Next, students combine karate with guided theatre exercises. Lastly, students perform the given scenario or assignment, uniting the material covered during the session. Although this particular format lends itself to ‘devising’ or creating theatre from scratch, movement-based theatre scripts can also work well in the performative stage of the class. The performative portion of the process aims to achieve credible and visceral performances using principles learned through Shotokan karate. To increase the acting student’s safety, *kumite* (sparring) features within certain parameters of the KAT programme (see section 4.4). However, the physicality involved with KAT raises the question of the importance of training the actor’s voice. One will find that although the first two phases of KAT do not include substantial vocal training per se, the practice sets the foundation for preparing the voice by increasing the use of the breath and by freeing the body from habitual restrictions. Thus, KAT integrates well with vocal work.

The KAT programme assumes that actors possess the ability to learn kinaesthetically. Thus, this process follows a traditional karate class format, with the instructor modelling the appropriate movement that the student imitates. This process agrees with how Barba and Savarese explain that the ‘repetition of physical actions’ in martial arts leads to heightened awareness and enhanced use of the body (1991: 197). Those with disabilities and various learning preferences still benefit from karate instruction, as demonstrated through Para-Karate, a fully integrated facet of the World Karate Federation dedicated to training those with physical and mental disadvantages

(World Karate Federation 2023). In this regard, karate training ‘can complement rehabilitation and therapeutic activities’ (Witkowski and Glapa 2022: 17) for cognitive or physical disabilities. For example, in the case of a wheelchair-constrained student, *kata* is modified to focus on the upper body, allowing the trainee to achieve upper-body strength and self-confidence. In other words, karate is customisable to assist those with varying levels of physical or mental aptitudes by tailoring the exercises to focus on personal development.

However, one may question how to assess a student’s growth, especially when it comes to the arts. For example, should students receive rewards based on effort or what some might describe as ‘talent’? In this regard, the KAT programme offers ‘goals’ rather than ‘rewards’ during the ongoing training of students, such as with the memorisation and execution of gradually more complicated *katas*. If a diligent student falls behind the rest of the class, the *sensei* takes full responsibility and offers to work overtime to allow that one student to reach the same level of progress as the rest of the class. Thus, as displayed through this thesis, the KAT programme is available to anyone regardless of age, gender, or ability and follows the belief that ‘talent’ is *learned*.

## **Chapter Outline**

This Introduction concludes with a summary of the chapters in the thesis, thus providing an overview of the topics discussed throughout the following pages.

Chapter 1, entitled ‘Martial Arts in Actor Training: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly’, presents literature reviews that survey current practices as well as set the stage by appraising practitioners’ perspectives on the intersection of martial arts and acting. These reviews highlight topics related to the influence of mostly Eastern martial arts on Western actor training and performances, while also exploring themes that establish appropriate

expectations for *karate-do* in actor training. By highlighting the advantages and challenges inherent in the approach, the considerations emphasised in this first chapter lay the groundwork for the practical dimension of the research as informed by a comprehensive survey of literature on the subject.

Chapter 2 ‘Principles of Performance Training: The Body’ provides an overview of the structures that comprise the hands-on aspect of the research while preparing the actor mentally and physically for performance. By introducing principles of performance preparation linked to *karate-dō*, the first section of the chapter focuses on the human body as a unified entity composed of essential parts, including the pelvis, torso, feet, legs, hands, arms, face, and eyes. The subsequent sections explore topics such as the role of the breath, rhythm, and tempo in helping practitioners optimise their creative potential. By breaking down fundamental building blocks for movement, this chapter equips actors to achieve desired results in the foundational stages of training.

Chapter 3 ‘Principles of Performance Training: The Mind’ builds on the previous chapters by describing how the mind plays a crucial role in providing both mental and physical support. The chapter explores dynamic options by testing movement, identifying conventions, and recognising the role of the mind and body in communication. It highlights how one can develop kinaesthetic sensitivity, confidence, reaction time, and focus. By addressing training through the guiding principles of Shotokan karate, actors can potentially enhance areas like awareness, focus, balance, and harmony, while gaining a deeper understanding of concepts like *ki*, meditation, improvisation, and playfulness.

Chapter 4 ‘Principles of Performance Composition’ outlines the role of *karate-dō* in performance composition by building on the foundations established earlier. This is partially achieved by introducing the ‘three pillars’ of karate instruction: *kihon* (basic techniques), *kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents), and *kumite*

(sparring). By doing so, the chapter lays the groundwork for how karate can be applied in movement-based theatrical training across a broad spectrum of practices, including scripted and unscripted work. Here, one gains a better understanding of how to organise movement-based theatrical performances while enhancing the physical aspect of more traditional approaches and styles.

Chapter 5 ‘KAT Project: Framework and Practice’ introduces the Karate for Actor Training (KAT) process as a possible pedagogical practice. The chapter discusses what I categorise as ‘KAT Phase 1’ which makes explicit use of Shotokan karate while building toward actor training. Although this thesis is not by Practice as Research (PaR), the practical application of the work sheds light on the topics and characteristics discussed in the previous chapters while acknowledging the need for a robust framework to guide its adaptation for the performing arts.

Chapter 6 ‘KAT Project: Developments, Insights, and Possibilities’ develops a fuller picture of how *karate-dō* can influence a theatre class by outlining additional phases of the KAT programme. KAT Phase 2 presents a heightened use of improvisational theatre techniques to achieve *a more implicit use of karate*, ultimately aimed at preparing actors for performance. This chapter also considers a KAT Phase 3 extension that moves closer to *explicit theatre work* as linked to the insights gained by the practical research and theoretical investigations of the thesis. While remaining within the bounds of critical reflection, the chapter highlights the developments and insights gained from the programme of work, dealing with breath support, focus, awareness, balance, decisiveness, control, precision, stamina, memory, and visualisation. The practical processes detailed here demonstrate how Shotokan karate can integrate into various actor training techniques and how the work may continue to evolve.

The thesis concludes with reflections on future developments in karate as a form of actor preparation by underscoring topics such as the Western appropriation of Eastern practices. The final considerations of the thesis offer critical reflections on the practice, highlighting opportunities for growth, such as through further research.

A Glossary of Terms is also included as a source that facilitates the reading experience for those unfamiliar with the terms used throughout the thesis. The Glossary features three parts: (1) Japanese terms employed in karate, (2) terms original to the KAT programme of work, and (3) a shoulder-to-shoulder list of the three phases of KAT.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that the aim of this thesis is to determine the benefits and challenges of incorporating *karate-dō* into actor training environments. As will be developed in the following chapters, a *karate-dō*-centred approach to acting is not intended as a negation of other forms of training, but as an extension that provides a fuller picture of opportunities for performance preparation.

# Chapter 1

## Martial Arts in Actor Training: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

### 1.1 Martial Arts Revisited: The Pros and Cons

‘A martial artist is a human being first’ (Lee 2011). Bruce Lee’s comment draws attention to a simple yet profound reality that unites actors and martial artists: humanity. This potentially reflects an ancient link that dates back to how both practices partially developed out of the need for community (Chemers and Versényi 2014: 200). Some might go so far as to add that martial arts act as a key to ‘becoming a human being’ (Błaszczak 2021: 95). The success of performance practices that use martial arts, such as Peking Opera, *Kathakali* dance-drama, *Noh*, *Kabuki*, and Indonesian *Randai*, has inspired various performance practitioners to incorporate martial arts training into their preparatory processes. As will become evident in this thesis, Western practitioners have grown to appreciate, especially in the course of the twentieth century, what a number of their Eastern counterparts already understood: that there is an overlap between martial arts and performing arts. Based on the above evidence, and as shall be discussed here, martial arts have become an ‘established component’ of many Western theatre and dance training programmes (Ziółkowski 2022a: 359), such as in the Kokyu Studio in Poland ([www.studiokokyu.pl](http://www.studiokokyu.pl)). However, one may question the strengths and weaknesses of such an endeavour.

This chapter features a survey of the field of martial arts for actor training, resulting in a detailed overview of what can be called ‘the good, the bad, and the ugly’ characteristics of such practices. The present chapter commences with a review of the

2022 special journal issue of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (TDPT) dedicated to martial arts and delves straight into why practitioners might or might not consider martial arts for actor development. This is intended to provide an up-to-date bird's eye view of the field in question. The subsequent section features a review of Phillip Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (2009), with the aim of shedding a focused light on the proliferation of martial arts in Western actor education. The third section homes in on Daniel Mroz's *Dancing Word* (2011) to extend the discussion on the use of martial arts to enhance an actor's abilities and well-being. The chapter concludes with a final review that showcases female practitioners' contributions in the field, which specifically emphasises the actor's overall welfare in conjunction with martial arts training.

In the current chapter and the rest of the thesis, I will be referring to 'martial-acting' to signal the deployment of martial arts for the training of actors. This term is an adaptation of Marco Adda's definition of a 'martial training approach for acting' (2022: 398). For the purposes of this research, however, 'martial-acting' will not signify Adda's other definitions, such as performances ingrained in martial arts, the integration of martial arts elements to create a character, actors assisting a community, or political antagonism (2022: 398). In addition, the term 'martial arts' refers to both Eastern and Western practices discussed by the various practitioners and scholars surveyed in this chapter.

### **1.1.1 Does it Work?**

A review of a recent special issue of the journal *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (TDPT), dedicated to 'Martial Arts Revisited' (2022), provides an excellent starting point and platform to consider various aspects of the motivation behind using martial arts as part of the actor's process. Western practitioners expose conflicts

implementing martial-acting, such as potential student disinterest, limited time, safety concerns, need for tailoring practices, and scarcity of specialised instructors. However, the numerous rewards of martial arts appear to offset potential challenges when described as enhancing skills like ‘attentiveness, vigour, breath support, body-mind connectedness, acceleration of creativity, and character-building techniques’ (Ziółkowski 2022a: 360). Accordingly, this section evaluates some of the challenges and benefits that martial-acting practitioners articulate. Moreover, this review seeks to explain why martial arts, such as karate, demonstrate the potential to enhance an actor’s physical and mental eloquence during performance practices.

Observing martial arts’ potential within the actor’s process reveals inherent difficulties, especially considering that practitioners could face the challenge of advocating for a training procedure that is not universally accepted. Jonathan Grieve’s vehement ‘postcard’ complaint in the TDPT issue exemplifies this opposition (2022: 481). Possibly to the surprise of enthusiasts, Grieve describes the use of martial arts for acting as a ‘waste of time’ (2022: 481). This insight is significant because it suggests that the effectiveness of martial arts training for actors may be subjective. Given the perceived benefits expressed by other practitioners, one may question whether Grieve’s experience limits his perception. Perhaps it would prove more illustrative for Grieve to expand on his martial arts involvement by providing more details about the years of martial-acting he portrays as wasted (2022: 481). Nonetheless, exposing Grieve’s disappointment highlights the potential disinterest in martial arts on behalf of other performing artists. In this regard, Grzegorz Ziółkowski observes how his experience includes encountering actors who do not appear interested in the ‘in-depth’ investigation of martial arts (2022b: 370). Therefore, one may speculate that if practitioners would like to reap the most advantageous circumstances, they should find a training process that best suits them.

Identifying a process that fits an actor emphasises one of the most significant obstacles martial-acting presents: time constraints. On this subject, Ziółkowski describes how he omits in-depth *taijiquan* practice from his creative laboratory due to time constraints in the training process (2022b: 370), while Wojciech Cynarski agrees that the most effective martial arts preparation for an actor requires consistency (2022: 392). On the one hand, Robert Benedetti explains that the greatest hindrance to using ‘Asian training principles’ in Western actor instruction is ‘time’ (1973: 466). On the other hand, Daniel Mroz argues that although sustained training is best, limited exposure to martial arts nonetheless yields benefits (2009: 170).

Ellie Nixon counters time concerns when she describes *judo* as offering extensive physical preparation in a ‘timely training framework’ (2022: 431). Cynarski agrees that ‘the basics’ of martial arts are acquired ‘relatively quickly’, although fighting skills need cultivation over more prolonged bouts of at least ‘2-3 years’ (2022: 393). Adda observes that though actors may achieve ‘a lot’ in a ‘short amount of time’ (2023), martial arts experience, or lack thereof, still impacts performance outcomes (2022: 405–06). These descriptions highlight how various professionals interpret the benefits of martial arts in relation to time. For the purposes of this thesis, it would have been more elucidating if more practitioners used hours, days, months, and years to clarify timeframes. At any rate, these findings are significant because they can substantially influence the degree to which a practitioner may incorporate martial arts into the actor’s process.

In reference to ‘time’, in an interview with Paul Allain and Grzegorz Ziółkowski, Adrian Lester observes that actors frequently lack the daily training typical of other performing arts, notably dancers and musicians (Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 375–76). As a result, Lester proposes *taekwondo* as a solution for the required sustained practice that actors need (Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 375–76). On this subject, Martin Meyer

reveals that the continuity of training offered by martial arts appears more accessible in light of contemporary accounts describing the advantages of combining online and in-person training (2022: 503). Thus, these findings are helpful in providing the actor with insight into options to approach training as a regular and ongoing instruction.

The commitment required by a sustained training regime draws attention to how theatre practitioners view martial arts. For instance, if performance educators perceive martial-acting as promoting violence, they might avoid the practice altogether for the sake of a peaceful and ‘safe’ learning environment. Lester explains that although a practice like *taekwondo* can appear aggressive to an onlooker, closer inspection reveals its martial artists as kind, tranquil, and ‘balanced’ individuals who promote pacifism (Allain and Ziolkowski 2022: 380). On this topic, Slade Billew explains that he initially found himself reluctant to use martial arts in his theatre classes because he did not wish to encourage fighting (2022: 479). However, Billew’s solution includes redefining martial arts training for theatrical rather than combative purposes (2022: 479). These assertions are significant in offering insight for those who desire to reap the benefits of martial arts while supporting safety in the actor’s learning environment.

Maintaining theatrical objectives while using martial arts calls attention to how practitioners have modified this type of training for actors. For instance, Mroz illustrates a transfer between traditional Chinese martial arts techniques and acting exercises to create original performances (2022: 453–54). On her part, Nixon adds that she employs a ‘reconfiguration’ of the martial art of *judo* into ‘performer training practice’ (2022: 431), while Billew explains that his process includes adapting the ROSS system of Russian Martial Arts to the ‘psychophysical identities’ of students (2022: 468). Some of the theatre processes that Billew uses in conjunction with martial arts include ‘Six

Viewpoints, Acrobatics of the Heart, and Michael Chekhov Technique/Active Analysis' (2022: 468).

The practice of combining martial arts with other acting exercises emphasises Ziółkowski's description of martial arts as one of the 'many useful tools' for actors (2022a: 366). To this end, Christel Weiler reminds us that one should not expect a single 'system' of actor training to 'satisfy' all performance needs, nor should one assume that a process may apply to all forms of theatre (2019). These points are significant in illustrating the acceptable practice of tailoring and adapting actor training to include martial arts by supplementing and modifying exercises according to the exigencies of the individual, the objectives pursued, and as demanded by the particularities of a performance project.

Determining how to best adapt martial arts for acting highlights the instructor's role in accomplishing the task. Ziółkowski describes the necessity for an experienced instructor in the mandatory and challenging adaptation of *taijiquan* for actor training (2022b: 370). In Ziółkowski's experience, failure to employ an expert educator can cause students to sustain injuries (2022b: 370). However, in this regard, Ziółkowski notes a shortage of practitioners capable of building a 'bridge' between martial arts and acting (2022a: 360). Just as a martial arts instructor should obtain proper skills before teaching, Lester emphasises the significance of skilled performance instructors in preventing the spread of poor acting techniques (Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 379). These points highlight how the lack of professionals trained in both acting and martial arts could potentially restrict the availability of safe and effective martial-acting.

### 1.1.2 Wax On, Wax Off

The experience of those who have found martial arts to be a viable way to equip acting students draws attention to additional abilities acquired through practice. Despite the use of different martial arts styles, many practitioners featured in the 2022 special issue of TDPT agree that the benefits of martial arts include enhanced self-confidence, memory, strength, balance, breath support, flexibility, agility, concentration, expression, and bodymind connection. Billew adds that the ROSS Russian Martial Arts fosters his students' responsiveness, receptivity, and adaptability (2022: 479), while Przemysław Błaszczak stresses how *aikido* holds the answer to awareness, listening, and being in the moment (2022: 436). On his part, Lester mentions that some of the benefits of *taekwondo* comprise core strength and expressiveness (Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 377–81), whereas Adda confirms that the Indonesian *Bangau Putih silat* encompasses advantages like enhanced presence, rhythm, inner musicality, and perception expansion (2022: 398). These points illustrate that various acting principles are potentially attainable through different martial arts styles.

Skillssets applicable to actors and martial artists further exemplify the connection between performing and martial arts. Lester describes the creative and imaginative skills acquired through martial arts as equipping the actor to become a 'stage animal' (Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 379). To a certain extent, Gabriel Guarino de Almeida exemplifies this point through his description of the emulation of an animal through Chinese martial arts (2022: 493). Cynarski also encourages the idea of an actor as a 'stage animal' when he recommends that performers choose martial arts that hold 'crane, tiger and dragon' characteristics (2022: 393). These animal names can refer to different qualities in various martial arts. For example, Shotokan karate is often associated with tiger-like traits, while *Goju Ryu* is known for crane-like techniques. These accounts highlight martial arts'

potential to assist the imagination and physicality of actors with benefits such as the enhanced stage presence associated with becoming more animal-like.

However, examining the many skills acquired through martial arts reveals a need for more emphasis on vocal development, especially in regard to the performance demands of the actor. Accordingly, Ziółkowski confirms that martial arts lend themselves better to ‘physical or movement-based theatre’ (2022a: 362). On this subject, Billew describes martial arts as teaching him to be conscious of his breath while avoiding the production of sound (2022: 478). Lester agrees that while *taekwondo* did not specifically train his voice, it helped him better understand ‘rhythm, rhyme, and song’ (Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 379). Nonetheless, Billew’s solution to avoid neglecting the actor’s voice comprises supplementing martial arts with vocal exercises (2022: 478). These findings suggest that actors may need to accompany martial-acting with voice training to achieve the same level of physical fluency.

In addition to considering the abilities that actors may acquire through martial arts, one should also assess the overarching role of the practice. Nixon states that her experience proves that *judo* is essential for ‘devising’ and ‘the creation process’, as she optimistically describes theatre as inviting novelty in progressing forward (2022: 431). Ziółkowski emphasises martial arts as a ‘starting point’ and ‘point of reference’ for actor training (2022b: 372). However, he also describes resistance to the centrality of martial arts in performance education due to institutionalised opposition to innovative practices (Ziółkowski 2022a: 359). Consequently, these particular accounts stress the possibility of repositioning martial arts from a peripheral to a central role in actor training.

The picture that emerges from this review of the TDPT special issue illustrates how the presence of martial arts holds the potential to impact the work of performance practitioners significantly. When examining the pros and cons of martial arts for actors,

one finds that the likely or perceived drawbacks include relevancy, time, safety, modifying exercises, and instructor expertise. However, the assets of this type of training appear to outweigh the challenges by offering the actor a path to heightened ‘attentiveness, vigour, breath support, body-mind connectedness, acceleration of creativity, and character-building techniques’ (Ziółkowski 2022a: 360).

The possibility of combining martial and performing arts training is very much what the TDPT special issue explores in concrete terms. This overview of a recent volume on the topic can now serve as a broad and up-to-date appraisal for deeper and more specific explorations of martial-acting by specific practitioners and scholars in the rest of this chapter. To this end, this next section introduces one of the most influential pioneers of Asian martial arts in Western actor instruction.

## **1.2 Zarrilli Paves the Way**

Seeking to understand better the propagation of martial-acting in Western contexts will likely cause one to stumble across the work of Phillip B. Zarrilli. Following in the footsteps of Adolphe Clarence (A.C.) Scott, Zarrilli led the Asian Experimental Theatre Programme at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as early as 1979 (Zarrilli 2009: 215). He interwove Scott’s *taijiquan* training with yoga and the Indian martial art *kalaripayattu* to produce a ‘complementary set of psychophysical exercises’ for the actor (Zarrilli 1995: 25). His findings are a noteworthy contribution to the understanding of martial arts in actor training.

A review of one of Zarrilli’s most successful publications, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (2009), offers a framework to continue considering the strengths and weaknesses of martial arts in actor development. In this book, Zarrilli addresses a psychophysical approach to acting, the actor’s experience, and

those Eastern traditions that formed his process (2009: 8–9). Here, he echoes the rewards of martial arts mentioned in section 1.1.2, such as how an actor might diminish their ego, improve readiness, increase focus and awareness, enhance breath support, and ultimately achieve heightened levels of performance.

The perceivable difficulties of martial arts in actor development that Zarrilli mentions reflect those described in the TDPT review, including the introduction of unfamiliar concepts, time restrictions, and concerns about violence. He demonstrates the potential of martial arts for actors through his use of *taijiquan*, *kalarippayattu*, and yoga (2009: 98). This review compiles and examines some of Zarrilli's arguments to illustrate why a martial art such as karate can improve an actor's abilities as a performer.

### **1.2.1 Becoming 'All Eyes'**

Recognising martial arts as a form of actor training highlights the advantages of Zarrilli's most prevailing teachings. His approach includes preparing students to advance 'through a workshop phase in which the actor's awareness and energy are put into free play in structured improvisations and continues as the actor fine-tunes awareness and energy in response to specific dramaturgies' (Zarrilli 2009: 8). Edwin Creely adds that Zarrilli's approach includes five predominant themes: 'breath', 'attentiveness', 'imaging and metaphor', 'touch and otherness', and 'repetition' (2010: 220).

In seeking to update and extend our appreciation of body-mind potentialities by means of insights from merging theories and practices (like embodied cognition and martial arts respectively), Zarrilli describes his process as moving beyond the 'historical and practical limitations' of Konstantin Stanislavski (2009: 8). Finding a psychological process 'insufficient' for the actor (2009: 8), Zarrilli discovered that bridging the gap between the 'psycho' and 'physical' holds answers to awakened 'energy', heightened

awareness, and emotional availability (2009: 84). Creely adds that Zarrilli selected this approach based on the premise that ‘actors learn best (and perform best)’ when the passage between the mind and body becomes ‘free and open’ (2010: 226). Zarrilli’s thoughts on psychophysicality and the actor’s integrated ‘bodymind’ thus provide practitioners with an understanding of why martial arts can potentially assist actors.

The actor’s potential to transcend Cartesian dualism calls attention to what lies beyond the ‘self’. Zarrilli explains that an actor must focus on themselves in addition to the ‘inter-subjective space’ that includes elements such as the performance text, additional performers, spectators, and objects in the ‘environment’ (2009: 96). He also considers how the actor is a human ‘being-in-the-world’ (2009: 58). In this regard, it may be more fitting to replace ‘bodymind’ with what Frank Camilleri calls ‘bodyworld’ – a term that further updates Zarrilli’s ‘bodymind’ – to better encapsulate the actor’s interactions with ‘non-human’ elements such as ‘the natural world, other species, objects, or technology’ (Camilleri 2020: 26). All considered, Zarrilli’s lifelong findings on the actor’s ‘bodymind’ significantly contribute to the psychophysical discourse used in contemporary actor education.

Interpreting an actor’s ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ components highlights one of Zarrilli’s more complex theories. In his phenomenological theory of the ‘four bodies’, Zarrilli introduces a fourfold interpretation of the actor as composed of (1) ‘the surface body’ or visible parts of the human body, (2) ‘the recessive body’ or unseen visceral components, (3) ‘the aesthetic inner bodymind’ or heightened awareness and skills acquired through the integration of body and mind, and (4) ‘the aesthetic outer body’ or actor’s imaginative ‘score’ as seen on stage (2009: 50–59). Therefore, Zarrilli provides practitioners with tools to adjust and modulate between the ‘four bodies’ by operating ‘between exteroception, proprioception, and interoception’ (2009: 58). Zarrilli’s

conceptualisation of the ‘four bodies’ thus offers actors a more detailed understanding of what constitutes ‘psychophysical acting’.

Such an intricate notion of the actor’s embodiment draws attention to different possibilities for interpreting these concepts. From a Western viewpoint, one may question how the description of the ‘four bodies’ fits into a more typical depiction of the ‘body, soul, and spirit’. In such an analysis, one may note that Western interpretations are not direct representations of Eastern concepts. From the field of psychology, Ulrich Weger and Johannes Wagemann define the ‘soul’ as the ‘action’ that joins the physical ‘body’ with the ‘conceptual spirit’ (2015: 32). A comparison between Weger and Wagemann’s triune description of ‘body, soul, and spirit’ with Zarrilli’s fourfold interpretation of the actor reveals some similarities. Zarrilli’s description of ‘surface’ and ‘recessive’ bodies overlap with what Weger and Wagemann call the ‘body’, i.e. the physical aspect. Additionally, Zarrilli’s definition of ‘inner bodymind’ could be interpreted as the ‘soul’ (or a dimension of it), which leaves the ‘aesthetic body’ or persona that audiences see on stage as a possible manifestation of the actor’s ‘spirit’ as an expression that is offered as a medium of communication. Nonetheless, this juxtaposition indicatively highlights Zarrilli’s exclusion of a role for the ‘spirit’ in his approach.

Zarrilli’s omission may indicate an intentional departure from addressing spirituality in actor training. Practitioners such as Christel Weiler affirm that martial arts training such as *taijiquan* should ideally include ‘practical, ethical, and spiritual’ elements. She adds that although many actors find ‘spirituality’ ‘constitutive’ to their practice, they usually define ‘spiritual’ as a curious search for ‘self-cultivation’ rather than a journey of ‘believing’ (Weiler 2019). On this topic, Zarrilli admits that Eastern practices impacted him ‘spiritually’, yet he also concedes that he avoids religious connotations because of ‘the highly problematic Western assumptions’ often associated

with the term (2009: 213). Accordingly, by ‘spiritual’, he intends ‘good human qualities’ (213). Therefore, although he circumvents deploying religiously loaded terminology when talking about acting, he still affirms that ‘an ethics of good practice’ is necessary (Zarrilli 2020: 267). Zarrilli’s decision to omit religiosity from his approach implies that students can glean benefits from martial arts (which can be aligned with ethical ‘virtues’) independent of religion.

Spirituality calls attention to other benefits an actor might gain from martial arts training. In the 1970s, Herbert Blau drew attention to the fact that various actors suffered from restraints inherent in the traps of the ‘ego’ (1973: 361). Roughly twenty years later, Richard Nichols agreed that martial arts are an essential asset in finding ‘selflessness’ and inner creativity (1991: 56). In the 2000s, Zarrilli affirmed that martial arts heighten an actor’s performance abilities through a *non-indulgent process* that diminishes ‘narcissistic tendencies’ (2009: 128, emphasis added). More recently, Weiler described *taijiquan* as opposing egocentricity (2019). Even from these broad brushstrokes, the potentiality of martial arts in promoting altruism is evident because it adds to the positive traits actors might assimilate from its practice.

A ‘non-indulgent’ training process points to additional skills that martial-acting can address. Zarrilli places breathing techniques drawn from martial arts in a predominant position of his work. Consequently, his exercises often begin with breath work so that students can acquire heightened awareness and focus (Zarrilli 2009: 100). These breathing exercises are characterised by guiding students to use their imagination in order to ‘relocate’ their eyes to the lower abdomen so as to follow the breath on an inward ‘journey’ (Zarrilli 2009: 26)

Another reflection of Zarrilli’s process includes imparting how to attain a state of readiness when the actor’s body becomes ‘all eyes’ (2009: 24), i.e. alive and aware of

their surroundings. For him, this means being and remaining ‘in the moment’ (2009: 100), a state or condition that resolves many acting problems. Zarrilli depicts this state of attuned ‘perceptual/sensory awareness’ as ‘animal-like’ (2009: 60), reinforcing the idea of the actor as a ‘stage animal’ (cf. 1.1.2). Zarrilli’s process thus encourages practitioners to recognise the potential that martial arts display in assisting with fundamental acting skills.

The acting principles attainable through Zarrilli’s approach indicate other supplementary ideals available through martial arts. Zarrilli describes a phenomenon via martial-acting that he calls ‘doing and being done’, i.e. when a performer becomes that which they execute (2009: 83). Other practitioners, such as Błaszczak, agree that actors trained in *aikido* find themselves ‘inside’ the practice and ‘purged of everyday noise’ (2021: 93). In this regard, Adda explains that diligent training in the performing arts and martial arts allows practitioners to shift from ‘doing something’ to having art ‘manifest through’ them (2023). Acknowledging that certain states of being within performance are attainable through martial arts confirms what actors might achieve through practice.

Skills accessible through martial-acting also bring to the fore reactions to Zarrilli’s practice. Lori Lee Wallace describes the effects of Zarrilli’s approach on thirty students, shedding light on the benefits of a martial arts process for actors (2012: 172–74). She identifies Zarrilli as an instrumental ‘innovator’ of many ‘talents’ who has benefitted contemporary theatre practices (2012: 162–63). Wallace admits a possible bias in the results of her study because of Zarrilli’s involvement in choosing all participants (2012: 172–74). However, her findings are still valuable for shedding light on the effectiveness of martial arts for actor development.

The widespread response to Zarrilli’s approach – as evidenced by the popularity of his publications and practical commitments – highlights his influence on higher

education. Zarrilli impacted actor training at the university level through his resilience in maintaining martial arts as part of his process as a director, professor, and scholar. Camilleri acknowledges Zarrilli as influential in contributing to contemporary conversations about the actor's 'process' (2019: 17). In a sense, Adda invites practitioners to surpass the achievements of Zarrilli when he describes martial arts as a 'super discipline' that can assist additional subjects beyond the confines of the performing arts (2023). Nonetheless, Zarrilli's efforts can be viewed within this 'super discipline' context as significant in providing a concrete example of the possibilities inherent in establishing martial-acting in university settings. Accordingly, if martial arts demonstrate the potential to assist practitioners in the preparation and execution of performance, these findings might also encourage the expansion of the practice into additional areas of study.

The potential of using martial arts in various disciplines directs one's attention to the variety of choices available for actors. Zarrilli himself recognises these options while simultaneously describing the rewards of his approach (Martial Arts Studies 2016). However, he refrains from mentioning those forms of training he finds beneficial beyond his process. On the same subject, Błaszczak explains that although martial arts are of great benefit to him, he does not believe that they are necessarily adequate for 'all actors and all kinds of theatre' (2021: 9). The success of Zarrilli's work indicates that martial arts are a viable alternative for the actor's development if integrated in a coherent and consistent manner that enhances one's capacities for imagination, intention, and action.

### **1.2.2 It's a Draw**

It is interesting to consider Zarrilli's views on some of the challenges involved in a martial arts practice for aesthetic performers. One difficulty mentioned by practitioners in section 1.1.1 includes the presumed violence that accompanies martial-acting. For example, Eve

Wedderburn expresses alarm at how institutions appear to ignore the undercurrent of violence in martial arts for actors (2016: 90). However, in an interview, Zarrilli rebuts that rather than make him more violent, martial arts assist him in acquiring the ‘responsibility’ to become a true ‘pacifist’ (DojoTV 2018). Indeed, for Zarrilli, martial arts do not endorse aggressiveness in the actor but, on the contrary, foster an ethical attitude through discipline, dedication, and awareness of one’s surroundings.

Another difficulty that Zarrilli expresses, similar to practitioners in section 1.1.1, involves the need for *time* in martial-acting. Zarrilli explains that time is necessary to achieve ideals such as ‘thinking with the body’ and ‘acting with the mind’ (2009: 76). Weiler adds that one should view actor training as a ‘life-long’, ‘ongoing’, and ever-changing process (2019), which counters contemporary inclinations in various spheres to achieve swift results with minimum effort. From the field of psychology, Stephanie Brown describes contemporary society’s need for ‘instant gratification’ as resulting in a lack of ‘deepening experiences’ that has caused the ‘younger generation’ to miss important components of human ‘development’ (2014). In this light, one might consider the need to set the proper expectations in regard to the actor’s educational journey.

A possible redefinition of training expectations evokes the apparent ‘foreignness’ of Asian martial arts concepts in the West. Zarrilli admits that some of his students struggled to understand how to apply his Asian-inspired process to acting (1995: 187). Nevertheless, he believes that the confusion experienced by these students resulted from Western-based assumptions of actor training processes (1995: 187). Zarrilli attempts to bridge the potential ‘gap’ between training and performance by employing ‘performance-like exercises’ that aid in applying principles (2009: 9).

Adda agrees that Western practitioners sometimes need assistance embracing Eastern concepts (2023). To this end, he describes adapting Stanislavski’s theories as a

stepping stone to allow Western practitioners to accept Eastern practices (2023). For example, Adda takes Stanislavski's idea of reducing action to minimal movement, which encompasses a significant experience and makes an actor more 'alive on stage' (2023). Zarrilli also introduces his process to a Western audience by speaking of practitioners like Stanislavski (cf. 1.2.1). Other practitioners who could potentially serve as 'stepping stones' to 'Eastern concepts' include: 'Michael Chekhov, [Vsevolod] Meyerhold, [Antonin] Artaud, [Bertolt] Brecht, [Jerzy] Grotowski, [Eugenio] Barba, [Jacques] Copeau, Tadeusz Kantor, Herbert Blau, Suzuki Tadashi, Yoshi Oida, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Anne Bogart' (Zarrilli 2009: 8). This is notable in providing practitioners with insight into how to introduce Eastern concepts into a Western-based context.

Addressing possible difficulties in applying martial arts to acting also highlights what some might perceive as enigmatic concepts. Zarrilli describes the importance of 'energy vectors' and how he led practitioners to access what he defines as 'inner energy' or '*ki/qi/prana-vayu*' (Zarrilli 2009: 19). Zarrilli's approach to accessing 'inner energy' includes breathing and imagery exercises, such as inviting practitioners to follow the breath with an 'inner eye' (2009: 27; see also 1.2.1), as a pathway to awakening 'awareness', 'perception', and the 'entire bodymind' (2009: 19). However, Mroz cautions that one would be misguided in believing that 'the Sanskrit word *prana*' and the Chinese word *qi* are equivalent' (2023). Although they may appear similar 'in low resolution', they are not identical 'in any other way' (Mroz 2023). In this regard, Zarrilli would have been better served to distinguish the differences between *prana-vayu*, *qi*, and *ki* in understanding these principles. Nonetheless, Zarrilli's exploration of concepts from different cultures helped to spread Eastern ideas in Western actor training.

The appropriate terminology is essential for instruction because it directs attention to an objective or phenomenon and the means to understand and achieve it. Zarrilli admits that he initially found himself scrambling for adequate language to describe the gains of his training process (Martial Arts Studies 2016). Still, he discovered that a combination of phenomenological and dynamic systems theories provided him with the vocabulary needed to explain his approach (Zarrilli 2020: 1). This is significant because, in doing so, Zarrilli provided practitioners with the potential jargon to describe martial arts for actor training. Camilleri proposes to refine such terminology by using a ‘post-phenomenological’ and ‘post-psychophysical’ discourse to fit the socio-material demands of the twenty-first century more adequately (2019: 33–64). In this regard, although Zarrilli argues that ‘phenomenological’ and ‘psychophysical’ already address the developments of the present age (2020: 278), a more updated discourse that reflects the fast-evolving technological realities we inhabit provides further options when addressing martial arts for actor instruction in a contemporary setting.

In conclusion, Zarrilli does not attempt to impose what an actor should experience through his (Zarrilli’s) lessons. Instead, he offers a ‘process’ to reveal what might ‘arise’ in the individual actor (Martial Arts Studies 2016). His contribution is significant in providing insights into the communion of martial arts and performing arts training. Zarrilli’s experience reveals a consistent effectiveness that an actor might achieve through the application of martial arts principles, especially where it concerns the bodymind connection, selflessness, focus, awareness, and readiness. This thesis takes its cue from Zarrilli’s contributions, which lead to the work of another martial artist, actor, director, and academic whose work cuts across different areas of interest for this thesis: Daniel Mroz.

### 1.3 Mroz's Stepping Stones

The story goes like this:

A learned man once went to a Zen teacher to inquire about Zen. As the Zen teacher explained, the learned man would frequently interrupt him with remarks like, 'Oh, yes, we have that too...' and so on. Finally, the Zen teacher stopped talking and began to serve tea to the learned man. He poured the cup full and then kept pouring until the cup overflowed. 'Enough!' the learned man once more interrupted. 'No more can go into the cup!' 'Indeed, I see,' answered the Zen teacher. 'If you do not first empty the cup, how can you taste my cup of tea?' (Lee 2011)

Richard Nichols notes that although the actor and Zen monk might not have crossed paths, they nonetheless share a similar ideal of 'human behaviour', one that is freed from inhibitions (1991: 43). Not every martial artist or actor follows Zen teachings, nor is this thesis advocating that they do so. Yet, the story of the 'learned man' illustrates how some practitioners may need to overcome preconceived notions in order to accept martial arts as a form of actor training. Hence the aim of this thesis to examine what actors can expect from such an endeavour.

Mroz's approach acts as a stepping stone for those who wish to incorporate martial arts in their actor training, thus also providing a detailed guide for employing such a practice. His decision to engage in traditional martial arts for actors was recommended by his instructor, Richard Fowler (2011: 26). Mroz developed an approach using traditional Chinese martial arts and world singing traditions to build upon what practitioners like Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, and Fowler proposed. His process, which he has successfully integrated in courses at the University of Ottawa since the early 2000s (Mroz 2009: 164), follows an incremental learning process modelled after how children learn their native language (Mroz 2011: 32). Mroz's work has provided

practitioners with the tools necessary to create ‘contemporary performances’ through martial arts training (2009: 164).

A review of one of his publications, *The Dancing Word* (2011), provides further insight into the deployment and adaptation of martial arts for actors. For the scope of this research, Mroz’s definition of ‘Chinese martial arts’ refers to ‘cultural practices’ dating to the ‘mid-19th to the early 20th centuries’ (2022: 444). This review highlights the uniqueness of Mroz’s process while identifying the advantages of martial arts training in regard to the enhanced skills, emotional well-being, and physical health of the actor. His work also addresses perceived challenges such as misconceptions of ‘energy’, time, and violence.

### **1.3.1 Why Martial Arts?**

Mroz’s findings on the benefits of traditional Chinese martial arts for performers resonate with those skills mentioned so far in this chapter, such as improving an actor’s confidence, movement, flexibility, posture, partnering skills, use of breath, and improvisational abilities. He developed a system that prepares students for acting by moving through incremental levels of ‘movement, voice, rhythm, song, speech, and synthesis composition’ (Mroz 2011: 103–04). He teaches actors how to improve their abilities as performers to create original and visually engaging performances (2011: 164).

Among the notable qualities of Mroz’s approach are his principles that deal with vocal clarity (2011: 37). This is significant in light of how beginning in the 1960s, Alan Stambusky lamented that inadequate vocal training was producing insufficiently prepared actors, thus leading to the reliance of stage microphones as standard equipment (1963: 289). Ten years later, Robert Benedetti built upon this concern by adding the need to teach performance skills that do not separate the actor’s ‘voice, body, and mind’ (1973: 467).

Since then, Mroz's research on world vocal traditions has allowed him to complement martial arts with exercises such as 'chanting, speaking, polyphonic singing, and harmonic tone training' (2009: 164). His approach places particular attention on the actor's vocalicity as a form of 'kinetic energy' (Mroz 2011: 120–22) and resonates with the potential need for supplementing martial arts to suit performance needs (cf. 1.1.2). Accompanying martial arts with vocal instruction also echoes the work of practitioners like Elizabeth de Roza and Budi Miller, who recognise that actors trained in the martial art of *kalarippayattu* and Fitzmaurice Voicework are more 'fully' prepared for performance through a combination of these practices (2018). Thus, Mroz's contribution is noteworthy in providing an option for those who wish to reap the benefits of martial arts without neglecting adequate vocal preparation needed for performance.

Mroz's approach extends beyond vocal instruction. Another example of his training includes 'spatial projection', a skill that allows actors to shift 'sensitivity' beyond what is tactically and visually accessible (Mroz 2022: 433–44). Exercises in spatial projection include identifying an imaginary 'grid' that defines the space around a person (2022: 447). Students may draw 'lines, arcs, and curved planes' within this 'grid' by utilising different body parts as the instruments that paint a world of 'imagined' 'art' (2022: 446). Mroz's 'spatial projection' stresses the role of imagination in his process of martial arts for acting and demonstrates yet another way of using martial arts for the actor's benefit.

Expanding an actor's abilities to include invisible qualities – as distinct from the visibility of what audiences see on stage – such as the sensitivity that comes with spatial projection, brings psychophysical instruction to the fore. Roughly fifty years ago, Sophia Delza advocated for the 'simultaneous use' and training of the performer's body and mind (1972: 29). In the 1980s, Linda Conway expressed 'concern' about the insufficiency of popular actor training that lacked a mind-body connection (1980: 51). Since then, and

thanks to the practice and publications of various practitioners, psychophysical instruction is generally accepted in performance training (Camilleri 2013b: 30). Mroz is among those practitioners who developed a psychophysical process for the actor, precisely through traditional martial arts because, as he himself acknowledges, his approach is aimed at the actor's 'bodymind' (2011: 100–01). Roughly ten years later, Camilleri described the potential limitations of psychophysical approaches in contemporary performance practices that, in seeking to overcome the mind-body binary, leave the ecological human-non-human dichotomy unchallenged (Camilleri 2019: xi; see also section 1.2.2). In this regard, Mroz's approach engages with 'post-psychophysical' concerns since martial arts are already relational in dealing with real or imaginary opponents.

Another characteristic of Mroz's process includes Prearranged Movement Patterns (PMPs) drawn from traditional Chinese martial arts and original compositions (2011: 160). These movement sequences are spurred by 'conscious intentions and impulses' that augment 'self-awareness' and are composed of observable and intentional actions (89). Skills acquired from PMPs include 'strength, endurance, and coordination' (98). Viewed from this angle, PMPs can be aligned with how Ellie Nixon describes '*kata*' as 'a training etude [that] chimes with Lecoq's Twenty Movements' (2022: 419). As such, Mroz's work with PMPs is significant in providing practitioners with a potential building block for studying and creating devised performances through martial arts. The proposal of a Karate for Actor Training (KAT) Programme, which will be introduced and discussed later in this thesis in Chapters 5 and 6, includes elements of composition for devising performances that resonate strongly with Mroz's PMPs.

Using martial arts for the training of actors potentially also benefits practitioners with a means to evaluate progress. Mroz creates an equation dividing the number of

gestures in a sequence of physical movements by the number of intentions per action. A reduction in the number of thoughts during the execution of moves means that the actions need to be adjusted to make the sequence more physically and mentally demanding (Mroz 2011: 118). Mroz's 'formula' is helpful in supplying practitioners with a possible way to assess growth. An actor's development is also accessible by other means, such as in a performance's increased 'truthfulness'. Franco Ruffini explains that: 'Actors must pretend, but this does not give them the licence to lie' (1995: 54), which is interesting in light of how he also describes actors as more engrossed with receiving admiration than achieving believability (2014: 22). The potential 'truthfulness' gained through martial arts, rooted as it is in the real-world situations of combat, parallels Ruffini's account of boxers as less 'concerned about being admired' than ending up 'on the floor' (Ruffini 2014: 22–23). In a similar vein, Robert Dillon offers martial arts as a means to 'reveal' the 'truth' needed in performance (1999), while Marie Walker adds that the specificity offered through martial arts is the ingredient to acquiring the sought-after believability in acting (2022: 440). Returning to Mroz, he agrees that his own process coaches actors to portray 'credible' performances through 'intentional truthfulness' (2011: 139).

Accessing the best means for achieving 'truthful acting' calls attention to other devices by which an actor may reach such an ideal. For example, suppose an actor uses Lee Strasberg's Affective Memory exercise to recall a traumatising real-life event to portray something similar on stage. In such a case, an audience will likely perceive 'true' emotional distress. However, Cheryl Kennedy McFarren argues that performance practitioners can no longer deny the harm of exercises that encourage the recall of trauma since research demonstrates that these practices are unhealthy, exemplified by responses like 'hyper-arousal' and 'dissociation' in actors (2003: 199). McFarren cautions acting instructors as to the ethical obligation of not teaching psychologically harmful exercises

to students (2003: 200). The ethical responsibility in theatre education resonates with how Mark Seton warns that acting instructors do not often prioritise responsibilities that protect student-actors (2010: 10). In light of such knowledge, practitioners might prefer tools that achieve ‘believable’ acting without jeopardising the actor’s psychological welfare.

On this subject, Mroz offers an alternative to drawing upon painful memories that cause repercussions to the actor or performance processes (2011: 130). He points out that every actor can recall an emotive history during a performance, but few prove capable of arousing powerful emotions in an audience (134). He offers traditional Chinese martial arts as a vehicle that allows one to ‘differentiate’ between ‘emotions’ and ‘sense of self’ to avoid succumbing to overpowering feelings (208). A 2015 research project on emotional well-being has found actors suffering from elevated ‘levels of depression, anxiety and stress’ compared to those in other professions (O’Neill 2015). In this scenario, Mroz’s approach offers actors the kind of training that counters stressful situations, such as when his students demonstrated anxiety during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic (Mroz 2023). To this end, Mroz’s approach indicates how traditional martial arts can assist the actor psychologically.

The actor’s internal state also tends to reflect the state of their physical health, as martial arts demonstrate the potential to assist in both areas. Mroz describes how his understanding of physicality through traditional Chinese martial arts, such as *taijiquan*, offers protection from physical harm (2023) and permits access to a sense of ease that counters repercussions of unnecessarily bracing during the work (2011: 100–03). Yet, he finds himself concerned for the safety of those who practise physical theatre without this knowledge (2023). He cautions that some forms of actor training lack substantial body knowledge, increasing the risk of injury (2023). The significance of beneficial movement

and understanding of the body is essential in highlighting the need for well-trained martial-acting instructors (cf. 1.1.1).

### 1.3.2 Why Not?

Over fifty years ago, Benedetti argued that Asian actors received a superior level of instruction compared to Western actors partially due to the intensive training that allowed these performers to become experts in ‘singing, dancing, acrobatics, mime, and acting’ (1973: 465). He explained that although Western practitioners have sought inspiration from Eastern practices, the Western-trained actor lacked the endurance of the Eastern-trained actor who withstands vigorous and ongoing training (1973: 465). Benedetti further stated that although practices like *taijiquan*, karate, and *aikido* ‘significantly’ help Western actors, they still fall short of what he perceived as the success of their Eastern counterparts (1973: 465). His argument in favour of Eastern actors implies that martial arts and performing arts are two separate practices. However, Mroz explains that he does not view martial arts as ‘subject A’ applied to theatre as ‘subject B’ (2023). Instead, he argues that martial arts are already inherently ‘theatre’. Thus, for him, martial arts for actors signifies ‘doing theatre with theatre’ (2023). This view is notable in light of the opposition of martial arts in actor education (cf. 1.1.2). Mroz’s stance is thus significant in redefining the basis by which practitioners may deploy martial arts for training purposes.

Similarities and overlaps between martial arts and performing arts can reflect potential inaccuracies when practitioners teach concepts that are foreign in the respective fields. In the late 1990s, Dillon lamented Western practitioners’ mistakes in describing Asian ideas through the improper use of terms, misrepresented equivalencies, and lack of specificity (1999). He points out that ‘martial arts’ in itself is an ‘imprecise term’ (1999).

Similarly, Mroz cautions that non-Asian concepts are at times inaccurately presented as ‘Asian’ by Western practitioners (2023). Upon further investigation, one might find that these presumably ‘Asian’ concepts derive from non-Asian sources like the Russian mystic Madame Blavatsky or the German physician Franz Mesmer (Mroz 2023), the first known as an ‘occultist’ (Wills 2016) and the second recognised as a ‘charlatan’ (Ellis 2015: 170). Thus, Mroz explains that it is important that practitioners trace traditional martial arts ideas to their accurate origins (2023).

When delving deeper into the origins and meanings of Eastern concepts, Western practitioners will most likely encounter a seemingly ambiguous concept often presented in theatrical jargon as ‘energy’. Fowler recognises that Asian martial arts offer generations of studies into ‘effective and energetic movement’ allowing the actor to receive a form of ‘sustainable’ instruction that accesses ‘potential’ and ‘kinetic’ energy (Mroz 2011: 44). On this subject, Barba and Savarese agree with the importance of ‘energy’ from Eastern and Western theatre perspectives because it sheds light on a dynamic quality that underpins and drives movement understood broadly to incline the imagination as much as gesture (1991: 74–84). However, Simon Murray argues that ‘energy’ is often ‘ill-used’ by performance practitioners who define it in ‘ubiquitous’ terms that dilute its specificity (2015: 50). Therefore, one can deduce that differing opinions of the definition of ‘energy’ may result in varying applications of this concept.

Mroz agrees that performance practitioners are guilty of the improper use of words like ‘energy’ or ‘*qi*’ (2023), while traditional Chinese martial arts training permits a deeper understanding of the specifics of these concepts. As conveyed in section 1.2.2, *qi* encompasses various definitions, including ‘breath’ and ‘life-energy’ (Mroz 2011: 59). When expressed in cosmology, *qi* is equated with ‘process and function’, while spiritually, *qi* is observed through the ‘positive and negative’ results of actions (2011: 59–

60). At the same time, Chinese Medicine interprets the state of *qi* through ‘physiological signs’ (2011: 60). Mroz’s explanation of the nuances of *qi* further highlights the importance of accurately defining martial arts concepts.

To summarise this overview of Mroz’s practice and writings, one finds a substantial understanding and concrete instances of integrating martial arts and actor training. Mroz’s psychophysical process uses traditional Chinese martial arts to build upon the knowledge and success of influential theatre practitioners. By assisting actors in avoiding popular misconceptions, he invites them to research practices and concepts that are potentially extraneous to their primary concern of aesthetic performance. His process strengthens the position that martial arts can enhance an actor’s abilities in areas such as confidence, physicality, awareness, vocal quality, breath work, improvisational skills, and believability in performance. Mroz’s approach differentiates itself from other forms of actor training in various ways, including how it addresses a performer’s physical and mental well-being while still providing practitioners with the components for devising and evaluating creative work. The nurturing aspect of Mroz’s process draws us to that of female practitioners in the field, whose collective voice resounds particularly in regard to the welfare of the actor as related to martial-acting.

#### **1.4 Women to the Forefront**

‘One of the most striking features of karate is that it may be engaged in by anybody, young or old, strong or weak, male or female’ (Funakoshi 1981: 112). Gichin Funakoshi, the ‘father’ of Shotokan karate, believes that anyone can practise martial arts, irrespective of appearance, age, gender, or ability. Still, male perspectives appear to outweigh those of females when it comes to martial arts for actor training. Although this may reflect the demographics involved, with men constituting ‘73% of studio memberships’ (Galperin

2022), the perspectives of female practitioners like Sophia Delza, Linda Conway, Ellie Nixon, Maria Brigida de Miranda, Maria Kapsali, and Christel Weiler provide significant and valuable analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of martial arts for actors. The practitioners featured in this section refer to martial arts with reference to the abilities of actors and their view of self, as well as to the relationship between martial-acting and topics like body image, consumerism, diversity, and other skills attainable through practice. Since these women echo many of the findings discussed in previous sections, such as those relating to time, emotional well-being, and physical health, this section also serves as a concluding overview of points addressed in the present chapter.

#### **1.4.1 Not Everyone is Kung Fu Fighting**

In the 1980s, John Caruso explained that the ultimate objective of American television was to advance consumerism under the appearance of ‘entertainment’ by maintaining the audience’s perception of the actor as a ‘role model’ and fulfilling ‘stereotypes’ (1986: 21). Roughly thirty years later, Maria Kapsali expressed concern that the ‘technical refinement’ in practices like the martial art of *taijiquan* encourages comparisons between physical abilities and appearances (2013: 84). Kapsali describes practices like *taijiquan* as inspiring an ‘objectified’ perception of the actor’s body, which consequently diminishes the actor’s ‘sense of empowerment’ (2013: 84). She argues that a person’s appearance is often associated with their worth such as in affiliating personal fitness with a ‘good person’ or posture with ‘social status’ (2013: 81). Kapsali speculates that those who practise *taijiquan*, yoga, or the Feldenkrais method are seen as ‘good’ simply because they are pursuing ‘healthy’ lifestyles, despite the potential inaccuracy of this correlation (2013: 80).

The objectification of the actor's physique highlights Elizabeth Brendel Horn's support for the use of 'physical exercises' in the theatre classroom to honour the human 'body' rather than improve one's figure (2019: 59). Horn explains that fostering the actor's potential fixation with 'body image' breeds detrimental outcomes such as eating disorders and poor self-esteem (2019: 59). This relates to how actors often shape their bodies to fit casting requirements (Mitchell 2015: 64). To this end, Roanna Mitchell invites performance practitioners to consider investing in 'holistic evaluations' of physicality rather than a societal definition of an attractive form (2015: 154). Linda Conway offers actors the solution of joining practices like 'karate' with dramatic skills such as 'action', 'phrasing' and 'visibility' to achieve an 'effective body image' (1980: 69). On her part, Christel Weiler explains that she views *taijiquan* as very accepting of different body types, adding that the practice also offers actors a way of adapting to the ageing process (2019). These observations from various sources propose martial arts as a training platform that can also assist actors to develop a 'healthier' view of self.

Although actors struggle with stress related to self-image, they might alternatively limit the effectiveness of their performances through egocentricity. On the one hand, Kapsali observes that disciplines such as *taijiquan* cause the actor's 'presence' to become 'mystified' and 'an end in itself', thus leading to narcissistic tendencies (2013: 82). On the other hand, Weiler describes *taijiquan* as opposing 'recrimination', the 'politics' of performance institutions, and egoism (2019). As described in section 1.2.1, most practitioners agree with Weiler that martial arts impart virtues that oppose narcissism. In this sense, then, martial arts can play a role in promoting a form of altruism that can not only benefit the work of actors but also their lives beyond the theatre as human beings.

How actors see themselves draws attention to consumerist tendencies that impact the formation of actors. Kapsali describes the 'commodification' of practices like

*taijiquan* in actor development as ‘tokenistic’ because acting programmes do not often permit the ‘in-depth’ and sustained instruction needed for proper training. She argues that practices like *taijiquan* act as part of a marketing strategy that drives performance instruction to become more ‘institutionalised and expensive’ (2013: 82). The relationship between performance and the educational marketplace also highlights how the surplus of trained performers ‘exponentially outweighs employment opportunities’ in the ‘entertainment industry and professional theatre’ (Zazzali and Klein 2015: 261). Eve Wedderburn suspects that practitioners utilise martial arts as actor training to make instruction more ‘relevant’ in contemporary contexts, which might also support maintaining performance practices in higher education (2016: 90). In this regard, it is important to weigh the perceived and actual value of martial arts for actor instruction as part of a broader educational business market.

As mentioned previously, actor training within educational contexts calls attention to how martial arts and sustained instruction go hand in hand. Conway supports the notion of ‘daily practice’ in increasing ‘patience, concentration, and awareness’ (1980: 57). Kapsali adds that as a sustained process, training enables actors to aim for physical and individual goals rather than ‘technical mastery’ (2013: 84), yet she also reminds us that the ‘length and intensity of training’ influences whether actors choose martial arts for their development (2013: 75). Maria Brigida de Miranda agrees to the need for years of training in acquiring specific skills available through *capoeira* (2012: 190); however, she chooses to employ *capoeira* as actor training *because* she finds the practice beneficial in light of duration constraints (2012: 182). These insights further solidify the notion of incorporating training as an ongoing endeavour despite the need to define better what actors can attain within specific timeframes (cf. 1.1.1).

Martial-acting within instructional environments points to those who may display interest in such a practice. Recent surveys demonstrate that most of those practising martial arts worldwide appear male and under fifty-five years of age (Galperin 2022). However, Mroz explains that 70% of his past and present performing arts students identify as female (2011: 31). A majority of women in postsecondary courses reflect data that indicates that females represent 6.27 million enrolments as opposed to 4.67 million males in the United States alone (Korhonen 2023).

The significant number of females who might engage in martial arts for actor training mirrors how women have historically benefitted from such a practice. Diana Looser explains that females often practised *jujitsu* and *judo* to resist male-dominated contexts while promoting women's rights at the turn of the twentieth century (2011: 15–17). In the 1980s, Conway described how she employed *taijiquan* to 'free' the actor from societal restrictions of appropriate male or female physicality (1980: 54). Recently, Gey Pin Ang and Ranice Tay Kai Xin stated that their work as women who practise traditional Chinese martial arts transcends 'age', 'gender', and 'experience' (2022: 218). Grzegorz Ziolkowski agrees with his female counterparts that martial arts promote gender equality in actor-training contexts (2022a: 361). Gender empowerment appears particularly significant considering a statistically significant 'gender bias' in favour of men who are more apt to make a 'living' out of acting than women (Williams, Lacasa, and Latora 2019). In this light, martial arts provide a potential avenue for gender impartiality.

However, Jiwon Chung argues that 'traditional martial arts' are 'hierarchical' and 'oppressive' in advocating inequality between 'abilities', 'seniority', 'gender', and 'size' (2011: 142). Chung's view differs from that of practitioners like Weiler, who considers *taijiquan* as lending itself to 'diversity' (Weiler 2019). Likewise, Nixon describes *judo* as providing an inclusive and collaborative devising environment that connects actors to the

surrounding ‘world’ and ‘events’ (2022: 425). Although martial arts may provide a platform for diversity, Kapsali views *taijiquan* as non-inclusive of all people groups, as it is often reserved for those of significant economic means in a ‘consumerist market’ (2013: 80). However, the expenses associated with the enrolment in martial arts programmes appear comparable to other art forms, such as dance (Ataexcellence: 2020). Those who engage in various forms of the arts, such as theatre, dance, music, or fine art, for example, can expect to invest both time and money into training. Accepting martial arts as an ‘art form’ allows one to associate financial and duration commitments similar to other creative outlets. Therefore, one could argue that if martial arts exclude those of lower economic means, then the same applies for ‘the arts’.

#### **1.4.2 Fast as Lightning**

Previous sections have delineated what practitioners describe as benefits acquired through different styles of martial arts, such as improving an actor’s stage presence, partner work, awareness, spatial orientation, sensitivity, concentration, reflexes, flexibility, resilience, alertness, perceptivity, attentiveness, stamina, balance, centring, and ‘virtuosity’, all benefits that serve the actor both in and out of a performance. Delza notes that in her experience, *taijiquan* offers actors ‘patience’, ‘poise’, ‘power’, ‘perseverance’, ‘grace’, ‘ease’, ‘coordination’, ‘assurance’, ‘security’, ‘calmness’, and ‘control’ (1972: 33). Conway adds that practitioners can expect to achieve an improved ‘execution of the intellect’ (1980: 69). For Nixon, *judo* enables actors to move with ‘lightness’, ‘freedom’, and ‘gentleness’ (2022: 425), whilst Walker ascribes enhanced ‘chorus work’ and ‘internal/external presence’ to *aikido* training (2022: 440). On her part, De Miranda describes her undergraduate students as achieving an enhanced ‘sensitivity and communication’ offered through the basic movements in *capoeira* (2012: 190). These

testimonies for practitioners, yet again, confirm that actors may achieve significant benefits despite variations in martial arts style (cf. 1.1.2).

As alluded to in section 1.3.1, practitioners have experienced the positive impacts of martial arts on physical and mental health. These findings resonate with the research of Carol Fuller and Viki Lloyd, who surveyed more than 500 individuals who participated in martial arts, concluding that practice promotes ‘health and well-being’ (2020: 104). Examples of how martial arts have helped those with health issues are numerous and include Funakoshi, who advocated karate as preventative care against ‘illness and disease’ (1981: xiv). Performance trainers like Kapsali agree that practices like *taijiquan* assist in health and fitness environments as an alternative cure for different ailments (2013: 78). Similarly, Weiler describes martial arts in terms of treatment for health concerns such as ‘balance problems, spinal and back disorders, tensions, stress symptoms and depressive mood’ (2019). Conway adds that *taijiquan* also benefits ‘inner organs’ (1980: 54). These findings coalesce the understanding of potential health benefits for those actors who pursue martial arts.

Beyond physical benefits, Delza surmises that *taijiquan* assists actors with anxiety associated with ‘stage nerves’ (1972: 33, see also 1.3.1). She points out that ‘harmony of mind and body’ allows performers to contain ‘emotional disturbances’ that can limit ‘creative’ and ‘imaginative’ prospects (Delza 1972: 32). Débora Zamarioli adds that the Chinese martial art of kung fu demonstrates the potential for ‘self-cultivation’ in performance training (2015: 125). The psychological value of martial arts marks another aspect of the rewards available through practice. Focusing on such potential health benefits once again draws attention to the stereotype that the emphasis of practice is on the ‘martial’ rather than the ‘art’. As reported in section 1.2.2, Wedderburn addresses what she considers as inherent violence in martial-acting. However, practitioners like

Mroz describe martial arts as ‘non-aggressive’ in ‘nature’ (2011: 82). In this regard, De Miranda explains that she teaches *capoeira* in her acting classes without requiring students to engage in physical contact (2012: 189), thus providing a solution for the promotion of actor safety. Revisiting varying opinions on this central issue supports how practitioners in previous sections have found ways of prioritising the performing arts student’s welfare in conjunction with martial arts education.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter provided various snapshots of martial arts as a vehicle for actor training in contemporary Western contexts by way of various reviews. The first section featured a review of a 2022 special issue of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (TDPT) dedicated to martial arts, including the potential challenges and benefits available to actors through practice. The next section focused on Phillip Zarrilli’s *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (2009), specifically on how actors can achieve enhanced awareness through Eastern martial arts. Zarrilli’s work addresses similar disadvantages to those voiced by practitioners in the TDPT review, yet he also provides tools to overcome difficulties such as teaching foreign concepts to Western students. The subsequent review of Daniel Mroz’s *Dancing Word* (2011) highlighted the various ways martial arts contribute to his theatre classes, including evaluating student progress, as well as tools that assist actors with devising. The final section addressed the contributions of female practitioners who provide a significant understanding of martial-acting, especially concerning the actor’s overall well-being.

A combination of the benefits showcased throughout these reviews reveals martial arts for actors as presenting possible obstacles like student disinterest, time limitations, safety concerns, the need for modifying exercises, and the necessity for specialised

instructors. However, the advantages of such training include improved creativity, physicality, awareness, confidence, believability, alertness, breath support, bodymind connectivity, self-image, physical health, and mental well-being. Although the overwhelming majority of practitioners surveyed in this chapter agree that actors can expect to enhance their performance skills through martial arts, it was also important to include why not all performers find this practice beneficial. Building on this knowledge, and as set out in the Introduction, this thesis aims to provide practitioners with the necessary answers to engage in martial arts like karate to improve performance abilities. To this end, the following three chapters introduce those training and performance principles that serve as the foundation of the Karate for Actor Training programme of work presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

## Chapter 2

### Principles of Performance Training: The Body

The preceding chapter set the stage for a discussion on performance training principles accessible through karate. The nature of what an actor may hope to achieve through such preparation is encapsulated in Eugenio Barba's letter to one of his performers, Roberta Carreri:

We live cloistered in skies of words, ideas, stories and conventions. Beneath these skies floats an island we call theatre. We can inhabit this island either as a haven or as a place where we can stand on tiptoe in order to tear, here and there, the veils of those skies in hope of glimpsing the point of contact joining the two worlds between which we balance: the world of illusions that help us to live and the world of reality which some of us cannot bear to gaze at for long. (Barba in Carreri 2014: xxi)

Another way of describing such a blurred 'point of contact' between 'illusions' and 'reality' is when a rose in nature appears 'artificial' compared to a rose made of silk that appears 'real'. In other words, the present chapter discusses how actors can use karate to access the awe-inspiring potential of theatre.

#### 2.1 Organising Structures

The methodology that this chapter employs to examine the benefits of karate for actors, which fall under what Barba calls 'extra-daily techniques' (1991: 9–10), is characterised not by an inflexible 'science' of training but by offering useful 'bits of advice' (1991: 8). Carreri compares such 'advice' for actors and their roles in performances to a sculptor's 'ability to handle hammer and chisel' in order to create statues that appear 'alive' (2014:

159). Therefore, in this thesis, the principles of performance training presented in Chapters 2 and 3 can be aligned with the premise that training per se is not the goal but, rather, a means to an end of expression and communication obtained through a sustained work ethic.

A crucial aspect in the identification and discussion of these training principles, which form the basis for the transferability of extra-daily techniques and benefits from karate to the work of actors, involves the organising structure to be adopted to deliberate such skills and values. Consequently, it is important to consider some models applied for similar purposes that have informed the categorisation of principles that feature in the current chapter and the subsequent two chapters. For cross-sectional methodological reasons, these models include a practical book of advice for the actor, an audio-visual resource, a theoretical publication, a recent (2023) EU-funded project, and a performer's work memoir.

As a publication of 'tips' for actors, *The Secret Art of the Performer: A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* (Barba and Savarese 1991) follows an 'A-Z' classification system to categorise principles of performance while homing in on specifics such as parts of the human anatomy, including the 'eyes', 'face', 'hands', and 'feet'. This publication by Barba and Nicola Savarese offers performers guidance by tracing 'shared common principles' that span geographical and cultural distances through the study of human socio-cultural and physiological behaviour in performance (1991: 8). The advantages of this publication include an anthropological viewpoint of 'useful directions for improved performance' (8).

Comparably, *Physical Actor Training: An Online A-Z* (2019) by Paul Allain and Frank Camilleri adopts an alphabetical system of categorisation that narrows principles to specific concepts, such as those pertaining to parts of the anatomy and related

techniques. This resource comprises over sixty short videos with audio commentary and prioritises movement-based theatre while enticing the actor to engage in ‘hands-on’ training aimed towards ‘movement work, vocal exploration, dance-theatre, and physical training’ (2019). The classification system present in this source of audio-visual material presents various concepts, including ‘grounding’, ‘balance’, ‘energy’, and ‘craft’.

By comparison, John Matthews *Anatomy of Performance Training* (2014) portrays a theoretical view of the body while employing a categorisation structure that highlights the ‘hand’, ‘foot’, ‘mouth’, ‘heart’, and ‘ear’ as the subjects of chapters through a progression that aims at developing ‘arguments’ related to training (2014: 29–30). Matthews describes these subjects not as severed parts but as the ‘actions’ and ‘uses’ that are ‘exemplified’ and ‘represented’ by each category (27). Thus, his description of the body becomes as much about ‘holding, walking, speaking, hearing and feeling’ as it does about ‘hands, feet, mouths, ears, and hearts’ (27). The benefits of Matthews’ work include drawing attention to the importance of ongoing practice (4) and developing one’s understanding of the ‘physical and propositional body’ as a ‘science’, ‘art’, and ‘methodology’ (20).

In contrast, *InPerTrain Manual: Towards an Individual Performer Training* (Kozma and Marofka 2023) arranges training according to theoretical and practical principles. Although Gábor Viktor Kozma and Mátyás Marofka do not classify training according to anatomy in this EU-funded resource, they still address parts of the human body within exercises. This project provides support aimed at introducing ‘innovation in performer training’ while encouraging performers to ‘develop’ their actor training programmes either singularly or collectively (2023: 9). The benefits of this manual include providing the actor with a ‘typical day-to-day routine’ that favours continued training (10).

Alternatively, Carreri adopts a chronological narrative in her memoir, *On Training and Performance: Traces of an Odin Teatret Actress* (2014). Her biographical account sheds light on the Odin Teatret training process while acknowledging components of the body in relation to theatre exercises. One example is an exercise she refers to as ‘Leading Points’, which involves directing attention to the ‘heels’, ‘elbows’, and ‘wrists’ as a means to engage holistically one’s body and intentionality (Carreri 2014: 199). The intended benefits of Carreri’s account include an aim to inspire performers rather than provide a training manual for performance purposes (2014: 4).

The above models inform the structure of the present chapter by highlighting an almost inevitable need to address specific parts of the body in physical theatre. Thus, this chapter classifies the pelvis, torso, feet, legs, hands, arms, face, and eyes as components of an organic whole. Such a sectioning of the body into separate ‘parts’ might come across as counterintuitive on account of the holistic nature of a person. In this thesis, any perceived ‘partitioning’ of the actor is intended as a narrowing down to what Barba and Savarese describe as a ‘particular use of the body’ or ‘technique’ (1991: 9), i.e. a focus on the micro or component elements that *relationally* contribute to and constitute the actor’s psychophysical bodymind. Analogous to the image of a sculptor chiselling away at what is superfluous in a block of marble, the training principles in this chapter resonate more with Jerzy Grotowski’s concept of ‘*via negativa*’ – an eradication of obstacles – than to an accumulation and ‘collection of skills’ (1975: 17). Moreover, the present chapter also addresses additional principles that align with the actor’s body, such as breath, rhythm, and tempo. These elements, which involve the *relationality* of the physical parts (i.e. the gel that brings and holds everything together), also appear in many of the movement-based theatre training resources mentioned above.

The sequence implied in the subtitles of Chapters 2 and 3, i.e. ‘Body’ and ‘Mind’ respectively, is one forced by the structure of writing, which demands a linear approach that places one item after another and does not allow for contemporaneous or simultaneous ordering. As such, therefore, the sequence of chapters should not indicate either a separation or an order of importance. Accordingly, this thesis builds on the premise that actors are human beings composed of body and mind. Matthews describes training as an all-inclusive endeavour that creates and recreates ‘specific values about humans’ (2014: 8) whilst acting as an ever-present ‘response to the problems experienced as a result of having a body and being in the world’ (2014: 164). Thus, the principles in this thesis address the psychophysical nature of actor training while at the same time seeking to surpass the limitations of viewing the actor exclusively in terms of ‘bodymind’ by adopting Camilleri’s ‘post-psychophysical’ position of the actor as ‘bodyworld’ (2019: 62; cf. section 1.2.1). Describing the actor in terms of ‘bodyworld’, i.e. as extended beyond the envelope of one’s body to include a relational connection with the world-out-there, is not intended as ‘anti-psychophysical’ but, as Camilleri argues, ‘psychophysicality to a wider and deeper degree’ (2019: xxii). Karate illustrates bodyworld *par excellence*, in that, in lieu of an actual person or location, one uses the imagination as grounded in reality. For example, when practising *kata* (prearranged movement sequence), a *karateka* is affected by the ‘real’ immediate environment, including, but not limited to, the temperature, lighting, sound, architecture, and materials that compose the surrounding ‘world’. The combination of stimuli from the ‘real world’ affects the *karateka* in ways comparable to an actor during performance. Therefore, the following training principles acknowledge not only the actor’s psychophysical integrity as a human being, but also the relational connection with the situating context as a ‘being-in-the-world’ (Camilleri 2020: 25).

## 2.2 Body

Karate for actor training requires a harmonic collaboration of parts of the human anatomy in relation to the mind. Such is evident in executing techniques like the jump featured in the *kata* (prearranged movement sequence) known as *Heian Godan* (see Figure 1). Each part of the body is not disconnected as ‘the human body is structured in such a way that even a single movement of one individual part results in a kind of muscular echo in all the other parts’ (Barba and Savarese 1991: 122). Accordingly, this section takes a closer look at some of the elements that constitute this organic whole.



*Figure 1. Karate jump in kata known as Heian Godan, by Josephine Calvo, 2024. (Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*

### *Pelvis and Torso*

Of the many components of the body, the hip area is among the most undervalued yet essential. Medical practitioners Matthew Burgess and Forshing Lui define the pelvis as a crucial component of the human skeleton, serving as an:

Attachment point for some of the strongest muscles in the human body while withstanding the forces generated by them. The curved nature of the pelvic bone creates a closed structure, itself lined with various muscles and housing various blood supplies, lymphatic structures, nerves, and organs, including the intestines, urinary bladder, and internal sex organs. (Burgess and Lui 2023)

Thus, martial artists and physical theatre practitioners – along with posture and movement practices like the Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Method – stress the importance of properly aligning the pelvis to avoid consequences like poor posture displayed through lumbar lordosis (i.e. an abnormal inward curvature of the lumbar spine). On this subject, sixth *dan karateka* Jesse Enkamp explains that:

Incorrect movement and/or positioning of the pelvis can lead to considerably decreased anatomical stability and weak posture. And not only will incorrect orientation of the pelvis give us weak and useless techniques, but it might even injure us. (2023)

Consequently, a karate *sensei* (teacher) may instruct: ‘To preserve your lumbar, control how it bends, do not tilt your pelvis forward, [and] keep your buttocks and core muscles toned’ (Chichvarin 2020). In karate stances, *karateka* (i.e. karate practitioners) should keep their backs straight, avoid leaning, and maintain level hips (see Figure 2). Accordingly, *karate-dō* attributes importance to *koshi* or energy found in the hips and the posterior pelvic tilt (see Figure 3). Enkamp describes the posterior pelvic tilt in karate as

‘tucking the tail between the legs’ to ‘maintain the neutral lumbar curvature’ (2023). The movement of the pelvis and torso is particularly evident in karate punches like *gyaku zuki* (reverse punch) because the hips and chest rotate in the last moment before hitting the target to maximise impact. In the *kata* known as *Hangetsu*, one may notice the heightened isolation of the pelvic rotation, where the movement slows to a pace that coincides with the breath. An example of the beginning techniques in the *Hangetsu* sequence require that they are executed slowly and with an application of power and breath work as follows:

- Step forward with the left foot, sliding the foot in a crescent-shaped arc while executing a middle level block with the left fist, bringing it up from the right side in a large semicircular motion.
- Retract the right fist to the right hip with both fists facing upwards.
- Without altering the stance, pull the left fist back to the hip and extend the right fist toward the front in conjunction with a subtle hip rotation where the back hip pushes forward and the front hip pulls back.

The above sample of the *Hangestu* sequence highlights the relationship between hip movements and powerful techniques. Recognising the importance attributed to the pelvis relates to how martial artist Dave Lowry explains that movement begins from the hips regardless of whether one is ‘executing a reverse punch, a strike with a kendo shinai or an aikido throw’ (2005: 48).

Japanese performer Katsuko Azuma agrees with attributing importance to the pelvic area, where she places ‘her energy as an actress and dancer’ in the ‘centre of gravity’ located at the ‘midpoint of a line between the navel and the coccyx’ (Barba and Savarese 1991: 18). Carreri describes receiving the following instruction from Azuma:

She told me to imagine a steel ball covered in velvet in my stomach and a steel cable stretched out between the top of my head and my coccyx. This cable was tight and drawn, in tension, pulled upwards by the head towards the sky and downwards by the coccyx towards the centre of the earth. (2014: 102)

The imagery of contrasting materials in a performer's abdomen reflects the harmonious interplay of opposites in Asian principles. Such appears closely related to what *Kabuki* actor Sawamura Sojuro describes as '*koshi*' or the actor's 'right energy' (Barba and Savarese 1991: 10). '*Koshi*' is translated from Japanese to English as 'hips' whilst referring to the ideal vitality in an actor. Therefore, mastery over the hip area is essential for the martial artist and movement-based performer. Visualising internal images like Azuma's 'steel cable' facilitates the body's alignment and can counteract the effects of sedentary and computer-based lifestyles that compromise overall well-being. Proper posture in karate is significant in protecting oneself from the dangers of leaning forward, such as what would expose the head during an attack. In karate, improved alignment allows one to guard vital organs and enables diaphragmatic breathing necessary for movement. Among its many functions, the pelvic area constitutes the area that 'unites' the 'upper body' with the 'lower body'.



*Figure 2. Demonstration of kata known as Jion, by Josephine Calvo, 2024.  
(Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*



*Figure 3. Demonstration of kata known as Jitte, by Josephine Calvo, 2024.  
(Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*

### *Feet and Legs*

If the pelvic area is the platform for the upper body, the feet serve as the foundation of the entire body. The structure of the foot speaks volumes about its role as ‘a complex mechanical structure of the human body composed of thirty-three joints, twenty-six bones, and more than a hundred muscles, tendons, and ligaments that all work together to bear weight, allow for locomotion, and transmit force’ (Manganaro and others 2023).

Camilleri stresses the importance of the feet in movement-based acting, beginning from the premise that ‘they are the point of contact with the floor’ (Allain and Camilleri 2019). Barba and Savarese add that ‘Whether deformed by special shoes or left free, the feet determine the body’s tone and its dynamic space’ (1991: 120) and that the ‘position’ of the feet may impact the ‘strength and nuance’ of the voice (1991: 126). Thus, performers tend to understand how feet influence the actual physical portrayal of characters, especially where movement is concerned. Accordingly, freedom from foot constrictions is a commonality found among many Eastern performance traditions (Barba and Savarese 1991: 120). The positioning and movement of the feet are, therefore, not only crucial to the alignment of the body, but also to the specific aesthetic and functional requirements of a practice.

Those who practise karate also feature nude feet or, at most, thin-soled shoes. Ideally, karate training features feet in contact with a *tatami* mat to increase traction and stability. The foot’s dexterity is crucial for correctly positioning a kick to impact a target powerfully and without self-injury. Thus, different foot positions facilitate slicing, pushing, or sliding movements, all of which impact balance. During locomotion, karate students receive instruction to slide their feet on the ground while maintaining the same height, which resonates with performance forms like *Kyogen*. Controlling the legs, hips, and feet allows one to deliver karate kicks from these stances, such as *mae geri* (front kick), *mawashi geri* (roundhouse kick), *yoko geri* (side kick; see Figure 4), and *mae tobi geri* (forward jump kick; see Figure 5). An example of how the feet feature in a prearranged sequence can be observed through a sample of the *kata* known as *Jion* (meaning ‘compassion and favour’):

- Jump forward, landing on the right foot and draw the left foot behind the right heel.
- When landing, keep the hips lowered with the right wrist crossed above the left.
- The wrists are crossed to block against a lower-level attack.
- Step back with the left foot, then swing fists from the crossed position to the back on both sides.

The above features a self-defence sequence against an imaginary opponent where foot positions are linked to the rest of the body. This aligns with strengthening the body from the ‘feet up’, which is fundamental in martial arts and exemplified by how, as a young man, Gichin Funakoshi ambitiously practised *kiba dachi* (horse stance; see Figure 9) on a rooftop during an Okinawan typhoon (1981: 46). Basic stances that engage the lower body are the foundation of karate movement and include *zenkutsu dachi* (front stance; see Figure 10) and *kokutsu dachi* (back stance; see Figure 3). Learning proper stances allows one to remain grounded while protecting oneself from techniques such as *ashi barai* (forward sweep). The lower ligaments function in terms of defensive and offensive techniques in a way comparable to the upper ligaments (see Figure 6).



*Figure 4. Demonstration of yoko geri (sidekick), by Josephine Calvo, 2024.  
(Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*



*Figure 5. Demonstration of mae tobi geri (forward jump kick), by Josephine Calvo, 2024. (Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*



*Figure 6. Demonstration of kata known as Unsu, by Josephine Calvo, 2024.  
(Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*

### *Hands and Arms*

Funakoshi describes how some idealise the outcome of practising martial arts when they question: ‘I understand that you practise karate. Tell me, can you really shatter a huge rock with your fingers? Can you really make a hole in a man’s belly with them?’ (1981: 9). Despite myths of what one may or may not accomplish through *karate-dō*, proper body preparation includes training the upper extremities by engaging the fingers, hands, forearms, elbows, upper arms, and shoulders. One way of strengthening the extremities

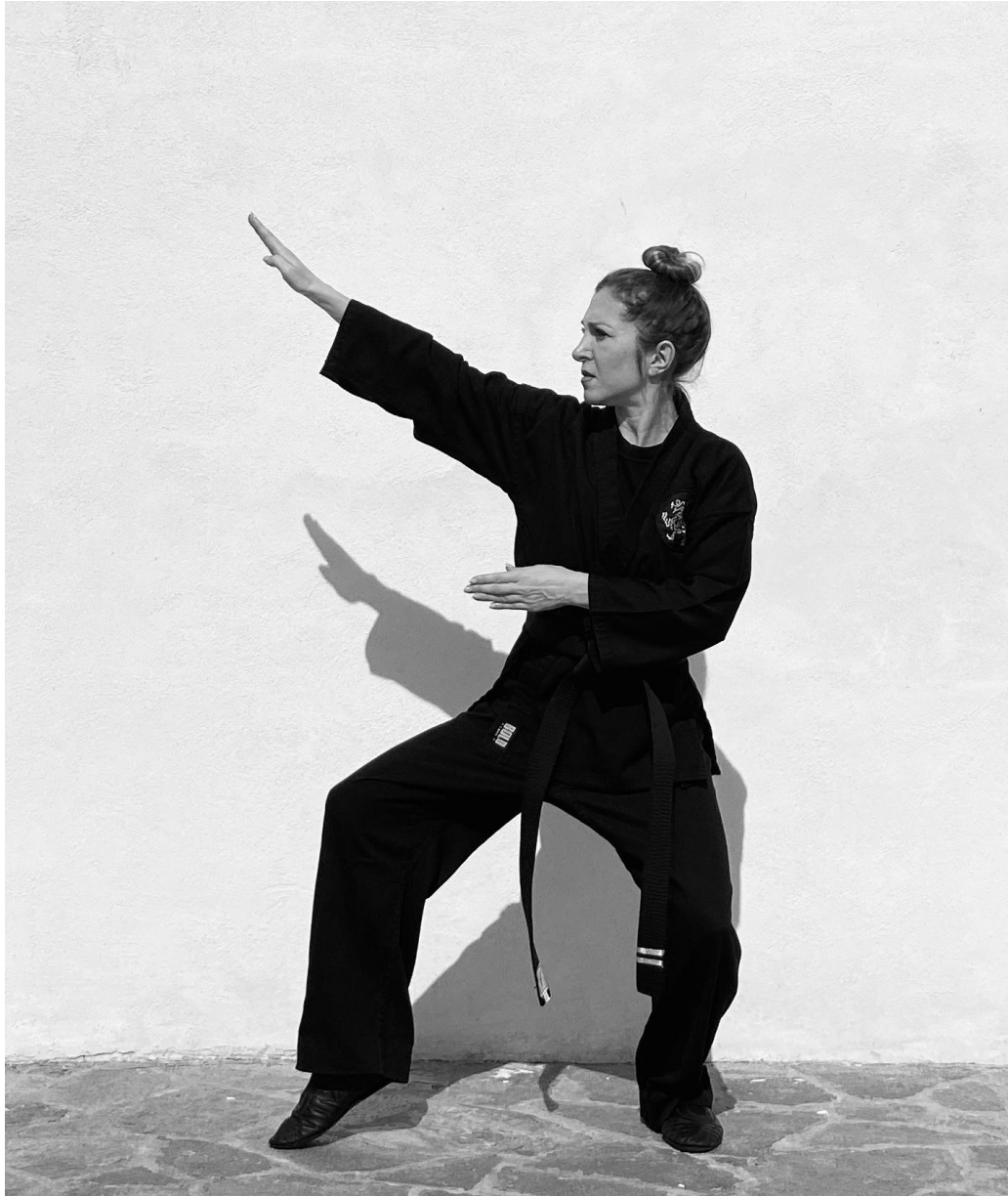
of the hand includes adopting rigorous exercises like full-body push-ups that employ the fingers in the place of flat palms. Others may advocate training the fingers to penetrate different substances such as sand, beans, rice, or pebbles. Traditionally, conditioning the hands featured hitting a *makiwara* (straw-covered post), although contemporary *karateka* often train with a punching bag.

Codified Shotokan karate gestures favour economy of movement, which resonates with Eastern performance practices. As featured in *kamae*, karate hands and arms protect vital organs during an attack. In karate, as in Japanese theatre, the word ‘*kamae*’ indicates adopting a position of readiness. Basic karate hand movements include blocking or initiating a ‘hit’ through options such as a closed fist (see Figure 10) or a ‘knife hand’ (see Figure 7). The fingers play a significant role in using techniques like *nukite* (spear hand), where the fingers become the striking point. Forming a spear hand can adopt a four-finger, two-finger, or one-finger thrust. A proper karate punch features a straight wrist, with the knuckles of the index and middle finger as the point of contact. Forming a punch entails a three-step process where the middle joints of the fingers fold, the hand folds at the basal joints of the fingers, and the thumb grips the first two fingers. Some of the basic punching techniques include *oi zuki* (stepping punch), *gyaku zuki* (reverse punch), *kizami zuki* (leading hand punch), and *yama zuki* (mountain punch; see Figure 10) while blocks include *morote uke* (augmented block; see Figure 8), *gedan barai* (down block), *age uke* (rising hand block), *soto uke* (outside block), *uchi uke* (inside block), and *shuto uke* (knife hand block). For example, a downward block like *gedan barai* features the hand and wrist in the same position as punching, while the arm extends downwards to deflect an attack and make a powerful counter. Hand techniques feature in prearranged Shotokan karate sequences like *Jitte* (meaning ‘ten hands’), as in the following example:

- Draw the left fist to the left hip.
- At the same time, create a shallow fist with the right hand where the distal two joints of the fingers rotate in a circle starting in front of the chest, passing upward by the chin, then outward to the front, and finally downward to execute a middle level downward block with the palm upward.

The above example illustrates how the fingers, hands, and arms work in tandem to perform a specific function in relation to the rest of the body.

Systemised and ongoing training of the upper appendages lends itself to the medium of movement-based performance. Increasing the effectiveness and potency of the arms is essential in preparing the actor for contemporary demands, including when it comes to motion capture technologies that use the wrist, elbow, and shoulder to plot body articulation, proficiency, accuracy, strength, and endurance (Kapsali 2021: 157). Sections of the arm can either initiate gestures or move as a reaction stemming from other parts of the body. Of the components of the arm, one may assume that the areas where joints hinge are ‘weak’ points, although, in reality, strikes from the wrist and elbow prove very powerful. For example, the potential force initiated by the elbow is particularly notable through the execution of powerful techniques like *empi* (elbow strike; see Figure 9). The importance of the arms is evident when observing self-defence training, though those without the use of one or both arms may rely on training the feet and legs to achieve similar outcomes. A commonality among lower and upper limbs is the aim to defend vital points, such as those featured on the head.



*Figure 7. Demonstration of Bassai Sho kata, by Josephine Calvo, 2024.  
(Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*



*Figure 8. Demonstration of morote uke (augmented block) in kokutsu dachi (back stance), by Josephine Calvo, 2024. (Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*



*Figure 9. Demonstration of empi (elbow strike) in kiba dachi (horse stance), by Josephine Calvo, 2024. (Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*



*Figure 10. Demonstration of yama zuki (mountain punch) in zenkutsu dachi (front stance), by Josephine Calvo, 2024. (Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*

### *Face and Eyes*

When it comes to karate strikes, one of the parts of the body that most importantly evades blows is the head. The importance of the contents of the cranium is evident in how it is the only part of the body that features an enclosed bone framework. The brain is crucial

and responsible for regulating essential bodily processes such as motor skills, vision, breathing, and memory. Of the parts of the head, the face appears the most acclaimed in contemporary society. Science recognises the human face as one of the highly impactful components in communication as it reflects information about a person's 'identity, gender, sex, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical health, attractiveness, emotional state, personality traits, pain or physical pleasure, deception, and even social status' (Jack and Schyns 2015). The significance that contemporary society attributes to the face is evident through the advent of 'close-ups' of television actors and the increased popularity of publicising pictures of oneself on social media. In contrast, physical appearance is of no consequence for those who practise karate. Accordingly, Master Matsumura, one of the original Okinawan karate masters, advocated 'vanity' as the 'only obstacle to life' (Funakoshi 1981: 28–29).

Of the facial components, the most impactful are the eyes, which serve as a powerful asset for the actor and martial artist. One may perceive a great deal of information about one's internal state through the eyes alone, such as sentiments of fear, anger, or compassion. Therefore, like the actor, the martial artist must pay attention to internal thoughts that manifest through these organs. Here, the Christian adage rings particularly true with regards to the connection between the eyes and the body as a whole:

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness! (The Holy Bible, Matthew 6. 22–23)

In other words, internal mental processes such as thoughts and emotions are visible through the eyes and impact the entire body. Funakoshi exemplifies the potential impact of the eyes when he likens Matsumura's stare to a bolt of lightning that sparks fear in an

opponent, ultimately escalating in a victory (1981: 26). Karate students receive instruction to avoid looking into an opponent's eyes, which contrasts with how Allain describes eye contact as necessary in physical theatre for the purposes of communication and collaborative work (Allain and Camilleri 2019). In Shotokan karate, eye movement is particularly evident when one's gaze fixes on invisible adversaries while executing *kata* (see Figure 11). An example of incorporating facial expressions into a prearranged Shotokan karate sequence is displayed through a *kata* like *Empi* (meaning 'flight of the swallow') as follows:

- Open the outstretched right fist, jump forward onto the right foot, and draw the left foot up to a position behind the right heel so that the legs are crossed.
- At the same time, clench the right fist while drawing it toward the left shoulder, as if grasping and pulling an imaginary opponent. Meanwhile, execute a lower-level attack with the left fist.
- The facial expression while grasping the imaginary opponent must demonstrate strength and resolve.

The above example illustrates how facial expressions play a crucial role in prearranged sequences, making interactions with an imaginary opponent appear more realistic. This relates to how eye placement during combat is towards an opponent's chest to anticipate an attack and avoid distraction that can arise from eye-to-eye contact with an adversary.

Carreri illustrates some of the most influential performance training she received from butoh performer Natsu Nakajima as insisting on the importance of the eyes so that: 'You no longer see what is in front of you, you do not want to see it, it does not interest you. It does not matter what your eyes do, as long as you try to see inside you. Do not

direct your gaze to the outside, but to the inside' (2014: 108). The above resonates with how some martial artists choose to train blindfolded to enhance the senses so that they do not rely on vision alone. Looking inside oneself is also stressed by butoh performer and guru Kazuo Ohno, who proposes that one works towards seeing 'everything' and seeing 'nothing' so that the '*kokoro*' or 'soul heart' might radiate to observers (Carreri 2014: 109). For the martial artist, *kokoro* signifies an 'indomitable spirit' that one can access deep inside oneself (Morgan 1992: 108). Thus, the warrior spirit of not 'giving up' or '*kokoro*' is attainable for both the actor and martial artist.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between the organ of sight, i.e. the *anatomical* eye, and a different kind of sensibility that aesthetic performers and martial artists often refer to as the 'mind's eye', which deals with the imagination. In this regard, the relationship between the actor and elements like the stage, imaginary scene partners, props, and costumes is comparable to how the *karateka* operates in relation to the surrounding environment, invisible opponents, punching bags, protective gear, and the karate *gi* (uniform). Engaging with invisible opponents during *kata* allows the martial artist to use the mind's eye to visualise and relate to someone they imagine has the same stature. A *karateka* may use the imagination to see a punching bag as an opponent while improving stamina and strength upon contact. Adapting to various environments influences the physical and mental state of practitioners. By way of illustration, practising *kata* in a small space simulates a self-defence scenario to increase adaptability. Therefore, internal and external elements influence the *karateka* to impact the level of mobility, speed, sound, and breath associated with movement.



*Figure 11. Demonstration of gaze placement in kata, by Josephine Calvo, 2024.  
(Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*

### **2.3 Breath**

Absorbing oxygen and expelling carbon dioxide are essential bodily functions. The mechanics of respiration generally occur unconsciously, in the sense that we do not think about inhaling and exhaling. However, breathing quality and patterns are something that

can be trained, especially in the context of different circumstances, such as for movement on a stage or when fighting, and even more so when using the voice. Despite the ample evidence of the importance of optimising breathing, situations in contemporary society often fossilise poor habits. For instance, one may engage in shallow breaths as a response to anxiety when speaking publicly.

Various impediments can hinder the potential inhalation of oxygenated air, including daily stressors, physical or emotional trauma, disorders, and improper alignment. Breathing is classified as eupnea (quiet breathing or resting respiration), diaphragmatic (deep breathing), costal (shallow breathing), and hyperpnea (forced breathing) (Blanchfield 2022). Maximising incoming oxygen and outgoing carbon dioxide can impact confidence, endurance, physical health, and mental well-being. One can add that ‘regulating’ the breath is ‘essential’ for ‘all the arts’, and controlling the breath improves technique (Lewis 1994: 166).

For centuries, communities have demonstrated a certain level of fascination with the breath. Examples include linking breath to the ‘spirit of life’ such as the Hebrew ‘*ruah*’ or Greek ‘*pneuma*’. Aside from more profound philosophical implications regarding inhalation and exhalation, theatre practitioners recognise a clear link between breath and the quality of movement (Zarrilli 2009: 25). For example, practitioners like Phillip Zarrilli advocate beginning actor training with the breath as a ‘psychophysical pathway to the practical attunement of the body and mind’ (2009: 25; cf. section 1.2.1). Accordingly, actor training programmes have incorporated breathing exercises to awaken the respiratory system whilst activating the bodymind (e.g. Kozma and Marofka 2023: 33) to prepare the actor for overcoming common hurdles like psychophysical ‘fatigue’ (Mroz 2011: 87). Consequently, it is not uncommon to hear actresses like Roberta Carreri report that she has received directorial instruction to ‘breathe from the wrists and knees’

(2014: 84), despite these parts of the body not appearing to be directly correlated with the respiration process.

The approach of voice coach Kristin Linklater helps actors better understand the imagery linked to breathing techniques as she advocates optimal respiration through the removal of ‘restrictive tensions’ in conjunction with a ‘diversity of stimuli’ (1976: 25), such as employing the imagination to release vocal potential. Linklater’s exercises highlight the link between the breath, physicality, and mental processes to liberate the voice. Her vocal training process employs the inner eye by including activities such as visualising the neck as an open pathway (1976: 80) or imagining a ‘pool of vibrations’ in the lower part of the torso (36). The voice is closely linked to the breath as engaging the latter allows for vocal cord vibrations that produce sound. In her practice, Linklater described vocal production as encompassing the following process:

- (1) There is an impulse in the motor cortex of the brain.
  - (2) The impulse stimulates *breath* to enter and leave the body.
  - (3) The *breath* makes contact with the vocal folds creating oscillations.
  - (4) The oscillations create vibrations in the *breath* stream.
  - (5) The vibrations are amplified by resonators.
  - (6) The resultant sound is articulated by the lips and tongue to form words.
- (1976: 6, emphasis added)

In simple terms, the breath begins with an impulse in the brain which propels the execution of vocal production. The absence of optimising the use of breath would imply a lack of vocal ‘volume, colour, and articulation’ (Mroz 2011: 87). Training the actor’s voice is arguably imperative for all theatre practises, including those considered ‘movement-based’ because of its communicative potential.

Voice specialist and theatre director Patsy Rodenburg agrees with Linklater about the necessity of removing physical tensions as a precondition for releasing one’s vocal

presence. During an interview, Rodenburg recognised that the ‘vast majority of people are born with the most amazing voice’ and theatrical ‘presence’, although these somehow become stifled by life’s circumstances (Reed 2022). She explains that women particularly suffer from hindrances to vocal potential because of the belief that appearance takes precedence over speech, causing a domino effect of physical tension that paves the way for high-pitched and unbecoming vocality (Reed 2022).

In this regard, karate can assist in removing physical constrictions in favouring diaphragmatic breathing by inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. To aid focus and improve the potency of movement, a karate *sensei* might direct inexperienced students to inhale when ‘blocking’, exhale when executing a ‘finishing technique’, and ‘inhale and exhale when executing successive techniques’ (Nakayama 1979: 13–14). In accomplishing powerful strikes, such as those associated with ‘breaking’ (or *tameshiwari*, the practice of striking and breaking solid objects), a martial artist must execute ‘breath control’ in collaboration with ‘confidence, concentration, technique, equilibrium’, and ‘focus’ (Lewis 1994: 165). Post-strenuous training features deep breathing, such as when coupled with standing on one’s toes and lifting the arms. The potential one can achieve through breath work is exemplified by certain martial arts, where accounts describe practitioners entering trance-like states to reduce breathing to a minimum or holding the breath for extended periods underwater (Lewis 1994: 140).

Breath work and vocality as inherently present in karate serve to display the potential to assist the actor with more advanced voice work. In karate, the importance of training the breath takes precedence over the voice, despite how these two processes are closely linked. *Karateka* feature the use of the voice when announcing a *kata* name or releasing *kiai* (energetic shout), and one can say that *kiai* and the breath are directly related to ‘life energy’ or ‘*ki*’, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Releasing ‘*kiai*’

allows one to augment the power of a technique, such as metaphorically pouring gasoline on a fire. The opposite also holds that stifling one's breath or an energetic shout limits movement potential. Consequently, the more complex the technique, the more the karateka must rely on the breath.

Breathing also assists the karateka with unfortunate encounters with physical pain. A common adage states that 'pain is a great teacher' because injuries allow one to avoid repeating what causes discomfort. However, one does not often learn what to do in the midst of inadvertently experiencing prolonged pain. On this topic, karate *sensei* often instruct 'mind over body' or 'pain is a state of mind'. Therefore, pain is seen as a condition that the *karateka* can overcome. To this end, a *karateka* must learn to breathe when in pain, whether ailments occur from injury or physical limitations. Practising reliance on the breath also resonates with overcoming emotional pain, which assists one during difficult life circumstances. All of the above allows one to recognise that the extent to which one depends on the breath carries over into the rhythmic patterns and velocity of one's movement, which marks the key body quality to be discussed next.

## **2.4 Rhythm and Tempo**

The word 'rhythm' stems from the Greek verb '*rheo*', signifying a 'particular way of flowing' (Barba and Savarese 1991: 211). Konstantin Stanislavski explains the importance that performers should attribute to this manner of 'flowing':

If we do not realise that the foundation of the whole of a man's life, the rhythm given to him by nature, namely respiration, is also the foundation of the whole of our art, we shall never be able to find the one and only rhythm for an entire performance and, in subordinating to it everybody who takes part in the performance, create one harmonious whole. The rhythm, which every man has to

express in life, originates from his breathing and, consequently from his entire organism, from his first need, without which life is impossible. (1967: 93)

In other words, Stanislavski views respiration as the foundation of life and performance practices, which is intrinsically connected with rhythm. The practice of diaphragmatic breathing may manifest itself in terms of elongated beats or sustained movement. By comparison, costal breathing can translate into staccato or stifled movement. The above information is helpful for the actor who needs to portray different characters in different circumstances. This knowledge is also useful for karate students who train to understand themselves and their sparring opponents better.

Writing about the performer's work, Janet Goodridge sheds some light on the complex nature of an individual's rhythm when she identifies elements that determine one's 'bodily use of time elements':

These include the visible, physiological patterns which we can observe with our eyes, the less discernible biophysical features, the performers' inner rhythms, the influence of natural environmental rhythms, and other rhythms of the historical era and environment; cultural conditioning, social influences and personal characteristics as well as those of a performer's or director's adopted styles. The total pattern emerges as a correlation of parts, a complicated, many-layered mesh of relations between components. It emerges not only from each individual performer's use of rhythm, but also from the rhythms of interaction and of group activity. A complex web indeed. (1999: 39)

On Goodridge's account, therefore, the various factors that shape the rhythmic quality of a performance come from different angles and directions. Such a multifaceted conglomeration of moving pieces may cause one to see rhythm as an unreliable or erratic concept that requires taming. Alternatively, the absence of rhythm can cause a

performance to appear dull or unengaging. Therefore, one may question how best to ‘control’ such an apparently ‘fluid’ concept.

On this topic, Swedish theatre director and composer Johan Petri distinguishes theatrical rhythm as ‘influenceable’ (impacted by elements such as the audience’s response and unforeseen circumstances), ‘structured’ (predetermined by the director and actors), ‘musical or metrical’ (predetermined), or a combination of the above (2012: 4–5). Petri identifies the importance of committing to a rhythmic structure to assure ‘credibility’ and strengthen the relationship between performers and the audience, highlighting the link between rhythm and audience engagement (13–14). Hence, those performances that include audience participation will potentially include more fluctuations in rhythmic quality. The above resonates with the *karateka* who is affected by ‘influenceable’ (impacted by factors such as the audience or sparring partners), ‘structured’ (predetermined by the *sensei* or *kata*), and ‘musical or metrical’ (predetermined) rhythm. The last of these is the least common, as traditional karate training does not commonly feature musical or metrical accompaniment, except for during unconventional demonstrations.

Barba and Savarese apply the understanding of rhythmic movement by highlighting the importance of ‘resistance’ to feature the silences and pauses that characterise what one acknowledges as ‘rhythm’ (1991: 211). The Japanese principle known as ‘*jo-ha-kyū*’ exemplifies the use of resistance to create rhythmic patterns in its application to the martial and performing arts. *Jo-ha-kyū* is composed of three phases into which every performative action takes place, as defined in the following terms:

The first phase is determined by the opposition between one force which is increasing and another force which is resisting the development of the first (*jo*, to restrain); the second phase (*ha*, to break, to interrupt) is the moment when the

resisting force is overcome until one arrives at the third phase (*kyū*, speed), when the action culminates, releases all its power and suddenly stops as if meeting an obstacle, a new resistance. (Barba and Savarese 1991: 214)

In other words, one may observe the rhythmic movement characterised by *jo-ha-kyū* as starting slow, speeding up, and reaching a climactic and unexpected halt. The variety achieved through *jo-ha-kyū* allows the successive action to appear visually engaging because of the unforeseen shift in the course of movement. *Jo-ha-kyū* is particularly effective in theatrical performances and recognisable in *kata*, where one witnesses resistance, movement accelerations, and pauses. The three phases featured in *jo-ha-kyū* resonate with the three ‘beats’ in what some call the ‘principle of threes’. Such a guideline is present in physical theatre performances, especially evident in comedic routines. The ‘principle of threes’ is featured in *kata* where two ‘beats’ precede an accentuating third ‘beat’. An example of this consists of two consecutive blocks followed by a strike.

If rhythm describes the placement of movement in a pattern, tempo relates to speed. To illustrate the difference, one can consider the speed of the human heartbeat as ‘tempo’, while the repeated pattern of sound created by the heart as ‘rhythm’ (Rogers 2017). Attention to tempo and rhythm permits actors to rid themselves of habitual patterns so that they can perform with variation and maximise ‘creative potential’ (Samur 2017: 63). Sam and Helen Kogan define tempo for the actor as:

- Speed of thinking
- The speed with which I accept new thoughts into my consciousness
- The speed with which thoughts evolve from my consciousness
- The speed with which I view pictures in front of my mind’s eye
- The speed of synthesising thoughts
- The effort of holding still pictures

(2010: 138)

In other words, internal thought processes relate to the tempo that manifests externally. This means that mental associations and emotional reactions to external or internal stimuli dictate inner rhythm and tempo. For example, if one's mind is engaged in thoughts of excitement, this will translate into the velocity and patterns of one's physicality.

For the *karateka*, visible or imaginary opponents can dictate what viewers perceive as 'rhythm' or 'tempo'. In *kata*, rhythm is observable through a movement pattern in time, while the speed of action illustrates tempo. *Karatekas* usually employ rhythm and tempo by imitating their *sensei*, though, with more experience, they might apply a limited amount of artistic liberty. Therefore, one often learns the rhythmic beats portrayed through *kata* by replicating their instructor's actions. In this regard, learning rhythm by imitation resonates with Eastern theatrical forms like *Kyogen* or Peking Opera and Western movement-based performance practices such as dance. In both cases, i.e. in aesthetic and martial practices, it is as if an individual is training by grafting one's way of being body – and inhabiting that body – onto that of the teacher's.

In combat, a martial artist can aim to learn an opponent's rhythm and tempo to avoid attacks. Synchronising one's actions to an adversary's movements facilitates anticipating techniques because understanding the timing of an attack allows one to prepare a strike on the 'offbeat' (McGuire 2010: 215). By way of illustration, if one engages in the repetitive rhythm of kicking on the third beat, the adversary will begin to expect to guard themselves on that beat. Therefore, if the opponent begins to anticipate a strike on the third beat, one can confuse them by striking on the second. Similarly, if one hops from side to side while sparring, the opponent will begin to memorise that rhythm, which means changing one's pattern can confuse the adversary.

To conclude this section's outline on the essential role of rhythmic patterns and movement velocity in martial arts for actor training, it is worth discussing how these two

somatic disciplines compare in this aspect. In a martial arts sparring match, an individual's rhythm and timing are influenced by the ongoing interaction with an opponent, which parallels playing off the cues of a partner in scripted and non-scripted theatre. This individual-based rhythm contrasts with the collective rhythm one often finds in learning choreography in aesthetic practices like theatre and dance, overlapping with what a *karateka* might experience when imitating the *sensei* during training or presenting a group demonstration of *kata*. Although karate training and demonstrations involve group unity, the core of the practice relies more on personal rhythm and timing, whereas performing arts such as theatre are often rooted in ensemble-based work. The differences in tailoring rhythm and timing between the responsibilities of the actor and the *karateka* are heightened by the fact that the former must often adjust to the collective demands of a dramatic performance, such as lighting, sound cues, audience reactions, and the overall pacing and flow of a production.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a glimpse of those structures that constitute some of the more visible portions of the Karate for Actor Training programme presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The first section focused on the human body, which is composed of essential parts such as the pelvis, torso, feet, legs, hands, arms, face, and eyes. Special attention was given to these areas of the body often showcased in karate, although none of them function without the collaboration of the body as a whole. Karate highlights the body as a living and fascinating structure of cells, tissues, organs, and systems that function in unity.

The following section addressed the role of the breath in assisting practitioners with optimising creative potential. Breathing is essential for life and consequently crucial to the arts, especially movement-based performance practices due to its more complex

engagement in diverse situations. Training to breathe fully employs the mind and body so that one can move efficiently and effectively. Maximising the use of the breath permits performers to overcome everyday struggles such as fatigue, anxiety, or lack of energy. Learning to use the breath is also closely linked with performative elements such as vocal potential and rhythmic variety.

The final section addressed the importance of rhythm and tempo for the actor and martial artist. One way of perceiving rhythmic variety is through the level of audience engagement. For example, a lack of attention dedicated to rhythm or tempo may translate into what the audience perceives as ‘dull’ or ‘unengaging’. The variety attainable through movement patterns and velocity in the martial or performing arts can vary according to factors such as interpretative ideas, the size of the training space, fellow practitioners, and unforeseen circumstances. Techniques to add rhythmic and temporal variety include learning by imitation and identifying elements such as resistance and pauses to add ‘colour’ to a performance.

Understanding the elements addressed in this chapter prepare the ground for my proposed Karate for Actor Training programme. Attaining the heightened potential of the body and breath maximises functionality so that one can address movement patterns and build creatively. As mentioned throughout this chapter, the body does not function in the absence of thought processes. Accordingly, the following chapter delves more deeply into what one may refer to as the ‘mind’.

## Chapter 3

### Principles of Performance Training: The Mind

The present chapter continues to develop the premise that actor training involves the individual's body, world, and mind as a vehicle for artistic expression. Various idiomatic expressions address what can occur to one's 'mind' as one goes about daily life, such as 'going blank', having something 'cross it', or even 'losing it'. While the variety of figures of speech pertaining to the mind highlights the importance of the topic, one may question what is implied by the extent of the term. According to a typical understanding as evidenced by a general knowledge source such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the 'mind' is understood in Western culture as the:

Complex of faculties involved in perceiving, remembering, considering, evaluating, and deciding. Mind is in some sense reflected in such occurrences as sensations, perceptions, emotions, memory, desires, various types of reasoning, motives, choices, traits of personality, and the unconscious. (2024)

The APA Dictionary of Psychology adds that such a term is at times defined 'narrowly' by denoting 'only cognitive activities and functions', thus, the 'nature of the relationship between the mind and the body, including the brain and its mechanisms or activities, has been, and continues to be, the subject of much debate' (American Psychological Association 2018). Discussions concerning what the 'human mind is, what structure it has, and what parts belong to it' often address 'indispensable' assumptions that involve 'thoughts', 'knowledge', and 'purpose' (Britannica 2024). Although debates on the topic include identifying the mind with 'human consciousness', contemporary psychologists understand the state of being conscious or aware as composing only a 'small portion of

mental processes' (Henriques 2011). Neuroscientist Caroline Leaf describes the mind as composed of 'trillions and trillions of thoughts' that occupy 'mental real estate' in the 'brain', 'mind', and 'cells' of the 'body' so that as one uses the mind, or 'thinks', 'feels', and 'chooses', thoughts are 'built' into the brain (2022). Psychiatrist Ralph Lewis adds that one can describe thoughts as 'physical' and 'relational' 'representations of matter' with 'shape and weight' (2023). Accordingly, the work of somatic performers like martial artists and actors provides a fertile ground of enquiry about the mind and its embodied relationalities, not only as they overlap with the material contexts of the world around, but also with corporeal phenomena such as learnt technique and ways of doing. To this end, following the direction of the previous chapter in providing practical insights, this chapter sheds light on the cultivation of potential 'thoughts' in an actor's mind (i.e. their mental activity) with the aim of enhancing their presence on stage.

### **3.1 Organising Thoughts**

Gichin Funakoshi and Genwa Nakasone provide different anecdotes that pertain to the significance of the mind in *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate: The Spiritual Legacy of the Master* (2003). One of these vignettes or nuggets of wisdom includes Confucian philosopher Meng Tzu's complaint 'that when the mind – which is the master of the body – wanders down the wrong path and becomes lost, we make no attempt to find it and bring it back' (2003: 44). Although the purpose of the illustration is to highlight that one can 'train' thought patterns, the value attributed to the mind brings Cartesian dualism to the fore. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, psychophysical actor training as a concept and vision is an 'important battle that has been won' (see section 1.3.1 and Camilleri 2013b: 30). Indeed, exclusively 'brain-centred' perspectives risk a 'regressive step, redolent of Cartesian overtones of mind supremacy' (Camilleri 2023: 84). However,

the role played by the mind should not be undermined and devalued because, after all, ‘what binds mind and body together is the brain, a *physical organ* that, along with the spinal cord, makes up the central nervous system that coordinates and influences the activity of all parts of the body’ (84). Accordingly, this chapter continues to advocate actor training in a way that permits practitioners to accept body and mind as a ‘gestalt or whole’ in the surrounding world, without swinging the argument to the opposite extreme of privileging body over mind.

Not all performance practitioners may comprehend the benefits of martial arts (cf. 1.1.1), let alone the implications of post-psycho-physical training (see sections 1.2.2 and 2.1). However, a significant number of actors understand the importance of thought patterns; if not at a ‘fundamental but conscious level’, they are at least aware of ‘acting a role or playing a score of actions’ (Camilleri 2023: 36). As an actress and instructor of acting, Roberta Carreri describes the significance of the actor’s thoughts in the following terms:

I often have the impression that actors believe that their thoughts are made invisible by the thickness of their skull. They are mistaken. The actor’s body is transparent on stage: if the actor’s mind is empty, the spectators will not see anything, but if the actor is mentally engaged, spectators will perceive this clearly and their minds will ‘dance’ with the actor’s. After all, this is the actor’s task: to make the spectators’ minds dance with them. (2014: 126)

At this point, one may question what tools facilitate the actor in remaining mentally engaged. Of the options available, *karate-dō* aims to ‘train the mind to develop a clear conscience enabling one to face the world truthfully’ so that ‘mind and technique become one’ (Funakoshi 1973: 6). The difference between karate and many hobbies or sports is that it offers actors the opportunity to focus on ‘internal versus external objectives’

(Morgan 1992: 24–25). Thus, this chapter seeks to provide the actor with a path that allows the audience’s mind to ‘dance’.

In continuing to explain the importance of thought patterns, Funakoshi and Nakasone illustrate another anecdote, this time featuring sixteenth-century sword master Tsukahara Bokuden, who astonished his contemporaries when he explained that a student ‘with a mental attitude that allows him to walk carelessly by a horse without considering that it may rear up is a lost cause no matter how much he studies technique’ (2003: 40). The severity of this observation disqualifies a significant number of students while illustrating the need to couple technical training with thought patterns, i.e. with ‘sound judgement’. Fortunately for those dismissed by Boduken’s statement, practices in the field of psychology, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, provide techniques that can help reframe thoughts (Ackerman 2018). In accordance with the belief that one can learn new thought patterns, this chapter next addresses awareness and focus, leading to sections on balance, harmony, *ki*, and meditation, to conclude with a discussion that brings them all together in a consideration of improvisation and playfulness. *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate: The Spiritual Legacy of the Master* (2003) will serve as a reference point throughout the chapter.

### **3.2 Awareness and Focus**

The outcome of numerous studies has demonstrated that ‘victimisation by peers’ in adolescents is associated with an increased risk of depression in young adulthood, where sufferers of bullying are more likely to develop depression compared to non-victimised peers (Bowes and others 2015: 6). In other words, experience can impact a negative or positive mindset and, therefore, one’s outlook on life. The importance of one’s thoughts underscores how individuals who think positively about themselves tend to walk

confidently, whereas negative ideas may lead to slouching and insecurity. This principle aligns with the idea, addressed in many self-help books, that thoughts determine outcomes. For example, believing in the ability to achieve a goal heightens its probability. The importance attributed to one's thoughts resonates with the twelfth guiding principle of karate: 'Do not think of winning. Think rather of not losing' (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 69), with alternative translations describing the phrase as 'Have a winning strategy, not a reactive mindset'. In either translation, the significance of the way one thinks is highlighted since 'true' *karate-dō* is developed in a 'spirit of humility' (Funakoshi 1973: 3).

A 2020 study estimates that an average 'healthy' individual of a 'young-adult demographic' experiences over six thousand daily thoughts (Tseng and Poppenk 2020: 7). Additional research has found that contemporary individuals experience amplified stress, hindered productivity, elevated likelihood of errors, and prolonged time needed to complete tasks focusing because of increased 'time using technology' and an inherent motivation to 'self-interrupt' (Shapiro 2023). Oversights that arise from an inability to 'think clearly' or 'focus' may give way to 'calamity', which the seventh guiding principle of karate describes as springing 'forth from carelessness' (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 47). Ageing may also contribute to a decrease in one's ability to concentrate as 'brain regions involved with memory processing, such as the hippocampus and especially the frontal lobes, undergo anatomical and neurochemical changes over time' (Harvard Health Publishing 2025).

For the purposes of this research, 'awareness' implies the perception of one's surroundings analogous to a floodlight, while 'focus' refers to concentrating on the specific, comparable to a spotlight. In sports, one may employ different types of 'attentional focus', including 'broad', 'narrow', 'external', and 'internal' (Weinberg

2015: 379). For example, runners may employ an ‘inward’ attentional focus as an ‘associative strategy’ (i.e. monitoring of sensory information) when competing and ‘dissociative’ strategies (i.e. alienation of painful sensory input) to overcome ‘physiological stress’ when practising non-competitively (Morgan and Pollock 1977). Examples of impediments to optimal focus include what sport and exercise psychology describes as ‘attentional problems’, such as attending to past or future events, performative pressure known as ‘choking’, fatigue, inadequate motivation, visual stimulants, and auditory cues (Weinberg 2015: 380–86). One way to counter ‘attentional problems’ involves employing positive self-talk to heighten concentration, such as saying, ‘I can do it’ to increase ‘energy’, ‘effort’, ‘confidence’, and ‘motivation’ (Weinberg 2015: 388). According to an article published by the Harvard Health School, one’s attention span can improve by working in ‘blocks of time’, avoiding ‘multitasking’, engaging the brain through activities that require ‘concentration’, practising ‘mindfulness meditation’, and remaining ‘social’ (Marshall 2023). The above recommendations for improving one’s focus, provided by health publications, resonate with practices found in karate training.

According to Venkateswar Pujari, engaging in martial arts displays ‘cognitive advantages’ in the areas of ‘attention and executive function’ because of the ‘constant focus’ and ‘high degree of concentration’ associated with training. These phenomena assist with the ‘management and regulation of thoughts, activities, and behaviours’, thus impacting activities like ‘planning, problem-solving, cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control, and working memory’ (Pujari 2024: 20–21). One of the reasons that a martial art like karate heightens concentration is that practitioners become highly aware that distraction could cause injury. The awareness and focus enhanced by the alternative of experiencing pain highlights the guiding principles of karate that invite one to think of

‘hands and feet as swords’ and to remember that beyond one’s ‘own gate, you face a million enemies’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 83). Thus, the consequences of distracting oneself become an additional incentive to remaining mentally engaged and aware of one’s environment. Karate assists with broadening awareness to include the ‘big picture’ of one’s surroundings in preparation for self-defence. For example, if one focuses on an opponent’s fist, one may miss an incoming kick.

In Japanese martial arts such as karate, the term that is at times associated with heightened awareness is ‘*zanshin*’. Although *zanshin* is a Japanese word not easily translated into English, it signifies alertness ‘distilled to its essence’ (Morgan 1992: 128). Tenth *dan* Shotokan karate master Hirokazu Kanazawa describes ‘*zanshin*’ as a state of physical and mental preparedness (Kanazawa 2006: 118), whereas Funakoshi describes the term as ‘preserving one’s alertness’ or ‘remaining mind’ (Funakoshi 1973: 218). *Zanshin* represents a trained and uninterrupted awareness before, during, and after executing techniques so that one may achieve performative ideals of animal-like qualities, resonating with the enhanced stage presence of actors described as ‘stage-animal[s]’ (see section 1.1.2). Obtaining *zanshin* includes enhancing awareness of one’s surroundings, such as when training in karate practices like *kata* and *kihon* (basic techniques), discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

To cultivate awareness and improve focus, a karate class may begin and end with breathing exercises, self-reflection, discarding distractions, and scanning the body. The mindfulness that comes through karate assists one with focalising the present moment and action at hand. Such training can assist the actor with ‘focused distraction’ or what Frank Camilleri explains as the ability to remain focused without concentrating on oneself during a performance (2023: 71). Based on the discretion of the *sensei*, karate instruction can emphasise an effect or the body movements themselves, engaging either external or

internal focus respectively. Practising karate improves movement control, balance, and proprioception, demonstrating the potential to empower actors with the ‘centredness’ and communication needed in performance.

Phillip Zarrilli explains that improving attentional focus is very useful for the actor who requires the ability to sustain a fully engaged psychophysical relationship from moment to moment so that ‘perceptual’ and ‘sensory’ ‘awareness’ opens inwardly and outwardly, allowing one to attend to specific actions and tasks with ‘primary focus’ (2009: 83). In other words, improving one’s perception of what occurs internally or externally allows for heightened performative potential. Developing one’s ability to perform through increased awareness and focus is achieved with consistent training, which also gives way to the applicability of balance and harmony as discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 Balance and Harmony**

To avoid falling, Odin Teatret actress Carreri explains that she had to ‘fix’ her ‘eyes on a precise spot on the wall’ (2014: 29). While focus plays a significant role in achieving physical equilibrium, the understanding of ‘balance’ encompasses variables and perspectives beyond staring at a single point. For example, the study of physics suggests that two opposing forces of equal magnitude are required for an object to reach equilibrium or ‘balance’. From a physiological perspective, the brain combines vestibular and proprioceptive information to achieve what one may understand as physical ‘balance’. In the arts, what one perceives as aesthetic ‘balance’ may refer to the distribution or weight of elements contributing to an overall unifying or satisfying effect.

The multifaceted concept of balance often appears as a component of a broader understanding of ‘harmony’. The etymology of the term ‘balance’ derives from the Latin

*bilanx*, which denotes two (*bi*) scale pans (*lanx*), or a relationship quality between two phenomena; at the same time, the Latin *harmonia* signifies ‘joining or concord’ (Lomas 2021: 52). One may define ‘balance’ as the relationship between two dialectically related phenomena, and ‘harmony’ as the dynamic synchronisation of multiple such ‘balancing acts’ (Lomas 2021: 51). For current purposes, this chapter focuses primarily on *mental balance* as opposed to aesthetic applications of the term, that is, on an internal and all-encompassing state of being rather than on an external somatic phenomenon aimed at predominantly visual symmetry.

Seventh *dan* Shotokan karate instructor Santo Calvo explains that balancing one’s mind precedes achieving physical balance and harmony (Calvo 2024). The importance of addressing one’s thoughts before training physically resonates with the fifth guiding principle of karate, ‘Mentality over technique’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 35). Eighth *dan* karate instructor Steve Rowe describes steadying the mind for the martial artist as signifying a *balancing* of ‘patience’, ‘kindness’, ‘tolerance’, and ‘compassion’ while maintaining ‘resolve’, ‘courage’, and ‘determination’ (World of Martial Arts Television 2016). As such, in this context, balance and harmony act as motivational principles that precede behaviour and technical action. In the realm of theatre, beginning with one’s thoughts aligns with actor training guidelines that encourage occupying and quietening ‘squirrel-like minds’ through exercises that comprise focusing on an external point ahead – in the case of Zarrilli, this can involve such mental strategies as using the inner eye (or one’s imagination) to track the journey of the breath to and from the area below the navel (Zarrilli 2009: 25–26). Thus, although balance may encompass a variety of principles, the combination of breath work and focus act as ideal points of departure.

Seeking mental balance may appear simple compared to the effort required by what Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese describe as the performer’s physical ‘extra-daily

balance' or 'luxury balance' on stage (1991: 34). However, modifying one's conception and way of doing may require a considerable amount of effort. As Leaf explains from a neuroscientific perspective, thought patterns form over 'twenty-one days', and that these 'new thoughts' become ingrained as 'habits after sixty-three days' (2024). Thus, practice and determination are required to achieve habits associated with new ways of thinking. The Japanese concept known as *ikigai* addresses those thought patterns linked to balance as a motivational principle. Bearing no direct translation in English, Westerners often describe *ikigai* through a Venn diagram of four overlapping qualities: what one 'love[s]', what one is 'good at', 'what the world needs', and how one can receive compensation (Mitsuhashi 2017). Although describing *ikigai* through a Venn diagram falls short of the fullness of the concept, one may summarise this term as encompassing 'one's purpose' or 'reason for living'. In an ideal situation, an individual aims to accomplish all the categories featured in the Venn diagram by seeking professions and hobbies that satisfy a sense of fulfilment. The role that karate offers the actor lies in gratifying life choices linked to *ikigai*, such as paving a path for what one 'loves' to become what one is 'good at'.

Valuing the importance of mental balance acts as one of the initial steps in seeking that sense of synchronisation known as harmony. On the topic, master Kanazawa directs *karateka* to engage in a specific process that encompasses mastering basic movements and placing 'special attention' on 'technique and power', 'left and right sides of the body', 'hands and feet', 'body movement', and 'breathing' (2006: 20). Kanazawa explains that students must learn to harmonise with others such as during *kumite* (sparring), to match 'movements, breathing, power, and techniques', which leads to 'respecting, understanding, getting along, and improving personal relationships' (2006: 21). In this context, to 'harmonise' goes beyond synchronising movement to also include a shared

way of thinking and being. Consequently, modifying one's thoughts and actions in respect to others resonates with the advice provided in the thirteenth and fourteenth guiding principles of karate: 'Make adjustments according to your opponent' and 'The outcome of a battle depends on how one handles emptiness and fullness (weakness and strength)' (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 75), respectively. By way of example, a *karateka* in a sparring tournament may anticipate the movements of an opponent through patterns and areas of entry whereby one may score a point (cf. section 2.4).

According to Kanazawa, accessing harmony also involves using one's 'rich imagination' in ways that include envisioning oneself as an 'enormous and towering presence in the universe' with a 'big heart' while surrounded by imaginary opponents (2006: 21). Kanazawa recognises harmony as the synchronisation that occurs between 'oneself', 'others', and 'nature', while focusing one's gravity centre in the *seika-tanden* (area between the navel and pubic bone), using the imagination, expressing one's 'heart' through technique, and developing a greater 'love' and respect for nature (2006: 21). The relationship between oneself and nature is conveyed from a more philosophical perspective when Kanazawa describes *karateka* as demonstrating a 'horizontal form of harmony' while lying down on mother earth and a 'vertical form of harmony' when standing upright (2006: 20). Such a connection with nature and others can potentially set off a chain reaction that positively impacts one's relationships and self-esteem, which in turn can act as a platform on which to build creatively. Harmony becomes perceivable through different levels of a *karateka*'s work, as when combining the skill, control, and concentration needed for an effective *kiai* (energetic shout). Thus, the use of the imagination in relation with breath work allows for a synchronisation between one's body, mind, and surrounding world, which links to the often debated and at times misunderstood topic of the next section: *ki*.

### 3.4 Ki

Following a sparring match, karate expert and royal bodyguard Sokon ‘Bushi’ Matsumura (1779–1893) addressed a defeated opponent by saying, ‘I know this: you were determined to win and I was just as determined to die if I lost. That was the difference between us’ (in Funakoshi 1981: 28). Determination, a significant ingredient that can propel one towards success, demystifies the nature of karate despite varying theories developed regarding the practice. Perhaps a combination of elements, including the destruction of written records during World War II and decrees prohibiting karate (Martin 2007: 2–3), contributed to the shroud of mystery and esoteric transcendental theories surrounding *karate-dō*. As various martial arts developed and were intertwined with sorcery or war magic (Mroz 2025: 95–96), one may speculate that spiritual and mystical ties may have perpetuated differing descriptions of what can be achieved through karate. From an emic perspective, Funakoshi complains of hearing of arguably inaccurate accounts that described employing ‘only the five fingers of one hand’, to ‘penetrate’ an ‘adversary’s rib cage, take hold of the bones, and tear them out of the body’ (1981: 8). Regardless of how incredible abilities can be acquired through rigorous conditioning regimes, misinformation regarding karate has persisted through contemporary times, despite increased transparency about the practice. Inconsistent accounts have continued in part because of a wonder surrounding accomplished *karateka* but also because of a misinterpretation of terms and ideas linked to the practice. Among the most mystified and debated terms in Shotokan karate is *ki* (気), which is better understood if one differentiates the concept from *kime* (決め) and *kiai* (気合).

One often envisions a powerful strike accompanied by a characteristic shout when thinking of karate. Such power associated with karate technique is often described as

'*kime*' or 'decisiveness', manifesting in what one perceives as powerful movement. Determination resonates with the actor's work, in particular with a decisiveness that Carreri observes is an 'essential quality' that allows actors to 'react in an appropriate manner on stage, even in unforeseen circumstances' (2014: 67). *Kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents), a topic described in more detail in Chapter 4, requires a certain level of *kime*, such as in the execution of technique when the entire body contracts to its full potential to showcase power for attacks, parries, and absorbing blows. Accordingly, one can recognise the role of *kime* in the nineteenth guiding principle of karate, which recommends to 'not forget the employment or withdrawal of power, the extension or contraction of the body, the swift or leisurely application of technique' (Funakoshi and Nakasone: 2003: 107). Some may limit their understanding of *kime* to performing with increased 'energy' despite the lack of specificity in using such a description (see section 1.3.2). Although *kime* appears to contain a homonym for *ki*, it does not hold an equivalent meaning nor the same logographic character, 気. Misinterpretations of *kime* include understanding the term as a destructive force, snapping the *gi* (uniform), shocking an opponent, or a mystical ingredient. One can more accurately understand *kime* as performing with an elevated level of intention, which allows one to tense and/or relax muscles in opposition to specific movements produced by other muscles.

One of the characteristic expressions of performing with *kime* includes emitting the karate shout known as *kiai*. Some misinterpret *kiai* as a way of drawing attention to oneself. More accurately, the vocality of *kiai* augments the force behind movement (cf. section 2.3) while potentially confusing or distracting an actual or imaginary opponent. Dave Lowry (2023) describes *kiai* as a 'combination' of 'attitude' and breath with or without using the voice. Accordingly, *kiai* is often experienced as an exhalation that

combines breath with physical expression. When translating the characters that form ‘*kiai*’ (気合), one can define ‘*ki*’ as ‘life force’ or ‘breath’ and ‘*ai*’ as ‘harmonise’ or ‘join’. Technically, *kiai* is characterised by a powerful cry that empties the lungs, creating a vacuum that automatically refills them as the normally closed mouth opens and admits more air. Joining an audible exhalation to a strike accentuates the production of power in the moment and harmonises breathing over a series of movements. These sounds serve as punctuation which shapes the dramaturgy of a sequence alongside tempo and rhythm variations. This combination of elements creates a level of meaning for the practitioner and potential observers as reflected in the characters 気合 (*kiai*). Accordingly, *kiai* acts as a dynamic expression of *ki*. To better understand such an implication, one must define the often misinterpreted and romanticised concept of *ki*.

Diverse ideas of *ki* rest partially in how definitions change based on one’s location, profession, or necessity. Some of these variations stem from how concepts resembling *ki* appear in various religions and belief systems. How this is expressed and made meaningful varies according to different people groups and circumstances. In the West, one finds *ki* defined as ‘vitality’ or ‘life-energy’; in the East, the concept can expand to include the life function that permeates the universe (Ohnishi and Ohnishi 2009: 175). One even finds variants for *ki* within Japanese martial arts. For example, eighth *dan* Shotokan master Masahiko Tanaka refers to *ki* as the ‘concentration of power focussed in one point’ (Tanaka 2001: 27), while eighth *dan Shindo Ryu* master Kenji Ushiro uses the term to intend ‘depth of thought’ that ‘enables simultaneous, multidimensional movement’ (Ushiro 2008: 5). Because of the propagation of varying definitions of *ki*, a certain number of karate instructors may avoid mentioning the topic to circumvent controversies.

In seeking to understand the term better, one finds the simplified character 氣 (*ki*) is commonly used and can signify an array of contextual meanings such as ‘breath’, ‘gas’, ‘atmosphere’, ‘spirit’, and ‘mood’. Because of Japan’s ties to Chinese cultural and linguistic heritage, some believe that the Japanese ‘*ki*’ and Chinese ‘*qi*’ are equivalent. However, S. Tsuyoshi Ohnishi, a Japanese-born biophysicist and *aikido* instructor, highlights an emic interpretation that differentiates the Chinese ‘*qi*’ from the Japanese ‘*ki*’:

the former [Chinese] seems to believe that it is a “substance” or “matter” flowing in and through our bodies, and that it can be emitted from the body of a *Qigong* healer. In contrast, the Japanese considers that it is a form of energy. (2007)

Although Ohnishi’s view may appear reductive given the diverse interpretations of *qi* and *ki*, his perspective serves to highlight how an emic lens may not agree on an equivalence. Therefore, as these concepts are shaped by the cultures that surround them, this thesis approaches *ki* from a specific perspective within Shotokan karate, a martial art that took form in Okinawan and Japanese contexts. Accordingly, this research refers to *ki* as a form of self-cultivation associated with the phenomenology of being alive and effective as a player of martial arts.

Developing one’s understanding of *ki* signifies increasing awareness, concentration, determination, physical preparation, technique, and proper breathing methods. Master Kanazawa explains that,

By training the lower abdomen—our gravity center (called *tanden* or *seika-tanden* in Japanese; located in the lower belly below the navel)—and employing proper breathing

techniques (thoracic respiration, abdominal respiration, lower-abdominal respiration), we are able to achieve mental concentration and cultivate *ki* (life energy), the very root of human life, thus facilitating the generation of energy essential for good health and living. (2006: 14)

In other words, Kanazawa acknowledges karate as facilitating a type of self-cultivation through breath work, concentration, and connection with the lower-abdominal area (2006: 14). In teaching about *ki*, a karate *sensei* may direct *karateka* to employ the imagination in drawing strength by envisioning the feet as roots of plants. Martial artist Raymond Pawlett describes an instance from his own practice of increasing awareness of *ki*:

If you want a demonstration of how *ki* works, think about the *karateka* who break pieces of wood with their strikes. If you are hitting a piece of wood, you do not aim at the piece of wood, you aim through the piece of wood. If you aim at the wood, you hurt your hand. If you aim through the wood, it breaks. This is an example of using your intent to extend your *ki*. If you can develop sensitivity to your *ki*, then your karate will change as a result. (2008: 24)

Just as developing awareness of *ki* may assist the *karateka* with surpassing obstacles like breaking a block of wood, such may potentially assist the actor with facing mental or physical challenges like staying in character during long and demanding performances.

*Ki* exercises resonate with what Zarrilli describes as the use of the actor's active imagination, which encompasses maintaining an open awareness of what is perceived inwardly to and from the region below the navel, through the 'inner eye', whilst maintaining the visual field to what one sees outwardly (2015: 85–87). By way of example, keeping the eyes open to the surrounding environment while following the breath on an inward journey couples inner and outward awareness, thus permitting one to maintain the connection between mind, body, and world. Such work may elicit a deep

inner examination and reduction of conscious sensibility activated in what Barba refers to as the actor's 'thought-action' (1995: 51), a process of translating thoughts into physical actions. The interplay of inner and outer awareness sustained through thought-actions resonates with the work of both actor and *karateka* who balance an intersection between body expression and intellectual engagement as needed for an engaging performance. Thus, one may argue that the relationship between thought and action can be interpreted as the actor's or *karateka*'s 'intelligence' and inner working of 'stage presence'. Comparatively, martial artist and actor Scott Dare explains that '*ki*' may be perceived as the actor's 'stage presence' (2015: 7). Michael Veltri explains that some interpret the manifestation of *ki* as perceived 'self-confidence' or 'charisma' (2017: 24) or a type of proprioception and 'sixth sense' that allows greater awareness of how one propels through space (2017: 26). Kanazawa links this type of self-confidence to engaging the lower abdominal area and a 'feeling of encouragement in the face of unstable circumstances' (Kanazawa 2006: 15). Thus, the confidence and charisma associated with exercises that improve one's awareness of *ki* resonate with Zarrilli's example of the actor who may draw towards a 'heightened' state of 'optimal consciousness' while becoming 'attentive', controlled, and able to 'channel and focus *ki*' (2015: 77).

In summary, the collective or individual application of karate exercises that increase one's understanding of *ki* can include techniques that engage focus, the lower abdomen, respiration, inner awareness, and imagination. This type of work is seen as a lifelong endeavour involving the strengthening of mental and physical discipline. The aim of the actor who engages in the Karate for Actor Training programme (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) parallels that of the *karateka* who seeks a conscious development of character while maintaining a peaceful state of mind. This type of work is directly connected to

clearing the mind of distractions and increasing relaxation, as discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 Meditation**

The term ‘meditation’ may cause one to visualise a Shaolin monk sitting cross-legged, peacefully, on a mountainside. However, just as different interpretations of *ki* exist, the same holds for ‘meditation’. The term is often loosely associated with activities related to breathing exercises, contemplation, concentration, listening to nature sounds, chanting, and guided imagery. Increased popularity of the practice relates to many health benefits such as reducing ‘stress’, ‘anxiety’, ‘depression’, ‘pain (both physical and psychological)’ as well as improving ‘memory’, ‘efficiency’, ‘blood pressure’, flexibility, balance, cortisol levels, and oxygen utilisation (Sharma 2015). Thus, some may even describe meditation as a ‘chic trend’ (Ross 2016) that continues to gain popularity in Western countries. Specific forms of meditation appear more popular among contemporary Western societies, include mindfulness (acknowledging thoughts and gently releasing them), focus (as in concentrating on the breath), transcendental (repeating a mantra to oneself), and visualisation (imagining achieving a goal).

In India, which is historically and culturally associated with the phenomenon, the practice of meditation is depicted as part of the natural health care system known as *Ayurveda*, or ‘Science of Life’. Closer to the topic of this thesis, emic lore dictates the origins of meditation as applied in karate are linked to what Bodhidharma brought from India to the Shaolin Monastery in China during the sixth century, later making its way to Okinawa through trade (Funakoshi 1981: 31). Some accounts describe meditation as woven together into everyday life in Asian villages, along with martial arts and the performing arts, so much so that these practices impacted religious and philosophical

systems (Zarrilli 2009: 63–64). Despite any spiritual or religious connotations linked to the practice, this thesis understands ‘meditation’ as assisting either clearing the mind from distractions or visualising achieving a goal to increase concentration, relaxation, and consequently performative ability.

In karate, a *sensei* may direct students to meditate by announcing ‘*mokuso*’ (silencing thoughts) at the beginning of a training session, followed by a ‘*mokuso yame*’ (stop silencing thoughts) when the meditation period has terminated. Meditative time in a karate *dōjō* may last up to five minutes at the opening and conclusion of class. During meditation, a *karateka* will typically pursue the ability to enter *mushin*, or a state of ‘mind-no-mind’. *Mushin* is a mental state where one learns to stop the ‘internal dialogue’, thus allowing one to more efficiently respond with ‘quick reactions, extrasensory perception, and steely calm’ (Morgan 1992: 124–25). Emptying the mind during meditative time may allow thoughts to pass without engagement. This phenomenon or state of being aligns with the sixth guiding principle of karate that ‘The mind must be set free’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 44). Accordingly, Funakoshi and Nakasone describe freeing oneself from mental traffic as cultivating a ‘composed’, ‘tranquil’, and ‘immovable mind’ that becomes ‘like a crystal clear mirror’, which ‘captures the moon when it appears, or reflects a bird flying overhead’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 99).

The meditation exercises one may find used in karate include those that involve mindfulness, focus, and visualisation, as encompassed in the example of a beginner exercise:

1. Assume *seiza* (kneeling position) with hands resting on thighs.
2. Close the eyes while listening to the breath and visualise something peaceful, such as the ocean.

3. Place hands on the abdomen.
4. Adjust breathing rhythm so that the hands move outward on the inhale and inward on the exhale in a natural and relaxed way.
5. Acknowledge thoughts as an observer of one's own mind and gently let them pass.
6. Revert to a gentle, smooth, and deep breathing pattern while imagining that the abdomen becomes denser with each breath.
7. Open the eyes and gently shake out the body once the meditation time has ended.

Meditation exercises of this kind assist practitioners with increasing physical awareness, reducing stress, improving recovery, heightening mental clarity, and enhancing the mind-body-world connection. Such practice allows one to increase time dedicated to inner reflection, which partially assists with what Funakoshi and Nakasone describe as the fourth guiding principle of karate, 'First know yourself, then know others' (2003: 34).

Meditation may also include visualising achieving a martial objective while centring oneself in preparation for mental and physical challenges. In such a scenario, meditation may assist the *karateka* with visualising the execution of a specific *kata* or technique, mentally rehearsing a challenging sparring session, or focusing on a personal goal. Using the imagination to envision achieving one's goals has become popular as a 'performance-enhancement' tool that involves conditioning the mind and body to respond 'optimally in a performance situation' (Blankert and Hamstra 2017). Martial artist Forrest Morgan explains that the application of meditation may occur during performance in that,

Too often students learn to achieve *mushin* easily while in stationary meditation, but fail to reach it while practicing their art. What they need is a moving, dynamic form of *zazen* [sitting meditation], a drill that employs *haragei* [literally 'stomach art', meaning a visceral level form of understanding], *kokyu chikara* [breath

strength], *kime*, and subsequently, *kiai* to develop their *mushin*. That dynamic *zazen* students need is...you guessed it...*kata!* (1992: 126)

Comparatively, the actor may also employ meditative techniques such as breathing, inner reflection, and visualisation during performance. Exercises of this kind resonate with how Zarrilli describes the ‘actor’s work with visual perception’ as not ‘limited to the realm of objects or the environment within the immediate visual field of performance’, but as incorporating ‘embodied acts of visualization and/or the imagination – two realms of “the possible” that often constitute an essential part of the actor’s performance score’ (Zarrilli 2015: 82; cf. section 3.4). In his acting process, Zarrilli describes approaches to awareness and attention by incorporating meditative practices that employ motor and perceptual skills to ‘encounter, experience, and generate’ what is not present in the ‘immediate environment’. One way of achieving this is precisely by engaging the performer’s ‘active imagination’ as a voluntary act which sustains the attention needed for performance (Zarrilli 2015: 82–83). Such mediation-oriented practices highlight an overlap between acting and karate in the importance they attribute to what one senses, feels, and embodies in the surrounding world.

In employing karate as a platform for actor training, actors may view meditation as a practice encompassing deep breathing, visualisation, and clearing thoughts. In other words, meditation offers the actor a way to declutter the mind, thus increasing the ability to remain ‘in the moment’, which is a crucial demand in performance. Accordingly, Barba and Savarese explain that:

One objective of martial arts is to learn to be present at the very moment of an action. This type of presence is extremely important for performers who wish to be able to recreate, every night that quality of energy which makes them alive in the spectator’s eyes. It is perhaps this common objective, in spite of different results,

which explains the influence which martial arts have had on most Oriental theatre forms. (1991: 197)

Meditation has also been associated with ‘emotion regulation’, ‘interpersonal abilities’, ‘basic cognitive functioning’, and increased ‘creativity’ (Baas, Nevicka, and Velden 2014: 1104). Beginners should remember that although meditation may appear initially daunting, consistency makes the practice more effortless over time. Moreover, meditative practice also aligns well with preparing the actor to attract the spectator’s attention. It does so by rooting the individual’s stage presence in securer foundations of concentration and application, be that in context of psychological realist acting or physical performance. Accordingly, the next section homes in on improvisation and playfulness as strategies and qualities that can build on or emerge from the mental phenomena discussed in this chapter.

### **3.6 Improvisation and Playfulness**

Improvisation and playfulness evoke images of the spontaneity, creativity, and light-heartedness of children. Their inclusion here in a chapter on principles of the mind for actor training intends a ‘mental’ or psychophysical attitude that crystallises the dimensions covered so far in the preceding sections. For indeed improvisation and playfulness can be seen as at once instigators and manifestations of specific applications of awareness and focus as related to creativity, spontaneity, use of memory, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving skills. This understanding chimes with Barba’s qualification of the word ‘improvisation’ when he argues that:

When the word improvisation does not mean a lack of precision, when it is used in a positive sense, it denotes a quality of the performer which derives from a refined work on the various levels of scenic *bios* [the ‘biological’ level of performance upon

which techniques and scenic presence are founded]. It is thought/action on the riverbed of a physical score. (1995: 71)

It is in this sense, therefore, as a coming together of the different facets of the actor's *bios*, fusing the physical and the mental, that improvisation and its constitutive playful characteristics occupy a strategic place in the formation of performers. Furthermore, although improvisation and play feature in both training and performance, and as such are ideal bridges between process (training) and product (performance), the exploration and discovery available through these practices act as stepping stones to the principles of performance composition described in the next chapter.

Although improvisation and play can be found in various performance contexts, both terms closely relate to the work of Jacques Lecoq, who developed his training process based on sources such as *Commedia dell'Arte*, to offer an 'all-encompassing experience for player *and* beholder' (Camilleri 2023: 118). As Camilleri explains, describing 'play' in general

can be problematic to pin down exactly [...] for it is not a specific thing to do (a what). And although it is related to how one does, it is not even a manner of style. Play can be viewed as a kind of 'inhabiting something' since one always 'plays with something' – in the context of theatre this involves objects, clothes, masks, text, other performers, imaginary equivalents of all these (including a made-up language), and almost anything else. (2023: 117)

In Lecoq's case, the French term he uses, '*le jeu*', captures most of what one associates with the English word 'play', which includes 'children's play', the 'act of pretence', 'recreational activity', an 'act of theatre', and a kind of 'flexibility'. It also simultaneously suggests a 'playful creativity' more easily understood in English as 'improvisation' – a 'pedagogic approach' at the centre of Lecoq's work (Lecoq 2020: 15). Camilleri describes

the appeal of ‘play’ for the actor in how the practice marks a *‘dispositional or attitudinal readiness* that “accretes” physiological and mental ways of being, and which “secretes” (seeps, erupts, or otherwise prompts or conditions) behaviour in particular situations’ (2023: 119). For the purposes of this thesis, the French *‘le jeu’* encapsulates what is intended by ‘improvisation and playfulness’.

Carreri defines improvisation as crucial for the actor, holding as much importance in training as in the creation process (2014: 79). Thus, she identifies three different types of improvisation that pertain to herself as an actress but which shed light on the kind of strategies that performers employ to engage body and mind when ‘playing’:

1. Improvisation with fixed elements. Starting from a given chain of exercises or a sequence of actions, I can improvise with the dynamics and order of parts. In this way I become accustomed to interpreting physical scores; that is, using fixed sequences of actions to react to the work of a colleague, or applying them to a text.
2. Improvisation within the parameters of a principle. I can do whatever I want as long as I stick to the rules of a given principle. Here the scope of improvisation is even wider in that one does not start by learning a fixed form, but by improvising within the frame of a principle to explore different possibilities. With daily repetition a sequence of actions gradually emerges and is fixed, and it is then used as a fresh point of departure to improvise with different dynamics.
3. Improvisation starting from a theme. To create material for performances, I follow the flow of associations that emerge from a theme that is usually given by Eugenio [Barba, her director]. (Carreri 2014: 79)

The appeal of the above exercises rests in part on how improvisation offers opportunities to add specificity, active listening, and freedom in performance. However, Carreri draws attention to a critical error that may occur with improvisation, namely when actors become carried away by real-life emotions rather than using the imagination (and hence ‘the mind’) in ways that provide precision of physical actions (2014: 84). Lecoq describes

such an error as the ‘difference between the act of expression and the act of creation’ where in the ‘act of expression one plays for oneself alone rather than for any spectators’ (2020: 53–54). The snare of acting for oneself is less commonly found in karate, despite how one may apply improvisational exercises by ‘fixed elements’, ‘within the parameters of a principle’, or ‘starting from a theme’, because of how *karateka* learn to concern themselves more with self-defence than admiration (cf. section 1.3.1).

Improvisatory practices in the performing arts share ‘common ground’ with ‘real-world situations in sports’ in providing a type of ‘preparatory’ and ‘finishing’ practice rather than a prescribed ‘technique training’ so that practitioners become ‘freer to *play*’ (Camilleri 2023: 117). Similarly, one finds overlaps between improvisational parameters in karate and the performing arts. By way of example, a karate *sensei* may require *karateka* to use a vocabulary of *kihon* (basic techniques) and/or *kata* to reorder techniques or sequences of actions while applying certain principles. Other improvisational scenarios in karate may include using *kihon* according to a theme or following a flow of associations. A karate *sensei* may also direct an advanced *karateka* to generate a *kata* using movement vocabulary while employing the imagination to create given circumstances, such as defending oneself against ten opponents in a small room. Comparatively, Mroz has employed improvisation and ‘free play’ through a combination of martial arts and acting exercises in what he describes as ‘Spontaneous Movement Patterns’ or ‘SMPs’. These SMPs are so-called because of their ‘unplanned’ nature which demands ‘immediate expression’, ‘partner responsiveness’, and a spontaneous ‘physical vocabulary’. SMPs are distinct from Mroz’s PMPs (‘Prearranged Movement Patterns’), which involve fixed movement phrases or scores as mentioned in section 1.3.1 (Mroz 2011: 95). Part of the appeal of SMPs and similar structured improvisations lies in how

Zarrilli describes such practices as providing a bridge between the heightened sensory awareness developed in pre-performative training and performance (2009: 112).

Other karate-based improvisational exercises comprise *kumite* (sparring), in which *karateka* employ techniques in response to a real-life opponent. The seventeenth guiding principle of karate provides direction that one should learn technique before applying improvisation because ‘*Kamae* (ready stance) is for beginners; later, one stands in *shizentai* (natural stance)’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 96). Accordingly, the improvisation that occurs during *kumite* permits practitioners to avoid becoming ‘hampered or shackled’ by choreographies as to ‘transcend *kata*’ and move ‘freely’ in response to an opponent’s ‘strengths and weaknesses’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 104). Such a frame of mind or *modus operandi* resonates with what Barba describes as the essential need of ‘learning to learn’, a condition that enables one to master ‘technical knowledge’ without being ‘dominated by it’ (1995: 9) as well as with the work of theatre practitioners like Konstantin Stanislavski who advocate the ideal of learning technique and later ‘forgetting it’ during performance (1973: 99).

Richard Nichols describes a practice he calls ‘empty-handed combat’, which combines principles of Lecoq’s process, Stanislavski’s training, and martial arts as a ‘microcosm of the acting process itself’ (1980: 92–98). Nichols describes such training in the following terms:

The intentions and actions must be shaped by clearly delineated given circumstances and integrated with an organic emotional response to the character’s needs and actions within the imagined situation. Emotions must be balanced by intense concentration and superb physical technique in the delivery of each and every blow. When confidence in oneself and trust in one’s partner are added to the above elements, we have the ingredients of an experience that can bring unique rewards to the student actor at the same time that it serves as a means of movement self-education for the student as a human being. (1980: 97–98)

The appeal of Lecoq's training includes practising 'rhythm', 'tempo', 'space', and 'form' while exploiting a comprehensive intersection between 'play and player', 'child's play and drama', 'games and performances' (Lecoq 2020: 208). Nichols commends the centring found in martial arts while nurturing acting principles such as Stanislavski's 'two perspectives of a role', where the practitioner is both character and actor observing a theatrical role (Nichols 1980: 97). Improvisation found in martial arts resonates with the demands of acting by providing opportunities to think quickly, respond to different circumstances, and rely on training and intuition. In comparing Lecoq's improvisational exercises with karate, one finds parallels in areas such as the dynamic use of space, importance attributed to tempo and rhythm, and the phrasing needed to define a clear beginning, middle, and end to a performance. Thus, coupling karate with actor training, as this thesis proposes, potentially offers opportunities to enhance the imaginative process and physical craft of the actor. In this sense, Funakoshi is correct when he explains that society is misguided in viewing karate solely as a sport (2003: 114).

In practising improvisational techniques, actors and *karateka* must abide by certain rules within exercises. For example, both the actor and *karateka* must avoid injuring real-life partners by controlling movements. Despite limitations implied by parameters defined as 'rules', a certain level of 'freedom' exists within the range of physicality, spontaneity, and exploration of human expression. An aim of such work includes exploring more dynamic performative options by testing the range of movement, identifying conventional behaviours, and recognising the body as a medium for communication. Using improvisation to engage the imagination in a way that includes make-believe partners or non-human objects develops kinaesthetic sensitivity,

confidence, reaction time, and focus. Accordingly, Nichols describes the appeal of martial arts for the actor as follows:

While dance unquestionably should remain a basic element in an actor's movement education, the addition of a martial art can be of special value in the areas of movement improvisation and the rapid assimilation of unfamiliar movement sequences. Asian movement patterns tend to use different body centers, and the seemingly off-balance forms, when assimilated, can lead us to a changed way of seeing and feeling the world about us. (1991: 53)

Movement vocabulary of the kind attainable through martial arts provides actors with the tools needed to generate creative ideas and deepened expression, which is in accordance with Barba's 'extra-daily' performances that surpass what the spectator may perceive as 'mundane' (see section 2.1).

The improvisation found in karate demonstrates discipline and discovery while exercising resilience and new perspectives. These options that karate makes available offer a fresh lens through which actors can develop movements to find fluidity and expressivity within dynamic relationships between discipline, creativity, precision, and spontaneity. Such benefits align well with creating performances that Odin Teatret actress Julia Varley associates with the 'beauty' or 'poetry' of seducing an audience: 'Not as a means of imparting understanding, but as a way to reveal what spectators have inside themselves, what they have lived' by having them 'discover' and 'fall in love' (Fondazione Barba Varley 2024a, translation by Josephine Calvo). Thus, the skills acquired through improvisation and play, based as they are on specific manifestations of awareness, focus, and other 'mind' dimensions, act as a bridge to principles of performance composition, which is the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Principles of Performance Composition

This chapter builds on the body and mind foundations already established in the proposed integration of karate in actor training, this time with a focus on the generation of performance material. Although it presents compositional guidelines, this chapter does not imply a lack of alternative approaches to developing a performance; as the saying goes, ‘creativity unlocks countless possibilities’. The aim is to provide practical tools for arranging movement-based theatrical performances and enhancing the physical aspect of more traditional approaches and styles. Although this chapter emphasises movement-based theatre, these principles extend to a broad spectrum of theatrical practices, encompassing both scripted and unscripted work. Thus, the compositional guidelines in the following sections, rooted in the inner and outer workings of *karate-dō*, aim to align with Master Gichin Funakoshi’s advice to apply ‘the way of karate to all things’ (2003: 64).

A glance at the etymology of the term ‘composition’ serves to ground the discussion from the outset. Stemming from the Latin *componere*, signifying ‘putting something together’, composition in the current context refers to the assembling and rearranging of thematic and conceptual elements into meaningful theatrical structures. Daniel Mroz provides a useful framework for understanding theatrical composition, explaining:

If the global aim of performers in preparation is to learn to make compelling actions with the body and voice in space and time, then the overall concern of the artist responsible for composition is *the ability to put actions performed by actors’ bodies and voices into a compelling structure in space and time.* (2011: 137, emphasis added)

This observation highlights the importance attributed to the assembly featured in theatrical composition, which is the focus of this chapter.

Further grounding this perspective, Phillip Zarrilli outlines essential elements needed to anchor the development and composition of performance:

(1) an overall strategy for the period of devising/workshopping/rehearsing, (2) the acting tasks that will constitute and create each major structure or unit of action within the performance score, and (3) the actor's point and mode of entry into embodying each task, i.e., how the actor approaches each specific task. (2009: 113)

Although Zarrilli describes this framework when working with a text, it also serves as a foundation for unscripted work by offering an overall arching guide that applies to a spectrum of theatre. Accordingly, unscripted or prewritten theatrical pieces require the assembly of different parts while forming a certain level of cohesion. For the purposes of the present discussion, this chapter aligns with Zarrilli's description of assemblage as a structural shaping that results in a 'repeatable performance score' that showcases the actor's fictive body (2009: 113). The assembly involved raises an important consideration during theatrical composition: the often-crucial need for an 'outside eye'. Although the role of a director is regularly integral to making theatre, this research views composition primarily through the lens of the performer, who may also act as a composer, as when assisted by technology such as videotaping. Thus, the chapter proposes a plan – or even a mapping exercise – for those who seek to identify the role of *karate-dō* in building theatre.

#### 4.1 Compositional Building Blocks

At the end of a theatrical piece, Japanese actors may be greeted by audience members with the phrase '*otsukaresama*', meaning 'You have tired yourself out for me' (Barba 1995: 16). Such an expression does not convey the same meaning as the Western adage of wishing performers to 'break a leg'. Instead, *otsukaresama* highlights the spectator's recognition of the physical, vocal, and mental demands to which many actors subject themselves through vigorous hours of training, dedication, and effort. This Japanese greeting highlights what Robert Benedetti describes as a high level of training, particularly for Asian actors (1973: 465; see also section 1.3.2). Vigorous training also resonates with the work of the *karateka*, although one may argue that the difference between the martial artist and the actor lies in what Eugenio Barba likens to the Japanese art of flower arrangement:

Like the flowers and branches in *ikebana*, performers, to be scenically alive, cannot present *what they are*. They must represent what they want to show by means of forces and procedures with the same value and effectiveness. In other words, they must give up their own 'spontaneity', that is, their own automatisms. (1995: 31)

It is worth noting the equivalence Barba draws between habits ('automatisms') and so-called 'spontaneity', shining a light on the importance of not taking self-expression for granted, hence the need for strategies of training and composition. Roberta Carreri describes such 'automatisms' that inhabit daily function as characterised by the 'rule of maximum result with minimum effort' (2014: 32). Abandoning these habitual movements for what lends itself to theatrical expression resonates with how Mroz describes the work of the actor as developing 'credible' rather than 'realistic' performances: 'Credibility is not established in terms of how true to life performers are, but rather in terms of the intentional truthfulness that each performer brings to her work' (2011: 139). Although

extra-daily behaviour (see section 2.1 and Barba and Savarese 1991: 9–10) may not appear realistic, it evokes believability within the world of a performance. This type of movement reflects techniques found in karate, such as maintaining low stances and utilising sliding footwork.

The training and composition processes that overlap in both traditional martial arts and movement-based theatre include repeatable choreographed movement patterns characterised by specific objectives and impulses. For example, Vsevolod Meyerhold's études or Etienne Decroux's corporeal mime sequences bear similarities with the movement patterns found in karate, as they share an emphasis on disciplined, repeatable arrangements that cultivate precision, rhythm, and expressiveness. Accordingly, this thesis proposes the use of what I term Compositional Building Blocks (CBBs) to refer to materials and aspects derived from Shotokan karate that can be applied within an aesthetic enactment. This approach becomes more transparent when drawing from the lens and expertise of Mroz's integration of traditional Chinese martial arts into actor training and composition (see section 1.3). Through his experience teaching acting students, Mroz has found benefits in employing choreographed movement patterns of *taijiquan taolu* in conjunction with improvised partner exercises of *tuishou* (2011: 97–98). These exercises demonstrate how 'designed' movement patterns can act, which is what Mroz describes as the 'study of fighting, acting and dancing' (2011: 96).

The concept of CBBs takes its cue from Mroz's Prearranged Movement Patterns (PMPs) (see section 1.3.1 and 2011: 160), which he identifies in terms of three categories: 'quotidian, designed or functional'. The first, 'quotidian', is composed of 'daily personal, idiosyncratic actions'; the second, 'designed', is 'informed by training in a codified style'; and the third, 'functional', follow the design of the 'body and gravity' (2011: 96). Accordingly, 'designed' movement patterns in karate, such as *kata* (choreographed

combat with invisible opponents), can be adapted to form sequences that blend ‘quotidian’ and ‘functional’ elements for theatre. For instance, an exercise might involve simplifying the outer appearance of the *kata* into movements that resemble daily actions while preserving the inner focus and awareness needed in karate. Thus, components of CBBs draw attention to the importance of subcategories like improvisation or competitive/athletic movement. That is not to say that the lines of what composes movement patterns may not blur when defining ‘quotidian’, ‘designed’, or ‘functional’ CBBs. Therefore, whether those components that develop movement CBBs include *kihon* (basic techniques), *kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents), *kumite* (sparring), or added improvisations, the types of movement featured in choreographed sequences can act as brick and mortar in the construction of a theatrical piece.

Following Mroz’s lead, one can integrate multiple CBBs into a single series by following what he identifies as the two requisites needed for PMPs:

Firstly, the composition must remain within the bounds of the principles that were used to create its component parts. In other words, the performers’ PMPs have all been composed in a common ‘language’ established by their training and to properly orchestrate them no ‘sudden translation’ into another language can be permitted. This signifies that the principles of movement and sound that govern the individual scores cannot be altered once the actors’ solo actions are integrated. Secondly, however, the assembly of the group composition must go beyond the simple orchestration of a group ‘dance’ and establish a dominant point of view that leads the audience towards the area of meaning of ultimate interest to the director. (2011: 137–38)

The above emphasises a seamless integration of parts when structuring sequences that impart theatrical meaning. Failing to follow specific guidelines that produce cohesion could cause the audience to interpret what is unintentionally fragmented, confusing, or unfinished. Therefore, when employing CBBs, it is advisable to remain within the

confines of certain principles. For example, karate techniques could be organised within the rhythmic and resistance structures of *jo-ha-kyū* (see section 2.4) to maintain a sense of interconnectedness.

Mroz also identifies the ‘liaisons and joinery’ between movement patterns and the ‘means by which they are constructed’ according to what he describes as ‘tasks, stunts and constraints’ (2011: 141). If ‘tasks’ are the primary source for material and ‘stunts’ refer to the ‘responsiveness’, ‘awareness’, and ‘complicity’, then ‘constraints’ act as the ‘glue’ that binds ‘tasks and stunts together’ to define ‘presence, shape and intensity’ (Mroz 2011: 142–43). When applying these guidelines as CBBs, one could layer a *kata* exercise by directing the actor, for example, to perform as if desiring to drink water after hours of thirst while evading other actors. Moreover, other principles can be added like those that Mroz describes as ‘geometry’ and ‘trajectory’ (2011: 144), for example, by adjusting the line of movement so that the actor uses the strong diagonal line that divides the stage.

CBBs also draw on Mroz’s manner of identifying ‘objective operations of montage’ (repetition, distortion, discontinuity, fragmentation, and recombination) as paralleling ‘fictive operations’ (creating, destroying, concealing, revealing and sustaining) (Mroz 2011: 146–47). For example, an exercise in generating and sustaining an image could include having an actress perform *kihon* (basic techniques) while employing an umbrella to shield against imaginative rain. Destroying this initial illustration while fashioning a new image could entail having the same performer transform her umbrella into a boat by flipping it and standing inside as she paddles with her hands.

Though *kihon* (basic techniques), *kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents), or *kumite* (sparring) can compose elements of CBBs, one can add to these structures by applying modes of movement exploration like those presented by Frank

Camilleri in Icarus Project's Principles of Composition and Interaction in the context of improvisatory work for contemporary aesthetic performance:

**basic actions:** to do simple actions using different parts of the body, e.g., walking, picking up, throwing, kicking, grabbing, sitting down.

**landscaping:** to do different walks by imagining different floor textures (e.g., hot coals, sandy, wading in knee-high snow) and/or using different parts of the feet (e.g., tiptoes, heels, inner/outer sides).

**ritualize:** to always and repeatedly do a specific action at a specific point in the space.

**reconstruct:** to deconstruct and reassemble actions in different ways.

**dynamics:** to vary actions in form, rhythm, size, and speed, i.e., maximize/minimize, slow/ fast, light/heavy, flow/staccato.

**translation:** to do specific actions with another part of the body.

**transpose:** to ritualize and reconstruct actions elsewhere in the space.

**shadow:** to follow a partner in the space (including in front of and beside, not necessarily behind, a partner; close by or some distance away).

**mirror:** to replicate a partner's work. [...]

**humanize:** to make abstract actions more recognizably human, i.e., movements that we can potentially do in everyday life. [...]

**weaving:** a recall combination of the above principles and strategies.

(Camilleri 2013a: 154)

These principles provide access to alternative ways of exploring karate techniques and sequences. For instance, rehearsals could include practising *kata* or *kihon* as modified according to the above guidelines, thus stimulating physical and mental action within a compositional context. In exemplifying the applicability of some of these principles combined with karate techniques, one might consider:

**basic actions:** performing *kihon* (basic techniques) or *kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents) with different parts of the body.

**landscaping:** performing *kihon* or *kata* while imagining different floor textures or using different parts of the feet.

**ritualise:** repeatedly performing specific *kihon* at a certain point in the space.

**reconstruct:** deconstructing and reassembling *kata*.

**dynamics:** adjusting the rhythm, size, and speed of *kata*.

**transpose:** ritualising and reconstructing *kata* elsewhere in the space.

**humanise:** transforming *kihon* or *kata* into what is more quotidian.

CBBs that derive from such work can set a production's aesthetic logic while supporting relationships between performers and the elements of storytelling. Thus, CBBs act as a means of training, self-study, and composition. Despite how compositional guidelines such as those listed above appear to offer quick 'formulas' for generating a performance, Mroz warns that skipping through 'layers of the composition process' 'by proceeding through them too quickly' may cause a disservice to the final product, which will lack a certain level of meaningful depth (2011: 138). Therefore, one should allow time to explore the crafting of CBBs as a sustained practice. In accordance with employing designed movement patterns in the compositional course, the next section describes the fundamental building blocks in Shotokan karate, known as *kihon*.

#### **4.2 *Kihon***

Carreri recounts a metaphor that Swedish actor, director, pedagogue, and mime Ingemar Lindh once told her: 'Technique is like an iron staircase, cold and hard but necessary. When it snows, it becomes white, soft, and shining. In performances, spectators should

see the snow and not the staircase' (2014: 3). This analogy underscores the necessity of a solid technical basis that allows artistry to flourish. Setting a firm foundation can seem tedious, but there would be nothing to climb without that staircase. Accordingly, performers must often train and rehearse for many hours to set the stage for an aesthetically engaging performance that communicates and interacts effectively with an audience. Shotokan karate establishes a foundation through *kihon* or basic techniques.



*Figure 12. Demonstration of gyaku zuki by Josephine Calvo, 2024. (Courtesy of Josephine Calvo)*

The term *kihon* 基本 features the *kanji* 'ki' and 'hon', which translate into English as 'basic, fundamental, elementary, or standard'. As experienced builders can attest, a solid foundation is necessary for a strong structure. Learning basic techniques forms the material for more complex movements in karate and theatrical enactments alike.

*Kihon* training emphasises biomechanical efficiency and teaches proper movement, breathing, and alignment. Typically performed without an opponent, these techniques feature attacks like a round house kick, parries like a rising block, and simulations as one might find in *kata* or *kumite* (see sections 4.3 and 4.4). Sports like basketball, tennis, and football include what is comparable to *kihon*, or the repetition of essential skills that improve muscle memory so that the basics become second nature. Techniques repeated in space and time resonate with the work of composition. In Shotokan karate, *kihon* is a precursor to more advanced practices like *kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents) and *kumite* (sparring) and features a decomposition of gestures used for resistance, speed, and strength training. It serves as a tool for self-defence and can be adapted to impart meaning and purpose within a theatrical piece. For instance, practising *kihon* might involve standing in *kiba dachi* (horse stance) while repeating *oi zuki* (lunge punch) ten times in a one-to-one rhythm over four rounds. Another example could feature standing in *kiba dachi* (horse stance) and practising *yoko geri kekomi* (side thrust kick) in a one-to-two rhythm over twenty rounds. The following lists some essential *kihon* techniques across stances, punches, strikes, kicks, and blocks:

### **Stances**

- *hachinoji dachi* – ready stance
- *zenkutsu dachi* – front stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 10*)
- *kokutsu dachi* – back stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 8*)
- *kiba dachi* – horse stance / saddle stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 9*)
- *nekoashi dachi* – cat stance
- *hangetsu dachi* – ‘half-moon’ stance

### **Punches**

- *oi zuki* – lunge punch
- *gyaku zuki* – reverse punch (see *Figure 12*)
- *kizami zuki* – jab punch

### Strikes

- *nukite* – spear hand (thrust)
- *uraken* – back hand (strike)
- *empi* – elbow (strike) (see Chapter 2 *Figure 9*)
- *tettsui* – hammer fist

### Kicks

- *mae geri* – front snap kick
- *mawashi geri* – round house kick
- *yoko geri kekomi* – side thrust kick (see Chapter 2 *Figure 4*)
- *yoko geri keage* – side snap kick
- *ushiro geri* – back thrust kick

### Level Heights

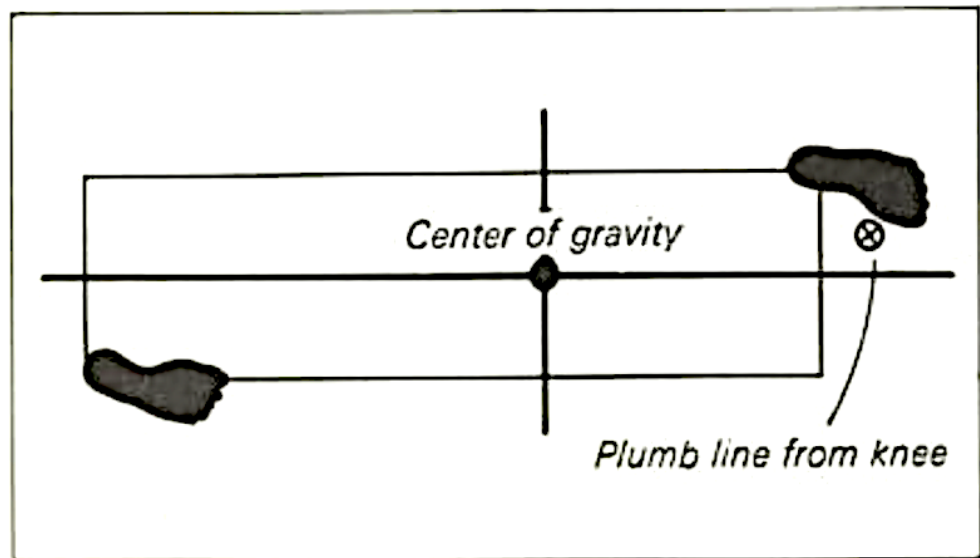
- *jōdan* – ‘upper level’ / face
- *chūdan* – ‘middle level’ / stomach / solar plexus
- *gedan* – ‘lower level’ / groin

### Blocks

- *age uke* – rising block
- *age shuto* – rising knife hand block
- *soto uke* – outside block
- *uchi uke* – inside block
- *gedan barai* – down block

- *shuto uke* – knife hand block
- *juuji uke* – two-handed ‘cross’ block
- *morote uke* – augmented block (see Chapter 2 *Figure 8*)

Each *kihon* requires a specific administration of movement. For example, *zenkutsu dachi* (front stance) requires a straight back leg and a bent front leg so that when a practitioner looks down, they can see their knee above the foot, covering the toes. *Zenkutsu dachi* features a distribution of one’s weight between 60 per cent on the front leg and 40 per cent on the rear leg. Concurrently, one must keep the back over the hips and the face directed forward, as depicted through the foot positions in *Figure 13*:



*Figure 13. Zenkutsu dachi foot placement (Nakayama 1977: 30)*

In this example, the centre of gravity shifts closer to the front leg, allowing practitioners to remain grounded while executing techniques. One may add hand and arm movements to *zenkutsu dachi* as in the example of *uraken* (backhand strike), featuring the hand in the same placement as a karate punch (see section 2.2), while the elbow forms a quick, spring-like motion to execute a side strike.

*Karateka* must precisely perform *kihon* techniques during exams, often culminating in a powerful *kiai* (energetic shout) during the final repetition. This disciplined approach mirrors the precision needed in theatrical composition, where repeated patterns can form core movement expression. By integrating *kihon* into training, actors can develop technical prowess and a deeper understanding of movement narratives. The Japan Karate Association outlines requirements when evaluating *kihon*, such as ensuring the ‘hips are kept parallel to the floor and the upper body [is] kept straight’ and ‘using the whole body to generate power and focus in performance’ (2008). These guidelines resonate as options that provide those ‘constraints’ described in the compositional route detailed by Mroz (see section 4.1; Mroz 2011: 142–43). The following table outlines how *kihon* is executed and combined according to the Shotokan karate examination to graduate from a white to a yellow belt at Yale University:

#	motion	stance	Technique	Japanese
1	Forward	Front	Punch to <i>chudan</i>	<i>Chudan junzuki</i> [oi zuki]
2	Forward	Front	Rising block	<i>Jodan ageuke</i>
3	Forward	Front	Outside block	<i>Chudan sotouke</i>
4	Forward	Front	Down block	<i>Gedan barai</i>
5	Forward	Back	Knife-hand block	<i>Kokutsu shutouke</i>
6	Forward	Front	Front kick	<i>Maegeri</i>

Figure 14. White belt *kihon* table (Yale Shotokan Karate 2024a)

The purpose of this table is to demonstrate that karate offers a map-like range of progressive possibilities that can be adopted and adapted accordingly to fit the needs of preparing students for aesthetic performance.

Foundational movement components are not exclusive to karate; forms of theatre like *Noh*, *Kabuki*, Peking Opera, *Kathakali*, and Balinese dance drama provide students with instruction in what is comparable to *kihon*. In theatre, foundational movement allows practitioners to focus on mastering stances, gestures, and techniques applicable to different contexts and modalities. The precision, discipline, and repetition involved in perfecting basic movements form the core of training, enabling performers to execute more elaborate routines. For example, *Noh* employs choreographed physical postures which use the same word as the martial arts '*kata*' and require perfecting basic stances and techniques to include foundational movements, gestures, and poses that transform into a 'series of successive, fluid, emotive motions' (World of Noh 2024). Combining and perfecting *kihon* can feature as part of compositional training for contemporary theatre, in agreement with how Mroz describes PMPs as the 'study of movement expression governed by principles idealised by a given approach' (2011: 96). More elaborate constructions that include *kihon* are called *kata*, which can serve as a model for developing aesthetic logic in guiding style, rhythm, and flow.

### **4.3 *Kata***

Funakoshi's experience in learning karate consisted of secretive late-night training at Master Azato's home:

Night after night, often in the backyard of the Azato house as the master looked on, I would practise a *kata* ("formal exercise") time and again week after week, sometimes month after month, until I had mastered it to my teacher's satisfaction.

This constant repetition of a single kata was gruelling, often exasperating and on occasion humiliating. More than once, I had to lick the dust on the floor of the dōjō or in the Azato backyard. But practice was strict, and I was never permitted to move on to another kata until Azato was convinced that I had satisfactorily understood the one I had been working on. (1981: 6)

Funakoshi eventually realised that he did not learn *kata* for the sake of learning; thus, memorising many *katas* was not the goal. Instead, he was undergoing a ‘tempering and disciplining’ (1973: 9) route that cultivated courage, courtesy, integrity, humility, self-control, and a sense of justice. This type of training nurtures qualities that address many situations, including those that might impose fear or require reliability.

The word ‘*kata*’ can be translated as a formal exercise or choreographed sequence of movements that simulate combat scenarios in karate. Although ‘*kata*’ is predominantly associated with karate in the West, this term expands to include choreographed sequences of movement in traditional Japanese forms of theatre like *Kabuki* and *Noh*. The types of *kata* featured in Shotokan karate today stem from the work of Master Anko Itosu, who simplified the sequences for middle school students, giving form to what are now known as the *Heian Katas* (Martin 2007: 5). The most straightforward versions of *kata*, *Taikyoku Kata* and *Ten No Kata*, are the work of Funakoshi who simplified Itosu’s *katas* into what he initially intended for elementary school students but are now used for beginners of any age (Martin 2007: 5–7).

As *karateka* discover through sustained training, *kata* does not entail simply learning choreography quickly. Instead, one should view the practice as a long-term endeavour where short but frequent training offers more benefits than sporadic and infrequent work (Funakoshi 1973: 39). Part of the appeal of practising *kata* includes lacking the need for a specific space, equipment, or partners as well as the practice’s accessibility to any gender, physicality, or age. Learning *kata* can consist of a course that

features first focusing on the sequence, next correcting the stances, and then reviewing the meaning of the movements so that one can apply strength, expansion/contraction of the body, and tempo variations (Funakoshi 1973: 40). The fundamental techniques known as *kihon*, such as blocking, punching, striking, and kicking, when combined logically, give way to *kata*.

The first movement in performing all *katas* includes *yōi*, where one stands at attention in *hachinoji-dachi* (natural stance) while positioning the fists about two inches in front of the upper thighs before *rei* (a bow). Some may mistake *rei* as separate from *kata*. When first teaching *kata*, the *sensei* will often count in Japanese (regardless of the country where the class occurs) from one to ten while pronouncing the first syllable of bisyllabic numbers, such as ‘ich’, instead of ‘ichi’ (signifying the number one) for sharper counting. Below is the list of the Japanese numbers repeated in order when *karateka* practise repetitions of techniques such as in *kata*:

- *Ichi* (one)
- *Ni* (two)
- *San* (three)
- *Shi* (four)
- *Go* (five)
- *Roku* (six)
- *Shichi* (seven)
- *Hachi* (eight)
- *Ku (kyuu)* (nine)
- *Juu* (ten)

Hence, through counts, the *sensei* adjusts the tempo and rhythm of the movement (cf. section 2.4). For example, a *sensei* may count slowly and then speed up before the *karateka* culminates the sequence in a *kiai* (energetic shout), featuring *jo-ha-kyū* through a slow resistant pace that speeds up and culminates into a pregnant pause (cf. section 2.4).

While practising *kata*, one should remember that the beginning and end of the sequence should always occur at the same spot on the floor when performed correctly. Therefore, inconsistency in this area signifies a misstep in the sequence. Executing the leg movements of *kata* occurs along a predetermined and invisible line of movement on the ground (*embusen*), which may resemble shapes like the letter ‘T’ or the letter ‘I’ (Nakayama 1977: 94). Figure 14 illustrates five floor patterns that Funakoshi describes as the predominant line of movement in many *katas*:

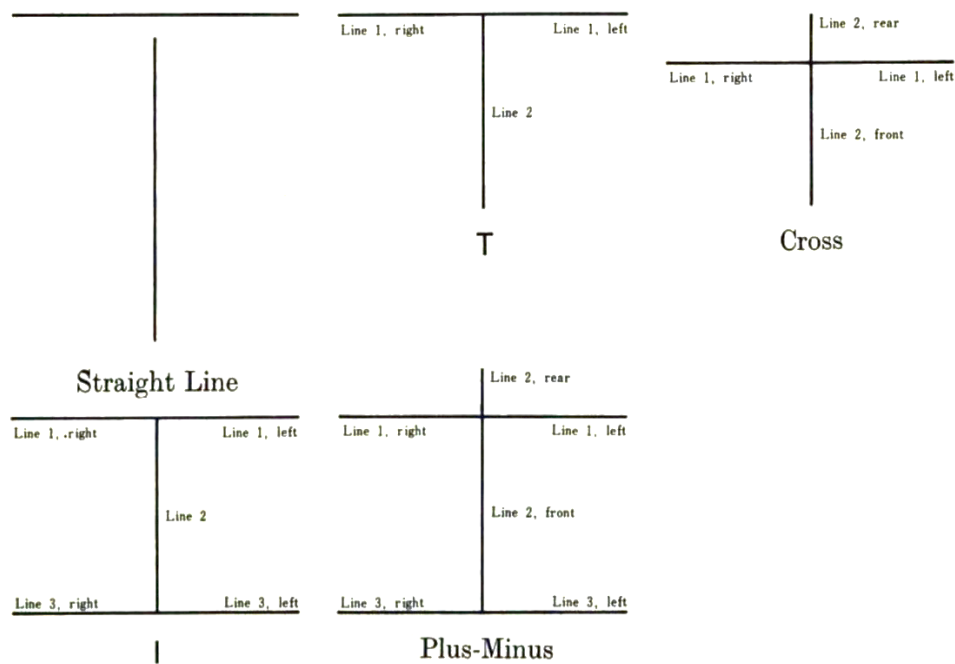


Figure 15. Line of Movement (Funakoshi 1973: 41)

Although these movements appear restricted to a space’s horizontal and vertical lines, techniques also use diagonal lines that deviate from these predetermined directives. For

example, certain *katas* require that one departs from these lines when performing techniques on a diagonal or forty-five-degree angle.

Each *kata* has a specific name and requires more advanced techniques as one progresses through level examinations. The following includes a partial list of karate *katas* next to approximate transliterations of the Chinese characters describing each name:

- *Heian Shodan* – peaceful mind – first level
- *Heian Nidan* – peaceful mind – second level
- *Heian Sandan* – peaceful mind – third level
- *Heian Yondan* – peaceful mind – fourth level
- *Heian Godan* – peaceful mind – fifth level
- *Tekki Shodan* – iron horseman – first level
- *Tekki Nidan* – iron horseman – second level
- *Bassai Dai* – destroying a fortress – major
- *Empi* – flight of the swallow
- *Jion* – compassion and favour
- *Kanku Dai* – observing the sky – major
- *Jutte / Jitte* – ten hands
- *Hangetsu* – half-moon
- *Unsu [Unsuu]* – cloud hands
- *Wankan* – king’s crown

All *katas* fall under categories of *shōre-ryū* or *shōrin-ryū*, with the former emphasising strength and power and the latter featuring light and quick movements in the likeness of a ‘falcon’ (Funakoshi 1973: 8). Examples of *shōre-ryū kata* include *Tekki Shodan*, *Jitte*,

*Jion*, and *Hangetsu* whereas the *shōrin-ryū kata* includes the *Heian Shodan*, *Bassai Dai*, and *Empi katas*. *Heian Katas* include five forms that contain a variety of techniques and almost all basic stances, which allow one to become confident in the ability to defend oneself (1973: 35). Certain *katas*, like the *Heian Katas* and *Tekki Katas*, are mandatory as opposed to other *katas* which are optional when studying karate. Master Masatoshi Nakayama explains the best way to perform *kata* in the following terms:

To perform a *kata* dynamically, three rules must be remembered and observed: (1) correct use of power, (2) speed of movement, fast or slow, and (3) expansion and contraction of the body. The beauty, power and rhythm of the *kata* depend on these three things. (Nakayama 1977: 95)

Because *Heian Shodan* is often the first *kata* that *karateka* learn, it is important to focus on the stances and movement of the feet along the *embusen*, or performance line, which in this case is shaped like an ‘I’ composed of one vertical line and two horizontals. The *Heian Katas* are considered less advanced, apart from *Taikyoku Kata* and *Ten No Kata*, than the other *katas*. *Heian Shodan* includes twenty-one movements, completed in approximately forty seconds. One can summarise the movements in *Heian Shodan* as follows:

1. Begin in *yōi* (ready position), then announce, ‘*Heian Shodan*’, *rei* (bow), and follow with another *yōi*.
2. Perform *gedan barai* (down block) to the left, followed by *oi zuki* (lunge punch) on the horizontal line. Performed in *zenkutsu dachi* – front stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 10*).

3. *Gedan barai* (down block) to the right, followed by a recharge to *tettsui* (hammer fist) and then *oi zuki* (lunge punch) on the horizontal line. Performed in *zenkutsu dachi* – front stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 10*).
4. *Gedan barai* (down block) toward the vertical line dividing the space, followed by *age shuto* (rising knife hand block) and three progressive steps of *age uke* (rising block), with the final block culminating in *kiai* (energetic shout). Performed in *zenkutsu dachi* – front stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 10*).
5. *Gedan barai* (down block) followed by *oi zuki* (lunge punch) on a second horizontal line to the left and then repeated to the right. Performed in *zenkutsu dachi* – front stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 10*).
6. Three consecutive *oi zuki* (lunge punch) culminating in *kiai* (energetic shout) on the third punch. Performed in *zenkutsu dachi* – front stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 10*).
7. *Shuto uke* (knife hand block) to the left on a horizontal line and then at a forty-five-degree angle, followed by *shuto uke* (knife hand block) to the right on the horizontal line and then again on a forty-five-degree angle. Performed in *kokutsu dachi* – back stance (see Chapter 2 *Figure 8*).

In the above example and all *katas*, timing, balance, and rhythm principles come into play. For example, during the progressive steps of consecutive *age uke* (rising block) or *oi zuki* (lunge punch), one speeds up the movement before culminating in *kiai* (energetic shout) while keeping the feet in contact with the floor. During such physical exercise, one also taps into the use of the imagination by seeing invisible opponents and connecting with principles such as not being the first to strike. Thus, Shotokan *katas*, like *Heian Shodan*, embody a story through blocks, strikes, and evasions.

When seen through the lens of performing arts, *Heian Shodan*, like other *katas*, becomes a sequence of dynamic expressions that invites exploration in the context of extra-daily movement. The study of movement offered through *kata* resonates with the requirements for the expressivity and embodiment required as practitioners discover the mechanics of movement, rhythm, spatial dynamics, flow, and intent. Therefore, as a *karateka* might perform *Heian Shodan* with the mindset of a warrior defending against unseen opponents, one can reinterpret the same *kata* as an exploration of theatrical concepts like overcoming struggles or transformation, as such resonating with long-standing Stanislavskian-inspired practices of infusing movements with intentions, thus transforming them into meaningful actions within dramaturgical narratives. Exploring *kata* as part of actor training can act as both a rehearsal tool and a mode of theatrical composition. For example, the movements in *Unsu* can train the actor physically and mentally while still representing a narrative of flight, resilience, or confrontation.

Shotokan *katas* invite practitioners into a deeper understanding of those elements discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, such as understanding the human body, breath support, rhythm, tempo, awareness, focus, balance, harmony, *ki*, and meditation. For instance, an acute awareness of breath support and rhythm allows one to apply the pauses, accelerations, and dynamic shifts needed in *kata*. *Kata* also highlights the inseparability of mind and body, where the practitioner can achieve a heightened state of awareness, or *zanshin* (see section 3.2), to embody a sequence fully. The study of *kata* fosters a deep appreciation of movement as a language in its own right, which reflects Julia Varley's belief that the human body provides the actor with the possibility to speak a language that includes and involves everything, speaking not only of itself but of everything else (Fondazione Barba Varley 2024b). Thus, employing *kata* as a CBB can

layer symbolic meanings, such as shielding oneself from conflict or breaking through barriers, all of which chime with *kumite* (sparring).

#### 4.4 Kumite

An old proverb suggests that ‘if two tigers fight, one is bound to be hurt and the other to die’ (Funakoshi 1981: 25). In other words, despite who wins or loses, no one survives a fight ‘without a scratch’. Acknowledging the consequences of combat highlights the crucial point that ‘karate is not, and never has been, merely a brutal form of self-defense’ (Funakoshi 1981: 114). Instead, one who masters the art of karate understands not to place themselves in dangerous situations where they are forced to employ the art. Accordingly, those who pursue karate only to ‘make use of it in a fight’ inevitably discontinue training as ‘it is quite impossible for any young person whose objective is so foolish’ to continue pursuing *karate-dō* (Funakoshi 1981: 104). Thus, Funakoshi emphasises that *kumite* ‘does not exist apart from the *kata* but for the practice of *kata*’ (1973: 211). Therefore, *kata* acts as the principal means of training and *kumite* as a supporting method, in agreement with how Nakayama describes *kata* and *kumite* as ‘two wheels of a cart’ (1977: 112).

*Kumite* (組手) translates from Japanese to English as ‘grappling hands’ or ‘sparring’ and is one of the fundamental components of karate training. *Kumite* allows practitioners to apply *kihon* and *kata* in a dynamic and interactive setting, honing the ability to respond to an opponent’s movements. The role of *kumite* serves as a practical application of karate principles and techniques under what Funakoshi describes as ‘more realistic conditions’ than *kata* (1973: 211). It also develops attributes like courage, humility, and respect, reflecting the guiding principles of karate. Students learn *kumite* after building skills and confidence to prepare for more advanced, competitive, or self-defence-oriented applications. The benefits of *kumite* include teaching practitioners how to judge and

control distance whilst timing attacks and defences effectively. Sparring sharpens reaction times and situational awareness, which enables practitioners to respond quickly to an opponent's movements. Understanding the purpose of *kata* becomes easier after practising *kumite* as the latter includes live rather than imaginary opponents. Through trial and error, practitioners engaging in *kumite* learn to dynamically adapt to various situations without corrupting the techniques learned through *kihon* and *kata*. Accordingly, Kanazawa explains that *kumite* allows practitioners to observe, imitate, and respect partners (Kanazawa 2006: 21; cf. section 3.3) through a practical application of technique.

Despite how various masters have created subcategories of 'kumite', in this context, the term refers to all forms of sparring in Shotokan karate. For Funakoshi, there are two forms of these types of exercises: *kumite* (sparring) and *jiyū kumite* (free sparring) (1981: 113). However, masters like Nakayama have identified additional subcategories of *kumite*, each designed to develop specific skills progressively. Nakayama recognises 'basic' *kumite* as the most elementary of these forms, aimed at cultivating *kihon* based on the practitioner's skill level (1977: 112). Comparatively, master Hirokazu Kanazawa distinguishes *gohon kumite* (five-step sparring) as a subcategory featuring techniques that can apply to more advanced versions of *kumite* (2006: 99). Nakayama also describes a category known as *ippon kumite* or 'one-step sparring', which entails the study of offensive and defensive techniques, movement, and *maii* (distance between partners) (1977: 112).

Proper *ippon kumite* etiquette features attacker and defender facing each other in 'open V stances', shifting to 'closed V stances', and then bowing (*rei*) to show respect to one another (Kanazawa 2006: 99). After bowing, *karateka* agree upon the target (upper, middle, or lower levels) and who will apply offensive or defensive movements before taking turns administering techniques. For example, the attacker announces their intended

strike and target, such as *'jōdan oi zuki!'* (high-level lunge punch) while the defender responds with an appropriate block like *age uke* (rising block) and counterattack like *gyaku zuki* (reverse punch). Part of the aim of *ippon kumite* is sharpening a student's ability to deliver techniques while reacting quickly and efficiently. Practising *ippon kumite* emphasises proper positions, timing, and distancing, which resonates with stage combat. Thus, the type of control needed for *kumite* chimes with what actors may encounter when enacting a fight sequence that requires proper technique as protection from injuries.

An additional subcategory of *kumite*, which Nakayama defines as *jiyū ippon kumite* (semi-free sparring), acts as a stepping stone to open sparring by allowing practitioners to begin in a freestyle position. In this case, the defender must respond appropriately with blocks and counterattacks while delivering tempo and rhythm variations that improve one's understanding of distancing, body movements, centre of gravity, defensive techniques, and offensive blows (1977: 124). *Jiyū kumite* (free sparring) is the most advanced form of sparring in Shotokan, featuring no designated attacker or defender so that both participants engage freely without prearrangements. When practising *jiyū kumite*, the attacker works towards lessening the distance with the opponent while seeking the opportunity for an attack. At the same time, the defender prevents the attacker from achieving striking distance without running away (Kanazawa 2006: 178). Despite the improvisational freedom granted in this form of *kumite*, attacks stop 'short of vital points, leaving a thin margin' (Funakoshi 1973: 222). During this form, contact with the target is 'strictly prohibited' (Nakayama 1977: 112–13). Despite the safety precautions required when adopting *jiyū kumite*, the improvisational nature of the practice parallels a sense of theatrical play (see section 3.6), mimicking real-life scenarios that test reflexes, timing, strategy, and the ability to respond under pressure.

Various theatrical exercises, such as those promoted by Jacques Lecoq, pair well with the improvisational nature of *jiyū kumite* (cf. section 3.6). These exercises can enhance the practitioners' playfulness, imaginary environment, sensory perception, and character development. For example, one can build an imagined setting surrounding *kumite* by employing Lecoq's sequence of six imaginary sounds as described below:

The first one you do not hear (which does not mean there will be no reaction). The second, you hear, but without paying any special attention to it. The third one is loud and you listen to see if it will repeat. Since it does not, you cease paying attention. The fourth is very loud, and you think you know where it comes from, which reassures you. The fifth fails to confirm what you had thought. Finally, the sixth and last is a jet plane which passes over your head. (Lecoq 2020: 71)

Coupling these imagined stimuli with *jiyū kumite* maintains the timing, awareness, and reflexes required while adding reactions to illusory cues. Complementing this exercise with a specific make-believe environment acts as an additional way to impact a practitioner's imaginary senses. For example, practising *jiyū kumite* on a fictitious beach will evoke different stimuli and, therefore, reactions than on an imaginary mountain peak.

Other theatre-based improvisational exercises that pair well with *kumite* include those that permit practitioners to form character qualities. One way of pursuing character development in theatre includes beginning with the study of animals as illustrated by Lecoq:

The analysis of animal movement brings us closer to the study of the human body and helps with character creation. Broadly, animals resemble us, having bodies, feet, heads. This makes them easier to approach than materials or the four elements. Research on animal bodies begins with their purchase on the ground: how do they stand? What is their contact with the ground, and how does it differ from ours? We discover hooves which trot, making only brief contact with the ground (reminiscent of women in high heels), the flat feet of plantigrades (e.g. bears); the webbed feet

of ducks who walk with a rolling gait (like Charlie Chaplin); the feet of flies which work like suction pads, sticking to the floor, etc. (Lecoq 2020: 126)

Similarly, those engaging in *kumite* can study animal movements, which resonates with how certain martial arts include animal-like techniques (cf. section 1.1.2 and Cynarski 2022: 393). For example, in Shotokan karate, a *sensei* may direct students to study the movement of a tiger to maintain the essence and rhythm required when moving forward in *zenkutsu dachi*. Once actors have combined the research of animals with *kumite*, they can progress to enacting additional qualities like colours, elements, or materials. For example, a practitioner can assume the task of physically interpreting ‘fire’ or characteristics associated with the colour ‘red’. Actors practising *kumite* with specific non-human qualities should capture the movement they wish to portray without rushing or overacting. Transposing a specific physicality associated with non-human entities furthers the sense of ‘play’ associated with *kumite*, springing forth new CBBs. Mastering the portrayal of different physical and rhythmic attributes calls attention to the emergent relationships and dynamic interactions one can create between fictional characters.

One can further examine the connections among fictional characters through specific theatre exercises with a focus on this area. For example, one can adapt what Simon Murray refers to as ‘Charging the Space’ (2018: 138) for *kumite* as follows:

- Practitioners should face one another and work in pairs. Using their imagination, partners visualise a stick connecting them between torsos, foreheads, or abdomens while maintaining a distance of roughly two metres.
- One practitioner chooses offensive (e.g. a punch like *oi zuki*) while the other picks a defensive (e.g. a block like *gedan barai*) technique. Both maintain the distance of the invisible stick.

- Once the sensation of dramatic space has been determined, partners can increase the speed or distance between them.
- At this stage, partners can add language by having the attacker speak a word before or after executing a technique while the partner implementing the defensive technique reacts in silence. After several rounds of this sequence, the defender can react using one word.

This type of exercise heightens the dynamism between practitioners while developing new dramatic scenarios. Combining these types of improvisational exercises maintains the benefits of *kumite*, which include improved reflexes, strength, flexibility, coordination, balance, endurance, stamina, timing, adaptability, focus, concentration, and discipline.

Due to concerns associated with applying sparring in actor formation (see section 1.1.1), references to *kumite* as one of the three tiers of karate (along with *kihon* and *kata*) come with the understanding that adjustments are necessary to increase safety. Preparation, sparring gear, and remaining within set guidelines (e.g. controlling strikes) reduce the risk of injury. Accordingly, academic institutions like Yale University have integrated versions of *kumite* in Shotokan course training as prearranged movements or semi-free sparring (Yale Shotokan Karate 2024b). Solutions for retaining the benefits of *kumite* (i.e. surpassing *kata* or harmonising with partners) while increasing safety measures in actor training can include modifying the tempo to slow-motion or increasing the space between partners for long-distance sparring. Consequently, theatre practitioners like Slade Billew have implemented safety precautions by redefining martial arts for theatrical rather than combative purposes (2022: 479; cf. section 1.1.1). Therefore, by defining the purpose of training for theatre while setting specific parameters, one can

lessen the risks associated with *kumite* for actors. Thus, pairing theatre exercises with *kumite* maintains the benefits of *karate-dō* while enhancing the actor's imaginative world and fashioning discoveries that further develop an actor's understanding of body, mind, and world. Accordingly, *kumite* functions as an exercise that springs forth CBBs that maintain the timing, awareness, self-confidence, and courage needed when crafting theatre.

#### **4.5 Creating a Performance**

When examining composition, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau describe the art of crafting a performance in the following terms:

Composition is a form of writing, but it is writing on your feet in space and time using the language of the theater. Just as there are literary devices in fiction and poetry, there are useful theatrical devices in making Compositions. Think of small stage moments—a gesture, a turn, a light cue—as words. In combining these words, you begin to create sentences. And in stringing these sentences together, you begin to build a paragraph, and so on, into chapters, etc., all with a combination of movement, light, sound, etc. (2005: 186)

Just as there are many ways to write a story, there are different options for generating aesthetic performance – including one that uses *karate-dō*. Although one may perceive aspects of karate as inherently theatrical, forging a composition practice may not come intuitively. Consequently, and for the sake of the present discussion, this section describes the combination of CBBs through adaptations of Bogart and Landau's *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (2005). In this context, the term 'Viewpoints' refers to exercises and a compositional framework aimed at creating and analysing physical theatre. As an explorative means by which one can generate movement-based theatre, Viewpoints lays out a series of questions that assist practitioners

with making performative discoveries. Bogart and Landau explain that despite the success in applying the approach set forth by Viewpoints, it is ‘impossible to say where these ideas actually originated, because they are timeless and belong to the natural principles of movement, time and space’ (2005: 7). The examples described in this section can enhance the montage of CBBs by joining what Bogart and Landau describe as ‘separate components of theatrical language into a cohesive work of art (2005: 12–13). In other words, fashioning an artistic piece in this context implies combining CBBs to construct theatrical productions that integrate design elements.

The Viewpoints compositional course implies the need for an ensemble working together to build a performance. However, just as karate allows one to practise *kihon* or *kata* alone, CBBs permit training by single performers. Thus, one may employ a similar questioning course of action as a solo performer desiring to combine CBBs through Viewpoints, understanding that one would miss the collectivity and group ownership in assembling a performance. In either the case of an ensemble-based or a solo routine, the inquisitive means set forth by Bogart and Landau act as practical options for combining spatial, temporal, environmental, and physical relationships developed through CBBs. This can allow practitioners to continue reaping the benefits of karate while applying the tools needed to build something instinctually cohesive. In this context, examples are directed towards constructing ensemble-based devised theatre, although a compositional route of this kind also applies to scripted work. The following examples identify how the marriage of CBBs and Viewpoints can maintain karate principles while pursuing the practice of theatre-making.

The variety of compositional options for a performance draws attention to how theatre holds the capacity to involve all the arts. Thus, ‘borrowing ideas’ from different creative practices applies in this context. For example, as a starting point, Bogart and

Landau invite practitioners to recall something memorable from an artistic enactment, indicating what to look for (2005: 182). In doing so, they describe an exercise identifying what ‘floats up into consciousness’ from observing other performances to access ‘genuine, unmediated interest’ as a fundamental tool (2005: 181). Possible recalls through this exercise can include poetic images like a relationship between an inanimate object and a human or a powerful effect from a combination of musical notes. Bogart and Landau encourage practitioners to discover what becomes ingrained in one’s memory through the visual or auditory senses. Their practice includes generating new material or ideas related to themes, characters, relationships, or events dictated through ‘source work’, which acts like research engaging intuition and the unconscious (2005: 165–68).

Sergei Eisenstein describes the classical structure of musical works, films, dramas, and paintings as ‘invariably derived from a struggle of opposites’, linked together through a certain conflict (1970: 157), thus shedding light on source ideas for composition. Examining different artistic mediums conjures ideas of what stories one can craft and the techniques within the different art forms that can be reused and recycled for theatre. Hence, one’s experience of the arts, such as in the observation of paintings or dance, can grant practitioners insights into building performances that explore qualities which Bogart and Landau describe as ‘point of view’, ‘architecture’, ‘audience’, ‘storytelling’, ‘light’, and ‘character’ (2005: 157–59). Each of these vantage points grants a different angle to address theatre-making. For example, during the explorative process, a CBB can be adjusted to shift the audience’s perspective to permit practitioners to make discoveries that inform and add connections between segments.

When identifying artistic tools for combining CBBs, one can insert a questioning layer as suggested by Bogart and Landau to identify three basic components in building theatrically: ‘the question’ that ‘motivates the entire process’, ‘the anchor’ (person or

event) that serves as a means to arrive to ‘the question’, and ‘the structure’ as the form where the event ‘hangs’ such as in organising ‘time, information, text and imagery’ (2005: 154). An example of these tools in a theatrical rendition depicting the impact of social media might be:

- The question: What is society becoming considering the impact of social media?
- The anchor: Testimonies and experiences of contemporary people.
- The structure: Mobile application structure.

Thus, the ‘question’, ‘anchor’, and ‘structure’ serve as the unifying pieces in generating material. Identifying those elements that link the moving pieces can become the key to cohesiveness, such as when deciding on elements of imagery, time, information, and text. When envisioning the CBBs that will work together with the ‘question’, ‘anchor’, and ‘structure’, one can imagine these pieces as sharing what Bogart and Landau describe as a ‘throughline’ in the assembling and overlapping of images, showcasing ‘juxtaposition’, ‘contrast’, ‘rhythm’, and ‘story’ (2005: 141). Bogart and Landau’s description of the link that connects all the pieces bears an obvious comparison to Konstantin Stanislavski’s definition of the actor’s ‘through line’ where actions align with achieving an ultimate goal (1981: 79). Although Stanislavski’s use of the words ‘through’ and ‘line’ refers to the actor achieving an ultimate objective, one could compare Bogart and Landau’s description of ‘throughline’ to intend that which unites CBBs in working towards a goal. In such a case, the performative actions in and throughout CBBs can work together to relay an ultimate message to an audience, guiding the desired dramaturgical trajectory. This process does not imply that a theatrical piece or character must travel in sequence

from point 'A' to point 'B'. As Bogart and Landau state, performances and characters can move from 'C' to 'F' and then 'X' in depicting a story (2005: 185–86).

The variety of choices in piecing segments together, even when using a framework like Viewpoints, highlights the important relationship between what Bogart and Landau describe as 'separate tracks' (2005: 187). Identifying separate tracks draws attention to what Barba describes as the performance 'score', which he defines as the form and outline of the course of action, characterised by a segmentation where sequences of actions become subdivisible for the performer so that each sub-unit contains a beginning, climax, and end, ultimately blending into an 'organic flow' (Barba 1995: 112). Thus, if CBBs act as sub-units, then one can also say that each segment contains a structure where special attention can be given to the relationship between beginnings and endings to link parts together. Enhancing what unites CBBs together includes an exploratory progression characterised by producing that which is based on integrating one relational aspect to the next, impacted by environmental factors like the architecture of a space, the texture of the floor, light sources, or sounds.

Examining how the actor's world may impact theatrical composition draws attention to film montage techniques as a resource applicable to the theatre, such as 'zooming in' or 'zooming out'. Film transitions can shed light on how one can splice CBBs to form a performance that flows from one scene to the next while remaining visually engaging. For instance, one may apply a fade-out assisted by lighting techniques. In the example of a crossfade (when one clip fades out as the other fades in), one can achieve a similar effect to that of film by having a group of stage actors give way to a hidden view of the stage. Accordingly, Barba describes Dario Fo's verbal comments during his teaching sessions with Odin Teatret as illustrating theatre montage in terms of 'zooms, background shots, wide shots, close-ups, reverse shots', which for the performer

‘makes the action precise, alive, and interesting’ whilst imagining a ‘film camera in the brain of each spectator’ (1995: 126).

The splicing together of CBBs highlights relationships between and within tracks, including how ‘movement’ can relate to ‘text’ or ‘sound’ to ‘lighting’. Stringing these types of elements together features a specific type of ‘rhythm’ and ‘contrast’ advocated by filmmakers like Eisenstein, who invite practitioners to remember that the ‘literal meaning’ of the word ‘composition’ involves comparing and arranging whilst establishing ‘proportions’ and ‘links’ between different parts (1970: 156). Adding to the fluidity from one track to the next, one must also strike a balance between unity and variety, as an abundance of the former reduces the excitement. Concurrently, excess of the latter can make a piece feel disjointed. When all the tracks work together in a unified way, one may say that the performance has achieved a level of balance and harmony (see section 3.3) so that none of the elements evokes predictability or confusion but a perfect combination of building blocks. Thus, harmony works together with the equilibrium generated by different parts.

Seeking a certain balance can feature one of the techniques woven into various art forms known as *repetition*. Eisenstein explains that repetition acts as a method for ‘establishing compositional ties and links between separate parts’, similar to what is found in music or poetry, to assist in generating unity in the composition (1970: 156). Part of why repetition works effectively includes how the technique highlights similarities and differences. One such example in a CBB might feature replicating a *kata* several times but changing the final technique to highlight an ending moment. Another example might include having practitioners repeat *kata* segments performed by different individuals who enter the field of play. In these scenarios, contrast can work in favour of emphasising a specific focal point by guiding the spectator’s gaze. Visual and auditory perceptions of

juxtaposition, as techniques found in various art forms, can assist with the theatricality of how one wishes to direct attention. Thus, repetition can direct a sense of movement while producing a certain ‘feel’. Repetition can also include rhythmic patterns found in the arts displayed through patterns. For example, when considering rhythmic arrangements in theatre, such as *jo-ha-kyū* (see section 2.4), one may realise that:

An evening has a jo-ha-kyu  
A play has a jo-ha-kyu  
An act of a play has a jo-ha-kyu  
A scene has a jo-ha-kyu  
An interaction has a jo-ha-kyu  
An action has a jo-ha-kyu  
A gesture has a jo-ha-kyu  
(Bogart and Landau 2005: 148)

In other words, as rhythmic patterns apply to a single CBB, the technique can also spread to an entire theatrical piece. Employing these principles to different steps can add to cohesiveness while enhancing spectator engagement.

In weaving CBBs through the Viewpoints framework, *karate-dō* impacts the approach of theatrical composition by providing a base. However, CBBs do not need to resemble karate techniques as the gestures can be reformatted, making the movements appear more quotidian. The compatibility of Viewpoints with CBBs is particularly evident in those exercises that overlap or enhance one another. As a compositional route, Viewpoints can develop combinations between tracks while maintaining the benefits of karate because of the shared aims of maintaining awareness, focus, memory, tempo, and rhythm, as well as an understanding of speed, duration, and repetition. Karate adds additional work in courtesy, balance, efficiency, self-confidence, integrity, courage, stamina, endurance, flexibility, and self-control to Viewpoints training.

Among the shared objectives of CBBs and Viewpoints, one of the most notable is the principle of aiming for humility instead of egoism. Bogart and Landau describe humility as the ‘ultimate lesson of Viewpoints’ (2005: 210), which resonates with how Funakoshi describes the objective of *karate-do*: ‘that in daily life, one’s mind and body be trained and developed in a spirit of humility’ (1973: 3). The benefits of constructing theatre in a humble and collaborative environment includes permitting a theatrical piece to spring forth without the need for a director or teacher. In this context, joining CBBs encourages contributions from each participant, thus keeping the project moving forward rather than halting disagreements on the final product.

In devising, exercises that involve imagination and a sense of ‘play’ align well with the resourcefulness of the practitioners, thus enhancing the compositional course of action. For example, running on the spot and visualising a golden band pulling the head upward, imagining that the legs are strong and muscular, and working with an ‘open heart’ (Bogart and Landau 2005: 26) can complement the actor’s creativity and act as a commonality found between linked CBBs. An example that incorporates a sense of ‘play’ might include exercises featuring kinaesthetic responses and spontaneous reactions, such as when a group runs into the centre of a circle in a way that an outside observer cannot tell who initiated the movement. If one adds what Bogart and Landau describe as ‘hidden thoughts and feelings’ (2005: 12–13), one enhances those connections that the actor experiences between building blocks. Bogart and Landau’s principles of time (tempo, duration, kinaesthetic response, and repetition) and space (shape, gesture, architecture, spatial relationships, and topography) (2005: 8–9) can act as additional elements that allow CBBs to be integrated into one another. For example, the tempo and gestures of one CBB, composed of elements of *kihon*, may flow into the repetition and spatial

relationships of the next CBB, composed of principles of *kumite*. In such a case, the cohesiveness becomes more perceptible to the performers and spectators.

The following example demonstrates how one might combine Viewpoints, in the form of an exercise that Bogart and Landau describe as ‘Changing Place in Space’ (2005: 85), with karate:

- First, performers find a place, or ‘station’ onstage, one at a time, until the maximum number of actors are in the space.
- Second, the performers must decide where to go and which *kihon* (for example, *zenkutsu dachi* or *kokutsu dachi*) to perform based on where the other performers are in the space, their movements, and the architecture of the space. Then, the performers must memorise the *kihon* and stations of the other actors.
- Third, the performers must switch stations several times with other actors until each has become familiar with which *kihon* belongs to which station.
- Fourth, performers improvise by moving through the stations with a sense of play, highlighting a kinaesthetic response, repetition, or tempo while remaining within the parameters of *kihon*.

Kinaesthetically, such an exercise encourages actors to react instinctively, engage the memory, and recognise tools like repetition and rhythm. During this exercise, the practitioner must replicate what is perceived visually. Once the movement sequences are mastered, one can form new CBBs from the explorations developed in the exercise. The collaborative nature of this type of work aims to foster a sense of collective awareness and ensemble cohesion. Additionally, one may enhance newly fashioned CBBs by focusing on different principles, such as having the first half performed with special

attention to tempo and the second half to spatial relationships. Next, one could proceed to the division of the *kata* into ‘three main movements’ so that the elements of the story incorporate the following elements, one at a time:

Three lines of text from the play text [...]

A specific role for the audience, and choice of performing space in relation to the viewing space

A piece of music from an unexpected source

A revelation of space

A surprise entrance

A break of frame

A sequence of extreme contrast

A repetition of an object or image three times

Anything else from your specific list of ingredients, from your specific Play-World

(Bogart and Landau 2005: 169)

In such a compositional assignment, one can explore how separate ‘tracks’ – as described earlier in this section – can affect one another when integrated separately. For instance, practitioners can examine how text impacts movement or how music affects rhythm. Through this progression, the relationships among CBBs take shape, drawing attention to a variety of themes and the overall structure and flow of a theatrical piece. One approaches the above choices based on the desired impact on the audience’s perspective while paying attention to storytelling techniques influenced by genre, framing, characters, or the play world. In the course of this work, one may also invite selected observers to provide feedback on what could improve the final product before making a piece accessible to the public. The following includes some examples of questions directed to observers with the task of assisting the performers:

- What halted the flow of the performance? What eased it?

- What moments stood out most? What stood out less?
- How would you describe the rhythm?
- Do you think the tempo should have been faster or slower at different times?
- Was the beginning, climax, and ending clear? What could have made these more evident?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the performance?

By involving this kind of outside feedback, one can adjust building blocks according to the overall audience's perception.

In conclusion, combining CBBs through the inquisitive structure set forth by Viewpoints offers the capacity to maintain the gains of *karate-dō*. While this type of action leans heavily on generating material through an exploratory route, karate and Viewpoints complement one another by strengthening areas where the practices do not overlap. From the karate perspective, those principles not addressed in Viewpoints are attended to through the foundation set forth through this thesis's proposal of a 'Karate for Actor Training' approach as discussed in the next two chapters. Funnelling CBBs through compositional practices like Viewpoints invites practitioners to produce that which requires practice 'on one's feet'. Accordingly, the following two chapters crystallise the discussion developed in the preceding three chapters on principles of body, mind, and composition by focusing on pedagogy and practice.

## Chapter 5

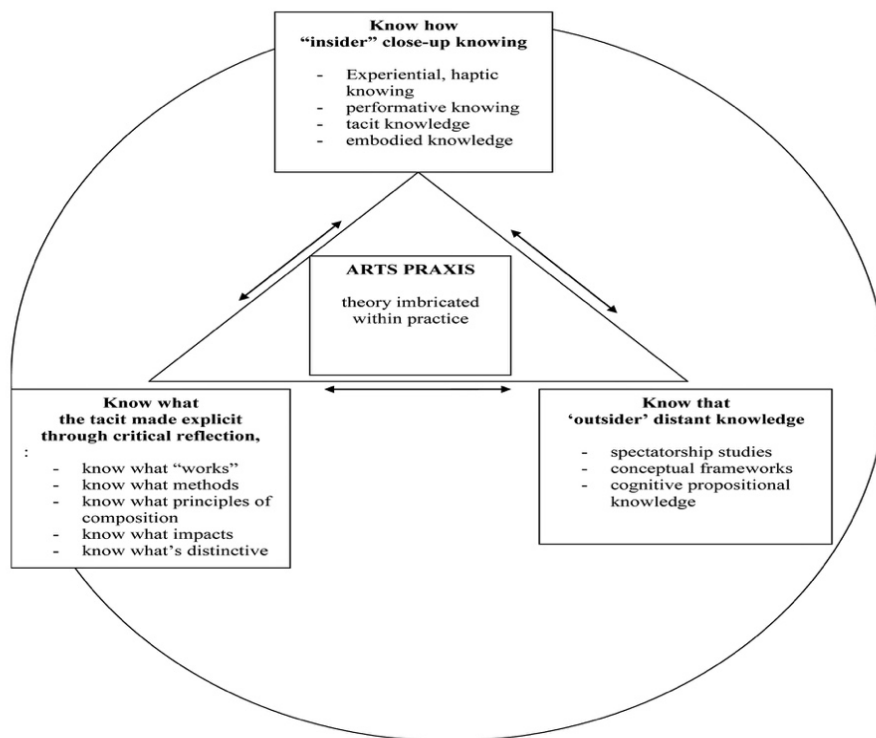
### KAT Project: Framework and Practice

The idea of research as a form of reflecting, returning, and looking back is linked to the etymology of the word ‘research’ itself. The term gains clarity when split into ‘re’ and ‘search’, implying retracing one’s steps in ‘searching’ for something once more. The translation of ‘research’ into romance languages like French or Italian has a more direct association with the Latin origin of the word, ‘*circare*’, which implies circulating, as one does when trying to find something. Although the term might have initially intended searching solely for a material object, it has expanded to signify intellectual investigation. Research has become important for improving human understanding, representing a process of exploration that uncovers new insights. Generating knowledge by ‘reflecting’ or ‘looking back’ has characterised the formation of the psychophysical work described in the present chapter by acting as a flashlight illuminating the nuances of a project referred to as Karate for Actor Training (KAT).

KAT examines the practicality of the application of karate in an actor training environment through a workshop setting. Although this thesis is not by Practice as Research (PaR), KAT is a practical application that sheds crucial light on the topics and characteristics discussed so far in the previous chapters. As such, this project lends itself toward gleaning inspiration from Robin Nelson’s modes of knowing while acknowledging the need to frame understanding in the application of the performing arts (2013: 39). In this framework, Nelson’s PaR model allows what he calls ‘practitioner-researchers’ the ‘different kinds of evidence’ that produce new insights (2013: 38). KAT aligns with Nelson’s perception of a fluid view of knowledge with ‘different modes’ of

understanding such as ‘know how’, or tacit and embodied knowledge; ‘know that’, or propositional and theoretical knowledge; and ‘know what’, or knowing ‘what works’ through critical reflection (see Figure 16). Thus far, in this thesis, I have presented instances of both ‘know how’ (through my embodied knowledge of acting and karate) and ‘know that’ (through the various ‘knowledges’ by practitioners and scholars reviewed and invoked in previous chapters). KAT has provided the opportunity to develop the third axiom of Nelson’s methodology, i.e. the ‘know what’ dimension. Accordingly, the ‘know what’ acquired through critically reflecting on the project has assisted in identifying how the ‘know how’ and ‘know that’ have intersected to create new insights. The knowledge produced through KAT becomes clearer when viewed through the lens of Nelson’s diagram in Figure 16 outlining the different ‘modes of knowing’ associated with arts praxis.

**Modes of knowing: multi-mode epistemological model for PaR**



*Figure 16. 'Modes of Knowing' (Nelson 2013: 37)*

Nelson's model prioritises the imbrication of 'theory within practice', that is, not theory that *precedes* or *results from* practice but a methodology that *fuses both* enterprises simultaneously in a tripartite configuration that ends up offering a veritable three-dimensional picture of the research process.

In the context of this thesis, Nelson's model assists in improving one's understanding of KAT by establishing how 'modes of knowing' can embrace what he describes as a variety of 'possibilities' (2013: 38). Accordingly, the intersection of theory and experience related to KAT features in what Barbara Bassot, an academic specialising in research methods and professional development, describes as 'building blocks of professional practice' (2023: 8), or what I refer to as 'Practice Blocks' (PBs). These PBs that constitute KAT bear similarities with the structuring and layering used in the Compositional Building Blocks (CBBs) of performance-making discussed in section 4.1.

The current chapter's contribution to the thesis explains the PBs as the work that led to the formulation of KAT from the perspective of myself as a researcher, a Master of Fine Arts in Acting graduate, an actress, a black belt in Shotokan karate, and an instructor. Understanding the spectrum of knowledge gained through KAT is illustrated by reflecting on the foundation and building blocks of the practice. In agreement with the readability and level of intimacy that Nelson describes in relation to one's practice, a first-person narrative distinguishes this chapter, as the alternative would add an unnecessary 'depersonalisation' from the work (2013: 35). In this context, the terms 'participants' and 'students' are used interchangeably to refer to those who participated in KAT.

## 5.1 Introducing KAT

There are various options when observing a structure made of different blocks. For example, one may ‘circle’ the edifice to understand the architecture, materials, and presumed foundation. A thorough examination may incite questions about why the building was assembled in a certain fashion. One may ask similar questions when describing a training programme like KAT through this lens. Why were specific ‘building blocks’ chosen and layered in KAT? At first, evaluating the appropriate PBs for KAT resembled a scattered puzzle of pieces needing proper fitting. Eventually, each piece worked together to improve understanding how *karate-dō* can impact the actor’s body, mind, and surrounding world.

The first insight occurred in 2021 during a Shotokan karate lesson intending to teach the *kata* known as *Kanku Sho*. At the time, I was struck by how the gestures of *Kanku Sho* reminded me of physical theatre. In other words, I recognised the overlap between the clarity of movement found in these practices. For example, observing the engravings of physical positions in *Commedia dell’Arte*, as depicted by Claude Gillot (1673–1722) (see Duchartre 1966: 35), resonates with the physical specificity found in karate. I had no idea at the time that researching the overlaps between karate and physical theatre practices would lead me to embark on a journey that would birth what I would later refer to as ‘KAT’. The PBs that made their way into fashioning KAT date to an explorative period in 2022 that I retrospectively refer to as ‘Phase 0’ of this research journey. Characterised by a five-month period of classes, Phase 0 featured a combination of Shotokan karate and actor training as part of a conservatory for the arts programme at The Culture House in Kansas, USA. At the time, and despite marked differences between karate and *Ninjutsu*, the course was marketed under a more attractive title to entice more enrolments: ‘The Actor Ninja’. That season set the stage for deep reflection on the integration of karate and

acting, propelling the need to better understand the adaptation and application of karate in actor training. What developed from Phase 0 included a desire to provide a resource for those in the performing arts, especially actors, students of acting, and their teachers.

Initially, Phase 0 featured a lineup of exercises that lacked a formulated structure for delivery. Eventually, the course showcased classes that began with Shotokan karate and ended with improvisational exercises encompassing karate. Problem-solving allowed the initial structure of Phase 0 to evolve into the following sample class, which, despite some differences, resembles parts of the Phase 1 KAT workshops presented and discussed in section 5.3:

### **Warmup**

Stretching

### **Presentation**

- Karate lesson of the week: ‘Karate begins and ends with *rei* (bow)’
- *Kihon: zenkutsu dachi* and *kokutsu dachi*
- Importance of the breath

### **Practice**

- *Kihon* with locomotion while impersonating the essence of a ‘tiger’ and using breath
- Slow Motion Samurai exercise incorporating what was covered in the present class: *rei*, *zenkutsu dachi*, *kokutsu dachi*, and breath

### **Performance**

Improvisational exercises incorporating what was covered in the class while enacting moving through different environments to return ‘home’

The expected student learning outcomes of the Phase 0 structure encompassed building focus, awareness, balance, control, breath support, memory, and relaxation techniques with the aim of performing truthful interactions on stage. Formulating a repeatable structure for each class set proper expectations in agreement with the objective of creating two showcases: one as a mid-term exam and the other as a final presentation. In accordance with the projected learning outcomes, experimentation of *kata* with different types of rhythm and tempo led to the idea for the mid-term topic: creating a performance using music and *kata*. As for the final topic, the overlaps between karate and *Commedia dell'Arte* inspired the concluding showcase: combining *karate-dō* with a routine associated with *Commedia dell'Arte*: 'The Lazzo of the Fly'.

My tendency to modify classes based on perceptions of student involvement influenced crafting a standardised structure for Phase 0. In doing so, Phase 0 identified the benefits of introducing techniques through a Presentation, Practice, Performance format (PPP). This PPP process is an adaptation of the 'Presentation, Practice, Production' (Harmer 1998: 31) model used to teach foreign languages, designed after how children learn their native language. The PPP structure derived from personal success teaching Berlitz language classes from 2006 to 2011. As the Supervisor for Berlitz Languages, my job involved educating instructors on how to teach foreign languages effectively. I have since adapted this structure to actor training, echoing how practitioners like Daniel Mroz have also taught acting students using a process modelled after how one learns their mother tongue (cf. section 1.3). One of the reasons why the PPP structure works well with a combination of karate and actor training is because it aligns with a traditional karate class structure where the *sensei* models the proper execution of techniques. Like karate, KAT was built with the assumption that participants possess the ability to learn kinaesthetically. This assumption does not mean that those with mental or

physical disabilities cannot participate in this type of programme, as KAT aligns with the inclusivity of the World Karate Federation's facet dedicated to paralympic movement (World Karate Federation 2023).

In simple terms, the PPP structure is composed of three phases. The first features an instructor teaching something new, the second invites repetition, and the third allows freedom without interruptions. During Phase 0 and the subsequent phases of KAT, the 'Presentation' phase includes new concepts where students learn Compositional Building Blocks (CBBs) (see section 4.1). For example, during 'Presentation', students may be taught fundamental techniques like *kihon* (see section 4.2) by having the instructor model how to perform so that students can imitate those movements. The next stage constitutes 'Practice' so students can continue making discoveries through repetition and exploration with instructor-led feedback. During this phase, one can join CBBs (see section 4.5) by coupling karate techniques with theatre exercises like those outlined in Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (2005). During the 'Performance' stage, students employ what they have learned in 'Presentation' and 'Practice' without assistance. The performative stage assists students in building the confidence needed to refrain from continued 'leaning' on the instructor.

The accomplishments of Phase 0 included identifying different practices that worked well with a combination of karate and actor training. For example, the class displayed improved awareness, focus, balance, stamina, flexibility, and self-confidence when imaginative elements were added to the execution of karate techniques, such as when students engaged in *kihon* as different animals. Another success of Phase 0 included identifying how a hybrid of Shotokan karate and improvisational exercises complemented one another to balance a level of 'play' and 'discipline' that funnelled into specific performative choices (see section 3.6). Other successes involved having students learn

principles before techniques so that ideologies could be applied to practice and daily life. For example, the first guiding principle of karate, ‘Do not forget that *karate-dō* begins and ends with *rei* [bow]’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 19), underscores the need to respect others so that one understands why there is a need to bow before performing *kata*. Teaching principles before techniques aligned with the final segment of the class structure, which acted as a karate and actor training fusion that ‘cemented’ learning.

Transitioning Phase 0 to Phase 1 involved identifying what principles and techniques are crucial to Shotokan karate and how they might ‘carry over’ to actor training. Informed by Phase 0, focus on karate exercises allowed overlaps with actor training to ‘float to the surface’. For example, examining respiration in karate, as in the application of *kihon*, *kata*, and *kumite*, highlighted the overlaps with training the breath in theatre practices (cf. section 2.3). Another example included the necessity of ‘rhythm and tempo’ in both karate and acting (cf. section 2.4). In other words, beginning with research and reflection into the techniques and principles of Shotokan karate assisted in recognising PBs that overlap with actor training. Explaining the PBs that fine-tuned Phase 0 into the Phase 1 KAT workshops can be more explicitly articulated through a critically reflective view as practitioner-scholar, thus enabling a ‘retracing of one’s steps’ (a research) that makes visible those aspects of the process that were implicit.

## **5.2 Researcher’s Role as Practitioner-Scholar**

Barbara Bassot describes critical reflection as ‘looking into a mirror to see ourselves and our practice more clearly’ to grant ‘serious thought or consideration to what we see’ (2023: 3). In her book, *The Reflective Practice Guide: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Critical Reflection* (2023), Bassot describes different facets of reflective practice, including ‘reflection-on-action’ or looking back, ‘reflection-in-action’ or thinking on

one's feet, and 'reflection-for-action' or planning for the future (2023: 3). Bassot invites readers to graduate from this type of 'reflective practice', which focuses solely on experience, to 'critically reflective practice' that redirects attention to personal responses to practice-based experiences (2023: 5). She explains that practitioners should surpass reflecting on experience by raising the necessary questions that challenge related assumptions and increase self-awareness (Bassot 2023: xii). Consequently, critically reflecting on that which pertains to KAT has encompassed digging beneath the observable PBs.

One of the first steps in critical reflection can include funnelling a project of work like KAT through Bassot's 'Integrated Reflective Cycle' (see Figure 17):

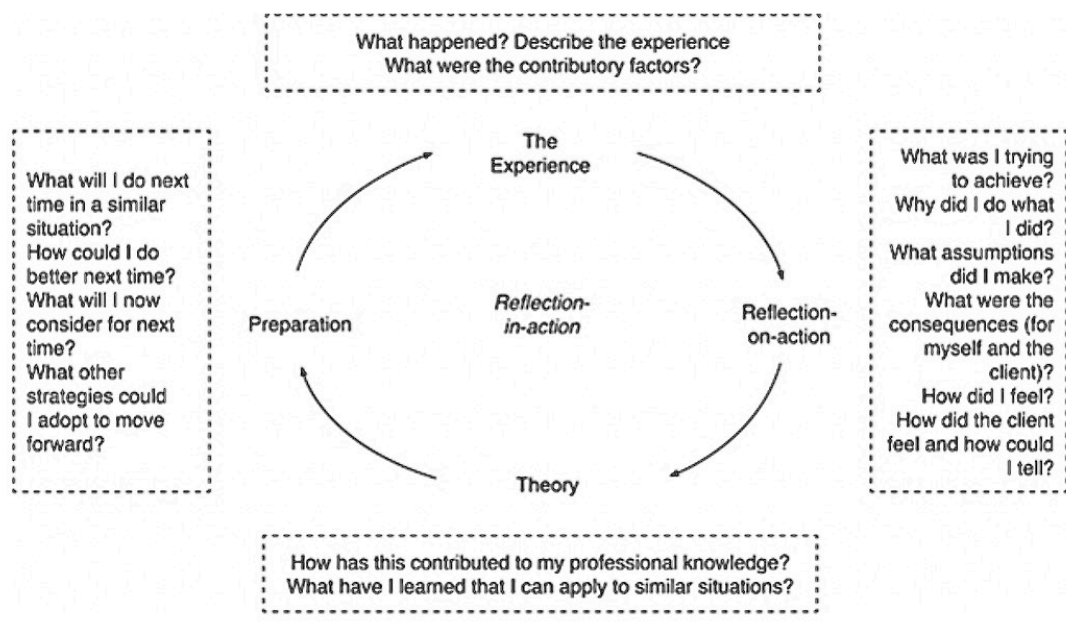


Figure 17. 'The Integrated Reflective Cycle' (Bassot 2023: 181)

Bassot's model showcases a four-step cycle of inquisitive reflection to improve the understanding and execution of one's practice. Analysing a project like KAT through this filter allows one to recognise the impact and understanding gained through practice. This reflective cycle provides a framework for viewing KAT as a combination of individual

occurrences composing a whole experience. To evoke Nelson's terms, the 'know(ledge)' described here, although not impervious to the 'know how' and 'know that' gained through practice and theoretical findings respectively, constitutes the 'know what' of critical thinking. Critical reflection involves analysing and questioning how modes of knowledge inform practice and influence decisions by allowing one to discover solutions and resolutions to continue moving forward. Thus, theoretical knowledge (or 'know that' in Nelson) feeds into Bassot's description of critical reflection, allowing for a deeper understanding of how theory and reflection influence each other. Recognising the motivations and responses behind a project like KAT addresses theoretical understanding and future application by identifying specific strategies for improvement. In other words, this type of reflection guides practitioner-researchers in transitioning from academic and professional knowledge into personal and professional growth. By following a reflective cycle that addresses a series of 'what', 'how', and 'why' questions, one better understands how to avoid what Bassot describes as 'predicting conclusions' or 'only seeing' what one expects (Bassot 2023: 164). Thus, viewing KAT through the lens of Bassot's Integrated Reflective Cycle promotes striving for excellence by preventing stagnation.

The process of designing KAT workshops showcases how a combination of 'know how', 'know what', and 'know that' have influenced the programme. For example, my practical knowledge of karate and acting reminded me that students have the ability to learn through strategy, effort, practice, and observation. My tendencies to manifest patience, find creative solutions, over-think, and seek 'perfection' have also impacted the assembly of KAT, as characterised by the pace at which the workshops were built. The self-awareness gleaned from critically reflecting on the project has assisted the development of the work in several ways. First, it has helped me better understand why I chose certain PBs and assembled them in a certain way. Second, it has enabled me to

identify my strengths and weaknesses as a practitioner. Third, it has assisted in avoiding stagnation so that the project proceeds optimally.

The combination of PBs that crafted KAT paved the way for an overall positive experience in my role as instructor-scholar. Discovering how combinations of PBs fit one another complemented my enjoyment of learning and teaching. However, the first experiments bringing Shotokan karate and actor training together were accompanied by a level of nervousness associated with the novelty of those sessions. What if acting students were uninterested in improving their skills through *karate-dō*? Or what if actors provided biased responses based on perceptions of karate, myself, or the workshops? The initial nervousness associated with KAT eventually evolved into a sense of ease that was impacted by observing that the participants appeared genuinely interested in the process, as displayed through their questions and desire for additional workshops.

Accordingly, one of the elements that has influenced the transmission of KAT is my perception of whether students enjoy their educational experience. As an instructor, I can create assumptions that students are not enjoying themselves based on facial expressions and body language. If students appear lethargic, I assume their lack of energy displays a lack of interest in the class. This interpretation can cause me to modify the initial trajectory of the class by making me teach to improve student liveliness rather than focus on what I initially set out to accomplish. This realisation highlights a balance I seek in teaching what is useful and engaging. Realising my tendency to want to modify a class based on perceived student involvement has impacted the structure and execution of KAT. Fossilising the framework of how the class is conducted forces me to stick to the initial plan rather than make last-minute changes without proper forethought. This insight played a part in my decision to include exercises and techniques that I foresaw students might enjoy as part of the process.

Another example of PBs that have influenced the making of KAT includes what I have learned from needing to take proper care of myself in order to teach or perform optimally. This principle relates to numerous scenarios one may recall, such as when actor Christopher Reeve fainted in front of a live audience due to not eating adequately before a performance in the 1970s (Reeve 1998: 181). The lesson addressed in this example identifies that practitioners need to care for themselves in order to accomplish what they set out to do. Self-care can include reducing stress, consuming necessary nutrients, and resting adequately. This last realisation aligns with motivational speaker Stephen Covey's invitation to 'sharpen the saw' (1989: 288) or take the time to 'recover' to progress further. Just as athletes understand the importance of recovery, instructors and actors can gain benefits from incorporating a recovery period into their schedule. Accordingly, learning to 'sharpen one's saw' is important for those who wish to embark on a KAT journey. Therefore, meditation is incorporated into the beginning and ending of KAT workshops as built-in 'recovery' time.

In agreement with recovery and improvement, the delivery of constructive feedback is also important in this type of workshop setting. My experience in academic theatre training contexts influenced the manner in which feedback was incorporated into KAT by avoiding what Bassot describes as 'bad feedback', portraying criticism that is 'confusing', 'accusatory', or 'condescending' (2023: 105). Criticism stemming from biased peers should not be surprising in actor training contexts where students compete for the same roles, assistantships, or scholarships. However, this feedback is often aimed at expressing personal preference rather than improving a peer's technique. Therefore, the supportive feedback in KAT is derived from the instructor rather than other students in the course, which aligns with a traditional karate class where the *sensei* is responsible for providing constructive criticism. If there are times when feedback is requested from

peers, only constructive language is permitted. KAT students are required to receive a lesson on how to properly voice constructive criticism, such as in using ‘I’ statements when delivering comments. An example might include, ‘I believe that...’ rather than ‘You should have...’. This practice encourages the execution of techniques in the absence of emotions dictated by positive or negative opinions.

Avoiding pitfalls like embarking on an emotional rollercoaster gauged by peer feedback is linked to what Bassot describes as the ‘resilience’ needed to address ‘challenges’ related to awareness and reactions (2023: 71). As practices can experience obstacles, learning what Bassot describes as ‘healthy’ coping mechanisms (2023: 71) can avoid pitfalls like burnout. One of these survival tools includes processing an experience with a support team. Verbally processing an event like a stream of workshops can be likened to asking someone to help hold a mirror with the aim of catching a glimpse from another perspective. As an instructor and actor, I have found that verbally processing a professional experience helps me better understand strengths and weaknesses so that I may continue to improve. For example, speaking to my supervisor after delivering one of the KAT workshops provided insight that my research was visible in the work. In other words, simply recounting an experience can permit clarity for future delivery. Failure to find healthy coping mechanisms can cause repeated cycles of ruminating over what one could have done to improve delivery rather than moving forward. These realisations have led to the inclusion of a question/answer period at the end of KAT sessions.

These PBs have worked together to build KAT, sharing similarities with how Bassot describes bringing relatively small individual reflections together to make a ‘quilt’ (2023: 154). Reflections of KAT created a spectrum of knowledge influenced by interpretations of the best course of action and have been fundamental in fashioning the project as it continues to evolve. Such knowledge can be integrated into what Bassot

describes as a part of everyday life or a ‘way of being’ (2023: 181). For example, one can apply daily choices to ‘sharpen the saw’ or choose constructive terminology when addressing others. Reflecting on KAT as an experience highlights the significance of becoming a practitioner-scholar linked to a desire to see students excel. Accordingly, the next section dives deeper into those Phase 1 KAT sessions that were intended and designed to assist acting students.

### **5.3 Phase 1 Workshops**

Karate enthusiasts may recognise the ‘*Tora no Maki*’, a tiger design found on the cover of Gichin Funakoshi’s book, *Karate-dō Kyōhan* (1935), an image heavily associated with Shotokan karate (see Figure 18). Although ‘*Tora no Maki*’ is an idiomatic expression signifying ‘Master Text’ or ‘Book of Knowledge’, the literal translation of the title, ‘Scroll of the Tiger’, offers a play on words between the cover and contents of the book. In this case, ‘judging a book by its cover’ provides insights into tiger-like characteristics associated with the multifaceted nature of Shotokan karate, one that recalls the process and objectives of KAT’s Phase 1 workshops. Using this metaphor to describe the programme of work aligns with Bassot’s recommendation to employ imagery as critical reflection, providing structure for focusing one’s ‘thoughts and experiences’ (2023: 151).



Figure 18. 'Tora no Maki' design on *Karate-dō Kyōhan* (1935) by Gichin Funakoshi

Although one cannot describe Phase 1 as providing a 'Master Text' or 'Book of Knowledge', the illustration of an intricate tiger resonates with the composition of the workshop and assists in offering a framework for the process. Similar to how separate segments generate the *Tora no Maki* picture, different PBs (Practice Blocks) have proved fundamental in creating the depiction of what I refer to as 'Phase 1'. The PBs used in the foundational structure of Phase 1 rely heavily on Shotokan karate to instil principles carried into theatrical performance. Judging Phase 1 by its appearance reveals a practice where Shotokan karate and theatre overlap and interact. One might even say that the structure of Phase 1 parallels the design of a tiger in that the limbs represent foundational karate techniques that meet the theatrical 'tail' at the 'body' of practice, all of which extend into the performative 'head'.

The *Tora no Maki* image also includes a circle, implying the ongoing movement of the tiger in a never-ending wheel, which resonates with the dynamism of Phase 1. Viewing the workshop structure from this perspective highlights how the majority of the work has been influenced by Shotokan karate. Thus, Phase 1 relies heavily on the *explicit* use of karate, at times mirroring what one may find in a traditional *dōjō*, or karate training

hall. The subsequent Phase 2 is characterised by a more balanced mix of karate and acting exercises involving a fusion of techniques (see section 6.1). The combination of karate and more quotidian movement in the second phase paves the way for an *implicit* use of the martial art in Phase 3 that foregrounds stage skills such as vocal and object work (see section 6.2). This progression of phases highlights a relationship showcasing *an* incremental implicit use of karate with the aim of catering to an array of performative demands. The structure, execution, insights, and observations associated with these KAT workshops are better understood by examining the Phase 1 process, which can be viewed as foundational to the other phases.

### 5.3.1 Structure and Execution



*Figure 19. KAT Workshop held at the Valletta Campus, University of Malta, 2023*

Gichin Funakoshi and Genwa Nakasone describe the twentieth guiding principle of Shotokan karate to 'Be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful' when pursuing the 'way' (2003: 111). This principle encapsulates the ingredients necessary in the assembly and execution of Phase 1 KAT, which emerged and was developed via different circumstances spanning academic courses, open workshops, an international conference, and a community enrichment course. Mindfulness, diligence, and resourcefulness informed by different modes of knowledge came into play when teaching students in these different circumstances.

The bulk of the work that led to the development of Phase 1 first took place at the University of Malta following an invitation sent to undergraduate students at the School of Performing Arts in October 2023:

#### Karate for Acting Workshop

Awaken your inner actor-ninja with this fun and interactive workshop!  
Your instructor, Josephine Calvo, is a doctoral student and actor with a black belt in karate. This class will allow you to engage in the ancient secrets of karate to awaken and improve your performance skills.

These sessions were held in Malta at the Valletta and Msida campuses, in the Aula Prima (Figure 19) and Gateway Basement Studio (Figure 20) respectively, as well as the Students' House Common Room (also in Msida), to accommodate participant mobility. The requirements for participation included a signed research ethics consent form (see Appendix B) and clothing that favoured movement. In total, four two-hour sessions were offered over two-weeks with participation ranging between three and fifteen students at one time. Undergraduate students at the School of Performing Arts had the opportunity

to take two workshops that differed in content but not in structure.

This first phase of the practical research was also offered as part of the University of Malta School of Performing Arts' 10th Annual Conference, *Connecting Creatively Through the Performing Arts*, held in March 2024. Ten conference participants, that included both graduate and undergraduate students experienced in theatre and dance, took part in this session. The conference programme abstract included an excerpt from the present thesis, describing the need to examine if *karate-dō* can benefit an actor's ability to express themselves physically and mentally during a performance. Although the conference programme did not stipulate the need for specific attire, participants arrived prepared, needing only to remove footwear or change into movement-based clothing. These conference participants appeared at ease during the workshop, likely due to experience with movement-based exercises.

Those who appeared less prepared for these karate-inflected sessions for actors were the four participants from the Military Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programme on the USA military base known as Sigonella in Sicily, Italy, also in March 2024. The workshop was held in the Compass Room, a conference hall that provided ample space for movement. These participants held little or no background in acting or performance and joined the workshop in restrictive clothing that did not favour the ability to move freely. However, these same participants demonstrated curiosity about the relationship between karate and acting. Despite their lack of familiarity with performing, these MWR participants managed to remain engaged throughout the duration of the workshop.

Conducting these KAT sessions in different circumstances solidified my awareness of how diverse modes of knowledge can work together to provide a resource for actors, students of acting, and their instructors. Although these workshops in Malta and Sicily engaged different numbers of participants of varying levels of experience, the structure

of the sessions remained the same, featuring a final sequence demonstrated in the following example:

### **Introduction**

- Introduction to KAT Research
- Karate focus lesson: ‘There is no first strike in karate’, ‘Karate begins and ends with *rei*’ (bow), and ‘*kiai*’

### **Warmup**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Breath support
- Stretching

### **Shotokan Karate Presentation and Practice**

- *Kihon* (basic techniques): stances, fist positioning, proper execution of a punch
- *Kata: Heian Sandan* (first ten techniques)

### **Combining Theatre Exercises with Karate**

- *Jo-ha-kyū*
- Practice *Heian Sandan* while incorporating *jo-ha-kyū*
- Slow Motion Ninja with *kihon* and respiration

### **Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate**

- Group improvisations on the theme of a post-apocalyptic world where students need to find water; inspired by Ōta Shōgo’s *Mizu no Eki* (The Water Station) (1981)
- Students integrate *Heian Sandan*, *jo-ha-kyū*, and breath work within the improvisation

## Closing

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Question/Answer Session

The evolution from the work that I retrospectively called ‘Phase 0’ to these ‘Phase 1’ sessions included a more standardised and detailed structure focusing on Shotokan karate techniques that aimed toward performance. By fine-tuning the PBs needed to achieve specific goals, the additional exercises and elements assisted in setting participant expectations, building to a performative outcome, and concluding the session.

The introduction of every session enabled students to better understand a brief overview of the research linked to KAT. An explanation of the work served as an essential stepping stone for performing arts students to comprehend the application of karate to their practice (cf. section 1.2.2). During this part of the workshop, students were assured that no previous experience in karate was necessary and that they need only ‘try their best’. Following a brief overview of the present research, students received verbal instruction on karate principles in what I describe as a ‘focus lesson’. The first principle, ‘There is no first strike in karate’, was explained to highlight participants’ responsibility not to employ karate techniques under any circumstance other than avoiding death if there is no alternative. The following principle, ‘Karate begins and ends with *rei* (bow)’, included describing the importance of respecting instructors, fellow students, and a potential audience.

The next step involved the ‘Warmup’, which comprised meditation, breath work, and stretching. By eliminating tension through meditation and proper breathing, participants could focus on executing subsequent parts of the workshop without unnecessary distractions. Beginning with proper respiration set a firm launching pad for

the work (see section 2.3), as did engaging the imagination during meditation. Conscious respiration exercises ensured adequate oxygen delivery, focus, and concentration. Stretching was also important in increasing the range of motion and preventing injuries. This approach assisted students with the subsequent parts of the workshop, like learning *kihon* through observation and imitation. The learning sequence began with stances, followed by blocks and punches. For example, learning *kiba dachi* (horse stance) preceded instruction on *gedan barai* (down block) and *oi zuki* (forward punch). Kicking techniques were purposely excluded to enhance safety. After practising techniques, students received verbal corrections to improve execution. Participants who struggled to adjust to oral instructions received additional explanations and were reminded to coordinate respiration with their movements.

Practising these fundamental building blocks for KAT prepared the ground for a focus on *kata*. Due to its variety of techniques, I opted to transmit *Heian Sandan* during this stage. Master Masatoshi Nakayama describes the ‘principal aim’ of *Heian Sandan* as mastering the ‘forearm block’ against attacks (1977: 100). Learning *Heian Sandan* in its entirety requires that students memorise twenty movements. However, because of time constraints, only half of the movements were taught in one two-hour session. Those who participated in a second session acquired the entire *kata*. While learning *Heian Sandan*, students applied proper breathing and focus, aligning performing *kata* with what Nakayama describes as ‘beauty, power, and rhythm’ (1977: 95 and cf. section 4.3). The focal point of the work included better understanding the rhythm of *kata* and how it can apply to performance. In this case, participants received an explanation of *jo-ha-kyū* (see section 2.4) where they could practise the principle with improvised movement. After rehearsing *jo-ha-kyū*, students were introduced to how the principle featured in *Heian*

*Sandan*. Transitioning to the next part of the workshop became an appropriate time to offer participants a brief water break.

After a short pause, the next part of these first phase workshops was dedicated to exploring movements learned throughout the session in a ‘Slow Motion Ninja’ game. This improvisational exercise was an adaptation of the popular warmup known as ‘Slow Motion Samurai’ where performers practise physical awareness, control, and focus. The ‘slow motion’ dynamic provided additional safety measures for practising Shotokan techniques learnt earlier in the workshop. Participants were instructed to use hand movements and stances while attempting to make gentle contact with other participants through *shuto uke* (knife hand block) or *nukite* (spear hand). When participants were ‘tagged’ (i.e. ‘hit’) by someone else’s *shuto uke* or *nukite*, they were required to proceed to the floor with a slow ‘death’. While exercising memory, focus, and awareness, students used this exercise to transition to a more interactive and light-hearted segment of the workshop where the focal point shifted from karate techniques to theatrical improvisation. The ‘last ninja’ to have evaded the slow motion *nukite* of other participants was instructed to emit a *kiai* (energetic shout) (see section 2.3).

During the performance section of the workshop, students employed different elements learned throughout the session in scenes inspired by the premise of Ōta Shōgo’s *Mizu no Eki* (The Water Station) (1981). In this context, the improvisations were informed by the post-apocalyptic world of Shōgo’s *Mizu no Eki* because of the movement-based and non-verbal nature of the script. During the performance, students integrated techniques from *Heian Sandan*, *jo-ha-kyū*, and breath work as they improvised in pairs or groups of three. Students were granted freedom to piece together the building blocks they had learned earlier in the workshop while remaining within the ‘world’ of the play.

No peer comments were solicited at the end of the performances. Any feedback was provided by myself as the instructor.

At the end of the workshop, students sat in *seiza* (kneeling) for a final reflective period, reviewing their personal successes throughout the session. During this time, students let go of negative post-performance thoughts like, 'I wish I would have done this' or 'Why did I do that?'. Instead, through respiration and imagery, students entered a peaceful time of inner reflection where the focus was placed on what was gained from the experience. This meditative time functioned in bringing closure to what was accomplished during the workshop so that participants could transition into a 'question/answer' period where they sought clarity about KAT, karate, or actor training. Those who demonstrated additional interest in the terms used during the work were sent the following list:

*Zenkutsu Dachi* (front stance)

*Kiba Dachi* (horse riding stance)

*Kokustu Dachi* (back stance)

*Jo-ha-kyū* (where movement begins slowly, speeds up, and then ends swiftly)

*Heian Sandan* (*kata* used to achieve 'green belt')

*Morote Uke* (augmented block)

*Shuto Uke* (knife hand block)

*Nukite* (spear hand)

*Rei* (bow)

*Kiai* (energetic shout)

Providing notes of Japanese terms used during the workshops was helpful to cater to the

learning preferences of those who desired to retain key elements of what was transmitted through a written list.

For those students who attended a second workshop, the introduction, warmup, and closing remained the same. The material used for ‘Shotokan Karate Presentation and Practice’, ‘Combining Theatre Exercises with Karate’, and ‘Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate’ differed, as visible in the following outline:

### **Introduction**

- Introduction to KAT Research
- Karate focus lesson: ‘There is no first strike in karate’, ‘Karate begins and ends with *rei*’ (bow), and ‘*kiai*’

### **Warmup**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Breath support
- Stretching

### **Shotokan Karate Presentation and Practice**

- *Kihon* (basic techniques): stances, fist positioning
- *Kata: Heian Sandan* (second half of the *kata*)
- The ‘principle of threes’
- Practice *Heian Sandan* while incorporating the ‘principle of threes’

### **Combining Theatre Exercises with Karate**

- Practice *Heian Sandan* with qualities of elements (fire, water, earth, or air)
- Partners choose to embody qualities of elements and parts of *Heian Sandan* in no-contact *kumite* (sparring)

## Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate

Group improvisations in scenarios inspired by exercises from Jacques Lecoq: students integrate *Heian Sandan*, qualities of elements, the ‘principle of threes’, and breath work

### Closing

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Question/Answer Session

The above second workshop structure acted as a stand-alone process that built upon the previous session. The second half of *Heian Sandan* was taught, thus building on knowledge of *jo-ha-kyū* by adding the ‘principle of threes’. Students were given the opportunity to explore *Heian Sandan* with qualities of elements like ‘fire, water, earth, and air’. Following this exploration, students chose which elements they wanted to employ in a three-beat, no-contact exchange with a partner. This exercise assisted with transitioning into a more explorative time where meaning was attributed to different qualities of movement. The exercise also served to develop characters that the actors could use in the performative portion of the workshop. The final performance required students to incorporate what they had learned throughout the process.

The execution and structure of this initial stage of my practical research, which has shaped what I now refer to as KAT Phase 1 Workshop, was characterised by *an explicit use of Shotokan karate*, evident in every aspect of the process. This was demonstrated through the guiding principles and techniques like *kihon*, *kata*, and *kumite*. In this context, the critical reflective ‘know what’ and the theoretical outsider ‘know that’ processes developed during the hands-on ‘know how’ served to inform which Shotokan karate techniques would establish the foundation upon which to build through Presentation, Practice, and Performance. The emphasis on fundamental building blocks of Shotokan

karate aimed toward the transfer of concepts like tempo, rhythm, focus, awareness, and breath control. The structure and execution of the workshop permit and even favour the repetition of sessions before transitioning to the subsequent phase. Understanding of the role of the workshop is further served by identifying the insights and observations relevant to the process.

### 5.3.2 Insights and Observations



*Figure 20. KAT Workshop held at the Gateway Basement Studio, University of Malta, 2023*

The ninth guiding principle of karate states that practice encompasses a ‘lifelong pursuit’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 57). This viewpoint aligns with observations emergent from the first phase of the research, which should be viewed as a small fraction of sustained training. In this light, Phase 1 acts as an integral component of a continuous

process where students can continue to enhance their skills. Consequently, the outcomes of these workshops reflect the actor's ongoing necessity for self-improvement to further refine performance skills (cf. section 1.1.1 and Allain and Ziółkowski 2022: 375–76). With little to no experience in Shotokan karate, Phase 1 participants aim at learning new skills rather than trying to 'act'. This approach eliminates potential overacting by echoing Franco Ruffini's description of boxers as more concerned with technique than admiration (cf. section 1.3.1 and Ruffini 2014: 22–23). In this setting, participants utilise karate exercises to enhance their focus, awareness, coordination, respiration, and memory, which they then apply to performing theatrically. As a result, participants concentrate on the ability to work individually and collaboratively in a training environment that fosters perseverance.

Regarding the Phase 1 workshops I carried out in the initial stage of my research, the instructional context outlined above sheds light on the important interplay between participants and myself as their trainer. As the instructor, I taught using English as the primary language of instruction, along with the use of Japanese terms associated with the techniques introduced in the workshop. During this time, I focused on participants' reactions to activities to assist them in improving their craft. Addressing how best to approach challenges based on students' diverse experiences underscored the need to cater to a spectrum of abilities. Therefore, I employed 'know what' in aiming to challenge the most advanced students, as my experience suggested that this approach would encourage those with less experience to strive to match the success of their peers. However, I needed to balance the difficulty of the exercises by incorporating a level of simplicity that allowed all participants to remain engaged. Standardisation of the process was facilitated by the participants' willingness to take risks in learning and practising something new. Accordingly, participants in this phase of the work displayed a certain level of

anticipation during the introduction and warmup. Demonstrating a desire to ‘decompress’ from the daily stressors of contemporary society, the students appeared engaged in respiration and visualisation associated with meditative time. However, transitioning into stretching appeared surprisingly foreign to participants who, aside from those with genetic or achieved flexibility, exhibited a level of rigidity. Although many participants might not have practised meditation or stretching on a regular basis, they remained focused and followed instructions to the best of their abilities.

Despite a similar level of participant engagement, subsequent segments dedicated to *kihon* and *kata* highlighted varying skill levels. Differences in participant abilities and physical awareness became clear through the interpretation of movement by imitation (see Figure 20). By mirroring exercises or activities, students displayed individual levels of experience with physical expression as well as challenges and breakthroughs encountered when practising Shotokan karate. The techniques featured in the sessions appeared unfamiliar to most participants. The lack of experience replicating movement through observation and imitation was evident in the absence of confidence and an inability to mimic correctly. Difficulty with *kihon* and *kata* included an initial incorrect placement of the torso and hips, altered position of the extremities, difficulty differentiating between left and right parts of the body, and inaccurate weight distribution.

Although most participants had at least some experience in the performing arts, those with a background in dance displayed an advantage. Participants of varying levels found the initial movements of *Heian Sandan* unfamiliar, which include a simultaneous *uchi-uke* (inside block) and *gedan-uke* (down block). The difficulty learning this technique encompassed a psychophysical barrier akin to ‘tapping the head and rubbing the belly’ simultaneously. A combination of repetition and one-on-one assistance allowed participants to adapt and improve delivery, demonstrating how vision, motor control, and

decision-making work together to develop student coordination. Participant effort showcased how diligence can permit the development of those neural pathways required to perform techniques in *kata*. Improved technique paralleled enhanced self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment when practising *Heian Sandan*, which confirmed a sufficient level of difficulty in progressing forward.

If one believes that students learn more efficiently through learning style preferences, then Phase 1 lends itself to those who prefer to learn through visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic means. According to this theory, those with other learning preferences, such as reading and writing, are better assisted through the list of terms and questionnaire provided at the conclusion of the workshop. Observations of student engagement in Phase 1 draw attention to the debate regarding the validity of learning inclinations, described more in the Conclusion of this thesis. According to scholars Henrietta Den Dekker and Joseph Kim, ‘student-centred learning approaches’ are better served through ‘active learning’ tactics by focusing on the types of engagement and cognitive processing that benefit all students and promote ‘equity’ (2022: 71). If students learn more efficiently through active learning, then one can say that Phase 1 offers this approach through exercises like role-playing, improvisation, collaborative work, and analysing *kata*.

Students complied with the systematic approach to learning inherent in *kihon* and *kata*, which agrees with the assumption that those who engage in actor training hold a level of kinaesthetic learning ability. While there may be similarities in skills between the actor and karate practitioner, observing the participants engaged in Shotokan karate for an aesthetic performative goal highlighted the diverse types of students that could be drawn to Phase 1. While those who engage in karate classes might do so to improve physical fitness and self-defence, those who enrol in acting classes likely seek a creative outlet or career goal. Accordingly, those who participated in Phase 1 enrolled in an acting

course instead of a karate class, possibly indicating a preference for devising stories over focusing on physical and mental discipline.

Participant facility with the work was enhanced by removing movement restrictions dictated by strictly adhering to karate techniques. Those with experience in the performing arts demonstrated a predisposition toward exercises favouring exploration and expression. These same students released tension and maintained focus when engaged in the fusion of improvisational theatre exercises and Shotokan karate techniques. The hybridity of the exercises functioned as a transitional segment where many of the participants welcomed and even enjoyed the playfulness associated with exercises like ‘Slow Motion Ninja’ or ‘Long Distance *Kumite*’. The light-hearted nature of these exercises carried over into the final performance demonstration, regardless of the given circumstances dictated by the assignment. Participants with experience performing before an audience displayed a level of ease in the final portion of the workshop, while those with less experience appeared slightly hesitant with the exercise.

During closing, students unanimously demonstrated effortless engagement in respiration and reflection, which transitioned into the question/answer period. Those with less experience performing had more questions regarding acting professionally, while those more familiar with acting or dancing exhibited interest in how karate could improve their craft. Students displayed interest during the question/answer period, requesting if additional workshops would become available. Responses to a follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix A) that was answered by 26 participants from the sessions listed above, solidified what was covered in the workshop by asking respondents if they ‘strongly agreed’, ‘agreed’, felt ‘neutral’, ‘disagreed’, or ‘strongly disagreed’ with recognising how Phase 1 improved the following areas:

- Awareness
- Sense of being here and now
- Need to focus
- Understanding of what is needed to apply karate to acting
- Need to use breath
- Need to use coordination
- Need to integrate body and mind
- Need for a sense of timing
- Need to respect self and others

The items on the questionnaire were carefully selected based on a combination of ‘know that’ of the present research and ‘know what’ of teaching experience, linked to what participants could accomplish and recognise over a two-hour workshop. Most of the exercises featured in Phase 1 require the use of all the items listed on the questionnaire. However, if one must categorise benefits according to the exercises in the workshop, one may construct the following list of examples:

Awareness:

- *Mokuso* (meditation)
- *Kumite* (sparring)
- *Kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents)
- *Kihon* (basic techniques)

Sense of being here and now:

- Stretching
- *Mokuso* (meditation)
- *Kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents)
- *Kihon* (basic techniques)

Need to respect self and others:

- Karate lesson of the week: ‘There is no first strike in karate’
- *Kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents)
- Group improvisations

Need to Focus and for a Sense of Timing:

- *Kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents)
- *Jo-ha-kyū*
- Group improvisations

Creativity and Coordination:

- Practise *Heian Sandan* while incorporating *jo-ha-kyū*
- Practise *Heian Sandan* with qualities of elements (fire, water, earth, or air)
- Partners choose qualities of elements and parts of *Heian Sandan* to incorporate in no-contact *Kumite* (sparring)
- Group improvisations

Need to use Breath and Integrate Body and Mind:

- *Mokuso* (meditation)

- *Kata* (choreographed combat with invisible opponents)
- *Kihon* (basic techniques)
- *Jo-ha-kyū*
- Group improvisations

Although the above is not an exhaustive list, the participant responses provided a picture of the workshop’s effect. These participants were not given examples of what they could achieve through the session; however, by selecting ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ in different areas, results demonstrated that 88.5% recognised the benefits of the exercises (see Figure 21).

Results Rating Perceived Benefits of KAT

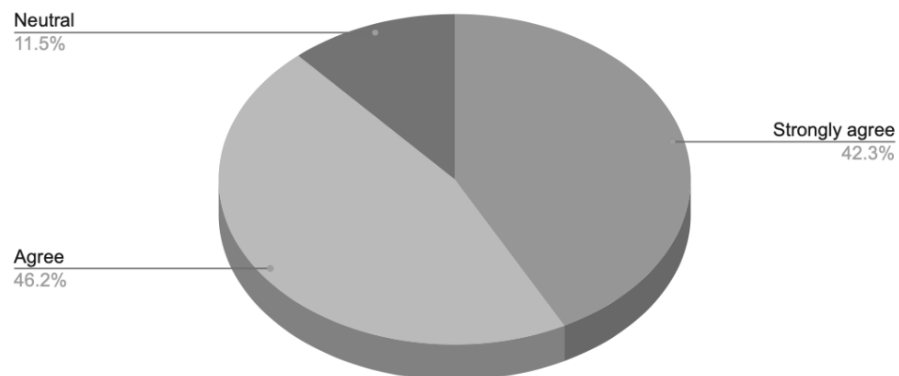


Figure 21. KAT Questionnaire Results

Students most strongly understood how karate could improve the work of actors in the use of ‘breath’, ‘coordination’, ‘timing’, ‘body and mind’, and respect for ‘self and others’. Their scope of understanding was most likely related to their experience in needing to use these principles throughout the workshop. For example, ‘breath’,

‘coordination’, ‘timing’, ‘body and mind’, and respect for ‘self and others’ are all necessities to accomplishing *kata*. A total of 11.5% of responses amounted to ‘neutral’ perceptions of increased ‘awareness’, ‘creativity’, ‘understanding what is needed to apply karate to actor training’, ‘need for a sense of timing’, ‘need to use coordination’, and ‘need to coordinate body and mind’. Neutrality in these areas displayed a potential lack of attention on behalf of participants during certain parts of the workshop, such as during the explanation of the necessity of timing as related to acting, *kata*, and *jo-ha-kyū*. No participants disagreed with any of the options on the questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire demonstrated that participants with varied experiences and in different contexts recognise the benefits of Phase 1 despite limited exposure to the work. These same participants displayed that karate-based actor training can assist one’s relationship with the body, mind, and surrounding world with the aim of improving performative expression. Viewed in close proximity, these sessions showcased a variety of acting students engaged in *explicit* use of the building blocks of Shotokan karate. However, a broader perspective revealed a process that is akin to and builds toward actor training. In other words, while the majority of the work explicitly deploys Shotokan karate, the process is channelled into a system that benefits actors in their craft. The insights and observations that emerged during this first phase of practical research evolved into further developments and possibilities in Phase 2 KAT, which are described in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### KAT Project: Developments, Insights, and Possibilities

Associating a metaphorical image with Phase 2 KAT signifies departing from the symbolism of a tiger described in the previous chapter in favour of a representation that more closely aligns with the developments in the workshop. Continuing the previous chapter's trajectory of Barbara Bassot's recommendation for critical reflection (see section 5.3 and Bassot 2023: 151), the image of a dragon serves as a better metaphor to describe the hybridity of the programme of work in this phase of the research. The dragon's ability to exhibit animal-like characteristics like instinct, adaptability, and athleticism can be viewed as illustrating the foundational aspects of karate training. Simultaneously, the dragon's human-like traits, including communication and cognition, can be seen as mirroring the work of improvisational theatre exercises. The dragon's strength, agility, precision, and intelligence resonate with the integration of karate and theatrical improvisation, highlighting implicit and explicit uses of the martial art to broaden applicability for performance. Although Shotokan karate is not typically associated with a dragon, one can argue that Phase 2 moves beyond traditional Shotokan karate techniques in favour of theatrical exploration. Consequently, Phase 2 KAT displays *a heightened use of improvisational theatre techniques to achieve a more subtle demonstration of karate*, ultimately aimed at preparing actors for performance. This chapter describes and discusses Phase 2 while remaining within the bounds of critical reflection, thus aiding in the exposition of the developments, insights, and possibilities of KAT. The chapter also presents an outline for a Phase 3 extension based on the insights gained by the practical research and theoretical investigations of this PhD. As will be

expounded in detail in section 6.3, Phase 3 moves closer to explicit theatre work as informed by implicit karate principles.

### 6.1 Phase 2 Workshops



*Figure 22. Phase 2 KAT Workshop at the Happy Holidays Event Space in Mellili (Sicily, Italy), 2025*

Phase 2 sessions took place in the grand hall of the Happy Holidays event space in Mellili (Sicily, Italy) in the spring of 2025. This training location has been used for karate demonstrations dating back to the 1970s and has been the home base for theatre workshops since 2018. Conducting Phase 2 in a space with a history of karate and theatre made KAT feel ‘at home’ in this location. The workshop was taught in Italian with the use of Japanese terms associated with karate techniques. To broaden the applicability to the demands of contemporary Western society, Phase 2 was designed to cater to single or multiple participants to address areas like strength, flexibility, coordination, agility,

reflexes, confidence, focus, alertness, discipline, and respect. The first two workshop participants did not have prior experience with the KAT, which was not ‘out of bounds’ within the circumstances as the work was formulated with the flexibility to cater to those who might not have access to Phase 1. Teaching the workshop to actresses with prior experience in choreography affirmed my expectations as an instructor of the fast progression and retention of techniques as well as the high level of adaptability to the requirements within the workshop. Prepared with movement-based clothing, both actresses remained engaged during the exercises and expressed a high level of enjoyment with the overall experience. When comparing the work with other types of actor training, they highlighted how respiration and meditation assisted their anxiety more than other types of performance instruction.

Observations of the workshop with the two actresses set the launching pad for solo explorations of Phase 2, where I applied knowledge from my Master of Fine Arts in Acting, professional acting experience, and second-degree black belt in Shotokan karate. Filtered through my view as an instructor and student, Phase 2 became an opportunity to step into the shoes of prospective participants with knowledge in these areas. The uniqueness of participating in sessions as teacher and learner allowed me to understand better how to continue to improve the sessions from the ‘inside out’. Knowledge acquired from years of training in karate and theatre helped me to consider what impact the sessions might have on participants with martial arts and performing arts proficiency. In alignment with how one may perform *kihon* or *kata* alone, I practised these sessions to discover the implications of what one might experience if wanting or needing to train single-handedly (see section 4.5). Engaging in Phase 2 in this fashion came with the understanding that I was missing the potential benefits of working collectively (cf. section 4.5) but adhered to the lifestyle of contemporary actors who might not always be able to train with others.

The flexibility of practising *kata* in any location (see section 4.3) permitted my explorations of Phase 2 in spaces like my living room or the Happy Holidays event space, two options that may be available to a solo performer. The uniqueness of exploring Phase 2 as an actor ‘inside’ the work shifted my perception by granting a different perspective of experiential knowledge.

There are several important points to consider regarding the Phase 2 framework. First, the components of the workshop feature a linear and logical progression in agreement with the necessity to engage toward the end goal of the present research. However, diving into these sessions did not always remain within the confines of how direct the process might come across in writing. Second, my pursuit of other physical practices, particularly periodic interests in dance, may have influenced my improvisational work, such as impacting the cadence, muscular activation, and rhythm I utilised as an actress in the sessions. Third, reflecting on my experiences in this context has contributed to my cognitive processing of aesthetic practice, which aligns with Robin Nelsons’s distinction between ‘know what’ reflected on practical ‘know how’ (cf. section 5.2 and Nelson 2013: 37).

A bird’s eye view of a sample Phase 2 session provides a better understanding of what is intended by references to the workshop:

### **Introduction**

- Introduction to Research
- Karate focus lesson: Twenty Guiding Principles of Shotokan Karate

### **Warmup**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Breath support and *kiai* (energetic shout) practice

- Stretching

## **Karate Combined with Theatre Presentation and Practice**

### Part 1

- *Kihon* (basic techniques): stances, fist positioning, and proper execution of a punch
- Apply improvisation to *kihon*, such as exploring different floor textures
- Keep the focus and awareness of *kihon* while engaging in the improvisation

### Part 2

- *Taikyoku Shodan*
- Apply improvisation to *Taikyoku Shodan*, such as making the techniques ‘quotidian’
- Create a scene based on *Taikyoku Shodan* while maintaining the focus and intention behind it

### Part 3

- Practise the first six techniques of a more advanced *kata* like *Heian Godan*
- Identify rhythm patterns in the delivery of performance
- Apply improvisation to *Heian Godan*, such as practising the techniques with different parts of the body
- Create a scene informed by *Heian Godan* while maintaining the focus and intention behind it

## **Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate**

- Samuel Beckett’s *Act Without Words* (1965) becomes the inspiration for the performance while maintaining the breath support, focus, and awareness practised in class

- Add montage techniques
- Apply questioning process

### Closing

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Question/Answer Session

At first glance, the Phase 2 framework appears similar to Phase 1 (see 5.3.1), partly because both include Shotokan karate building blocks for a performative outcome. Continuing on the trajectory of the preceding phase, proper expectations are set through an introduction to the research process. This introductory component explains a ‘focus lesson’ set forth by Gichin Funakoshi and Genwa Nakasone in *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate: The Spiritual Legacy of the Master* (2003). Repetition of Phase 2 allows one to address different principles per session to permit the assimilation and application needed for adequate understanding and retention.

The warmup enables the mental and physical preparation needed to follow through with the requirements of the workshop. Taking the time to eliminate superfluous thoughts, practise respiration, and prepare the body for movement, mirrors the process previously discussed in Phase 1 as a necessary step to progress safely and efficiently. Although *kihon* can function as preparation for more advanced breathing and movement techniques, it is recommended that the warmup component of Phase 2 is not skipped. The following parts of the workshop maintain the presentation, practice, and performance guidelines of instruction introduced in Phase 1 (see section 5.1) to achieve efficiency towards the end goal. One can apply knowledge from practising karate techniques learned in a traditional *dōjō*. For example, developing the muscle memory and strength of *kiba dachi* (horse stance) can assist a performer with sequences set forth by a variety of

performances such as in Frank Camilleri's description of needing to maintain a wide horse-riding stance in *Martyr Red* by Icarus Performance Project in 2013 (Camilleri 2023: 159) or as in the example of a *Commedia dell'Arte* stock character like Harlequin who can characteristically assume a similar stance.

The most notable differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2 are evident in the execution of 'Karate Combined with Theatre Presentation and Practice' and the 'Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate' components of the workshop. These feature an intentional transition from karate techniques into improvisatory exploration for aesthetic performances. In this process, improvisational points of departure such as those inspired by the Icarus Project's Principles of Composition and Interaction include: 'basic actions' (performing *kihon* or *kata* with different parts of the body), 'landscaping' (performing *kihon* or *kata* while imagining different surrounding textures or using different parts of the feet), 'ritualising' (repeating specific *kihon* at a certain point in the space), 'reconstructing' (deconstructing and reassembling *kata*), 'dynamics' (adjusting the rhythm, size, and speed of *kata*), 'transposing' (ritualising and reconstructing *kata* elsewhere in training space), 'humanising' (transforming *kihon* or *kata* into more quotidian movement patterns) (cf. section 4.1 and Camilleri 2013a: 154). Using these types of explorations aligns with the importance Roberta Carreri attributes to improvisation in training and composition (cf. section 3.6 and 2014: 79). The nature of exercises addressed in Phase 2 pertains to what Carreri defines as improvisation with 'fixed elements', 'within parameters of a principle', and a 'theme' because, rather than learning and repeating a set codified technique, the work causes one to explore the potential movement of a sequence paired with a given principle that can be employed within the theme of a performative context (see section 3.6 and Carreri 2014: 79).

Dynamic alterations through improvisational explorations of *kata* evoke different storylines that align with the development of Compositional Building Blocks (CBBs) (see section 4.1). However, a level of ‘humanisation’ (i.e. rendering the abstract movement into a more recognisable human and daily configuration) must feature in these sequences to raise the applicability to a broader range of performances. Adjusting techniques in this manner permits a varied pertinency to performative outcomes and resonates with the eighteenth guiding principle of karate, which dictates that one ‘Perform *kata* exactly’ while ‘actual combat is another matter’ because of the need to move freely (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 103–04). Approaching improvisational exercises in this framework feature the following sequence:

**Step One**

Perform *kata*

**Step Two**

Apply improvisational exercises like ‘landscaping’

**Step Three**

‘Humanise’ sequence

Shotokan karate techniques are most recognisably associated with low stances, blocks, punches, and kicks. Thus, making these movements appear more quotidian signifies adding a subtlety in increments that allows heightened applicability.

Movement explorations can create CBBs in the context of an improvisatory process that is complemented by the application of ‘humanisation’. Adapting *kata* techniques to more quotidian behaviour patterns signifies maintaining the benefits of the practice internally without the same physical manifestation. In other words, applying these

explorations signifies maintaining the breath work, awareness, focus, balance, stamina, endurance, memory, flexibility, tempo, rhythm, self-confidence, and efficiency of *kata* without the same movements. Using improvisation to make Shotokan karate techniques appear more quotidian while maintaining the benefits of the practice can be approached in three stages as in the following example:

### **Step One**

Perform *kata* in its pristine form at ‘one hundred per cent’ with focus, awareness, and breath work.

### **Step Two**

Perform *kata* as mixed with quotidian movement or at ‘fifty per cent’ while maintaining focus, awareness, and breath work.

### **Step Three**

Perform sequence at ‘zero per cent’ intending a complete transformation into quotidian movements while maintaining the focus, awareness, and breath work of the *kata* in Step One.

This process allows one to learn how to transition from an explicit use of Shotokan karate to a more implicit use of the work. One can narrow down which principles to focus on by building upon these incrementally to avoid overwhelming practitioners. For example, if participants have little experience with KAT or karate, focusing on one component, like breath work, can suffice.

Shifting to quotidian movement while maintaining the advantages of karate is showcased in the example of the *Taikyoku Shodan* exercise, which dictates the repetition of techniques while protecting oneself from imaginary opponents. *Taikyoku Shodan* was

chosen to feature as part of the workshop in alignment with the benefits described by Funakoshi:

Once one is able to perform the Taikyoku forms with proficiency, he can understand the other kata with relative ease. For this reason, the Taikyoku form should be considered elementary as well as the ultimate form. In fact, the Taikyoku Kata is the very prototype of a karate kata, a combination of the down block and middle level front punch (basic techniques in any training), the front stance, the typical body movements of karate, and a defined line of movement. (Funakoshi 1973: 42)

In other words, *Taikyoku Kata* sets a foundation for those unfamiliar with karate while becoming a point of practice for those with experience. *Taikyoku Shodan* movements are directed to the left and behind in a four-directional rotation. The techniques traditionally featured in this *kata* include *gedan barai* (down block), *chūdan oi zuki* (middle level front punch), and *zenkutsu dachi* (front stance) and are performed in four directions along an ‘I’ shaped line of movement (see Figure 23). The simplicity of this specific *kata* permits seamless integration of more complex explorations because of the less complex recollection necessary when applying improvisation.

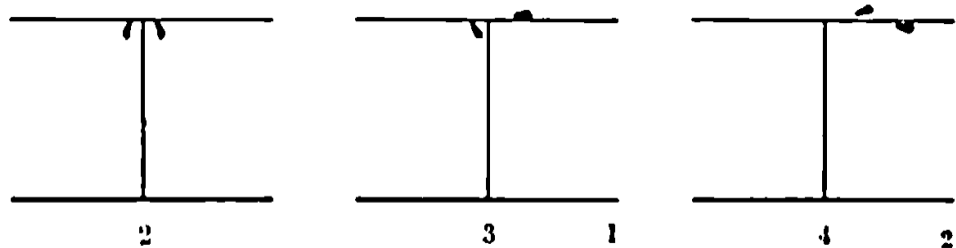


Figure 23. ‘*Taikyoku Shodan* Line of Movement’ (Funakoshi 1973: 43)

Practising the fundamental elements of *Taikyoku Shodan* signifies setting the groundwork before transitioning into the gradual ‘humanisation’ of the *kata*. As the outward

manifestation of technique gradually becomes more subtle, the motivation for the four-directional movement shifts to a variety of imaginary circumstances that do not necessarily include protecting oneself from physical threats. One example includes moving in four directions as in finding a solution to a problem or trying to locate a lost object. Once the transition into ‘humanised’ movement is complete, participants are reminded to maintain elements like breath work, focus, and awareness. Following this stage, participants can revisit the sequence with different improvisational points of departure like adjusting imaginary circumstances that affect the tempo, rhythm, and efficiency of the sequence.

The application of improvisational explorations can couple with any *kata*. Having memorised and practised the following Shotokan karate *katas* (cf. section 4.3) for several years (each item in the list is hyperlinked to the relevant audio-visual material from Black Belt Wiki), I explored potential sequences and movement possibilities with each:

- [Heian Shodan](#) (peaceful mind – first level)
- [Heian Nidan](#) (peaceful mind – second level)
- [Heian Sandan](#) (peaceful mind – third level)
- [Heian Yondan](#) (peaceful mind – fourth level)
- [Heian Godan](#) (peaceful mind – fifth level)
- [Tekki Shodan](#) (iron horseman – first level)
- [Tekki Nidan](#) (iron horseman – second level)
- [Bassai Dai](#) (destroying a fortress – major)
- [Bassai Sho](#) (destroying a fortress – minor)
- [Kanku Dai](#) (observing the sky – major)
- [Kanku Sho](#) (observing the sky – minor)

- *Empi* (flight of the swallow)
- *Jion* (compassion and favour)
- *Hangetsu* (half-moon)
- *Jitte* (ten hands)
- *Wankan* (king's crown)
- *Unsu* (cloud hands)

Movement stemming from elementary *katas*, such as *Heian Shodan* and *Heian Nidan*, served to develop improvisations that included hand gestures which resembled picking, slicing, grabbing, or pushing in all directions. These points of departure created scenarios that mirrored personal struggles that led to inner discoveries. Abiding within the scope of the exercises signified remaining within the limitations of the predetermined and invisible floor pattern of movement (*embusen*), which resembles shapes like the letter 'T' or the letter 'I' (cf. section 4.3 and Nakayama 1977: 94). In other words, maintaining the *embusen* while engaging in explorative exercises of *kata* signifies performing patterns that feature travelling to the left, right, forward, and back to the starting point (see Figure 23). Justifying movement along this trajectory conjures scenarios like trying to escape, making a decision, or attempting to understand a situation. When the beginning and ending of a sequence coincide at the same point in a floor plan, complementing a dramatic finish, one can validate the route through scenarios such as a character's inner realisation. The *embusen* set by *kata* does not always complement what appears most impactful for performance, such as utilising the strong diagonal line of the stage. However, reconstructing or transposing *kata* supports adjusting the traditional line of movement in favour of performative outcomes (cf. section 4.1).

These improvisational explorations build toward a performative component where physicality takes precedence over speech. In this case, Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words* (1965) was chosen as the point of departure for the framework of the scenarios created in previous workshop components. This segment was complemented by having participants include at least one improvisational sequence developed throughout the session. The flexibility of using the script as inspiration for the performance allowed one to incorporate improvisational sequences while remaining within the parameters of the workshop. Performing the entire play entailed repeating sessions to maintain karate benefits, such as breath work, focus, awareness, and rhythm. This signified setting the performance in a 'common language' through the combination of CBBs while remaining within the boundaries of the world of the play, in agreement with maintaining a homogenous performance (cf. section 4.5).

Transitioning from outward-directed imitation to exploring and devising creatively becomes a component that can feature in performance. This progression enables the development of feeling and enaction when processing elements like the imagination and intention associated with embodiment. The narrative sequences stemming from the combination of improvisation and *kata* permit the practitioner to engage with the cognitive organisation of imaginary circumstances. The acting techniques featured through the exercises facilitate heightened intentionality by transcending imitated movement, which transforms the perception of the immediate surroundings in a training environment into an imagined space (e.g. a farm or an ancient castle). The memories evoked through the sensorial means outlined in the improvisational exercises resonate with Camilleri's description of modulating one's work to arouse emotions and feelings that permit one to embody a role rather than remain within the confines of mechanical imitation (Camilleri 2023: 149). Thus, repeating these exercises assists in producing new

concepts in the generation of imagination and recollection by developing movement sequences that allow a certain level of flow, echoing what Camilleri describes as ‘learning to learn’ in his journey of investigating performance training for actors and athletes (2023: 149). In other words, exploring karate techniques through improvisation generates new memories and scores that add to experiential knowledge.

The CBBs created from the application of theatrically probing *kihon*, *kata*, or *kumite* act as training, self-study, and sequences for composition. These CBBs, derived from the combination of improvisational acting exercises and karate techniques, pave the way for incorporating devised sequences that can feature in the performative portion of the workshop. When seeking to devise homogeneous sequences, one should consider pursuing a level of organisation and interconnectedness necessary for the development of a common performative language (see section 4.1). This type of process permits enhanced montage by joining components of theatrical language into a cohesive work of art (cf. section 4.5 and Bogart and Landau 2005: 12–13). Montage techniques like those suggested by Daniel Mroz act as explorations into the nuances of the work by adding elements like repetition or recombination to the score (see section 4.1 and Mroz 2011: 146–47). Fashioning a performance through improvisational sequences developed in Phase 2 implies combining CBBs that constitute theatrical productions.

Once CBBs are generated, one explores qualities like ‘point of view’, ‘architecture’, ‘audience’, ‘storytelling’, ‘light’, and ‘character’ (see section 4.5 and Bogart and Landau 2005: 157–59). Accordingly, the sessions allow one to work aesthetically toward realist behaviour with a degree of freedom in fulfilling the criteria necessary to connect the preceding and subsequent sections of the score. The variety of choices when piecing segments together highlights the relationship between ‘separate tracks’ of a performance (cf. section 4.5 and Bogart and Landau 2005: 187). Identifying those tracks underlines

the course of action and ‘organic flow’ (cf. section 4.5 and Barba 1995: 112). In other words, if the exercises in the workshop act as training elements and sub-units of a performance, then special attention is given to the relationship between the beginnings and endings of each track. Fluidity from one segment to the next requires unity and variety while avoiding excesses that do not fall within the parameters of the performance (cf. section 3.3).

Freedom of interpretation stimulated by a script like *Act Without Words* (1958) allows one to include CBBs developed in the workshop. For example, one can incorporate a sequence developed from *kata* in the first scene of the play, between one whistle cue and the next:

Whistle from left wing.

He reflects, goes towards left wing, hesitates, thinks better of it, halts, turns aside, reflects.

A little tree descends from flies, lands. It has a single bough some three yards from ground and at its summit a meager tuft of palms casting at its foot a circle of shadow.

He continues to reflect.

Whistle from above. (Beckett 1958: 87)

Using a script like *Act Without Words* (1958) as inspiration for the performative section of the workshop was informed by Phillip Zarrilli’s preference for Beckett’s scripts when applying martial arts as actor training:

If in-depth psychophysical training takes one to the “edge of a breath” where thought takes shape as impulse/action—a place where one “stands still while not

standing still,” Beckett’s plays take the actor to this same place “between” where meanings, associations, and experiences are left open for the audience. (Zarrilli 2009: 115)

Zarrilli explains that Beckett’s plays do not demand creating characters or discovering a ‘dramatic action’; instead, they focus on the ‘embodied actualisations of thought’ as ‘consciousness in action’ (Zarrilli 2009: 115) which aligns with the Phase 2 work. Although a non-verbal script was chosen to inform the final portion of the workshop, the Phase 2 structure allows for devised interpretations. Therefore, in this context, the script acts as a framework that can be adjusted within the margins of the workshop.

Ideally, one receives feedback from the instructor teaching each session. However, if one has experience with karate and acting, one may engage in the work as a self-study process by analysing self-tapes as an important part of the process. Watching recordings of the work signifies asking compositional questions (see section 4.5) such as:

- What were the moments that you recall most from the performance?
- What have you improved on?
- What did you learn?
- What did you miss?
- What would you keep, and what would you change next time?

Recognising strengths and weaknesses is key to improvement, even if analysing self-tapes can prove tedious. Journaling or discussions with a colleague can further act as reflective tools for continued improvement. The aim of Phase 2 remains to explore the extent to

which karate facilitates physical and mental expression in contemporary movement-based theatre, which consequently draws attention to the subsequent phase in the process.

## **6.2 Phase 3 KAT**

Critically reflecting on phases of KAT by way of metaphors involves identifying an image that completes the triad of workshops that constitute it. In this case, the illustration that most closely aligns with Phase 3 is that of a monkey due to the mammal's ability to exhibit human-like qualities aimed at communicating in social situations. A monkey's intelligence, complex social interactions, ability to adapt to new situations, and use of tools act as a mirror of the work conducted in this third phase. Funnelling the work of the previous sessions into a third workshop enables progression into a complete implicit use of Shotokan karate, characterised by a continued sense of exploration. One of the goals of this phase is to provide training that easily translates into a wide range of performance opportunities by incorporating performative objectives that support solo, partner, and group performances. An initial challenge was determining which theatre techniques best complemented the Shotokan karate techniques established by the previous two phases. This difficulty was resolved by taking a cue from practitioners who have combined martial arts with the use of a combination of theatre techniques (cf. section 1.1.1 and Billew 2022: 468).

Exploring different theatre exercises, combined with *an implicit use of karate*, serves as an additional mode of exploration without adhering to a single doctrine. The theatre exercises outlined in this section align with the training in the aforementioned phases, the implicit use of Shotokan karate, and the objectives of KAT. Solo explorations conducted during the summer of 2025, aimed at deepening the investigation through personal work, continued the trajectory established in the previous phase to examine the

applicability of the process to the lifestyles of contemporary actors. The exercises in the workshop do not imply that the use of other acting techniques is not compatible with karate. Developments in the programme have highlighted the potential of partnering with additional types of theatre training in other proposed phases of the work (discussed more extensively in the Conclusion). The Phase 3 workshop offers a path for incorporating Shotokan karate into acting exercises developed by practitioners like Michael Chekhov, Mroz, Carreri, Anne Bogart, and Tina Landau.

Engaging in the third phase of KAT does not imply having completed one's formation or 'arriving' at an end goal but maintains the role of ongoing training. Like Phases 1 and 2, those who engage in Phase 3 may do so without experience in the previous phases. However, due to the implicit use of karate, it is highly recommended that one participates in the previous phases or Shotokan karate lessons before engaging in this work. Some of the karate principles that sustain the performative objectives of this phase include breath support, focus, concentration, visualisation, coordination, and a sense of inner and outer awareness. Despite an implicit use of what one generally associates with Shotokan karate technique, this workshop bears similarities with the previous phases, as visible through the following sample:

### **Introduction**

- Introduction to Research
- Karate focus lesson: Guiding Principle of Shotokan Karate (choose one per session)

### **Warmup**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Stretching

- Movement stemming from karate techniques to sculpt the surrounding space
- *Ki* awareness exercises
- Vocal warmup (e.g. Kristin Linklater)

### **Practice**

- Part 1: Environment
  - Imagination
  - Atmosphere
- Part 2: Character
  - Answering questions
  - Coexisting with character
  - Activities

### **Performance**

- Storytelling
  - Prop as Partner
  - Crafting
- Observations and Notes

### **Closing**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)

Phase 3 continues the course in providing a training programme that features an Introduction, Warmup, Practice, Performance, and Closing segment. While sharing similarities with Phases 1 and 2, the workshop distinguishes itself through several aspects, including a longer Warmup due to the addition of exercises in vocal work and *ki* awareness. The Practice and Performance stages also differ from previous phases in that

they deepen work in performative areas labelled as ‘Environment’, ‘Character’, and ‘Storytelling’.

The intent is to employ the previous phases in a consecutive manner to build toward this third segment, although one may engage in each session separately. If joining all three KAT phases together as a single six-hour workshop, then one may make modifications to the Introduction, Warmup, and Closing portions. However, eliminating the Warmup from the other phases requires that one maintains the *ki* awareness and vocal exercises in Phase 3. The Warmup stage plays a crucial role in preparing the actor through breathing techniques and imagery that span *mokuso* (meditation), *kihon* (basic techniques), *ki* (life force) awareness, and vocal exercises. One may use *kihon* or parts of *kata* as physical and mental preparation during this phase by employing techniques slowly and with gradual intensity. For example, *kihon* can work well in stretching the legs, as with *kakato geri* (axe kick), where one employs a straight leg to reach above a target with swooping motions that gradually increase in height. Similarly, one practises the first techniques of the *Hangetsu kata* to engage in slow but powerful movements that awaken the use of *koshi* (vitality present in the hips) (see section 2.2). In this context, these techniques are used as the starting point for a theatre exercise where the actor works like a ‘sculptor’ who moulds the space as if leaving forms that are ‘chiselled’ by the movements of the body (cf. section 1.3.3 and Chekhov 1953: 8).

In this work, one uses karate techniques as the launching pad for creating strong and definite shapes that can be likened to the brush strokes of an artist who attempts to improve painting lines. In doing so, one’s movements act as works of ‘art’ that sculpt the atmosphere as artistic work (cf. Mroz 2022: 446 and Chekhov 1953: 10). Joining movement with visualisation continues the trajectory of visualisation set during *mokuso*, assisting an exploration of possibilities by employing parts of the body to produce shapes

in space (cf. section 1.3.3). Creating through the imagination and experimenting with movement can later function as CBBs for the performative portion of the workshop. Transitioning from karate techniques to improvisational movement is characterised by an implicit use of the work that intends to preserve *ki* awareness through mindful breathing, enhanced focus, and heightened attentiveness. The implicit use of karate in this exercise promotes precision, coordination, and a sense of physical and spatial awareness.

The type of breath work employed in this workshop builds on that of the previous sessions by including ‘thoracic’ and ‘abdominal’ respiration as associated with improving a participant’s awareness of *ki* (see section 3.4 and Kanazawa 2006: 14). This Warmup work includes breathing alongside tensing the muscles of different parts of the body (cf. section 3.4 and Reid and Croucher 1995: 164) and employing the imagination as in envisioning the feet as roots (cf. section 3.4). These exercises cultivate the actor’s active imagination in maintaining an open awareness inwardly through the ‘inner eye’ and outwardly toward the surrounding environment (cf. section 3.4 and Zarrilli 2015: 85–87). The confidence one gains from exercises that improve *ki* awareness resonates with Zarrilli’s example of the actor who encounters a ‘heightened’ state of ‘optimal consciousness’ while becoming ‘attentive’ and controlled (cf. section 3.4 and Zarrilli 2015: 77). The breath work, imagination, and open mindset encouraged through these exercises assist in enhancing the ability to achieve inner and outer awareness. The interplay of what is perceived inwardly and outwardly balances an intersection between physical expression and intellectual engagement employed in the workshop. This relationship between inner and outer awareness chimes with Eugenio Barba’s explanation of the actor’s ‘thought-action’ (see section 3.4 and Barba 1995: 51), which serves as part of the practice and performative aspects of the phase.

The respiration and visualisation set forth by *mokuso*, *kihon*, and *ki* awareness align with the removal of ‘restrictive tensions’ propagated in transitioning into the vocal work of Kristin Linklater in *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976) (see section 2.3 and Linklater 1976: 25). Including vocal work as part of the process resonates with the practice of practitioners like Mroz who recognises the importance of complementing martial arts with vocal exercises (see Mroz 2009: 164 and section 1.3.1). The vocal exercises in this workshop serve to ‘free’ the actor from physical and mental restrictions while highlighting the link between breath, physicality, and mental processes in Shotokan karate (cf. section 2.3). Employing this type of vocal work continues the course outlined in the programme by tapping into imagery, such as when envisioning a ‘pool of vibrations’ deep inside to produce sounds connected to increased awareness (cf. section 2.3 and Linklater 1976: 38–39). This work aligns with Zarrilli’s explanation of exercises linked to an embodied connection with speaking:

The “feeling of form” has to do not just with the body per se, but with the tactile, auditory relationship of the mouth, tongue, teeth, and lips as they are shaped to speak. In this way, words body-forth as they are spoken. A psychophysical approach invites the actor to inhabit a heightened embodied connection to the complex act of speaking. If the actor “feels” the shape of words in the mouth as they are being said, the “saidness” of the words-as-thought—as consciousness in action—is manifest. (Zarrilli: 2009: 191)

In other words, the vocal work described here complements the awareness and understanding of embodiment developed through karate. Although practitioners like Carreri acknowledge ‘ninety per cent of communication’ as ‘non-verbal’, this type of work is still necessary in preparing to ‘transmit’ a ‘message of the semantic meaning’ of ‘words’ (Carreri 2014: 129). Karate is utilised in the vocal work by assisting with imagery

and the removal of restrictions, enabling the voice to function with refinement and clarity in communicating performatively.

The exercises that follow include ‘Environment’ work, which encompasses a two-fold view of the ‘actual world’ surrounding the actor (e.g. rehearsal space, clothing one is wearing) and the ‘make-believe world’ of the character. The first step involves selecting a story that can derive from a play, book, myth, or folktale. Allowing an imaginary world to emerge in this part of the process signifies addressing the setting as a theme to begin crafting the ‘world of the performance’. The starting point in the process involves the ‘Environment’ portion, which incorporates what one smells, hears, sees, tastes, and feels in an imaginative setting. During this exercise, one may either recall these senses or imagine what they might be like. Karate assists one in increasing the awareness, which enables the transfer of what one senses or feels into an imagined location by employing focus, visualisation, and breath work. This type of work allows one to employ awareness and visualisation in a way that experiences empty space like a positive object or substance that transcends distances (cf. section 1.3.3 and Mroz 2022: 433–44). The ‘Environment’ exercise enables one to interact with an imaginary world by processing sensory information linked to interpretation. Interacting with what one has constructed through visualisation signifies accessing a point where imagination and reality intersect. If one imagines sitting in a forest on a cold day, one ‘feels’ a chill or ‘smells’ the scent of the trees. Chekhov describes the importance of adding ‘atmosphere’ in that it functions in inspiring the actor, engaging the spectator, and acts as the ‘soul’ of the performance (Chekhov 1953: 62). An example of including ‘atmospheric’ details to a fabricated ‘world’ includes an ominous setting that later becomes joyful. These types of details can develop from inspiration deriving from the ‘story’.

After crafting an imaginary world, participants work towards building truthful characters stemming from the ‘story’. With the understanding that character building can entail different techniques, this workshop employs the following Viewpoints questions as the first step in developing a character:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I am from \_\_\_\_\_.

My profession is \_\_\_\_\_.

Five facts I know from the text [or story] are \_\_\_\_\_.

Five things I intuit \_\_\_\_\_.

A telling action I perform in the play [or story] is \_\_\_\_\_.

A telling line I speak is \_\_\_\_\_.

My greatest fear is \_\_\_\_\_.

My greatest longing is \_\_\_\_\_.

Odd habits I have are \_\_\_\_\_.

My likes include \_\_\_\_\_.

My dislikes include \_\_\_\_\_.

(Bogart and Landau 2005: 128–29)

This step aligns with the questioning process set forth by practitioners like Konstantin Stanislavski, who encourage recognising the interplay of given circumstances with the possibilities of a performance:

*If* is the starting point, the given circumstances, the development. The one cannot exist without the other, if it is to possess a necessary stimulating quality. However, their functions differ somewhat: *if* gives the push to dormant imagination, whereas the given circumstances build the basis for *if* itself. And they both, together and separately, help to create an inner stimulus. (Stanislavski 1973: 48)

Stanislavski’s explanation of a ‘starting point’ supports the idea of moving beyond any potential limitations of a mind and body gap (cf. section 1.2.1 and Zarrilli 2009: 8), which

he appeared to recognise through his experimentations with a form of yoga (Carnicke 2010: 4). Specificity in a role, together with discovering the stimulus for the actor, requires considering a breadth of options. This process aligns with Stanislavski's description of '*if*' (Stanislavski 1973: 48) as well as Bogart and Landau's openness to performative 'possibilities' (Bogart and Landau 2005: 125). Character building through this type of questioning process is served by the problem-solving, adaptation, and visualisation techniques kindled through karate. Outlining the details of a character through such questions sets the stage for entering a process complemented by Chekhov's exercise in imagining that 'the same space one occupies with one's 'real body' co-exists with another body – the 'imaginary body' of the character, which one creates in the imagination (Chekhov 1953: 87). This type of 'coexisting with character' exercise is facilitated by tapping into the respiration, awareness, and imagination practised in *kata* and *kihon* to visualise co-existing with a new body.

As one practises moving and interacting as a character, one can begin developing Viewpoints sequences described as 'Activities':

#An action with Tempo that expresses character

#An action with Duration that expresses character

#A floor pattern that expresses character

#Three Behavioural Gestures that are particular to the character's personality, culture, time or place

#Two Expressive Gestures that express the essence of the character, a propelling force or a conflict within

#A walk across the room with bold choices regarding Tempo, Shape and Topography

(Bogart and Landau 2005: 130)

This work is assisted through *kata* practice in Phases 1 and 2. For example, completing an action with 'tempo' includes incorporating the understanding of speed and duration in

*kata*. Another example includes exploring the possibilities of *embusen* (line of movement) to set the stage for the behavioural and expressional gestures used to convey the essence of a character. Achieving a ‘bold walk across the room’ signifies applying the understanding of elements of karate that pertain to inner impulse, breath work, imagery, and awareness. This process aligns with focusing on the creation of truthful characters to avoid what Zarrilli describes as the trap of intentionally trying to portray a state rather than discovering a character through specific tasks (Zarrilli 2009: 191).

The ‘Storytelling’ segment that follows requires incorporating the ‘Environment’ and ‘Character’ work practised previously by adding a third element: a prop of choice. Participants are directed ahead of time to bring a prop to facilitate building CBBs that create scenes. This exercise aligns with Carreri’s description of the interplay of thought and action, as when one recognises images created during movement (Carreri 2014: 71). This ‘Storytelling’ exercise requires using the imagination to explore the possibilities of what the prop can become. Maintaining implicit use of Shotokan karate during the exercise signifies retaining the awareness, concentration, determination, and proper breathing methods practised earlier. Improvising with a prop during this segment is served by adhering to Mroz’s ‘fictive operations’, i.e. creating, destroying, concealing, revealing and sustaining (see section 4.1 and Mroz 2011: 146–47). For example, the following showcases the outcome of improvising within the bounds of ‘creating’ and ‘destroying’ images with an umbrella as a prop:

- Character enters enchanted forest holding an umbrella.
- As she closes the umbrella, it becomes a sword that she unsheathes as a warrior.
- The sword transforms into a telescope as she becomes an adventurer.
- The telescope becomes an unsteady boat as she becomes a fugitive.

In the above example, the transformation of the prop features transitions from one segment to the next without requiring linear logic to link images. This process recalls Carreri's propagation of storytelling as evocative logic that can transpire through leaps of association (Carreri 2014: 72). Carreri explains that it is important to understand that this type of work is not characterised by thinking of images and then recreating them but by recognising the images alongside movement and unity with the prop (2014: 71). This exercise requires performing with *kime* or elevated intention and permits the use of vocality as when releasing the voice in *kiai* (energetic shout). This exercise permits adding the voice through improvisation, beginning with one word or phrase linked to explorations of breath and the sensation of speech that stem from the 'pool of vibrations' practised during the Warmup (see section 2.3 and Linklater 1976: 38–39). Devising a performance in this context can involve borrowing ideas from various creative practices, including powerful moments from plays, myths, folktales, or other types of stories (see section 4.5 and Bogart and Landau 2005: 182). This point in the process requires re-examining if an implicit use of karate is maintained by checking the breath support, awareness, focus, rhythm, efficiency, decisiveness, and *koshi* (vitality in hips) present in the work.

The next step involves identifying what Chekhov describes as 'laws of composition', such as the battle between 'Good and Evil', which influences the transformational journey of the character and the polarity of a piece (where the beginning and ending feature as opposites) (Chekhov 1953: 104). In this example, the theatrical rendition of *La Strada*, adapted by Tullio Pinelli and Bernardino Zapponi, from the 1954 film by Federico Fellini, is used to identify symbolism linked to the main characters Gelsomina and Zampanò as representing forces of 'Good' and 'Evil' respectively. Here,

one discovers the polarity of Gelsomina's transformational journey as she changes from the beginning to the end of the performance. This process calls for one to determine the foundational 'question', 'anchor', and 'structure' for the performance (see section 4.5 and Bogart and Landau 2005: 154):

- Question: Who is Gelsomina becoming?
- Anchor: A therapy session with Gelsomina.
- Structure: A winding road.

Employing Mroz's 'objective operations of montage' (repetition, distortion, discontinuity, fragmentation, and recombination) (see section 4.1 and Mroz 2011: 146–47) assists this part of the process, as in the example of including repetition to juxtapose the beginning and ending to highlight change. At this point, one explores building upon the work by adding the CBBs used in the prop exercise:

- Who is Gelsomina becoming? *A warrior who repeatedly unsheathes her sword.*
- Therapy session with Gelsomina: *She steps into an unsteady boat to cross a river.*
- A winding road: *The entire performance is like a winding road where Gelsomina uses a telescope to understand where to go.*

The layering of activities in 'Crafting' requires re-examining if the following 'checklist' of breath support, awareness, focus, rhythm, efficiency, decisiveness, and *koshi* (vitality in hips) is maintained. Any area that needs strengthening signifies returning to karate

techniques practised during the Warmup. Next, one includes parts of the text to explore impulse and action as in the following example:

**Gelsomina:** It rains, it snows, always on the road. But what about the future? The years go by. It's something to think about. Where will I end up? In a small ditch?  
[*She is a warrior who unsheathes her sword*]

I'm leaving. I'll learn new skills. I'll make doves fly. I will stand on galloping horses.  
[*She uses an unsteady boat to cross a river*]

The circus is like a grandiose family. I'm done with Zampanò. I'm going with them.  
[*She uses a telescope to see where to go and then returns to unsheathing her sword*]  
(Pinelli and Zapponi 2000: 22; translation by Josephine Calvo)

Linking the text to thoughts and impulses can be illustrated through examples, such as Gelsomina questioning her safety while using an umbrella as a sword or making the choice to move forward, even if she cannot see where to go. Practising this sequence is assisted by how karate prepares one to recognise the interplay between inner and outer awareness, as in Barba's 'thought-action' (see section 3.4 and Barba 1995: 51), so that information is carried in the body rather than 'demonstrated' to the audience.

When working in the absence of a KAT instructor, this point in the process requires videotaping the performance to examine the work. Observing a recorded performance of oneself allows one to write notes pertaining to the following (cf. section 4.5):

- Highlighted moments
- Hidden moments
- Improvements

- Rhythm
- Tempo
- Tensions in the body
- Clarity
- What was learned?
- What was missed?
- What should be kept, and what should be changed for next time?

Viewing the work through this perspective enables one to determine accomplishments and adjustments. This point in the process also requires re-examining if the work maintains an implicit use of karate by examining the following list:

- breath support
- inner awareness
- outer awareness
- focus
- rhythm patterns
- efficiency
- *kime* (decisiveness)
- specificity with the body (see section 2.2)
  - pelvis and torso
  - feet and legs
  - hands and arms
  - face and eyes

Maintaining elements of Shotokan karate involves building upon the work previously practised in Phases 1 and 2 to explore additional nuances such as specificity in Phase 3. Recording one's performance highlights the techniques that need strengthening, despite the implicit use of karate. However, repetitive series of performing, recording, observing, and applying changes can become tedious when working alone. The following simplifies this process by permitting a maximum of two recordings per workshop:

- Step 1: Record the performance.
- Step 2: Watch the recording while writing notes.
- Step 3: Practice incorporating notes.
- Step 4: Record the performance again.
- Step 5: Watch the performance (without writing notes).
- Step 6: Write final thoughts on impactful moments and what to work on in future sessions.

Limiting the number of video recordings per session contains the process in a way that aligns with the efficiency of karate and the parameters of the workshop. Any additional changes can be set aside for future sessions while allowing memory to identify the most impactful moments in the work (see section 4.5 and Bogart and Landau 2005: 181–82).

Refraining from the need to make additional modifications to the performance works as a transition into the Closing segment, characterised by *mokuso* (meditation). This type of work signifies maintaining elements of Shotokan karate practised in Phases 1 and 2 while exploring additional nuances such as specificity in Phase 3. The practice of recording one's performance permits one to recognise which techniques need strengthening despite an implicit use of karate. In this phase, as in the previous ones,

breathing techniques and visualisation function as assisting with the acknowledgment of achievements and challenges as opportunities for growth. Although concluding the session with *mokuso* ends the three KAT phases, this part of the process also functions as the beginning of an ongoing journey featuring karate in actor training. The connection between the start and finish of the phases serves as a metaphor that mirrors the journey of a karate ‘white belt’, which, through a *karateka*’s dedication, sweat, and perseverance, evolves into a ‘black belt’. This illustration reminds one that the belt remains ‘white’ underneath, mirroring the essence of the *karateka* as an ongoing learner who did not ‘give up’ (cf. Introduction). In the same way, the KAT phases act as part of a sustained journey characterised by perseverance. The tenacity necessary for overcoming challenges sets the stage for a deeper understanding of how to rise above difficulties in KAT, as discussed in the next section.

### **6.3 Parries, Counterattacks, and Opportunities for Growth**

Shotokan karate emphasises the importance of facing challenges with unwavering dedication. This mindset parallels aspects of the phases of KAT, which resonates with the adaptability associated with the process. The perseverance that characterises the workshops reflects the ‘true image of the Way of Karate’, that is, ‘becoming better today than yesterday, and then better tomorrow than today’ (Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 59). This also aligns with Carreri’s explanation that ‘one of the essential functions of training is to retain the capacity to learn’ (Carreri 2014: 60). Accordingly, the phases of KAT were formulated to complement the sustained learning necessary in actor training (cf. section 1.1.1). KAT workshops supplement ongoing learning while providing actors with the appropriate expectations of Shotokan karate in performance training. Recognising how to counter potential obstacles acts as an important part of preparing for

the work. KAT terminology serves as a shortcut for directions or adjustments throughout the process, saving time and reducing the risk of miscommunication. However, joining a KAT programme may require catching up to understand what these terms imply.

Divided into phases, each workshop acts as a stand-alone course. Splitting KAT into phases was necessary to accommodate realistic time frames and facilitate the assimilation of the work. The challenge of crafting each workshop as a stand-alone process risks insinuating a lack of importance attributed to working progressively through phases. An objective of structuring each phase as an independent step, while maintaining the goal for successive building, includes facilitating a comprehensive and implicit understanding of karate in Phase 3. Consequently, the intrinsic fusion of Phase 2 serves as a significant process in of itself *and* as a stepping stone between phases, bridging the foregrounding of karate in Phase 1 with its backgrounding in Phase 3. This reflects the necessity of catering to the lifestyles of contemporary practitioners, which influenced the framing of each phase as a discrete process where multiple rounds of a single phase add to the retention of benefits.

One of the challenges of embarking on a karate training programme for actors includes finding other practitioners who wish to train in a similar manner and according to the same schedule, especially if this implies a long-term commitment. Although practitioners may initially want to train together, sustained work of this type signifies finding a programme that complements the busy lifestyles of contemporary actors. Thus, learning to train alone can become an option to maintain the benefits of a process like KAT. However, one of the issues of solo training is safety. A novice is discouraged from practising the phases without proper supervision. Therefore, if one must train alone, they should first enrol in a Shotokan karate course to at least learn elementary *katas*, such as *Taikyoku Shodan* and *Heian Shodan*. In this case, setting the foundations of movement

with a karate *sensei* by memorising the execution of *katas* can act as a launching pad for studying movement and devising through KAT.

Another challenge of embarking on a programme like KAT alone is finding scripts that cater to solo physical theatre performances. This signifies exploring different points of inspiration for the performative section of the workshops, which need to expand to include adaptations of sources like novels, mythology, or children's fables. Modifying stories to remove speech or other characters in these portions of the phases signifies altering a performance that may not resemble what was initially intended by the author or playwright. In this case, the process becomes reminiscent of *devising* based on such material as sources of inspiration. Indeed, the exploratory nature of training allows one to make discoveries that complement creating something *new*. Crafting new performances as part of the workshop signifies fostering skills like planning, adaptation, exploration, and experimentation. However, starting the process may appear overwhelming and tedious for those who lack the discipline or training of performance-making. In this case, a foundation in karate and improvisational theatre assists in embarking on a self-study journey of KAT.

As a solo practitioner with experience in karate and devising theatre, my challenges included finding incentives to remain consistent with the training. In this context, Carreri's advice mirrors that of a karate *sensei* who directs one to use the mind to tap into strength by pushing 'beyond exhaustion' (Carreri 2014: 58). Setting goals provided new perspectives in testing the limits of what can be accomplished through sustained work. Focusing on training alone allowed me to progress more quickly than if I needed to lead others in the proper delivery of techniques. However, working solo also signified that I had to rely on my perceptions of the process, as assisted by critical reflection in the form of writing. Journaling about the process helped detect a slow progression and training

gaps between one phase and the next. The uniformity of karate techniques used as a platform and the linear approach to the process influenced the type of movement and creative bounds of the workshop. However, applying techniques like reconstructing sequences provided those adjustments that favoured performative outcomes, thereby avoiding the generation of prescribed sequences. Potential dangers of this type of work include falling into meaningless choreographies that lack depth and substance. Thus, it was important to align the work with desired theatrical outcomes. Progressing with more challenging *katas*, varied improvisational exercises, and diverse sources of inspiration assisted the process.

Testing the limits of the phases identified a range of complexities associated with the sessions. The key here was finding the level of difficulty that was challenging enough to produce growth but simple enough to avoid discouragement. For example, applying improvisation to advanced *katas*, like *Unsu* (cloud hands) in Phase 2, challenges one's memory in piecing together complicated techniques that utilise diagonal, horizontal, and vertical lines of movement. Recognising the spectrum of difficulty in the process emphasises how one can cater to different levels of experience based on which *kata* is chosen and how much of the given sequence is addressed. The different steps in the process can appear complicated at first, as one of the difficulties includes maintaining internal traits of a modified sequence. Part of the challenge becomes focusing more on recollecting a sequence than exploring the creative bounds of the work. These difficulties can be countered by narrowing the principles and techniques to fewer points of focus for both experienced and inexperienced individuals. Adjusting techniques for different applications, other than intended – precisely like martial arts for acting skills – appears to offset the essence of karate in favour of contemporary performative opportunities. However, recalling Funakoshi's advice to apply 'the way of karate to all things' as there

‘lies its beauty’ (cf. Introduction and Funakoshi and Nakasone 2003: 64) reminds one that the essence of karate can and should remain as part of the creative process despite modifications to outward techniques.

Beginning from a foundation in Shotokan karate may imply that the work lacks character development and in-depth vocal training. Although the first two phases do not include substantial vocal training, they lay the foundation for preparing the voice for Phase 3 by increasing the use of breath and freeing the body from constraints. Comparatively, character development is indirectly addressed in the initial two phases during the performative portions of the workshops. Adding too many elements to the performative segments risks overwhelming practitioners during the exercises, hence the decision to sticking to a limit of three focal points at a time before progressing forward. This is especially the case when working with individuals who have less experience.

One of the challenges of the phases includes creating CBBs too early in the process, which might imply crafting pieces that do not necessarily fit into a performance ‘mould’. This problem is resolved through repetitions of the workshop, allowing one to better understand the performative plan. For example, if the goal is to prepare for a theatrical adaptation of Fellini’s *La Strada* (1954), one can utilise all the exercises in Phases 1, 2, and 3 to build towards this goal. However, the potential issue with tailoring the entirety of the KAT workshops to one specific performance is that it may limit the creative bounds of improvisational explorations. The choice then becomes using the phases in educational or rehearsal-like environments. On the one hand, if KAT is used as the name implies, for ‘actor training’, then maintaining free exploration favours this objective. On the other hand, if the goal is to build toward a specific performance with an invited audience, one can employ each Phase successively toward this purpose.

Considered separately or together, the three phases of KAT display how *karate-dō* can influence a theatre class by enhancing crucial elements such as breath support, focus, awareness, balance, decisiveness, control, precision, stamina, memory, and visualisation. The proposal of KAT showcases that the incorporation of Shotokan karate into a theatre class addresses the actor's relationship with mind, body, and world, leading to performative outcomes. The practical process detailed in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrates how Shotokan karate can integrate into various actor training techniques developed by practitioners like Stanislavski, Chekhov, Mroz, Bogart, Landau, Carreri, Barba, Zarrilli, and Jacques Lecoq. The KAT programme of work may continue to evolve in accordance with the explorative quality of examining the benefits of karate in different forms of actor training. Essential components to achieving results requires time, continuity, and regular practice. An important element to grasp is that the process serves as a point of departure that relies on personal motivation.

## Conclusion

This research began with the question of whether incorporating *karate-dō* in an actor training programme could impact a practitioner's aesthetic expression during a performance. The answer to the impact of what an actor can expect from this type of training has been addressed throughout the chapters that compose this thesis. Chapter 1 explored how practitioners view the advantages and disadvantages of martial arts for actor training. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 addressed, respectively, the actor's physical and mental preparation for performance by introducing the principles of *karate-dō* and how the practice impacts the actor. Chapter 4 built on the preceding two chapters by describing the role of karate in performance composition and outlining the role of compositional building blocks derived from *kata*, *kihon*, and *kumite*. The thesis culminated in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 by addressing the KAT project framework and practice, starting off with an appreciation of the researcher's role as both practitioner and scholar, and then moving on to describe and highlight the developments, insights, and possibilities of the work.

This thesis concludes with an examination of some of the implications of linking *karate-dō*, an Asian practice, to actor training in Western contexts, specifically with reference to questions pertaining to the Western appropriation of Eastern martial arts. Pertinently, one may question what is lost when transplanting an Asian martial art like karate to a Euro-American setting. Although this consideration is significant, it was not introduced earlier to avoid becoming the primary driving force behind the work. Accordingly, the following considerations set the stage for a discursive site where knowledge is addressed and challenged, beginning with discussions relating to colonial and decolonial narratives, transitioning into opportunities for further research, and concluding with final reflections.

## Of Hybrid Cultures and Practices

I grew up with *karate-dō* as a normal part of life because my Sicilian-American father was the karate *sensei* on a US military base in Sicily. Taking karate lessons with other children from North America or Sicily became an ordinary after-school activity. In retrospect, I realise that my childhood training featured a convergence of aspects of Sicilian, US, and apparently Japanese customs. Sicilian culture alone implies speaking of that which encompasses Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, and Spanish influences. Although these karate lessons established a firm foundation in techniques, they did not aim to introduce foreign beliefs into an already multifaceted cultural context. Instead, the practice served as a significant stepping stone for learning about other cultures. In certain contexts, karate training in Western spheres can be likened to the metaphor of the ‘California Roll’ (a type of sushi), which, although not generally accepted as ‘authentic sushi’, serves to make something unfamiliar appear more approachable to a wider audience. Similarly, the study of *karate-dō* in actor training has ample potential to invite deeper research into the cultures that sustain it.

As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, *karate-dō* originates from a blend of Chinese and Okinawan traditions that were rebranded by Gichin Funakoshi to align with Meiji Japan’s modernist-nationalist frameworks. One example of Funakoshi’s work includes ensuring that the character used for ‘*kara*’ in ‘karate’ signified ‘empty’ instead of ‘Chinese’ (cf. Introduction and Funakoshi 1981: 22–34). Modifying the name and techniques associated with karate aligned with Funakoshi’s ‘mission in life’, that is, disseminating *karate-dō* by making the practice less secretive and more accessible to the rest of the world (Funakoshi 1981: 30). His efforts aimed at inclusivity while explaining that karate was accepting of all persons regardless of age, race, sex, or ability (Funakoshi

1981: 112). By examining the Okinawan and Chinese roots of karate, one might question the nationalist narratives that portray karate as purely Japanese. There are even those who trace the origins of karate to ancient influences from Greece, India, China, and Okinawa, before it reached Japan (Rielly 1998: 25–35). Better understanding the practice means recognising that karate in ‘Japan was a process of negotiation between organisations and individuals of different cultural settings, with their own traditional backgrounds’ and that from these exchanges the practice was ‘shaped’ and further settled into other ‘cultural contexts’ (Johnson 2012: 74). Accordingly, *karate-dō* is the product of repackaging through nationalism, sportification, and global branding.

One might never know the full extent of what was erased, and which epistemologies were suppressed in the journey of developing the *karate-dō* one recognises today. These considerations draw attention to the origins of martial arts in general, which are described by the president of Japan *Karate-dō Shoto-kai*, Genshin Hironishi, as a practice ‘nearly as old as man, who early found himself obliged to battle, weaponless, the hostile forces of nature, savage beasts and enemies among his fellow human beings’ (Funakoshi viii–ix). From an anthropological perspective, one recognises that karate is ‘practiced in many cultural settings, in often divergent ways, but is still held to be “karate” by these numerous and diverse practitioners’, therefore, one can accept that ‘karate is not merely a cultural practice’ but one that ‘interacts with cultures’ (Johnson 2012: 74). Although karate is often associated with beginning in Okinawa, one acknowledges that it is a ‘cultural practice’ that has developed and evolved over time, ‘before it ever crossed over the waves to the Japanese mainland’ (Johnson 2012: 75).

Considering the multilayered history of *karate-dō* highlights how the training encompasses a hybridity of knowledge that permits practitioners to embody aesthetic and philosophical traditions in the co-presence of multiple worlds. This aligns with Marco

Adda's description of the multifaceted nature of martial arts as a practice not easily set into a metaphorical 'box' (Adda 2022). Diving into the depths of this multiplicity signifies recognising that:

First, the martial arts have their origins in combat and preparing for combat. Second, they arise out of profound philosophical [or spiritual] traditions and are associated with particular "ways of life." Hence practitioners see them as contributing significantly to moral and character development, rather than as simply athletic. Finally, martial arts traditions include more-or-less elaborate etiquette including respect for opponents, teachers, and referees. (Bicknell 2021: 2)

In other words, practising karate signifies adopting a way of life that is impacted by belief systems with intrinsic and extrinsic implications. Given the influence of globalisation in the twenty-first century, practising a martial art such as karate underscores the value of creating space for learning without imposing other worldviews.

The multifaceted nature of karate draws attention to the concept of a 'blurred genre' proposed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his influential essay *Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought* (1980), where he discusses genre mixing in Euro-American circles. Martial-acting practitioners like Daniel Mroz recognise the multilayered nature of martial arts by highlighting the 'blurred' lines between facets that constitute the work (Mroz 2025: 98). In the case of karate, these indefinite lines can be seen in the overlap of meditation, cultural rituals, self-defence, fitness, performance, and personal development. This inevitably signifies that karate is not a 'frozen' practice, but one that continually evolves while absorbing the influences of contemporary society. On the topic, Jeanette Bicknell explains that 'martial arts styles and practices are not static. Rather, they have changed and developed over time and continue to do so, as practitioners meet, exchange ideas, and learn from one another to enrich their respective arts' (2021:

2). This perspective rejects the myth of pure, unchanging martial arts traditions, which can be shaped by multiple cultural influences and historical events, and highlights that what appears to be a 'pure' practice is, in fact, more complex.

Explorations of karate as a means of actor training position themselves as more than a prescription for improved performance. The work invites a re-evaluation of inclinations toward colonial frameworks that reduce training to a mere array of 'tools'. The objective is not to diminish the work to an extraction of karate techniques, but to engage the complete aesthetic and philosophical integrity associated with the practice. Therefore, the actor who practises a martial art like karate must recognise that it carries deep cultural and philosophical knowledge derived from non-Western traditions. In other words, a programme like KAT must aim to respect the full meaning of karate. Where colonial aesthetics may have privileged Euro-American models for actor training through rational and text-driven work, karate introduces alternative paradigms such as embodied stillness and ethical responsiveness.

Karate, as a means of actor training, challenges the idea that only Western processes for performance preparation are correct by welcoming a search for alternative paradigms and techniques that reevaluate structures and forms. This signifies dismantling institutional boundaries to make space for embodied lineages in marginalised systems. For example, exploring *karate-dō* in performance training contexts provides opportunities to research the impact of additional art forms not usually associated with physical theatre. Considerations of karate as actor preparation challenge a Western way of perceiving and valuing the practice by understanding the martial arts as layered systems that have been impacted by colonial processes. The idea of confronting colonial concepts of actor training aligns with what Marilena Zaroulia and Glenn Odom describe as the necessity of 'decentring' Western theatre and performance studies, a discourse that must

‘inform all conversations, decisions, [and] structures’ (2021: 10). Dismantling colonial structures embedded in the history and representation of actor training enables one to recentre knowledge systems of artistic legitimacy by addressing non-Western modes of expression and interpretation.

Undoing the effects of colonialism signifies reevaluating the definition and interpretation of ‘art’ and resisting stereotypical representations. Examining topics like the significance of art means considering counter-narratives, such as in appreciating imperfections, simplicity, and change. For example, this can signify considering Japanese aesthetic concepts like *wabi*, which means ‘desolate or lonely’, and *sabi*, which refers to that which evokes the ‘fragility of life’ (Graham 2014: 20). Reevaluating the meaning of concepts associated with artistic appeal can imply considering alternate interpretations such as those that surpass display and counter the exaltation of materialism and the self.

From this perspective, researching karate as a means of actor training embraces multiplicity and cultural hybridity as a complete aesthetic system that invites performers to train in ways that honour other worldviews and modes of expression. This process builds towards the reparative inclusion of embodied knowledge, aligning with Funakoshi’s direction to practise karate not solely with words but with the whole body (Funakoshi 1981: 106), as an option that does not conform to a logocentric course of action. In doing so, this research offers the opportunity to reevaluate alternative epistemologies by placing decolonial aesthetics as a constructive framework that restores systems that value what *karate-dō* adds to performance training. Here, knowledge related to explorations of *karate-dō* in actor training becomes a place of contact between worldviews that coexist as part of contemporary society. Ideally, this signifies promoting critical thinking, education, and shared values in social contexts.

Encouraging decolonial aesthetics involves incorporating cultural narratives that foster an inclusive learning environment while transcending colonial limitations, such as the perception of a split between mind and body. Discovering the multifaceted origins of karate alongside what shaped its development implies encouraging students to research and respect the philosophical concepts behind the techniques. For example, the philosophical underpinnings of the *kata* known as *Unsu*, whose name means ‘hand like the clouds’, implies using the hands to sweep away an opponent’s moves in the same way that clouds sweep across the sky (Rielly 1998: 151), where the hands symbolise clouds and the eyes represent the sun. Another example includes the *Empi kata*, whose name means ‘flight of the swallow’, featuring rapid upward and downward movements as resembling the agility of a bird (Rielly 1998: 151). Although not all Shotokan karate *katas* can be traced to specific origins, forms like *Hangetsu* are linked to Chinese origins, while others are accredited to developments set forth by practitioners like Master Anko Itosu (Rielly 1998: 152). Understanding the historical ties to karate can be fostered through student-led discussions and collaborative learning projects that aim to develop cultural awareness and inclusivity. Such an objective facilitates reparative inclusion rather than exotic supplementation, allowing the actor to remain open to discussions regarding other perspectives and worldviews.

The core purpose of decolonial aesthetics is to dismantle Western perspectives and frameworks that might marginalise or erase cultural practices and art forms. By reevaluating the reception and definition of a practice like *karate-dō*, one can consider how it has been historically influenced by other cultures. This means reevaluating how one’s Western lens may influence perceptions of the practice in relation to beauty, artistic value, and cultural representation. Aiming for an inclusive appreciation of the cultural and artistic ties to the practice signifies embarking on a journey that is open to new

perspectives and discoveries. In doing so, one recognises how a programme that incorporates *karate-dō* can open opportunities for further research.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

Both *karate-dō* and actor training continually evolve to align with the demands of contemporary society. This means that a programme like KAT necessitates a certain level of adaptation to keep up with the ongoing pressures of existing actor training and performance practices. Although practitioners may voice the desire to preserve traditional actor training and martial arts, the impending digitalisation in teaching and practice has already begun through online platforms like Zoom and YouTube. This trend is expected to continue to incorporate new technologies, such as motion capture, virtual reality, and augmented reality. The concern is that digitalisation will counter the efforts set forth by the martial arts by leading to disembodiment (Meyer 2022: 496), as linked to an increasing vagueness associated with the lines separating humans and technology. Further studies on the potential of karate in actor training can reflect upon maintaining the benefits of the practice despite the evolving relationship between humans and mechanisation. This signifies creating future KAT phases that explore a level of technology, such as incorporating online workshops, performances, or virtual reality.

Developments in understanding the relationship between the human body and the surrounding world highlight concerns linked to how one perceives oneself. For example, body image perceptions have been impacted by a struggle of comparisons heightened by ‘influencers’ and ‘celebrities’ on virtual platforms. Karate aligns with inviting practitioners to invest in ‘holistic evaluations’ of physicality rather than societal ideals of ‘beauty’ (cf. section 1.4.1 and Mitchell 2015: 154) through focus on action-based skills (cf. section 1.4.1 and Conway 1980: 69). This aligns with how Master Matsumura

encourages one to transcend the obstacles linked to ‘vanity’ (cf. section 2.2 and Funakoshi 1981: 28–29). The inclusive nature of karate accepts anyone regardless of their aesthetic appearance and offers individuals a way to adapt to physical changes (i.e. the ageing process) (cf. section 1.4.1), while countering the outcomes of sedentary and self-indulgent lifestyles that can lead to poor self-esteem. Further research into the impact of a programme like KAT can analyse how the practice assists actors in developing a more accepting view of themselves while allowing the acquisition of skills such as strength and endurance building. This can involve examining how the work affects areas such as mood or stress levels. For example, one can investigate how KAT impacts physical and emotional wellness by observing results linked to theories like the ‘Six Dimensions of Wellness’, which encompasses emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual ties (National Wellness Institute 2025). In theory, a practice like karate appears to address dimensions of wellness as linked to the Japanese idea of *ikigai*, which involves finding a hobby or employment that complements one’s talents, enjoyment, and needs (cf. section 3.3 and Mitsuhashi 2017). Further research into karate in actor training involves determining how practitioners equate the practice to a sense of fulfilment by providing an outlet for exercise, stress management, intellectual stimulation, building relationships, and ascribing meaning to activities.

Understanding the complexity of karate also entails accepting that the process is linked to philosophical and spiritual aspects related to imparting guidance for self-improvement and personal growth. When karate was introduced to Japan in 1922, it began to evolve into becoming a part of Japanese culture which means that it was influenced by elements like a ‘samurai ethos’, ‘Confucian traditions of filial piety’, the ‘way of the warrior’, and ‘Zen’ (Rielly 1998: 80). Although many practitioners negate religious associations with karate, the practice was informed by specific historical and cultural

factors that involve belief systems. This does not signify that the practice endorses a religion despite how a Western lens may interpret these factors. The context surrounding the formation of present-day karate can lead one to Mroz's caution that 'readers of English' should avoid assumptions associated with the word 'religion' (Mroz 2025: 95). What is important for actors to understand is that karate was influenced by belief systems rooted in historical and cultural contexts. Accordingly, engaging in *karate-dō* intends to provide directives for self-improvement or 'an ethics of good practice' (cf. section 1.2.1 and Zarrilli 2020: 267). For example, learning the importance of discipline, humility, and respect might signify encouraging practitioners to sweep a rehearsal space before practice or clean up before leaving. These principles chime with transcending hindrances to the actor's potential, such as not permitting the ego to take centre stage (cf. Introduction and Turse 2003). Assisting actors with a path for self-improvement also means discouraging thought patterns that negatively impact their mental health (cf. Introduction). Further studies in this area can involve analysing how a programme like KAT can influence the actor's psychological well-being.

Surveying potential areas for additional research signifies investigating variations of KAT phases with different objectives. Among the options for potential combinations of the KAT programme are incorporating techniques associated with practitioners not addressed in this thesis. One option involves catering each KAT workshop to a specific line of techniques, for example, focusing solely on Michael Chekhov or Jacques Lecoq exercises to create Chekhov-KAT or Lecoq-KAT sessions. The benefits of continued research in this area means developing additional insights, such as comparing and contrasting the impact of different goal-specific KAT sessions. Additional studies could also compare the benefits of KAT with other hybrid practices, such as 'Painting for Actor Training' or 'Running for Actor Training', to shed light on what an actor can acquire

from different variations. This implies analysing KAT alongside categories that include other types of martial arts, performing arts, fine arts, or sports to recognise the value that arises from each respective practice. For example, one could compare the benefits of karate with those of the martial art known as ‘*U Vastuni*’, or ‘*A Paranza*’ (Sicilian staff fighting), a practice derived from a self-defence system of shepherds dating back to the 12th century (Associazione Nazionale Bastone Siciliano 2025). Analysing the different benefits an actor can obtain from *U Vastuni* as compared to *karate-dō* allows one to investigate the differences in how these practices improve an actor’s relationship with body, mind, and the surrounding world for performative purposes. Creating a programme for actor training that employs an alternative martial art, such as ‘*U Vastuni*’, can further identify the strengths and weaknesses of the KAT programme.

These avenues for further research suggest exploring the additional implications of how karate compares to other forms of actor training. One of the objectives of these hypothetical variations is to develop specific skills that focus on targeted areas based on actor needs. The following list offers examples of potential hybrid practices that can be compared with the KAT phases discussed in this thesis:

- Incorporating Technology with KAT
  - Video Instruction
  - Virtual Reality
  - Motion Capture
  - Augmented Reality
- Replacing Karate with another form of martial arts
  - Aikido for Actor Training

- *U Vastuni* (Sicilian staff fighting) for Actor Training
- Taekwondo for Actor Training
- Modifications to the type of Actor Training
  - Incorporating karate with only Michael Chekhov exercises (Chekhov-KAT)
  - Incorporating karate with only Jacques Lecoq exercises (Lecoq-KAT)
  - Incorporating karate with only Konstantin Stanislavski exercises (Stanislavski-KAT)
- Replacing Karate with another practice that can be combined with actor training
  - Dancing for Actor Training
  - Running for Actor Training
  - Swimming for Actor Training
  - Painting for Actor Training
  - Music for Actor Training

Though the opportunities for further research are many, the objectives appear to remain the same; that is, analysing the benefits and limitations of each type of programme to better inform actors and their instructors of what to expect from each endeavour.

Developing additional KAT phases can also involve tailoring the workshops to specific goals, such as community engagement, while offering the opportunity to expand cultural horizons and explore real-life interactions. Ideally, these future developments mean promoting community projects where anyone can practise regardless of appearance, ability, or age. This course aligns with empowering cultural experiences that stimulate

inclusion. A recent US national survey conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Making Caring Common (MCC) found that 73% of participants blamed technology as the leading cause for their loneliness and voiced a desire for 'more activities and fun community events' (Ross 2024). If present-day loneliness can be attributed to the role of the digital multiverse, one must recognise the degree of mutation in what is understood as social interactions. For example, one can have two thousand online 'followers' but no community outside of social networks. With the growing dependence on technology and the increasing impact of artificial intelligence, the world appears to be moving toward eliminating human interactions. Heightened levels of technology also imply that live actors may one day be considered unnecessary.

Directing a practice like KAT toward community-building efforts offers a space for restoration in light of these concerns. Community engagement through a KAT workshop setting offers a space for collaboration, dialogue, and prospects for change. By following the example of a theatre programme like Dell'Arte International in Blue Lake, California (Dell'Arte 2025), KAT offers opportunities for community, education, classes, and service-related activities. This signifies providing avenues to create meaningful connections through a social infrastructure. Community building with KAT can involve creating workshops for children and adults that foster engagement and artistic expression, as linked to enrichment programmes and events. An example includes offering open-air KAT sessions and productions in inner-city neighbourhoods that prompt discussion on addressing local issues. Another possibility involves providing educational classes specifically designed for individuals who fall into the Para-Karate category, dedicated to training those with physical and mental disabilities (World Karate Federation 2023). Catering KAT workshops for those with disabilities signifies adjusting the work to accommodate individuals with visual, intellectual, and physical limitations. The benefits

of community building are multifaceted and impact one's physical and mental well-being (cf. Stein 2023 and Introduction). Community-based work acts as an avenue to provide a necessary sense of belonging and highlights the importance of recognising that actors are humans *first* (cf. Introduction). Community-driven initiatives relate to the importance of relinquishing egoism and accessing how *karate-dō* instils values like selflessness, respect, pacifism, responsibility, justice, humility, and creativity (cf. Introduction). The aim is to provide opportunities for cooperation and empowerment through reflection, discussion, and continued connection. Acknowledging how one fits into a greater whole signifies understanding relationships and how to interact with the environment in the face of change. This type of understanding can also direct practitioners towards discovering their origins and traditions.

Limitations of continued research into programmes like KAT involve sparking substantial interest that sustains continued exploration of the work. This signifies attracting enough appeal to develop trained instructors with the experience necessary to teach KAT. The more plausible solution may involve actors enrolling in karate lessons and then applying those techniques in KAT sessions, either privately or collectively. If practitioners became aware of the benefits of *karate-dō* for performative purposes, then the work might gain more traction. Student learning highlights Adda's description of martial arts as a 'super discipline', which links to different fields of study like 'music', 'neuroscience', 'psychophysiology', and 'psychology', so that the distance between academia and practice is shortened (cf. section 1.2.1 and Adda 2022).

Adda explains that more connections can be made between martial arts and other disciplines because, although these practices might be perceived as separate, they are interconnected (Adda 2022). This aligns with Richard Nichols' position in recognising that more fields outside of business schools can benefit from martial arts instruction (cf.

Introduction and Nichols 1991: 43). For example, martial arts can play a key role in an actor's psychological and physiological well-being by informing areas of personal identity and self-confidence. One avenue for increasing interest in the practice is to adjust sessions to fit students' learning preferences. However, catering sessions to potential types of interest draws attention to the debate regarding the validity of educational preferences:

Learning styles theories have infiltrated the education system, influencing all key players, including students, teachers, administrators, researchers, and the general public. This widespread belief begs the question of how. How does a theory, with no scientific merit, become commonly accepted knowledge? (Dekker and Kim 2022: 18)

In other words, catering instruction to learning style theories is not necessarily associated with expecting better retention or results. This topic highlights the argument that favours active learning approaches that focus on benefitting students through types of engagement that stimulate intellectual processing (cf. section 5.3.2 and Dekker and Kim 2022: 71). If there is not enough evidence to provide instruction directed toward learning preferences, then adjusting phases to suit individual needs becomes more a matter of providing instruction through avenues like problem-solving, analysis, and critical thinking. Questions of what students 'like' or 'dislike' could be linked to arguments by those who view martial arts for actors as a 'waste of time' (see section 1.1.1 and Grieve 2022: 481) or uninteresting (see section 1.1.1 and Ziółkowski 2022b: 370). Potential areas for future research include tailoring KAT sessions to both learning style preferences and active learning to further analyse whether providing diverse versions of KAT can heighten engagement or retention. This could involve creating KAT workshops that integrate

elements such as mathematics and problem-solving to cater to preferences that align with the benefits of *karate-dō*.

Recognising the multifaceted nature of karate reveals an aspect that can be viewed as both a limitation and a strength: its emphasis on self-defence. The fact that karate techniques instruct how to defend oneself against an attack highlights the complex and debated question of incorporating martial arts into a theatre classroom (cf. section 1.1.1). As mentioned earlier in this thesis, some believe that contact with violent movements causes practitioners to learn what is harmful, while others recognise that the practice fosters ingredients necessary for pacifism (i.e. discipline, self-control, and respect) (see section 1.2.2). This point highlights the importance of trained instructors who can assess the maturity and character of students before introducing advanced techniques (cf. Introduction). As already indicated, one solution for actor training contexts includes redefining martial arts objectives for theatrical rather than combative purposes (cf. Introduction and Billew 2022: 479). In the example of the KAT programme, this has meant tailoring and adapting the training by supplementing and modifying exercises to cater to performative needs. Further developments in this area include examining the difference between actor training benefits in a traditional karate class and those in a KAT framework. This line of study aims to identify the differences between what an actor can attain from a traditional karate class and the three KAT phases discussed in the final chapters of this thesis.

A summary of some of the examples for further research into KAT includes the following:

- The impact of KAT on an actor's sense of fulfilment.

- How KAT influences the actor's mental health.
- Comparing and contrasting KAT with new hybrid combinations of actor training.
- Examining how the benefits of KAT are impacted by technology.
- Exploring the impact of KAT when combined with community-building efforts.
- Analysing the benefits of KAT when tailored to learning style preferences.
- Examining the difference between the benefits of a traditional karate class and KAT.

The nuances of what is available to actors through karate can be seen as an ongoing journey of possibilities. In the aforementioned scenarios, karate-based actor training emerges not only as an option for training actors but also as a space that respects bodily wisdom and cultural frameworks.

### **Final Reflections**

A bird's eye view of this research raises questions about the meaning and need for performance training, and consequently, the performing arts. Humans appear to display an inclination toward what the arts have to offer, despite difficulties in pursuing a career in the field. Among the many functions of a performing art like theatre are stimulations linked to growth, education, creativity, and communication. Part of the appeal of theatre lies in its potential to enrich lives by bringing people together through cooperative efforts. This can signify playing an important role in affirming a community's culture and values. The role of karate in the performing arts draws attention to the multifaceted nature of the term 'art', which encompasses a wide range of interpretations.

Evaluating the meaning and definition of what can be described as an artistic practice underscores the debate of applying karate as ‘art’ rather than ‘sport’ (cf. section 3.6 and Funakoshi 2003: 114). If practising karate as a ‘martial *art*’, then one should grasp both the ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ benefits of the practice (cf. Introduction). Part of the difference between practising karate as an ‘art’ rather than a ‘sport’ lies in the aesthetic purpose that attempts to accomplish aims that overlap with those of the performing arts. Some of these objectives resonate with promoting personal growth, community, and cultural traditions. Although progress, kinship, and customs may also be addressed in sports, karate transcends identifying solely as athleticism in that it does not rely only on competition and quantifiable results. The deeper dimensions of karate are rooted in tradition, creativity, and mastery, serving as a powerful tool for conveying experiences and reflections. An acting programme that incorporates karate is defined not only as an option for improving one’s performance but also as an opportunity to present diverse perspectives, bring people together, and preserve cultural knowledge.

Despite how one may recognise the value of karate for actor training, the process has not always proven straightforward. The possibility of karate for actors has been a winding road, sometimes straightforward and at other times taking unexpected turns. Researching how *karate-dō* impacts a practitioner’s relationship with their body, mind, and surrounding world at times proved a direct process that helped set expectations for both theoretical and practical applications. Accordingly, KAT has provided opportunities aimed at developing skills for those interested in movement-based theatre as linked to the aesthetic and cultural implications of the practice. Measuring the outcomes came through a combination of theory, practice, and reflective interpretation. Part of the process involved identifying ‘turns’ on the hypothetical road, where problem-solving complemented the process. Exploring how to overcome gaps in understanding karate in

actor training was accompanied by a level of discovery as part of an ongoing learning process. Despite its limitations, the work opens new avenues for investigating variations of how a karate-based process can enhance performance education. Part of the value of the process lies in providing knowledge that enables students and instructors of acting to better understand what to expect from incorporating *karate-dō* into their lives. This complements an existing body of work that discusses what one can expect from existing martial-acting options, such as those that incorporate traditional Chinese martial arts. Considering the benefits that *karate-dō* provides, it offers the opportunity to enhance skills such as focus, awareness, breath support, stamina, bodymind connectedness, flexibility, and specificity.

Karate as a form of actor training underscores an ongoing commitment to discovering how to support actors in delivering meaningful performances. The avenues an actor can take to embark on a training journey are many. However, learning about the benefits of *karate-dō* as an option can become a valuable resource that supports this process. Despite how novices might believe that ‘inspiration’ or ‘talent’ is sufficient to sustain their careers, all professional actors need training. Although it is advised that actors explore different techniques, one of the roles of an acting instructor includes recognising that students must make their own choices. Allowing students the freedom to select a long-term training practice supports directing them to a programme that suits their needs and preferences (cf. section 1.1.1). Closing these final reflections is perhaps best addressed through Michael Chekhov’s insight:

Why does a civilized man need a culture? Why does an intelligent child need an education? At the risk of driving the point home with a sledgehammer, it should be reiterated that every art, even the actor’s must have its principles and aspirations, and its professional techniques. (1953: 171)

In other words, actors need to acquire principles and techniques. What path they take remains a matter of choice.

## Glossary of Terms

This glossary is not an exhaustive or definitive list, but is intended as a source that provides basic information to enable a smooth reading experience for those unfamiliar with the terms employed throughout the thesis. The Glossary is divided into three parts: the first refers to Japanese terms commonly employed in karate, the second to terms used in Karate for Actor Training (KAT), and the third includes a side-by-side comparison of the three phases of KAT. The second and third parts fall under the heading of ‘KAT Findings’ to mark research output that is original to this study. To counter the inevitable reductiveness of a typical glossary, the following cross-referencing strategies are suggested to provide a fuller picture: (1) brackets after each term indicate the main relevant chapter(s) where the term is discussed, (2) italicised words denote other items in the glossary to highlight connections, and (3) the glossary can be used in conjunction with the Bibliography for further reading.

### *Karate-dō* Terms

*age shuto* [Chapter 3] This term refers to a rising knife hand block, which is commonly used to counter high strikes.

*age uke* [Chapter 2, Chapter 4] A rising upward block involving raising the arm to defend against strikes to the head.

*ashi barai* [Chapter 2] This Japanese term refers to a sweeping technique that targets the ankle or knee to cause an opponent to become unstable or fall.

***Bassai Dai*** [Chapter 3] Literally translated as ‘destroying a fortress - major’, this is considered an advanced and dynamic *kata*.

***Bassai Sho*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 6] This nomenclature for an advanced *kata* translates as ‘destroying a fortress – minor’.

***chūdan*** [Chapter 3] This Japanese word refers to techniques aimed at the middle level or solar plexus of an opponent. It is one of the three height levels used to categorise defensive techniques.

***dōjō*** [Chapter 3] This Japanese word is used in this context to refer to a karate training hall where individuals learn to refine their skills.

***embusen*** [Chapter 4, Chapter 6] This Japanese term refers to the predetermined and invisible line of movement throughout a prearranged movement sequence known as *kata*.

***Empi*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Conclusion] This term refers to both a close-range elbow strike and the name of a *kata* intending ‘flight of the swallow’.

***gedan*** [Chapter 3] This refers to defence techniques aimed at the lower level of the body from the belt area to the knees and is one of the three attack levels of *Shotokan* karate.

***gedan barai*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 4] This Japanese term literally translates to ‘downward block’ and refers to a sweeping technique where the arm extends to deflect an attack with a closed fist.

**guiding principles** [Introduction, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5] This term refers to the ‘Twenty Guiding Principles’ of Shotokan karate, advocated by karate master Gichin Funakoshi, who emphasised the importance of achieving characteristics that transcend aesthetic connotations.

***gyaku zuki*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 4] Translates from Japanese to English as ‘reverse punch’ and intends a punch that is delivered with the arm on the opposite side of the leading leg.

***hachinoji dachi*** [Chapter 3] Known as the ‘ready stance’, this term refers to a basic position where one stands with feet shoulder-width apart with toes pointed out at a 45-degree angle.

***Hangetsu*** [Chapter 2] Signifying ‘half-moon’, this is the name of an advanced *kata* which emphasises breathing and slow, powerful techniques.

***hangetsu dachi*** [Chapter 3] This signifies a ‘half-moon stance’ characterised by arc-like footwork.

***Heian*** [Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This Japanese name refers to the foundational Shotokan karate prearranged sequence of movements for beginners and translates into English as ‘peace and calm’.

***Heian Godan*** [Chapter 2] Signifying the fifth level *kata* in the *Heian* or ‘peaceful mind’ series, this *kata* is known for introducing more advanced techniques.

***Heian Nidan*** [Chapter 3] This is the name of the second *kata* in the ‘peaceful mind’ or *Heian* series, introducing sidekicks and spear hand strikes.

***Heian Sandan*** [Chapter 5] This name literally translates to ‘peaceful mind – third level’ and refers to the third prearranged sequence of movements in the *Heian* series, which introduces specific techniques through simultaneous block and strike combinations.

***Heian Shodan*** [Chapter 4, Chapter 6] This Japanese name refers to the first prearranged sequence of movements known as ‘peaceful mind – first level’, taught in the *Heian* series of *Shotokan* karate, serving as an introduction to basic techniques and stances.

***Heian Yondan*** [Chapter 3] This is the fourth *kata* in the ‘peaceful mind’ or *Heian* series, known for highlighting the importance of *kokutsu dachi*.

***ippon kumite*** [Chapter 4] This term refers to prearranged or ‘one-step sparring’ which involves the study of offensive and defensive techniques.

***Jion*** [Chapter 3, Chapter 6] This fundamental yet advanced *kata* translates into English as ‘compassion and favour’.

**Jitte** [Chapter 3] This *kata* translates into English as ‘ten hands’ and emphasises defending oneself against multiple imaginary adversaries using staffs.

**jiyū ippon kumite** [Chapter 4] This term refers to the semi-free sparring that acts as a bridge between pre-arranged and free-style.

**jiyū kumite** [Chapter 4] This term refers to the most advanced form of sparring in *Shotokan*, featuring no designated attacker or defender.

**jōdan** [Chapter 3] This Japanese word is used to indicate high-level attacks to the upper part of the body and is part of the three heights associated with defensive techniques.

**juuji uke** [Chapter 3] This term refers to a two-handed ‘cross’ block used to defend against an incoming attack.

**kamae** [Introduction] This Japanese term signifies a stance of mental and physical readiness.

**Kanku Dai** [Chapter 3] This is the name of a fundamental but complex *kata*. The name of the *kata* means ‘observing the sky – major’.

**Kanku sho** [Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This name means ‘observing the sky – minor’ and refers to a *kata* known for advanced and athletic movements.

***karate-dō*** [Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This Japanese term refers to a martial art that is understood as a way of life with origins in what Okinawans referred to as ‘*Okinawate*’ or simply ‘*te*’. The practice imparts principles such as breathing, awareness, focus, balance, stamina, endurance, memory, flexibility, tempo, rhythm, self-confidence, courtesy, integrity, humility, courage, self-control, and efficiency.

***karateka*** [Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 6] This Japanese term refers to a dedicated practitioner of karate.

***kata*** [Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This term refers to a choreographed pattern of combat against invisible opponents. Learning *kata* is associated with advancing proficiency levels in karate and is often employed for practising and memorising techniques.

***ki*** (気) [Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 6] In the present thesis, this often-controversial Japanese term refers to the life force present in living things, as acknowledged by various cultural worldviews.

***kiai*** (気合) [Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This Japanese term refers to an energetic shout, often generated from the diaphragm, to augment the power of a technique while potentially confusing or distracting an opponent.

***kiba dachi*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 4] This term translates from Japanese to English as ‘horse stance’ or ‘straddle stance’ and is characterised by a wide, low stance, with knees bent and feet facing forward.

***kihon*** (基本) [Introduction, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] In this context, the Japanese term refers to basic techniques such as stances, punches, strikes, kicks, and blocks that form the foundation of *Shotokan* karate.

***kime*** (決め) [Introduction, Chapter 3, Chapter 6] In this context, the Japanese term refers to the decisiveness, focus, and power that maximise the effectiveness of the technique.

***kizami zuki*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 3] This technique signifies a linear leading hand punch often targeted toward the opponent’s head.

***kokoro*** [Chapter 2] This term represents the indomitable ‘spirit’ or ‘heart’ of a *karateka* that overcomes challenges.

***kokutsu dachi*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 4] This technique refers to a fundamental back stance in *Shotokan* karate, characterised by placing the majority of body weight on the back leg.

***kumite*** [Introduction, Chapter 4] This Japanese term refers to sparring between two or more individuals, one of the primary components of *Shotokan* karate.

***mae geri*** [Chapter 2] This signifies a front kick characterised by extending the front leg and striking with the ball of the foot.

***mae tobi geri*** [Chapter 2] This technique refers to a front jump kick.

***maii*** [Chapter 4] This term refers to the distance between sparring partners and the time needed to cover that distance.

***makiwara*** [Chapter 2] This term refers to a traditional striking post used for karate training.

***mawashi geri*** [Introduction, Chapter 3] This term refers to a roundhouse kick, initially incorporated into *Shotokan* karate by Gichin Funakoshi's son, Yoshitaka 'Gigo'.

***mokuso*** [Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This Japanese term refers to silencing one's thoughts through a combination of respiration and imagery as practised at the beginning and end of training sessions.

***morote uke*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Chapter 5] This translates from Japanese to English as 'augmented block', a technique used to defend against an attack, often characterised by one hand blocking and the other reinforcing the hand or arm.

***nekoashi dachi*** [Chapter 3] This technique translates to 'cat stance' and refers to a specific position where the weight rests on the back, bent leg.

***nukite*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Chapter 5] In Japanese, this term translates to 'spear hand' and refers to a strike where the fingers are extended.

*oi zuki* [Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Chapter 5] This term translates in *Shotokan* karate as ‘lunge punch’ and refers to a punch that is delivered while stepping forward with the same side leg.

*rei* [Chapter 4, Chapter 5] In this context, the term refers to a demonstration of respect, as when bowing before beginning a training session.

*sensei* [Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 6] In this context, the Japanese word is used to signify an instructor of karate and is used as a form of respect.

*shizentai* [Introduction] This Japanese term signifies a natural stance or posture where the body remains relaxed but ready.

**Shotokan** [Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4] This name refers to a form of karate linked to the training propagated by master Gichin Funakoshi and stems from his pen name ‘*Shōtō*’ meaning ‘pine waves’ and ‘*kan*’ signifying ‘house’ (Funakoshi 1981: 85–86). What Funakoshi refers to as the ‘first karate *dōjō*’ bore the name ‘*Shōtō-kan*’ over the door, a title chosen by a ‘nationwide committee of karate supporters’ in 1935 (Funakoshi 1981: 83–84).

*shuto uke* [Chapter 2] This technique refers to a knife hand block.

*soto uke* [Chapter 3] This term refers to a defensive technique known as an ‘outside block’.

**Taikyoku Kata** [Chapter 6] This name refers to a series of foundational *katas* such as *Taikyoku Shodan*.

**Taikyoku Shodan** [Chapter 6] One of the more basic prearranged sequences of movements in Shotokan, which acts as a foundation for more advanced *kata* while instilling focus, alignment, and proper respiration.

**Tekki Nidan** [Chapter 3] This name means ‘iron horseman – second level’ and refers to the second *kata* in the *Tekki* series, characterised by movements performed in *kiba dachi*.

**Tekki Shodan** [Chapter 3] This refers to the name of the first *kata* in the *Tekki* series and translates to ‘iron horseman – first level’, reflecting the powerful movements in the *kata*.

**Ten No Kata** [Introduction] This name is translated as ‘*kata* of the heavens’ and refers to a fundamental Shotokan karate *kata* intended for beginners.

**tettsui** [Chapter 3] This word refers to a hammer fist technique.

**uchi uke** [Chapter 2] This technique refers to an inside block where the forearm engages against an incoming attack.

**Unsu** [Chapter 3, Conclusion] This translates to ‘Cloud Hands’ and refers to a highly advanced *kata* known for its complex techniques and acrobatic movements.

***uraken*** [Chapter 3] This word refers to a backhand strike with a closed fist.

***ushiro geri*** [Chapter 3] This term refers to a back kick executed while spinning and then thrusting the heel backward.

***Wankan*** [Chapter 3] This translates into ‘king’s crown’ and refers to a shorter, yet advanced *kata* known for demonstrating a unique rhythm pattern.

***yama zuki*** [Chapter 2] This technique features the leading hand punching and the rear hand guarding to create a shape that resembles a mountain peak, hence the name, ‘mountain punch’.

***yōi*** [Chapter 3] This term translates into ‘ready’ and signifies when one stands at attention while practising physical and mental readiness.

***yoko geri keage*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4] This term is used in Shotokan karate to indicate a fundamental snap side kick technique.

***yoko geri kekomi*** [Introduction, Chapter 3] This term refers to a thrust side kick introduced into Shotokan karate by Yoshitaka ‘Gigo’.

***zanshin*** [Chapter 3] This Japanese term signifies a state of heightened alertness and awareness.

*zenkutsu dachi* [Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This is a term used in *Shotokan* karate referring to a front stance characterised by a forward bent leg and a back straight leg.

## **KAT Findings: Terms**

**activities** [Chapter 6] This term was developed as part of Phase 3 KAT to simplify referring to components of a Viewpoints exercise, as propagated by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (Bogart and Landau 2005: 130). The exercise serves as a component of character work in the workshop, focusing on character movements and interactions, and is facilitated by *kata* practice in Phases 1 and 2.

**coexisting with character** [Chapter 6] This phrase refers to Michael Chekhov's exercise in imagining that 'the same space one occupies with one's 'real body' co-exists with another body – the 'imaginary body' of the character, which one creates in the imagination (Chekhov 1953: 87). Creating a character in this exercise is facilitated by tapping into the respiration, awareness, and imagination practised in karate.

**Compositional Building Blocks (CBBs)** [Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This term refers to those performative sub-units in KAT that can be applied within an aesthetic enactment as a means of training, self-study, and composition. CBBs take a cue from Daniel Mroz's Prearranged Movement Patterns (PMPs) (Mroz 2011: 160) by employing *kihon*, *kata*, *kumite*, or improvisations.

**crafting** [Chapter 6] This word was developed to refer to a component of the ‘*storytelling*’ in Phase 3 KAT, intending a layering of techniques such as maintaining an implicit use of karate through awareness, breath support, focus, and efficiency, while linking text to thoughts and impulses.

**environment** [Chapter 6] This word was developed to encompass what one smells, hears, sees, tastes, and feels in an imaginative setting devised through Phase 3 KAT. This exercise encompasses the inclusion of ‘atmospheric’ elements in agreement with the importance Michael Chekhov attributes to inspiring the actor through these means (Chekhov 1953: 62).

**humanisation** [Chapter 5, and Chapter 6] This term refers to transforming karate techniques into more quotidian movement patterns while maintaining the benefits of the practice internally. This exercise plays a prominent role in Phase 2 KAT, which features a mixture of implicit and explicit karate use.

***Jo-ha-kyū*** [Chapter 2] This Japanese term refers to a principle that exemplifies the use of resistance to create rhythmic patterns in its application to the martial and performing arts.

**karate focus lesson** [Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This term refers to focusing on specific *guiding principles* of Shotokan karate during a KAT training session.

**Karate for Actor Training (KAT)** [Introduction, Chapter 5, Chapter 6] This name refers to a programme of work that employs *Shotokan* karate as a means for actor training. KAT

examines the practicality of applying karate in actor training through a workshop setting and can be depicted as a practical application that sheds light on the topics and characteristics discussed in this thesis.

***koshi*** [Chapter 2, Chapter 6] This Japanese term is translated into English as ‘hips’. In this context, the term refers to mastery over the hip area as linked to what *Kabuki* actor Sawamura Sojuro describes as the actor’s vitality (Barba and Savarese 1991: 10).

**martial-acting** [Chapter 1] This term was developed to simplify references to the deployment of Eastern and Western martial arts for training actors. The term is an adaptation of Marco Adda’s definition of a ‘martial training approach for acting’ (2022: 398). For the purposes of this research, the term does not signify Adda’s other definitions, such as performances ingrained in martial arts, the integration of martial arts elements to create a character, actors assisting a community, or political antagonism (Adda 2022: 398).

**montage techniques** [Chapter 4, Chapter 6] This term refers to adding elements like repetition or recombination to a score while remaining within the margins of devising sequences homogeneously.

**Practice Blocks (PBs)** [Chapter 5] This term refers to the intersection of theory and experience related to KAT and features as what Barbara Bassot describes as ‘building blocks of professional practice’ (2023: 8). PBs have united in forming KAT, bearing similarities with the structuring and layering used in *Compositional Building Blocks (CBBs)*.

**Presentation, Practice, Performance (PPP)** [Chapter 5] This term refers to the teaching process threaded throughout KAT, an adaptation of the ‘Presentation, Practice, Production’ model described by Jeremy Harmer, which is based on how children learn their native language (see Harmer 1998: 31).

**principle of threes** [Chapter 2, Chapter 5] This principle is featured in the performing arts and karate. In the example of *kata*, this can be experienced when two ‘beats’ precede an accentuating third ‘beat’.

**prop as partner** [Chapter 6] This refers to the ‘*storytelling*’ exercise during Phase 3, where actors recognise images alongside movement explorations with a prop. This exercise requires incorporating the ‘*environment*’ and work previously practised in the workshop, aligning with Roberta Carreri’s description of the interplay between thought and action (Carreri 2014: 71).

**qualities of elements** [Chapter 5] This term refers to theatrically embodying what resembles fire, water, earth, and air.

**questioning process** [Chapter 6] This term refers to asking compositional questions through the KAT phases.

**storytelling** [Chapter 6] This word refers to a performative component of Phase 3 KAT, which joins compositional elements of *montage techniques*. This part of the workshop includes exercises such as ‘*prop as partner*’ and ‘*crafting*’.

# KAT Findings: Phases

## KAT Phase 1

### Introduction

- Introduction to KAT Research
- *Karate focus lesson*: ‘There is no first strike in karate’, ‘Karate begins and ends with *rei*’ (bow), and ‘*kiai*’

### Warmup

- *Mokuso* (meditation)
- Breath support
- Stretching

### Shotokan Karate Presentation and Practice

- *Kihon* (basic techniques): stances, fist positioning
- *Kata: Heian Sandan* (second half of the *kata*)
- The ‘*principle of threes*’
- Practice *Heian Sandan* while incorporating the ‘*principle of threes*’

### Combining Theatre Exercises with Karate

- Practice *Heian Sandan* with *qualities of elements* (fire, water, earth, or air)
- Partners choose to embody *qualities of elements* and parts of *Heian Sandan* in no-contact *kumite* (sparring)

### Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate

Group improvisations in scenarios inspired by exercises from Jacques Lecoq: students integrate *Heian Sandan*, *qualities of elements*, the ‘*principle of threes*’, and breath work

## **Closing**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Question/Answer Session

## **KAT Phase 2**

### **Introduction**

- Introduction to Research
- *Karate focus lesson*: Twenty Guiding Principles of Shotokan Karate

### **Warmup**

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Breath support and *kiai* (energetic shout) practice
- Stretching

### **Karate Combined with Theatre Presentation and Practice**

#### Part 1

- *Kihon* (basic techniques): stances, fist positioning, and proper execution of a punch
- Apply improvisation to *kihon*, such as exploring different floor textures
- Keep the focus and awareness of *kihon* while engaging in the improvisation

#### Part 2

- *Taikyoku Shodan*
- Apply improvisation to *Taikyoku Shodan*, such as making the techniques quotidian

- Create a scene based on *Taikyoku Shodan* while maintaining the focus and intention behind it

### Part 3

- Practise the first six techniques of a more advanced *kata* like *Heian Godan*
- Identify rhythm patterns in the delivery of performance
- Apply improvisation to *Heian Godan*, such as practising the techniques with different parts of the body
- Create a scene informed by *Heian Godan* while maintaining the focus and intention behind it

### Theatrical Performance Informed by Karate

- Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words* (1965) becomes the inspiration for the performance while maintaining the breath support, focus, and awareness practised in class
- Add *montage techniques*
- Apply the *questioning process*

### Closing

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Question/Answer Session

## KAT Phase 3

### Introduction

- Introduction to Research
- *Karate focus lesson: Guiding Principle* of Shotokan Karate (choose one per session)

## Warmup

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)
- Stretching
- Movement stemming from karate techniques to sculpt the surrounding space
- *Ki* awareness exercises
- Vocal warmup (e.g. Kristin Linklater)

## Practice

- Part 1: *Environment*
  - Imagination
  - Atmosphere
- Part 2: Character
  - Answering questions
  - *Coexisting with character*
  - Activities

## Performance

- *Storytelling*
  - *Prop as Partner*
  - *Crafting*
- Observations and Notes

## Closing

- *Mokuso* (Meditation)

## Bibliography

- Ackerman, Courtney. 2018. 'Cognitive Restructuring Techniques for Reframing Thoughts', *Positive Psychology*, 11 February  
<<https://positivepsychology.com/cbt-cognitive-restructuring-cognitive-distortions/>> [accessed 27 April 2024]
- Adda, Marco. 2022. 'Martial Art-Acting in Dictatorial Indonesia: Antigone (1974) and Lysistrata (1975) directed by W. S. Rendra', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 397–415,  
doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2046631
- 2023. Personal interview carried out by Josephine Calvo (Martial-Arts-Acting),  
7 February, Zoom Meeting
- Allain, Paul, and Frank Camilleri. 2019. *Physical Actor Training: an online A-Z*,  
online video recordings, Drama Online  
<[https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/video?docid=do-9781350997189&tocid=do-9781350997189\\_5794178143001](https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/video?docid=do-9781350997189&tocid=do-9781350997189_5794178143001)> [accessed 29 November 2023]
- Allain, Paul, and Grzegorz Ziółkowski. 2022. 'Interview with Adrian Lester: Taekwondo and Actor Training', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 375–82, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2114781
- American Psychological Association. 2018. 'Mind', <<https://dictionary.apa.org/mind>>  
[accessed 17 February 2025]
- 2023. 'Self-focus', <<https://dictionary.apa.org/self-focus#:~:text=An%20excess%20of%20trait%20self,Also%20called%20self-focused%20attention>> [accessed 16 August 2023]

- Ang, Gey Pin, and Ranice Tay Kai Xin. 2022. 'Cultivating Vessel and Voice: Embodiment as A Way of Being in Performer Training', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.2, pp. 214–21, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2066337
- Associazione Nazionale Bastone Siciliano. 2025. 'Bastone Siciliano', <<https://bastone-siciliano.com/storia/storia-bastone-siciliano/>> [accessed 14 August 2025]
- Ataexcellence. 2020. 'A Cost Comparison Between Martial Arts and Other Activities', <<https://ataexcellence.com/acostcomparisonbetweenmartialartsandotheractivities>> [accessed 26 July 2023]
- Baas, Matthijs, Barbara Nevicka, and Femke S. Ten Velden. 2014. 'Specific Mindfulness Skills Differentially Predict Creative Performance', *Sage Journals*, 23 May <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0146167214535813>> [accessed 23 September 2024]
- Barba, Eugenio, and Nicola Savarese. 1991. *The Secret Art of the Performer: A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* (Routledge)
- 1995. *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology* (Routledge)
- Bassot, Barbara. 2023. *The Reflective Practice Guide: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Critical Reflection*, 2nd edn (Routledge)
- Beckett, Samuel. 1958. *Act Without Words: A Mime for One Player* (Grove Press)
- Benedetti, Robert. 1973. 'What We Need to Learn from the Asian Actor', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 25.4, pp. 463–67, doi:10.2307/3205600

- Bicknell, Jeanette. 2021. 'Aesthetics of the Martial Arts', *Philosophy Compass*, 16.17, pp. 1–8, doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12738
- Billey, Slade. 2022. 'Accessing Psychophysical Identities through Russian Martial Arts in Actor Training', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 465–80, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2058993
- Blanchfield, Theodora. 2022. 'The Benefits of Deep Breathing', *Verywell Mind*, 22 September < <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-benefits-of-deep-breathing-5208001> > [accessed 16 January 2025]
- Blankert, Tim, and Melvyn R.W. Hamstra. 2017. 'Imagining Success: Multiple Achievement Goals and the Effectiveness of Imagery', *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 39.1, pp. 60–67, doi:10.1080/01973533.2016.1255947
- Błaszczak, Przemysław. 2021. 'Aikido in Actor Training: A Personal Perspective', in *The Paper Bridge: Contemporary Theatre and Film Interconnections Between Japan and The West*, ed. by Wojciech Otto and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM), pp. 87–95
- 2022. 'Aikido in Kokyu Studio's Practice', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 435–38, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2102750
- Blau, Herbert. 1973. 'Shadow Boxing: Reflections on the T' Ai Chi Chuan', in *Break Out!: In Search of New Theatrical Environments*, ed. by James Schevill (Swallow Press), pp. 360–62
- Bogart, Anne, and Tina Landau. 2005. *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (Theatre Communications Group)
- Bowes, Lucy, and others. 2015. 'Peer Victimization during Adolescence and its Impact on Depression in Early Adulthood: Prospective Cohort Study in the

United Kingdom', *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 350, pp. 6,

doi:10.1136/bmj.h2469

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. 2023a. 'Hirohito', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hirohito>> [accessed 20 September 2023]

— 2023b. 'Karate', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/sports/karate>> [accessed 26 September 2023]

— 2023c. 'Meiji Restoration', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Meiji-Restoration>> [accessed 18 September 2023]

— 2024. 'Mind', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/mind>> [accessed 24 April 2024]

Brown, Stephanie. 2014. 'Society's Self-Destructive Addiction to Faster Living', *New York Post*, 4 January <<https://nypost.com/2014/01/04/societys-addiction-to-faster-living-is-destroying-us-doctor>> [accessed 3 September 2023]

Burgess, Matthew D., and Forshing Lui. 2023. 'Anatomy, Bony Pelvis and Lower Limb: Pelvic Bones', *National Library of Medicine*, 24 July <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK551580/#:~:text=The%20bones%20of%20the%20pelvis,the%20forces%20generated%20by%20them>> [accessed 15 December 2023]

Calvo, Santo. 2024. Personal interview carried out by Josephine Calvo (Balance and Harmony), 13 July, Phone Meeting

- Camilleri, Frank. 2013a. 'Between Laboratory and Institution: Practice as Research in No Man's Land', *TDR/The Drama Review*, 57.1, pp. 152–66, doi:10.2307/23363800
- 2013b. 'Habitational Action: Beyond Inner and Outer Action', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 4.1, pp. 30–51, doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2012.755469
- 2019. *Performer Training Reconfigured: Post-psychophysical Perspectives for the Twenty-first Century* (Methuen), Kindle Edition
- 2020. 'A Hybridity Continuum: The Case of the Performer's Bodyworlds', *Performance Research*, 25.4, pp. 17–25, doi:10.1080/13528165.2020.1842024
- 2023. *Performer Training for Actors and Athletes* (Methuen)
- Carnicke, Sharon Marie. 2010. 'Stanislavsky's System: Pathways for the Actor', in *Actor Training*, 2nd edn, ed. by Allison Hodge (Routledge), pp. 1–25
- Carreri, Roberta. 2014. *On Training and Performance: Traces of an Odin Teatret Actress*, trans. by Frank Camilleri (Routledge)
- Caruso, John. 1986. 'TV and Its "Stereotypes": Furthering "Consumerism" in Guise of Entertainment', *Education Week*, 8 January  
<<https://ejournals.um.edu.mt/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/tv-stereotypes-furthering-consumerism-guise/docview/2247441756/se-2?accountid=27934>> [accessed 16 January 2025]
- Carvalho, Rodrigues, and others. 2022. 'Effects of Kiai on Jumping Performance and Striking Reaction Time in Karate Athletes', *Idō Movement for Culture*, 22.1, pp. 27–35, doi:10.14589/ido.22.1.5
- Chekhov, Michael. 1953. *To the Actor: on the Technique of Acting* (Harper & Row)

- Chemers, Michael, and Adam Versényi. 2014. 'Kinesis as Mimesis: On the Application of Martial Arts to Dramaturgical Practice', *Theatre Topics*, 24.3, pp. 199–204, doi:10.1353/tt.2014.0042
- Chichvarin Alexander. 2020. 'Stop Harming Your Back!', *Karatedōmagazine*, 31 July <<https://www.karatedomagazine.com/2020/07/31/pelvic-tilt-in-zenkutsu-dachi/>> [accessed 15 December 2023]
- Chung, Jiwon. 2011. 'Theatre of the Oppressed as a Martial Art', *JSTOR*, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981335>> [accessed 30 April 2024]
- Conway, Linda. 1980. 'Image, Idea and Expression: T'ai Chi and Actor Training' in *Movement for the Actor*, ed. by Lucille S. Rubin (Drama Book Specialists), pp. 51–69
- Covey, Stephen R. 1989. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (Simon and Schuster)
- Creely, Edwin. 2010. 'Method(ology), Pedagogy and Praxis: A Phenomenology of the Pre-Performative Training Regime of Phillip Zarrilli', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 1.2, pp. 214–28, doi:10.1080/19443927.2010.505000
- Crews, Sarah. 2024. 'Habits to Belonging in and Through Boxing', *Performance Research*, 28:6, pp. 115–23, doi:10.1080/13528165.2023.2334653
- Cynarski, Wojciech J. 2022. 'The Applicability of Historical Japanese and Polish Fencing to the Development of Acting Competences', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 383–95, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2041474
- Dare, Scott. 2015. 'From Dojo to Theatre: Karate as Training for Actor Presence', *Academia*

<[https://www.academia.edu/10646694/From\\_Dojo\\_to\\_Theatre\\_Karate\\_as\\_Training\\_for\\_Actor\\_Presence](https://www.academia.edu/10646694/From_Dojo_to_Theatre_Karate_as_Training_for_Actor_Presence)> [accessed 13 April 2022]

Dekker, Henrietta Den, and Joseph A. Kim. 2022. 'The Widespread Belief in Learning Styles', in *Learning Styles, Classroom Instruction, and Student Achievement*, ed. by Daniel H. Robinson, Veronica X. Yan, and Joseph A. Kim (Springer International Publishing), pp. 11–20

Dell'Arte International. 2025. 'Community: How Well Do You Know Dell'Arte?', <<https://dellarte.com/about-dellarte-international/community>> [accessed 4 August 2025]

Delza, Sophia. 1972. 'T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Integrated Exercise', *The Drama Review*, 16.1, pp. 28–33, doi:10.2307/1144727

De Miranda, Maria Brigida. 2012. 'Jogo de Capoeira: When Actors Play a "Physical Dialogue"', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 3.2, pp. 178–91, doi:10.1080/19443927.2012

De Roza, Elizabeth, and Budi Miller. 2018. 'The Lion and the Breath: Combining Kalaripayattu and Fitzmaurice Voicework Techniques Towards a New Cross-Cultural Methodology for Actor Training', *Journal of Embodied Research*, 1.1, pp. 1–15, doi:10.16995/jer.6

Dillon, Robert. 1999. 'Accounts of Martial Arts in Actor Training: An Enthusiast's Critique', *Journal of Theatrical Combatives*, <<https://ejmas.com/jtc/jtcframe.htm>> [accessed 1 May 2023]

Dixon, Nicholas. 2007. 'Boxing, Paternalism, and Legal Moralism', in *Ethics in Sport*, 2nd edn, ed. by William J. Morgan (Human Kinetics), pp. 389–403

- 2015. ‘A Moral Critique of Mixed Martial Arts’, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 29.5, pp. 356–84, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44714928>> [accessed 6 September 2025]
- DojoTV. 2018. *Martial Arts Stories #1 Phillip Zarrilli*, online video recording, YouTube, 28 February <<https://youtu.be/TL1kkKUuk6s>> [accessed 15 March 2023]
- Donahue, John J. 1993. ‘The Ritual Dimension of Karate-do’, *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 7.1, pp. 105–24, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44398891>> [accessed 17 February 2025]
- Duchartre, Pierre-Louis. 1966. *The Italian Comedy* (Dover Publications)
- Eisenstein, Sergei. 1970. *Film Essays and a Lecture by Sergei Eisenstein* (Praeger)
- Ellis, Harold. 2015. ‘Franz Mesmer: Pioneer in the Treatment of Functional Disease or Charlatan?’, *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, 76.3, pp. 170, doi:10.12968/hmed.2015.76.3.170
- Enkamp, Jesse. 2023. ‘Naha-te’s 2 Greatest “Secret” Lessons (pt.1)’, *Karate by Jesse* <<https://www.karatebyjesse.com/naha-tes-2-greatest-secret-lessons-pt-1/>> [accessed 15 December 2023]
- Fondazione Barba Varley. 2024a. *Julia Varley: Lettera B Bellezza*, online video recording, YouTube, 21 April <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nwmJ3RMcsY>> [accessed 28 October 2024]
- 2024b. *Julia Varley: Lettera C Corpo*, online video recording, YouTube, 21 April <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v1=WsLCZg-M1\\_K](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v1=WsLCZg-M1_K)> [accessed 28 October 2024]

- Fontaine, Sheryl. 2002. 'Teaching with the Beginner's Mind: Notes from My Karate Journal', *JSTOR*, 54.2, pp. 208–21, doi:10.2307/1512146
- Fuller, Carol, and Viki Lloyd. 2020. *Martial Arts and Well-being: Connecting Communities and Promoting Health* (Routledge)
- Funakoshi, Gichin. 1935. *Karate-dō Kyōhan* (Genrin Shoin)
- 1973. *Karate-dō Kyōhan: The Master Text*, trans. by Tsutomu Ohshima (Kodansha International)
- 1981. *Karate-do: My Way of Life*, trans. by Shojiro Kanazawa (Kodansha International)
- and Genwa Nakasone. 2003. *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate: The Spiritual Legacy of the Master*, trans. by John Teramoto (Kodansha International)
- Galperin, Eran. 2022. '39 Martial Arts Industry Statistics to Know in 2022', *Gymdesk*, 30 November <<https://gymdesk.com/blog/martial-arts-industry-statistics>> [accessed 24 May 2022]
- Geertz, Clifford. 1980. 'Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought', *The American Scholar*, 1 March <<https://research-ebSCO-com.ejournals.um.edu.mt/linkprocessor/plink?id=3f6c41b2-940e-3713-a82b-1105207bfc49>> [accessed 27 July 2025]
- Goodridge, Janet. 1999. *Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance: Drama, Dance, and Ceremony* (Jessica Kingsley)
- Graham, Patricia J. 2014. *Japanese Design: Art, Aesthetics & Culture* (Tuttle Publishing)
- Grieve, Jonathan. 2022. 'Postcard to a Friend', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 481, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2102742

- Grotowski, Jerzy. 1975. 'Towards a Poor Theatre' in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Methuen), pp. 15–26
- Guarino de Almeida, Gabriel. 2022. 'Humanity and Animality in Chinese Martial Arts', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 482–95, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2045516
- Harmer, Jeremy. 1998. *How to Teach English: An Introduction to the Practice of English Language Teaching* (Harlow)
- Harvard Health Publishing. 2025. 'How Aging Affects Focus', 10 January <<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-aging-affects-focus>> [accessed 15 January 2025]
- Henriques, Gregg. 2011. 'What is the Mind?', *Psychology Today*, 22 December <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/theory-knowledge/201112/what-is-the-mind>> [accessed 24 April 2024]
- Hodge, Allison (ed.). 2010. *Actor Training* (Routledge)
- Horn, Elizabeth B. 2019. 'And So She Plays Her Part: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Body Image, Consent, and the Young Actor', *Youth Theatre Journal*, 34:1, pp. 55–65, doi:10.1080/08929092.2019.1633720
- Jack, Rachael E., and Philippe G. Schyns. 2015. 'The Human Face as a Dynamic Tool for Social Communication', *Current Biology*, 25:14, pp. 621–34, doi:10.1016/j.cub.2015.05.052
- Japan Karate Association. 2008. 'Technical Manual for the Instructor', <[https://www.jka.or.jp/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/tech\\_manual\\_instructor.pdf](https://www.jka.or.jp/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/tech_manual_instructor.pdf)> [accessed 24 October 2024]

- Johnson, Noah. 2012. 'The Japanization of Karate? Placing an Intangible Cultural Practice', *Journal of Contemporary Anthropology*,  
<<https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jca/vol3/iss1/4>> [accessed 12 August 2025]
- Kanazawa, Hirokazu. 2006. *Black Belt Karate* (Kodansha International)
- Kapsali, Maria. 2013. 'Rethinking Actor Training: Training Body, Mind and Ideological Awareness', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 4.1, pp. 73–86, doi:10.1080/19443927.2012.719834  
—2021. *Performer Training and Technology: Preparing Our Selves* (Routledge)
- Kogan, Sam, and Helen Kogan. 2010. 'Nine Tempo-Rhythm', in *The Science of Acting* (Routledge), pp. 164–70
- Korhonen, Veera. 2023. 'Undergraduate Enrollment in 4-year Postsecondary Degree-Granting Institutions in the United States from 1970 to 2031, by Gender', *Statista* <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/236448/enrollment-projections-in-us-4-year-postsecondary-institutions-by-gender/>> [accessed 10 June 2023]
- Kozma, Gábor Viktor, and Mátyás Marofka. 2023. *InPerTrain Manual: Towards an Individual Performer Training* (Ladder Art Company with the support of the European Union) <<https://ladderartcompany.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/InPerTrain-Manual.pdf>> [accessed 29 November 2023]
- Layton, Clive. 1997. *A Shotokan Karate Book of Facts* (Shoto)
- Leaf, Caroline. 2022. 'Difference Between Thoughts & Memories', 24 September <<https://drleaf.com/blogs/news/the-difference-between-thoughts-memories>> [accessed 25 April 2024]

- 2024. ‘How to Use Mind-Management to Rewrite & Redefine Your Life Story’, 9 April <[https://drleaf.com/blogs/news/how-to-use-mind-management-to-rewrite-redefine-your-life-story?srsId=AfmBOorS5xV3AHF5x5o6\\_b7Md029eQCtvPR6O9O7LdTMS1ZrT4Hr0qCA](https://drleaf.com/blogs/news/how-to-use-mind-management-to-rewrite-redefine-your-life-story?srsId=AfmBOorS5xV3AHF5x5o6_b7Md029eQCtvPR6O9O7LdTMS1ZrT4Hr0qCA)> [accessed 26 August 2024]
- Lecoq, Jacques. 2020. *The Moving Body (Le Corps Poétique)* (Bloomsbury)
- Lee, Bruce. 2011. ‘Liberate Yourself from Classic Karate, the Masterpiece Written by Bruce Lee!’, *Black Belt Magazine*, 26 September <<https://blackbeltmag.com/liberate-yourself-from-classical-karate>> [accessed 1 May 2023]
- Lewis, Peter. 1994. *Martial Arts* (Brompton Books)
- Lewis, Ralph. 2023. ‘What Actually Is a Thought? And How Is Information Physical?’, *Psychology Today*, 7 October <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/finding-purpose/201902/what-actually-is-a-thought-and-how-is-information-physical>> [accessed 26 April 2024]
- Linklater, Kristin. 1976. *Freeing the Natural Voice* (Drama Book Specialists)
- Lomas, Tim. 2021. ‘Life Balance and Harmony: Wellbeing’s Golden Thread’, *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 11.1, pp. 50–68, doi: 10.5502/ijw.v11i1.1477
- Looser, Diana. 2011. ‘Radical Bodies and Dangerous Ladies: Martial Arts and Women’s Performance, 1900-1918’ *Theatre Research International*, 36.1, pp. 3–19, doi:10.1017/S0307883310000684
- Lowry, Dave. 2005. *The Best of Dave Lowry* (Black Belt Communications)
- 2023. ‘What is a Kiai?’ *Blackbelt Magazine*, 27 December <<https://www.blackbeltmag.com/what-is-a-kiai>> [accessed 15 January 2025]

- Lyubomirsky, Sonja. 2010. 'Happiness for a Lifetime', *Greater Good Magazine*, 15 July  
<[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/happiness\\_for\\_a\\_lifetime](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/happiness_for_a_lifetime)>  
[accessed 30 September 2023]
- Manganaro, Daniel, and others. 2023. 'Anatomy, Bony Pelvis and Lower Limb, Foot Joints', *National Library of Medicine*, 21 August  
<<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK536941/>> [accessed 18 December 2023]
- Marshall, Mallika (ed.). 2023. 'Concentration & focus', *Harvard Health Publishing*, 8 May <<https://www.health.harvard.edu/topics/concentration-focus>> [accessed 15 January 2025]
- Martial Arts Studies. 2016. *Phillip Zarrilli at the 2016 Martial Arts Studies Conference*, online video recording, YouTube, 6 September  
<[https://youtu.be/ot6SDV\\_hmTU](https://youtu.be/ot6SDV_hmTU)> [accessed 10 March 2023]
- Martin, Ashley. 2007. *The Shotokan Karate Bible: Beginner to Black Belt* (Firefly Books)
- Matthews, John. 2014. *Anatomy of Performance Training* (Bloomsbury)
- McCarthy, Patrick, and Yuriko McCarthy. 1999. *Ancient Okinawan Martial Arts: Koryu Uchinadi*, 2 vols (Tuttle Publishing)
- McFarren, Cheryl Kennedy. 2003. 'Acknowledging Trauma/Rethinking Affective Memory: Background, Method, and Challenge for Contemporary Actor Training' (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, University of Colorado at Boulder)

- McGuire, Colin. 2010. 'Rhythm Skills Development in Chinese Martial Arts', *The International Journal of Sport and Society*, 1.3, pp. 209–18, doi:10.18848/2152-7857/CGP/v01i03/54024
- Meyer, Martin J. 2022. 'Martial Arts Training During the Pandemic and Beyond: Towards Practices of Virtuality', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 496–513, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2043423
- Minutemen, Calpeper. 2018. *Bruce Lee Interview (Pierre Berton Show, 1971)*, online video recording, YouTube, 26 August <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uk1lzkH-e4U&t=144s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uk1lzkH-e4U&t=144s)> [accessed 13 April 2022]
- Mitchell, Roanna. 2015. 'The Body That Fits the Bill: Physical Capital and 'Crises' of the Body in Actor Training', *About Performance*, 13.1, pp. 137–56, doi:10.3316/informit.499964015215753
- Mitsubishi, Yukari. 2017. 'Ikigai: A Japanese Concept to Improve Work and Life', *BBC*, 8 August <<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20170807-ikigai-a-japanese-concept-to-improve-work-and-life>> [accessed 13 July 2024]
- Morgan, Forrest. 1992. *Living the Martial Way* (Barricade Books)
- Morgan, William P., and Michael L. Pollock. 1977. 'Psychologic Characterization of the Elite Distance Runner', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 301.1, pp. 382–403, doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.1977.tb38215
- Mroz, Daniel. 2009. 'From Movement to Action: Martial Arts in the Practice of Devised Physical Theatre', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 29.2, pp.161–72, doi:10.1386/stap.29.2.161\_1
- 2011. *The Dancing Word* (BRILL)

- 2022. ‘Spatial Projection: Extended Perception of Theatre Creators Through the Practice of Chinese Martial Arts’, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 443–62, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2032300
- 2023. Personal interview carried out by Josephine Calvo (Martial Arts in Actor Training), 19 January, Zoom Meeting
- 2025. *Resonant Space: Religion, Theatre, and the Chinese Martial Arts* (Cardiff University Press)
- Murray, Simon. 2015. ‘Keywords in Performer Training’, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 6.1, pp. 46–58, doi:10.1080/19443927.2014.995829
- 2018. *Jacques Lecoq: Routledge Performance Practitioners* (Routledge)
- Nakayama, Masatoshi. 1977. *Best Karate: Comprehensive 1* (Kodansha International)
- 1979. *Best Karate. 5, Heian, Tekki* (Kodansha International)
- National Wellness Institute. 2025. ‘The National Wellness Institute’s Six Dimensions of Wellness’,  
 <<https://cdn.ymaws.com/members.nationalwellness.org/resource/resmgr/tools2/6dimensionssummary.pdf>> [accessed 16 September 2025]
- Nelson, Robin. 2013. *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Palgrave Macmillan)
- Nichols, Richard (ed.). 1980. ‘Empty-Handed Combat in Actor Training Program’, in *Movement for the Actor* (Drama Book Specialists), pp. 87–98
- 1991. ‘A “Way” for Actors: Asian Martial Arts’, *Theatre Topics*, 1.1, pp. 43–60, doi:10.1353/tt.2010.0001

- Nixon, Ellie. 2022. 'Judo as a Devising Practice: Yves Klein, La Mancha and Chile', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 416–33, doi:10.1353/tt.2010.0001
- Ohnishi, S. Tsuyoshi. 2007. 'Ki: A Key to Transform the Century of Death to the Century of Life', *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 4.3, pp. 287–92, doi:10.1093/ecam/nem021
- and Tomoko Ohnishi. 2009. 'Philosophy, Psychology, Physics and Practice of Ki', *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 6.2, pp. 175–83, doi:10.1093/ecam/nen005
- O'Neill, Luke. 2015. 'Demands of Acting Hurting Mental Health', *University of Sydney*, 14 September <<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2015/09/14/demands-of-acting-hurting-performers--mental-health.html>> [accessed 16 September 2025]
- Pawlett, Raymond. 2008. *The Karate Handbook* (Rosen Pub)
- Petri, Johan. 2012. 'Rhythm and the Quality of Dialogue in Theater Performance', <<https://www.johanpetri.se/rhythm-and-the-quality>> [accessed 19 September 2025]
- Pinelli, Tullio, and Bernardino Zapponi. 2000. *La Strada* (Besa)
- Pujari, Venkateswar. 2024. 'Martial Arts as a Tool for Enhancing Attention and Executive Function: Implications for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – A Literature Review', *Journal of Pharmacy and Bioallied Sciences*, 16.5, pp. 20–25, doi:10.4103/jpbs.jpbs\_612\_23
- Reed, Anna. 2022. *Finding Your Voice with Patsy Rodenburg*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 May

- <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bopDBJ0kXak>> [accessed 21 February 2024]
- Reeve, Christopher. 1997. *Still Me* (Century)
- Reid, Howard, and Michael Croucher. 1995. *The Way of the Warrior: The Paradox of the Martial arts* (Overlook Press)
- Reynolds, Sharon. 2023. 'How Football Raises the Risk for Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy', *National Institutes of Health: Turning Discovery into Health*, 11 July <<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/how-football-raises-risk-chronic-traumatic-encephalopathy>> [accessed 28 September 2023]
- Rielly, Robin L. 1998. *Complete Shotokan Karate: History, Philosophy, and Practice* (C.E. Tuttle Co.)
- Rogers, Kara. 2017. 'What's the Difference Between Tempo and Rhythm?', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/story/whats-the-difference-between-tempo-and-rhythm>> [accessed 25 January 2024]
- Ross, Ashley. 2016. 'How Meditation Went Mainstream', *Time Magazine*, 9 March <<https://time.com/4246928/meditation-history-buddhism>> [accessed 23 September 2024]
- Ross, Elizabeth M. 2024. 'What is Causing Our Epidemic of Loneliness and How Can We Fix It?', *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, 25 October <<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/24/10/what-causing-our-epidemic-loneliness-and-how-can-we-fix-it>> [accessed 15 September 2025]

- Ruffini, Franco. 1995. 'Mime, the Actor, Action: The Way of Boxing', in *Incorporated Knowledge: Mime Journal 1995*, ed. by Thomas Leabhart (Claremont Colleges), pp. 54–69
- 2014. *Theatre and Boxing: The Actor Who Flies*, trans. by Paul Warrington (Icarus Publishing Enterprise, Routledge)
- Samur, Sebastian. 2017. 'Stanislavski's Tempo-Rhythm in the Twenty-First Century', *Stanislavski Studies*, 5.1, pp. 61–66, doi:10.1080/20567790.2017.1296993
- Seton, Mark. 2010. 'The Ethics of Embodiment: Actor Training and Habitual Vulnerability', *Performing Ethos International Journal of Ethics in Theatre and Performance*, 1.1, pp. 5–8, doi:10.1386/peet.1.1.5\_1
- Shapiro, Rebecca. 2023. 'Can't Concentrate? Here's How to Focus in the Digital Age', *Columbia Magazine* <<https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/cant-concentrate-heres-how-focus-digital-age>> [accessed 13 July 2024]
- Sharma, Hari. 2015. 'Meditation: Process and effects', *Ayu*, 36.3, pp. 233–37, doi:10.4103/0974-8520.182756
- Simon, Robert. 2007. 'Violence in Sports', in *Ethics in Sport*, 2nd edn, ed. by William J. Morgan (Human Kinetics), pp. 379–88
- Stambusky, Alan. 1963. 'Speech in the Theatre: The Importance of Voice Science to Director and Actor', *The Speech Teacher*, 12.4, pp. 289–98, doi:10.1080/03634526309377316
- Stanislavski, Konstantin. 1973. *An Actor Prepares* (Theatre Arts Books)
- 1967. *Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage* (Hill & Wang)
- 1981. *Creating a Role* (Methuen)

- Stein, Samantha. 2023. 'The Importance of Community', *Psychology Today*, 18 July <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/what-the-wild-things-are/202307/the-importance-of-community>> [accessed 15 February 2024]
- Tanaka, Masahiko. 2001. *Karate-Dō Perfecting Kumite*, trans. by Schlatt (Götzelmann)
- The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (Thomas Nelson, 1982), online edn, Bible Gateway <<https://www.biblegateway.com>> [accessed 21 December 2023]
- Toon, Peter. 1988. 'Boxing Clever', *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 14.2, pp. 69, doi:10.1136/jme.14.2.69
- Tseng, Julie, and Jordan Poppenk. 2020. 'Brain Meta-State Transitions Demarcate Thoughts Across Task Contexts Exposing the Mental Noise of Trait Neuroticism', *Nature Communications*, 11.3480, pp. 1–12, doi:10.1038/s41467-020-17255-9
- Turse, Paul. 2003. 'Martial Arts and Acting Arts', *Ejmas* <[http://ejmas.com/jtc/jtcart\\_turse\\_0503.htm](http://ejmas.com/jtc/jtcart_turse_0503.htm)> [accessed 13 April 2022]
- Ushiro, Kenji. 2008. *Karate and Ki: The Origin of Ki - The Depth of Thought*, trans. by Naoto Akiyama and Josh Drachman (Dou Shuppan)
- Veltri, Michael. 2017. *The Mushin Way to Peak Performance: The Path to Productivity, Balance, and Success* (John Wiley & Sons)
- Walker, Marie. 2022. 'A Place of Practice—A Report from Kokyu Studio', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 439–42, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2102751

- Wallace, Lori Lee. 2012. 'The Intercultural and Psychophysical Pedagogy of Phillip Zarrilli' (Theatre and Dance Graduate Theses & Dissertations, University of Colorado)
- Wedderburn, Eve. 2016. 'Violence in Martial Arts Actor Training: A Dialectical View', *Performance Research*, 21.3, pp. 84–91,  
doi:10.1080/13528165.2016.1176741
- Weger, Ulrich, and Johannes Wagemann. 2015. 'The Behavioral, Experiential and Conceptual Dimensions of Psychological Phenomena: Body, Soul and Spirit', *New Ideas in Psychology*, 39, pp. 23–33,  
doi:10.1016/j.newideapsych.2015.07.002
- Weiler, Christel. 2019. 'Grasping the Bird's Tail: Inspirations and Starting Points', in *Intercultural Acting and Performer Training*, ed. by Phillip B. Zarrilli (Routledge) pp. 167–78
- Weinberg, Robert Stephen. 2015. *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (Human Kinetics)
- Williams, Oliver, Lucas Lacasa, and Vito Latora. 2019. 'Quantifying and Predicting Success in Show Business', *Nature Communications*, 10.2256, pp. 1–8,  
doi:10.1038/s41467-019-10213-0
- Wills, Matthew. 2016. 'Spiritualism, Science, and the Mysterious Madame Blavatsky', *JSTOR Daily*, 25 October <<https://daily.jstor.org/spiritualism-science-and-the-mysterious-madame-blavatsky>> [accessed 12 August 2023]
- Witkowski, Kazimierz, and Aleksandra Glapa. 2022. 'Analysis of Karate Training for People with Mental Disabilities', *Original Article Healthy Living*, 15 May <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369298654\\_Analysis\\_of\\_karate\\_training\\_for\\_people\\_with\\_mental\\_disabilities](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369298654_Analysis_of_karate_training_for_people_with_mental_disabilities)> [accessed 16 January 2025]

- World Karate Federation. 2023. 'Para-Karate', <<https://www.wkf.net/sport-parakarate#:~:text=Para%2DKarate%20is%20focused%20on,Karate%20among%20athletes%20with%20disabilities>> [accessed 3 October 2023]
- World of Martial Arts Television. 2016. *What are Yin and Yang? The Martial Way*, online video recording, YouTube, 26 April  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo94QrbFb70>> [accessed 28 October 2024]
- World of Noh. 2024. 'Movement Patterns', <<https://www.the-noh.com/en/world/danceform.html>> [accessed 24 October 2024]
- Yale Shotokan Karate. 2024a. 'Kihon (Basics)',  
<<https://karate.sites.yale.edu/kihon-basics>> [accessed 24 October 2024]
- 2024b. 'Kumite (Sparring)', <<https://karate.sites.yale.edu/rank-testing-and-tournaments/kumite-sparring>> [accessed 21 November 2024]
- Zamarioli, Débora. 2015. 'Body Cultivation Throughout the Kung Fu Chinese Martial Art Choy Lay Fut Style' *Urdimento*, 2.27, pp. 124–35,  
doi:10.5965/1414573102272016124
- Zaroulia, Marilena, and Glenn Odom. 2021. 'Editorial: Taking a Snapshot of Theatre and Performance Studies', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 41.1, pp. 1–11, doi:10.1080/14682761.2021.1881271
- Zarrilli, Phillip B. 1995. *Acting (Re)Considered: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* (Routledge)
- 2009. *Psychophysical Acting: Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (Routledge), Kindle Edition
- 2015. 'The Actor's Work on Attention, Awareness, and Active Imagination: Between Phenomenology, Cognitive Science, and Practices of Acting', in

- Performance and Phenomenology*, ed. by Maaïke Bleeker, Jon Foley Sherman, and Eirini Nedelkopoulou, (Routledge), pp. 75–96
- 2020. *Towards a Phenomenology of Actor Training* (Routledge)
- Zazzali, Peter, and Jeane Klein. 2015. ‘Toward Revising Undergraduate Theatre Education’, *Theatre Topics*, 25.3, pp. 261–76, doi:10/1353/tt.2015.0034
- Ziółkowski, Grzegorz. 2022a. ‘Is the readiness All? Revisiting Martial Arts in Actor Training’, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 354–68, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2085782
- 2022b. ‘Let Go Lightly’: the Absent Presence of Taijiquan in the Artistic Practice of ROSA and ATIS’, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.3, pp. 369–74, doi:10.1080/19443927.2022.2102747

# Appendix A

## Participant Questionnaire

### KAT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### KARATE FOR ACTOR TRAINING

Date :

Location of Training :

Name (or anonymous) :

*Please rate how much you agree with the following statements in regard to how this type of training improved your:*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of being here and now	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Need to focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding of what is needed to apply karate to acting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Need to use breath	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Need to use coordination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Need to integrate body and mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Need for a sense of timing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Need to respect self and others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix B

### Research Ethics Consent Form

*This document is based on the Consent Form used by the University of Malta School of Performing Arts.*

Name:

Mobile Number:

I.D. Card No:

Email Address:

I the undersigned, \_\_\_\_\_

(i) Agree to my personal data being collected in the following formats:  
photographs, film/video images, audio recordings, and anonymous testimonials

(iii) Consent to such personal data being used:

In and/or for the Karate for Actor Training research programme marketing as indicated in Section A

Please see Section A below

In the Karate for Actor Training research programme publications as indicated in Section B

Please see Section B below

In the Karate for Actor Training research programme exhibition as indicated in Section C

Please see Section C below

Section A: Karate for Actor Training Marketing

(iii) I consent:

- a. My personal data indicated in (i) above from being used:

To promote the Karate for Actor Training research programme along with the services and benefits organised by the University of Malta (UM) doctoral student, Josephine Calvo, who is conducting the research.

And

- b. For the purpose described in (iii) (a) above, such data being published as follows:

On UM and/or Josephine Calvo's affiliated web pages

On UM and/or Josephine Calvo's social media channels

On printed materials such as posters and brochures  
On local and international media such as online newspapers, TV broadcasts, and blogs

#### Section B: Publications

(iv) I consent to my personal data indicated in (i) above being used in the research and scholarly publications of UM doctoral student and researcher Josephine Calvo.

#### Section C: Exhibitions

(i) I consent to my personal data indicated in (i) above being used in the performances held in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a PhD in Theatre Studies from the University of Malta.

#### Declaration

I have read and understood the information given to me in this consent form. Furthermore, I understand that I may withdraw the consent given above and/or ask for more information about the processing of my personal data at any time and that any such withdrawal of consent will not affect the lawfulness of any publishing of my personal data undertaken prior to such withdrawal.

I also understand that online locations are accessible worldwide and that once publications are issued and are in circulation, they may not be recalled.

I hereby agree to the collection of my personal data in the format/s I indicated above, to any resulting photos and/or videos being edited if and as required, and to such personal data being used as, and for the purpose/s, indicated above.

I furthermore waive all claims against Josephine Calvo and the University of Malta, with respect to the copyrights, publication or use of such photos/videos, including any claim for compensation related to their use.

NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_