This proposal is designed as a ‘dreamcatcher’ – it knits together the ideas of others in order to capture a vision of an actor training regime that supports and develops agency. The aim is to work with, from and through the ideas of others in a spirit of synergy, collaboration and openness. I therefore start by acknowledging and celebrating existing work that has informed this essai: the auto-cours at the Lecoq School in Paris, Olu Taiwo’s concept of the Mobile Studio, Lisa Peck’s work on critical acting pedagogy, the work of the SP Escola de Teatro in Brazil, Rosi Braidotti’s work on nomadic theory, Kristine Landon-Smith’s work on intracultural actor training, Niamh Dowling’s development of a nomadic pedagogy, Claudia Nascimento’s work on the actor as cultural border-crosser and the auto-didactic journeys of many performers who seek out their own training.

The Nomadic Studio

The Nomadic Studio challenges and explores the kinds of spaces (internal, external and virtual) needed in order to create work that speaks to, from and for the people, the communities within which theatre functions. It unsettles ‘citizenship’ as a fixed position; the term Nomadic generates a sense of liminality, porosity, transformation, journeying and celebrated otherness within the training space. The Nomadic Studio is not owned or policed; it is designed to create spaces within which the human self-image can be performatively and critically explored and is therefore well suited to training performers in agency. The term nomadic is intended to disturb notions of permanence, universality and stability in relation to actor training, and to echo contemporary social, societal and
aesthetic challenges – such as migration, sustainability, homelessness and nationalism.

The Nomadic Studio is not restricted to creators and makers, it can also enable engagement with designers, technicians, dramaturgs, directors, writers, thinkers, scientists, architects and any others who wish to share a journey with the makers of theatre. The Nomadic Studio can take processes and meanings from the communities around it, recognizing how spaces are enculturated, gendered, inaccessible, and vulnerable to racism and sexism. At the same time, it recognizes that performers have a culture of their own and are capable of operating as boundary-breakers. Co-ownership of the learning space with the student is intended to create presence and power for the student and to provide a space within which colonization can be recognized, critiqued and resisted. The Nomadic Studio enables all spaces to become learning spaces and thus reveal the forces that construct their social impact. The Nomadic Studio can exist wherever the student is able to observe, question, create and perform the relationships and connections that exist around them.

The student develops their own Nomadic Studio process and thus both conceptualizes their own practice and builds agency. The Nomadic space can shrink to the physical body of the student – their kinesphere; it can be contained within the digital capture of what that body does; or, it can expand to include a park, a city, a region. It has implications for the ways in which the student records and reflects upon their practice – digitally, on paper, in performance, through making or marking, poetry or song. The Nomadic Studio is a process that enables students to work together within and across subject fields. It is possible to create Nomadic Studio Meetings – groups of Nomadic Studio users – through which the student can explore how to invite others into their own space and share processes for making, creating and reflecting.

Skills are acquired, but in relation to need and purpose, and with a critical awareness of the cultural dynamics of their transmission and application. The challenge is to identify what skills have value, and to find the best way to organize learning into a system or process that enables and gives agency. The student does not accumulate skills, they explore them.

Within the Nomadic Studio culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability are never limitations, they are the contexts through which the Nomadic studio enables meaning and engages with the contemporary issues facing theatre performance. The challenge is to reveal and resist the personal, political and social pressures that stop students from making work for today. This implies the adoption of what Lisa Peck refers to as a *via positiva* – allowing pleasure and discipline to work beside each other, making learning an affirmative experience.

### Nomadic Meetings

Nomadic Studio Meetings can take place online or face-to-face. Students share with staff, fellow students on their course, students on other courses, collaborators (students from other institutions), and/or with external partners. The Meeting space should be managed and critically
developed by all those using it. The Meeting should enable the transmis-
sion of knowledge and skill multi-directionally – teacher to student, stu-
dent to student, student to teacher. The Meeting also acts as the point at
which the student can identify what further training is required or
whether the training is completed.

The Meeting can enable the learning to operate transculturally and trans-
nationally; students can explore ways in which they engage with a shifting
and changing world through performance and embodiment and celebrate
cultural difference. Nomadic Meetings model, without attempting to appro-
priate, the concept of the GONA (Gathering of Native Americans) in their
focus on community-identified issues and empowerment.

**Nomadic Journeys**

Nomadic Journeys are a process of discovery that is essential to the
Nomadic Studio – the challenging of practice through dis/re-location.
Journeys treat the territories traversed as intersectional and aim to look
afresh at the environments explored. The Journey should conclude with a
sharing which takes a form appropriate to the students’ objectives and to
the environment(s) explored. Students can commence a journey at any
time in their study. The maximum period that a journey can last is
defined by the nature of the journey, its aims and purposes, and the
resources needed to support it. Sometimes guides may be used – these
might be local gatekeepers, experts in a particular field, or someone with
previous experience of the field.

**Nomadic Studio Structure and Design**

The first section of any such programme of study might introduce partici-
pants to the Nomadic Studio, Meetings and Journeys. Work could start
by developing the students’ confidence in their Nomadic Studio practice
and process and encouraging the development of collaborative, support-
ive, transformative and integrated work. By the final part of their study,
the Nomadic Studio, Meetings and Journeys would hopefully have deep-
ened the students’ practice, helping them to identify and acquire relevant
skills, contextualize what they do and conceptualize how they work. They
may have invented their own nomenclature and will have personalized
the process to their own needs, but in collaboration and conversation
with the work of others. There is no predetermined answer to the ques-
tion ‘what are we training students for?’, this is the question that would
confront each student and which the Nomadic Studio concept invites
them to answer.

**Nomadic Teaching**

The subordination of student to teacher in conventional training dimin-
ishes the opportunities for empowerment, agency and independence. The
teacher within the Nomadic Studio should model this alternative process for the student, assisting them to identify how they might construct their own personal Nomadic Studio. The teacher would help the student to identify the questions that will drive their practice. The teacher would need to negotiate the nature of their interactions with the students – in particular, attention would need to be paid to the nature of critique, the application of touch, the ‘ownership’ of techniques and exercises, notions of expertise and virtuosity, and the function of training. The role of the Nomadic Teacher is in this sense an emancipatory one – the aim is to strengthen the student’s ability to learn independently – to teach less and challenge more, to build stamina and persistence. The teacher brings experience, but with an opennness to challenge and change. The student must be able to tell truth about their own experiences. The teacher thus requires somatic understanding, openness and the ability to create supportive and healthy learning environments.

Summary

Training organized in this manner recognizes that learning is situated within a social matrix interacting with its surrounding society in a dynamic way. As such the training and techniques are not predetermined. Organizational structures around such training must be porous, non-hierarchical and open. They must recognize and critically resist the ways in which power (gendered, racial and ableist) operates in the learning space, the performing arts industry and society at large. Each student has their own individual trajectory, but it takes place in the context of the journeys and struggles of others – students learn to guide and support each other. Without something like the Nomadic Studio, autodidacticism can feel an isolated place to be learning, and as such, agency beyond the personal can be limited and difficult to achieve. This formalization of nomadic training is intended to sustain its independent spirit and recognize the value of the practices that already exist, whilst enabling collaboration and synthesis through shared structures, meeting points and pedagogic principles.

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