Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight

by

Thiloshni Padayachee

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Supervisor: Dr R de Villiers

Co-supervisor: Mr N Manganye

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Declaration

I, Thiloshni Padayachee, declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis at the University of Pretoria, is my work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Thiloshni Padayachee

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Sam Govinder. Thank you for not only embracing and encouraging the theatre kid within me, but for your unwavering support throughout my pursuit for education. You have ignited a passion within me to succeed in life and to always follow my dreams.

"You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains,

You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas,

I am strong when I am on your shoulders,

You raise me up, to more than I can be".

Josh Groban

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Abstract

Transformative learning experiences in theatre are why theatre was created and continues to exist globally. Theatre is a deep connection to the human condition, allowing us to learn and construct knowledge through global and individual insight. This form of storytelling allows for transformation as the individual creates meaning from a simulated experience. For multiple role players (researchers, dramatic arts practitioners and theatre education specialists), the emphasis on transformation was solely on the audience's experience. This study focuses on the actors' transformation as they engage in theatre processes to achieve their transition from the self to the character. This interchangeable process will be facilitated through the Bhava–Rasa theory, which represents the cognitive and emotional journey the actor undergoes during their transformation, and the social alchemy theory, which represents the character's narrative as the actor navigates within to develop the required transition. The aim is to investigate theatre theories in developing actors as they create their characters to foster deep educational developments in beliefs, thoughts, perspectives and perceptions. The study will achieve this aim by observing actors as they engage in theatre practices during their participation in the Spotlight production. Semi-structured interviews with three actors and the director will be conducted at three intervals to create a timeline. These intervals will be at the beginning of and during the rehearsal process and after the second production performance. This timeline will provide a platform to investigate when and how transformative learning experiences occurred. The knowledge pursued in this study is about exploring the connection between theatre practice and transformative learning experiences within the actor. The investigation will focus on how transformative learning develops actors' meaning schemes as they engage in the artistic process. Individuals' meaning schemes refer to their beliefs, concepts, judgements, values, attitudes, perspectives, feelings and assumptions. This body of knowledge is used to interpret the world. We view ourselves and the world around us through these filters that shape our understanding. The actor's meaning scheme is altered during the transformative process in theatre.

Key Terms:

Transformative, Bhava–Rasa, social alchemy, Theatre, Drama, Actor, Learning processes, meaning schemes

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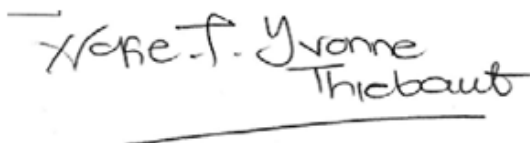
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List of abbreviations

MIs	Multiple intelligences

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION

Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Transformative learning experiences in theatre are why theatre was created and continues to exist globally (Jones, 2005). The reason is that humans are natural storytellers; it is how we pass knowledge down from generations, teach and learn, and create meaning from our lives (Bedford, 2001). Theatre is a deep connection to the human condition, allowing us to learn and construct knowledge through global and individual insight (Ekpe, 2018). Sayers (2014) proclaims that acting a role in a simulated environment, such as a theatre performance, allows the individual to practice their responses to a specific situation that resembles reality. The actors' experience is real despite the simulated scenario; therefore, the transformation is real (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). I pursue my study within this niche. My study will be introduced through four discussion points: transformative processes, meaning schemes, Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories, and the Spotlight production. I will clarify each concept as it pertains to my study.

Transformative processes are a series of progressive steps that add value and enhance elements of an individual's original state to an improved state of being (Mezirow, 2003). Butler (2017) motivates that engaging in theatre practices can introduce transformative processes in participants' minds through their stimulated experiences. Theatre challenges our perceptions of ourselves and others, thus developing ways of creating meaning in the world (Stewart, 2020). I discovered attitudes and perceptions about myself and those around me while participating in theatre productions. These discoveries have reshaped how I interpret the world around me. I experienced the theatre as a space where I could confront these perceptions by questioning how they developed and shaped my thoughts and actions. Consequently, I could alter my current meaning scheme and how I constructed knowledge and made meaning from my experience.

The second point in my discussion is meaning schemes. Mezirow's (2003) transformative learning theory explains meaning schemes as the constellation of beliefs, concepts, judgements, values, attitudes, perspectives, feelings and assumptions that forms the body of knowledge from which we interpret the world. We view ourselves and the world around us

through these filters, which shape our understanding (Taylor, 2000). The individual's meaning scheme is altered during the transformative process (Ishino, 2018).

The third point discusses two theories that alter actors' meaning schemes. The interchangeable process between the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories represents the actor's journey from the self to the character as the meaning scheme transformation occurs. The Bhava–Rasa theory can be explained as the "give and take" created during a theatre performance (Shridevi, 2020). The Bhava, the state of mind wherein simulated emotion is evoked, cannot exist without the Rasa, which is the "artistic taste", as it represents the emotion and sentiment the audience receive (Miettinen, 1985). This experience feels real to the actor and the audience in the moment of creation because both parties employ a conscious element of believability.

The social alchemy theory was created as a unique problem-solving model. This theory is a method of working through challenges arising in business and individuals in the social sector (Smith, 2019). This process embedded in this model is driven by empathy, making it effective (Smith, 2019). The social alchemy theory is about discovering innovative solutions for diverse clients to achieve their growth and development goals while receiving support during the process (Smith, 2019). The Bhava–Rasa theory signifies actors' cognitive and emotional journeys during their transformation. The social alchemy theory signifies the character's narrative as the actor navigates within to develop the required transition.

Lastly, the fourth point of this introductory discussion will address the specific production regarding my research title. My study will centre around the Spotlight production. This production is a compilation of multiple monologues drawn from two classic ages in theatre acting: the Greek and Elizabethan eras (Shakespearean creations). The director designed this production to allow his third-year students to explore their identities as professional actors and individuals. He believes that professional and personal growth cannot be viewed in isolation and that one will always impact the other due to the complex nature of how humans learn. Therefore, the director allows each actor to select their monologue, which will be challenging and foster a deeper understanding of themselves.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research in drama education has increased in the last four decades, with significant studies on its influence on children and students (primary and secondary) in the education system

(Abed, 2016; Heathcote, 1970). Drama education is a learning mode to understand challenges and support students in making meaning from the world around them (Saka, Ebenezer, Cakir, & Saka, 2016). Different genres within drama education have been investigated and developed to advocate the value and impact drama education holds in an educational space (Atas, 2015; Coleman & Davies, 2018; O'Toole: 2009; Saka et al., 2016; Ubuz & Duatepe-Paksu, 2016). For example, the notions of Theatre in Education (TIE) (Jackson & Vine, 2013) and Theatre for Development (TFD) (Breed, 2002) speak to the technique of using theatre to serve as an educational or developmental experience for the audience and does not consider the benefit for the actors. A study investigating the impact of acting on the actor, with specific reference to the actor's development, confirmed the limited data on this topic and the need for further research (Burgoyne, Poulin, & Rearden, 1999).

Research revealed limited investigations on theatre as educational and developmental characteristics for the actor undergoing the artistic process (Andersen, 2004; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985; Mages, 2018; Yoon, 2006). The lack of research on the impact of theatre processes on the actor to create transformative learning experiences has been highlighted (Burgoyne et al., 1999). I want to contribute my study within this gap in the research. This dissertation investigates the premise that theatre processes cultivate transformative learning experiences in the actor during the transition from the self to the character. The journey from actor to character is understood as the actor's process to create a live representation of a character from a script to the stage (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger, 2015).

This study investigates the actors' processes in the Spotlight production by interviewing actors before, during, and after the production. I selected this production because the transition from actor to character will be facilitated by engaging with the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. The director's intent for this production aligns with the research in this study. This production will serve as the focus to investigate the process the actor undergoes to transition as close as artistically possible to the character. This study identifies fundamental elements within actors' transformative processes, which serve as developmental milestones in their artistic journeys. The data gathered in this study will explain how these milestones produce transformative learning experiences for the actor during and after the process via a process of critical self and peer reflection during and after the production, revealing when and how transformative processes transpired (McLaren, Welsh, & Long, 2021). The data will assist me in answering my two research questions

proposed in this study: How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production by engaging in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories, and how does transformative learning develop the meaning schemes of actors as they transition from the self to the character?

1.3   RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION

I use the metaphor of a garden that bears fruit to articulate the rationale and motivation for my study. I selected a garden to represent my understanding as it is associated with growth, development and nourishment from an individualistic perspective and a scholarly community. The rationale and motivation of my study are discussed on four levels: personal, conceptual, professional and scholarly. I elaborate on each level as it relates to Figure 1.
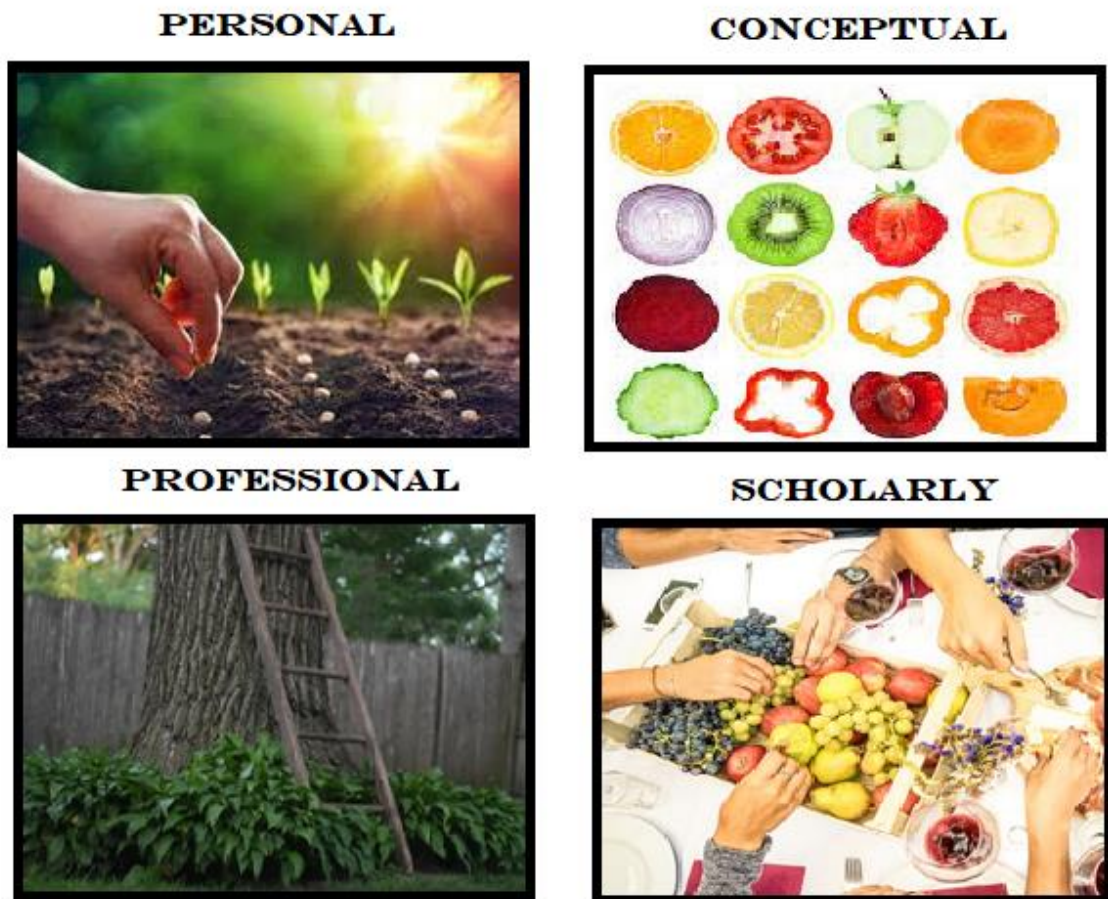
Figure 1: The Garden Metaphor (Padayachee, 2023)

1.3.1 Personal

I am pursuing this study to challenge myself on academic and personal development levels. Academically, I have completed my BA degree in Drama, Postgraduate Certificate in Education, and my Honours in Teacher's Education and Professional Development, which has led me to the next step in my journey—completing my master's dissertation. My motivation from a personal development perspective is to continue this path of discovery and construct a deeper understanding of who I am.

My experience as an actor in a production during my first-year studies to obtain a bachelor's in Drama at a University in 2007 has influenced this study. The role I portrayed was one I did not identify with. I struggled to understand my character, yet I acknowledged a personal and professional attraction to such a role. After completing this production, I underwent a process of critical reflection that highlighted the change in insights, beliefs and thoughts, which had altered due to my participation in this role (Dole, Bloom, & Kowalske, 2016). The information I discovered during this process contributed to my knowledge as an actor (professional) and individual (interpersonal or self-development) (Ganiev, Ganieva, & Bahodirova, 2021). It highlighted that my current meaning scheme was created due to childhood trauma that I had suppressed for many years. This transformative learning experience allowed me to acknowledge this traumatic experience in my past and deal with the after-effects of the trauma.

Regarding my garden metaphor, this level is the process of questioning my current meaning schemes that contribute to constructing who I am in my intellectual, emotional and spiritual makeup. I view these meaning schemes as seeds that have been planted in my garden throughout my life. I use this self-discovery platform to analyse and understand these meaning schemes and explore the experiences that lead to their creation to purposefully develop my meaning schemes to better serve me in my life.

1.3.2 Conceptual

The conceptual level of my study is an opportunity to dissect each fruit developed from the seeds planted. This study's objective is to carefully investigate each fruit deeply academically to understand its composition, texture and taste and make connections between similar and different fruits. This process allows me to create multiple combinations or recipes balanced in taste, texture and flavour. In this light, I aim to understand the processes

in theatre that assist actors on their journeys to embody the character. I aim to develop a deep understanding of the cognitive processes the actor undergoes to physically, mentally and vocally bring a character to life (Matern, 2013). Finally, I aim to use this knowledge to discover the connection between theatre practice and transformative learning experiences. The above objective will be achieved by dissecting each step in the interchangeable process of the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories, constructing my knowledge on this research topic.

1.3.3 Professional

My pursuit of this study is strongly linked to my professional goals at the university. I am currently a part-time lecturer at the postgraduate level. My goal is to become an active researcher in my field, where I will engage in multiple academic projects, collaborate with professionals from other fields, and contribute my published work to the Humanities Education. I will apply the knowledge gained from my study to my lecture hall to enhance my classroom teachings. In the higher education field, we must teach what we research and research what we teach (Pan, Murray, Cotton, & Garmston, 2012). Once I have completed my master's, I will apply for my PhD, as it has been a lifelong dream to achieve and is the next step up the ladder (Figure 1) towards my professional development goal.

1.3.4 Scholarly

Academically, drama has for decades been viewed as a discipline that provides creativity, expression, stimulation and entertainment (Heathcote, 1970). However, this discipline has been overlooked and undermined for its educational value. The link to cultivating learning experiences is a gap in the literature, which this study will contribute to. A significant need exists to justify to the world that participation in drama fosters transformative learning experiences. Acting allows participants to make meaning from life and develop meaning schemes in a simulated environment free of consequences. This study aims to use the knowledge gained to contribute to the school of knowledge regarding drama, theatre and the arts and its ability to cultivate transformative learning experiences. The scholarly level of my study is represented as the sharing, selling and exchanging of produce from my garden. My rationale and motivation for pursuing this study are to expand the knowledge of the theatre art form and its practices to increase the understanding and appreciation of the transformative abilities in theatre and drama practice for the scholarly society.

1.4 FOCUS AND PURPOSE

1.4.1 Focus

This study focuses on cultivating transformative learning experiences in actors as they engage in theatre processes. It will guide the transition from the self to the character to create an authentic representation of the character on stage. It will focus on actors' meaning schemes before, during and after the production to examine the development of their meaning schemes to foster deep transformative learning. This study focuses on the Spotlight production, an accumulation of classic performance monologues from the drama genre (Greek and Elizabethan theatre) interwoven into one production. Each actor will present a specific, self-chosen segment drawn from deep critical scripts and texts. Each actor will choose their performance piece and character, and the director will be consulted only for guidance. The director's instruction to the actors is to carefully select a performance piece/character who they believe will challenge them as actors with their practice and on a personal (self) level. The director views this as the first step to self-transformation, as the actors control their journeys of discovery.

1.4.2 Purpose

This study's primary purpose is to understand theatre practices to create transformative learning experiences for actors in a production. Theatre theories for developing the actors as they create their characters foster deep educational developments in beliefs, thoughts, perspectives and perceptions. This study investigates how theatre processes for character development provide the actor with a transformative learning experience as meaning schemes are developed. This premise informs my study and contributes to the interdisciplinary knowledge of education and drama in theatre practices.

1.5 RESEAECH QUESTIONS

To guide the investigation of my study, I will focus on the below questions. These questions allow me to navigate and refine the research focus.

- How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories?
- How does transformative learning develop actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character?

1.6   LITERATURE REVIEW

In this preliminary literature review, I provide an insight into the existing research regarding my research topic: *Exploring transformative processes in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories*. This literature review will reveal the main trends in this topic and highlight the gaps for further research.
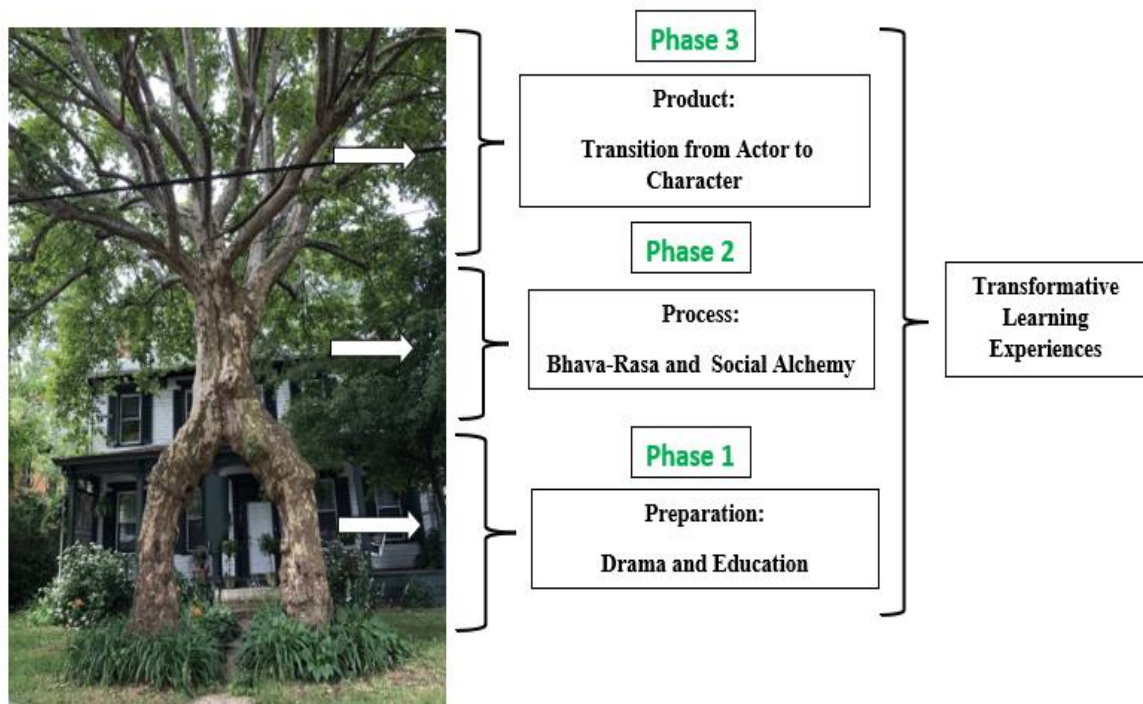
Figure 2: The process of inosculation in the theatre environment (Padayachee, 2023)

The reviewed literature has been organised systematically to create flow, logic and a deeper understanding of how these bodies of knowledge are interwoven. The metaphor used to present this literature review is titled *The process of inosculation in the theatre environment* (Padayachee, 2022). Inosculation is a natural phenomenon that occurs when roots, branches, or trunks of two trees merge and grow together (Salazar, Salvador, & José, 2018). The inosculation process is biologically similar to the artificial grafting process. Grafting is a technique used in plant agriculture to join parts of different trees or plants to grow as a single plant or tree (Salazar et al., 2018).

Figure 2 shows how the inosculation process of a tree is represented in my research study. The metaphor has three primary phases represented by three P's: preparation, process and product. Phase 1 (preparation), when added to Phase 2 (process), results in Phase 3 (product).

This entire developmental process creates transformative learning experiences. I will provide a brief explanation of the three phases.

Phase 1: The two trees represent the primary pillars of this study, drama and education, as it pertains to learning in a creative space. Drama focuses on research done in the field, discussing drama as pedagogy and a stimulant in cultivating learning experiences. The education pillar focuses on Mezirow's transformative learning theory and specifically mentions the two areas of learning: instrumental (learning through problem-solving) and communicative (learning by creating meaning). These two primary areas share the same building blocks as the two theories discussed in Phase 2 of this review. Instrumental learning is based on a problem-solving process equating to the social alchemy theory, and communicative learning is based on the foundation of creating meaning, which equates to the Bhava–Rasa theory, which will be elaborated on in Phase 2.

Phase 2: The two primary areas in transformative learning theory share distinct features in the two theories selected in the conceptual framework of this study. The social alchemy theory represents instrumental learning because they are defined as problem-solving learning approaches. The Bhava–Rasa theory represents communicative learning because they are defined as approaches to learning through creating meaning in communication. During this phase, the two pillars (theories) represented by the drama and education fields become inosculated to form one learning stream. In my study, how learning occurs in the Bhava–Rasa theory focuses on actors' abilities to create meaning from their experiences. Actors will use this theory as a roadmap to connect with their character's emotional journey.

Regarding the social alchemy theory, the aspect of learning on which I will focus is how actors transition into characters using narratives. Actors will use this theory as a navigation tool, leading to the development process of the actor's transformative learning experiences.

Phase 3: Through inosculation, the branches and leaves formed from the joint tree represent the transition from the actor to the character in the theatre environment. These experiences are developed when the above-mentioned primary areas merge to form unique opportunities for learning for the actor. For this study, I focus on a specific aspect of these transformative learning experiences—the developmental process of an actor's meaning scheme.

1.6.1 Phase 1 – Preparation (drama and education)

In the preparation phase, I discuss literature on how learning occurs in the drama and education fields. This phase forms the foundation for creating transformative learning experiences (Figure 2).

1.6.1.1 Drama

The literature on drama as pedagogy shows various approaches that have been developed over the decades. The primary approaches include drama in education (Heathcoat & Herbert, 1985), TIE (Turner, 2010), TFD (Breed, 2002) and drama therapy (Jones, 2013). Significant research supports drama technique influences in the classroom to motivate, encourage, engage and capture students (Andersen, 2004; Heathcote, 1970; O'Neill, 1995). From my experience as a drama teacher, I witnessed the intrigue, commitment and dedication portrayed by my students regarding their drama work.

In the last two decades, drama as pedagogy has attracted much attention from research teams because of its popularity with students in the teaching environment (Dogru, 2015; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985; O'Toole, 2009). Explorations and studies were conducted on various subjects using dramatic approaches to teach the specific subject material. These subjects include Science (Abed, 2106), Languages (Atas, 2015), Geometry (Ubuz & Duatepe-Paksu, 2016), Mathematics (Coleman & Davies, 2018), History (O'Toole, 2009), and Biology (Saka et al., 2016). These researchers show sustainable evidence that drama as a pedagogy improves students' understanding of concepts and changes their attitudes towards that subject (Yoon, 2006). As a high school teacher at a public school, I taught three subjects: Dramatic arts, English (Home Language) and Life orientation to the senior and FET phases. Due to my success in the drama classroom, I integrated my teaching style in the other two subjects with drama pedagogy, as it allowed me to connect with my students more easily and helped them retain the information for longer periods.

Evidence on teaching and learning has exposed a perception indicating a lack of connection between cognition and the arts. Piaget supports this view and sees "cognitive development as a journey away from the sensory and the emotional towards abstract conceptualisation" (Andersen, 2004, p. 74). From my experience as a former teacher and drama student, I disagree with Piaget's findings because, in my teaching and learning encounters, I experienced an enhancement of my cognitive functions through artistic activity. Piaget's

notion has been rejected by most theorists in dramatic arts, who advocate that drama as a pedagogy enhances cognitive abilities (Heathcote, 1970) and facilitates learning in all areas of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) (Andersen, 2004), resulting in deep learning (O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007). My experience as an actor gave me a deeper insight into myself and my peer actors through reflective practice after engaging in theatre activities.

Andersen discusses the work of Kunn and Dean on metacognition as a core contributor to cognitive development and that drama techniques will be an effective method to "foster metacognition in classroom learning" (Andersen, 2004, p. 282). The notion that drama as a pedagogy stimulates critical thinking during activities, such as role-play, and encourages students to search for a deeper understanding of the character and themselves is supported by Heathcote and Herbert (1985), Young (2018), and Thacker (2002). My experience as a drama teacher allowed me to use critical thinking to guide my students into creating their characters. Furthermore, critical thinking through self-reflection is paramount to students' growth and development.

Heathcote (1970) adds that role-taking is a normal and natural way for individuals to make sense of the world around them and how they fit in. Many practitioners (Young, 2018) have adopted this method, including Butler (2017), who concurs with this notion, stating that the student becomes a part of an experience during an activity. They will automatically draw on their experiences as a reference point to aid their search for meaning and understanding, resulting in deep learning. While participating in multiple productions, I observed my peer actors as they engaged in role-taking. I witnessed how the director guided them through character development exercises. This facilitation helped them identify the emotions their character experienced and draw on their experience to portray the character authentically.

A significant and growing body of literature on drama as pedagogy has investigated the significance and effectiveness of using drama as a metaphor for "real-life" experiences and, in doing so, students learn to navigate a path to problem-solving using their ability to exercise creativity, imagination, critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Elfand, 2004; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985; McNees, 2015; Mavroudis & Bournelli, 2019; Van den Berg, Coetzee, & Munro, 2014). Bailey (1997) and Dogru (2015) echo the benefits of drama in this context, stating that the power of drama lies in its ability to create a make-believe world. This world evokes the same principles and rules as a real-life situation, such as consequences, choices, emotions and thought processes. It allows the students to deepen their thoughts, thus

developing cognitive skills and achieving deep learning (Mavroudis & Bournelli, 2019). Drama and theatre practice allowed me to create a simulated situation through imagination while participating in a production, allowing me to experience my actions and emotions as "real life". Knowing consciously that the situation was simulated allowed me to fully indulge in the exercises, obtaining a deeper understanding of myself and my character.

Much research has been published on drama as a student-centred approach to teaching. Dewey (1938), Dole et al. (2016), Vygotsky (1978) and Wagner (1976) share the same perspective that the "traditional teacher-cantered" approach, where the student is seen as an empty vessel dependent on the teacher for knowledge, has become redundant to the education system. The above theorists advocate for a student-centred approach that drama as a pedagogy can facilitate by creating a space where students control their learning using skills and practices to solve problems independently with the teacher's guidance (Ranzau, 2016). One of the first examples of the student-centred approach was in Heathcote's theory of "mantle of the expert", where she demonstrated its effectiveness on a student's learning process, self-confidence and autonomy in solving problems (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). Research in this field has revealed drama as pedagogy's connection to constructivist theory (Andersen, 2004), which focuses on the student's role in constructing knowledge and meaning from drawing on new information and prior experience (Heathcote, 1970; O'Neill, 1995). My experience teaching FET students in the drama classroom indicated that when students are active agents in their learning experiences, the success of the learning encounter is enhanced. I found that students who did not engage and take charge of their inquiry in the classroom did not benefit fully from the learning experience, producing rote learning at best.

This study evaluates research based on the long-standing debate regarding teaching and learning methods' ability to promote deep or surface learning in education. It reveals that drama as a pedagogy is successful in cultivating deep learning in students through its constructivist approach, MI, generating opportunities for reflective practice and its focus on students as key in their learning journey (Abed, 2016; Andersen, 2004; Heathcote, 1985; O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007; Van den Berg et al., 2014). My transformative learning experiences resulted from deep learning about myself and my peer actors, allowing me to reflect and construct new meaning schemes.

1.6.1.2 Education

Jack Mezirow instituted the transformative learning theory in 1978 during his occupation at the University of Columbia (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow's theory centres on adult education and how they construct knowledge and make meaning (Taylor, 2000). Consequently, a clear distinction exists between learning during childhood and learning during adulthood (Christie et al., 2015). The transformative learning theory advocates that adult students can develop and adjust their thinking given their exposure to new information (Christie et al., 2015) by evaluating existing knowledge, beliefs, values, feelings, attitudes and perspectives (meaning schemes) to construct a new knowledge system (Taylor, 2000). From my experience as a student in high school compared to being a student at university, and now a postgraduate student at the age of 34 years, I find a clear difference in how I constructed knowledge in the three phases of my life. I experience learning as an adult to be complex but also easier to reconstruct; thus, developing my meaning schemes becomes better with practice. A student can develop a new meaning scheme through critical reflection and review when presented with new information (Christie et al., 2015). Ishino (2018) focused on the connection between drama practice and transformative learning theory to foster developmental changes in individuals as they explore the boundary between the self and others. He proclaimed that transformative learning is enhanced through reflective practice used in character development in the theatre (See section 2.2.4.2). My experience in the theatre as an actor has cultivated new learning experiences for me, which transformed my sense of identity and how I viewed my peers and the people in my life.

Transformative learning theory comprises two primary pillars: instrumental and communicative (Kitchenham, 2008). Instrumental learning involves controlling and manipulating the environment as a problem-solving method for decoding knowledge (Mezirow, 2003). Communicative learning pertains to understanding what is being communicated when interaction occurs, meaning "becoming aware of the assumptions, intentions and qualifications of the person communicating" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). The interchangeable nature of these two pillars fosters transformative learning experiences (Kitchenham, 2008). Zhao and Liu (2022) echo this explanation, stating that these two pillars are fundamental to the process and directly contribute to the student's sustainable development. My experience as an actor during performance required instrumental and communicative aspects of the art form to achieve my acting objective. As a teacher, my

students required both key pillars to make their learning in the classroom valuable, as they needed to solve the problem they were presented with and communicate their insights.

According to Nesvet (2010), transformative learning theory and theatre practice share the same objective to transform the perspectives and beliefs of the participant/student through specific activities, developing the process of where and how we make meaning from our experiences. Nesvet (2010) advocates that participation in these activities achieved a transformative outcome through critical reflection. My experience playing a role that I felt was far removed from my reality was only achievable through critical reflection to understand my character's actions and choices.

1.6.2 Phase 2 – Process (Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories)

The process phase of this literature review focuses on how learning from the preparation phase has been carried through to the inosculation of the two theories. I discuss the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories regarding the actor's transition from the self to the character. The Bhava–Rasa theory represents actors' cognitive and emotional journeys during their transformation. The social alchemy theory represents the character's narrative as the actor navigates within to develop the required transition (Figure 2).

1.6.2.1 The Bhava–Rasa theory

Bharata Muni, a sage in India in the 500 A.D. era, compiled a detailed scripture on the performing arts titled the Natyasastra (Miettinen, 1985). This ancient treatise included dance, music and theatre, with a specific section dedicated to the Bhava–Rasa theory where it was first introduced to the world (Mohanlal et al., 2014). The Bhava–Rasa theory can be understood as the give-and-take duality embedded in the beauty of the performing arts where one has no impact without the other (Shridevi, 2020).

Miettinen (1985) explains that the Bhava represents a state of mind, a simulation of emotions translated to the audience via gestures, facial expressions and body language. The Rasa is the artistic taste; in other words, it represents the audience's emotion and sentiment and feels real to the individual (Mohanlal et al., 2014). This interconnected relationship between the Bhava and Rasa creates a direct line of communication between the actor on stage and the audience member in the gallery (Shridevi, 2020). This line of communication conveys the

meaning or intended understanding of the art form, which is essential to an authentic creative experience (Shridevi, 2020) (See section 2.2.5.1).

As a dramatic arts practitioner, I understand the communication between the actor/performer on stage and the audience. I have observed this connection through my experiences, but I also experience it each time I watch a play, movie or performance. A line of communication is created by observing characters as they progress through their emotional journeys of the play's narrative. It allows the audience to experience these sentiments within themselves, creating transformative processes for the audience. However, I do not believe this line of communication is limited to the actor and audience. I have experienced that this is true for fellow actors/performers on stage. During my participation in theatre performances, I have experienced that everything happening on stage during a production is a continuous flow of communication, where each actor/performer plays a part and contributes to this flow. Therefore, for believability, this line of communication must be performed as effectively to the peer actors/performers on stage as to the audience members.

The above was echoed in the later work of Richard Schechner, as he used the Bhava–Rasa theory principles and applied them to Western performance theatre to create "Rasaethetics" (Schechner, 2001). He proclaimed that practising the art of performance and acting through Rasaethetics could create a deeper connection to the role/character the actors were portraying (Schechner, 2001).

1.6.2.2 The social alchemy theory

The founder of the social alchemy theory, Suzanne Smith, is an adjunct professor at the University of Texas, Arlington (Smith, 2019). She developed this theory as a problem-solving model aimed at the social/civic sector to work through challenges to achieve growth and effectively support all role players using empathy as a driving force to problem-solve (Smith, 2019). According to Smith (2019), the social alchemy theory is a unique approach to discovering innovative solutions for organisations and individuals. Smith (2019) argues that the social sector differs significantly from other sectors because it addresses transforming an idea into a meaningful, effective solution and transforms the individual as they develop and evolve with their idea. This duality speaks to the true nature of alchemy (Smith, 2019).

From my experience working on projects within the arts and outside the business world, after having participated in a project, I experienced a sense of change in my thinking and attitude. It was either due to something new I learned about myself and my peers regarding a specific challenge or finding a solution. I experienced that as I learned, I transformed and became better at the task at hand. I discovered the same in my students in the classroom environment. When they discovered a solution by problem-solving together in a socially engaging way, they behaved differently, the work they produced improved and their way of thinking developed.

The process contains four integral steps: innovate, improve, impact and scale. Each contributes to transformative social change (Smith, 2019). The innovation step is the starting point of the journey, where the problem is identified, and a suitable hypothesis is formulated (Smith, 2019). According to Smith (2019), design thinking is recommended, according to Smith, as it is a new approach to problem-solving because it requires empathy, creativity and rationality to construct the most effective and suitable solutions. A crucial aspect of this step is to search for new ideas and explore using old ideas in a new and creative way to solve a problem (Smith, 2019). In my study, the innovation step is where the character experiences a dilemma or conflict during the narrative. The actors will research as they interrogate the character's motives, actions, emotional states and reasoning. They can create meaning and develop a deeper understanding of the character's journey by identifying similarities and differences between themselves and their characters. Empathy is employed as a driving force of this enquiry, fostering acceptance and understanding instead of judgement.

Steps two (improve) and three (impact) work hand-in-hand to create a working structure for evaluating these ideas and measuring their success (Smith, 2019). Smith (2019) explains that the goal of these two steps is not merely trial and error but a period of learning and having the flexibility to move to the next step or pivot back to the first step. This step allows for redevelopment, fostering growth (Smith, 2019). During the actors' transformative processes, this step is where they draw on their experiences to create a connection between the self and the character. Participating in Bhava–Rasa allows the actor to engage with real emotions attached to specific events in their lives and portray them as characters. This step is used as a navigation tool, which challenges the actors' current meaning schemes and introduces new knowledge during the process.

In the last step, scaling, the idea has been assessed and is now ready to be scaled (Smith, 2019). Scaling refers to solidifying the process by preparing to support and aid growth for the individual and the organisation (Smith, 2019). In my study, this step signifies the actors' final recreation of the character according to their interpretations, providing an authentic representation of the character on stage. Once this step has been achieved, actors undergo a process of self-reflection, altering their meaning schemes.

Social alchemy theory approaches problem-solving uniquely, different from existing theories of this nature. Newell, Shaw, and Simon's (1958) human problem-solving theory shares similar elements as the social alchemy theory; however, empathy is not a focus in this theory (Langley, Magnani, Schunn, & Thagard, 2005).

1.6.3   Phase 3 – Product (transition from actor to character)

The product phase is the result of the inosculation process of transformative learning experiences. In this final phase of my literature review, I discuss the actor's transition from the self to the character. The literature contains knowledge linking the actors transformative process to that which occurs in adult learning, as proposed by Mezirow. The director's role in this process is also discussed in detail. I draw on multiple theatre practitioners to highlight how these processes effect the actor on their learning journey to transformation (Figure 2).

Many studies share the same perspective that a drama expression in the production is a powerful tool to help individuals verbalise their inner feelings and assist them in communicating their private thoughts non-invasively (Barnes-Smith, Frotz, Ito, Kohorst, & Vascimini 2015; Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011; Ikonomopoulos, Cavazos-Vela, Vela, Sanchez, Schmidt, & Catchings, 2017; Nompula, 2012; Pieske, 2019; Stuckey & Tisdell, 2010).

These studies focused on the child to adolescent age groups. Drama assists children to effectively communicate with adults, as they frequently find it challenging to express themselves verbally (Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011). Adolescents experience strong feelings that might cause inner turmoil since they might not understand it and, therefore, refrain from talking about it. Drama bridges this gap for these individuals by creating a non-intrusive gateway to discover and evaluate their thoughts and attitudes (Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011). In this space, drama participants feel safe expressing their thoughts and gaining insight into their experiences (Nompula, 2012). Pieske (2019) adds that the dramatic arts empower

people, giving them a sense of control over their lives and helping them cope with the stressors of daily life. This study will focus on the actor's transformative processes, achieved through communicative and instrumental learning adopted from Mezirow's transformative learning theory. I will examine how an actor's meaning scheme is altered during this process.

Ikonomopoulos et al. (2017) discuss how theatre practices should be conducted to avoid re-traumatisation in a theatre production but still be effective as an emotional outlet. The insight offered by Barnes-Smith et al. (2015) proposes that individuals need an avenue of expression separate from their daily lives to make sense of the world around them. This avenue allows people to critically reflect on and confront their perspectives and outlooks while minimising the risk of exposure. They state that an integral connection exists between creativity and their ability to learn, making participation in drama an effective vehicle for personal development (Barnes-Smith et al., 2015). Pieske (2019) states that the director does not play the role of a therapist but a creativity facilitator. Furthermore, the director only provides a safe, creative space for people to explore the self, using the transition into character as a vehicle. Transformation in the theatre can only occur if participants accept their involvement in the process and progress at their own pace (Jones, 2005). The lack of pressure allows the student freedom to investigate their experiences (Butler, 2017). Recent research has focused on the understanding that drama facilitators cannot protect their participants from having negative experiences; therefore, these facilitators should provide their students with the needed skills to work through any trauma they will inevitably experience (Pieske, 2019).

My participation in a specific role created a gateway to a past traumatic experience I had as a child, which I had suppressed. My director addressed it carefully, supporting me to work through it. However, Burgoyne et al. (1999) account for multiple actors who experienced great turmoil under their director's facilitation, which left past and present trauma unresolved and exposed. These actors shared that their directors pushed them beyond their limits, rendering them vulnerable to the negative effects of the process (Burgoyne et al., 1999). These actors also stated that even though they experienced turmoil on a personal level, they felt that the experience helped them grow professionally by increasing their control of the self within their characters (Burgoyne et al., 1999).

Multiple theatre practitioners developed their theories to achieve the objective of transitioning the actor into the character. They specifically focused on actors' abilities to reach a performance level of utmost believability to their peers on stage and the audience

(Jones, 2005). These practitioners did not focus on the actors' development process and the transformation of the self but as a byproduct of participation in theatre performance (Burgoyne et al., 1999). Bertolt Brecht focused on the audience's transformation through epic theatre using rational self-reflection and critical view methods to stimulate audiences in creating meaning from the performance (Jones, 2005). Within his epic style and overall theatre practice, the actor is a vessel of transformation for the audience, not a subject of transformation for themselves. The above is also true for the work of Konstantin Stanislavski, as produced by Matern (2013) and Pitches (2006), indicating a rigorous technique for actors to undergo, leading to the most realistic representation of their characters to the audience. The Stanislavski system of acting used techniques of psychological realism, as it mobilises the actor's conscious thought and will to activate less-controllable psychological processes, such as emotional experience and subconscious behaviour, character authenticity. Again, the focus is on the audience, their transformation, and experience. The actors are still viewed as a vessel in this process.

To conclude, the literature on this research topic reveals the lack of information and focus on the actor's growth and development. It has been highlighted that a controlled emotional journey is essential to the actor's transformation. For any development of actors' meaning schemes to occur, the director must guide them into their role safely and controlled to draw the line between exploration of the self as professionally beneficial and re-traumatisation.

1.7   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study's conceptual framework is designed to address a specific phenomenon. The framework constitutes three theories from diverse fields of study, as presented in the literature review: the Bhava–Rasa, social alchemy and transformative learning. As actors transition from the self to the character, they engage in a continuous interchangeable process involving cognitive and emotional faculties through an introspective journey to bridge the gap between the self and the character. The discovery, awareness, empathy and understanding emerging from the actor's journey led to a transformative learning experience. The Bhava–Rasa theory fosters the actor's controlled emotional journey, and the social alchemy theory signifies the actor's character development. Actors navigate the world of their characters using their meaning schemes as a navigation tool and discover new knowledge about themselves, their characters and the world. The conceptual framework

created for this study addresses these processes and represents how this transformation occurs.

The interchangeable process is created when the actor builds meaning from the character's narrative through various components in the social alchemy theory (Smith, 2019). These components are explored and developed using the Bhava–Rasa theory to link and enact emotion while making cognitive connections between the self and the character's inner world (Mohanlal et al., 2014). During this interchangeable process, actors embark on a journey of self-discovery, leading to their personal and professional growth and development (Schechner, 2001). This process is an essential element in the theatre-making and requires vigilant and nurturing guidance from the director to maintain the actor's safety throughout this journey (Schechner, 2001).

Transformative learning experiences, as noted from Mezirow's transformative learning theory, are the products of this interchangeable process where the actor's current meaning scheme has been altered specifically and significantly to give way to a new meaning scheme. This study focuses on developing the actor's meaning scheme through their participation in theatre practices.
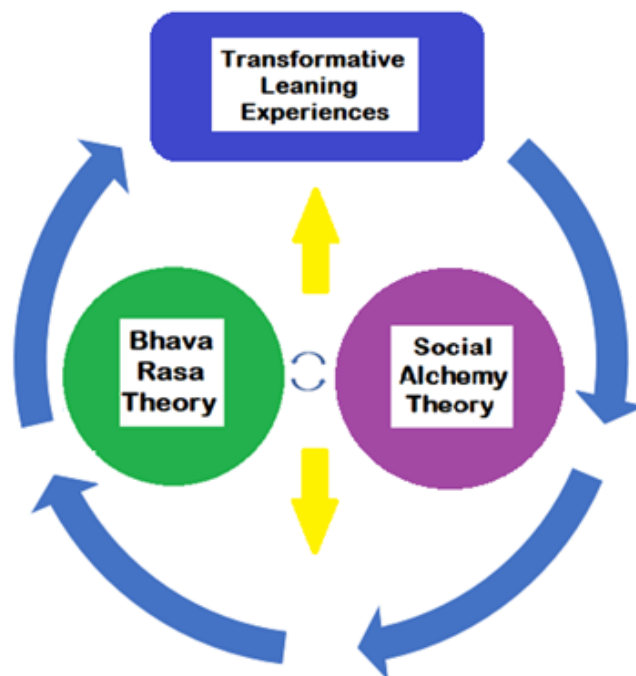
Figure 3: The ensemble (Padayachee, 2023)

1.8   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study's research methodology will be explained using Figure 4. Each point in the figure will be discussed to provide a clear guide as to how the research in this study will be conducted.
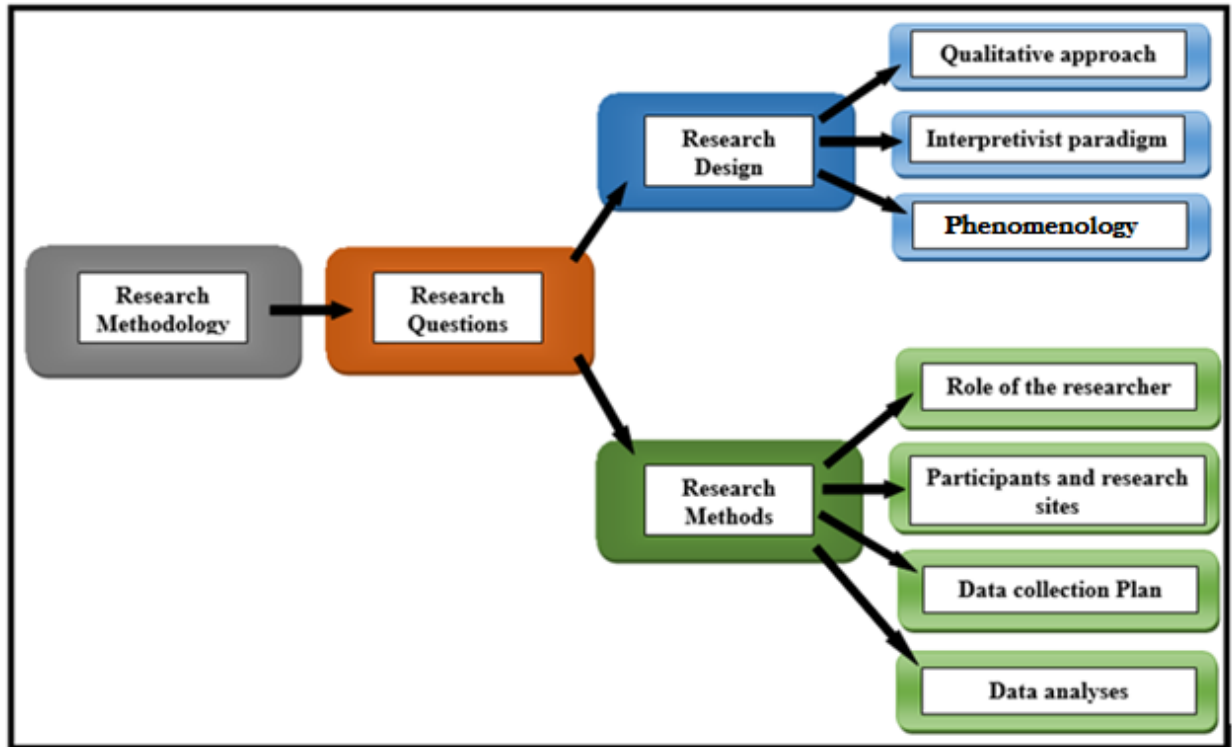
Figure 4: Research methodology diagram (Padayachee, 2023)

1.8.1   Research questions

Title: Exploring transformative processes in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories

The research conducted in this study will aim to answer the research questions below.

- How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production by engaging in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories?
- How does transformative learning develop actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character?
  -

1.8.2 Research design

Babbie (2004, p. 112) describes a "research design as a plan that involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied among which population with which research methods for what purpose". A research design can be viewed as a blueprint of a research study/project, guiding the researcher in conducting the investigation (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Finestone (2021) explains that a research design is a framework that encompasses the research approach, paradigm and type. These components uncover insight into a specific research topic to construct knowledge thereof.

1.8.2.1 Research approach

Creswell and Miller (2000) propose that researchers use qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate their research problems. Each approach differs in how research is conducted and will produce different findings as their interpretation process is far removed (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This study adopted a qualitative approach. This approach will support my investigation into transformative integration regarding actors' developmental processes as they transition into character in the Spotlight production.

A qualitative approach seeks to define and interpret unclear phenomena through non-numerical measurement methods focusing on meaning and insight (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness., 2018, p. 20). Finestone (2021) elaborates that the qualitative approach focuses on investigating research problems of a social and/or human nature to construct a deeper understanding and build meaning by considering the research problem from a holistic viewpoint, reporting on data collected from knowledge sources, and conducting the study in a natural setting (Finestone, 2021).

A qualitative study suits my research topic, as I will investigate humans in their social settings. These actors will be observed and interviewed to examine the change in their meaning schemes. The study will be conducted in the rehearsal space where the actors are comfortable and familiar with their surroundings. Furthermore, I aim to build meaning from the data I have gathered to provide a deeper insight into the ability of theatre processes to cultivate transformative learning experiences for the actor.

1.8.2.2 Research paradigm

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the word paradigm is derived from the Greek language meaning pattern. Therefore, a research paradigm can be understood as research patterns used to identify connections in research, building meaning (Maree, 2017). Finestone (2021) proposes that a research paradigm is a way of seeing the world around us. Researchers use how they think about ideas and concepts to build understanding and generate insight into those concepts (Allen, 2017; Khaldi, 2017). Several authors have defined a research paradigm as an entire set of beliefs, techniques, standards, perspectives and values shared among members of a group of individuals on how problems should be investigated and solutions constructed (Finestone, 2021; Iacob, Popescu, & Ristea, 2015; Kamal, 2019; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Maree, 2017).

According to scholars, a research paradigm comprises three fundamentals: epistemology, ontology and methodology (Finestone, 2021; FitzPatrick, 2019; Iacob et al., 2015). This concept can be understood by asking the following questions concerning the three elements listed above: What is reality (ontology)? How do we know something (epistemology)? How do we go about finding out (methodology)? (Finestone, 2021).

In this study, ontology investigates the reality according to the actors of the performance. Epistemology refers to how we know these meaning schemes exist and can be developed. Finally, methodology refers to how this study will be conducted, i.e., conducting semi-structured interviews with three actors, the director, documenting field notes and observations, and using the Spotlight production to gather data.

Tekin and Kotaman (2013, p. 84) propose that "interpretivism is a school of thought that concentrates the meaning of social interactions". Interpretivism can be viewed as a paradigm assisting the researcher in understanding how individuals construct meaning within their cultural and social contexts by interpreting their experiences, narratives and perceptions (Carminati, 2018). I selected the interpretivist paradigm since my study concerns humans (young adults) and how their meaning schemes develop as they transition from the actor to the character during the Spotlight production. Therefore, my study justifies my paradigm choice, as it will assist me in constructing a deeper understanding of the process actors undergo during the rehearsal and production period, how their meaning schemes develop, and how transformative learning experiences occur. In this study, I will interpret the data

collected through semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations during the actors' processes.

1.8.2.3 Research type

Within the qualitative approach to this study, I will use phenomenology to assist my investigation regarding the meaning schemes of actors and guide the process. Phenomenological research studies experience from an individual's perspective (Larsen & Adu, 2021). Phenomenology is embedded in personal knowledge and subjectivity (Errasti-Ibarrondo, Jordán, Díez-Del-Corral, & Arantzamendi, 2018). This research type emphasises individuals' interpretations of their experiences and how they construct meaning from their perspectives (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). Phenomenological research is effective for understanding subjective experiences and provides researchers with insights into their participants' actions, motivations and meaning-making processes (Larsen & Adu, 2021; van Manen, 2023). According to van Manen and van Manen (2021), phenomenology as a research type can access participants' inner worlds, enabling a researcher to examine how they make meaning out of their experiences (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). Therefore, the researcher can cultivate a deeper understanding of a particular aspect of the human experience (Larsen & Adu, 2021).

Phenomenology was selected for this study since I seek insight into three actors and the director's experiences and subjective knowledge. I am investigating whether the three actors encountered a transformative experience during their participation in the Spotlight production and whether the director's insights from the beginning to the end of the production have developed/altered. Phenomenological research is ideal for this study, as each actor and the director have their background, context, life experience and meaning schemes, which will influence the findings of this study.

1.8.3   Research methods

Research methods refer to an umbrella term for research techniques, procedures and approaches used in investigating a research problem (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It describes the flow and logic of a research project that will be followed systematically to reveal knowledge and insight into a specific research problem (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Researchers select specific methods to approach their study, guiding the data gathering and interpretation process for meaning and a deeper understanding (Dudovskiy, 2018). To

understand how this study will be executed, I address the researcher's role, the participants and research site, the data collection plan, and data analyses.

1.8.3.1 Role of the researcher

The positionality of researchers within the qualitative methodology allows for a focus on the individual and to obtain more insight into the social world they are learning about (Lethole, Palmer, & de Klerk, 2021). This study will be conducted from a subjective viewpoint using an interpretivism approach, as it concerns human research (Tekin & Kotaman, 2013). My role as the researcher is as an insider and an outsider. My experience in theatre practice and transitioning from the actor to the character will distinguish me as an insider researcher. This study will be directed at three actors and their personal and professional experiences as they transition from the actor to the character. The director will also be included. The investigation will focus on the before, during and after experiences in the Spotlight production using semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations, which will render me an outsider researcher, thus achieving my positionality in this study of a dual nature.

1.8.3.2 Participants and research sites

Finestone (2021) describes sampling as a technique researchers adopt to select participants from the population for a specific study. The sampling method was created to address how research participants were selected since the entire population could not be included in the study due to financial and time constraints (Babbie, 2004). Since I am conducting my study within a qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm, I selected purposeful sampling as the most suited. Purposeful sampling is a method of selecting research participants based on the researcher's judgement (Finestone, 2021). Therefore, due to the subjectivity in the interpretivist paradigm, purposeful sampling is ideal for selecting participants in this study.

The research site for this study is in Pretoria at the Rynlal Centre. Due to the nature of this study and its focus area, I will consult the director regarding participant selection for this study. The selection will be based on the actors' choices in monologues and characters. Each actor will be interviewed at three intervals: at the beginning of the rehearsal process, during the rehearsal process, and after the second production performance. Two females and one male of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds were selected. For this study, I have selected the following actors based on the above criteria.

Actor Gender	Character	Genre	Play	Playwright
Male	Hamlet	Elizabethan era	*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*	William Shakespeare
Female	Lysistrata	Greek era	*Lysistrata*	Aristophanes
Female	Hermione	Elizabethan era	*The Winter's Tale*	William Shakespeare

Table 1: Actor participants and character representation in the Spotlight production (Padayachee, 2023)

In addition to the three actors, I will conduct semi-structured interviews with the director at the beginning of the rehearsal process, during the rehearsal process, and after the second production performance. Since the director is the facilitator in the actors' transition process, he will have valuable insights to share regarding the study.

1.8.3.3 Data collection plan

According to qualitative authors, data collection methods are ways of sourcing information from a select group of participants for research purposes to explore the phenomena (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Finstone, 2021; Maree, 2017; Ningi, 2022). Barrett and Twycross (2018) explain that data collection instruments provide the tools to effectively gather data from research subjects. This study will employ in-depth semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes to source information from my research participants to answer the two research questions. Each interview will last 30 minutes. I will use a digital sound recorder to record the interviews, assisting in transcribing the data received.

1.8.3.4 Data analysis

According to Maree (2017), data analysis is arranging the collected data systematically and organising the information to increase the researcher's understanding of the study phenomenon. Data analysis creates meaning and fosters understanding of the data sourced from the research participants, the researcher's observations, and field notes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Maree (2017) explains that data analysis and interpretation is achieved by

decoding the raw information into multiple categories, themes and sub-themes the researcher has identified in the study.

After the in-depth semi-structured interviews, the data will be transcribed according to the recordings. I will include my written observations and field notes. I will then code the information according to specific themes identified in the conceptual framework of my study. As I sort and decode the research responses, I will apply the factors contributing to the interchangeable process between the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. I will use the field notes and observations documented during the Spotlight production to inform the identified codes by establishing the differences and similarities in the data to provide a detailed analysis. All sourced information will be analysed holistically to build meaning from the findings. Lastly, I will develop conclusions based on the decoded information.

1.9 Trustworthiness

Scholars in qualitative research have defined trustworthiness as the degree of confidence or trust in the data, interpretation, methods and instruments used to ensure the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014; Maree, 2017; Ningi, 2022). Researchers working within the qualitative paradigm have proposed five ways of assessing a study's trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and authenticity (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Basias & Pollalis, 2018; Connelly, 2016; Elo et al., 2014; Johnson, Adkins, & Chauvin, 2020).

To ensure that this study meets the quality standards to deem it trustworthy, I will conduct the research as follows: (1) I will brief each participant on the study's purpose and how the information will be used. (2) Anonymity forms will be distributed and explained to each participant before engaging in the interview or observations. (3) All participants will be interviewed using the same in-depth semi-structured interview questions. Further detail into the questions might differ, as the participants' roles will influence the information. (4) All interviews will be conducted privately on the same premises as the rehearsal space. (5) An interview time of 30 minutes will be allocated to each participant and will be more than adequate to allow them to complete the posed questions.

1.9.1 Ethical considerations

Arifin (2018, p. 30) states that "the protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study". Issues in ethics are morals, values and principles that guide acceptable or unacceptable practices regarding human research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Maree (2017), two issues must be considered when addressing ethics in research: (1) the treatment of participants and (2) the researcher's morals and values as an individual in the study. This study investigates the actors and the director's meaning schemes, addressing their values, experiences, beliefs, perspectives, motivations, perceptions and insights. I examine how their meaning schemes develop during character transformation in a theatre environment; therefore, ethical considerations are essential. Regarding the treatment of the participants, I provided a detailed briefing explaining the study's content and purpose. I explained that this study is sensitive and subjective and will be treated carefully. I also explained what will be required from the participants and the extent of their involvement in the study.

Due to the nature of this study, the following ethical considerations will apply: voluntary participation, participant safety, privacy, trust and informed consent (Finestone, 2021; Iacob et al., 2015; Maree, 2017). Voluntary participation means that the participants were informed about the nature of the study and that their participation is voluntary (Iacob et al., 2015). Participants will not face penalties if they choose to withdraw from the study (Arifin, 2018). I will seek confirmation from each participant before each interview to ensure their participation is voluntary. The participants' safety ensures they are not harmed due to the study or practices of the researcher (Maree, 2017). Due to the sensitive and personal nature of this study, there might be very personal insights the participants share or choose not to share. I will respect their contributions and perform regular check-ins to ensure they feel safe during the process. I will also provide participants with additional processing time if they require it.

Privacy and trust indicate that all participants will remain anonymous, and their contributions to the study will remain confidential (Finestone, 2021). Each participant will be interviewed in a separate room, where they will have the privacy to discuss and share their experiences with me. I will remind them that all information shared with me during the interviews, interactions and observations will not be shared with any other cast member or the director.

Informed consent implies that all participants were briefed on the study, how it will be conducted, and what is required from them as participants (Arifin, 2018). I will request consent from each participant before each interview and remind them of the nature of the study and what it entails.

1.10   Research structure

The chapters are outlined as follows to ensure a well-structured research report where the content flows logically and the research aims and questions are addressed.

Chapter 2: Exploring transformative processes of the actor in theatre – literature review

This chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature regarding the research topic, "Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight".

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter presents a roadmap of how this study will be conducted to ensure that the aims and objectives align with the research decisions to answer the two research questions at the end of this study.

Chapter 4: Data analysis

This chapter informs the reader of what was discovered during the study and presents an in-depth analysis of the data obtained through the rigorous research methodology.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter relates to the aims and research questions from which the findings have been deduced. This chapter connects the data, the interpretation and the research results.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by providing the reader with a sound discussion of the findings and includes the research conclusions. The research study is reviewed to provide limitations and recommendations to further the research discovered through this study.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLORING TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESSES OF THE
ACTOR IN THEATRE

Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One provided an overview of the research study, explaining the study's focus and purpose, background and context, and rationale and motivation for pursuing this research topic. I included the research questions framing the study and a brief literature review and research methodology. Chapter Two is a detailed and structured literature review on this research topic. I explain a metaphor specifically designed to present this literature to build meaning of and connect the organised literature. I provide a detailed explanation of the three phases linked to the metaphor and research. The review includes specific aspects from research conducted in this field according to my research topic. A formulated structure was followed using concept, understanding, discussion and application to create cohesion in the research as it frames this study. A conceptual framework was designed for this study. I discuss the components of this framework in greater detail for a deeper understanding of how the selected theories contribute and create meaning.

2.2 Reviewed literature

This literature review provides an insight into research pertaining to my research topic: *Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight*. The literature presented in this review focuses on scholarly research relevant to the phenomenon of this study. This research topic investigates observable phenomenon in the Spotlight production. Therefore, I begin this literature review by discussing the phenomenon being investigated and the Spotlight production.

2.2.1 The phenomenon of this study

A phenomenon in a qualitative study can be understood as an observable event, situation or result regarding an individuals lived experience (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022). A phenomenon assists researcher's in collecting data on this lived experience to build meaning and understanding of their observations (Yin, 2016). According to Creswell and Poth (2018),

the phenomenon of a study guides the research in providing an established answer to a research question. In a qualitative study, the researcher investigates the phenomenon by allowing participants to explain why, how and what they are feeling, thinking and experiencing during a specific event or moment in time (Larsen & Adu, 2021). These explanations and descriptions are derived from the participants' experiences and subjective knowledge, assisting their meaning-making process (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). In this study, I observe the transformative process of the actors and the director during their involvement in the Spotlight production. I explore these transformative processes through their lived experiences. I explore how they create meaning and build understanding from the insights gained during their involvement in this production. The phenomenon then extends to how this meaning-making process has cultivated transformative learning experiences and how their meaning schemes might have altered. This phenomenon aims to answer the two research questions: how are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production by engaging in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories and how does transformative learning develop actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character? This phenomenon guides my research decisions and how I study the participants in the Spotlight production.

2.2.2 The Spotlight production

The Spotlight production is as an individual performance within a collective group of actors as part of a third-year (final) curriculum production for acting and performance. The actors participating in this production are registered for this course at a well-established acting institution in Pretoria. The director's purpose is to allow his third-year students to explore their identities through theatre performances and develop as actors in their professions and individuals in their daily lives.

The director selected two processes during rehearsals to engage the actors in theatre practices to foster this development. The Bhava–Rasa process explores emotions in a controlled technique and the social alchemy process explores character development and identity. The Spotlight production is a compilation of diverse monologues selected from two theatre performance eras: the Greek era (500 BC to 220 BC) and the Elizabethan era (1558 to 1603). The director selected these two theatre periods due to the significance and complexity of the characters created in these period plays. Greek theatre moved away from theatre as entertainment and introduced it to investigate the meaning of being human (Paillard, 2021).

Greek theatre gave rise to playwrights, such as Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes, who used their art to debate philosophy (Hager & Fragkou, 2017). The Elizabethan era focused on dramatic storylines integrating complex and diverse characters through emotion and strategy (Zayniddinovna, 2022). Powerful themes of revenge, love and pride were presented to understand humans (Suciati, 2013) The Elizabethan era gave rise to playwrights such as Shakespeare, Jonson and Chapman (Zayniddinovna, 2022). The characters introduced during these eras changed how the world viewed theatre, as they represented truths about the human condition and shared the intensity and motivations behind each character and their narrative experiences.

The literary focus in the Spotlight production is on monologues/soliloquies from theatre plays in these noteworthy eras. Since the production focuses on individual performances, monologues/ soliloquies were selected as a form of dramatic literature. A monologue/ soliloquy is a speech delivered by a single actor in a play (Dodson, 2002). This method suited the director because he wanted to focus on each actor and their ability to navigate their emotional paths alongside their characters' narratives. Monologues/ soliloquies also provide the opportunity to engage in a close reading exercise, where actors focus on a small segment of text to discover meaning from the words on a deeper level (Hinchman & Moore, 2013), enhancing their comprehension of the literature as a whole and the character as a singular (Savatgy, 2022). Furthermore, the backgrounds, contexts and circumstances in these character monologues/ soliloquies are frequently far removed from the characters written in the 21st century, increasing the difficulty for actors as they transition from the self to the character for an authentic performance.

The director is the lecturer for acting and performance courses for the third-year students and the creator and director of the Spotlight production. The director is currently working in the film and theatre industry as an actor, director, scriptwriter, radio drama performer, movement choreographer and workshop facilitator. He has extensive experience in theatre practices and has undergone the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes numerous times for his art as an actor. The student actors are completing their final year of acting and performance and will be entering the professional industry once the course is completed. All actors have undergone the two processes used in the Spotlight production during the second year of study. They understand how to apply themselves and have built a relationship with the director after working together for over two years.

The director instructed the actors to select their characters and monologues for the Spotlight production since he believes it will place them in the driving seat of their growth and development. He believes it will allow each actor to assess their ability and work towards attaining a deeper understanding of their art form and their identities. He motivates that when actors challenge themselves in this manner, the possibility of professional and personal development is far greater than if the director selected their monologues for this performance. The director advocates that in theatre, he experienced professional and personal growth as being two sides to the same coin, where one intrinsically affects the other. He argues that this happens because people do not learn in isolation but holistically. This understanding provided the foundation of the objective he wanted to achieve in the Spotlight production. The rehearsal period for the Spotlight production is six weeks, with three performances. The theatre space used during the rehearsal and performance is at the Rynlal Centre in Lynwood, Pretoria. A foundation for this study has been created by establishing the phenomenon being investigated in the Spotlight production, with the director's version and objective he aimed to achieve. This foundation is a compass for the literature review presented below. Aligned with the theme of growth and development of an actor's meaning scheme, a metaphor has been designed to structure the literature reviewed, presented as the process of inosculation of both trees and knowledge.

2.2.3   The inosculation metaphor

The reviewed literature is organised systematically to create flow and logic and a deeper understanding of how these bodies of knowledge are woven together. The metaphor created to present this literature review is titled, the process of inosculation in the theatre environment (Padayachee, 2022). Inosculation is a natural phenomenon occurring when the roots, branches or trunks of two trees merge and begin to grow together (Salazar et al., 2018). Inosculation is biologically similar to the artificial process of grafting. Grafting is a technique used in plant agriculture to join parts of different trees or plants so that they grow as a single plant or tree (Salazar et al., 2018). Hindu scriptures known as the *Vedas*, dated 1500 BCE explain inosculation as a physical manifestation of the harmony and unity which exists so effortlessly in nature (Pillai & Palani, 2021). It explains that when this relationship is nurtured, it restores good health and peace of mind (Pillai & Palani, 2021). For this study, the inosculation in the theatre environment aids actors' growth and transformation as their meaning schemes are altered.
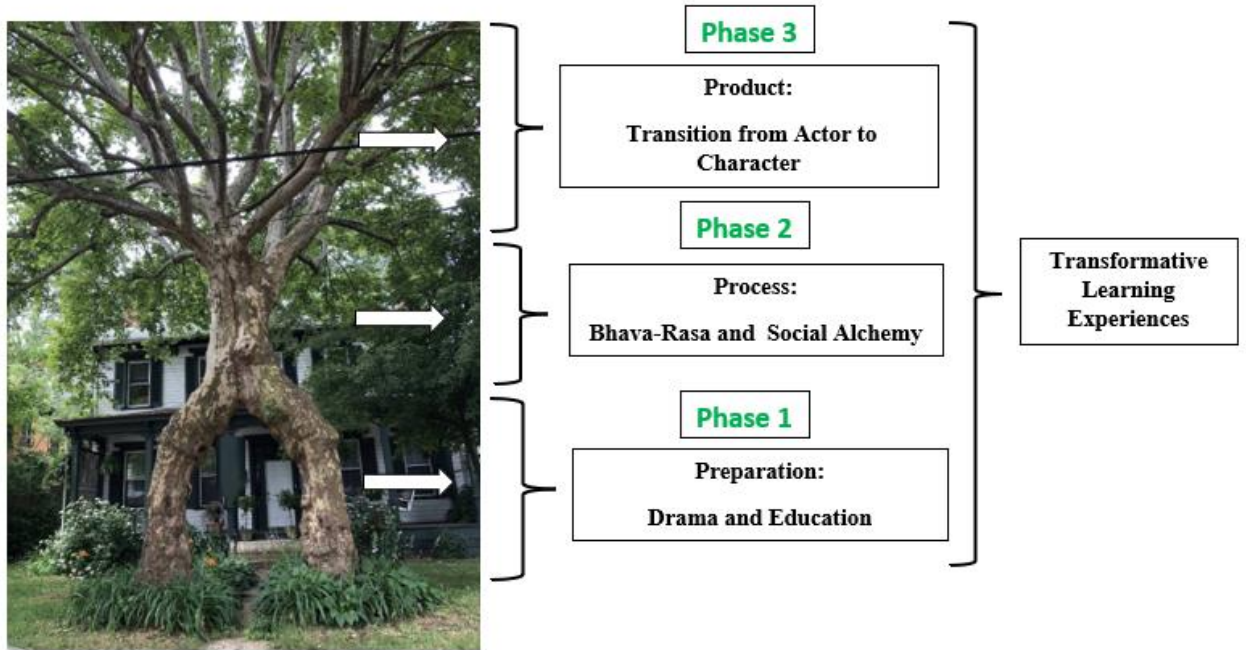
Figure 5: The process of inosculation in the theatre environment (Padayachee, 2023)

Figure 5 demonstrates how the inosculation process of a tree is represented in my research study. The metaphor has three primary phases represented by the three Ps: preparation, process and product. Phase 1 (preparation) when added to Phase 2 (process) results in Phase 3 (product). This developmental process creates transformative learning experiences. Inosculation in the theatre environment is a broad overview depicting the connections between the three Ps. However, to understand how these phases merge to form new bodies of knowledge in the literature, I have provided a root mapping diagram to highlight the connections of inosculation. Below I summarise the three phases.

Phase 1: The two separate trees represent the foundation pillars of this study, namely theatre and education regarding how individuals learn in the theatre and classroom. The theatre pillar focuses on research conducted by scholars in this study field regarding how actors learn through their involvement in theatre. The literature includes distinct elements from theatre that directly contribute to an actor's learning process. The elements relevant to this study include the relationship between drama and theatre, the theatre environment, theatre practices and the director's role. The education pillar focuses on how students learn through their involvement in classroom activities. The literature in this section relates specifically to elements in education that directly contribute to student learning. The education pillar focuses on learning theories, including Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and Gardner's theory of MI. Mezirow's theory is

given special attention since it frames actors' transformative process during their participation in the Spotlight production. This theory discusses two learning forms: instrumental and communicative learning. Instrumental learning occurs through problem-solving. Whereas communicative learning is achieved when meaning is cultivated during the learning journey. Once inosculation has occurred, the two foundation pillars join to form a combined way of knowing/learning, defined as learning through theatre. The literature contained in this section of Phase 1 combines the learning elements in both pillars to create one knowledge stream. Learning through theatre includes literature on specific elements regarding how educational methods of learning are present and effective in theatre learning. The inosculated bodies of knowledge discussed are as follows: thinking processes comprising critical reflection, cognition and metacognition; simulated activity comprising role-taking, real-life metaphor and make-believe; and pedagogy comprising drama in education and drama-based pedagogy.

Phase 2: The process phase comprise the two theories used in the Spotlight production: the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. These theories together represent the subsequent phase of inosculation, as it transforms the foundation phase: learning through theatre into an active process. The Bhava–Rasa theory focuses on actors' abilities to create meaning from their experiences. Actors use this theory as a roadmap to connect with their character's emotional journey. Regarding the social alchemy theory, the aspect of learning I focus on is how actors transition into specific roles through their characters' unique narrative experiences. Actors use this theory as a navigation tool. During the process phase, the two theories become inosculated to form one learning process called the interchangeable transition process. In this section, the literature discusses this interchangeable transition process as it is applied to transformative learning theory, demonstrating how Phase 1: learning through theatre, is combined with Phase 2: the interchangeable transition process. The literature indicates that the two fundamental areas in transformative learning theory share distinct features in the two theories selected in the conceptual framework of this study. Instrumental learning represents the social alchemy theory since they are both defined as problem-solving learning approaches. Communicative learning represents the Bhava–Rasa theory since they are both defined as learning approaches by creating meaning through communication. Combining the developmental and learning processes reveals a deeper understanding of how individuals learn, thus concluding Phase 2 of inosculation.

Phase 3: Through inosculation, the branches and leaves formed from the joint tree represent actors' transition from the self to the character in the theatre environment. The final phase of inosculation highlights two fundamental segments in the actors' transition from the self to the character, namely actors' controlled emotional journey and character development. The self represents the actors' controlled emotional journey, and the character represents the character development in the transition. These developmental experiences are cultivated since these fundamental areas merge to form unique opportunities for learning for the actor. This transition leads to transformative learning experiences for the actor. The result of this inosculation is called the transformation of meaning schemes, concluding the final phase of the literature review. For this study, I focus on a specific aspect of these transformative learning experiences: the developmental process of an actor's meaning-making scheme.

2.2.4 Phase 1 – preparation (learning through theatre)

In the preparation phase, I discuss the literature on how learning occurs in the theatre and education fields. This phase forms the foundation on which transformative learning experiences are created (Figure 2). In this phase, the literature addresses how learning is fostered for the actor in a theatre and a student in a classroom. When these foundation pillars are combined, a new form of knowing emerges. This is known as learning through theatre. The literature in this section addresses selected elements regarding how educational methods of learning firmly exist in theatre practices. The elements selected for this literature discussion are relevant to the phenomenon being investigated in this study.
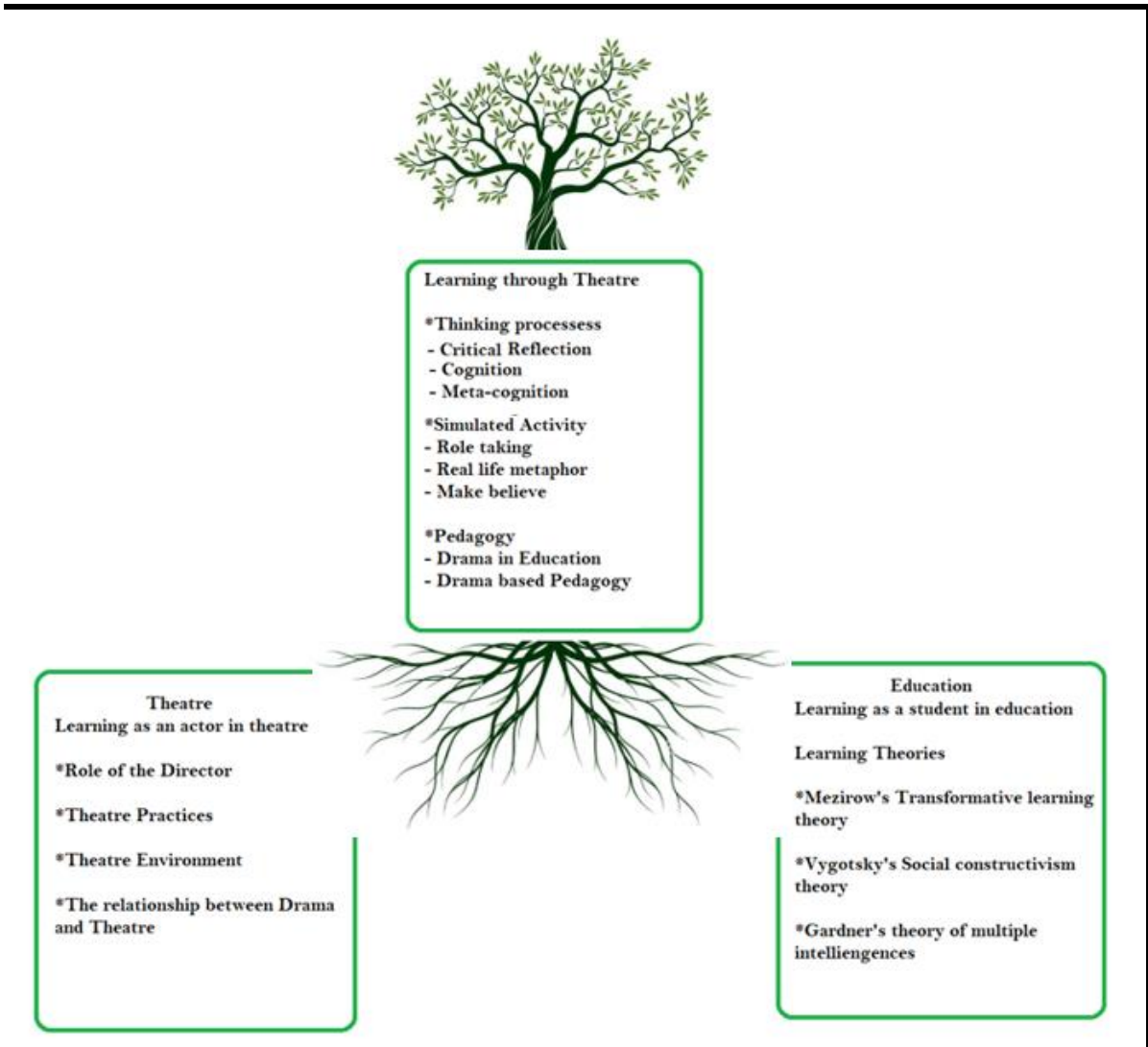
Figure 6: Inosculation in the preparation phase: transformation of roots (Padayachee, 2023)

2.2.4.1 Theatre – Learning as an actor

The literature covered in the theatre foundational pillar focuses on four intricate elements: the relationship between drama and theatre, the theatre environment, theatre practices and the director's role. These four elements represent the influence of theatre on an actor's learning within the framework of the phenomenon of this study.

- The relationship between drama and theatre

We must first review the literature on each concept separately to understand the relationship between drama and theatre. Once the distinction between the two concepts has been established, we can examine their relationship and how the concepts are used in the current literature.

According to Dalrymple (1987), drama is derived from the Greek word *Drao*, understood as action or to do. She explains that drama can be viewed as a genre within theatre styles or a component of action that occurs on stage during a theatre performance (Dalrymple, 1987). Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) propose that drama is the link between the playwright's script and the audience who witness it. They explain that drama represented through action brings the script alive for human sensors to experience it in a live performance (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Warwick (2012) supports this definition, stating that drama is taking the script in its written form and translating it into action using gestures, physical movements and dialogues, which is then interpreted by audience members. A definition numerous scholars accept indicates that drama imitates nature where fiction and non-fiction can be recreated through mimicry (Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011; Dawson & Lee, 2018; Fleming, 2017; Hager & Fragkou, 2017; Pieske, 2019). Multiple techniques have been created over the decades to achieve the art of imitation, still present in modern drama practices in the 21st century (Carson, 2012; Dunn, 2016; Garrido, 2023; Heathcote, 1970; LoMonico, 2009). These techniques have been developed for teaching and learning. Consequently, drama was viewed as a teaching tool aimed at children and young individuals learning the art (Garrido, 2023).

For multiple authors, theatre is the spectacle of taking drama to the stage (Butler, 2017; Young, 2018; Schino, 2020). It includes elements such as costume design, lighting, sound, props, scenery/sets, pyrotechnics and backstage operations to create a theatrical production for an audience (Raquel, 2015). In line with this understanding, literature highlights that the theatre is a space where stage business occurs, where the creativity of drama, the dynamics of show business and the honesty of human experience come together to create an end production (Balme, 2019). Theatre was primarily associated with adults and, more so, professional actors and practitioners (Pérez Valverde, 2003). Additionally, theatre can refer to an area/structure where dramatic performances are presented to a live audience (Dodson, 2002; Kirby, 1965; Paillard, 2021). Pérez Valverde (2003) advocates that theatre is created for entertainment and requires a live audience to communicate the spectacle presented on stage. The 21st century literature focuses on theatre as a communication and exploration of the human condition, first by actors, playwrights and directors and then to production and artistic staff and finally to the audience (Dunn, Bundy, & Stinson, 2020; Pérez Valverde, 2003; Salas, 2009).

From the multiple and vastly different definitions of drama and theatre, it is understandable that consensus among scholars could not be reached to provide one all-encompassing definition for each concept nor could finding a general understanding to include drama and theatre as branches from the same tree. The literature reveals that the debate regarding the division between drama and theatre erupted during the 1950s and 1990s regarding the appropriate use of these theatre techniques and practices when working with young students for learning (Fleming, 2017). The argument centred around the impact theatre practices would have on the psyche of young students if maturity, confidence and emotional stability were not in place due to age and life experiences (Moreno, 1972). Fleming (2017) supports the definition of Way (1967), stating that drama is primarily concerned with actors' experiences during their participation in the creative process and theatre concerns the communication between the audience and actors on stage. Recent literature proposes that scholars and practitioners juxtapose drama and theatre to establish a relationship between them regarding a specific event or situation (Alam & Al-Hawamdeh, 2022; Fleming, 2017; Isyar & Akay, 2017). These authors argue that the two concepts can be used interchangeably when their context requires a combination of understanding and meaning. This interchange becomes possible because theatre practitioners have adopted techniques, methods, etiquette and facilitation approaches from theatre and combined them with teaching and learning systems for students in a classroom environment (Fleming, 2017). Furthermore, these theatre practitioners have identified specific teaching and learning strategies through the drama-making process effective for the participant and applied them to their theatre practices to enhance the spectacle and authenticity.

Due to the phenomenon I am investigating in this study, I choose to define the relationship between drama and theatre as an interchangeable notion. This choice is justified since my study is concerned with how actors learn, develop their meaning schemes and experience transformative learning experiences through their participation in creating drama. However, theatre practices, the theatre environment and the director's role in a rehearsal for theatre create the opportunity and conditions to learn. This inclusive and interchangeable approach aids my search for meaning and understanding of the phenomenon since my research participants will not be limited to a specific definition but can use this interchangeable context to accurately define their experiences and build meaning from their involvement in the Spotlight production.

- Theatre environment

When considering the various practices under the theatre umbrella, it is crucial to note that the theatre environment created in each space shares the same principles, dynamics and purpose. The conditions cultivated in this unique environment is a pivotal component in the performance-making process (Rajendran, 2016). A theatre environment can be understood as a manufactured space involving how a performance area is used to define settings, communicate meaning, engage character narratives and foster an intimate relationship between the actors and the audience (Hunter, 2008). The theatre environment created advocates for sincerity, respect for others and the process, independence and professionalism (Tanev & Lekova, 2022).

The theatre environment during rehearsal is a space where actors can engage in raw emotion, recall their experiences, critically reflect on sensitive topics, expression of opinions without judgement and where character exploration can occur (Pieske, 2019). Hunter (2008) explains that this unique environment creates a safe space where race, gender, religion, sexuality, class and age are viewed as creative tools in making theatre. These tools enhance the experience for actors and audience instead of treating them as barriers that further separate the human population. Using these tools in this specific environment is referred to as theatre practice (Young, 2018). The theatre environment in the Spotlight production is the same space for the rehearsal and the production performances. The participants are familiar with the space and well-acquainted with the specific theatre environment created by the production director, fostering trust and a sense of safety felt by the participants and director during the creation process.

- Theatre practices

Theatre practice provides the director and actors with a framework that guides the creative process in achieving a specific objective (Dalrymple, 1987). These objectives drive the devising process of the theatre piece created and, therefore, need careful consideration in selecting a suitable theatre practice to meet the outcome intended (Fleming, 2017). These objectives range from the TIE (Turner, 2010), TFD (Breed, 2002), and theatre for communication and community building (DuMar, 2022). Professional actors and directors devise and perform the above practices; therefore, they are viewed as theatre practices that focus and impart a message through performance directors (Pérez Valverde, 2003).

TIE is a particular type of theatre used in educational projects for schools to educate (Pérez Valverde, 2003). In TIE, plays and drama-devised activities are presented as performances to school-going students to share information through a creative medium (Turner, 2010). The literature reveals this is true for TFD and it focuses on a message of development delivered through theatre performance (Adeyemi, 2015). The message communicated in TFD is aimed at adults since the content being addressed is serious and controversial (Breed, 2002). When the objective of theatre is aimed at fostering communication and building understanding among community members, playback theatre is used (Salas, 2009). Playback theatre originated from psychodrama, which focuses on portraying the life drama of a main character and how they process and work through these personal events (Moreno, 1972). The goal of playback theatre is to create a performance where the main character externalises their psyche using role-play and enactment techniques to adapt their beliefs, behaviours and outlook on future life events (Salas, 2009). When these practices are followed correctly, it ensures the safety of all participants during the devising and performing process (Rajendran, 2016). This goal is achievable through theatre techniques that encourage tolerance, respect and open-mindedness in the theatre environment (Alam & Al-Hawamdeh, 2022). The literature indicates that these three theatre practices focus on the effective delivery of the intended message instead of on the artistic achievements of professional actors (Hammer, 2023).

Multiple theatre practitioners developed their theories for the authenticity of actors' performances (Dalrymple, 1987; Jones, 2005; Mihut, 2020; Schneider, Crumpler & Rogers, 2006;). The objective of these theatre practices can be to achieve the most realistic portrayal of the actor as the character (Jones, 2005) by following specific acting systems developed to aid the actor's transition into a specific role in performance (Schneider et al., 2006). For this study and the focus on transformation, the literature presented on acting methods for achieving authenticity has been narrowed down to the work of three theatre practitioners: Meisner, Strasberg and Stanislavski (Panero, 2019).

Meiser's technique is also known as the real people technique since it focuses on actors relying on their motivated impulses over intellect (Davidson, 2023). Meisner created his technique to teach actors how to perform naturally, which was true to how they would behave and react in a real-life situation (Maus, 2020). This technique helps actors remain present during a performance and remain engaged with their peer actors so that the action on stage would drive the performance; therefore, actors will not solely rely on the previous rehearsed

performance or memory (Davidson, 2023). Literature on Meiser's techniques indicates that theatre practitioners used this method to channel an actor's real reactions and motivations and portray them as the character (Otos & Shively, 2021). This method is centred around three components of the actor's process: the repetition of literature/script, emotional preparation and improvisation (Davidson, 2023). These components provide the building blocks for the actors' transition into their characters by bridging the gap between the characters' actions and responses and the actors' reactions and motivations (Maus, 2020).

Strasberg's technique is known and referred to as method acting (Krasner, 2012). The objective of method acting is for actors to attempt to inhabit the psyche of their given character to achieve an authentic performance (Eken, 2019) by engaging in this process for extended periods to create realistic behaviour within imaginary circumstances (Krasner, 2012). This method comprises four components: removing tension, focus and deliberateness, developing sensory memory, and identification and replication (Eken, 2019). To remove tension, an actor must identify and release tension in the body to create a blank slate for embodying a character (Barclay, 2019). Focus and deliberateness is achieved by engaging in an activity through the senses in a situation equal to the character's character and context (Krasner, 2012). When developing sensory memory, an actor draws on their experiences obtained during the focus and deliberateness component and commits it to memory. Then during a performance, the actor draws on this sensory memory to create a genuine response in the moment (Barclay, 2019). Lastly, during the identification and replication component, actors use their autonomy to select which sensory memories they want to draw on for a specific reaction, making each performance unique (Beck, 2000). Barclay (2019) argues that Strasberg's acting technique focuses on actors developing their sensory memory regarding the character's narrative experience. Sensory memory is fostered when actors engage their senses by engaging in specific physical and psychological experiences similar to the events the character experienced in the plot (Beck, 2000). The literature indicates that multiple theatre practitioners found Strasberg's technique extremely controversial and even dangerous for actors (Eken, 2019; Hetzler, 2020; Krasner, 2012; Maus, 2020). Method acting has raised some major concerns among modern practitioners as a system that might cause an overlap between the actor's self (personal identity) and the character's identity (Otos & Shively, 2021). This method blurs the lines between the actor's psyche and that of the role being enacted since actors might immerse themselves in the character's world and lose

control in the process (Panero, 2019). Therefore, method acting requires great caution and guidance to ensure the safety of the actor during the transition.

The literature indicates that Meisner and Strasberg drew inspiration from Stanislavski's acting technique when they developed their methods (Eken, 2019). However, some safeguards contained in Stanislavski's system were not considered or practiced in later-developed methods, which increased the risk of actors being unable or struggling to distinct between the self and the character (Beck, 2000). Stanislavski designed his acting method to create reality on stage (Zarrilli & Hulton, 2009). He believed that an actor should live a role instead of performing it (Johnston, 2011) for authenticity by using an actor's real-life experiences to build a believable character in a performance (Beck, 2000). Stanislavski's method aimed at recreating natural human behaviour in a staged performance space (Zarrilli & Hulton, 2009). Stanislavski's motivation for this acting technique stemmed from his desire for theatre performance to move away from grandness, spectacle and exaggerated emotional responses to one that was natural, displaying a character's interior life through the actor's psyche (Beck, 2000). His acting method requires actors to engage in rigorous self-reflection on their life experiences and critically evaluate the differences and similarities between themselves as individuals and the role/character they were portraying (Jones, 2005). This acting was achievable by using empathy as a primary element in analysing the characters' narrative experience and their lived experience (Johnston, 2011). Stanislavski's work was not contained in a specific structure, process or format because he continued to develop and modify his technique as his study of acting and his experience in the field continued (Otos & Shively, 2021). The literature indicates two waves of his technique: early and late Stanislavski (Brecht & Mueller, 1964). Early Stanislavski focuses on creating living characters on stage by engaging actors in psychological exercises to develop complex and life-like characters (Panero, 2019). Late Stanislavski focuses on finding harmony between the external and internal acting in preparation for a performance (Mihut, 2020). Stanislavski became concerned with the impact of psychological exercises on actors and moved away from this approach towards an acting method based on the character's actions and inner world (Hetzler, 2020).

The primary elements of the Stanislavski's acting method comprise magic if, given circumstances, objective and super-objective, physical action, communion, emotional memory and subtext (Coger, 1964). The magic if can be understood as a process where actors aligns their motivations to that of the character (Ostdiek, 2012) by placing themselves in the

character's shoes and contemplating how they would react in their lives to a specific event, situation or experience (Stephenson, 2012). Stanislavski believed it was not possible or feasible for an actor to completely believe that the performance on stage was the same as reality, thus, the magic if was vital in helping actors bridge the gap between the self and the character (Stephenson, 2012). The step involving given circumstances determines the spectrum of actions available to the character during their performance (Ostdiek, 2012). The actor uses the script to establish this by deciphering the character's narrative through the script and identifying the character's background, circumstances, story progression and staged world (Ostdiek, 2012). The objective can be understood as the answer to "what does the character want?" and to link the motivation to action on stage (Zarrilli & Hulton, 2009). The super-objective is the primary motivation behind a character's actions, the sole driving force causing the character to achieve their set goal at any cost (Eken, 2019). The objectives are discovered in the text and in character development exercises (Eken, 2019). The step involving physical action is one of the most critical steps in Stanislavski's process because the actor must build their character's behaviour by developing distinct playable actions on stage to portray the character's inner world (Beck, 2000).). These actions are developed and practiced during the rehearsal (Ostdiek, 2012). Communion is a state of the actor being present and focuses on actors' communication with each other on stage during the performance (Hetzler, 2020). Stanislavski believed that the essence of depicting human truth on stage was achieved when actors directed their believable actions towards other actors on stage instead of the audience (Mihut, 2020). Therefore, the action on stage was a live experience for the actors in the role and not merely a rehearsed presentation (Ostdiek, 2012). The most iconic step in Stanislavski's acting method is emotional memory (Brecht & Mueller, 1964). This step involves developing an actor's ability to observe their natural emotional reactions in their daily lives as individuals and then apply it to their character's emotional state during the performance (Mihut, 2020). Stanislavski believed that by encouraging actors to draw on their emotional reactions and experiences to apply them to the character's emotional state, a true depiction of the human condition is achieved on stage (Hetzler, 2020). The literature indicates that numerous practitioners found this process effective for creating realistic performances but at a high risk to the actor as an individual (Johnston, 2011; Mihut, 2020; Panero, 2019) due to the possible blurring of lines between the actor's self and the role they are portraying (Zarrilli & Hulton, 2009). The final step of the method is determining the subtext of a script (Jones, 2005). The actor must determine the meaning behind their character's words in the text by analysing context and expressions

of human behaviour in themselves and the people around them using their imagination (Coger, 1964). The subtext drives the performance of the play (Panero, 2019). The message of the performance is delivered through the subtext (Coger, 1964). Stanislavski's work inspired many theatre practitioners to use his method as a foundation for creating their methods and techniques for acting, noting Stanislavski as a pioneer in theatre-making (Barclay, 2019; Hetzler, 2020; Schneider et al., 2006; Schino, 2020). This study investigates how theatre practices can be used as a tool to cultivate transformative learning experiences for actors. I examine specific techniques of Stanislavski's method used by the actors in the Spotlight production to transition from the self to the character. I explore how transformative learning experiences are created during character development exercises and the emotional engaging/recall exercises.

- The director's role

According to Steinrock (2020), a director is crucial in a theatre production. Traditionally, the director's role is required in four phases of the theatre production's journey: pre-production, rehearsal, technical and production (Afolabi, 2021). In the pre-production phase, directors are concerned with script analysis for their conceptualisation, creating a vision for the play according to their interpretations of the text, planning and instructing the technicians and designers on their requirements for the production, casting of actors, and deciding on timelines and the structure of rehearsals with the stage manager (Furlong, 2020). For the director, the rehearsal requires less logistical duty and focuses on transforming the script into a play/performance on stage through physical and verbal action (Hurtado-Pierson & Nyberg, 2020). This phase includes script analyses with the cast, running lines and blocking the scene with actors and the stage manager, directing actors in segmented scenes using the montage technique to create a flowing storyline and, most importantly, guiding actors through theatre practices in creating and developing their characters and mastering their performances (Schirmer, 2022). Once the rehearsal is completed, it is time to apply the technical aspects to the play (Boltaboeva, Usmanov, & Rahmonova, 2019). The director's role during technical comprises liaising with each technician (sound, lights, props, scenery, costume and stage/set) to communicate and apply specific instructions on when and how the technical appears (Ostdiek, 2012). Rehearsals with actors and technicians run simultaneously to create a complete theatrical production ready for performance (Cole, 2008). In the final production phase, the play in its completion is performed to its audience (Summerskill, 2020). The

director watches the performance from the perspective of an audience member to determine areas of improvement for all role players in the production (Summerskill, 2020). This step includes resolving problem areas that might arise during the performance time, acting notes for actors to improve the quality of their performances and consulting with the production house regarding media interviews and reviews (Afolabi, 2021). This final phase concludes the theatre production journey for the director from conception to realisation (Cole, 2008). Hurtado-Pierson & Nyberg (2020) define the director as the primary visionary and unifying creative force behind a theatre production. Theatre practitioners support this understanding by stating that the director's two primary responsibilities are to create a joint vision within a play/performance and lead the cast through the process of making theatre to achieve its ultimate actualisation (Afolabi, 2021; Schirmer, 2022; Steinrock, 2020).

This study focuses the literature review of the director's role in theatre-making on the second phase, the rehearsal process. I investigate the director's role in preparing actors for an authentic performance since it is aligned with the phenomenon I explore in my study. The director's role in character development begins with reading the script with the actors to create a unified understanding of how the play will be interpreted and communicate the director's vision (Weber & Snoddon, 2020). Directors make choices based on their interpretation and vision for the play that supports the meaning and message being related (Boltaboeva et al., 2019). During the reading and analysis of the script, the director discusses elements of the play with the actors to construct a shared vision and unified goal (Furlong, 2020). These elements include the atmosphere and mood of the play, the character's inner world and context, the progression of scenes, and if any adaptations have been made (Bandelj, 2003). The director then discusses each character with the respective actors to establish a clear understanding of their character's motivation, storyline, context, background, objectives, reactions and actions in the creative space (Eken, 2019). Zarrilli and Hulton (2009) explain that this is, in most cases, a collaborative process and consider the actor's input critical in transitioning from the self to the character. However, Furlong (2020) proposes that the actor must accept the director's interpretation of the character since the director drives the vision of the production. This approach to directing gives rise to the issue concerning an actor's autonomy and the balance between enhancing one's performance and distorting the holistic vision of the production (Ostdiek, 2012).

Stanislavski believed that when characterisation techniques are practiced, directors need not impose their vision on the actors but guide and persuade them so that they can "give birth"

to themselves (Mihut, 2020, p. 222). When actors take ownership of their craft and place themselves in the driving seat when bringing their characters to life, the director can focus on the production as a whole and merely correct the actors' actions and verbal expressions (Barclay, 2019). Beck (2000) states that the director must only guide to enable the actors' developmental journeys during this process and not stifle their creative expression. This collaborative approach requires that the scenery, action and blocking must be invented during the rehearsal through the contribution of the actors and director (Panero, 2019). Panero (2019) adds that the director must consider the actor's needs when making creative choices for the actor to achieve an authentic portrayal of the character. The literature referring to this approach reveals that when actors are engaged in theatre practices to achieve an authentic performance, they must align their identity as closely as possible to that of their characters (Fleming, 2017; Maus, 2020; Panero, 2019). This exploration requires much trust between the director and the actor since the process is personal and intimate and might cause the actor to feel vulnerable (de Smet, Rousseau, Stalpaert, & Haene, 2019). These practices might require the actor to confront hidden realities and truths about themselves, which is part of cultivating empathy for their character (Bandelj, 2003). The director's role is essential to guide the actor through this process in a structured and supported manner to ensure actors do not feel exposed and disturbed by their feelings and thoughts at the end of the exercise (Davidson, 2023; Otos & Shively, 2021). Pieske (2019) proposes that the director is not a therapist but rather a facilitator of creativity. The author states that the director only provides a safe creative space for actors to explore the self by using the transition into the character. This notion presents an understanding among theatre practitioners that the director's role is of a dual nature (Cole, 2008; Coger, 1964; Schino, 2020; Zayniddinovna, 2022). This duality exists because directors' roles require them to engage as mentors to their actors and professional artists directing a production (Cole, 2008). The safety measures the director puts in place to create a conducive environment for character exploration reveals the relationship created between actor and director (de Smet et al., 2019). Fleming (2017) explains that if actors find their directors unapproachable, the creation process is hindered and might not reach its potential in terms of authenticity. The literature states that the director's role in guiding actors through the transition should align their approaches to their actors' welfare (Brecht & Mueller, 1964; Davidson, 2023; Schneider et al, 2006;). This study analyses the impact of directors' facilitation on actors' personal and professional growth in the Spotlight production. I investigate the director's choice of using specific methods or

character exploration exercises to cultivate this transition and how transformative learning experiences are created for actors through his approach.

2.2.4.2 Education – Learning as a student

The following section focuses on how learning is cultivated for a student in an educational environment. The literature in this section addresses three learning theories that influence this study: Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and Gardner's theory of MI. These theories of education directly contribute to how learning occurs for a student in an educational setting. I explain how each theory is applied and interlinked to the phenomenon being investigated in this study.

- Mezirow's transformative learning theory
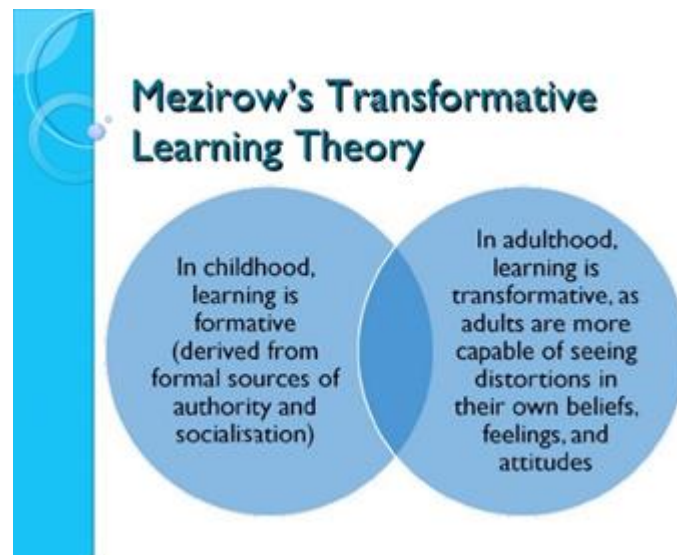
Figure 7: Mezirow's transformative learning theory: Childhood vs. adulthood (ACE Aotearoa, 2017)

Jack Mezirow instituted the transformative learning theory in 1978 during his occupation at the University of Columbia (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow's theory is centred around adult education and how they construct knowledge and make meaning (Taylor, 2000). Figure 7 shows a clear distinction between learning during childhood and adulthood (Christie et al., 2015). Transformative learning theory advocates that adult students can develop and adjust their thinking given their exposure to new information (Christie et al., 2015) by evaluating existing knowledge, beliefs, values, feelings, attitudes and perspectives (known as meaning schemes) to construct a new knowledge system (Taylor, 2000).

Mezirow's transformative learning theory has 10 integral steps that create transformation for the individual during the learning encounter (Zhao & Liu, 2022). Each step is explained below, encompassing the motivation in education and theatre practice (Zhao & Liu, 2022):

1. **Disorienting dilemma:** The introduction of new information that does not correspond with prior/current knowledge of the world challenges our worldview and is seen as a dilemma.
2. **Self-examination** refers to critically questioning and examining our beliefs, feelings and prior knowledge systems after learning that the new information does not fit.
3. **Critical assessment:** We reassess our fundamental beliefs and assumptions from our past knowledge system considering the new information.
4. **Recognition:** We acknowledge that other individuals have gone through similar experiences.
5. **Exploration:** We consider the impact the change in our beliefs will have on our lives.
6. **Action planning:** We evaluate the types of changes we will make to reflect our new beliefs.
7. **Knowledge acquisition:** We explore knowledge and understanding needed to reflect and expand our new outlook.
8. **Trying new roles:** We explore different roles and how to view a subject from a new perspective.
9. **Building confidence:** We learn to become more confident with our new identity.
10. **Reintegration:** We understand the changes we have gone through and can apply our new knowledge and understanding to future challenges.

This study only draws on the two fundamental pillars containing elements of the above steps since they are relevant to the research topic. Transformative learning theory comprises two fundamental pillars: instrumental and communicative learning (Kitchenham, 2008). Both are vital to the adult learning process since they lead one to evaluate and question the assumptions and beliefs we have constructed about the world (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). Quinn and Sinclair (2016) state that the primary difference between instrumental and communicative learning is the purpose, process and outcome they present.

Instrumental learning involves controlling and manipulating the environment to serve as a problem-solving method for decoding knowledge (Mezirow, 2003). It focuses on improving

performance by learning how to control people and the environment around you (Kurnia, 2021). D'Amato and Krasny (2011) propose an overlap between instrumental learning and personal growth. Their findings indicate that the participants in their study experienced empowerment and ownership by increasing their ability to navigate a specific task-based activity (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). Sterling (2016) supports this finding by indicating that individuals participating in instrumental and social learning experienced an increase in personal resilience and sustainability in a new environment. Franz (2002) motivates that the purpose of instrumental learning is to develop our command of task-based activities to enhance our skills and knowledge. This form of learning is approached from a rational and concrete perspective to discover the truth (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). Instrumental learning is task-oriented, requiring empirical evidence through evaluating the beliefs and assumptions of others and oneself to determine its true form (Mezirow, 2008). The outcome of instrumental learning is to produce concrete products, namely developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge (Mezirow, 2008).

Communicative learning pertains to understanding the meaning of what is being communicated when the interaction occurs (Mezirow, 2003)—"becoming aware of the assumptions, intentions, and qualifications of the person communicating" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). Communicative learning involves two or more students working towards a shared understanding or reaching a consensus on a belief or the meaning interpreted from an experience (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022). Through discourse and introspection, different perspectives arise and can be justified by the parties in communication (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022). Communicative learning requires a willingness to consider a perspective different from your own to create a joint understanding (Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023) by engaging in a critical reflection with others regarding specific beliefs and assumptions (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). Communicative learning develops our understanding of how humans communicate by evaluating our intentions, values and beliefs with those of others (Mezirow, 2008). This process involves assessing claims through discussion and understanding where consensus can be reached (Kurnia, 2021). Kurnia (2021) explains that these claims concern intentions, namely sincerity, appropriateness, authenticity and rightness. Communicative learning generates insights of oneself, others and society (Franz, 2002). With this outcome in mind, note that learning requires communicative and instrumental learning. Combining these two pillars allows adults to evaluate and reconstruct knowledge that shape their meaning schemes.

The interchangeable nature of these two pillars fosters transformative learning experiences by altering the student's current meaning schemes (Kitchenham, 2008). Zhao and Liu (2022) echo this explanation, stating that these two pillars are fundamental to learning processes and directly contribute to creating new learning encounters for the student. These learning encounters manifest when new information is introduced and accepted by the student (Quinn & Sinclair, 2016). Meaning schemes are defined as the student's body of knowledge, which shapes their perspective of the world and how they build meaning from their experiences (Sterling, 2016). Moyer and Sinclair (2016) explain that a meaning scheme is an accumulation of perspectives, beliefs, judgements, concepts, attitudes, assumptions, values and feelings about the world, which directly influences how we interpret our lived experience. These filters shape how we view the world around us and how we view ourselves within this world (Ishino, 2018). Meaning schemes are altered through a cognitive process of evaluation, reflection and adjustment, allowing the individual to merge their current knowledge system with a new stimulus to create a new knowledge system (Taylor, 2000). Through critical reflection and review, a student can develop a new meaning scheme when presented with new information (Christie et al., 2015). This process cultivates a transformative learning encounter for the student when the new information is accepted, altering the current knowledge system (Mezirow, 2008). This study focuses on the actor's transformative processes achieved through communicative and instrumental learning adopted from Mezirow's transformative learning theory. I investigate how the meaning scheme of an actor is altered during this process. The knowledge gained through actors' interactions in the theatre environment produces learning opportunities where they can evaluate and reconstruct their meaning schemes. This process can be explained as social constructivism developed by Lev Vygotsky.

- Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism
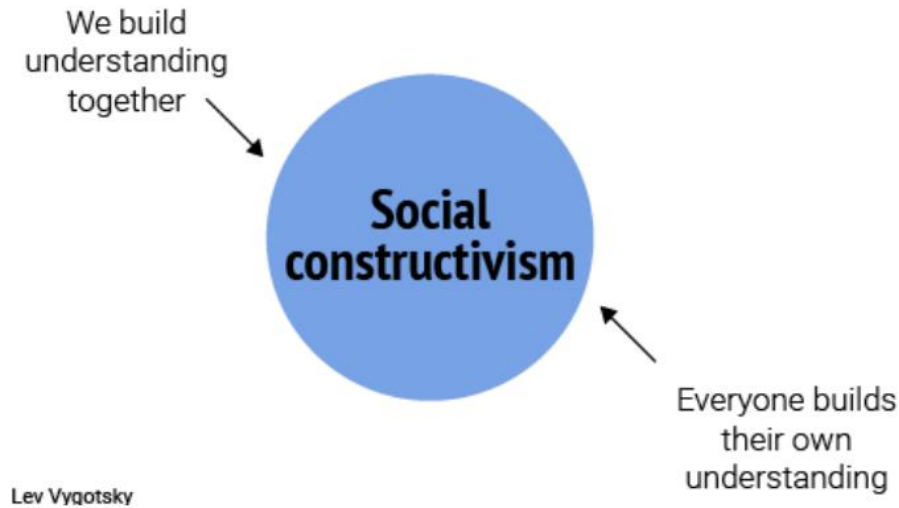
Figure 8: Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (Booker, 2019)

Research in learning and education has revealed a connection between Mezirow's transformative learning theory and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (Andersen, 2004; Christie et al., 2015; Raquel, 2015; Rasmussen, 2010). The premise indicates that communicative learning in Mezirow's theory cultivates learning encounters for the individual when interchangeable lines of communication are generated between themselves and others when working towards achieving a mutual understanding (Kitchenham, 2008). Social constructivism proposes that learning encounters are created for the individual through interactions within a group environment or social setting (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018). Both theories focus on the student's ability to construct knowledge and meaning from drawing on new information and prior experience (Heathcote, 1970; O'Neill, 1995; Raquel, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978;).

Social constructivism is based on Piaget's constructivism theory, which proposes that individuals learn by using their cognitive faculties to construct knowledge (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017) by interacting with the environment, which serves as a stimulus for introducing new information (Ackermann, 2001). Individuals process the information as they reflect on previous knowledge, evaluate new information, establish connections and reach a logical conclusion (Ackermann, 2001). Gascon (2019) advocates that Piaget's constructivism theory shares the same element of interaction with instrumental learning from Mezirow's transformative learning theory because they use the environment as a stimulant. Miller-First and Ballard (2017) argue that the constructivist approach in teaching and learning cultivates deep learning because it requires students to construct their knowledge

by drawing on their past experiences and personal reference points. We reflect and evaluate thought processes associated with our experience and apply logic to its connection to our current reference points (Rasmussen, 2010). Deep learning occurs when connections are made between the individual's previous knowledge and the new knowledge obtained to form a new understanding of a concept/idea/event (Christie et al., 2015; Dodson, 2002; Vygotsky & Cole, 2018).

Social constructivism is concerned with learning as a collaborative medium (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018). Learning encounters are created when individuals use their interactions with other people as a source of new knowledge (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017). By engaging with the ideas, understanding, culture and society of others, individuals expand their knowledge spectrum beyond the border of their current knowledge base (Raquel, 2015). Nystrand (1996) explains that individuals not only allow but rely on other people to increase their knowledge by creating building blocks to help them construct new knowledge. Interactive discourse, discussion and collaborative activity promote learning because they allow individuals to share their independent thoughts with others through language (Nystrand, 1996). In turn, they can evaluate and consider the independent thoughts of others through the same medium (Gascon, 2019). Head (2022) supports this conceptualisation by stating that language is powerful for creating new knowledge because it allows individuals to make connections and create cross-cultural understandings that transcend the learning environment. However, Lui and Matthews (2005) argue that language might be a barrier in this process because it is the primary vehicle of communication. They add that language barriers create communication difficulties because it limits an individual's inquiry and the process of negotiating with the ideas of others (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Knoblauch and Pfadenhauer (2023) propose that language barriers prohibit an individual from obtaining the necessary information/knowledge to initiate the process of constructing new knowledge, resulting in gaps in their understanding. Social constructivism situates that learning is an active process where individuals construct meaning for themselves (Rasmussen, 2010), fostering a feeling of great satisfaction and achievement, which makes learning more memorable (Dodson, 2002).

In this study, social constructivism plays a crucial role in an actor's learning in theatre because it connects to Mezirow's theory of transformation which addresses the actor's process. It also speaks directly to how learning in the theatre environment occurs since actors can confront their current knowledge and build new meaning and understanding by

considering the thoughts and perspectives of others through interaction with peer actors, technical crew and the director. This social interaction occurs in multiple ways and, therefore, contributes to the actor's cognitive faculty through various intelligences. Gardner's theory pertaining to the nine intelligences of humans accurately accounts for the nature of learning in the theatre.

- Gardner's theory of MI

Literature on active learning and learning through social interactions reveals a link to Gardner's theory of MI, which advocates for developing the whole individual (Darlene, 2017; Kezar, 2001; Moran, Kornhaber, & Gardner, 2006). Gardner's theory places the student at the centre of the learning encounter, making them active participants in their learning (Gardner, 1999). Gardner explains that effective learning requires flexibility, where students have several choices in how their learning is cultivated (Gardner & Moran, 2006). He defines active learning as a hands-on, project-based activity of an interdisciplinary nature situated in real-life contexts (Gardner, 2011). MI challenges the traditional notion that intelligence is a single entity and is either inherited and/or developed as one unit of ability (Hasanuddin, Dewi, Siregar & Tarigan, 2022). MI views intelligence as comprising multiple faculties that are independent and interactive depending on the individual and situation (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider, & Gardner, 2011). Gardner (1999) advocates that integrative instruction emulates real life that cultivates specific skills, attitudes and ways of thinking, which will serve students in the real world. Scholars in teaching and learning support this perspective, stating that an individual can develop numerous technical skills in academic, social and affective faculties when engaging in transdisciplinary education (Hasanuddin et al., 2022). Furthermore, Gardner proposes that engaging an individual's MI produces critical thinking, autonomy, creativity and independence skills (Aguayo, Ruano, & Vallejo, 2021). Creativity develops diverse ways of thinking that produce different solutions to the same problem (Shearer, 2018). Gardner proposes that creativity presents various forms of intelligence and can be developed by anyone through specific stimuli and activity (Darlene, 2017). MI focuses on the individual's strengths, motivating that humans differ from birth and are viewed as unique cases (Morgan, 2021), proposing that education cannot be limited to one generalised approach but must accommodate multiple ways of knowing and inquiring, allowing students to learn in their unique ways (Yavich & Rotnitsky, 2020).

Four understandings create the foundation of MI theory. The first indicates that individuals possess all intelligences, but how these intelligences function together is unique to each person (Shearer & Karanian, 2017). Second, intelligences can be developed to achieve a higher competency when engaging in specific activities and new ways of thinking (Moran et al., 2006). Third, although each intelligence has its own characteristics and is viewed through a separate lens, they work together in complex ways (Davis et al., 2011). The fourth understanding advocates that there are many ways to be intelligent within each of these facets of intellect (Gardner, 2011). This belief motivates us that how we assess intellect requires a broader lens if it is to consider the unique intellectual ability of diverse people (Yavich & Rotnitsky, 2020). Critics of the MI theory propose that the theory's framework is too broad and generalised and, therefore, cannot be accurately applied to teaching and learning (Shearer, 2018). However, Kezar (2001) and Morgan (2021) argue that the MI theory cannot be viewed as a tool to classify and define students' learning abilities since the theory strongly motivates that all individuals possess all intelligences and can develop MI through specific activities. They further motivate that an individual's abilities are constantly changing, and it is detrimental to label a student's intelligence at any point in their lives (Kezar, 2001; Morgan, 2021). Another criticism presented by Klein (1997) states that the MI theory is unsuitable for curriculum reform because it focuses on ability and presents a static view of a student's competence. Achkovska Leshovska and Spaseva (2016) have rejected this claim by highlighting that the MI theory was not designed for curriculum reform nor is it a collection of rigid scripts for schools to adopt for school improvement. They elaborate by stating that the MI theory can be consulted as a method for educators to understand their students, informing their instructions to provide a more holistic approach to teaching and learning.
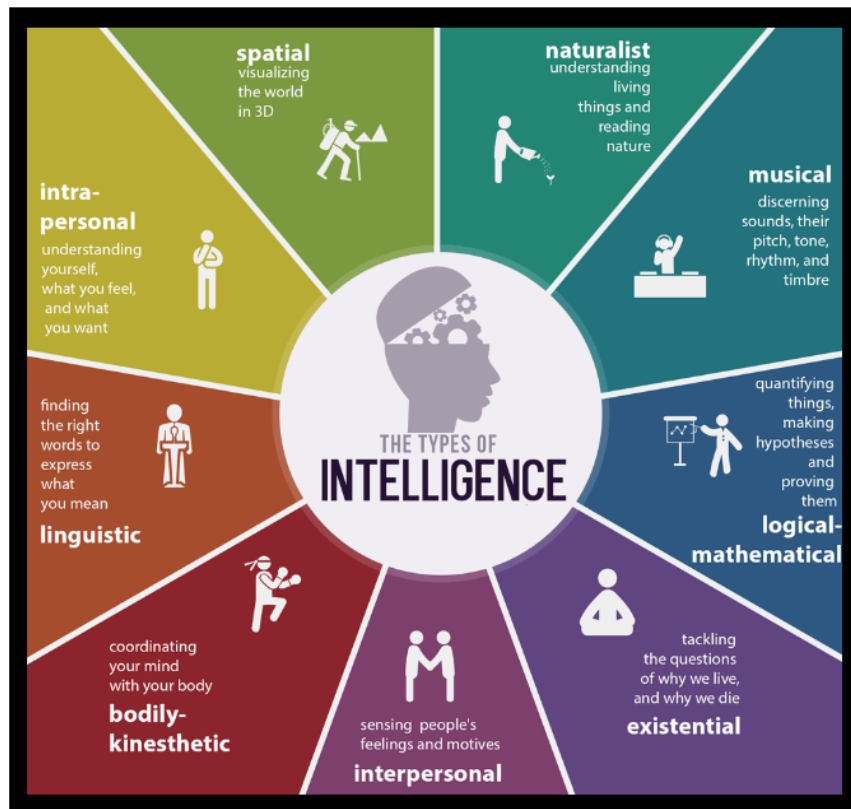
Figure 9: Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) (Vital, 2022)

The MI theory proposes that individuals possess nine intelligences (Gardner, 1999). Intelligences can be understood as potentials and capabilities an individual possess (Gardner, 1999). These intelligences differ according to the human environment and personal development, making them dynamic (Aguayo et al., 2021). Gardner (2011) states that an individual could use one intelligence to improve and enhance another intelligence, fostering growth and development holistically (Aguayo et al., 2021). The author of MI theory identified the nine intelligences as linguistic, bodily kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, naturalistic, musical, logical–mathematical and existential (Morgan, 2021). Linguistic–verbal intelligence refers to ways of knowing that are cultivated from language, writing, reading and speaking (Davis et al., 2011). It focuses on the ability to use language effectively to express oneself and make meaning from the world (Darlene, 2017) by understanding the meaning of words in writing and speech (Campbell & Campbell, 1999).). This intelligence increases in capability when an individual easily grasps the sociocultural context of a language, how to use it to articulate complex ideas and how to use words and phrases to relay meaning and understanding (Hasanuddin et al., 2022).

Bodily kinaesthetic is explained as individuals' ability to use their body as a way of knowing (Gardner & Moran, 2006). Learning through bodily kinaesthetic intelligence occurs by engaging in physical movement and developing the ability to manipulate one's body to achieve specific activities successfully (Kezar, 2001; Vital, 2022). It is referred to as learning by doing, where an individual is actively involved in a task and uses their body to explore the world around them (Abdi et al., 2013). This intelligence advocates for high levels of competencies in communicating through body language, easily completing physical tasks and increased body awareness (Moran et al., 2006). Interpersonal intelligences speak to an individual's ability to understand, relate to, engage and communicate with other people (Gardner & Moran, 2006). Knowledge acquired through this intelligence is cultivated from person-to-person interaction and fosters social skills essential for living and working (Moran et al., 2006). Developing effective ways of knowing through interpersonal intelligence requires high levels of empathy for other people, allowing the individual to display a deep understanding of others' viewpoints and circumstances (Gardner, 1999). Learning in this domain is achieved through collaboration, sharing of personal thoughts and perspectives, listening and comprehending others' experiences and viewpoints, and problem-solving in a team dynamic (Gardner & Moran, 2006).

Intrapersonal intelligence is concerned with individuals' introspection and increasing an understanding of their inner motivations and aspirations (Gardner, 2011). This intelligence advocates for high levels of self-reflection, self-awareness and the ability to connect easily with your thought processes, emotions, values and beliefs (Darlene, 2017). Ways of knowing in this domain indicate an individual's ability to search for meaning, significance and purpose of their experiences (Shearer & Karanian, 2017). Furthermore, ability with intrapersonal intelligence is understood as recognising and understanding one's intentions, motivations, moods, desires and reactions (Shearer & Karanian, 2017). Competence in this intelligence allows individuals to anticipate specific experiences and how they will react to them; therefore, they can predetermine their actions within a specific situation or context (Davis et al., 2011). These personal insights and self-awareness allow them to avoid challenging encounters and cultivate beneficial experiences aligned with their motivations (Kezar, 2001).

Spatial intelligence can be understood as a visual understanding of the world and making meaning from interpreting visual stimulants (Shearer, 2018). Ways of knowing in this domain occur when connections are made between images, shapes, patterns, textures and

designs we see and the meaning we create in our minds (Gardner, 2011). Individuals displaying high competence in this intelligence interpret the world by visually engaging with their environment to problem-solve and create meaning (Hasanuddin et al., 2022). Spatial intelligence allows individuals to decode and process information from visual stimuli to create meaning and connections for themselves (Shearer & Karanian, 2017).

Naturalistic intelligence is a domain involving the full range of knowing acquired through encounters with the natural environment (Gardner & Moran, 2006). Learning in naturalistic intelligence occurs through specific interactions with the natural world where an individual can recognise, appreciate and understand the elements found in the environment (Moran et al., 2006). An individual possessing high naturalistic competencies can easily differentiate between various species, classify multiple fauna and flora, and easily notice changes in the weather (Morgan, 2021). Naturalistic intelligence proposes that individuals are in tune with their surroundings and have a sensitive connection to all living things (Gardner, 2011).

Music–rhythmic intelligence is concerned with knowing what happens through vibrations and sound (Yavich & Rotnitsky, 2020). In addition to music, this domain encompasses the entire realm of sound, beats, vibrations, patterns, rhythms and tones (Gardner, 2011). Individuals who show high competency in music–rhythmic intelligence exhibit a deep affinity for various music and easily understand the complexity of composition (Leshkovska & Spaseva, 2016). As part of this affinity, these individuals use music as expression and communication between their inner and outer worlds (Gardner, 1999). Learning in this domain occurs when an individual engages in musical performance and composition (Davis et al., 2011).

The logical–mathematical intelligence is concerned with using numbers, mathematics and logic to interpret the world (Shearer, 2018). This domain is defined as intelligence that develops learning encounters by identifying various patterns, namely thoughts, numbers, colours and visuals (Gardner & Moran, 2006), allowing individuals who use this intelligence as a primary source of knowing to understand and make meaning of life and circumstances, personal relationships and solving problems (Gardner & Moran, 2006). Individuals who display a high capability in this intelligence think in abstract and conceptual ways and express themselves structurally and systematically (Morgan, 2021).

Lastly, existential intelligence focuses on making meaning from life experiences and using this knowledge to transform one's thinking regarding future events (Davis et al., 2011). Existential intelligence fosters learning encounters when individuals search for answers to deep and thought-provoking questions about life, their purpose and how they fit into the bigger picture (Darlene, 2017). These individuals display an affinity for a philosophical understanding of the human condition and delve into deep contemplation about death, love and the future to make sense of the world (Kezar, 2001). In this domain, individuals with high capabilities display a strong interest in the lives and actions of others and making connections from experience to create meaning (Leshkovska & Spaseva, 2016). This way of knowing allows individuals to search and pursue these deep understandings from an outside perspective and analyse situations objectively (Gardner, 1999). This study explores how transformative learning occurs for actors during theatre practice by evaluating which domain of intelligence is engaged. By examining the relationship between learning as an actor compared to learning as a student, I can define how both contribute to how learning through theatre occurs.

2.2.4.3 Learning through theatre

The section on learning through theatre comprises literature combining both foundational pillars to form one inosculated way of knowing. The reviewed literature refers specifically to the actors' learning encounters through theatre practice. According to the phenomenon investigated in this study, I selected three areas within the literature to review: thinking processes, stimulated activity and pedagogy. With each area of review literature, I address precise elements that contribute to learning through theatre.

- Thinking processes

This area of the literature looks at critical reflection drawn from critical thinking and reflective processes in theatre. I address the cognition and metacognition processes actors undergo during participation in theatre practices.

Defining each component as it relates to theatre is crucial for understanding critical reflection in theatre. Critical thinking is an intellectual process of skilfully and actively evaluating information in a disciplined way (Vickers, 2020). It requires conceptualising, synthesising, analysing and applying current knowledge with new information to form new knowledge (Alsaleh, 2020). Critical thinking allows an individual to systematically examine

experiences and perspectives by investigating what has transpired and, more so, why (Zeng, 2019). The objective of critical thinking is to discover meaning and create understanding from an experience or event to modify future behaviour (Pardede, 2019). In theatre practices, critical thinking activities are essential to actors' transition from the self to the character because it enables them to embody the character physically, mentally and emotionally during the performance (Vickers, 2020). By understanding the character's motives, perspectives and inner thought processes, an actor can live as the character at the given moment of performance (Howe, Boal, & Soeiro, 2019). By critically evaluating the cause and effect within a character's experiences, actors develop a deeper understanding of who the character is and how they can relate to their experience (Zeng, 2019).

Freire (1974: p. 48) stated that true reflection leads to action, which is crucial for the actor's preparation. Actors must achieve a level of utmost believability in performance and, therefore, must produce actions, reactions and thought processes aligned with the character and not with themselves (Reeves, Nyatanga, & Neilson, 2021). During reflection, an individual recalls past experiences that have led to a specific way of thinking, judgements and perceptions associated with an event, situation or person (Hébert, 2015). In theatre practices, such as Stanislavski's method, actors engage in a process of reflection of how they would react and produce specific thoughts from the character's experiences, thus connecting the two entities (Ingleson, 2022). Hart (2020) explains that reflection in theatre is an emotional experience as one evaluates thoughts that lead to actions that evoke emotional responses. Mälkki (2019) advocates that reflection allows the actor to enter the character's mind to live as the character during the performance. This step guards against an actor performing a superficial representation of the character's experiences.

Therefore, critical reflection within theatre practices combines the cognitive and emotional thought processes to produce a real interpretation of reality (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). Character development activities advocate for a deep critical reflection of the actor as the self and the actor as the character to create meaningful connections (Baer, Salisbury, & Goldstein, 2019). Actors' abilities to engage in critical reflection improve with practice and expand their repertoire of gestures, actions, thought processes and ability to empathise with others (Banks, Walling, & Loth, 2022). Through critical reflection activities, I explore how actors create meaning from their experiences in the Spotlight production. I explore how actors engage in the social alchemy activity to evaluate their characters' identities.

Cognition is a process or mental action of acquiring information/knowledge and understanding through experience, the senses and thought (McConachie & Hart, 2006). The concepts of cognition and thinking are frequently used interchangeably (Goldstein & Bloom, 2011). This study applies the definition that refers to the developmental ability of an individual when engaging in theatre practices. Therefore, the definition highlights a person's ability to process information, hold attention, maintain concentration, store and retrieve information and select appropriate responses and actions in given circumstances (Blair & Lutterbie, 2011). In the theatre environment, actors are exposed to a multitude of stimuli throughout the creative process, which cultivate numerous opportunities to engage their cognitive faculties. Evidence on teaching and learning has exposed a perception indicating a lack of connection between cognition and the arts (Efland, (2004).). Piaget saw "cognitive development as a journey away from the sensory and the emotional towards abstract conceptualisation" (Andersen, 2004, p. 74). Most theorists in the dramatic arts field have rejected this notion, advocating that participation in theatre practices enhances cognitive abilities (Heathcote, 1970). O'Toole and O'Mara (2007) support this notion by stating that theatre practices facilitate learning in all areas of Gardner's MI theory (Andersen, 2004), which result in deep learning. Andersen (2004) adds that the nine forms of intelligences described in Gardner's model are engaged and included in theatre preparation and performance. Gascon (2019) states that cognitive engagement in theatre occurs when students consider others' perspectives and compare them to theirs. This deliberate cycle of thinking and questioning allows students to adapt and alter their current perspectives/knowledge to develop new understandings (Goldstein & Bloom, 2011). This study explores how actors' cognitive faculties are engaged when participating in character development activities such as the social alchemy theory for character development.

Metacognition refers to individuals' understanding and awareness of their thought processes (Head, Kluge, Morris, & Rees, 2017). When learning through theatre, an actor engages in an ongoing metacognitive process to build self-awareness (Fox & Riconscente, 2008). Self-awareness is the key to emotional intelligence because when we become aware of our thoughts that create emotional reactions, we can modify our emotional responses (Norman & Furnes, 2016). Theatre practices, such as Stanislavski's method, contain numerous exercises that develop the actors' metacognitive abilities to enter a new reality by tapping into the character's mindset (Sokol-Hessner, Wing-Davey, Illingworth, Fleming & Phelps, 2022). This process requires the actor to consider a new set of thoughts and perspectives

belonging to the character to empathise with the character's experiences (Sokol-Hessner et al., 2022), which is essential for acting, as it allows the actor to live, think and react in the present moment as the character, thus bringing the character to life (Massey, 2020). Andersen discusses the work of Kunn and Dean (2004) on metacognition as being a core contributor to actors' cognitive development and that using theatre practices, such as Stanislavski's method, can be effective to foster metacognition (Andersen, 2004). Actors explore their judgements, attitudes and motivations to create a bridge between themselves and the character they portray (Pulley, Hall, & Burkitt, 2021). This process is essential, as the actor must identify with the thoughts and beliefs of the character to create a believable and authentic performance (Massey, 2020). By evaluating their meaning schemes towards a situation, actors undergo a metacognitive process where they become aware of how they think, how these perceptions were created and how these thoughts and beliefs shape their behaviour (Mihut, 2020). Straksiene (2022) motivates that character development exercises in theatre engage the actor personally and privately because it requires them to question who they are by exploring their inner thought, emotions, attitudes and judgements. This process is metacognitive, as the object of the exercise is aimed at helping actors understand themselves and the root of their current meaning schemes (Dogan & Cephe, 2019). Actors can only understand their character's life, thoughts and emotions when they understand who they are and how they have come to be as they are now (Pulley et al., 2021). This process is vital in an actor's preparation, as it establishes the similarities and differences between the actor and the character, reinforcing the relationship between the two (Okoye, 2022). Norman and Funes (2016) argue that only once actors understand how another thinks, interprets the world and reacts to this information, can they consider the thought processes, beliefs and judgements of another. In theatre, the other is known as the character. In line with the phenomenon explored in this study, I investigate the metacognitive processes in theatre practices used in the Spotlight production and how they aid actors in altering their meaning schemes. These theatre practices use simulated activities, allowing actors to interrogate their thinking processes.

- Simulated activity

The following literature area addresses the element of simulated activity in theatre practices. It highlights the role of how transformation in the actor can occur by presenting three

contributing factors: role-taking, real-life metaphor and make-believe. Together, these factors create a simulated environment for engaging in theatre practices.

Role-taking is essential when learning through theatre, as it allows the actor to develop appropriate ways of behaving within everyday situations (de Smet et al., 2019). These roles are acted out in a simulated situation where the actor is physically and mentally engaged in an active process (Hurtado-Pierson & Nyberg, 2020). Within this active process, actors make creative choices they feel align to their character in each situation (Carson, 2012). These creative choices include actions to depict behaviour, tone and tempo in delivering dialogue, gestures and emotions to represent the character's inner feelings and state of mind (Blair & Lutterbie, 2011). Once the role-taking activity is complete, actors can reflect on their performances in that specific role to determine the outcome and effect of their creative choices (Dogan & Cephe, 2019). Role-taking allows actors to explore identity and circumstance without limits because they can take on any role, in any situation (Rajendran, 2016). This sense of freedom provides actors with numerous opportunities to explore the human condition from diverse perspectives (Emunah, 1994). Actors can draw on their life experiences, interpretations, perspectives and insights when taking on a role (Carson, 2012). In this way, they recreate reality from their viewpoints and simultaneously acquire new knowledge from the simulated experiences contributed by peer actors (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994).

Heathcote (1970) explains that role-taking is a normal and natural way for individuals to make sense of their world and how they fit in. Role-taking creates a unique platform for actors to explore and evaluate their boundaries within a role without the consequences of reality (Upham & Gathen, 2021). Theatre practitioners (Young, 2018) have adopted this method, including Butler (2017), who states that the actor becomes a part of an experience during an activity. Actors will automatically draw on their experiences as a reference point to aid their search for meaning and understanding (de Smet et al., 2019). By being someone else, actors can address issues, portray behaviours and act out actions that are not associated with their identity but solely linked to the character (Isyar & Akay, 2017). Consequently, the actor feels safe to explore and experiment with various roles that cultivate real-life learning opportunities with the consequences of reality (Rajendran, 2016). Fleming (2017) advocates that role-taking fosters deep learning in actors, as they increase their understanding of humans regarding their thoughts, emotions and reactions. By understanding cause and effect

in a situation, actors can apply this newly constructed knowledge to their real lives, creating opportunities for personal growth and development (Emunah, 1994).

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the significance and effectiveness of using the simulated environment in theatre practices as a metaphor for real-life experiences (Elfand, 2004; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985; Mavroudis & Bournelli, 2019; McNees, 2015; Van den Berg et al., 2014). Actors can develop real skills applicable to their lives as they engage in simulated activities (Reeves et al., 2021). The actor is aware that the scenario created is unreal; however, the actions, thought processes and emotions the actor experiences feel real and, therefore, the insights discovered are meaningful (Hetzler, 2020). During theatre practices, such as Stanislavski's method for character development, actors learn to navigate a path to solving the problems their character encounters using their ability to exercise creativity, imagination, critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Hetzler, 2020). Bailey (1997) and Dogru (2015) echo the benefits of participating in theatre practices in this context, stating that the power of simulated activity lies in its ability to mimic a false reality that represents real-life events and real people. Gascon (2019) states that this false reality evokes the same principles and rules as a real-life situation, for example, consequences, choices, emotions and thought processes. It allows actors to deepen their thoughts as they recreate their characters' lived experiences, thus developing cognitive skills and achieving deep learning (Mavroudis & Bournelli, 2019). These learning encounters are cultivated when actors engage in complex real-life simulated experiences and discover new learning through their inquiry to solve the simulated problem (Gascon 2019). The collaboration and creativity of this process cultivate practical experiences for the actor through this real-life metaphor (Young, 2018). These problem-solving skills are developed through practice and active involvement (Dunn, 2016). Even though acting in a role is not real, the actor's experience, learning and emotions are as real as in real life (Butler, 2017). This way of knowing is not restricted to the simulated environment but extends to the actors' lives (Van den Berg et al., 2014).

Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) state that when actors engage their imagination during theatre performance to portray a character, they let go of their inhibitions, allowing them to freely explore their interpretations of their character's identity. This freedom of expression draws on the actor's creativity to speak, think and act in a way unfamiliar to their personal identity (Tovani & Moje, 2017). The concept of engaging in a make-believe world as someone else

is liberating and allows actors to explore their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions without feeling exposed or judged (Pulley et al., 2021).

Numerous studies share the same perspective that expression in theatre activity is a powerful tool to help individuals verbalise their inner feelings and assist them in communicating their thoughts non-invasively (Barnes-Smith et al., 2015; Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011; Ikonomopoulos et al., 2017; Nompula, 2012; Pieske, 2019; Stuckey & Tisdell, 2010). Actors feel safe in this space to express what they are thinking, gaining insight into their experiences (Nompula, 2012). Pieske (2019) adds that theatre practices provide actors with a feeling of empowerment, giving them a sense of control over their lives and helping them cope with the stressors of daily life. The insight offered by Barnes-Smith et al. (2015) puts forward that individuals need an avenue of expression separate from their daily lives to make sense of their world. Theatre provides a space for expression in a make-believe world, creating numerous opportunities for actors to explore roles far removed from their identities in the real world (Nompula, 2012).

This study explores how this simulated environment created in the Spotlight production cultivates a unique space for actors to construct a deeper understanding of themselves as individuals and professionals. Furthermore, I explore how participation in a simulated activity creates real learning encounters for the actor. By adopting theatre practices in the classroom environment, a new avenue is explored that relates to the pedagogy of the drama classroom.

- Pedagogy

Here, I address using theatre practices in classroom learning. I present literature regarding drama in education and drama-based pedagogy. Drama in education refers to teaching theatre practices as a subject for school children to develop skills acquired through participation in theatre. Drama-based pedagogy refers to using theatre activities and approaches that are applied to classroom instruction to teach various subjects in the curriculum.

Research have been published on the need to include drama as a subject in the school curriculum due to its significant impact on actors regarding their growth, development of their mental faculties and emotional wellbeing (Barnes-Smith et al., 2015; Pieske, 2019). Drama uses multiple theatre practices to cultivate twenty-first-century skills in students

(Raquel, 2015). Engaging in drama activities assists children in effectively communicating with adults since they frequently find it challenging to verbally express themselves (Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011). Adolescents experience strong feelings that might cause inner turmoil since they might not understand it and, therefore, refrain from talking about it (DuMar, 2022). Students' involvement in theatre practices provide them with the necessary tools to enhance their ability to communicate with other, increasing their ability to trust (Snyder-Young, Houston, Bell, Short & Lincoln, 2022).

Drama activities bridge this gap for these individuals by creating a non-intrusive gateway to discover and evaluate their thoughts and attitudes (Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011). Research on this topic supports the application of drama techniques in classroom learning to motivate, encourage, engage and capture students (Andersen, 2004; Heathcote, 1970; O'Neill, 1995). Furthermore, Heathcote (1970) states that participation in theatre practices encourages tolerance, respect and open-mindedness among students. Savatgy (2022) advocates that students' participation in drama activities improves their self-confidence and self-image. Jones (2013) and Massey (2020) state that drama activities foster personality development, enable students to trust themselves and their peers, develop social behaviour, enhance concentration and motivation and broaden a student's perspective on the world around them. By engaging students in drama activities and techniques, they can safely explore their feelings and find multiple ways to express them (Reeves et al., 2021), developing their emotional intelligence and ability to empathise with others (Heathcoat & Herbert, 1985). The literature reveals that involvement in drama techniques stimulates critical thinking and encourages students to search for a deeper understanding of the character and themselves (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985; Thacker, 2002; Young, 2018;).

Process theatre is a popular drama activity used in the drama classroom due to the developmental skills it cultivates (Jones, 2013). Process drama is a dramatic activity that focuses on the process and not the product (Rasmussen, 2010). Students' do not work towards a specific result, instead, the emphasis is placed on the student's journey in the role and how they navigate the imagined circumstance (Massey, 2020). In this drama activity, students must create and define a character and engage in a simulated scenario as their character (Dunn, 2016). Within this circumstance, students must think and respond in their roles as the educator guides them (Jones, 2013). The interactions in process drama activities are unscripted and improvised by the students (Reeves et al., 2021). However, before the

activity, the students and the educator establish a specific situation to begin with and agree upon boundaries and expectations to achieve cohesion and progression (Hunter, 2008).

The literature on drama-based pedagogy shows various approaches that have been developed over the decades. According to Dawson and Lee (2018), drama-based pedagogy uses drama approaches to actively engage students in artistic, emotional and academic learning through a dialogic meaning-making process in all facets of the curriculum. In the last two decades, drama-based pedagogy has attracted much attention from research teams because of its popularity with students in the teaching environment (Dogru, 2015; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985; O'Toole, 2009). Explorations and studies were conducted in various subjects using dramatic approaches to teach the specific subject material, including Science (Abed, 2106), Languages (Atas, 2015), Geometry (Ubuz & Duatepe-Paksu, 2016), Mathematics (Coleman & Davies, 2018), History (O'Toole, 2009), and Biology (Saka et al., 2016). The researchers above show sustainable evidence that drama-based pedagogy improves students' understanding of concepts and changes their attitude towards their subjects (Yoon, 2006). This research reveals that drama-based pedagogy is successful in cultivating deep learning in students due to its constructivist approach, use of MI, generating opportunities for reflective practice and its focus on students as a key component in their learning journey (Abed, 2016; Andersen, 2004; Heathcote, 1985; O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007; Van den Berg et al., 2014;). Tanev and Lekova (2022) advocate for drama-based pedagogy to teach social robotics to students. Their study reveals that incorporating drama into the robotics curriculum enhances student's emotional skills and their ability to recognise various emotions in others (Dawson & Lee, 2018). Students also learn how to respond appropriately to emotions and programme these responses into their robots (Tanev & Lekova, 2022).

Pérez Valverde (2003) motivates that drama techniques, when applied to methods in teaching and learning, enhance academic achievement and increase remembrance, positive attitudes toward content and classroom participation. One of the first examples of drama-based pedagogy was in Heathcote's theory of "mantle of the expert", where she demonstrated its effectiveness on a student's learning process, self-confidence and autonomy in solving problems (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). The mantle of the expert is an educational approach using imaginary contexts drawn from theatre practices to create purposeful learning encounters for students (Head, 2022). The educator establishes a fictional world where students are viewed as professionals and experts working together to solve a problem for a client (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994)). Students must use their knowledge to develop a

solution (Bolton, 1985). As students investigate the problem and work together to solve it, they construct new knowledge and understanding, reinforcing their self-concepts as experts.

This concludes Phase 1 of the actor's transformative learning experience where the two pillars of learning in theatre and learning in the classroom are inosculated to form learning through theatre. In Phase 2, I discuss the development of transformative learning experiences for the actor by applying the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories to the inosculation process of theatre.

2.2.5   Phase 2 – process (the interchangeable process of transition)

The process phase of this literature review focuses on how learning from the preparation phase is carried through to the point of inosculation of the two theories. This section includes three areas. I begin by first discussing the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. I address each theory as separate contributions to an actor's learning when transitioning from the self to the character. The Bhava–Rasa theory represents the actors' cognitive and emotional journeys during their transformation. The social alchemy theory represents the character's narrative, as the actor navigates within to develop the transition that is required (Figure 2). Lastly, I discuss the inosculation of the two theories to form a single learning process titled: The interchangeable process of transition.
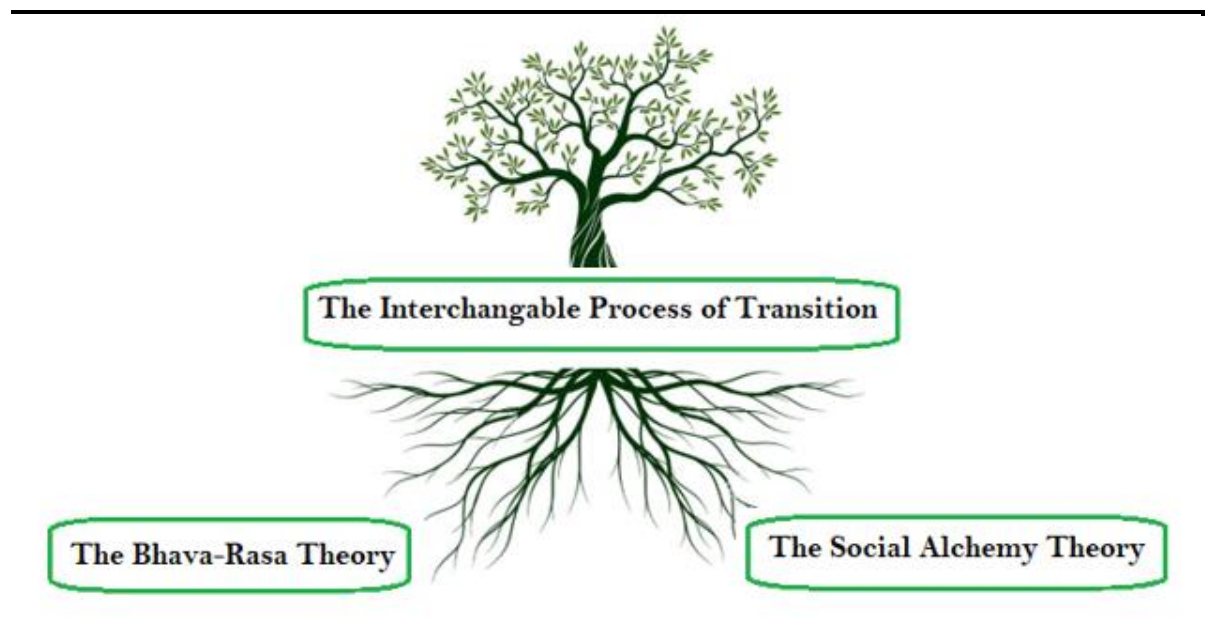
Figure 10: Inosculation in the process phase: Transformation of roots (Padayachee, 2023)

2.2.5.1 The Bhava–Rasa theory

Bharata Muni, a sage in India in the 500 A.D. era, compiled a detailed scripture on the performing arts titled the Natyasastra (a work attributed to The Art of the Theatre) (Miettinen, 1985). This ancient treatise included dance, music and theatre, with a specific section dedicated to the Bhava–Rasa theory where it was first introduced to the world (Mohanlal et al., 2014). The Bhava–Rasa theory can be understood as the give-and-take duality embedded in the beauty of the performing arts where one has no impact without the other (Shridevi, 2020).

BHAVA	corresponds to	RASA
(states of being/doing the actor embodies)	→	("tasted" by the audience)
pleasure or delight (*rati*)	→	the erotic (*srngara*)
laughter or humor (*hasa*)	→	the comic (*hasya*)
sorrow or pain (*soka*)	→	pathos/compassion (*karuna*)
anger (*krodha*)	→	the furious (*raudra*)
heroism or courage (*utsaha*)	→	the heroic/valorous (*vira*)
fear (*bhaya*)	→	the terrible (*bhayanaka*)
disgust (*jugupsa*)	→	the odious (*bibhatsa*)
wonder (*vismaya*)	→	the marvelous (*adbhuta*)
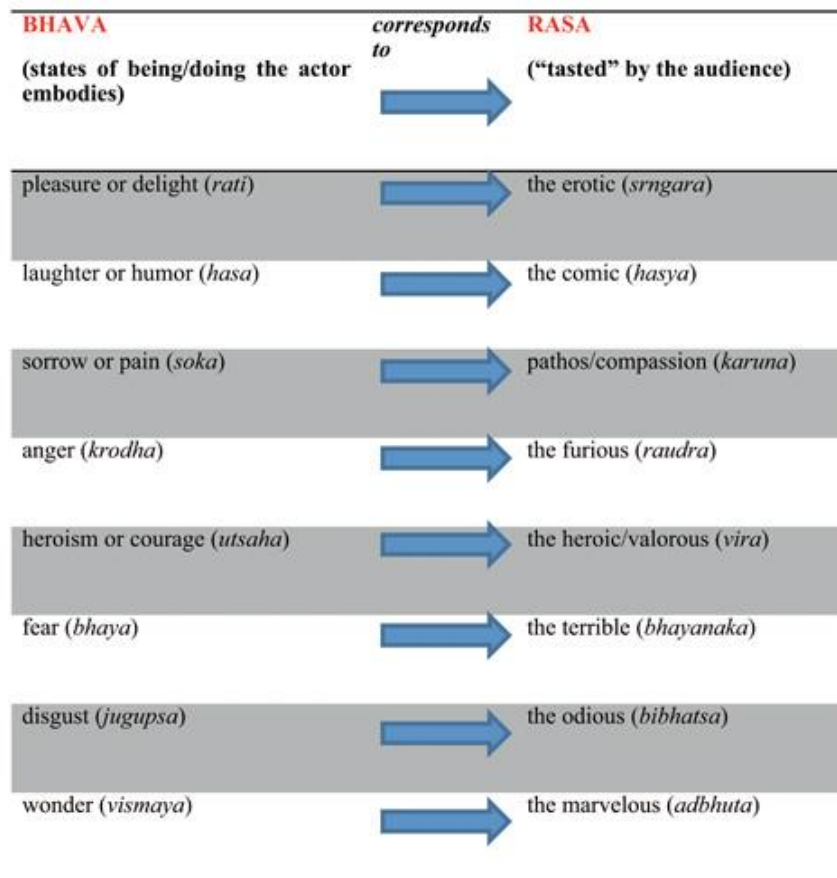
Figure 11: The Bhava–Rasa Theory (Miettinen, 1985)

The Bhava–Rasa theory comprises eight Bhava's (states of being) and their eight Rasa's (emotions or sentiments) as they create the relationship between the actor/performer and the audience (Miettinen, 1985). The neutral component in this theory is known as the self. The self represents the actor's identity/persona and state of being. During the exploration process, actors can move back and forth between emotions using the self to neutralise their current state of mind and affective state. Figure 11 shows the eight Bhavas in Sanskrit and English:

Rati/pleasure or delight, Hasa/laughter or humour, Soka/sorrow or pain, Krodha/anger, Utsaha/heroism or courage, Bhaya/fear, Jugupsa/disgust and Vismaya/wonder (Raina, 2019). The effect on the audience is represented by the eight Rasa's: Srngara/the erotic, Hasya/the comic, Karuma/pathos or compassion, Raudra/the furious, Vira/the heroic or valorous, Bhayanaka/the terrible, Bibhatsa/the odious and Adbhuta/the marvellous.

Miettinen (1985) explains that the Bhava represents a state of mind, a simulation of emotions that is translated to the audience via gestures, facial expressions and body language. The Rasa is the artistic taste, in other words, the Rasa represents the emotion and sentiment experienced by the audience member and feels real to the individual within the audience (Mohanlal et al., 2014). This interconnected relationship between the Bhava and Rasa creates a direct line of communication between the actor on stage and the audience member in the gallery (Shridevi, 2020). This line of communication conveys the meaning or intended understanding of the art form, essential to an authentic creative experience (Shridevi, 2020).

Schechner used the Bhava–Rasa theory principles and applied them to Western performance theatre to create Rasaethetics (Schechner, 2001). He proclaimed that by practising the art of performance and acting through Rasaethetics one could create a deeper connection to the role/character being portrayed (Schechner, 2001).

The literature reveals limited research on the Bhava–Rasa theory as its original theory by Bharata Muni (Oatley, 2022). Research regarding one component of the theory focuses only on the Rasa aspect of the initial theory (Schechner, 2001). Damle (2002) discussed the Rasa theory in the connection of interdisciplinary fields. Prakash, Singh and Saha discussed the Rasa theory in their exploration of Hindu poetry (2022), and Oatley (2022) regarding research on character and emotion in fiction. Studies citing the Rasa theory use multiple interdisciplinary topics that do not pertain to my study and have been excluded from this review due to relevance. Furthermore, a recent citing of the Rasa theory (adapted for modern practices) has been identified; however, theatre practitioners and scholars do not discuss or apply the original theory by Bharata Muni since they only focus on the Rasa component of the study relating to the audience.

This study examines how the actor creates this line of communication during the transition process to achieve an inner and outer state of believability. Furthermore, I explore the role this line of communication in the transition process for actors as they navigate between their

emotional journeys and the character's narrative. This study focuses on the actor's transformation; therefore, the original theory is used. Variations of the Bhava–Rasa theory divide their focus on the actor and the audience. The second theory presented in this process phase of the review discusses the cultivation of the actor's transformation and explains the importance of empathy in the actor's development journey.

2.2.5.2 The social alchemy theory

The founder of the social alchemy theory, Suzanne Smith, is an adjunct professor at the University of Texas in Arlington (Smith, 2019). She developed this theory as a problem-solving model aimed at the social sector as a process of working through challenges to achieve growth and provide effective support to all role players (Smith, 2019) using empathy as a driving force in problem-solving (Smith, 2019).

According to Smith (2019), the social alchemy theory is a unique approach for discovering innovative solutions for organisations and individuals. Smith (2019) argues that the social sector differs significantly from other sectors because it addresses the processes of transforming an idea into a meaningful, effective solution and transforms individuals as they develop and evolve with their ideas. This duality speaks to the true nature of alchemy (Smith, 2019). The literature reveals two definitions of alchemy. For this study, I apply both definitions as they have meaning and relevance to the phenomenon being investigated. The first definition refers to the origin of alchemy, which is understood as a medieval chemical science rooted in philosophy (Robinson, 2022). In this context, alchemy was aimed at the transmutation of base metals into gold to discover a means of prolonging human life and a universal cure for diseases (Robinson, 2022). Alchemists practiced alchemy and combined their scientific knowledge with their philosophy of the human condition to solve problems paramount to their time (Joyce, 2022). The second definition refers to spiritual alchemy, focusing on the individual's development.

Spiritual alchemy is the act of inner transformation (Truran, 2021). It is concerned with freeing and healing the inner parts of oneself that require change (Raff, 2019). This alchemy aims to achieve inner liberation, to free oneself of debilitating fears, destructive beliefs and adverse thoughts that stifle one's growth (Truran, 2021). The process of transforming an idea into a working solution represents the duality in this study, equating to the problem-solving nature of character development as actors navigate a path to creating an authentic

version of their characters. The second component of this duality refers to the inner transformation of actors as they undergo self-examination when creating a connection between the self and the character, known as the social alchemy of the character in the role.
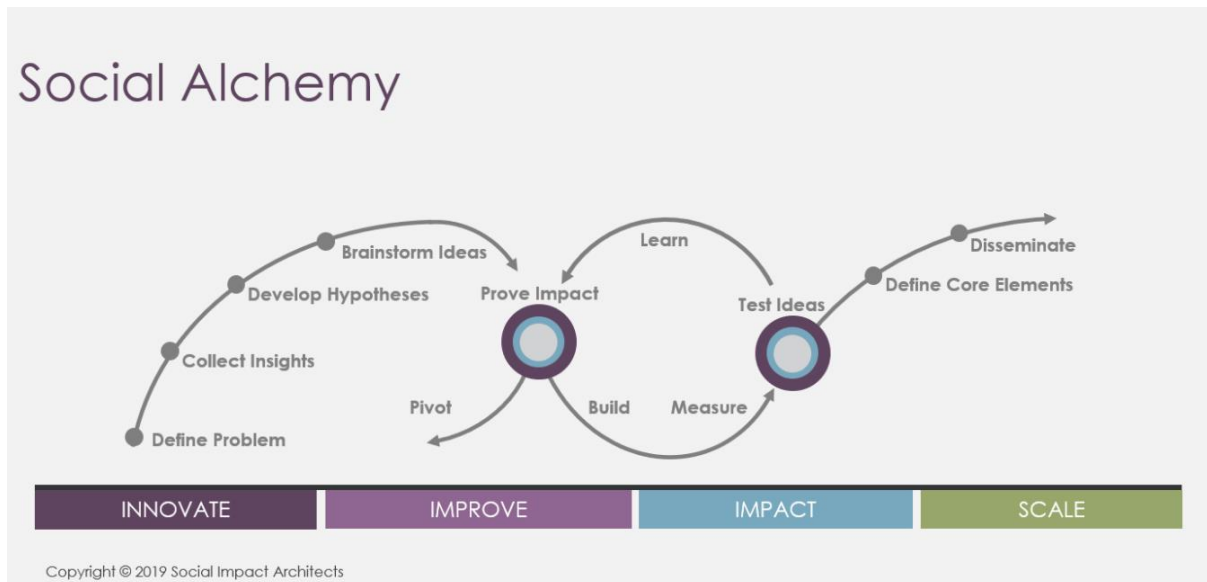
Figure 12: Social alchemy (Smith, 2019)

The process contains four integral steps: innovate, improve, impact and scale. Each step forms part of a cycle where the construction and development of an idea are moved forward or guided one step back to ensure the effectiveness of the solution (Smith, 2019). The innovate step is the starting point of the journey where the problem is identified and a suitable hypothesis is formulated (Smith, 2019). Design thinking is recommended, according to Smith, since it is a novel approach to problem-solving because it requires empathy, creativity, and rationality to construct the most effective and suitable solutions. An essential aspect of this step is to search for new ideas and explore using old ideas in a new and creative way to solve the problem (Smith, 2019).

Below, I discuss all four steps as they pertain to this study and explain the link between theory and the character's journey. The process begins with the innovate step, where the character experiences a dilemma or conflict during the narrative. The actor undergoes a process of research as they interrogate the character's motives, actions, emotional states and reasoning. By identifying similarities and differences between themselves and their characters, they can create meaning and develop a deeper understanding of the character's journey. Empathy is employed as a driving force of this inquiry because it fosters acceptance and understanding instead of judgement.

Steps two (improve) and three (impact) work hand-in-hand to create a working structure for evaluating these ideas and measuring their success (Smith, 2019). Smith (2019) explains that the goal of these two steps is not merely trial and error, but a period of learning and having the flexibility to move forward to the next step or pivot back to the first step, allowing for redevelopment to occur, which fosters growth (Smith, 2019). During actors' transformative processes, they draw on their experiences to create a connection between the self and the character. Participating in the Bhava–Rasa process allows the actor to engage with real emotions attached to specific events in their lives and portray them as characters. This step is used as a navigation tool that challenges the actor's current meaning scheme and introduces new knowledge during the process.

In the last step, scaling, the idea has been evaluated and is now ready to be scaled (Smith, 2019). Scaling refers to solidifying the process by preparation to provide support and growth for the individual and the organisation (Smith, 2019). This step signifies the actors' final recreation of the character according to their interpretation. Thus, providing an authentic representation of the character on stage. Once this step has been achieved, actors undergo self-reflection, altering their meaning schemes. Author Dostál (2015) indicates that self-reflection is an important factor in problem solving techniques. This study explores how actors draw on their prior knowledge and the new knowledge gained from their participation in the Spotlight production to construct meaning. I investigate how they use the problem-solving technique from the social alchemy theory to navigate their characters' narratives. For actors to create a living representation of a character, they must engage in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy process since they work hand-in-hand to manifest the transition required.

2.2.5.3 The interchangeable process of transition

The Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories create an interchangeable process of transition for the actor. This process is essential because it allows the actor to portray the character authentically. In addition to believability, actors engage in an interchangeable process where they move back and forth from the self to the character to bridge the gap between their true self and the character's identity. This process requires actors to identify and explore their beliefs, thoughts, perceptions and judgements alongside the character's beliefs, thoughts, perceptions and judgements to reveal insights. These insights foster the connection between

the two and allow the actor to safely transition back and forth between the self and the character.

When actors evaluate their meaning schemes, it is an essential learning milestone because it creates the opportunity for growth and understanding (Quinn & Sinclair, 2016). The two primary areas in transformative learning theory (instrumental and communicative) share distinct features in the two theories (Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy) selected in the conceptual framework of this study. Instrumental learning represents the social alchemy theory since they are defined as problem-solving concepts associated with learning. In the learning approach and the theory, the focus is on a task-oriented problem-solving (Mälkki, 2019). They use a cause-and-effect technique to evaluate and understand the relationships with their processes (Stein & Levine, 2021). Communicative learning represents the Bhava–Rasa theory because they are defined as ways of knowing which are achieved through creating meaning using communication. The focus of the communicative learning approach and the Bhava–Rasa theory is how individuals communicate their needs, desires, thoughts and feelings to allow themselves to create new knowledge (Stein & Levine, 2021). This interchangeable process is vital for transformative learning as logical and emotional components require the individual to confirm diverse types of their understanding and consider and engage with new perspectives of others to challenge their previous knowledge (Hyde, 2021). It is a combination of the logical and emotional ways of knowledge that together create transformative learning opportunities for the individual (Shridevi, 2020).

With this in mind, I focus my investigation on how actors navigate between their emotional journeys as actors and their character's narratives to cultivate transformative learning experiences. I focus on the actor's transformative processes achieved through communicative and instrumental learning adopted from Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Furthermore, I explore this interchangeable relationship between these two fundamental pillars as it applies to the actor's process in the Spotlight production.

This concludes the process phase of this literature review and introduces the final section: the product phase. The transition of the actor from the self to the character is explained in detail. In this phase, I explain how the prior concepts, theories and objectives are interlinked to form one body of knowledge known as transformative learning experiences. Within this broad spectrum, I focus on the transition of an individual's meaning scheme when engaging in the above processes.

2.2.6 Phase 3 – product (transformation of meaning schemes)

The product phase is the result of the inosculation process of transformative learning experiences. In this final phase of my literature review, I discuss the actor's transition from the self to the character. The literature contains knowledge linking the actor's transformative experiences to the processes occurring in adult learning, as proposed by Mezirow. Two components contribute to the actor's transformative experiences. First, I address the literature regarding the actor's controlled emotional journey and its effect on the actor's meaning scheme. Second, I review the literature on character development and the process actors follow to achieve their creative objectives. Lastly, I address the combination of the two components which results in the transformation of the actors meaning scheme (Figure 13).
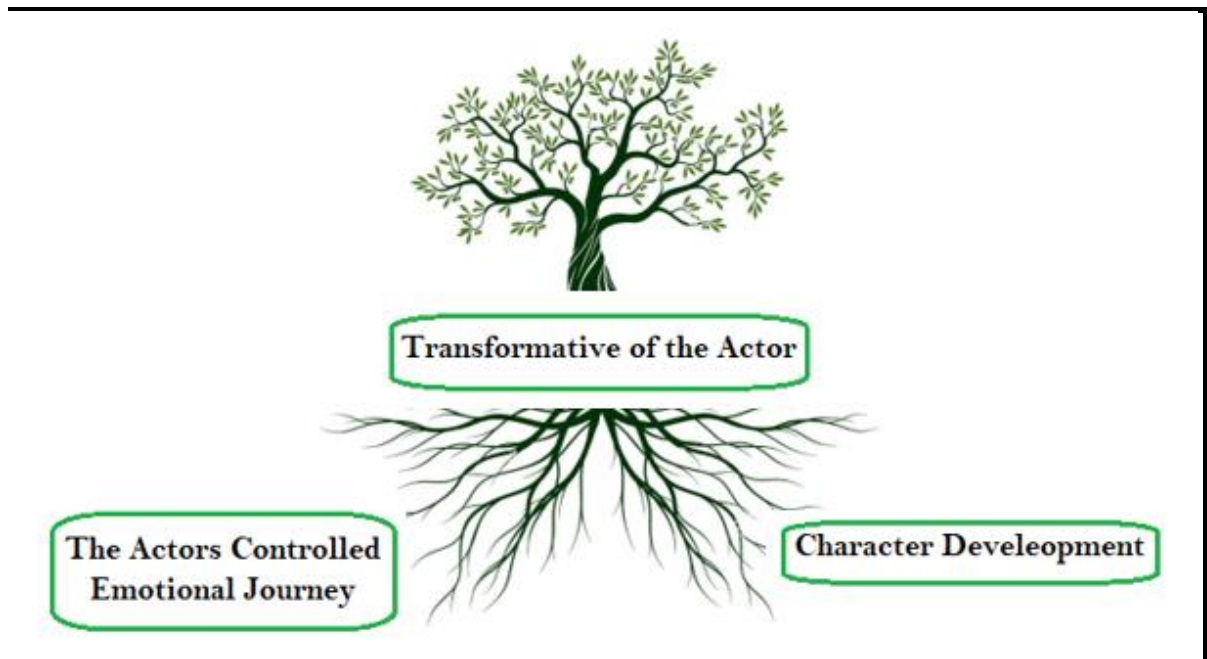
Figure 13: Inosculation in the product phase: Transformation of roots (Padayachee, 2023)

2.2.6.1 The actor's controlled emotional journey

The literature highlights that a controlled emotional journey is essential for transformation for the actor. During rehearsal, an actor must explore the emotions, thoughts and motivations of their character to gain a deeper understanding of how to portray such a character (Panero, 2019). This requires the actor to draw comparisons, identify differences and establish a

connection between the self and their characters (Goldstein & Bloom, 2011). This process is crucial as it allows the actor to believably and authentically perform the role of the character for the audience, but more so for themselves and their peer actors. If this process does not engage the actor's controlled emotional journey into the character, the performance will be superficial, and no deeper meaning or inner transformation will occur. According to Stanislavski, this is the greatest failure in theatre performance (Stephenson, 2012).

Theatre practice develops interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, advocating for the transformation of the self (inner knowledge) and the other (outer knowledge) (Andersen, 2004). Moving from the self to the character and then back to the self is an interchangeable process that requires actors to distinguish their identities from that of the numerous characters they portray to ensure the transition is safe and authentic (Butler, 2017). As actors explore the thoughts and emotions of their characters, the actor must become vulnerable to the process (Ostdiek, 2012). Therefore, an actor in the role must entertain and connect with specific strong emotions the character experiences, such as anger, grief, pain and regret (Stephenson, 2012). The actor as the self might not have been exposed to such emotions at this level during their personal lives and might struggle to engage or even control the enactment of these emotions during the performance (Ostdiek, 2012). Scholars in this field indicate that actors who struggle with control of their character's emotional journey might find that these raw and negative emotions spill over into the actors' lives, indicating the director's inability to guide the actor safely through the process (de Smet et al., 2019).

Select directors prefer the Bhava–Rasa theory to guide actors through their journey from the self to the character safely (Miettinen, 1985; Mohanlal et al., 2014; Schechner, 2014). Unlike other acting methods, the Bhava–Rasa guides actors to draw on their experiences where they have experienced similar emotions to that of their characters to engage in a safer reenactment of the role (Prakash et al., 2022). The emotions actors experience in their lives might not be as intense and extreme as that of the character's emotional journey; however, Shridevi (2020) states that it provides a strong foundation for the actor, which can later be built on during rehearsal. It is paramount that actors only draw on prior events/emotional states or experiences from their past that are not within the last five years of their lives because emotions and experiences need time to be processed and for the actor to understand and heal from them (Zarrilli & Hulton, 2009; Tyng, Amin, Saad & Malik, 2017). If an event/experience is within the five-year period, actors can engage in an experience or emotion they have not yet processed, and it might trigger re-traumatisation, which can be

detrimental to the actor's wellbeing. Stanislavski opines that the actor's subconscious should not be assaulted in the name of creativity and authentic performance (Mihut, 2020). He proposes that actors should draw on memories as opposed to present situations because events that have transpired have provided the individual with time to process them and, therefore, are more controllable when engaged within the theatre space (Eken, 2019).

Critics of Stanislavski's emotional recall and Strasberg's technique of acting model proclaimed that these methods had a high risk of leading the actor into a dark place where their emotional wellbeing was at risk (Brecht & Mueller, 1964; Hetzler, 2002). They motivate that these forms of acting might lead to actors forcing memories into the present, which could hurt them emotionally/mentally and allow them to lose control of their current state (Hetzler, 2002). Theatre practitioner Beck (2000) states that he found this system forces emotional reactions in actors, instead of aiding the actor to portray believable emotional responses in the moment.

For any development of the actor's meaning schemes to occur, the director must guide the actor into their role in a safe and controlled manner. This guidance ensures that the process the actor undergoes in exploring their emotions in the theatre space is carefully supervised for the safety of the individual and peer actors, assisting in drawing the line between exploring the self as professionally beneficial or re-traumatisation. Ikonomopoulos et al. (2017) discuss how theatre practices should be conducted in a way to avoid re-traumatisation in a theatre production but still be effective as an emotional outlet and space to explore the unfamiliarity of the human condition. The focus of recent research has been on understanding that theatre practice facilitators cannot protect their participants from having negative experiences; therefore, instead, these facilitators should provide actors with the needed skills to work through any trauma they will inevitably experience in their lives (Pieske, 2019). However, Burgoyne et al. (1999) account for multiple actors who experienced great turmoil under the facilitation of their directors who left past and present trauma unresolved and exposed. These actors shared that their directors pushed them beyond their limits, rendering them vulnerable to the negative effects of the process (Burgoyne et al., 1999). These actors also stated that even though they experienced turmoil on a personal level, they also felt that the experience helped them grow professionally by increasing their control of the self within their characters (Burgoyne et al., 1999).

Stanislavski's students who studied the method under his directions defined an actor-controlled emotional journey as an individual who controls their emotional intelligence and has the ability and skill to collaborate, engage and act during stressful moments or during intense emotional encounters (Mihut, 2020). Stanislavski, in his later work, moved away from guiding actors in engaging their emotional memory because he doubted its safety and felt that the risk of having negative side effects was not worth the detriment of the actor's wellbeing for the sake of authenticity alone (Coger, 1964). Stanislavski explained that directors were not trained to help actors address trauma the way therapists and counsellors are, thus motivating his shift from emotional memory recall to a new focus of action (Jones, 2005). The Stanislavski method shifted to using the physical actions of the character to create a more effective way of communicating emotion (Coger, 1964). This shift proved to be a successful change in his method as various theatre practitioners followed this new way of work (Coger, 1964; Mihut, 2020; Zarrilli & Hulton, 2009). These practitioners discovered that physical action evoked the required emotive content needed in an actor's performance to make it believable and authentic (Johnston, 2011).

In this study, I explore the actors' controlled emotional journeys as they transition from the self into the character through Bhava–Rasa. A rigorous character development process must be followed to bring the self as close as possible to the character while maintaining the actor's safety.

2.2.6.2 Character development

The literature regarding the actor's transition from the self to the character highlights the importance of character development exercises during rehearsal (Emunah, 2019). Character development contains multiple exercises to aid the actor in navigating the character's narrative experience to explore and discover the underlying truths that motivate the character into action (Mihut, 2020). For this study of the Spotlight production, I focus on four elements of character development: the character's narrative experience, closed readings, character journals and empathy.

The literature defines a character's narrative experience as a form of inquiry that creates a timeline of the events and experiences a character has undergone with the specific play/performance (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2011). The character's narrative experience provides the actor with vital information regarding the character's imagined life, allowing

the actor to critically review these experiences objectively (Baumer & Magerko, 2009). Once an actor understands the character's life and how they have come to be, they can create a connection between themselves and their characters, thus beginning the meaning-making process (Upham & Gathen, 2021). When actors can consider their character's intentions, the events that transpired and their character's reactions, they can understand and identify with that character in those specific circumstances (Ryan, 2015). Social alchemy theory is applied to this process because it aids the actor's search for meaning through problem-solving to enhance their understanding of who their character is and what they experienced (Baumer & Magerko, 2009). During this activity, actors interrogate the script to determine the events, circumstances, actions and results regarding their characters' narrative they are performing (Dunn, 2016). Theatre practitioners use this script analysis as a starting point for actors in their transition from the self to the character (Nystrand, 1996)

Another frequently used method is when a director conducts a closed reading of the script with the actors (Adomat, 2012). Closed reading is evaluating a text/script by identifying the connection between the words, emotions and attitudes being expressed (LoMonico, 2009). This process allows actors to contextualise the character's dialogue and connect the text to their emotions and values (Adomat, 2012). Participating in a closed reading exercise provides actors with a unique opportunity to explore the meaning of the text from an inside perspective because they are guided to analyse the script within their active role in character (Gascon, 2019). Nanda (2016) states that an actor's ability to read closely fosters a relationship between the text and the reader, enhancing an actor's understanding of the character. It allows the actor to discover a deeper understanding of the text, instead of the surface level that will lead to an uncertain interpretation of the character (Nanda, 2016). This type of theatre practice enables actors to determine the historical and social context of their character's world and assist them in creating meaningful connections between themselves and their characters' identities (Boyles & Scherer, 2012). This avenue requires actors to critically reflect and confront their perspectives and outlooks to establish a connection between the character's identity and their own (Barnes-Smith et al. 2015). Closed reading exercises achieve this connection while minimising the risk of exposure for the actor (Gascon, 2019).

Once closed reading exercises have been conducted on repeated occasions, an actor must fill in the missing information that could not be drawn from the text/script (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). The process of giving the character a true, descriptive identity can be

achieved by creating a character journal (Barclay, 2019). A character journal is a document the actor creates using the context and background provided in the text and adding detail by using their imagination (Dunn, 2016). In a character journal, an actor will establish numerous details to create a complex and believable persona for their role (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). These details are determined by asking the following questions: "who am I, where am I, where am I going, why is this so important to me, what do I love, what do I hate, where was I born, what is my relationship like with my parents, what am I afraid of, what do I want most in this world" (Johnston, 2011). Determining the character's motivations, desires, fear and hopes provides numerous layers to the character's identity, leading to a riveting and profound portrayal by the actor (Dunn, 2016). The answers to these questions are created by the actor and provide a solid foundation during character development (Eken, 2019).

By establishing the unwritten and intimate details of a character, an actor can better form a deeper connection through empathy (Goldstein & Winner, 2012). Empathy is an essential aspect of character development because it narrows the gap between the actor's self and that of their character by taking a fictional outline of a character and transforming it into a humanised version (Gascon, 2019). Empathy is "…perceiving the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with emotional component and meanings which pertain hitherto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition" (Rogers, 1975, p. 210-211). According to Zikopoulos and Barbas (2012), empathy allows actors to set aside their perspectives, judgements and interpretations of the world to explore unfamiliar perspectives, judgements and ways of interpretation of another (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). In theatre, actors should suspend the views and values they hold to enter the world of their character without prejudice (Goldstein & Winner, 2012). It is only through this process that true empathy can be achieved (Reeves et al., 2021). Empathy is an individual's ability to construct within themselves another person's mental state (Reeves et al., 2021), which can be explained by viewing one's ability to imagine and place oneself emotionally in someone else situation (Baer et al., 2019). Goleman (2011) proposes three types of empathy that frequently overlap: emotional, empathic concern and cognitive empathy. For this study, I focus on cognitive empathy because it is relevant to an actor's character development. Goleman (2011) defines cognitive empathy as an ability to understand how another individual might be thinking about their feelings and emotions, including empathy under the emotional intelligence spectrum (Gascon, 2019). In cognitive empathy, it is possible to understand how another person thinks about the situations they are in, the things that trouble

them and the things that excite them (Goleman, 2011). This is defined as perspective-taking because the actor does not claim to feel what the character is feeling but understands the thinking, leading to the emotion being exhibited (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). Through the entire character development exercise, an actor can enhance their connection to their character by engaging in empathic processes, such as perspective-taking, thus broadening an actor's understanding of the human condition (Mihut, 2020).

In the Spotlight production, I focus on how actors use empathy as a tool to build connections between themselves (the self) and the character (the other), completing the character development process for authenticity. Within this transition, an actor undergoes a transformative learning experience.

2.2.6.3 Transformation of the actor

Transformative learning experiences are cultivated when an actor engages in the character's controlled emotional journey and the character development exercises, as mentioned above. Transformation in the theatre can only occur if participants accept their involvement in the process and progress at their own pace (Jones, 2005). Therefore, the extent of transformation depends on actors' willingness to relinquish their way of knowing instead of learning to explore and experience the world from another's perspective (Winston, 2014). However, the lack of pressure from the director allows actors freedom to investigate personal experiences at their own pace (Butler, 2017).

There is a focus on the actor's ability to reach a performance level of utmost believability to their peers on stage and the audience (Jones, 2005). The developmental process of the actors and the transformation of the self was not a focus but a byproduct of participation in theatre performance (Burgoyne et al., 1999). The above is also true for the work of Konstantin Stanislavski, as produced by Matern (2013) and Pitches (2006), indicating a rigorous technique for the actor to undergo, leading to the most realistic representation of their character to the audience. The Stanislavski system of acting uses emotional recall techniques because it mobilises the actor's conscious thought and will to activate less-controllable psychological processes, such as emotional experience and subconscious behaviour, for the actor's authenticity of the character. Merlin (2007) advocates that the art of acting is about truly being able to listen and respond in the moment. Merlin proposes that Stanislavski's method of acting allows actors to be in tune with themselves and their peer actors while in a

role, creating an interactive and sustainable performance (Reeves et al., 2021). When actors perform in a role, they should perceive the world through the eyes of their character and produce actions and behaviour aligned with this way of seeing and interpreting experience (Brecht & Mueller, 1964). This perception allows actors to expand on their existing knowledge to include another's perspectives and, in doing so, this experience has a real impact on the actor as an individual (Baer et al., 2019).

Fleming (2017) proposes that the more an individual practices a skill, the more the skill becomes part of their daily practice. He motivates that once people develop specific skills, they perform these skills more often, which filters into their daily lives and becomes part of who they are (Fleming, 2017). Fleming advocates that the skills learned through theatre practice for performance remain real skills actors practice in their daily lives (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). These skills become attributes over time and expand beyond the stage and into the individual's way of being in the real world (Vygotsky, 1978). These attributes include tolerance and acceptance towards others, refraining from judging before engaging and encountering, a willingness to engage with others, learning to listen actively and considering the emotions of others before reacting (Vygotsky, 1978). Warwick (2012) supports this notion by stating that as actors practice empathy for the numerous characters they portray as part of their art form, they improve and enhance this skill over time, which spills over from their professional lives into their personal lives. This improvement leads to a form of transformation that changes the actor due to the enhancement of life skills developed through theatre practice (Warwick, 2012). Furthermore, Alam and Al-Hawamdeh (2022) explain that actors develop specific competencies during their work in theatre, where they develop a deep moral concern for others, the ability to embrace an encounter with the new and unfamiliar, the ability to view a situation from others' perspectives, and empathising with the experience of others. These competencies cannot be viewed separate from the individual but rather as the personal characteristics they possess (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Understanding another's experience from an emotive perspective can change how we view individuals, their experiences and their actions (Moreno, 1972). Fleming (2017) motivates that this becomes a new way of knowing and allows for changing how one thinks and understands the world, challenging actors to explore their experiences and emotional existence to build a deeper understanding of themselves (Emunah, 1994). This exploration

leads to self-awareness development, which transcends into their personal lives providing an understanding of why they react, behave and think in certain ways (Reeves et al., 2021).

When engaging in theatre practice, an actor becomes consumed with the here and now and indulges completely in the moments allowing them to act, listen and interact with their fellow actors in the present (Mihut, 2020). This form of concentration is essential for acting and is required if an actor is to perform in a role instead of re-enacting another experience (Coger, 1964). This process is known as unselfing oneself, allowing individuals to set aside their personal thoughts and feelings and focus on what the character is engaged in (Dunn et al., 2020). According to Winston (2014), this practice transforms an actor into a space of real time and real feeling, enhancing their present experience.

Dewey (1934) proposes that individual transformation occurs when the powers of the mind are engaged in a synchronised manner, leading to a meaning-making process (Chambliss, 1991). These powers include imagination, emotions, cognition and sensory experiences (Chambliss, 1991). These powers of the mind are constantly put into play during an actor's engagement in theatre practices as they skilfully work towards an authentic portrayal of a character (Hetzler, 2020). By engaging in the powers of the mind, actors can alter their meaning schemes to bridge the gap between the self and the character (Mihut, 2020). Ishino (2018) focused on the connection between theatre practice and transformative learning theory to foster a developmental change in individuals as they explore the boundary between the self and the other. He proclaimed that transformative learning is enhanced when an actor can draw off their experiences through reflection to recreate an authentic portrayal of the character's emotion (Ishino, 2018). The learning and knowledge gained during this experience is not exclusive to the actor in performance but extends to the actor's personal life (Goldstein & Winner, 2012). Within this space, transformative learning experiences are created for the actor (Coger, 1964).

This study explores the creative process actors engage in as they transition from the self into their characters in the Spotlight production. I focus on the specific knowledge gained during their transition, which creates transformative learning experiences that alter the actors' meaning schemes.

This concludes the product phase of the literature review. I have addressed the actors' controlled emotional journey as they prepare to transition into character. I discuss character

development and how transformative learning experiences are created from this experience. Below, I discuss this interchangeable process in detail, how transformative processes are created and how the designed framework aligns with my research topic.

2.3   Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is a researcher's map of the region being investigated, comprising essential concepts and understandings drawn from more than one theory to explain the findings and phenomenon in the study (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). For this study, I have selected to design a conceptual framework because the nature of my research topic cannot be explained using only one theory. The transformation of an actor is complex, as it is concerned with human experience, the cognitive and affective faculties and the personal nature associated with change and development of one's meaning schemes.

The conceptual framework for this study comprises the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories as they pertain to the actor's transition from the self to the character. The Bhava–Rasa theory denotes the cognitive and emotional journeys actors undergo during their transformation. The social alchemy theory denotes the character's narrative experience as the actor navigates within to develop the required transition. I provide three figures to aid in explaining the constructed conceptual framework. These three figures depict the different steps I worked through to develop and solidify the ideal conceptual framework that addresses my study. In step one of breaking down these two theories, the two-hander speaks to the interchangeable process that occurs.

Figure 14: The two-hander (Padayachee, 2023)

A two-hander is a term for a play, film or television programme with only two main characters (Rebellato, 2014). The two characters in question frequently display differences in social standing or experiences, differences that are explored and overcome as the story unfolds (Rebellato, 2014). Instances of two-handers include theatre, film, television episodes, television series and radio (Rebellato, 2014).

2.3.1 Step 1

In step 1 of the conceptual framework, the two-hander theories (Bhava–Rasa (Mohanlal et al., 2014) and social alchemy (Smith, 2019)) are engaged in a continuous interchangeable process where each component within the social alchemy theory (Smith, 2019) is explored and developed using the Bhava–Rasa theory (Mohanlal et al., 2014). The Bhava–Rasa theory represents the cognitive and emotional journey actors undergo during their transformation. The social alchemy theory represents the character's narrative as the actor navigates within to develop the required transition. During this process, the actors embark on a growth and development journey as they attempt to bridge the gap between themselves and their characters (Schechner, 2001), which is a vital component in creating theatre and requires the careful and nurturing guidance of a director to facilitate this process (Schechner, 2001). I explore each participant's emotional journey during this process to identify how their current meaning schemes have been altered.

2.3.2 Step 2

In step two of this conceptual framework, the ensemble speaks to creating transformative learning processes.
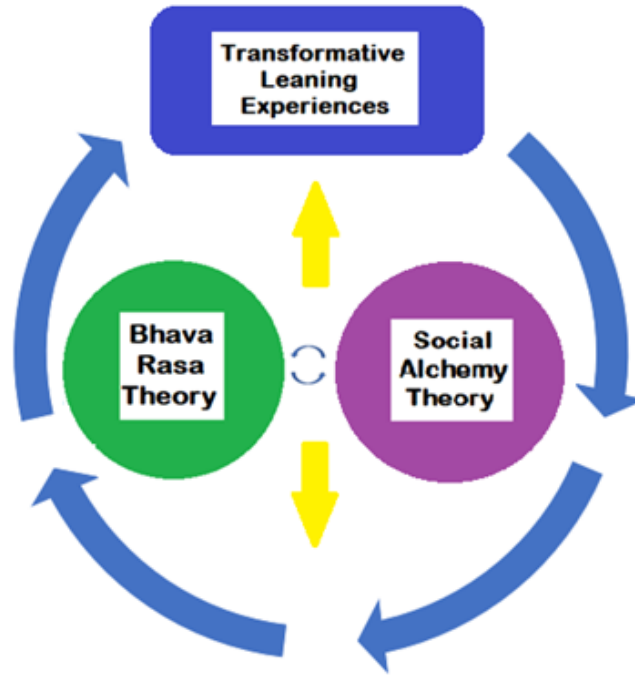
Figure 15: The ensemble (Padayachee, 2023)

An ensemble is three or more people who function together as a whole. An example of an ensemble is a music string quartet or a group of actors in a play (Barnett et al., 2013). During the second step, this interchangeable process between the social alchemy (Smith, 2019) and Bhava–Rasa (Mohanlal et al., 2014) theories creates ensemble learning experiences for the actors on this journey to discovering their characters (Schechner, 2001). Ensemble learning is embedded in social constructivism theory, which is created when individuals collaborate with others and use the knowledge they gained as a source of novel information (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018). Due to the continuous interchangeable nature of this process, the transformative learning experiences develop from a lighter/surface experience at the beginning of the rehearsal process and transcend into intense/deeper understandings of the actor's past experiences and insights into the character's life towards the end of the rehearsal period (Schechner, 2001). Transformative learning experiences were drawn from Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The actors' development of their meaning schemes is revealed during this process, as I observe and record their gradual growth and cognitive responses to the process.

2.3.3 Step 3

The final step of this conceptual framework is the denouement of the transformative learning experience for the actor.
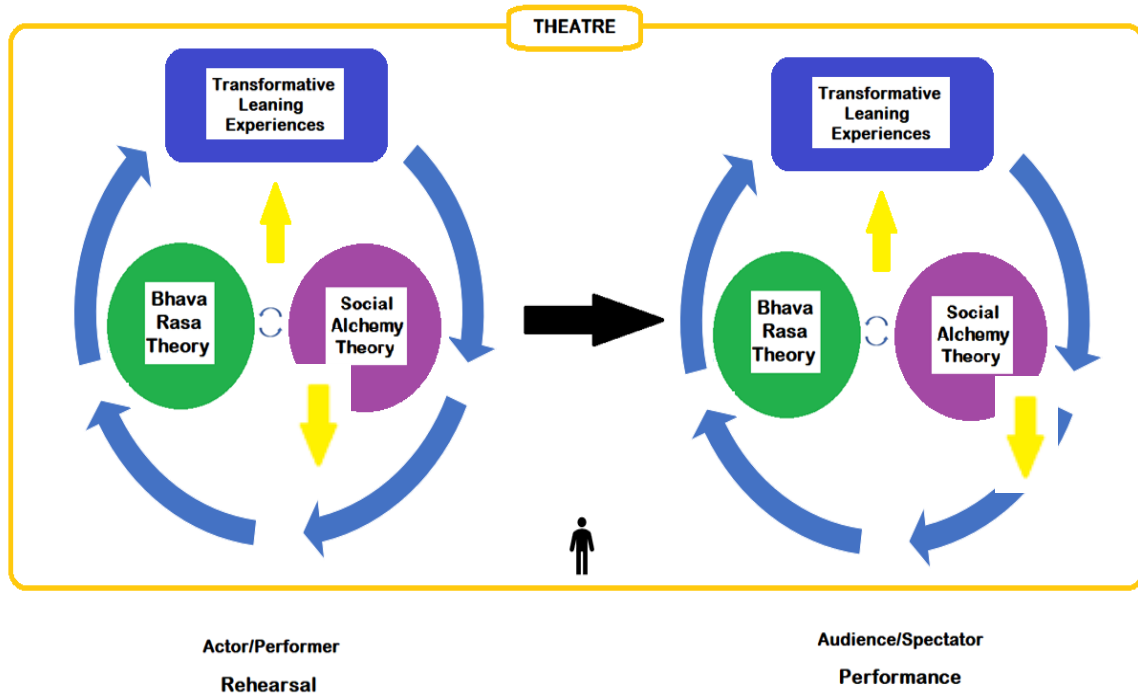
Figure 16: The denouement (Padayachee, 2023)

The denouement is the final act of a play, where everything comes together and the situation has been resolved, leaving the audience satisfied with the play (Shanahan, McBeth, & Jones, 2014). Denouement represents the conclusion of the plot as the character's narratives draw to a close (Britannica, 2015). In the final step of the conceptual framework, I realised that the transformative learning experiences were not limited to that of the actor, but that the audience members would also undergo transformation as they witness the characters on their journey of self-discovery during the denouement. This conceptual framework is thus placed in a new light and presents two phases of transformation: the transformative learning experiences the actor/performer undergoes during the rehearsal and the transformative learning experiences the audience/spectator undergoes during the performance. The transformation on both ends creates a unique process of transformation in the theatre environment.

This study focuses on the actor's process of transformative learning within the theatre's rehearsal process and stage production. The reason for this focus is to create a deeper understanding of the actor's process by investigating the transition from the self to the character to reveal detailed insights into this process—the development of the actors' meaning schemes and how this cultivates transformative learning experiences. This exploration evaluates the actors participating in the study who undergo transformative

processes and how transformative learning experiences are cultivated through their experience in the specific roles.

2.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature review supports the investigation as presented through the metaphor of inosculation in the theatre environment. Within the three phases of this process, I discuss how learning occurs for an actor and in an educational setting. This preparation phase results in learning through theatre. I proceed to discuss the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories, which create an interchangeable process of transition for the actor. The final process of inosculation represents the merger between these knowledge areas to create unique learning opportunities for the actor. In learning as an actor in theatre, I address four integral components: the relationship between drama and theatre, the theatre environment, theatre practices and the director's role. In learning as a student in education, I address three learning theories that contribute to the phenomenon in this study: Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and Gardner's MI theory. These two ways of learning create learning through theatre where I address three primary areas: thinking processes, simulated environment and pedagogy. In the process phase, I discuss the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. I describe the composition of each theory and the process during rehearsal and performance for the actor. I explain its link to the transformative learning experiences created through this interchangeable process of transition. Lastly, I examine the transition from actor to character through the actor-controlled emotional journey and character development exercises, formulating the final product of transformative learning experiences for an actor. In the second component of this chapter, I explain the conceptual framework designed for this research topic. I discuss how meaning is created from the processes occurring. The following chapter describes the research methodology followed in this study and motivates why and how the process was selected and implemented.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

In Chapter Two, I presented the literature review on this research topic: *Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight*. I discussed how the research informed my study and explained the conceptual framework designed to create meaning from the findings discovered through this research topic. In this chapter, I present the research methodology for this study. I explain my approach to the research using the diagram below. I discuss each point in the diagram to provide a clear guide regarding how the process of conducting this study was selected and executed. This chapter comprises five sections: research questions, research design, research methods, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.
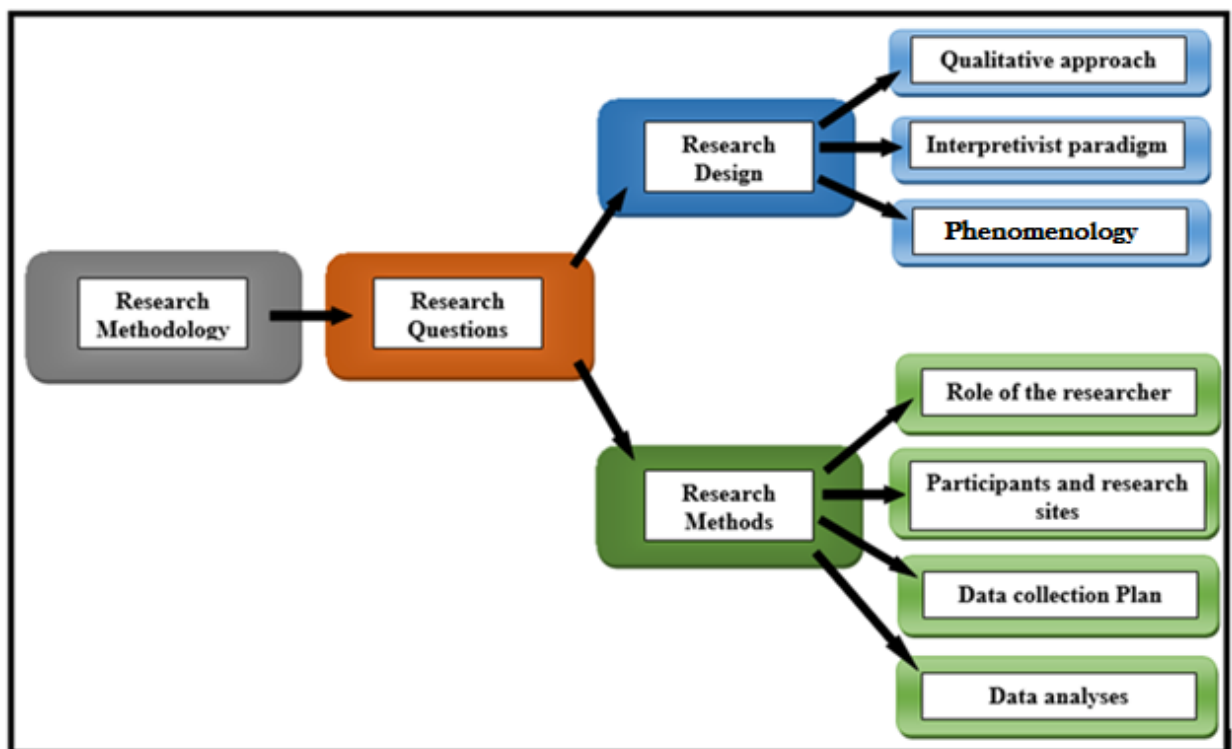
Figure 17: Research methodology diagram (Padayachee, 2023)

3.2   Research questions

The success of a research study begins with formulating the research questions derived from the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In a qualitative study, researchers can select a research topic constructed from their interests, ideas generated from reviewed literature, or

issues they observed or encountered in their study field (Pyo, Lee, Choi, Jang, & Ock, 2023). However, a research question focuses on a specific aspect of the research topic (Pyo et al., 2023). The research questions provide clarity and direction to how the study is conducted. The research topic for this study is *Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight*. Therefore, I narrowed my focus to investigate this phenomenon by selecting the following two research questions.

- How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production by engaging in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories?
- How does transformative learning develop the meaning schemes of actors as they transition from the self to the character?

These questions determine the research design and methods employed to produce desirable results aligned with the phenomenon discussed above.

3.3 Research design

Babbie (2004, p. 112) describes a "research design as a plan that involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied among which population with which research methods for what purpose". A research design can be viewed as the blueprint of a research study/project guiding the researcher on how to conduct the investigation (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Finestone (2021) explains that a research design is a framework that encompasses the research approach, paradigm and type. These components are used to uncover insight into a specific research topic to construct knowledge thereof. The following selection has been made: the research approach is qualitative, the research paradigm is interpretivism and the research type is phenomenology.

3.3.1 Research approach

Creswell and Miller (2000) propose two approaches researchers use to investigate their research problems: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research creates meaning and understanding using words, whereas quantitative research uses numeric data to create meaning and understanding (Creswell, 2007). Each approach differs in how research is conducted and will produce different findings because their interpretation process is far removed (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This study adopted a qualitative approach.

A qualitative approach seeks to define and interpret unclear phenomena through non-numerical measurement methods that focus on meaning and insight (Fusch et al., 2018, p. 20). Finestone (2021) elaborates that the qualitative approach focuses on investigating research problems of social and/or human nature to construct a deeper understanding and build meaning by considering the research problem holistically, reporting on data collected from knowledge sources and conducting the study in a natural setting (Alvermann & Mallozzi, 2010). A qualitative study will be suited to my research topic, as I will be investigating humans in their social settings. These actors will be observed and interviewed to examine the change in their meaning schemes. The study will be conducted in the rehearsal space where the actors are comfortable and familiar with their surroundings. Furthermore, I aim to build meaning from the data gathered to provide a deeper insight into the ability of theatre processes to cultivate transformative learning experiences for actors.

Creswell (2007) proposes nine characteristics of qualitative research and presents an explanation for each, including its role in the qualitative process. I present this information in Table 2, along with how these characteristics apply to my study.

Qualitative characteristics	As defined by the literature	As applied to this study
1. Natural setting	The data are collected in the field at the site where participants experience the issue by talking to the participants directly and seeing how they behave and react through face-to-face interactions (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).	Participants are interviewed in their rehearsal space at the Rynlal Centre in Lynwood, Pretoria. Semi-structured interviews are conducted in person through face-to-face conversations. Field notes are documented from my observations during the process.
2. Researcher as a key instrument	The researcher collects data by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews, reviewing documentation	I attended the rehearsals of the Spotlight production, observed and interviewed each participant at three

Qualitative characteristics	As defined by the literature	As applied to this study
	and physically watching the participants in action. Protocol devices might be used but it is operated by the researchers (Creswell, 2007, p. 38).	stages of the process. I used a digital sound recorder during the qualitative semi-structured interviews to assist in capturing the participants' responses accurately and in the transcribing process.
3. Multiple data sources	Qualitative research uses multiple data sources instead of only relying on a single data source. The researcher reviews all the sources and organises the information into themes or categories to find cohesion among them (Creswell, 2007, p. 38).	This study drew on three sources to collect data from the participants: qualitative semi-structured interviews, personal observations and field notes in the theatre space. All three sources were evaluated and based on the similarities and differences in the data, themes were developed to assist in the process of making sense of the information gathered.
4. Deductive data analysis is analysis with existing theories to fit your answers within it. You use both theories as analytical tools; therefore, it is deductive.	Researchers conducting qualitative studies begin their investigation with a theory and proceed to develop hypotheses from this theory. They then collect and analyse data to evaluate the hypotheses established at the beginning of the process. The process includes a back-and-forth way of working to establish	Only once the qualitative semi-structured interviews with the actors and the director have been transcribed and observations and fieldnotes organised can I evaluate the information gathered. The data evaluation process and formulating themes and patterns was repeated numerous times to

Qualitative characteristics	As defined by the literature	As applied to this study
	a definite set of themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 38).	provide a clear construct of the findings discovered.
5. Participants' meanings	Throughout the qualitative research, the focus is on the participants: how they make meaning, their perspectives on the issues, their challenges encountered, and their understanding. The researcher's perspective, meaning he/she brings, or literature reviewed is not part of this process (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).	As a theatre practitioner, actor and director, I had keep my experiences, perspectives and meaning schemes separate from the research. I had to focus on investigating only the experiences, attitudes, insights and meaning schemes of the actors and the director involved in the Spotlight production. I needed to approach data gathering objectively.
6. Emergent design	Qualitative research is not a fixed and rigid framework to be followed but rather a dynamic and evolving design that might change as the researcher goes into the field. This emergent design is only valid when the changes align with the research objectives (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).	The interview time frame for each interview was 30 minutes; however, the timeframe was determined by the participants and how much they each wanted to share answering the qualitative semi-structured interview questions I presented. The director made some adjustments to the directing style, which changed the outcome of the performances; however, all changes were still in line with investigating how

Qualitative characteristics	As defined by the literature	As applied to this study
		transformative processes are created in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories and how transformative learning develop the actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character.
7. Theoretical lens	Researchers use specific theoretical perspectives when conducting qualitative studies: differences in gender, race, age and culture. Social, historical and political contexts can also be applicable, depending on the relevance of the research topic (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).	In this study, I created a conceptual framework to create meaning from the data. One theory could not address the phenomenon in my study; therefore, I drew components from three theories to create my conceptual framework. The participants selected for this study comprised two females and one male of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The director (male participant) was also interviewed. The participants' ages and their experiences in the theatre environment varied.
8. Interpretive inquiry	Qualitative researchers review and analyse the data collected to create an interpretation of what they	After data collection had, I evaluated the multiple data sources. I reviewed and compared the participants'

Qualitative characteristics	As defined by the literature	As applied to this study
	hear, see and understand. A researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from their experiences, understanding, background and context. Consequently, there might be multiple interpretations arising from different role players, researchers, participants and readers (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).	feedback and insights to my understanding and experiences. The information gained from the literature on this research topic creates meaning and answers the two research questions. Since there are multiple role players (director, actors, readers and researchers), there were multiple interpretations of the findings.
9. Holistic account	Researchers in the qualitative field of study work towards developing a complex picture of the issue or problem, including influencing factors and considering the multiple perspectives that provide an all-encompassing viewpoint (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).	Once the qualitative semi-structured interviews were transcribed, they were shared with the actors and the director to review and confirm whether the document aligned with their viewpoints. Then, all sources were reviewed again to create a holistic understanding of the processes, events, influences and interactions that contributed to the complex picture.

Table 2: Characteristics of qualitative research as applied to the Spotlight production (Padayachee, 2023)

A qualitative approach to research is fitting for this study because the research questions and phenomenon are concerned with human nature and the social aspects of learning through theatre practice. Within the research design, I followed an interpretivist paradigm because I

investigated how the actors and the director make meaning from their experiences in the Spotlight production.

3.3.2 Research paradigm

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the word paradigm is derived from the Greek language, meaning pattern. Therefore, a research paradigm can be understood as research patterns used to identify connections in research, thus building meaning (Maree, 2017). Finestone (2021) proposes that a research paradigm is defined as a way of seeing the world around us. Researchers use the way they think about ideas and concepts to build understanding and generate insight into them (Allen, 2017). Several authors have defined a research paradigm as an entire set of beliefs, techniques, standards, perspectives and values shared among members of a group of individuals on how problems should be investigated and solutions constructed (Finestone, 2021; Iacob, Popescu, & Ristea, 2015; Kamal, 2019; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Maree, 2017).

According to scholars, a research paradigm comprises three fundamentals: epistemology, ontology and methodology (Finestone, 2021; FitzPatrick, 2019; Iacob et al., 2015). This concept can be understood by asking the following questions concerning the three elements listed above: What is reality (ontology)? How do we know something (epistemology)? How do we go about finding out (methodology)? (Finestone, 2021). In this study, ontology investigates reality according to the actors of the performance. Epistemology refers to how we know these meaning schemes exist and can be developed. Finally, methodology refers to how this study is conducted: conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with the three actors and the director, documenting field notes and observations, and using the Spotlight production to gather the data required. As discussed in the literature review, the dynamics of role-taking when engaging in theatre practices examines a character's reality and how the actor knows the character's motivations, mental state and emotional condition at any time during the performance.

Tekin and Kotaman (2013, p. 84) propose that "interpretivism is a school of thought that concentrates the meaning of social interactions". Interpretivism can be viewed as a paradigm assisting the researcher in understanding how individuals construct meaning within their cultural and social contexts by interpreting their experiences, narratives and perceptions (Carminati, 2018). I selected the interpretivist paradigm since my study concerns humans

(young adults) and how their meaning schemes develop as they transition from the actor to the character during the Spotlight production. Therefore, my study justifies my paradigm choice, as it will assist me in constructing a deeper understanding of the process actors undergo during the rehearsal and production period, how their meaning schemes develop, and how transformative learning experiences occur. In this study, I will interpret the data collected through semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations during the actors' processes.

3.3.3 Research type

Within the qualitative approach to this study, I will use phenomenology to assist my investigation regarding the meaning schemes of actors and guide the process. Phenomenological research studies experience from an individual's perspective (Larsen & Adu, 2021). Phenomenology is embedded in personal knowledge and subjectivity (Errasti-Ibarrondo, Jordán, Díez-Del-Corral, & Arantzamendi, 2018). This research type emphasises individuals' interpretations of their experiences and how they construct meaning from their perspectives (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). In this study I will follow a hermeneutical phenomenology approach A hermeneutical phenomenology is an approach to research that is oriented towards a participant's lived experience (the phenomenon) and interpreting the texts obtained from this lived experience to create meaning and understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 77).

Phenomenology was selected for this study because I seek insight into three actors and the director's experiences and subjective knowledge. I investigated how these three actors encountered a transformative experience during their participation in the Spotlight production. I also explored whether the director's insights altered from the beginning to the end of the production. Phenomenological research is ideal for this study because each actor and the director have their backgrounds, contexts, life experiences and meaning schemes that will influence this study's findings. Phenomenological research applies to my study because the lived experience speaks to the actors' experience in the Spotlight production because it relates to transformative learning encounters and altering their meaning schemes. The text in this study refers to the qualitative semi-structured interviews with all four participants and the observations and field notes documented. My focus in this study is to investigate how the actors experience and interpret their human experience while role-taking

in the Spotlight production. I provide a description and explanation of their personal experiences while participating in the Spotlight production.

3.4   Research methods

Research methods refer to an umbrella term for research techniques, procedures and approaches for investigating a research problem (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It describes the flow and logic of a research project that will be followed systematically to reveal knowledge and insight into a specific research problem (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Researchers will select specific methods in which they will approach their research, guiding data gathering and interpreting this data for meaning and a deeper understanding (Dudovskiy, 2018). To understand how this study is to be executed, I address the researcher's role, participants, research site, data collection plan and data analyses.

3.4.1   Role of the researcher

The positionality of researchers within the qualitative methodology allows for a focus on the individual and obtaining more insight into the social world they are learning about (Lethole et al., 2021). By using an interpretivist approach, my study is conducted from a subjective viewpoint because it concerns human research (Tekin & Kotaman, 2013). My role as the researcher in this study comprises an insider and an outsider. My experience in theatre practice and having transitioned from actor to character distinguishes me as an insider researcher. My research focuses and purpose is directed at three actors and their personal and professional experiences as they transition from actor to character. The director will be included in this process as his intentions, experience and insights will shape this study's findings. The investigation focuses on the before, during and after experiences in the Spotlight production using qualitative semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations. This renders me an outsider researcher, thus achieving my positionality in this dual nature study.

Figure 18 visually presents my dual positionality within this research using the conceptual framework designed for this study as a map. As an insider, I am placed within the transformative cycle because of the following reasons: (a) my experience as a theatre practitioner familiar with theatre practices, (b) my transitioning from actor to character in numerous productions, and (c) having experienced the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes during guided rehearsals in previous productions. As an outsider, I am placed

outside the transformative cycle because of the following reasons: (a) my role as an academic researcher who is investigating this phenomenon will be from an objective position, (b) I am excluded from the transformative cycle as I am not participating in the Spotlight production and, therefore, viewed as an observer, and (c) my focus on the development of transformative learning experiences and the altering of meaning schemes will guide my investigation through semi-structured interviews with the three actors and the director and documenting my observations and field notes during rehearsals.
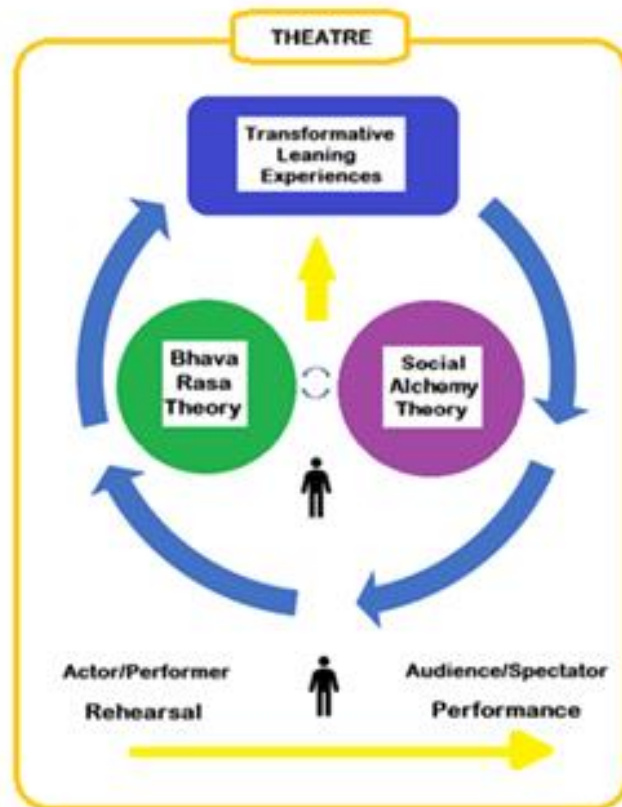
Figure 18: The dual role of the researcher in the Spotlight production (Padayachee, 2023)

Within this dual role as an insider and outsider, I investigate the subjective experience of the actors participating in the Spotlight production. I apply an interpretivism approach with a qualitative lens as I search for the meaning of how each actor experiences transformative learning.

3.4.2   Participant selection and research site

Creswell and Miller (2000), describes sampling as a technique that researchers adopt to assist in the selection of research participants from the general population for a specific study. The

sampling method was created to address how research participants were selected since the entire population could not be included in the study due to financial and time constraints (Babbie, 2004). Since I am conducting my study within a qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm, I select purposeful sampling as the most suited for this study. Purposeful sampling is a method for selecting research participants based on the researcher's judgement (Carminati, 2018). Therefore, due to the subjectivity in the interpretivist paradigm, purposeful sampling is ideal for selecting participants in this study.

The criteria used for participant selection in this study are:

- Participants must be 18 years or older
- Participants must speak, read and understand English
- Participants must have an acting background
- Participants must be familiar with theatre practices
- Participants must be from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Participants must be of different genders

Due to the nature of my study and its focus area, I consulted the director regarding selecting participants for this study. The selection was based on the actors' choices in monologues and characters. Aligned with purposeful sampling, these monologues and their characters must provide the actor with a personal or professional challenge that could alter their meaning schemes in the process. Each actor was interviewed at three intervals: at the beginning of the rehearsal process, during the rehearsal process, and after the second production performance. The actors were observed two weeks into the rehearsal process. Two females and one male of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds were selected. For this study, I have selected the following actors based on the above criteria.

Actor gender	Character	Genre	Play	Playwright
Male	Hamlet	Elizabethan era	*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*	William Shakespeare
Female	Lysistrata	Greek era	*Lysistrata*	Aristophanes

Female	Hermione	Elizabethan era	*The Winter's Tale*	William Shakespeare

Table 3: Actor participants and character representation in the Spotlight production (Padayachee, 2023)

In addition to the three actors, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with the director at the beginning of the rehearsal process, during the rehearsal process, and after the second production performance. Since the director is the facilitator in the transition process the actors undergo, he has valuable insights to share regarding the study. These insights might include knowledge regarding the three actor participants and their journeys from first year through to third year (final year) of their training, personality traits of the actors that might be relevant to the findings of the study, personal and professional experience using the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories during the preparation when actors embark on their transition into character, specific safety measures the director use in his rehearsal space, and his thoughts personal and professional on the final performance of the three actors in role and how transformative learning experiences occurred during this production.

The research site for this study is in Pretoria at the Rynlal Centre. Interviews were conducted in a separate classroom on the premises on a one-to-one basis. As in a qualitative approach, it is crucial to conduct and gather research data in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007). The theatre space in the Rynlal Centre where all the third year rehearsals occur is ideal. The participants are familiar with the space and, therefore, feel safe, making them willing to participate, engage and share information for this study. The separate classroom where interviews were held is away from the group interaction space and, therefore, confidentially was ensured, aligning with the phenomenological approach adopted in this study since the participants might be located and studied at a single site (van Manen, 2023). Once the participants were selected and the research site located and secured, the data collection process was followed according to a specific plan for a qualitative research study.

3.4.3 Data collection plan

According to qualitative authors, data collection methods are ways of sourcing information from a select group of participants for research purposes to answer the phenomena (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Finstone, 2021; Maree, 2017; Ningi, 2022). Barrett and Twycross (2018) explain that data collection instruments provide the tools to effectively gathering data from

research subjects. When examining the data collection process, essential questions must be asked and answered to provide the research with clarity and direction throughout the study. These questions help the research stay aligned with the purpose of the investigation and ensure that the research methods selected in this study provide relevant data to answer the two research questions proposed. Jansen and Vithal (2010, p. 22) propose eight questions to consider when designing the data collection plan for a qualitative research study. These questions have been organised in Table 4, along with how they apply to this study when focused on *Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight*.

Guided questions in a data collection plan	Application to this study of the Spotlight production
1. Why is the data collected?	Data are collected to investigate the two research questions: (1) How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories? (2) How does transformative learning develop actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character?
2. What are the research design and strategy?	The research design for this study is shaped by a qualitative approach, interpretivist paradigm and phenomenological framework. The strategy or research methods include the dual positionality as the researcher, a purposeful sampling process, and qualitative semi-structured interviews, including observations and fieldnotes that evolved into a thematic data analysis process.
3. Who will be the data sources?	The participants for this study will be three actors performing in the Spotlight production and the director of this production.

Guided questions in a data collection plan	Application to this study of the Spotlight production
4. Where will the data be collected?	The data will be collected at the rehearsal venue of the production (the Reynlal Centre in Lynwood, Pretoria).
5. How many data sources will be assessed?	Each of the four participants will be interviewed three times during this study; therefore, there will be 12 data sources.
6. How often will data be collected?	The data will be collected at three stages: (1) Beginning of the rehearsal process (week one) (2) During the rehearsal process (two weeks in) (3) After the second production performance
7. How will the data be collected?	Data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with each participant and observations and field notes were penned down during the study when and as they were observed. Four rehearsals were observed.
8. Justify the plan for data collection.	The qualitative semi-structured interviews with the three actors provided descriptive data on their current meaning schemes, the selection of monologue and character and the developments during the process and second production performance. The semi-structured interviews with the director provided descriptive data for his theme selection for the production, his choice in using specific methods or character exploration during the rehearsal process and his insights after the second production performance.

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Guided questions in a data collection plan	Application to this study of the Spotlight production
	The observations and field notes documented provided non-verbal descriptive data of the actor's transition from the self to the character and the director's influence on the rehearsal and performance process.

Table 4: Data collection plan as represented in the Spotlight production (Padayachee, 2023)

In this study, I employ the following data collection methods and instruments to answer the two research questions: in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes to source information from my research participants. Each interview was allocated 30 minutes. I used a digital sound recorder to record the interviews, which assisted in transcribing the data received.

In this section, I discuss the following aspects of the data collection plan for this study in detail: qualitative semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes and the consolidation of participant data collected.

3.4.3.1 Qualitative semi-structured Interviews

According to Seidman (2013), interviews are a mode of inquiry or a way of knowing. It is a way in which an individual can share their stories with another; therefore, it becomes a meaning-making process (Seidman, 2013). When individuals tell their stories, they share details of their lived experiences in progressive steps: a beginning. middle and end (Bedford, 2001). In doing so, they reflect on these selected experiences, place them in the order they transpired and make sense of them, thus establishing storytelling as a meaning-making process (Seidman, 2013).

The most crucial component of this process is based on language (Bedford, 2001). Seidman (2013, p. 8) echoes this by stating, "what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolise their experience through language". This natural way of inquiring comprises two individuals talking, asking and answering questions of each other (Seidman, 2013). The purpose of interviewing is a way in which the researcher can begin to understand the lived experience of each participant and how they made meaning from that specific experience

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interview questions must align with the knowledge of what the researcher wants to learn about a specific issue or phenomenon (Yin, 2016).

Within qualitative research, various types of interviews can be conducted: focus groups in person, one-on-one interviews face-to-face, where the interviewer and the interviewee are present in the same location, communication via text/email or using technology as a medium (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Alssawi, 2014, Braun & Clarke, 2013). The categories in qualitative interviews are unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Creswell and Miller (2000), a qualitative semi-structured interview is designed at the beginning of the interview process based on a line of inquiry that might alter as new information relevant to the study becomes known.

This study investigates how transformative learning experiences occur during the Spotlight production as actors transition from the self to the character. The two research questions, the field notes and observations perceived during the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes determined the interview questions for this study. Furthermore, emergent questions arising from information shared by participants were included in the interviews to provide clarity or further elaboration (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I selected one-on-one interviews to be conducted in person with each research participant. Two sets of interview questions were designed for the actor participants and the director.

In applying this structure to my study, I designed my interviews to obtain information at the beginning of the rehearsal process, during the rehearsal process and after the second production performance. This structure creates a complete cycle of narrative experience for each participant involved in this study, highlighting the meaning-making process. Furthermore, I followed a semi-structured format since I required the flexibility to add emergent questions that developed during the study. The interview questions for the actor participants at the three stages are available in Annexure A and the interview questions for the director is in Annexure B. Since there were three stages of interviews with the four participants, it allowed my observations and field notes to guide these questions and develop new lines of inquiry aligned with this study.

3.4.3.2 Observations and field notes

In qualitative research, observation is crucial for data collecting and is understood as "the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often

with note-taking instruments and recording it for research purposes" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 166). The research purpose and the research questions determine the relevance of observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Observations enhance the data collected because they can capture crucial information during processes that were not present in the interview. This communication is described as non-verbal and presents itself through sensors. It is a vital part of the research process to document these observations because they provide deeper insights into the participants' experience of which the participants themselves might not be aware (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study focuses on four primary events within the research study: (1) the Bhava–Rasa process that facilitated the cognitive and emotional journey of the actor in the role, (2) the social alchemy process where the actor navigates the character's narrative to create identity, (3) the final dress rehearsal where all actors, including the three actor participants involved in this study, will perform their complete monologues to a closed audience and will receive notes from the director, and (4) the second production performance in front of an open audience where the set, costume and props will be used in a theatre setting. Within these four events, I focused on facial expressions, emotional intensity, gestures, responses, actor motivations and connections (verbal), insights shared between the actor and director during performance feedback sessions, peer actor reactions, and my reflections at pivotal moments I perceived to be valuable to the study.

3.4.3.3 Consolidation of participant data collected

Once the observations and field notes were documented, I organised all the data I collected in a format to assist my review and aid the data analysis. Table 5 displays the data from the participants. All four participants volunteered their time towards my investigation, allowing me to observe them during the challenging moments in the process and use the observations as prompts for new questions, creating rich data.

Participants	Interview: Beginning of the rehearsal process	Interview: During the rehearsal process	Interview: After the second production performance	Observations and field notes	Reflective notes
Actor 1	All three answers to the questions were collected	All three answers to the questions were collected	All four answers to the questions were collected	Observations and field notes were documented during all four events	Personal reflections and critical moments were documented
Actor 2	All three answers to the questions were collected	All three answers to the questions were collected	All four answers to the questions were collected	Observations and field notes were documented during all four events	Personal reflections and critical moments were documented
Actor 3	All three answers to the questions were collected	All three answers to the questions were collected	All four answers to the questions were collected	Observations and field notes were documented during all four events	Personal reflections and critical moments were documented
Director	All three answers to the questions were collected	All four answers to the questions were collected	All four answers to the questions were collected	Observations and field notes were documented during all four events	Personal reflections and critical moments were documented

Table 5**: Consolidation of participant data collected in the Spotlight production (Padayachee, 2023)**

The data collected in this study were consolidated. All participants completed all data instruments. I then proceeded to the following section of data analysis.

3.4.4 Data analysis

According to Maree (2017), data analysis is arranging the collected data in a systematic and organised way to aid researchers in increasing their understanding of the study phenomenon. Data analysis is used to create meaning and foster understanding from the data sourced from the research participants, the researcher's observations and field notes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Maree (2017) explains that analysing and interpreting the collected data are achieved by decoding the raw information into multiple categories, themes, and sub-themes the researcher identified in the study.

Once the in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews had been conducted, I transcribed the data according to the recordings. I included my written observations and field notes. I then coded the information according to specific themes identified in my conceptual framework, as presented in my study. I applied the factors contributing to the interchangeable process between the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories as a guide as I sorted and decoded the research responses. I used the field notes and observations I documented during the Spotlight production to inform the codes I have identified by establishing the differences and similarities in the data to provide a detailed analysis of the data. I analysed all sourced information holistically to build meaning from the findings presented in this study. Lastly, I developed conclusions based on the decoded information.

I adopted the data analysis spiral designed by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 186) as the process to follow in this study. Each step provides clear instructions on how to work with the data collected to create meaning from the phenomenon observed.

The Data Analysis Spiral
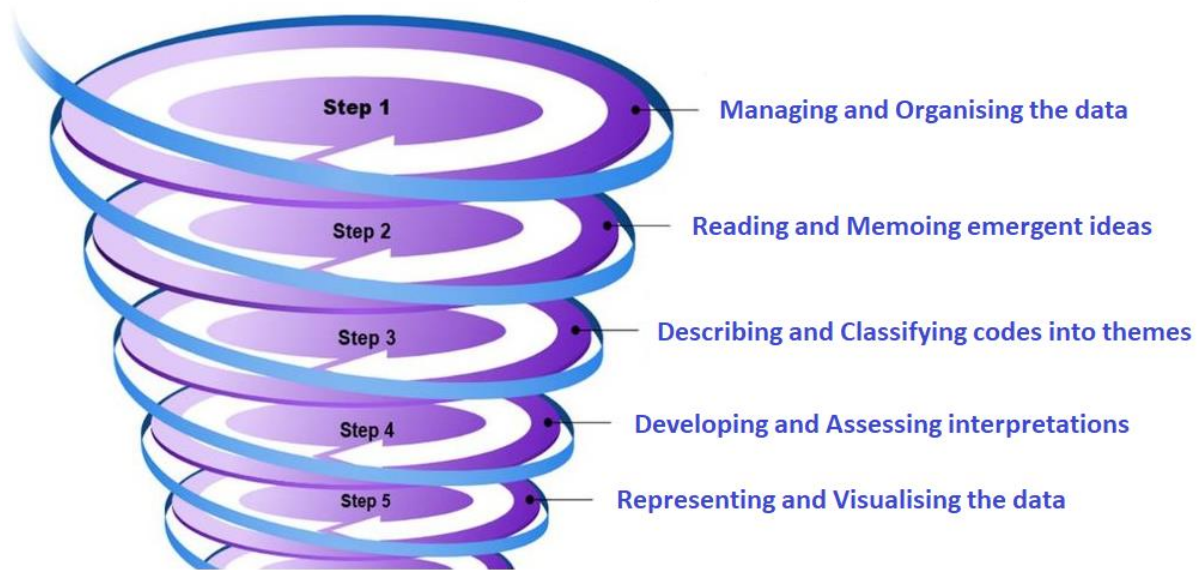
Figure 19: Data analysis spiral (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 186)

Below I describe each of the five steps that contribute to refining and construing the collected data, as applied to this study.

Step 1 – Managing and organising the data

I created and organised the data files comprising the qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with all four participants of the study at the three stages of production. I transcribed the interviews from the recordings into scripted text. The observations and field notes were documented during the four production events, including my reflections during these processes.

Step 2 – Reading and memoing emergent ideas

I read all the texts (mentioned in step 1) multiple times, made margin notes and highlighted information that stood out for me during the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes and then formulated initial codes relevant to the research questions. I then documented new ideas, lines of inquiry and/or issues that emerged during this rigorous process.

Step 3 – Describing and classifying codes into themes

I described subjective experiences in detail according to what I observed, the field notes and the interviews with the research participants in the Spotlight production. Building descriptions of the initial codes were identified and describing the essence of the phenomenon on which this study is based by decoding the texts by determining similarities and differences to identify patterns and categories. These patterns and categories were aligned with the research questions as I investigated concepts such as transformative learning experiences, meaning schemes and actors' transitions. These codes were then classified into thematic ideas by grouping reoccurring segments of data.

Step 4 – Developing and assessing interpretations

I developed significant statements by studying the decoded data to make sense of the codes, patterns and categories identified. I assessed the data in a creative, yet critical way to group these statements into meaning units. I viewed the data from a broader, abstract and holistic perspective to develop the themes into meaningful units by drawing links between my interpretations of transformative learning experiences, meaning schemes and actors' transition to my existing literature review.

Step 5 – Representing and visualising the data

I developed a textual description of what the actors experienced during their participation in the Spotlight production. These descriptions included verbatim examples drawn from the decoded data. I then developed a structural description of how the actors' experiences occurred, including the setting (rehearsal and theatre performance space) and context (theatre processes, final dress and second performance) pertaining to the study. Lastly, I combined the textual (what) and structural (how) descriptions to formulate a comprehensive and integrated description of the phenomenon that represents the essence of the actors' transformative learning experiences in the Spotlight production. This explanatory process concludes the data analysis. I proceed to discuss the aspects of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations pertaining to this research.

3.5   Trustworthiness

Scholars in qualitative research have defined trustworthiness as the degree of confidence or trust in the data, interpretation, and methods and instruments used to ensure the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Elo et al., 2014; Maree, 2017; Ningi, 2022). Researchers working within the qualitative paradigm have proposed four ways of

assessing the trustworthiness of a study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Basias & Pollalis, 2018; Connelly, 2016; Elo et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2020). Below I explain each method as they apply to this study.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the belief and trust one has in the research findings (Basias & Pollalis, 2018). It also refers to how believable the research is to the reader (Johnson et al., 2020). Various strategies can be used to establish credibility in a research study, namely interview technique, member checking, structural coherence, triangulation, the researcher's authority, reflexivity, time sampling and varied and prolonged field experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I applied the following strategies to strengthen the credibility of this study:

- I selected an effective and well-established research method within qualitative studies that suited my investigation and research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- I followed a precise purposive sampling method in how I selected the actors participating in the Spotlight production, ensuring rich data (Creswell & Miller, 2000).
- I employed member checking through my two supervisors regularly evaluating my research (Connelly, 2016).
- I abided by the specific data collection plan selected and followed the steps accurately (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).
- I increased clarity and precision by engaging in weekly feedback sessions with my two supervisors (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo (2020).
- I sent the transcribed interviews to my participants to ensure my understanding and interpretation was aligned with their response and intent (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
- I spent extended periods observing and engaging with the participants in the research space to ensure that the data collected were not superficial. The interviews were allocated 30 minutes; however, the session was not limited to this time (Maree, 2017).
- I adopted triangulation because I used multiple research instruments and collected data at three stages of the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.5.2 Transferability

Creswell and Creswell (2018) propose that transferability validates that the research results obtained in a study can be connected to other situations, contexts, times and populations. To prove these findings are transferable, the researcher must find these connections (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Therefore, the research participants were selected using purposeful sampling, which is aligned with the line of inquiry of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I adhered to the transferability conditions because I used purposeful sampling to select the actors who participated. All four participants are of diverse backgrounds, ages, races and genders. They all had a background in acting and were familiar with theatre practices. These selections ensured that the correct data were collected and processed to answer the two research questions of this study and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research occurs when another researcher can follow the decision trail followed in a specific study due to how the leading researcher describes the purpose of the study, how the participants were selected for that study and why they were selected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Dependability is used to show that the research findings cultivated in a study can be similar when the precise research questions are investigated, with the same research participants and the same data collection method (Connelly, 2016). I achieved dependability in this study by describing the entire research process in detail, including my motivations for making selected decisions and how it was aligned to previous studies attempting to investigate a similar line of inquiry in this field of study. These descriptions included my reasons for pursuing this research topic, the two specific research questions that guided this study, and a detailed map of the research design and methodology developed and followed.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with providing transparent and self-critical analysis of the research methods used in the research study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Confirmability establishes that the findings and interpretations cultivated in a study were derived from the data collected and not fabricated (Elo et al., 2014). Researchers should express a degree of neutrality to enhance the confirmability of a study (Cope, 2014).

In this study, I followed the following strategies to strengthen the confirmability of this research:

- I used a recording device to record the interviews with each participant.
- I transcribed each interview verbatim as per the recordings.
- I sent the transcriptions of each interview to their respective participants in the study to verify the accuracy of my transcribed documents and interpretations, including the observations I made during the process.

When assessing accuracy in qualitative research we refer to data validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data validation is assessing the quality and precision of the data collected before starting the data analysis (Cope, 2014). It also confirms the degree of completeness of the collected data (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) propose three validation strategies for qualitative studies: the reviewer's lens, the participant's lens and the researcher's lens. Researchers should select at least two strategies to ensure the validity of data in their study.

I selected the following two validation strategies to strengthen my study:

- The researcher's lens

I used different data collection methods in my study: interviews, observations and field notes. I interviewed four participants at three stages of the process; therefore, I have 12 data sources. I disclosed to all participants in the Spotlight production my background and position as a researcher and my intentions of exploring the data. I described my background in the acting environment, along with my experience with theatre practices. I acknowledged that my personal insights, experiences and understanding would likely shape my approach to this investigation and my interpretations of the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

- The reviewer's lens

As soon as the interviews and observation process concluded with the participants, I perused the data collected in detail, which provided thick descriptions of my interpretations as they pertained to each participant at the three stages of the process. My two supervisors read and evaluated the analysis and interpretations I constructed to audit the work produced (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this study, I employed strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the data cultivated by applying credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to the research conducted. It allowed me to evaluate the data collected with transparency and accuracy to avoid bias and be aware of additional issues that might have arisen during data analysis.

3.6   Ethical considerations

Arifin (2018, p. 30) states that "the protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study". Issues in ethics can be defined as morals, values and principles that guide acceptable or unacceptable practices when concerned with human research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Maree (2017), there are two considerations when addressing ethics in research: (1) the treatment of research participants and (2) the morals and values of the researcher as an individual in the study. Before commencing this study, I requested ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria to obtain consent to conduct my study. I investigated actors' and directors' meaning schemes which address their personal values, experiences, beliefs, perspectives, motivations, perceptions and insights. I researched how their meaning schemes developed when dealing with character transformative processes in a theatre environment; therefore, ethical considerations were essential. Regarding the treatment of the research participants in this study, I provided a detailed briefing explaining the content and purpose. I explained that this study is sensitive and subjective and will be treated with care and consideration. I also explained what would be required from the research participants and the extent of their involvement in the study.

Due to the nature of this study, the following ethical considerations were applied: voluntary participation, the safety of participants, privacy and trust, and informed consent (Finestone, 2021; Iacob et al., 2015; Maree, 2017). Voluntary participation means that research participants were informed about the nature of the study and that their participation is voluntary (Iacob et al., 2015). If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, they will not face penalties (Arifin, 2018). I sought confirmation from each participant before each interview to ensure that their participation in this study was voluntary. The safety of participants ensures that no participant is harmed due to the study or practices of the researcher (Maree, 2017). Due to the sensitive and personal nature of this study, there might be very personal insights the participants share or choose not to share. I respected their contributions and performed regular check-ins using verbal confirmations to ensure they felt safe during the process. I also provided participants with additional processing time if they

required it. Participants were not misled in any way throughout the research and were kept abreast of the study's development.

Privacy and trust indicate that all participants remain anonymous and their contributions to the study will remain confidential (Finestone, 2021). Each participant's privacy was maintained throughout the research by assigning pseudonyms (codes or labels) to each research participant to ensure their anonymity. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), pseudonyms are applied when a researcher selects fictitious names to represent the research participants in a study. In the study, each participant was interviewed in a separate room where they had the privacy to discuss and share their experiences with me. I also reminded participants that all information shared with me during the interviews and interactions and observations will not be shared with any cast member or the director. The data collected in this study are stored in a password-protected document for 15 years by my two supervisors for safekeeping.

Informed consent implies that all research participants were briefed on the study, how it will be conducted, and what is required of them (Arifin, 2018). I requested consent from each participant before each interview and reminded them of the nature of the study and what it entailed. I also requested consent from the production company producing the Spotlight production to conduct this study. I explained the purpose of this study, how I conduct the study and how I use the findings of this study in my research. Participants were not rewarded for participating.

3.7   Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the research methodology components and design for this study. I present the diagram that visually represents the process followed when conducting this research. I explained the two research questions that guided how the research was conducted. I explained the research design, which includes a qualitative approach, an interpretivist paradigm and a phenomenological lens applied to the study, followed by the research methods selected for this study: a dual positionality as the researcher, a purposeful sampling process for participant selection, the criteria used to make the selection and the research site aligned to the phenomenology approach. I discussed a detailed data collection plan comprising qualitative semi-structured interviews, observations and fieldnotes and how the data was consolidated. Next, I explained the data analysis process I followed, including applying a hermeneutical phenomenological lens, the transcription process and the data

analysis spiral adopted to decode the data. I addressed the trustworthiness of this study as it relates to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Lastly, I explained the ethics considerations applied to this study. In the following chapter, I present the data analysis. The data provided were obtained and consolidated from the qualitative semi-structured interviews, observation and fieldnotes of the Spotlight production.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research methodology and design presenting the process followed when conducting this study of the Spotlight production. I presented how the designs and methods influenced data collection and processing. I discussed the two research questions and how the design and methods selected would guide the research process. Furthermore, I explained the ethics considerations and trustworthiness of the research participants selected from the actors in the Spotlight production. The data collection process comprised qualitative semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes. The actors' experiences during their participation in the production were guided by a phenomenological lens. In this chapter, I address the data analysis component of this study by presenting the data collected from the three-interval qualitative semi-structured interviews with each actor and the director of the production. I provide an interview profile for each participant with a character description. I then proceed with interview reports from each qualitative semi-structured interview with all four participants. Observations and field notes obtained during the four events of the production are also presented. Lastly, I present a cross-case analysis of the three actors' data obtained during the qualitative semi-structured interview process.

4.2   Data analysis and interpretations

In the following section, I discuss the analysis and interpretations of the data collected from the actors and the director during their participation in the Spotlight production. Each actor selected their monologue and character to portray according to the specific goal (personal and/or professional) they wished to achieve. In presenting the data and interpretations, I used the characters' names as pseudonyms for each actor. For example: Participant A is an actor who played the role of Hamlet from Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, in the Spotlight production and will be referred to as Hamlet going forward. The director will be presented by his title as director within this chapter.

4.2.1   Interview profiles of participants and character descriptions

4.2.1.1 Participant A: Hamlet

- Actor profile

Participant A is a white male actor in his early twenties, completing his final year of acting training with the director at a private acting institution. He has experience in stage, film and camera acting and stage combat techniques. He participated in stage productions at his school during his high school years and performed in two professional productions during his first and second years at the acting institution. He has a great passion for the acting profession and is determined to succeed in the acting and performing goals he has set for himself. Once he has graduated, he wants to work as an actor in the South African industry for stage and film.

- Character description

Participant A plays the role of Hamlet, who is the main character in William Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, written between 1599 and 1601. Shakespeare created this play as a tragedy riddled with revenge that revolves around the agonised and tormented interior mind of the young Prince of Denmark. The character Hamlet is a university student whose studies are interrupted due to his father's death. Hamlet is faced with evidence that his uncle has murdered his father but is in turmoil as he wants to prove his uncle's guilt before trying to act. His reasoning, moral compass and righteousness come into question later in the play when Hamlet commits murder. The monologue Participant A selected for his performance is one of the most powerful and challenging monologues of the Elizabethan era. The monologue reveals Hamlet's inmost thoughts and turmoil as he discusses how miserable and painful human life is and how death (specifically his suicide) would be preferable and could release him from this mental torment. However, he is also plagued with the fear and uncertainty of what comes after death, placing him back in his agonising state.

4.2.1.2 👺 *Participant B: Lysistrata*

- Actor profile

Participant B is an African female actor in her early twenties. She studies through correspondence via a film editing academy and simultaneously completes her final year of acting training at a private acting institution. Her acting experience in stage and film acting is limited to her three years at the private institution, as she has not performed in professional productions. She did not have the opportunity to participate in theatre and dramatic arts activities, as her high school did not offer this subject as an extracurricular programme. She

is working hard to complete her acting training and film editing course successfully. She is passionate about theatre and stage acting and would like to explore national and international acting industries once her studies are complete.

- Character description

Participant B selected the character Lysistrata from the Greek comedy by playwright Aristophanes in 411 BC. Although the story of Lysistrata was written as an ancient Greek comedy, the depth, emotion and righteous acts of a determined woman surrounded by war and struggle prove to be the driving force behind this play. Lysistrata goes on an extraordinary mission to end the Peloponnesian War that plagues her people using her sexuality as a weapon to lure men in society to listen to the thoughts and advice of women. Lysistrata persuades the women of the Greek city involved in the war to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands and lovers to manipulate men to acknowledging and considering women's voices. A powerful and courageous strategy by the "weaker sex" to end war and chaos. This monologue selected by Participant B begins where Lysistrata addresses the Magistrate after the women have commandeered the Acropolis. He has come to arrest them for trespassing when he is met with Lysistrata who tells him about the women's plight and struggles during a war that men have caused.

4.2.1.3 🎭 Participant C: Hermione

- Actor profile

Participant C is a white female actor in her early twenties. She is completing her final year at the private acting institution under the director's facilitation. Her experience with stage acting is extensive, as she has attended an acting school for young actors from 12 years old. She does not have film experience and is looking to develop this skill set. She is focused on exploring her identity as a female actor through multiple female character roles within a more serious genre. She has modelling experience and want to focus on enhancing her ability to portray challenging characters professionally. After her studies, she wants to act full-time in film and stage performance in South Africa and undertake a directing course for a deeper understanding of acting techniques and performance.

- Character description

Participant C has selected Hermoine from the play *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare during the Elizabethan era in the 1600s. The character Hermoine is the Queen of Sicily and the lovely wife of King Leontes. She has two children to whom she is a doting mother. The character of Hermione is described as honourable, kind, gracious, of royal descent and respectful. The events that transpire in the play reveal her to be strong, mindful, dignified and courageous in her words and actions. The play unfolds as Hermione is unfairly accused of cheating on her husband and is thrown into prison while she is pregnant with her second child. Her daughter was born in prison prematurely. Participant C has selected the monologue where Hermione tries to defend herself in open court against the accusations of which she is accused. During her court session, a messenger brings news that Hermione's son has died from fear and worry regarding his mother's wellbeing, causing her to faint from pain and shock and is carried off stage.

4.2.1.4 Participant D: Director

- Actor profile

Participant D is a white male director in his mid-thirties. The director has extensive experience in the theatre and film industry. His skill set includes acting for stage and film, directing, script writing, radio drama performance and script development, film producing, lecturing at two institutions, physical theatre trainer and specialist, film editor, workshop facilitator and movement choreographer. The director has been collaborating with the actors in his acting training programme from year one to year three; therefore, knows them professionally and personally. He also has extensive experience working with the Bhava–Rasa theory as a theatre practice and the social alchemy process of developing a character. He uses these theatre practices in his actor's training programme. The director and I studied together at the same institution during our undergraduate degrees. His focus on the safety of the actors during all the processes is crucial for the research being conducted.

4.2.2 Individual participant report

4.2.2.1 Hamlet

- Interview 1: Beginning of the rehearsal

Hamlet selected his character because he has always been intrigued by the complexity and depth of this character. He feels it will be challenging for him in his final year to portray a character who is equally righteous and simultaneously overwhelmed with emotion. He states that the character "*struggles with a lot*" and "*is dealing with very difficult circumstances*". He does not completely identify with the character, especially "*the physical stuff like when he lost his father*". However, he can relate to the character's mental state, stating that "*there are some aspects that I can go 'yeah, that's a lot like what I'm going through '*". Furthermore, he can relate to the "*shifts he needs to make with the people and relationships around him with his friends and family*". Hamlet shared that by playing this specific role, he wants to "*make a breakthrough*" regarding his skill as an actor and "*prove*" to himself and the industry that he is capable. He believes that his goals personally, as an individual, and professionally, as an actor, flow into each other and are one. Hamlet indicated that at this moment he was not aware of any perceptions we had towards the character or of the process to come that he could share.

- Interview 2: During the rehearsal

Hamlet shares that his understanding of an actor's controlled emotional journey is "*the ability or way you use your emotion and just take control*". He mentions that an actor must pick which emotion works best for him and his character at that moment. Hamlet feels the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes helped him to understand his character's emotions and "*the thoughts the character was having*". He found that each time he went into these two processes, it became easier to navigate and states "*the control over the emotions gets easier*". He indicated that something different happened to him during his last encounter in the Bhava–Rasa process, which he could not understand. He entered the love emotion and found it "*easy to apply and feel it*". However, when he needed to move back to the self, he found it was "*much harder to get out of*". He could not understand why he struggled with this emotion or rather "*letting go of it*". He mentioned that after the director discussed it with him, and the two of them "*broke it down*", he could adjust much faster and get back to himself. He indicated that it might have been how the character was developing at that point or that his own emotions were influencing the process. Hamlet also mentions that engaging in these two processes develops your skills as an actor and a person, as "*it helps you get your mindset ready for the next character you play*". He feels it also enhances access to your

emotions "*and helps you get into the emotion and out of it as quickly as possible*". Hamlet believes that an actor's ability to get back to the self is "*the most important skill to have*".

- Interview 3: After the second production performance

Hamlet shares that he understands the word transformation to mean "*change*". He explains his understanding of transformative learning experiences by stating that "*when you as a students don't necessarily know something or how something works and then after the lesson or teaching or process you understand what's going on and can make sense of it*". Hamlet believes that this transformation has to do with the change within the student. He explains that "*it could also be you, something in you that changed completely, that transformed completely into something else*". Hamlet indicates that he was concerned that he "*messed up*" his lines and suggested that it was because he felt "*overwhelmed by the emotion in the moment*", causing him to lose focus. He mentions that it felt as though "*his emotions were overflowing with everything and that he lost control*". He indicated that he was happy with the transitions during his monologue and believes he has discovered multiple insights about himself during this process personally and professionally. Hamlet shares that from a personal perspective, it was only after he performed in the role that he could understand "*the real emotion of the character*" and that, at first, he thought he could not relate to some aspects of the character's narrative but later discovered he experienced a "*realness in the moment*". He explained that when he studied the character's narrative, he could not understand why the character made certain bad decisions; however, after going through the emotions and engaging in a mindset similar to the character, he found that some decisions were mostly clouded by the character's strong emotions. Hamlet felt that playing this specific role transformed him. He learned how to "*stay calm in stressful situations*" the way the character did. He also mentioned that the hard lessons the character had to learn or "*to accept the consequences of his own actions*" helped him "*apply them*" to his life and circumstances. He stated, "*that it just became a part of me*", and "*I will not forget it*". Hamlet also mentions that this transformation occurred because "*acting feels like real life where the emotions and thoughts feel real*". He stated that he subconsciously applies these insights to his life; however, "*you don't realise it until you need to think about it for an interview or have to write it down*". Hamlet indicated that he felt he achieved the breakthrough he aimed for and was happy about how the performance went.

4.2.2.2 🎭 Lysistrata

- Interview 1: Beginning of the rehearsal

Lysistrata shared that her motivation for selecting her character was a personal and professional choice. She indicated that professionally, as an actor, she usually played "*really dark characters like the abused victim or the abuser*". She wanted to challenge herself to see how "*adaptable and versatile*" she could be in her role. From a personal motivation, Lysistrata felt that playing the dark characters demanded a lot from her emotionally and psychologically. She stated that it was a bit much and she needed a clean slate away from the "*dark places of the mind*". She mentioned that the director wanted the cast to select a character and monologue that "*would play into a strong point*" they wanted to explore. Therefore, Lysistrata selected the role of a strong woman where she could explore "*her vulnerable side*". She wanted to play a female role where emotion was used in a deeper way instead of having her "*cry on stage*". Lysistrata indicated that she would like to identify with her character and the strength and power she holds; however, at this time, she does not. She believes that her character is "*able to stand up for herself, for what she believes and what she thinks is right, and I admire that*". She also feels that it is something she can learn for such a character, stating, "*I don't think that's something that I have inherently in myself but aspire to*". Lysistrata shared that the goal she wishes to achieve through this role is to overcome her fear of standing up to people, especially men, as she is either "*too shy, scared, or not confident enough*". She also mentions that she is "*very intimidated by people*" and aims to overcome this "*by learning to be like the character*". She indicates that that is where "*real growth happens for an actor*". She adds that it is "*something within us that attracts us to something like that*". Lysistrata feels that by playing her character to the fullest, she will "*develop the ability to speak to men*" and "*stand firm*" when sharing her thoughts and opinions. Lysistrata concludes this interview by stating that the character's traits are ones "*I'd like to adopt for myself*".

- Interview 2: During the rehearsal

Lysistrata explains her understanding of an actor's controlled emotional journey as "*a way you guide your own emotions alongside the character*". She indicates that the "*actor needs to be in control and not the character*". She also mentions that an *actor "has to use their own emotion in the correct way in order to support what is happening to the character*" in

their narrative. Lysistrata mentions that working with the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy process "*gets easier and more comfortable*" every time you engage in it. She explained that it is with "*practice that moving in and out of emotion gets better and gets deeper into the character*". Lysistrata shares that she thought her "*monologue was shallow*" and was not going to require "*deep, raw emotion*"; however, after engaging in the processes, she realised that the character was "*complex and had an interesting depth to her, which I didn't know was there*". Lysistrata believe her character to be quiet, which she finds to be "*far from*" who she is as a person. She explains that this process made her realise that the "*connection is closer*" than she thought, "*not in a physical way but in a kind of moral viewing of things*". She also mentions that the exercises helped her to see where her character's and her own "*opinions matched*", how she thought about situations and how the character thought about them. Lysistrata indicated that even though the situations and circumstances differ, "*there is a lot of similarity*" between herself and her character now. She adds that even though she still feels like she does not have the courage to do what her character does, she feels that "*the right thoughts are in place*" to help her get there.

- Interview 3: After the second production performance

Lysistrata understands transformation as "*extreme change where something is completely different at the end than it was in the beginning*". She mentions that transformative learning experiences are when "*a person learns something that changes aspects of you into something new*". She explains that once this happens, "*you can look back on the experience and find that you are someone different*". She believes it is a gradual change that occurs. Lysistrata indicates that in the last performance, she decided to look each audience member in the eye as she was performing, which gave a different energy to the performance. She says, it "*fired up the performance from within*" creating the necessary reactions to enhance the performance. Lysistrata shared that at the beginning of the rehearsal, some peer actors (males) were "*mocking*" her performance, which troubled her. However, during the last performance, she decided to "*make direct eye contact with them; they stopped their mocking*", which empowered her. She explains it felt quite encouraging to feel that way in a performance, as it felt real to her in the moment. Lysistrata highlights that this action makes the "*audience a part of the performance, making it even more real*" for the actor in the role. She feels it was challenging for her character to stand up to the men in society and make them listen to her. She experienced this when she "*stood up to the male peer actors when*"

they judged and mocked" her and it felt "*liberating to make them listen*" to her during her performance. Lysistrata mentions that when the "*emotions from the Bhava–Rasa process are combined with the thoughts, actions and narrative of the social alchemy process, then the experience feels natural*" to the actor, like "*a real-life experience*" to some extent. She explains that she understands that in the "*real world*", she is not in the midst of war or possesses so much power, but the "*feeling and action make it real for the actor and it feels nice*". Lysistrata also mentions that the make-believe power of theatre is fundamental to transforming an actor into a role. She mentions that this process was an "*eye opener*" for her, showing her that she can be "*feminine and powerful at the same time*", as her character. She shared a personal insight; she discovered that this character showed her that "*a woman can be supportive, kind and even submissive to her husband, but she can also be powerful and use that power when needed to do the right thing*". She learned new things about herself, for example, she "*enjoys talking to people and having them listen*" to what she has to say, enjoys "*taking charge in certain situations and being a leader, and being in control*". Lysistrata explains that she only really understood what this character meant to and did for her once she wrote her thoughts down and answered the questions in the interview. She mentions she feels transformed, as she now feels like she can "*stand up for herself after doing it in the performance piece in the role*", and "*emotionally*", as she "*feels stronger*" in her "*own identity as a woman*" than she did before. She views the relationship between men and women differently and now understands that "*embracing femininity doesn't mean relinquishing power*". She concludes this interview by stating that this experience has been a positive and enlightening one for her as an actor and as a woman.

4.2.2.3 Hermione

- Interview 1: Beginning of the rehearsal

Hermione indicates that she selected her character for two reasons: to move away from the superficial appearance side of acting and play a stronger role as a woman. She shared that in her previous roles, she would be cast as a provocative woman or the "*blonde role*". She wants to move away from that type of "*on-the-surface acting*" and explore "*a character with depth and complexity*", as this would challenge her. She was instantly drawn to this character because she "*is strong, has courage in the darkest of times and possesses so much love within her*". Hermione does not identify with the character physically, as she has not had a child

before; however, she strongly identifies with the mental and emotional hardships she goes through. She "*resonates deeply with the character's narrative and can easily see the similarities*" between them. She also mentions that she admires how the character "*can stand up for herself, going through the worst of struggles and to still be kind afterwards*". Hermione explains that in her personal life, she finds it "*difficult to forgive after someone has hurt or betrayed*" her and would like to learn this life skill from the character to become as strong. Hermione also states that the goal she wanted to achieve with this role was to prove to the industry that she can play strong, complex and complicated characters and that her ability to portray these characters should not be judged by her looks. She states the following passionately: "*I know I am pretty, but there is more to my soul than just the way I look*". Hermione indicates there are specific perceptions about herself that she would like to explore within this role and wants to use this character to help her work through her trauma in her life. Her personal goal for playing this role is higher than her professional goal. She concludes this interview by stating that the role she selected was just for her and her "*wellbeing*"

- Interview 2: During the rehearsal

Hermione believes that the actor's controlled emotional journey is when an actor does not "*lose themselves in the emotion of the character*"; it is about "*going through the emotions, but not letting it control you*". She states that instead, an actor "*should be in control of the emotion all the time*"; otherwise, "*it appears unstable and loses its impact*". Hermione indicates that she makes it a point "*to feel the emotion and still be aware*" of herself playing a role. She believes the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes are essential to the transition from the self to the character. The more she engages with these processes, the more she feels she is better equipped to take on a new and challenging character. It makes her "*feel in control*" of hers and the character's emotions. Hermione indicates that the Bhava–Rasa process helps her "*understand the emotion and access it in a safe way*". It helps her channel her "*own emotions into the moment without trying to control the outcome*" of the performance. She indicates that the social alchemy process "*ties into the training when you need to flow from one emotion into another*" according to the character's thought process and actions. Hermione uses a specific process "*to get into character and engage the emotion and mindset*" of that character. The only time she "*truly starts to transition from self to character*" is if she "*writes her thoughts down and thinks about how the character's*

narrative" affects her as a person. She calls this "*the empathy process*". Hermione indicated that she has discovered certain perceptions about herself that she wants to further explore through the character's narrative.

- Interview 3: After the 2nd Production Performance

Hermione's understanding of transformation means "*changing from one thing into another in some way*". She also explains that a transformative learning experience relates to a "*transformation that happens through experiences where a person learns something new*". She did not prepare extensively for her performance because she "*trusts*" herself "*to feel the emotion and go through the motions of the character's narrative*". She allowed herself "*to let the emotion guide*" her and "*trust that the actions emerging from the emotion would flow into the character's narrative*". She indicated that this was a "*more natural process*" for her, instead of forcing emotion, thoughts and actions into a role. Hermione felt a "*sense of transformation occur*", as she felt "*more comfortable*" within her role and felt the self and character drawing closer together. She believes the social alchemy process enabled her to "*feel so free during the performance*" as the groundwork was done during the rehearsal. Hermione shared that in the performance she "*felt beautiful and feminine*", which she did not expect, as it was part of her "*goal to move away from the aesthetics of performance*". She found that to be a surprising and welcoming effect of theatre and indicated that this experience in the role of this specific character felt like a "*breakthrough on a personal level*". She explained that at the beginning of this process, she was dealing with trauma from her past and that this role would hopefully help her "*deal with it or work through it*". She further explains that the trauma she experienced was abuse of a sexual nature and she was blamed for the events that transpired. Until she started her acting training, she had "*never spoken about it before*". Hermione shared that these theatre practices helped her "*acknowledge*" her past and begin to "*deal with the underlying emotions*" associated with it. She said that this role of her character "*was similar in the pain and hurt*" she felt, and it helped her understand her "*emotions*" towards herself and the people involved. Hermione indicated that working through the character's narrative during the social alchemy process helped her "*create an outcome for herself*" through the character's voice and body. She explains that this was a "*powerful process*" that made her feel "*vulnerable and powerful at the same time*". She believes her emotions and experience helped her portray her character more effectively; however, her character helped her deal with aspects of herself she did not want to face. She

indicates that the more characters she plays, the more about herself she discovers, which is the greatest thing about theatre for an actor. She concludes this interview by stating that she most certainly feels a big transformation in her attitude, thoughts, emotions and perspectives that was not there before this process started.

4.2.2.4 🎭 *Director*

- Interview 1: Beginning of the rehearsal

The director believes that theatre is the "*actor's medium*", whereas film is the "*director's medium*". He explains that theatre is a "*live event*", so as a director "*you cannot cut and paste like you would in film*", in theatre you have "*one product*". He mentions that "*the actor is always in search of the truth as he/she is looking to recreate and represent life on stage; this makes them agents of the message of the play*". The director indicates that theatre "*has an immense impact on the actor, as the actor goes on a journey*" when they bridge the gap between the self and the character. He explains that this journey is "*like a statue being created from rock, each day in rehearsal the actor shapes, clips away and moulds the character that comes from within*". The director mentions that the "*aim of acting is to bring the self and character as close as possible to each other, not for the actor to become the character; but for the actor to lend himself/herself to the character*". He also mentions that "*within this interchangeable process, the character brings something into the actor's life*", meaning a reason or purpose for growth and development. He believes that a "*character comes knocking for an actor*"; in the instance of rehearsal, you will "*witness a moment when the is just a little snap in the actor's mind, when the connection is made, when the truth of the character is discovered*". He goes on to say that that is when the character has come knocking for the actor. He indicates that at that "*moment, the actor gives over to the truthful nature of this imaginary circumstance*". The director mentions that "*theatre is like a living organism*" that requires the "*actors to engage using all their faculties, namely body, mind and soul*". He says it is a cognitive, affective and spiritual journey from the self to the character. He mentions that "*acting is a subjective experience*", as they must be "*comfortable within the self*" to apply all the technical aspects required for theatre. He also mentions "*that theatre practices are aimed at impacting the actor in order to reach who the character is*". He indicates that this "*occurs during rehearsal, as the process of the actor in some stages is more important than the final product*". The director believes that it is through a

"*collaborative working relationship between the actor and the director*" that true, authentic theatre is created. He mentions that "*at the beginning, the director does basic blocking for the scene*"; however, once "*the actor is in process, the blocking is adapted*" for him or her to make it "*comfortable*", and "*more organic for a real experience*". The director describes himself as an "*actor's director*", where he is "*extremely hands-on and involved in all aspects*" of the production. He thinks of himself as a facilitator, a guiding force that helps the actors achieve their theatre goals. He indicates that because he is "*an actor and a director,*" he can "*guide his actors in a more adaptable way, ensuring that the actor is making the role his/her own*". The director explains that "*in classical theatre*", like in the Spotlight production, it "*is more difficult to adapt the script/monologue as we are in service of it; however, the approach an actor takes to get into character*" can be manipulated. He explains that his approach to "*directing is personal*", where he gets to know his actors, "*what makes them tick and identifies areas where there is room for growth and exploration*". He says acting in theatre is a "*human business*"; therefore, we must put the human first. He indicates that he allows his "*actors to set their own artistic goals*" and then helps them to reach them. The director shares that the social alchemy process is a big part of what happens in theatre, "*as it serves as the problem-solving technique used to navigate the character's story*". He states that an "*actor must operate from a place of empathy*" if they want to discover the "*truth about their character*". The director explains that as part of the problem-solving process, an "*actor needs to get inside the world of the character and see how the character would play in this imaginary world*". These are "c*ritical skills that are developed through practice and theatre methods*". The director does not believe in "*method acting*", he believes he "*brings the self and the character as close as possible*" but "*maintains the safety of the actor*" during this vulnerable time. He explains that many safety nets are put in place to make the actor feel safe and comfortable in this created world. He believes that "*this collaborative way of working is healthier for an actor emotionally and psychologically*". He explains that directing does not mean "*getting an actor to do something out of fear,* but instead *helping them access the emotion of fear in a safe way*". As a director, he does not want to "*push actors into a space where they want to escape from, but rather guide them into a space where they want to escape to from daily life*". The director used "*classical theatre in the Spotlight production because it gives actors a point of measure*". It is an "*important aspect of actors' training to know where the benchmark is and how to navigate it*". He explains that the benchmark provided "*five elements*" within the theatre that he uses in his practices: body, voice, improvisation, personalisation and fire. The director explains "*that fire is the hardest*

one to achieve, as it is linked to the actor's motivation, their soul and their willingness to play within this character". His objective for the actors participating in the Spotlight production was for personal and professional growth; therefore, he started with fire. He explains that when the fire elements are already there, and the actor has committed to the character, the process is already halfway complete. He says that as a director, it is challenging to foster a connection (the fire) within an actor if they have already disconnected. If the fire is present, then, as a director, he can focus on guiding the actors to reach their potential personally and professionally. He calls this the "*bond of empathy*" between the actor and the character, which "*allows the actor to go the extra mile in search of the truth*".

- Interview 2: During the rehearsal

According to the director, the word control in an actor's controlled emotional journey is critical, as "*an actor needs to be able to repeat what they have done*". An actor must "*create a pathway to their emotional destination so that they know where to find it and how to get there*". He mentions that this is aligned with "*Stanislavski's method, as the action leads to emotion*" in a "*choreographed piece*" so that in each performance, an actor can perform these actions and know where to "*find the emotions needed within the character's narrative*". The director indicates that the Bhava–Rasa process develops this skill within the actor. He explains that in the Bhava–Rasa process, "*an actor learns to guide his/her emotions and align them to the character's narrative*" in a way that becomes "*easily accessible and familiar*". He states that "*knowing yourself and your boundaries is vital to the actor's success and safety*". He explains that "*the actor becomes an athlete of emotion*", allowing them to "*transfer this skill into their personal lives*". During his rehearsals for the Spotlight production, "*actors were guided through the eight Bhava–Rasa's, which include the self*" as the ninth Bhava–Rasa and emotions as "*the most important component*". He indicates that the self is achieved through association, meaning that actors would bring memorabilia from home and place it within the self component. This method allows them to "*return easily to the self*", as it is a place of "*comfort and neutral emotion*". Furthermore, the more "*secure and safe an actor reinforces the self, the more they are able to explore and push their boundaries*" personally and professionally. This process and goal are his "*priority as a director*". He adds that creating this "*relationship of trust*" between himself and the actors, and the "*actors and themselves*" is crucial for helping the actor maintain control and develop in a safe way. He mentions that "*trust and the fire within the actor*" are "*deeply intertwined*",

as one cannot be achieved without the other. As a director, he aims to create "*complete autonomy for the actor, an independent, self-reliance*", which "*empowers*" them to perform at their best. The director feels the "*rehearsal is of utmost importance*" for the actor's entire process because "*when character development occurs, so does the actor's development*". He indicates that this "*naturally occurs as the actor learns through the character about life and about himself/herself*". The director explains that this process occurs simultaneously only in theatre between the actors and their character, and the performance on stage and the audience members. He explains that this represents the full circle of the Bhava–Rasa process of theatre, making theatre a powerful transformation medium for the actor and the audience. He states, "*that theatre is a living organism where a line of communication is created between what happens on the stage and what is experienced in the audience*". He mentions that this is achieved when an "*actor navigates the character's narrative*" to "*create meaning and understanding*" for himself/herself. This "*process then occurs for the audience during the performance*", making an "*actor's audience an important part of the process*". He indicates that the two processes "*cannot be viewed in segregation*" but "*one complete cycle*". The director adds that "*in the moment of performance, it is not about the audience*" but what the "*actors feel towards the audience*". These "*feeling of responsibility*" to perform at their best in the moment, the promise of "*authenticity to carry the emotion*", bring the "*character to life*" on stage and serve as a "*medium of the story*" being told "*transforms the actor from rehearsal to live performance*". He believes "*something happens within the actor when they are standing in front of an audience*". As a director, he "*expects*" that change to occur and "*counts on it*", as it is the final component needed "*to complete the actor's process*". As the director, this is when "*you witness new things happening in an actor*" through performance. The director also mentions that the "*interchangeable process that first takes place of the actor during rehearsal*" occurs secondly "*between the actor and the audience*", and then finally, it occurs "*within the audience*". He indicates that this developmental process "*completes the cycle of transformation in theatre*". The director indicates that his goal for his actors during their training is firmly based on self-exploration. The must get to know themselves on a deep human level. He adds that by "*knowing your emotional triggers*" as an actor, you "*learn to identify them in your personal life and vice versa*". He also mentions that "*actors can share these emotional triggers with their director*" or "*choose not to*". He believes it is crucial to "*instil optional sharing, as this reinforces the trust*" developed in a theatre environment. The director indicates that to ensure the "*safety of the actor*", only emotional triggers "*older than five years*" can be used in the Bhava–Rasa process because

recent emotional triggers might not be "*fully dealt with by the actor*" and might cause "*re-traumatisation and have negative psychological effects on the actor's wellbeing*". He feels that this should be "*avoided at all costs*", and it is the "*director's responsibility*" to keep these limitations in place. He adds that actors must be able "*to come back to the self*" after engaging in these emotions through their triggers, which is critical, as "*safety takes precedence over authenticity*". The director indicates that his method of using the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes "*does not possess the same risks that Stanislavski's first method or Strasberg's technique of acting*" contained. He adds that the "*training the actors undergo*" must "*establish a strong foundation*" to ensure that the actors' process can be achieved "*successfully for the actors on a personal and professional level*". He indicates that the "*process of preparing the actors is where the director plays a dual role*". Furthermore, as a director, you must know your actors, so that you know "*when to challenge them*", "*when to broaden their margins*" and "*when to hold them back to keep them centred*". He explains it is important, as the director "*goes on this self-discovery journey with each actor*"; therefore, making it a very "*personal experience*" for both individuals. The director shared an example of a journey he experienced with one of his students in the Spotlight production. He shared that the student was "*struggling to access grief*", and after being guided through the Bhava–Rasa process, he made "*a personal breakthrough*". He indicated that as the student started to "*explore the emotion of grief*", many "*past experiences*" arose for him, which led the actor to discover "*he had issues with his father*". The director explained that this is typical, and only after "*a process of critical reflection and questioning why he thinks of his father in this way*", could the act "*move past it*". He shares that the actor needed to go through this "*personal trauma*" to "*remove the block and access the emotion in a safe way*". The director indicates that he is "*by no means a psychologist; however, there is a lot of psychology that goes into the process*". He adds that "*it requires psychoanalysis of both the self and character*". The Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes are "*implemented in such a specific way*" to allow the director and actor "*to work within the human psyche and navigate it in a safe manner*". He also mentions that these self-discoveries "*give the actor life experience*", which is then "*shared on stage*" with "*peer actors and the audience*". He indicates that "*each actor has their own way of accessing their emotional information*" of who they are, and the director must "*trust the actor*" in selecting their own process and path to getting there. The director believes that "*the art of acting is being able to connect*" with the "*emotion*", apply "*subjectivity*" and develop "*a substitution*" for the character's narrative to "*present this creation*" to others. Therefore, it "*is vital for an actor to channel these brutal*"

and honest versions of themselves" and "be able to apply" that to a brutal and honest "portrayal" for others to witness. The director strongly feels that "method acting is a dangerous path for an actor" and admits that in "certain instances can be managed"; however, he believes "the risk is unnecessary". In the directors' experience, "authenticity is a result of actually developing the actor as a person and accessing their inner thoughts, emotions and motivations". He believes that when an individual "learns something new", they "tend to unlearn something else" to accept the new knowledge. He adds that "it's not always an add-on as an adult, but a development or a change that occurs in that individual which alters their belief, opinion or understanding of this concept/experience". The director indicates that actors' processes require them to engage all their knowledge faculties holistically. He explains that "the actor's process is mathematical, affective, cognitive, spatial, physical, organic and sensory", making it an "evolving" process. He mentions that the "actor's process is a physical learning process"—the actor "learns to manipulate movement, posture and expression" of their bodies in a new way each time they perform a character. He adds that an actor must be able "to create cohesion between his thoughts and attitudes" and the "expression and command of his/her body". This process "includes language development" or acquisition, which "means the actors learn new ways of communicating verbally, reading and interpreting the written script" and formulating "verbal responses" aligned with the character's narrative. He also mentions that this form of "learning through language goes hand-in-hand with auditory awareness". An actor learns how to "interpret sounds, tones, pitch, projection, articulation and rhythmic patterns in speech". Actors use sound "to communicate" with their "peer actors and the audience" during performance. Furthermore, music used in plays and performances ("referred to as the leitmotif) requires the actor to make suitable selections of action, expression and emotion to create meaning". The director states that the actor's process is extremely "linked to emotional understanding and discovery". Actors learn to access their "personal emotions and motivations" and the "emotions of others and their motivations", which "extends to peer actors, the audience members and the characters" they "engage" with. He feels this "enables actors" to "portray characters in an authentic way" and "improve" actors' navigation of "their personal lives". The director indicates that the actor's process requires the actor "to learn and practice placing emotion, thoughts and actions logically" into the character's narrative; "the process is not random or uncontrolled, but "calculated, organised and methodical". The actor "learns how to navigate" his spatial surroundings during blocking the script and performance, and how they use visual stimulants received from peer actors on

stage to create a response/reaction aligned to the character. The director also mentions that the actor's process includes a connection to the natural world. He explains that the theatre environment is a living space that is organic and mimics the real world. He adds that theatre a living organism and actors must interact with their peer actors, the audience and their environment from this perspective. During the social alchemy process of navigating the character's narrative, the actors make connections with elements from nature. He explains that these references are used to engage the actor's imagination and give them a tangible reference point during character development. These references vary, for example, the flow of a calm river, the rapid dancing of a flame, a tree that is grounded, and roots run deep, the fierce nature of a lioness, or the playful nature of chimpanzees. These connections develop with practice and help the actor create accurate representations of their characters. The director also mentions that the actor's process is deeply embedded in existential learning. The process requires that actors question their existence, the meaning of life, the painful detachment of death, what love means to different people, and how fear and courage influence events and life experiences. This process is essential to understanding themselves and the characters they play to develop the transition from the self to the character authentically. The director shares that the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes are constantly evolving for the actor, as we are living entities. As we move through life as people, we are exposed to different things, emotions, events and experiences that change us, influencing our work as actors. He also adds that the social alchemy of the actor's personal narrative might not be congruent to the character's narrative; however, the theatre processes assist the actor in making the connections to portray a character that might seem far removed.

- Interview 3: After the second production performance

The director believes transformation is "*when something within a person changes*". The actor's process "*challenges every single fibre of their being*" as they are "*constantly in search of the truth*" about themselves and their characters. The director believes that by transitioning from the self to the character, "*the actor undergoes a process of transformation*". He explains that "*by lending and sharing your being with a character*", an "*actor enters into a transformative space*" where "*new information, new ways to learn, new connections and new meanings*" can be created. The director mentions that he admires "*the work of Dorothy Heathcote*" and supports her theory and "*uses it to enhance training the actors*". He believes that the "*mantle of the expert is an effective tool*" in "*empowering*" someone through theatre

because it "*places the individual in a transformative space*", enabling "*an individual to be the hero of their own story*". He adds that this is a vital process for actors, as they are "*the catalysts in the making of theatre*". He mentions that "*when the actor is seen and treated in this way, transformation occurs organically*" and, therefore, "*produces authentic portrayals of real life*". The director indicates that his technique for training actors draws on ideas from theatre practitioner Meisner and his method. He uses elements from this method only to guide actors into engaging in their work honestly and purely. He is very selective in the theatre practices he uses, as the "*safety of the actor is not always considered*" in existing training methods. He feels that "*the lines between the self and the character should never become blurry*", as this causes the "*actor to lose control*" and increases the risk "*of psychological harm*", which can be irreparable. The "*Bhava–Rasa process ensures this does not occur*", as "*the actor establishes their own boundaries*". He explains that this is achieved by "*constantly returning to the self*"; therefore, "*the lines between the actor's identity and that of the character's identity remain clear and strong*". The director feels that the goals and objectives he set out to achieve have been realised in all three faculties of "*education, entertainment and self-transformation*". The director indicates that forming "*empathy is vital to the success of the actor*" and, as an extension, to the "*success of the Spotlight production*". "*The level of empathy*" he aimed for the actors was not just met but "*exceeded*" because "*of collaborative theatre-making*". The director believes "*this production has not only served as a transformative learning experience for the three actors*" but for himself as well. He shares that he is "*never the same person when going into production and emerging out again*". He believes the experience of "*theatre in all its roles is transformative*" as it is linked to the "*human condition, the true nature of what it means to be human*". The director mentions that "*actors need to connect empathetically with this character*" to create an authentic portrayal; however, the "*director needs to have empathy for the actor*", as he takes them on this journey of self-discovery. He feels that this "*theatre transforms*" how "*he imparts knowledge*", how he "*guides*" his actors, how he "*builds connections*" with them, how he "*views*" them as people and professionals, how he "*engages*" them and how he learns to "*navigate this journey*" with them. The director concludes this interview by stating that "*the process of theatre is cathartic*" and, "*therefore, transforms the actor*" on a "*personal and professional*" level as the two "*overlaps*". He indicates that he takes his "*role and responsibility towards the actors and their process extremely seriously*" because he is "*not working with people doing a job*", he is "*working with people's lives and their wellbeing*".

4.2.3 Descriptions of the observations and field notes

In the following section of this data analysis, I present the observations and field notes documented during the four events in the Spotlight production. The observations and field notes obtained enhance the data collected and provide deeper insight into the participants' experiences.

4.2.3.1 🎭 The Bhava–Rasa Process

The three actors looked excited to begin the Bhava–Rasa process. They each sat alone and documented which emotions and transitions would be required for their monologues. This selection was discussed with the director and a consensus was reached. The director reminded the actors of the objective they were trying to achieve and emphasised the safety precautions that needed to be adhered to. The actors shared their concerns and challenges, which were then discussed with the director and their peer actors. All actors listened with great care and contributed when asked to by the director in a kind and supportive manner. I noticed that even a disagreement of an idea was addressed with care and respect along with a solution or alternative. I could see the director implementing the collaborative technique and followed by the actors. As each actor engaged in the process, they exhibited a level of comfort with the mechanics of the process and the director and his technique. Hamlet had no hesitation when moving from emotion to emotion as he built a rhythm of transition within his monologue. He seemed confident and was extremely verbally expressive during this process. Once he reached the emotion of love, his voice and body changed in subtle, but noticeably. He appeared calm and relaxed. He appeared to enjoy this section of his monologue. He then transitioned back to self and then into fear. I witnessed no change in his expressions, voice and body. Hamlet then stepped out of the process and consulted the director. He shared that he was struggling to let go of the emotion of love and felt as though it was over-following into the self and then into fear. The director and Hamlet discussed triggers and a different approach which was implemented. During his second attempt, I noticed a difference in his transitions from love back to self and then from self into fear. The physical change was tenuous; however, the actor's attitude changed positively, and his satisfaction was evident.

Lysistrata and Hermione appeared relaxed as they engaged in the process. Their transitions were visible in their bodies, vocals and expressions. They both followed the triggers they

established before the process started. They completed the process, ending with the self and then indicated to the director that they were satisfied with the outcome. After a reflection exercise, Hermione decided to alter her trigger for anger. The director supported her decision and ensured the trigger was older than five years. As the process was concluded, all three actors documented their findings, concerns and discoveries in their actors' journals. I observed that they were silent and found a secluded space in the rehearsal room to reflect.

4.2.3.2 🎭 The social alchemy process

The social alchemy process was not limited to one or two rehearsals, but over a period, from the first rehearsal to the performance day. All three actors appeared dedicated to the character development exercises. They engaged and contributed their ideas, opinions and interpretations of their characters during script reading. During an animal identity exercise, Lysistrata engaged in a discussion with the director, as she felt strongly that the animal identity she selected was better suited than the director's choice. The director then asked Hermione a series of questions challenging her choice in an unintrusive way. Hermione defended her choice well with truth and honesty. I witnessed the playful, yet respectful manner the actors and director display to one another. During the blocking of their monologues, Hamlet indicated his agreement with the director's suggestions through his positive facial expressions and inviting body language. Lysistrata communicated to the director that she felt confident enough to block her monologue. The director accepted this decision, and he allowed her space to create the blocking sequence. When Lysistrata was done, she exhibited excitement as she shared her progress with the director. The director, in turn, responded on an equal level to her excitement and made two suggestions she could consider as the monologue develops further.

4.2.3.3 🎭 The final dress rehearsal

During their performance, the actors engaged in a warm-up exercise conducted by the director. The director expressed his satisfaction with their progress and invited them to use this performance as an exploration to develop further and not view it as a final product. The actors received this suggestion well by verbally expressing their feelings and sharing the personal objectives they wished to achieve in this performance. This performance took place in front of a closed audience, which changed the dynamic of the theatre process. Hamlet and

Hermione looked nervous as they recited their lines and went through their emotional transition sequence. Lysistrata appeared more relaxed and communicated to the director that she wanted to use this performance opportunity to feel the emotion and drive the action of her monologue. She mentioned that this might alter the previous sequence she created. The director encouraged her to trust her instincts and suggested that they discuss the findings of this performance after the show. At the end of the final dress rehearsal, the director provided each actor with detailed feedback on their performance, suggestions to consider and an adjusted objective for the second production performance. The actors received the feedback well and acknowledged the areas of improvement suggested by the director. The session was concluded on a high note, as the director shared a precious acting moment he witnessed in each actor's performance and how he appreciated their honesty and dedication to their art form.

4.2.3.4 🎭 *The second production performance*

The second performance of the Spotlight production began with an individual warm-up session, with the actors each in charge of their process. The open audience exhibited high energy and excitement to see the final product that all actors had worked so hard on, and there was much chatter and laughing heard from the audience. The director briefed the actors backstage and communicated his only instruction to them: "*Enjoy yourself as you reap the fruits of your hard work. I look forward to seeing your characters come to life*". I observed a sense of calm and focus on the actors as they walked around backstage and prepared for their moment on stage. I joined the director who was seated in the audience. All three actors' performances were outstanding. Hamlet decided to add a long pause before he began his monologue, which created a sense of intensity in the audience, as there was silence in the theatre. His transitions were organic, and the emotional journey of his character flowed easily. He appeared in control of his emotional state and portrayed satisfaction with his performance at the end. Lysistrata entered the stage with a confident, feminine and empowered demeanour. She walked to the edge and along the apron of the stage as she glared at the audience, making eye contact with as many individuals as possible, which had an amazing effect on the audience, as they became still. Some audience members even looked away as they appeared uncomfortable with Lysistrata's inanimate expression. Lysistrata's performance was realistic and the aesthetics in the theatre were effectively used and well received by the audience. She maintained her composure during the more brutal emotions

that had caused her to break her concentration during rehearsal. She expressed great satisfaction with her performance. Hermione began the first line of her monologue in the wing (out of sight of the audience), causing the audience to visually search on stage for her and await her entrance. Her performance was excellent and well executed, and the emotional transitions were in harmony with her actions on stage. During her emotion of despair, she confused two of her lines; however, this was not noticeable to the audience members, as she retrieved her focus and concluded her performance effectively.

4.2.4   Cross-case analysis

The data collected from the participant interviews are presented as reports in Section 4.2.2. In Section 4.2.3, I present the observations and field notes conducted during the four events of the Spotlight production. In the following section, I provide a cross-case analysis of the three actors' responses from their interviews. This analysis discusses the primary findings regarding the similarities and differences in the three actors' responses. The director's responses are not included, as his interviews focused on his insights within his role as the director and not as a participant undergoing the process. The cross-case analysis is discussed in terms of the three interview stages according to the knowledge discussed.

4.2.4.1 🎭 Interview 1: Beginning of the rehearsal

- Selection, identification, goals

Two actors indicated that the reason they selected their characters was to challenge themselves personally and professionally. One participant mentioned their reason for selecting that character was to be purely professional, as it has been a long-term goal to concur such a strong character. All three actors indicated that their selected characters would be a big challenge for them. They mentioned that they did not entirely identify with their character's identity; however, some aspects were relatable to them. These actors agreed that certain mental states and mental struggles were more relatable than the life experiences of their characters. One actor indicated that the selected character shows power and strength, which beckoned the actor into playing this role. This participant used the words, "*I don't think that's something that I have inherently in myself but aspire to*". Another actor confirmed this by stating that "*it's something within us that attracts us to something like that*". All three actors mentioned that the goal they wanted to achieve by playing this role

was to explore parts of themselves they have not particularly engaged with before. For one actor, it was forgiveness and to work through trauma from the past. For another actor, it was to overcome the feeling of being intimidated by people and build confidence to stand up and share opinions and thoughts. Concluding the first interview at the beginning of the rehearsal reveals that all three actors were ready for the challenge of attaining a level of truth within themselves and their characters and were driven by personal and professional motivations.

4.2.4.2 🎭 *Interview 2: During the rehearsal*

- Actors' controlled emotional journey, Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes, meaning schemes

All three actors indicated that their understanding of an actor's controlled emotional journey meant that the actor remained in control of the emotion during the performance. They agree that emotion cannot be forced or faked but must be guided from the actor into the character. All three actors indicated that the Bhava–Rasa process was a theatre practice they were familiar with and even though they found it challenging, it was greatly beneficial for them. They said that knowing how the process works does not mean knowing what to expect, as each time it is a unique experience. One actor shared that the emotion of love had a new effect on him, and he found it challenging to return to the self again. Another actor said that it was only through engaging in the Bhava–Rasa process that the true emotional journey of the character was revealed, and the depth of the character could be seen. All three actors agreed that they felt well-supported and safe as the director guided them through the process. They all confirmed that they had immense trust in the director and held a professional and personal understanding of them. All three actors shared the same understanding of the importance of the social alchemy process and how it created a foundation for them to build on. The three actors agree that each character development exercise used in the social alchemy process provided a different layer to their characters and helped them see past the complexity being exhibited. All three actors indicated that they believe a change in the meaning scheme occurred for them and that it was not a once-off occurrence but rather that they were in the process of altering/developing or changing. One actor shared that courage still felt out of reach, but the thoughts needed to evoke courage were forming and that was a new experience. Another actor said that by actively engaging in these processes, there are personal insights discovered, changing how a person thinks and sees the world. Two actors

agreed that as they progressed through their character's narrative, they discovered similarities and differences between theirs and the character's identities. These insights helped them to better navigate their character's narrative, as empathy was evoked, and a deeper understanding of human nature was cultivated.

The findings from the second interview during the rehearsal process indicates that all three actors fully engaged in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy process and altered their meaning schemes in different ways.

4.2.4.3 🎭 Interview 3: After the second production performance

- Transformation, performance feedback, new insights, transformative learning experiences

The three actors agreed that transformation means that change has occurred. One actor indicated that for a moment during the performance, the emotion overflowed, and control was lost; however, when moving to the next transition, they regained control. Another actor said that the performance felt more intense than the rehearsal when the audience was present. All three actors indicated that they were happy with their final performances and felt that they reached the desired level of emotion needed by their character in each moment. All three actors stated that they experienced a realness during their performances, which drew the self and the character closer together. They confirmed that they discovered new insights about themselves personally and professionally. They agreed that these insights influenced how they viewed their characters and increased their empathy towards their characters. They all mentioned that the personal insights they discovered about their past experiences, beliefs and views about the world have changed them and helped them achieve the goals they had set for themselves. One actor said that a breakthrough was experienced during this performance, mentioning that the character's experiences allowed for a front seat to the lived experience of another person, which was insightful. All three actors confirmed that they experienced a transformation from playing their characters, and going through the theatre processes made them feel empowered as a person and as an actor. All three actors agreed that their beliefs, attitudes and perspectives have been altered, some in big ways and others in smaller ways.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of the data obtained during the Spotlight production. This data were collected by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with three actors and the director of the production. Furthermore, I conducted and documented my observations and field notes during the three phases of the production. I begin by providing an actor profile and character description for each actor involved in this study and include a profile of the director. I then present an individual participant report capturing each actor's responses to the semi-structured interviews. The director's responses are captured and presented. I proceed to capture descriptions of the observations and field notes obtained during the Spotlight production. These observations and field notes have been presented as they were recorded during the four events of the production. I conclude this chapter by providing a cross-case analysis of the three actors' qualitative semi-structured interview responses and present a discussion of the similarities and differences arising from the analysis. In the following chapter, I present the findings developed from the in-depth data analysis process. I present these findings as themes, categories and sub-categories identified in the data.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presented the data collected from the three-interval semi-structured interviews with each of the four participants. The data received was presented through interview profiles, character descriptions and reports from the semi-structured interviews. My observations and field notes were organised and included in this data analysis section of my study. In this chapter, I present the findings derived from the data obtained during the Spotlight production. These findings are arranged into themes, categories and sub-categories arising from the data analysis chapter. I discuss these findings in relation to the review literature presented in Chapter Two and the connections made to the conceptual framework which guided this study.

5.2 Themes, categories and sub-categories

Once all the data had been captured, I began an in-depth process of analysing the collected data. I read the responses, observations and fieldnotes numerous times to accurately identify specific codes in the data. I then organised these codes according to distinct themes formulated from my conceptual framework. I conducted a cross-case analysis to determine the differences and similarities in the decoded data. This process enabled me to identify each dominant theme in the study and the categories and sub-categories embedded within each theme. From these findings, I identified numerous connections to the conceptual framework of this study (as discussed in Section 2.3), resulting in cohesion between the identified themes, conceptual framework and aims of the study.

The following three themes were identified: namely theatre-ising, escaping the chrysalis: the actors journey, and transcendence: completing the cycle. Theatre-ising is derived from the term *theorising*, defined as the process of forming a theory about something (Hammond, 2023). In this study, theatre-ising is understood as a process of developing a theory about theatre. This theme focusses on devising a theory for theatre addressing the actors' transformative processes. It is achieved by creating practices to safeguard the actor against adverse effects and provides support as the actor transitions from the self to the character. Escaping the chrysalis: the actors' journey refers to the theme of growth and development found in nature, which has been discussed as metaphors in this study (Sections 1.5 and 2.2.3). The chrysalis represents the symbolic covering each individual is enclosed in due to their

life experiences and current meaning schemes. For an actor, escaping the chrysalis is ignited by self-awareness, personal insights and an inner motivation to develop as a person and actor. Transcendence is the final step in the process, where the actor completes their journey by altering their current meaning scheme. The altering process is due to the new knowledge gained from the transformative learning experience of transitioning from the self to the character in the Spotlight production. Below is an organised representation of the themes, categories and sub-categories identified in this study.

| Themes	Categories	Sub- Categories
1. Theatre-ising	Theatre practices	Learning through theatre
		Methodology drawback
	Theatre conditions	The director and actor relationship
		Theatre environment
	Theatre Theories	Bhava–Rasa
		Social alchemy
2. Escaping the chrysalis: the actor's journey	Character development	Cognitive faculties
	Actor's controlled emotional journey	Emotional engagement
	The actor's driving force	Goals and motivations
3. Transcendence: completing the cycle	Transitioning	Changing meaning schemes
	Actors Self-Awareness	Personal and professional insights
	Transformative experience	Skill development

Table 6: Themes, categories and sub-categories (Padayachee, 2023)

In the following section, I discuss these three themes in-depth as they relate and connect to the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework of this study.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Theatre-ising

Themes	Categories	Sub- Categories
1. Theatre-ising	🎭 Theatre practices	🎭 Learning through theatre
		🎭 Methodology drawback
	🎭 Theatre conditions	🎭 The director and actor relationship
		🎭 Theatre environment
	🎭 Theatre theories	🎭 Bhava–Rasa
		🎭 Social alchemy

Table 7: Theatre-ising (Padayachee, 2023)

Theatre is viewed as an aesthetical ensemble in creating a live performance and a medium through which the actor develops, as discussed in Section 2.2.4.1 of the literature review. An example from this study correlates with this understanding, where the director indicates that theatre is a "*live event where the actor is always in search of the truth as he/she is looking to recreate and represent life*" on stage through performance. When devising a theory for theatre, three components are considered: theatre practices, theatre conditions and theatre theories. Together, these components represent how theatre has been theorised in this study. Theatre-rising is present in the conceptual framework of the study, as it refers to the actors' internal and external processes using multiple theatre theories and practices (Section 2.3.1).

5.2.1.1 🎭 *Theatre practices*

Theatre practices are a framework assisting the director and actors in devising suitable methods of acting to achieve their desired goals (Section 2.2.4.1). The methods selected determine how learning occurs through theatre practices, enhancing the actor's ability within safe boundaries (Section 2.2.4.3). Furthermore, it determines the risks and drawbacks involved when authenticity is the sole goal of theatre (Sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.6.1).

Theatre is a platform showcasing the enactment of character narratives within a storyline using an actor as a vehicle (Section 2.2.4.1). As the director indicated, theatre is the "*actors' medium*" and through the actor, the character is brought to life. These enactments/portrayals are only achievable when an actor transitions from the self to the character through a character development exercise (Section 2.2.6.2). Learning through theatre occurs when an

actor engages in theatre practices to achieve the authenticity of their character on stage, resulting in developing new insights based on their exposure to new information and understanding of their character's narrative and their personal nature (Section 2.2.4.3). Evidence of this is noted in the actors' responses during the interviews. One actor indicated that when examining her character's narrative, she identified a strong similarity between the "*pain and hurt*" of her character's experiences and her feelings. She elaborated by saying that this practice helped her understand her emotions. The director echoed this, stating that actors can learn as they are actively involved in the lived experience on stage. This links to Mezirow's theory on adult learning (Section 2.2.4.2), which explains that adults use new information to assess and challenge their current knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, perspectives and values to construct new knowledge and understanding. Learning occurs in multiple quadrants of intelligence and makes actors active participants in their learning (Section 2.2.4.2). The findings in this study show that participation in theatre practice involved all nine MI proposed by Gardner. The director indicated that "*theatre is like a living organism*" and requires the "*actors to engage using all their faculties, namely body, mind and soul*". The director elaborates that for actors to bridge the gap between the self and the character, they employ their cognitive, affective and spiritual faculties. Evidence of Gardner's MIs are deeply embedded in the actors' process, which was observed in all three intervals of the Spotlight production. The combination of the intelligences is highlighted in the interchangeable process at the centre of the conceptual framework, focusing on the actors' learning journey (Section 2.3.2).

Numerous theatre methods and practices present multiple risks and drawbacks because of directors placing their focus on achieving believability of an actor's performance (Section 2.2.4.1). The director describes emotional recall advocated by Stanislavski's method acting as dangerous and risks the actor's emotional wellbeing. The director elaborates that the actor's safety is crucial in the process and all measures should be taken to avoid "*re-traumatisation and negative psychological effects on the actor's wellbeing*". Multiple scholars have highlighted these concerns, creating a correlation between the literature and findings of this study (Sections 2.2.6.1 and 2.2.4.1). The director stated that "*method acting is a dangerous path for an actor and the safety of the actor is not always considered*". The literature in this study presented by Otos and Shively (2021) highlights the concern that method acting has high risks of causing an overlap of actors' personal identity and their characters' identities (Section 2.2.4.1). Panero (2019) states that this theatre technique

exposes actors to unnecessary psychological issues and causes them to lose control of their emotions. One actor echoed their concern for this method, stating that it is crucial for the actor to maintain the boundaries between the self and the character, as it is easy to feel "*overwhelmed by the emotion in the moment*" and lose focus.

5.2.1.2 😈 *Theatre conditions*

The conditions created within the theatre space are essential to establish a conducive environment for an actor to explore, challenge and develop as an individual and professional actor (Section 2.2.4.1). The director must create and maintain these conditions, especially during the rehearsal phase of the production, as this is when the actor undergoes the transition from the self to the character. Engaging in this process requires actors to trust in the process and in the director guiding them as they explore the character's narrative and discover insights about themselves and within their roles. These conditions determine the safety and success of the interchangeable process the actor undergoes as they navigate the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories within the transition phase (Section 2.3.1).

For the actor to transition safely and confidently through the multiple theatre practices within the process, the actor requires an open line of communication with the director (Section 2.2.4.1). Building this trust and establishing a supportive relationship allows the actor to be guided through the process by the director who is focused on creating a believable character on stage within the actor's limits, ensuring the actor's safety and wellbeing from the beginning of the rehearsal to the completion of the stage performance. The data obtained from this study present multiple statements from the participants motivating the importance of trust between the director and actor. One actor stated that he struggled with engaging in a specific emotion during the Bhava–Rasa process, which brought up feelings he had towards his father. He then discussed his difficulties with the director and together they could "*break it down*". He elaborated that they found a way for him to identify and process that emotion, removing the barrier back to the self. De Smet et al. (2019) support this understanding by stating that the actor's process is personal and intimate, requiring a great deal of trust between the director and the actor (Sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.6.1). Another actor mentioned that her role in the Spotlight production helped her acknowledge her past through the director's guidance. She began to deal with the underlying emotions related to the trauma she experienced. The actor adds that it is a mutual relationship of trust between the director and herself, as she trusts him to guide her safely through the process and that the director

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trusts her to be open to communicating her limits and boundaries. This enables both parties to work together in creating theatre in a safe and collaborative space.

Theatre practice requires the involvement of the director and cast of actors in the production. Consequently, the environment which is created is collaborative and safe without judgement (Section 2.2.4.1). Pieske (2019) supports this understanding by stating that when an actor engages in character exploration practices, it involves recalling personal experiences and memories, dealing with raw emotion, confronting sensitive topics and the expression of inner private thoughts; therefore, a conducive theatre environment is necessary in making theatre. The director indicates that "*actors can share their emotional triggers with the director or choose not to*"; having the option creates trust in the theatre environment. The actors stated that an open line of communication was established between peer actors and the director due to the nature of acting and the level of vulnerability required. The literature echoes this, pertaining to Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (Section 2.2.4.2). This environment is essential to the rehearsal process where the actor engages in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes illustrated in the conceptual framework of the study (Section 2.3.1). Only in these conditions can the actor's wellbeing be considered a priority, and authenticity becomes a secondary objective.

5.2.1.3 🎭 *Theatre theories*

The selection of theories used to formulate theatre practices requires careful consideration to ensure the goals of the actor and the director are achieved. As depicted in the conceptual framework in Section 2.3.1, the two theories the director selected for the Spotlight production were the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. As actors engage simultaneously in these two theories, an interchangeable process occurs where they become interconnected for the actor, presenting itself as one all-encompassing theory in the actor's process (Section 2.2.5.3).

The Bhava–Rasa theory is employed to assist the actor in engaging their emotions in a safe and controlled way (Section 2.2.5.1). All three actors stated that the Bhava–Rasa process assisted them to access a wide spectrum of emotions and increased their "*ability to move in and out of emotion*" more easily. According to one actor, the self is the "*most important skill to have*" as an actor, as it allows the actor to stay centred during the process. One actor confirmed this by stating that having the option to return to the self at any time makes her

"*feel safe and in control*". Another actor indicated that the Bhava–Rasa theory created a more natural process for her, as the emotions, actions and thoughts seem to intertwine into the character's narrative. As discussed in Sections 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.6.1 in the literature, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are crucial for an individual's development. Evidence of this understanding is shown in the director's responses, stating that actors learn to guide their emotions and align them to the character's narrative. He explains that this skill is cultivated by regular practice in the Bhava–Rasa theory and using the self as an anchor. The director indicates that the Bhava–Rasa theory uses emotional triggers not within the preceding five years, as the emotions embedded in these triggers might re-traumatise the actor if it has not been addressed. The above correlates with the literature in Section 2.2.6.1. The Bhava–Rasa theory as the catalyst in the actor's controlled emotional journey demonstrates its effectiveness in the conceptual framework of this study (Section 2.3.1).

In Section 2.2.5.2, Smith (2019) explains that the social alchemy theory is a problem-solving tool that uses empathy as a core ingredient in how the problem is navigated and resolved. Evidence within this study correlates with the participants' responses, indicating that the social alchemy theory is an effective navigation tool for actors during character development. The director states that actors "*must operate from a place of empathy*" if they want to discover the "*truth about their character*". One actor shared that through the social alchemy process, she could "*create an outcome*" for herself through "*the character's voice and body*". Another actor indicated that the social alchemy process made it "*easier to get into character*" and engage in "*the emotion and mindset*" of that character. The connection between the interpersonal representing the character and the intrapersonal representing the actor (Sections 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.5.3) is evident in this study. All three actors and the director indicate that actors must approach their character from an empathetic perspective; therefore, using their personal insight and emotional experience to recreate the character's narrative and authentically portray his/her journey. In Section 2.2.5.3, the social alchemy theory becomes part of the interchangeable process within the actor's journey, illustrated in Section 2.3.1 of the conceptual framework on which this study was based.

5.2.2   Theme 2: Escaping the chrysalis: the actor's journey

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories

2. Escaping the chrysalis: the actor's journey	🎭 Character development	🎭 Cognitive faculties
	🎭 Actor's controlled emotional journey	🎭 Emotional engagement
	🎭 The actor's driving force	🎭 Goals and motivations

Table 8: Escaping the chrysalis: the actor's journey (Padayachee, 2023)

McConachie and Hart (2006) propose that cognition can be understood as the mental process of receiving information or acquiring knowledge and understanding through mediums, such as experience, sensory activity and thought (Section 2.2.4.3). An actor's cognitive faculties are deeply engaged during character development and the exploration within the emotional journey they embark on (Sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.4.3). The underlying motivation that drives actors to successfully complete this journey is intrinsically linked to their personal and professional goals and their search for truth within the art form (Sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.4.3). The interchangeable process driving the transition from the self to the character is highlighted in the conceptual framework of this study as the actors' journey as they begin to escape the chrysalis, comprising their current meaning schemes (Section 2.3.1).

5.2.2.1 🎭 *Character development*

An integral component in actors' processes is their ability to make meaningful connections between themselves and their characters through a cognitive process of critical reflection where they navigate the character's narrative to identify differences and similarities to assist in bridging the gap between the self and the character (Sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.4.3). An example of this in this study is explained by one actor, stating that she "*truly starts to transition from self to character when she writes her thoughts down and thinks about how the character's narrative*" affects her as a person. She calls this "*the empathy process*". Another actor states that the character development exercises helped him "*get into the mindset of the character*" and "*connect with the thoughts and emotions*" in the character's narrative. The above response resonates with the concept of metacognition, as discussed in Section 2.2.4.3 of the literature describing the metacognitive process in which actors, which develops their self-awareness. Furthermore, actors develop the ability to consider multiple and different perspectives regarding their thoughts and state of mind. This concept is linked to role-taking (Sections 2.2.4.3 and 2.2.5.3). The evidence in the study is captured by an actor's response indicating that he undergoes a rigorous process of documenting the

characters thoughts, motivations, rationalisations and behaviour to examine the narrative from the character's perspective. Another actor stated that through reflection, she can connect to the simulated experience of the character where she is mentally and physically engaged. This process is reinforced in Section 2.2.6.2, where character development provides a gateway for the actor into the world of the character, narrowing the gap between the self and the character.

5.2.2.2 🎭 *Actor's controlled emotional journey*

In the Spotlight production, the Bhava–Rasa theory is used as a practice to engage the actor in the emotional progression of the character's narrative (Sections 2.2.5.1 and 2.2.6.1). The actors' controlled emotional journeys are highlighted in the conceptual framework of this study as the affective component of their processes (Section 2.3.1). Stanislavski's method, as outlined by Mihut (2020), describes this process as emotional memory or recall and advocates its importance in actors' objectives to bring the character to life on stage by controlling their emotional responses (Sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.6.1 and 2.2.6.3). Evidence of this understanding is present in multiple participants' responses as they explain their experience in the Spotlight production. The director stated that the concept of control is one of the more crucial mechanisms of an actor's process, as the actor must be able to repeat this depiction numerous times. Therefore, the director supports the process embedded in the Bhava–Rasa theory, which assists actors in creating a pathway to their emotional destination, which can travel at any point (Sections 2.2.6.1 and 2.2.5.3). One actor indicated that the "*actor needs to be in control and not the character*", illuminating the element of control within the actor's emotional journey towards the character. Another actor mentioned that empathy is essential for maintaining control during the actor's transitioning. He explains that having empathy for you and your personal emotive experience and the character's emotive experience illuminates the boundaries between the self and the character, protecting the actor from psychological distress. This concept is further linked to the literature in Section 2.2.6.3, discussing the psychological responses of the actor during role-taking.

5.2.2.3 🎭 *The actor's driving force*

The actor's process is challenging, requiring the actor to engage mentally, physically and emotionally in the process. The driving force that fuels the actors when submerging themselves in the human condition is ignited by their professional aspirations, self-

awareness and personal motivations to grow and develop as actors and individuals. This correlates closely to the process of unselfing oneself (Section 2.2.6.3). In some cases, some actors confirm that their personal and professional goals and motivations have merged to form one clear objective or focus. All three actors indicated that there is a large overlap of goals as an actor towards their profession and the goals as an individual towards their life. The above equates with the inosculation metaphor in the literature review, which represents how learning and theatre have merged to form a new way of knowing (Section 2.2.3). The director explains that the attraction an actor has to a role is connected to the passion and need of the individual and the aspirations of the professional. The director refers to this as the "*fire*" that serves as the motivator and drives the actor to achieve this joint objective, linked to Section 2.2.2 discussing the Spotlight production and the actor's autonomy in selecting their character to perform. The director indicates that the actor by nature is in search of the truth about the character and themselves, as highlighted in the literature through Stanislavski's technique of acting, which attempted to draw out the realness of who the actor is to portray a character (Sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.6.2).

5.2.3 ![theatre masks icon] Theme 3: Transcendence: completing the cycle

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
3.Transcendence: completing the cycle	Transitioning	Changing meaning schemes
	Actor's self-awareness	Personal and professional insights
	Transformative experience	Skill development

Table 9: Transcendence: completing the cycle (Padayachee, 2023)

Transformative learning experiences occurs when the actor engages in theatre practices and embarks on a journey of learning, where two components come in play: instrumental and communicative learning (Section 2.2.4.2). The above creates a starting point for the transition from the self to the character. Through the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy interchange process, actors become aware of themselves and others through observation and interaction (Sections 2.2.5.3, 2.2.6.1 and 2.2.6.2). This acquired knowledge fosters new perspectives in actors where a transcendent change occurs, altering their current meaning

schemes, which concludes the transformative learning experience for the actor, as presented in the conceptual framework of the study (Section 2.3.1).

5.2.3.1 🎭 *Transitioning*

The process of transitioning from the self to the character comprises instrumental learning drawn from Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Section 2.2.4.2), presented in the conceptual framework (Section 2.3.1) as the social alchemy theory (Section 2.2.5.2). Another component of this transition phase is communicative learning, presented by the Bhava–Rasa theory (Section 2.2.5.1). As actors discover truths about the character, they simultaneously discover truths about themselves (Section 2.2.5.3). Evidence of this understanding is present in the actors' multiple responses during their participation in the Spotlight production. One actor stated that he began "*to understand and feel the real emotion of the character*" and that during the performance, he experienced "*a realness in the moment*". During the rehearsal, another actor indicated that she discovered certain perceptions about herself that she wants to further explore through the character's narrative. Another actor stated that her attitude towards certain topics and situations had changed and helped her to understand others' actions and thoughts. These responses motivate that the actors all experienced transformative learning, altering their current meaning schemes in diverse ways (Sections 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.5.3). When actors engage in metacognitive and reflective processes, they question their thoughts, reactions and experiences, creating an opportunity to process their feelings and understanding associated with their current meaning schemes (Sections 2.2.4.2, 2.2.6.3 and 2.2.4.3). All three actors and the director stated that through their participation in the Spotlight production, they became aware of personal insights that they did not experience or know of before the process began.

5.2.3.2 🎭 *Self-awareness*

Darlene (2017) outlines that intrapersonal intelligence requires high levels of self-reflection, a deep sense of self-awareness and the aptitude to connect easily with one's emotions, thought processes, belief system and values (Sections 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.6.1). All three actors displayed a high level of self-awareness, which developed from the start of the production through to the production performance. Multiple personal and professional insights were mentioned during the rehearsal process as the actors engaged in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy interchangeable process (Section 2.2.5.3). One actor stated that her participation in

this role in this production was an "*eye opener*", which showed her that she can be "*feminine and powerful at the same time*", like her character. This actor mentioned in the semi-structured interview that she "*learned new things*" about herself, namely, she "*enjoys talking to people and having them listen*" to what she has to say and enjoys "*taking charge in certain situations and being a leader*". Another actor indicated that as a professional actor, he is drawn to certain roles, which now alerts him to a need or want within himself that creates this attraction. He elaborated that this was a new insight of which he was not previously aware until he played this character. The above is linked to the integral steps in Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which highlights the various steps the actor undergoes during the learning encounter (Section 2.2.4.2). Furthermore, a strong connection to the concept of role-taking (Section 2.2.4.3) as a medium for cultivating self-awareness and introspection of others is evident in the actors' responses. Fox and Riconscente (2008) explain that an actor engages in an ongoing metacognitive process as a method of building self-awareness and, therefore, creates a gateway to increase emotional intelligence (Section 2.2.4.3).

5.2.3.3   *Transformative experience*

Transformative learning in theatre occurs when adults evaluate, develop and adjust their thinking when exposed to new information (Sections 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.6.3). The data revealed that all three actors and the director experienced transformative learning during their roles in the Spotlight production. One actor stated that she experienced a "*breakthrough on a personal level*" and that the role she played helped her address a past trauma she did not have the courage to face. The director echoed this statement by mentioning that "*this production has not only served as a transformative learning experience for the three actors*" but for himself as well. He indicates that "*theatre in all its roles is transformative*" because it is linked to the "*human condition, the true nature of what it means to be human*". He elaborates by stating that it is an interchangeable process within theatre where the "*actors need to connect empathetically with this character*" and "*the director needs to have empathy for the actors*" as they take them on this journey of self-discovery. The above correlates with the interchangeable process of the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes, which create the transformative learning experience for the actor (Sections 2.2.5.3 and Section 2.3.1). One actor stated that he believes that the transformation during the actor's process was because of the nature of acting, which feels like real life, as the emotions and actions of the character are recreated by the actor through lived experience. The actor's statement resonates with Reeves et al.'s (2021) conclusions that actors develop real skills that become transferable to

their personal lives because of engaging in simulated activities (Sections 2.2.4.3 and 2.2.6.1). Furthermore, this understanding is linked to theatre as being a real-life metaphor where practical experiences are cultivated for the actor, creating a lived experience through active involvement (Section 2.2.4.3). One actor shared that he has become aware that he subconsciously applies the insights he discovered from the process to his life as an individual. This actor elaborates that the challenging lessons the character had "*to learn or accept*" in their narrative helped him acknowledge and work through his circumstances. He added that "*it just became a part of me*", and "*I will not forget it*". These insights shared by the actor resonate with Fleming (2017), who advocates that the more an individual practices a skill, the more the skill becomes a part of their daily practices (Section 2.2.6.3). The above is echoed in the literature by Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998), motivating that the skills learned and developed during theatre practice for the authentic portrayal of a character remain real skills actors practice in their everyday lives (Section 2.2.6.3). Evidence of this understanding is also present in the director's response, stating that an actor becomes "*an athlete of emotion*", which allows them to "*transfer this skill into their personal lives*".

5.3   Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings from this study from the semi-structured interviews with three actors and the director participating in the Spotlight production. Insights from the observations and field notes were included in the data analysis and theme formulation in this chapter. The three themes and the categories and sub-categories were discussed according to the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework designed to guide this study. The first theme, theatre-ising, addressed theatre practices, conditions and theories. The second theme, escaping the chrysalis: the actor's journey, addressed character development, the actor's controlled emotional journey and driving force. The third theme, transcendence: completing the cycle, addressed transitioning, actors' self-awareness and transformative experience. In the concluding chapter of this study, I present the summary of the primary findings from the analysed data and the developed framework that represents the conclusions of this study. Furthermore, I discuss the significance of the study, the limitations and recommendations and insights of further research based on this study.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1   Introduction

Chapter 5 represents the penned down findings that emerged after the data had been scrutinised and interpretations developed regarding the phenomenon of this study. These findings were scrutinised and formulated from the data collected from three actors and the director during the Spotlight production. An in-depth data analysis was followed using the data analysis spiral, as proposed by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 186). Three themes, nine categories and 12 sub-categories were identified from the decoded data, as presented in Chapter Five. These themes were discussed in terms of the literature review and the conceptual framework from Chapter Two. In this concluding chapter, I present the informed conclusions regarding the phenomenon investigated in this study. A visual representation of these conclusions was developed using the conceptual framework and phenomenon of the study to interpret the data findings. The insights drawn to build meaning from these findings have been included in this chapter. The following components will be present in this concluding chapter: An overview of the study, summary of the primary findings, significance of the study, limitations and recommendations and further research to foster growth in theatre and dramatics arts.

6.2   Overview

In the following section, I address the two research questions as they align with the phenomenon explored in this study. This study investigates the research topic, *Exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight*. Components of this investigation focused on the lived experience of the actors participating in the production and the director's insights on theatre processes and their effect on the actors. Focus was aimed at the actors' meaning schemes and whether their participation created transformative experiences for them personally and professionally. The phenomenon was used as a compass to ensure the study remained on course and aligned with my research questions, focus and purpose. The following components consolidate the data findings obtained in this study and present a framework for understanding the transformative experience of actors in theatre. The research questions are:

🎭   How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories?

🎭 How does transformative learning develop the actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character?

6.2.1   Summary of the primary findings

A summary of the primary findings is presented below in relation to the literature prepared in Chapter Two and the empirical data presented in Chapter Five. This summary creates coherence among the multiple components of this study and provides a navigational map of how the conclusions were reached.

The literature review provided me with vital information needed to understand how the contributing factors influenced the actors' processes and how they made meaning from their experiences (Section 2.2.4). The reviewed literature enhanced my understanding regarding the inosculation of knowledge and assisted me in identifying the patterns and codes in the empirical data (Section 2.2.3). Due to the in-depth approach taken when conducting the literature review, I found numerous deeply embedded connections between the learning that occurs in a theatre space and the classroom (Sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.4.2). I could draw on similarities and differences easily, as I understood how learning encounters were created and enriched specific conditions for the actor professionally and personally (Section 2.2.4.3). The literature highlighted the focus theatre practitioners and theorists have on achieving authenticity and believability in performances (Sections 2.2.4.1), emphasising the gap in the research regarding actors' processes for growth and development, where the journey is as important as the destination (Section 2.2.6.3). The literature illuminated the detailed process of how humans evaluate, process and construct knowledge and how the meaning scheme of an individual alters when there is cognitive and affective stimulations (Section 2.2.5.3).

Since drama and theatre are concerned with lived experience within the human condition, applying only one theory to address its complex and intricate nature was impossible. By formulating a conceptual framework to guide this study, I could combine three theories that encompass the subjectivity in the phenomenon of my study. These theories were drawn from the transformative learning theory from the educational field, the Bhava–Rasa theory from the theatre field and the social alchemy theory from the social sector. By merging elements within each theory, I could create a transdisciplinary platform to house the specific phenomenon to investigate. This conceptual framework provided a unique lens through which to assess and interpret the actors' and director's transformative experiences and

insights. It helped me understand the interchangeable process responsible for the actor's transformation on which my study was based.

The primary findings from the empirical data relate to the intricate and personal nature of the actors' processes, how they make meaning from this experience, the director's experience and insights on theatre-making and a deeper understanding of my construction of theatre and the actor's transformative learning experiences. The participants in this study provided useful insights into the inner world of an actor and how they navigate their character's narrative in search of the truth. The empirical dataset contributed to this study by allowing the actors to critically evaluate and make sense of their subjective experience as they reached the various milestones within the process. It allowed the actors to express their concerns, struggles and achievements personally and professionally. The empirical data provided a platform for the director of the Spotlight production to share his approach to the acting process and theatre-making by highlighting the collaborative nature of his practice. I could understand the director's role within the actor's transformative process. It expanded my knowledge regarding the relationship between these two parties based on mutual trust and responsibility. The director indicated that the empirical data allowed him to reflect on his unique role in the industry as an actor, director and lecturer. The insights he shared from this holistic perspective allowed me to make the connections and build meaning of all the participant responses. It helped me understand my dual positionality in this study. The director's contribution to the findings in this study was valuable to my understanding and brought cohesion to the findings that emerged from this study. The empirical dataset illuminated a new way to achieve authenticity in performance, without risking the actor's wellbeing to achieve the artistic objective.

6.2.1.1 *Framing the conclusions of the study*

As mentioned in Section 6.2.1, the literature reviewed in this study aided my understanding regarding the actors' processes, including the components that contribute to their transformative learning experience. As I reflected on the research findings, I found that multiple insights that emerged from the study resonated with me, as they were linked to my acting experience, which served as the primary driving force for pursuing this study (Section 1.3.1). I reflected on critical deliberations concerning the participants' lived experiences, the actors' processes, the findings it produced, the literature on this research topic and my transformative experiences. From this process, one pending notion continued to surface,

which spoke to the gap identified in this field of study (Section 1.2). The in-depth literature review revealed iconic acting methods, as proposed by theatre practitioners whose theories constituted the foundation of acting approaches in the Western world. This notion highlighted the gap in the research, which established the lack of research and practice focusing on the impact of theatre techniques concerned with the growth and development of the actors and their transformative experiences. As I contemplated this notion regarding the findings of my study and how my research conclusions could contribute to the identified gap in the literature, I referred to the Bhava–Rasa theory of Eastern derivation, which provided an opposing view to the acting method that focused on the actors' processes.

This awareness led me to expand my enquiry to the origin of the Bhava–Rasa theory, the Natyashastra (Section 2.2.5.1). The Natyashastra is an ancient Sanskrit treatise developed in India 500 A.D. by sage Bharata Muni as a manual to the performing arts (Miettinen, 1985). This detailed scripture encompassed all forms of performing arts and the processes the artist undergoes in creating their art form (Mohanlal et al., 2014). Within its composition, multiple knowledge streams and their practical applications are presented, including the Bhava–Rasa theory. The Natyashastra is founded on human psychology, embedded in philosophical underpinnings of dramatics and linkage to spiritual attainment within an Indian cultural system (Bhosale, 2016). Consensus among Indian Sanskrit scholarship advocates that the Natyashastra is the bedrock principle for theatre-making (Bhosale, 2016; Miettinen, 1985; Mohanlal et al., 2014; Shridevi, 2020; Srinivasan & Aithal, 2023). This study's findings create a platform for the decoloniality of the Natyashastra treatise and the theories, including the Bhava–Rasa, contained in it. Western acknowledgement of the contribution to knowledge and the impact the Natyashastra has made on the art of performance is minute compared to Eurocentric theatre practices. This study is significant because it highlights the problematic nature of multiple Western methods of acting currently used as the foundation on which acting and theatre techniques were developed.

As I explored the scholarly works based on the treatise further, a central understanding emerged, which is viewed as the fundamental principle on which the essence of this treatise was based. The understanding is presented below (Schwartz, 2004, p. 12):

> *The goal of drama and the art of theatre, as envisioned in Natyashastra is ultimately to let the spectator experience his own consciousness, then evaluate and feel the spiritual values innate in him and rise to a higher level of consciousness.*

This profound understanding and objective are unique in nature, as it propounds theatre performance as a path to achieving a higher level of consciousness. This notion, as noted in the Natyashastra, has been advocated by the work of Huston-Findley (2012). The most mutual interpretation of this notion refers to the spectator as the focus of this transformation. However, Krishnamoorthy (1968, p. 45) strongly advocates that the "Natyashastra was primarily concerned with the actor" and the actors' transformative processes, which occur during participation in creative practice within theatre (as cited by Pollock, 2016). Pollock (2016) supports this understanding by drawing on the explanations of Krishnamoorthy (1968, p. 5) in his scholarly work:

> *What deserves our special attention here is the fact that the words Rasa and Bhava are used in connection with the actor and the artist, not in connection with the spectator. Bharata's Natya-sastra, if studied in this background, will show how nowhere are the words Rasa and Bhava confined to describe the spectator's exclusive experience. They are invariably used to refer to the activity of the artists.*

The findings that emerged in this study illuminate the need for a shift in focus from authenticity in aid of the spectator to the actor's development and transformation, as seen in the Bhava–Rasa theory. The theories and practices embedded in the Natyashastra have been devised with the actor's wellbeing and desire for spiritual enlightenment at its core; thus, the processes developed focus on the actor's journey where the spectator can be a witness to their transformative nature. Based on the above argument, I apply this understanding to the phenomenon specific to this study to capture the transformative nature of theatre. The revised definition is presented below:

> The goal of drama and the art of theatre is to let actors experience their consciousness, then evaluate and feel the transformative process within and rise to a higher level of consciousness.

As I continued contemplating my findings in this study and with this notion in mind, a direct connection became evident, which brings cohesion of the various components in my study. By applying this principle to the actor's transformative process in theatre, I align the three themes to the three progressions within the Natyashastra's goal of theatre. In doing so, I discovered that the actor's processes are cyclical and not linear, validating my conceptual framework as the two theories work together in an interchangeable process to create

transformative learning experiences for the actor (Section 2.3.1). Below I explain the congruency between my themes and the goal of drama and the art of theatre as an answer to my two research questions.

Theatre-ising → *The actor experiences his own consciousness*

Theatre-ising refers to forming a theory for theatre that is used as a specific process or way of knowing in creating transformative learning experiences for the actor. In this initial phase, actors become aware of their current meaning schemes through participation in theatre practices, which cultivates a deep sense of self-awareness. The inception of this self-awareness is when actors examine their current meaning schemes and, in doing so, experience their own consciousness. As visualised in the framework, this phase symbolises the commencement of the actor's journey of transformation as the seed begins to grow and develop.

Escaping the chrysalis: the actor's journey → *Evaluate and feel the transformative process within*

In this phase, the actor is immersed in the interchangeable process of the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories. The social alchemy theory represents the actor's participation in cognitive processes to navigate the character's narrative. The Bhava–Rasa theory represents the actors' involvement in emotion-driven processes to access their emotional repertoire and connect with the character's emotional states. This introspection develops actors' ability to evaluate and feel the transformative process of them and the characters they portray. Evaluate is linked to the cognitive process of character development and feel refers to the emotional process within the actor's controlled emotional journey. The transformative process within is concerned with an

individual's inner motivations, unique qualities and influences that have shaped the current version of who they are at present. Aligned to the framework, this middle phase signifies the difficulties actors experience and the intense amount of effort required to work through their current meaning schemes. This phase presents the actor's attempt to bridge the gap between the self and the character. Symbolically this phase represents actors enclosed by their current meaning schemes and trying to escape in aid of growth and development. The visualisation in this framework speaks to the process of inosculation, as discussed in the literature review. It refers to how the living organism escapes its current structure or state to transform into a new inosculated version of itself.

Transcendence: completing the cycle → *Rise to a higher level of consciousness*

In this concluding phase, the transcendence of the human condition occurs. Actors experience a transformative learning experience that changes or alters their current meaning schemes. The extent of change the actor experiences depends on multiple factors, including the character's narrative, the actor's mental and emotional state during participation in the production, the actors' motivations, the director's approach to making theatre, and the theatre environment. In this phase, the actors' current meaning schemes are altered and give rise to their new meaning schemes, representing enhancement in emotional and cognitive intelligence, increased knowledge and awareness and improved interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities. Theatre performance requires actors to be in a present state of mind, where they are actively engaged through collaboration, creativity and expression, which is an effective platform for the

cultivation of transformative learning experiences, elevating the actor to a higher level of consciousness. As symbolised in the framework, the actors' previous meaning schemes throughout their lived experience still exist within, as they served as the foundation that shaped the present version of themselves. Through numerous transformative learning experiences, actors will continue to alter their meaning schemes and maintain their intrapersonal awareness, raising their consciousness through understanding and contemplation.

6.2.1.2 The complete framework: The transformative process of the actor

In cohesion with the spectacle of theatre, I present the denouement of my study (Section 2.3.3). The complete framework representing the transformative process of the actor is depicted below. The three phases of the actor's process have been encompassed within and are introduced as a complete cycle of transformation of the actor through theatre (Section 6.2.1.1). The relationship between the three phases forms a continuum, where the boundaries between them might marginally overlap as the actor's process for each individual will differ due to the unique nature of the human condition.
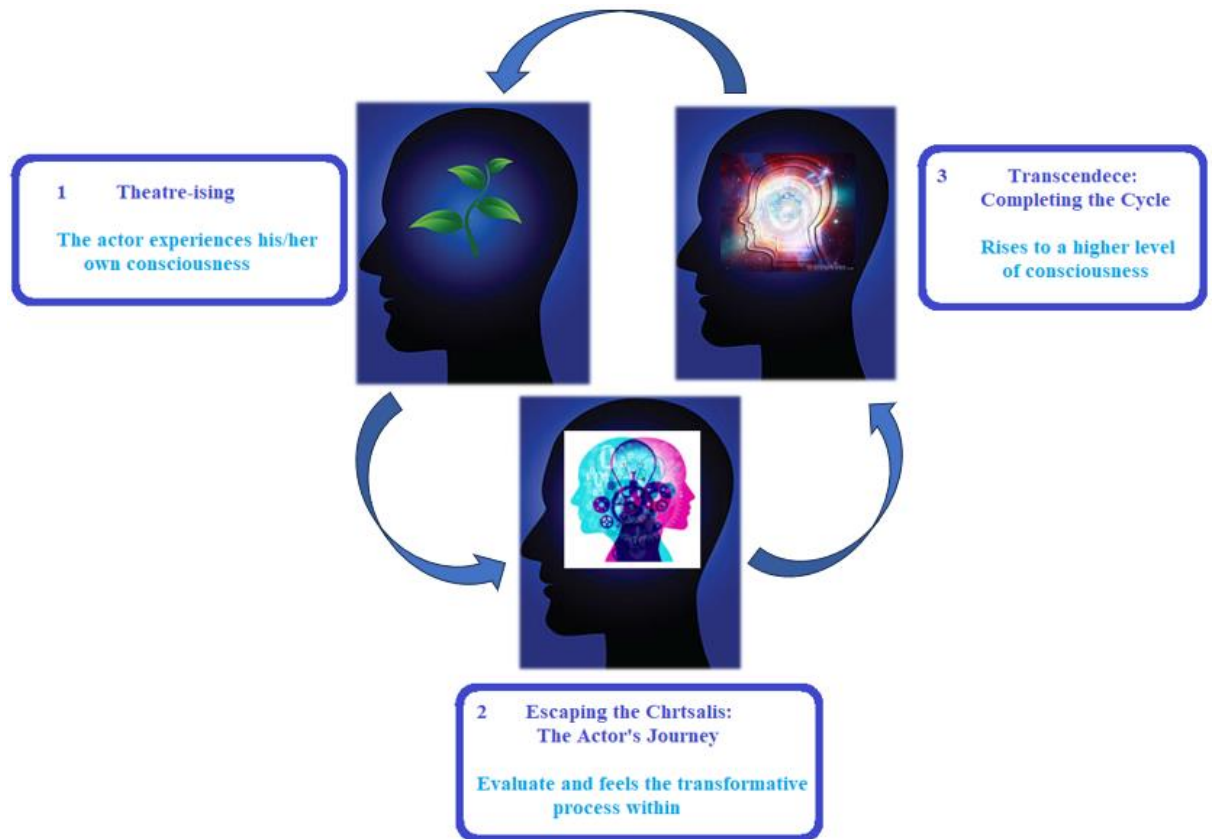
Figure 20: The transformative process of the actor (Padayachee, 2023)

With the above framework in mind, I discuss the significance of this study in the following section.

6.2.2   Significance of the study

This study focused on exploring transformative processes in the production of Spotlight. In the section below, I discuss the significance of my study as it pertains to the two research questions: How are transformative processes created in the Spotlight production based on the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories and how does transformative learning develop actors' meaning schemes as they transition from the self to the character?

The significance of this study focuses on the literature reviewed and the findings revealed in the research domains of drama, theatre and education. The knowledge contained within this study regarding the actor's process and the need for reform of how theatre is created can be used as a springboard for multiple role players in this field of study and practice. For theatre practitioners, drama theorists and directors, this study can be drawn on as a knowledge stream to aid their understanding of theory, practice and the actors' processes. This study can ignite the search for safer and more responsible methods of training and guiding the

actor through the transition process. This study can also serve as a framework for incorporating indigenous theory into modern-day theatre practices. The significance of this study can be used in the field of education because drama teachers can use the knowledge explored in this study to inform their teaching methods when working with young and impressionable students. It might illuminate the importance of the student actors' journeys for discovery and provide meaningful insights that can be used to inform classroom practice. In terms of research question one, an interchangeable process of transition is created between the actors' controlled emotional journeys and their character development, creating transformative learning experiences for actors as they empathise and appreciate the character's narrative, enhancing their interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. The second research question is answered due to the altering of an actor's meaning schemes. The findings reveal that actors become aware of their consciousness, experience a transformative process within and raise their consciousness, altering their current meaning schemes through a change in attitude, belief, values, perspective and outlook. This altering can be on a small scale; however, the findings indicate that the most subtle change in meaning scheme ignites the transformative process for the actor.

As I conclude the significance of this study, I consider the limitations and recommendations in the following section.

6.2.3   Limitations and recommendations

The limitations of the study are discussed in the below section regarding the nature of the limitation and the reasoning attributed to the research decision made. The recommendations for the study will follow, as the two are intricately connected. Below, I present the limitations identified in this study and their subsequent recommendations for consideration. These include the size of the sample and data collected from an independent/private institution only.

 The size of the sample

After a process of reflection regarding the methodology followed and the findings yielded in this study, I identified that the sample size for this study was small. Three actors and the director were purposefully selected to participate in this research study. Therefore, data were collected from four research participants. The reason motivating this research decision is due

to the qualitative nature of the study where semi-structured interviews, observations of the actors' processes and field notes from the production from inception to performance and of the director's approach to making theatre. The above forms a qualitative research strategy referred to as triangulation, reinforcing the validity of this study. Furthermore, the four participants we interviewed at three phases of the production process: the beginning of the rehearsal process, during the rehearsal process and after the second production performance. Therefore, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted as the participants' responses served as a rich source of data comprising in-depth and insightful data drawn from their lived experiences. I recommend that a larger sample size be used in future studies investigating this phenomenon to determine whether saturation has been reached.

🎭 Data collected from an independent/private institution only

The second limitation speaks to the constraint of having access to only an independent/private institution for data collection in this study. Public institutions were not included in the data set; therefore, the findings are limited to the lived experience, methods, training and expertise in independent/private drama training institutions. I attribute this research decision to the nature of the phenomenon being investigated. As a researcher, I required access to the actors at three phases of the process to conduct semi-structured interviews, observe them during their engagement in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy processes and to take field notes reflecting my observations of their behaviour, reactions and responses. This data collection method might be viewed as intrusive to the actors because their experiences are personal and sensitive, and disruptive to the director and his/her practice because the triangulation method is time-consuming and requires the researcher to be present within the theatre space during all three phases of the production. I received permission from this independent/private institution to conduct my research and an invitation from the director to use the Spotlight production and its participating actors as the primary data sources for my research. Due to the flexibility and freedom, I would have worked with the director with whom I had studied my Dramatic Arts qualification at university, I was inclined to accept this institution as my research site and the Spotlight production as the focus event of my investigation. Based on this knowledge, I suggest future researchers expand their investigation to include public institutions to enhance the understanding of theatre practices across the spectrum.

The limitations and recommendations as outlined above, provide suggested paths for future researchers interested in investigating this phenomenon. Below I present a recommended focus for future research on this specific research topic.

6.2.4   Further research

When reflecting on the findings of this study, it is evident that this study provided valuable insights into the actors' lived experiences and highlighted the importance of exploring indigenous theories for application and understanding of theatre practice. However, the limitations in the study indicated that future research is needed to address critical aspects of transformation and the actors' processes that emerged from the data collected. As I discussed the conceptual framework at the beginning of the study (before conducting a field research), I explain the denouement of the transformative learning experience for the actor as a framework not limited to the actor's transformation, but inclusive of the audience (spectator) transformative experiences as well (Section 2.3.3). This all-encompassing cycle of transformation is extended to the audience because it incorporates the findings in Western theatre focused on the transformation of the audience member and Eastern theatre focusing on the actor, resulting in audience transformation. For this master's study, I narrowed my focus to investigating the actors' experiences in the making of theatre to yield a deeper understanding of this one integral component. Findings aligned with this previously suggested framework have emerged in the study and have been advocated by the director through his semi-structured interview responses. The directors' insights indicate that the interchangeable process cultivating transformative experiences for the actor is then recreated for the audience member during live performance (Section 4.2.2). He explains that the audience is transported from being an outsider component of theatre to becoming a spectator having a role in the transformation process. The above is also echoed in the Bhava–Rasa theory that discusses the Bhava of the actor transferred to the Rasa of the audience through a line of communication (Section 2.2.5.1) and in Mezirow's transformative learning experience where he refers to communicative learning (Section 2.2.4.1).

Therefore, I suggest that the following future research be based on this phenomenon to include the audience in the transformative process in theatre to build upon the results of this study. The methodological investigation could include semi-structured interviews with audience members and observations and field notes of the responses to the performance on stage during a production. Audience members can be interviewed at two intervals: before

the performance begins and after the production has concluded. The following framework can be used as a working model to support this specific research investigation.
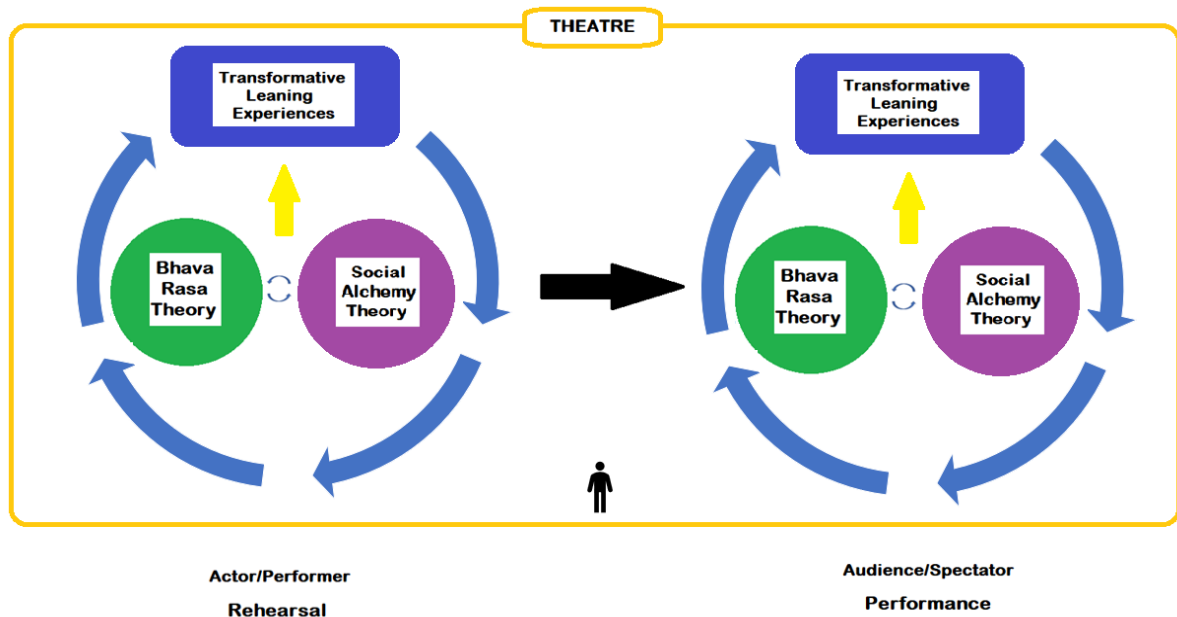
Figure 21: The denouement (Padayachee, 2023)

With the establishment of a future research topic, I provide concluding remarks on the study in the following section.

6.3   Conclusion

As a drama teacher, previous actor, director and researcher, I found this study to bring significant meaning and value to my personal and professional understanding. It has informed my approach to theatre-making and helped me understand my transformative experience, which served as the motivation for pursuing this research topic. The literature reviewed provided me with essential insights and information that I will use to enhance my practice and continue to contribute to the gaps identified in this study. My passion for the drama/theatre and its ability to transform individuals has increased my intrigue and motivation in this research field. After careful contemplation of the literature reviewed and the primary findings revealed in this study, I ardently propose applying the transformative process of the actor as a framework for theatre practice and the training of actors. My endeavour is for theatre to be used as a medium to raise individuals to a higher level of consciousness to experience their world with self-awareness and harmony.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A – Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Questions for the Actors

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Stage 1: Beginning of the Rehearsal

1. Why have you selected to perform this specific monologue for this character?

2. After having conducted research on your character, how do you identify with this character in terms of your own personal identity?

3. How do your personal and professional goals align with the role you have selected? What do you want to achieve?

Stage 2: During the Rehearsal

1. Explain how and why you think the "actors controlled emotional journey" is important. What does it mean to you?

2. Describe your experience as you were engaging in the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy (characters narrative) process.

3. The aim of theatre performance is to bring the actor as close as possible to the character they are portraying, to achieve believability. How have you experienced insights about your character and yourself that have changed your perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, etc?

Stage 3: After the 2nd Production Performance

1. In your own words, how would you describe "transformation" and "transformative learning experience"?

2. Please share how your experiences of your performance in the role (1st and 2nd performance) developed or changed.

3. How did you discover any insights (personally and/or professionally) about yourself during this whole process from the selection of character to the final performance?

4. How do you think your participation in this production in this specific role has created a transformative learning experience for you?

Annexure B – Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Questions for the Director

Stage 1: Beginning of the Rehearsal

1. Theatre focuses on an actor's authenticity of the character; how do you think participation in theatre has an impact on the actor?

2. As the director, how would you describe your role (in terms of purpose and responsibility) to the actors, in this production?

3. Why have you allowed the actors to select their own monologues and characters?

Stage 2: During the Rehearsal

1. Explain how and why you think the "actors controlled emotional journey" is important. What does it mean to you?

2. Why have you selected to use the Bhava–Rasa and social alchemy theories as theatre practices in this production?

3. How do you think the actors will benefit from engaging in the above process? What outcome are you aiming to achieve?

4. Drawing on your observations of the actors during the rehearsal process, how would you motivate the success of this theatre practice?

Stage 3: After the 2nd Production Performance

1. In your own words, how would you describe "transformation" and "transformative learning experience"?

2. Drawing on your observations of the actors after the first and second performances, how would you define the success of the production? How do you think the outcome you envisioned was achieved?

3. How do you think their participation in this production in this specific role has created a transformative learning experience for them?

4. How has your participation in this production as the director created a transformative learning experience for you?