

**ENGAGING THE SAVAGE IMAGINATION:
AN ACTORS SEARCH FOR THE HEART OF BOTTOM IN
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

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Abstract

This thesis will explore the notion of the Savage Imagination as it applies to an actors' process in preparation for and performance of the role of Bottom in William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. It establishes a working definition of the Savage Imagination then offers possible ways to apply it to the art of acting. The research is directed into three major areas: psychological, physical and experiential. Drawing from the works of Carl Jung, Declan Donnellan, Eric Morris, Janet Sonenberg and Keith Johnstone (among others), as well as concepts taught at York University by Paul Lampert, Erika Batdorf, Gwen Dobie (Alexander Technique) and Melee Hutton (David Rotenberg's States of Being), it references personal and academic discoveries in the fields of creativity, performance and improvisation. A production history of the play is included, with emphasis on the role of Bottom. It concludes with selected journal entries from rehearsals and performance.

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Artistic Challenge – Inviting the Savage Imagination

“Nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination” (Hume qtd. in Avens 15).

In my life and work as an actor I have often felt I needed more talent and creativity to be a true master of the craft. Not coming from an artistic background, I grew up in awe of talented performers in all disciplines. When I began acting, I learned to mimic the styles of these people for fear that my own creativity was inadequate. As a result, much of my work appeared competent but was very self-conscious. My performances were often respectable but lacked true originality and courage since I was always playing it safe.

My artistic challenge involves transforming this approach to my work. I need to learn to trust my instincts, let go of anxiety and provoke the tools of my imagination to free up a genuine creative flow. “[C]reative processes, in everyone, exist by the grace of impulses which, independent of our will, arise from the unconscious” (Van den Berk 1). Learning to have more faith in my art will involve new ways of looking at myself and the world.

Engaging my imagination physically may also help me access more creativity within. As Julia Cameron notes in her book *The Artist's Way*, “[c]reativity requires action, and part of that action must be physical” (185). To invite more rawness and passion into my work I may need to overcome my intellect. “Often our best ideas seem to come unbidden when doing a purely physical task that allows our conscious mind to get out of the way and our unconscious to suggest itself in its wild and creative ways” (Bergland). Exploring these and other new sources of inspiration is part of my journey into the Savage Imagination.

Defining the Savage Imagination

My first contact with the Savage Imagination as an acting term came in my MFA acting class at York University, taught by Professor Paul Lampert. He defines it as: “[a]n actors’ ability to imagine wholly any given physical, relational, emotional or psychological circumstances in a more creative, interesting or compelling way, making these choices with artistic daring” (Lampert). The key words in this definition for me are ‘compelling’ and ‘artistic daring’. While the definition may be subjective, the concept points toward a fearless creativity and openness to impulse. Both extremely valuable assets for an actor.

One example of what I believe to be the savage imagination at work is described by Patricia Bosworth in a biography of Marlon Brando. Recounting a moment from his acting class with Stella Adler:

She'd instructed the entire class to behave like chickens in a henhouse after they were told that a bomb was about to explode over them. While the other students hopped frantically around the room, clucking and flapping their arms like wings, Brando sat quietly in a corner miming the laying of an egg. “That's exactly what a chicken would do under the circumstances, my darling!” Adler exclaimed (18,19).

When an actor makes a creative choice that fits the scenario but is not immediately obvious to everyone, the Savage Imagination is what I believe to be the source of such inspiration. In order to define this in a more literate way, I would like to break down what these words actually mean: “Savage (*adj.*) - I. That is in a state of nature, wild. [...] II. In extended use with reference to behaviour, disposition, or character. a. Indomitable, intrepid, valiant *Obs*” (OED online). The etymology of this word comes from the “Anglo-

Norman and Old French *salvage*” as well as “classical Latin *silvaticus*: referring to woodland or wild” (OED online).

Imagination (*n.*) – 1. a. The power or capacity to form internal images or ideas of objects and situations not actually present to the senses. [...] Also, the power or capacity by which the mind integrates sensory data in the process of perception. [...]

5. The mind's creativity and resourcefulness in using and inventing images, analogies, etc.; poetic or artistic genius or talent. (OED online)

Taking *savage* to mean ‘natural and wild’, or ‘indomitable, intrepid and valiant’; while distilling *imagination* to a ‘capacity of perception’, or ‘the mind’s creativity and resourcefulness’ reveals two possible, concise definitions for the *Savage Imagination*:

1. A natural and wild capacity of perception.
2. The mind’s indomitable, intrepid and valiant creativity and resourcefulness.

The first definition suggests something that exists within us innately, similar to talent. The second suggests an aspect of the mind that exists with or without our conscious awareness. Both definitions imply that the source lies within the mind. In terms of something that may be accessed intentionally, the second is more open-ended and allows for more creative interpretation. David Rotenberg (another master teacher who spent many years at York University) simplifies the concept to “a creative internal life as actively, crazily interested in tearing down as raising up” (Rotenberg).

There is no single definition that fully describes the *Savage Imagination*. It is not an end product in itself, but rather a *quality* of creativity. My main objective in this thesis is to

explore a more daring and exciting quality in my own work. Therefore, I must take this concept beyond its definition to discover how I might use it in my process as an actor.

Accessing the Savage Imagination

Like talent, Lampert claims that the Savage Imagination cannot be taught; yet sometimes it may be unlocked in an actor in whom it lays dormant (Lampert). If it can be accessed intentionally, regardless of natural talent, I hope to find ways to improve my own ability to work creatively and compellingly. In the arts, when we speak of *talent* we are generally referring to a “mental endowment [or] natural ability”. This sense of the word comes from the Bible in Matthew 25:14-30 (“talent” III, OED online). In this passage Jesus uses the monetary unit of talents as a metaphor for gifts from God, distributed unevenly but with the idea that people are expected to develop and multiply whatever talents they receive.

With the assumption that an imaginative capacity exists within everyone to a greater or lesser degree, the means to access it might be improved by giving focus to it. I divided my research on this into three main areas: psychological, physical and experiential. The methods I used are not all traditional forms of actor training but they all involve unique ways of accessing parts of the imagination that may be useful to my work as an actor.

The study of Jungian psychoanalysis explores the concept of the psyche and the creativity of dreams. Martial arts and exercise connect mind and body to physical responses. And improvisation in practice and performance challenges habits and inhibitions that may be limiting the scope of creative work. In all these forms there seems to be unlimited potential for exploration in vast realm of the Savage Imagination.

Psychological: ‘A Dream, Past the Wit of Man’

“The view that dreams are merely imaginary fulfillments of suppressed wishes has long ago been superseded” (Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* 11).

For several months, I have met regularly with a Jungian analyst. We speak at length about dreams and what they might mean in terms of the development of my Psyche. According to Jung’s model, the Psyche is made up of both conscious and unconscious material containing memories, repressions, dreams and fantasies at varying levels of awareness (*The Portable Jung* 71). The unconscious is difficult to identify empirically. In Jung’s view it is a “natural phenomenon [which] contains all aspects of human nature - light and dark, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, profound and silly.” (“Approaching the Unconscious” 94). My hope is that tapping into the power of the unconscious will be a key to unlocking the Savage Imagination.

Jungian analysis often begins by focusing on dreams. Because “dreams contain images and thought-associations which we do not create with conscious intent” (Jung, *The Portable Jung* 75), this is a relatively objective way to gain insight into the contents of the unconscious. Dream images are often presented to us as symbols. Through interpretation, the meaning of these symbols may be suggested. Yet, as Jung says: “a dream cannot produce definite thought. If it begins to do so, it ceases to be a dream because it has entered the realm of consciousness” (“Approaching the Unconscious” 53).

I recorded a number of dreams over a period of several months, looking for patterns that may suggest complexes or inhibitions locked away in my unconscious. We also looked

for evidence of ongoing psychic growth in terms of patterns that were identified. I have shared three early dreams here:

1) I am at the family farm doing chores with the tractor, feeding the cows; they are docile and domesticated. I felt good about taking care of them. While on my way to feed the bulls I run into some difficulty. I get stuck with the tractor, I have trouble with the barbed wire in the gate and I keep losing the hay.

2) I am driving to some social event away from the farm. My vehicle is an old Dodge farm truck. It keeps breaking down or spinning around in circles on account of an old engine and a misaligned tire. No one could fix it. I finally look underneath to see what is wrong and discover a shiny new motorcycle engine has replaced the old truck engine! This gives it a new, unique power and it runs fine.

3) Heading out on a camping trip with some old high school friends. The RV's break down before we get to the campsite. We are on a hill with the town on my left and the wilderness on my right. Suddenly the brakes start to go on my vehicle (which is now an old grain truck) and I frantically try to stop it from rolling all the way into the ravine below, ultimately I cannot stop it and have to let it go.

My analyst suggested that these dreams seem to agree with my desire to explore a more 'wild and indomitable' creativity in my work. The frequent appearance of masculine and feminine symbols; such as the cows separated from the bulls, and a divide between the structured world and wilderness; suggest a need to find more balance in these opposing forces. The Dodge truck may be my stalled creativity looking for a new source of power. The grain truck falling into the ravine might indicate a need for more abandon and less reliance on organized, orderly thinking. And the fact that all these dreams took place in the home of my youth suggest that I may be feeling stuck in the past while indicating a desire to move forward. The symbols in these dreams are unique to my own experience but serve as metaphors for larger concepts. There is no single interpretation that can explain any dream entirely; the most valuable interpretation is the one that 'clicks' with

the perception of the dreamer (von Franz 159). Exploring the marriage of masculine and feminine energies, discovering new sources of power and playing with abandon in my work are all exciting ways to address my artistic challenge.

The purpose of attending to dreams is more than just to look for literal meanings or messages. Inviting the savage imagination is about realizing the awesome untapped creative potential latent in my own mind, especially when in my conscious life I often feel restricted by habitual editing and self-doubt. “It would be wrong to suppose [the] unconscious is striving to realize certain definite ends... The driving force... seems to be in essence only an urge toward self-realization” (Jung, *The Portable Jung* 134). So with the savage imagination, there is no identifiable end product. It is an ongoing process of exploration which I hope will deepen my work as an actor. I think the rehearsal process offers opportunity to do this. As Declan Donnellan says in *The Actor and the Target*: “The rehearsal and the unconscious have certain things in common. Both are normally unseen, but both are essential. They are the four fifths of the iceberg that are concealed” (7). Taking this image a step further, the imagination may be the crystalline structure that makes up the iceberg. In both rehearsal and performance, it holds everything together.

Physical: A Good Offense in Self-Defense

“Sweat is like WD-40 for your mind—it lubricates the rusty hinges of your brain and makes your thinking more fluid. Exercise allows your conscious mind to access fresh ideas that are buried in the subconscious” (Bergland).

Another technique I explored was a relatively modern martial art known as *Krav Maga*.

Developed in Czechoslovakia by Imi Lichtenfeld to help protect the Jewish quarter of

Bratislava from fascist militias, Krav Maga is a close combat-type martial art focusing on self-defense and threat neutralization (Philippe 91). The name in Hebrew literally means, “contact combat”. The form was refined and developed by the Israeli military for its ability to quickly take out opponents without the use of weapons. It has also been adapted by law enforcement agencies around the globe for its threat neutralization techniques. Unlike many martial arts there are no competitions in Krav Maga. Its purpose is primarily for self-defense in real world street fighting so there is no consideration given to ‘fair play’. The moves are designed to be simple and logical, working in harmony with natural instinct (Philippe xii).

I began my exploration at a training centre on Danforth Avenue called LFS GYM (for Lumpini Fighting Systems) advertising classes in Krav Maga, Muay Thai, Savate, and MMA. There I met with owner Sam Lumpini. I told him I had no martial arts training and was not interested in competition per se. I said I was curious about Krav Maga and he agreed it was a good introduction to his method. But he advised that I shouldn’t focus on just one martial art. He requires his students to commit to at least three months membership and welcomes them to train up to six days a week. I would also be required to sign an injury waiver indemnifying him and the gym from any responsibility for my safety. I felt a bit nervous since it was not cheap and the amenities were spartan at best. Yet there was a personal touch and homey atmosphere to the gym that told me this was a good place to explore a new form.

In the beginning I had no idea what I was doing. My endurance and flexibility were decent but I did not know how to punch a boxing bag. I had to learn the difference between a Jab, a Cross, and a Hook, as well as how to pivot my body for more power while not damaging my hands in the process. Most days I came home with bruises on my forearms and bleeding knuckles from blocking mock knife attacks and punching a bag with bare hands. Occasionally I would lie awake at night, going over different wrist locks and arm bars in my mind. At the end of three months of training Sam said that I was ready to get my Level One certificate. There are eight levels in Krav Maga, the top level being similar to a black belt in traditional martial arts. Unfortunately, I broke my wrist before I could take the test. I executed a punch incorrectly during a rehearsal and was unable to continue my training.

As with learning any new skill, it took me a while to get comfortable with the technique and much longer to call myself proficient at it. A fine touch is required to master this as well as any martial art. Fluidity and speed of reaction are paramount. The ultimate goal is to hone the instincts to the point at which individual actions become almost unconscious. While the mind focusses on assessing the situation, the body reacts with certainty and directness. This sense of mind-directing my unconscious reactions feels very similar to intentionally accessing the Savage Imagination.

Although I have only begun to scratch the surface of this martial art, I have noticed a marked improvement in my strength, endurance and mind-body connection. My bruises are healing faster and the bones in my forearms are getting denser. The newness of the

form and the exhaustion of the workout leave little room for my mind to wander. When I lose focus, I get injured. Much like performing on stage, I need a full mind and body commitment that leaves no room for distraction. Connecting the physical with the psychological in this way will be immensely valuable for me in my work as I dig deeper into my own personal sources of inspiration.

Because it is designed for self-defense and not competition, Krav Maga has no clearly defined set of moves like other martial arts or even dance forms. By focussing almost entirely on how to respond to any type of confrontation or situation, it is more like free-form jazz or improvised theatre. Confidence grows with fluency. A language must be learned to a certain degree of expertise before you can call yourself proficient at it. In his book *Improvisation as Art*, Edgar Landgraf claims, “improvisation, while not following a particular plan, nevertheless is an activity that relies on experience and repetition” (16). I will look into improvisation as a means of accessing creativity more in the next section.

Experiential: Imagining Through Improvisation

“Every creative man knows that spontaneity is the very essence of creative thought” (Jung, *The Portable Jung* 135).

Perhaps the most immediately recognizable approach to the Savage Imagination as it relates to acting is through improvisation. I explored this avenue in two ways: first, by working alone in studio without any parameters, allowing the mind to reflect and discover through free association and physical exploration. The structure was based on exercises and concepts I learned in the Voice, Text and Movement classes with Professors David

Smukler and Erika Batdorf at York University. Second, I enrolled in a class at the Second City Training Centre in downtown Toronto, offering a more cooperative form of improvisation in a performance-oriented environment.

While working alone in the studio, without an audience or a particular objective, my aim was to deconstruct the idea of performance as entertainment and work for pure invention. As Landgraf states: “Inventiveness... is a central aspect of improvisation” (25). The idea was to fill my creative well with images and play without defined goals, as a child would. I gave myself the freedom to follow whatever impulse came to mind, such as dancing, singing, and practicing handstands. I found my mind wandering a great deal. I would introduce a topic (perhaps a poem or a childhood memory) then grow tired of it as I became conscious of 'performing'. With the idea that “the non-thinking '*default state*' of consciousness is key to creative thinking” (Bergland) I would drift from one activity to another, sometimes rolling around on the floor, attempting to play piano, then running around yelling incoherently. All the while in the back of my mind hoping some creative idea would stick and lead me toward a story or idea that I could develop into a show. This was not a helpful goal as I later learned while studying the F.M Alexander Technique with Professor Gwen Dobie. I was engaged in a habit that Alexander called “end-gaining”. By focusing on what the result of my experimentation might be, I “fail[ed] to value the struggle of learning and experimentation with the unknown.” (McEvenue 24). But even without a particular goal, I felt the need to be inventive. I soon discovered that “it is not inventiveness itself, but rather its staging that is central to improvisation” (Landgraf 38).

What I needed was a sense of purpose, rather than an end goal, to keep my will activated in the improvisational process.

In the world of theatrical improvisation, *The Second City* is one of the best known names in the business. With training centres in Toronto, Chicago and Hollywood, it is “the largest school of improvisation and sketch comedy in the world” (secondcity.com “Training Centre”). Hoping that this would be a good place to help unlock the creative potential of my savage imagination, I enrolled in the 8-week ‘Improv for Actors’ course held at the training centre in downtown Toronto. The goals of the class are to improve spontaneity, focus, being in the moment, comedic timing, and the collaborative creative process (secondcity.com “Improv for Actors”).

The philosophy of “Yes, and” is the cornerstone of improvisation at The Second City. This is the concept that any offer whether verbal or physical once made should not be ignored but used as a springboard for further creativity. It also takes a lot of pressure off the person making the initial offer. One thing I observed is that I feel more creative when accepting offers and building on them than I do making offers myself. I feel I am more able to be spontaneous when I do not plan for what someone else is going to give me. I have the chance to surprise myself with my reply by simply saying “Yes, and...” adding whatever impulse comes from their offer. Conversely, when I would make an offer to a scene partner, I tended to overcomplicate it, trying to be too clever while alienating them and deflating the scene. I am beginning to realize that a Savage Imagination is not that

which makes me more audacious or clever with my choices, but rather that which helps me to tap into a sense of creative flow.

An experience I had in a class dedicated to musical improvisation illustrates this concept rather well. The instructor guided us through a series of exercises: making up melodies and simple rhymes, culminating in the creation of full improvised songs as a group. We formed impromptu bands and had an 'album release party'. The instructor would introduce our group and an album title we made up on the spot, inviting us forward to sing songs from it while he accompanied on piano. I found myself stepping in front of the class to introduce a song without a clue what it was about or how it would go, yet strangely confident it would be good. I just had to 'feel' my way through it. Sometimes the whole group would get involved as backup singers or dancers, each taking a verse of the song. I performed a Tom Waits style duet, a beatbox rap battle, a soul ballad, and harmonized on several improvised choruses. It was exhilarating! The full-body investment of singing and improvising got my (shame-oriented) mind-editor out of the way. I felt a curious mixture of fear and confidence that left little room for doubt or embarrassment. I surprised myself with the number and variety of musical styles I could pretend expertise in. This class offered me a rare experience of engaging the Savage Imagination in its pure spirit of invention and creativity. There was a real sense of flow and freedom, as if I was not making it up at all but was channeling and interpreting the song that already existed. This reminded me that creativity is a "process of surrender, not control" (Cameron 95).

By combining the structure of the improvisational theatre games I learned in class with the sense of free play I explored in the studio I feel I am beginning to develop a new approach to creativity. The freedom of the studio is good for ‘unclamping’ the mind to allow ideas buried in the unconscious to suggest themselves (Bergland) and incubating images that may not seem useful in the moment but are invaluable raw materials for refilling the creative well. This freedom can then be carried into a structured framework such as a class or rehearsal to give clarity, form and context to the creative flow of improvisation.

Summary

A Savage Imagination is more than just a natural ability in some actors to think more creatively than others. Its ultimate source may be in the unconscious. Accessing the information and images stored there requires a delicate balance of discipline, curiosity and attention along with a sense of freedom and courage to step into the unknown. It also takes practice and humility to work through habitual fears. One of my major fears as an actor is that of failure, which is a sure way to block creativity. The ‘safe’ choices I have made to protect myself from giving a poor performance are actually blocks to my imaginative capacity. Truly compelling work cannot come from generic, reflexive impulses. Janet Sonenberg points out in *The Actor Speaks* “hazarding failure as he attempts to reach a moment of unguarded expression [is just one] of the risks an actor takes in exploring his creativity” (2). And as they say at The Second City: “Improv is 80%

failure”. Accepting the possibility of failure is akin to allowing the possibility of inspiration. Which is also part of what makes live performance so exciting.

The Savage Imagination can not be held in the hand like an object. It can only be experienced as an event and is often identified only in retrospect. The nature of imagination itself is unpredictable and wild. One way to cultivate it is to develop a sense of curiosity and respect for the boundless depths of the creative mind. “Our capacity to imagine is both imperfect and glorious, and only the paying of attention can improve it” (Donnellan 9). To admit defeat or to lose interest creates blocks that can get in the way of creative ideas. Especially when there is no evidence of what that lies beyond. But the Savage Imagination is still there and the more it is accessed, the easier it is to find. In my work on the character of 'Bottom' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I plan to explore possible ways to access my own Savage Imagination through the text and demands of the production in an intentional way.

A Midsummer Night's Dream Through the Ages

First Appearance

The earliest known mention of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is in a document from 1598 called *Palladis Tamia* by Francis Meres. He includes it among a dozen of Shakespeare's plays as an example of the author's skill in writing comedy (Halio 9). Although the exact date of a first production cannot be verified, most scholars estimate between 1594 and 1596 placing it eleventh or twelfth in a chronological canon of plays ascribed to William Shakespeare (Young 4). One popular theory is that the play was written for and performed on the occasion of a noble wedding, possibly between the Lord Chamberlain's granddaughter Elizabeth Carey and Sir Thomas Berkeley on February 19, 1596 (Chambers and Williams 47). At the time Shakespeare was a shareholder and member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a newly formed acting company in London, highly favored by the court, which would later become the King's Men after the ascension of James I (Chambers and Williams 42).

Possible Sources

A Midsummer Night's Dream is known as one of the 'lyric plays', written around the same time as *Romeo & Juliet*. Both plays share a source in the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Turner 26), which the mechanicals attempt to perform before the Duke with farcical results. Unlike many of Shakespeare's plays, *Dream* does not seem to be drawn from one chief source (such as Plutarch's *Lives* for *Julius Caesar* and Holinshed's *Chronicles* for the history plays). Rather, he uses a variety of familiar

stories and ideas drawn together in three interweaving plots: the main (sentimental) plot, the grotesque plot, and the fairy plot. The main plot, concerning Theseus and his wedding with Hippolyta, draws on Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* and Chaucer's *The Knightes Tale* (Sidgwick 9-12). The grotesque plot of the 'rude mechanicals' has no single source but was likely inspired by the practice of artisan guilds in rural Warwickshire coming together to rehearse a play for a major community event. The twist of Bottom's translation into an ass has literary precedent in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* and Reginald Scots' *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), ascribing to witches the power to turn men into animals then back into men again. The latter includes one story of an English sailor, who was transformed into an ass and could not rejoin his crew until he had learned his lesson and was returned to himself (29-31). The fairy plot also has few literary sources but draws upon a long oral tradition of folklore, still active in Shakespeare's time. In fact the modern image of the fairy world in English literature owes a great deal to Shakespeare's treatment of it in *Dream*. The aforementioned *Discovery of Witchcraft* provides some information on fairies, especially Robin Goodfellow (or Puck), whose name and character are mentioned. Most of the other fairy characters are assigned names and/or character traits by Shakespeare that seem to be chiefly of his own invention (35-39).

Production History

Just as little is known and nothing is certain regarding the first production, it is also difficult to know how frequently *Dream* was staged during Shakespeare's lifetime. The three surviving historical texts are the two quartos of 1600 and 1619, and the First Folio

of 1623. Few variations between editions other than stage directions and scene divisions seem to suggest that it was popular enough to warrant remounting during Shakespeare's lifetime (Young 4). It has been mentioned in court records in 1604 and 1630 (assuming the play of 'Robin goode-fellow' refers in fact to *Dream*) and likely enjoyed several productions in the interim (Halio 13). However, for the next 200 years a full production of Shakespeare's original text was rare. A performance by the King's Company in 1662 attended by Samuel Pepys was recorded in his diary to be "the most insipid, ridiculous play, that ever I saw in my life" (qtd. in Young 112). Popular taste after the Restoration favoured the refined decorum of French neoclassicism. Shakespeare's plays were also being revised or rewritten by Restoration dramatists (Halio 14), beginning a long tradition of adaptation especially with regards to productions of the *Dream*.

The Age of Adaptations

The first known adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* focused on the comedic interludes of the mechanicals presented as short playlets in various entertainments during the period when the theatres were closed from 1642 to 1660. *Bottom the Weaver* was published in 1661, omitting the young lovers entirely and reducing the roles of Titania and Oberon, while retaining all the scenes involving the mechanicals with a few brief additions to provide continuity (Halio 14). Another major adaptation was Elkanah Settle and Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* produced in 1692-3 at Dorset Gardens Theatre. Not only was the text cut and altered but songs and dances were also added without setting a single line of Shakespeare to music (Halio 15).

For the next 150 years, more adaptations of *Dream* continued to surface while the original play lay dormant. These include *The Fairies* in 1755 by David Garrick and John Christopher Smith that cut out the sub-plot of Bottom and the mechanicals to make room for more songs, and another Garrick production in 1763 actually titled *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but severely cut and altered by George Colman (a colleague of Garrick's) that closed after a single night. Shortly after this Colman produced a shorter and more successful adaptation called *A Fairy Tale*, omitting the parts of the lovers and courtiers as well as Bottom's transformation scene. There are no more recorded adaptations or productions for nearly 50 years until Frederick Reynolds' operatic adaptation in 1816 (Halio 15–20). Spectacle was preferred over poetry, while severe cuts and questionable additions attempted to appease the tastes of the time. Critical reception was cold given that in the romantic era it was believed that "*Dream* was so highly imaginative a work of art that *any* representation was bound to fall short of what the language of the play itself could convey to an active intelligence" (Halio 21). Nevertheless, these spectacular adaptations dominated the stage for another hundred years. Mendelssohn's overture and/or incidental music began appearing in nearly every production including Madame Vestris' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Covent Garden in 1840, with additional songs by Thomas Simpson Cooke. While staying more faithful to the original text than previous adaptations, and generally treated as an artistic success, the spectacular elements, such as a chorus of fifty dancing fairies and multiple hand painted sets pushed the cost of Vestris' production beyond its ability to recoup its initial investment. Not to be outdone, Charles

Kean's adaptation at the Princess Theatre in 1856 cut eight hundred lines of text but featured even more lavish sets and no less than ninety dancing fairies. In 1895, Augustin Daly went further by adding battery-operated lights to the fairies' costumes and Herbert Beerbohm Tree topped them all in 1900, adding live rabbits to the stage during one of Oberon's songs (Halio 25–31).

The Modern Era

In 1912 Harley Granville-Barker revolutionized the staging of Shakespeare's plays by returning to the original texts and focusing on poetry and intimacy with the audience. He pushed the action out onto the apron in front of the proscenium arch to create a thrust stage similar to the Elizabethan theatre and reduced the number of cumbersome scene changes. He also required his actors to speak their lines quickly and naturally so a whole play could be performed in three hours without cuts. His 1914 production of *Dream* was his last Shakespeare and received mixed reviews for his impressionistic sets and stiff, dignified fairies covered in gold paint. Nevertheless it signaled a profound shift in the way Shakespeare would be performed in the twentieth century (Halio 33–36). Since then numerous productions have explored widely different aspects of the play as the focus became about interpretation rather than adaptation. In 1935 Max Reinhardt made a film in the sweeping, spectacular style of the nineteenth century and Tyrone Guthrie directed a gauzy, romantic version with ballet-dancing fairies in 1937. Peter Hall attempted in 1959 to recreate the original staging by setting the play in an English country house (Halio 46).

In the 1960's the approach to *Dream* changed once again, thanks in part to Jan Kott's book: *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, inviting new political and psychological interpretations to Shakespeare's work (Elsom 2). Psychoanalysis had been around for decades already, reminding us that our dreams hold special meaning for our lives and often reveal hidden desires. So in a play with 'Dream' in the title it was inevitable that people would see not just the gauzy fantasies but the dark and erotic desire of dreams as well. When the mortals connect with the fairy realm, the results can be terrifying. "Bottom's transformation is no longer merely a humourous interlude but a dream representing the fears and desires of both Bottom and Titania" (Hackett 51). Both are profoundly changed by the experience, though they cannot express why.

Peter Brook's 1970 *Dream* at the RSC embraced these ideas with an orgiastic energy, more celebratory than frightening as seen in the image of David Waller as Bottom being carried off to Titania's bower with an arm-sized erection (Hackett 53; appendix A).

Robert Lepage took this theory of unconscious desire even further in 1992 with a production playfully dubbed *A MUDsummer Night's Dream* (Halio 117). Building from Brook's idea of freeing the text from traditional staging he encouraged actors to bring in their own dreams and intuitions and let them play in mud and water on stage resulting in a metaphorical and very physical production (Hackett 53; Halio 118–122).

Sweet Bully Bottom

The name of Bottom might fancifully be supposed to refer to a person's backside (or ass), a play on words Shakespeare may not object to but was likely not his intent. A 'bottom' in

the weaving trade is the spool upon which yarn is wound (Sidgwick 29). Some have taken this reference to ball of wool justification for casting a corpulent actor in the part (Taylor 189). Yet it is very likely that William Kemp was the original Bottom. A legendary clown in *The Chamberlain's Men*, Kemp is described as small and spry. Another famous comedian Thomas Pope (who was not small or spry, and originated such roles as Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch) likely played Quince (Taylor 210–215). Kemp was as well known in his day as Shakespeare and Burbage, appearing among them at the top of the list of players in the bills for shows they performed (Chambers and Williams 172). In a pamphlet by Thomas Nashe in 1590 he was called: “vicegerent general to the ghost of Dick Tarlton” (qtd. in Schoenbaum 184). This is high praise indeed since Dick (Richard) Tarlton was one of the most celebrated clowns of the era (Kermode 56). Kemp was also known as a dancer, so when Bottom suggests to Theseus at the end of the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*: “Will it please you to see the Epilogue, or hear a Bergomask dance betweene two of our company?” (V.i.343-5)¹ It is possible that this was an excuse for Kemp to show off his skill. It is also a clear satire of the tradition of dancing at the end of every performance, even tragedies (Kermode 109-110).

Marion Taylor argues in her book *Bottom, Thou Art Translated* that the roles of Bottom and the mechanicals were based on a real life suitor to Queen Elizabeth, the French Duke of Alençon and his train (136). The possibility of the Queen taking a husband was cause

¹ All quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are taken from the First Folio edition: William Shakespeare, *A Midsommer Nights Dreame*, Edited by Neil Freeman. New York: Applause, 1998.

for much public debate across all strata of society in the late sixteenth century. Among the potential suitors she entertained, D'Alençon may have been the most ridiculous (see appendix A). He was small, unattractive and twenty-one years younger than the queen, but he made up for this with his courtly manners and confidence in wooing. He persisted in his efforts for over ten years. Evidently, she did fall for him and agreed to the marriage but changed her mind due to the strong objections of some of her advisors (Taylor 44–47). Londoners knew D'Alençon simply as “the Mounsieur” as attested by a ballad written about Elizabeth shortly after her death (Taylor 49). Even Elizabeth called him “Mounzeur” in the only love poem she is known to have written (Taylor 47). As Taylor points out, Bottom's use of the term “Mounsieur” eleven times in less than twenty lines (IV.i.7-25), in this unusual spelling, is compelling evidence for a possible reference to the Duke (Taylor 136-137). Also, with Titania identified by many scholars as a prototype of the Queen (Taylor 132), being ‘enamoured of an ass’ while under the spell of ‘love-in-idleness’ takes the identification with the failed suitor even further (Taylor 142).

The driving action of the grotesque plot in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the production of a play as part of the festivities surrounding the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta. The idea of a town's craftsmen putting on plays stems from the mystery play tradition in medieval times (“mystery” being another word for “craft”) popular at religious festivals throughout England. This practice was forcibly shut down in Shakespeare's youth as the new protestant Church sought to eliminate all of the old Catholic traditions (Kermode 16–18). In the late sixteenth century most of the audience likely recalled the performances of

these amateur thespians well. In modern terms, we may look to the performances of some amateur theatre groups to get a sense of the effect this satire may have had.

The Clown

In the stage directions of both the first quarto of 1600 and the First Folio text of 1623, Bottom is referred to as “Clown” or one of “The Clowns” (IV.i. & III.i.) In the late Elizabethan era it was a new development to have at least one actor in each company designated ‘The Clown’ to amuse audiences during interludes. The Chamberlain’s Men appeared to have two. Originally a *clown* referred to a “rustic who by virtue of his rusticity is naturally inferior and ridiculous.... The use of *clown* to refer to a kind of comic performer came marginally later, and may be traced back to Tarlton” (Wiles 61). As a performer, Will Kemp was arguably the most famous clown in England, known for his ‘jigs’, his dancing and his rapport with the audience (Wiles 34). Shakespeare was among the first to integrate the clown character into the plot of the show rather than merely sending the clown out to do his ‘shtick’ in the interludes. Within another ten years the role of the clown was so integrated and scripted that it was no longer desirable to have them improvise to get cheap laughs from the audience. Hamlet makes this clear in his advice to the players (III.ii.32-37). In the role of Bottom, Shakespeare appears to gently mock Kemp’s love for broad humour and farce by writing in frequent malapropisms and a tendency to go “off-book” (Hunt 226). Like Kemp, Bottom would prefer to work as a solo performer taking all the roles in *Pyramus and Thisbe* and leaving little for his fellow craftsmen (Wiles 33). Compared with other comedic roles in Shakespeare (such as

Falstaff and Feste) Bottom is more of a 'foolish wit' than a 'witty fool'. He is closer to the original definition of a clown as a rustic (perhaps oblivious to his rusticity) than the later definition of a comic performer. When Granville-Barker staged the play with an emphasis on using all the original text, he insisted that the comic scenes serve the 'poetic whole' of the play without the additional 'business' that most clowns were known for (Halio 36). The particular skills of the actor playing Bottom may also determine how the role is interpreted. Shakespeare's writing is flexible enough that one can call upon their own personality to bring humour and life to the role.

The Ass

In the last fifty years the image of the ass that Bottom is transformed into has become a centerpiece of many productions. In a quick Google™ search of promotional posters, about half featured an image of an ass-head of some sort. This may be due in part to Jan Kott's essay titled *Titania and the Ass's Head* in his book *Shakespeare our Contemporary*. He focused on the coupling of the ass with Titania as a particular key to the play. Kott argues that their encounter is indeed sexual, even suggestive of bestiality, based on a Renaissance idea that "the ass was credited with the strongest sexual potency among all quadrupeds and is supposed to have the longest and hardest phallus" (227). Also, in one of Shakespeare's possible sources, *The Golden Ass* by Lucius Apuleius; while trapped in the body of an ass the narrator is seduced in a similar fashion to Bottom:

There fortun'd to be amongst the Assembly a noble and rich Matron that conceived much delight to behold me, and could find no remedy to her passions and disordinate appetite, but continually desired to have her pleasure with me, as

Pasiphae had with a Bull... casting out these and like loving words: *Thou art he whom I love, thou art he whom I onely desire, without thee I cannot live*, and other like preamble of talke as women can use well enough, when as they mind to shew or declare their burning passions. (Apuleius 77)

The symbolism of the ass or donkey has had various meanings throughout history. In classical times the ass was associated with the revels of Dionysus. The sexual abandon of the celebrants led to donkeys being associated with lust or comical stupidity. In the Renaissance, a jester's cap was often fitted with donkey ears, epitomizing a satire of love (Werness 22). This may be the allusion Shakespeare intended with the identification of Bottom as the *clown*. It could also be a clue to his character even before he is translated. Modern psychoanalysts have noted the ancient idea of certain animal spirits living within man as a necessary acknowledgement for living a healthy psychic life (Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* 75). It seems natural therefore to investigate an animal body while working on a character. I will look further into animal work as an acting technique in the next section.

The Heart of Bottom: A Savage Imagination

Lovers and mad men have such seething braines,
 Such shaping phantasies, that apprehend more
 Then coole reason ever comprehends.
 The Lunaticke, the Lover, and the Poet,
 Are of imagination all compact. (V.i.4-8)

In these words Theseus derides not only lovers and lunatics but also poets. If Shakespeare is mocking himself in this he may also be challenging the actor to stand up for the power of the imagination as embodied by the lovers, the fairies and especially Bottom.

“We will meete, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and couragiously. Take paines, be perfect, adieu.” (I.ii.99-100). In these admonishing words to his fellow players we get an idea of how Bottom feels about rehearsal. It may be argued that ‘obscenely’ is one of Bottom’s many malapropisms. Perhaps he intended to say ‘seemly’ as a fashion appropriate for rehearsal, or possibly ‘obscurely’ in reference to the location. On the other hand, ‘obscenely’ may be exactly what he intended. Engaging the Savage Imagination requires an *obscene* amount of courage yet fills the actor and the play with possibilities hitherto unknown.

I need to begin by acknowledging the technical requirements of the role. Once I establish the container in which the play and character exist, I will give myself permission to improvise and explore the heart of Bottom physically, imaginatively and savagely. In answer to Theseus’ depreciatory comments earlier I intend, like Bottom, to “apprehend more / Then coole reason ever comprehends” (IV.i.6).

Adaptation: 'Every Man Looke Ore His Part'

In my preparation to perform this role, I am paying close attention to what is unique in this adaptation by director Alison Humphrey. There are several edits and additional scenes not found in the original. Two prologues have been added, highlighting the origin of the changeling boy that Titania steals from the Indian king, and Theseus' conquest of Hippolyta at the gates of an Amazon city. In this version, Hippolyta does not agree to the marriage although she does produce an heir for Theseus in Hippolytus.

The other major aspect of this production that makes it distinct will be the use of new technology to make many of the fantastical elements of the story come alive. As Bottom, this will affect me most when my head is transformed into that of an ass. Instead of wearing a literal ass-head, I will wear a head-cam that tracks my facial expressions and translates them onto the cartoon image of a donkey projected on a scrim in front of my face. I have spent a few days with the production team well ahead of rehearsals to get a sense of how this will feel. Using this new 'real-time' motion capture technology the donkey head becomes a virtual puppet, controlled by the movements of my face and head. Unlike a pre-recorded video projection, I will not be expected to replicate an identical performance from night to night. There is still an opportunity to physically engage my imagination, playing with my own human expression to see how it reads on a donkey. The limitations may include a signal delay from the camera to the projection, and the expressions on the face of the donkey may read differently than they do on my own. I am also attached to a computer by a long cable, limiting the distance I may travel on stage.

Improvisation: 'You May Doe it Extemporie'

Inspiration isn't intellectual...you don't have to be perfect (Johnstone 17).

In my research I studied improvisation in physical exploration, martial arts and comedic performance. Improvisation requires a certain amount of trust in the imagination. In life we use our senses to absorb as much information as we can about our environment, the pressures we face, our sense of time, and what we hope to achieve. As an actor playing a role, most of this information cannot be sensed but has to be imagined. However much an actor prepares for a role, "the actor's senses will never absorb as much in performance as the character does in the real situation" (Donnellan 8). This is a good thing though because the failure of an actor's senses to experience the world of the character is an opportunity for the imagination to run free.

One of the best ways to engage the imagination through improvisation is contained in the phrase: "Yes, and", encouraging us to accept everything suggested to us by our scene partners and the environment and *adding* to it. Initially, it may appear that Bottom does not listen or accept the suggestions of others. But in fact he is constantly adapting to the changes in his environment. In the first scene he 'improvises' his way into as many parts in the play as he can convince Quince to give him, auditioning as he goes. He assures his friends that he can roar as the lion as fearfully and as softly as he chooses depending on how he "aggravates" his voice (I.ii.66-78). The fact that Bottom does not question the addition of the ass-head reveals a perfect readiness to accept even the most fantastical circumstances as in the imperfect but clear logic of a dream. What he does not understand

is the unusual behavior of everyone else. Upon waking alone and back to himself once more he tries to recount his 'dream' saying, "me-thought I was, and me-thought I had" (IV.i.207). This implies he is aware that he was not his usual self in the dream but now he is only dimly conscious of it. Also, much of Bottoms' dialogue has the feel of improvised text—could this be because it was 'workshopped' with Kemp in early performances? Or perhaps Shakespeare had such a keen ear for 'clown logic' that he was able to write in a spontaneous voice. Either way, taking my cue from Bottom, choosing to have "an empty head and just watch" will allow me to stay with my imagined senses in the moment, helping me to play spontaneously (Johnstone 32). My challenge will be to carry this spontaneous spirit through rehearsals and into performances despite the fact that many of my choices will have to be 'set' at some point.

A New Technique: 'I Have Had a Dream'

Are you sure that we are awake? It seems to me that yet we sleep, we dream (VI.i.192-4). As I mentioned earlier, one place I have looked for the Savage Imagination is in the unconscious creativity and desires of dreams. When asleep, our unconscious uses symbols known to the conscious mind to tell stories. We receive these stories as if they came from outside ourselves, much like we do when we go to see a play. "A theatre is not only a literal place, but also a space where we dream together" (Donnellan 1). The idea that dreams may mean something beyond mere fantasy has existed for thousands of years. In ancient Greece it was believed that illness could be healed by listening to instructions given in a dream while sleeping at the temple of Aesculapius (Sonenberg 51). In her book

Dreamwork for Actors, Janet Sonenberg argues that “we exist within the universe of imagination” and “are ultimately *of* imagination” (26).

The link between imagination and dreams is mainly an unconscious one. As Sonenberg writes: “The world of imagination is comprised of the reflexive, the constructive, and the autonomous imaginations” (2). Because “the autonomous imagination is distinguished by its nonvolitional nature” (Sonenberg 3), it is the place where dreams find their voice. The information it gives is independent, generative and “recognizable though not necessarily immediately understandable” (Sonenberg 3–4). The autonomous imagination is often non-linear and more symbolic than literal. As an actor, this means developing more trust in my creativity. I have to resist my habit of picking apart and analyzing my ideas before experimenting with them. In other words I have to bypass my usual intellectual filter that judges and gauges ideas before I have a chance to experiment with them. Donnellan calls this filter the “rogue eye”, a harsh critic, disembodied and watching me with an ever-updated progress report on ‘how I’m doing’ (39).

Dreams and visions figure strongly in the story (not to mention the title) of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. There is a kind of collective dream taking place in the play, not just for the lovers or Bottom, but the audience as well. In the epilogue Puck encourages us to imagine we “have but slumbered here / While these visions did appear” (V.i.415-416). This is an ideal opportunity to use my own dreams to address my artistic challenge and prepare to embody my character. My dreams are often far more vivid and wildly inventive than I am in my conscious creative work. According to Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious,

the archetypes or primordial images we meet in our dreams are symbols carried down from mythology (Jung, *The Portable Jung* 39). Therefore the results of dreamwork can be both personal and essentially universal at the same time. Using Sonenberg's book as a guide, I plan to incubate dreams with images from the play and take the resulting dreams as a creative springboard to my actor work. I will start by choosing compelling images from certain scenes, playing with them in a studio to find where they live in my body, locating that 'feeling' image in my mind's eye and then asking myself: "what do I see?" The practice of rehearsing embodied images like these right before going to bed has shown some positive results in producing an 'incubated dream' (Sonenberg 63). The dreams I have when my mind is presented with these images may offer ideas and inspiration that would not otherwise occur to me.

Preparation: 'We Will Rehearse'

The dreamwork is not intended to replace normal, constructive script analysis and character preparation. Rather it is intended to be a deepening of the work that is already part of my acting methodology. In my first term acting class, Professor Paul Lampert introduced us to a list of twenty-six questions to ask when building a character (appendix B). Even if some answers change through the exploration process, this serves as a great base to establish the container, so I am never stuck 'not knowing who I am' (Donnellan 75). The use of David Rotenberg's drivers (What drives the character to behave this way?), states of being (What is the emotional state of the character?) and modifiers (What is the iconic relationship of the scene?) as taught to me by Melee Hutton are also very

useful in creating the landscape for a character to 'sit' in. This is a practical way to build a container that the Savage Imagination can live in and move through (see appendix C).

In the last two years I have re-learned the importance of including release and relaxation exercises in my pre-show warmup routine. The vocal warmups taught by Professor David Smukler help release breath by opening the pelvis and ribcage and waking up facial resonators. These are crucial to help me fill the big space of the Faire Fecan Theatre. The physical warmups that Professor Erika Batdorf and Professor Gwen Dobie's taught also help me find flexibility in my spine, joints and muscles. In addition to these I will be experimenting with "ego preparations" as described by Eric Morris in his book *Irreverent Acting*. Morris believes that a healthy ego is the most important ingredient in an artist (71). Playing Bottom will require an inflated ego, which is not something I generally have in my everyday life. Deciding which ego preparations to do involves asking questions related to the needs of the character such as: "What is the ego-state? How does [he] feel about himself... generally? [I]n this world? [I]n this scene?" (Morris 72). Some of the ego preparations include the "Superman", "Accepting the Academy Award" and "Fantasies and Self-Aggrandizements" (Morris 72-76). These engage the imagination and fill the mind and breath with ideas of grandeur. They are also designed to help put me into a 'right-handed' state of being. (In David Rotenburg acting lingo this refers to the positive side of an emotional state that I believe will be useful in this comedic role.) By committing to these preparations physically and emotionally, I hope to put myself into an 'ego-state' synonymous with Bottom. I will explore this more in rehearsal.

Animal Work: 'Let Mee Play the Lyon Too'

Another avenue Morris encourages exploring in *Irreverent Acting* is what he calls:

“Animal work”. He describes this as an “external choice approach” in which he suggests translating the ‘spine’ of an animal into the character’s behaviour to “pique unconscious responses... from the primitive parts of ourselves” (Morris 190). My acting teachers at York have noted my tendency to work more bravely and imaginatively using external approaches. Doing mask work with Paul Lampert, I felt a freedom to risk more and make bigger choices. The ‘spine and feet’ and broad gestures of the character body work with Erica Batdorf yielded similar feedback. In one exercise we had to integrate new animal bodies into character bodies we had already developed. I had the spine, feet and particular gestures of the character already, then I found that an animal began to suggest itself.

Rather than making the obvious choice to study donkeys for Bottom’s animal body, I will use Batdorf’s method of starting with the spine and feet, incorporating some physical and vocal gestures before attaching them to an animal or the text so that I may open myself to a more ‘inspired’ choice. Using the dream work, after incubating selected images from the play, my unconscious may offer up some interesting choices. In an early experiment, using images suggested by a monologue I have been working on from *The Maids’*

Tragedy by Beaumont and Fletcher, I had a very interesting and revealing dream:

I am at the family farm in a pasture where I find myself befriending a young bull moose. I fed him from my hand and talked to him with the impression that he understood me perfectly. I was trying to teach him to jump over the fence like the deer did. He was awkward though, like an adolescent moose and didn’t know how to lift his legs so high. I rode on his back and coached him, helping him to believe in himself. On a final attempt he managed to clear the top rail of the fence with his

front legs but came crashing down on his pelvis, trapping his back legs on the other side. I could feel the pain in my pelvis and I slid sideways off his back. He seemed angry with me for making him try what he couldn't achieve.

My character in the monologue of a scorned and frustrated lover is also somewhat like a (masculine) moose trapped by his sense of indignation and jealousy of the (feminine) deer. Beyond just referring to this monologue, upon waking I had the distinct feeling that this dream might be giving me clues about Bottom as well. The moose in particular seems to have a personality that I can readily identify as Bottom. Proud and graceful but also gangly and awkward, certainly not comfortable with being fenced in. Perhaps a little frightened too while trying not to show it (see appendix A). As Sonenberg advises, I do not want to analyze the dream too much by defining the meaning of the symbols too clearly or I might lose the richness of its images. The idea is to take the symbolic potential of these impulses as a signal from the unconscious and ground it in my body (35). Engaging the animal body and, to a certain extent, seeing through an animal mind is a reliable way to access the unconscious imagination within a consciously imposed structure. In alchemy, transformation is only possible when the container the elements are mixed in is sturdy enough to handle the forces of heat and pressure imposed on them (Sonenberg 77). A strong technique coupled with this process opens new possibilities for nuances of the character to be discovered without tearing the foundation from under his feet. Following impulses both conscious and unconscious, while having faith in the strength of the container, is key to creating the opportunity to delve deeply into the imagination. This can only enrich my acting work as a result.

Journal Entries

Oct. 30, 2012

First read-thru. This is a huge cast for this show. 21 actors in total! My goal for this has been to play and be loose during the read. Stay open to new impulses and rule out nothing when it comes to interpretation. I've had some time to think about the role already and get acquainted with this version of the text.

The humour seems to read pretty well right off the page. I guess Shakespeare knew what he was doing. I don't feel like I'm 'trying' to be funny, but I am treating the role like a bouncy castle to jump around in. I think this'll be fun!

Nov. 1, 2012 - Head-cam tryout

Tried the proposed donkeyhead apparatus on for the first time today. Pascal Langois is the guy who seems to be the expert in the field of facial motion capture. He recorded some samples of me making various facial expressions and speech samples to establish a face print that can be saved and tracked for use with any future avatars. In other words, his computer now 'knows my face', and can track my expressions smoothly in real time. They are prerecording major emotional expressions to help speed up the computers processing time, so it can 'guess' how to translate what I'm feeling into the avater (in this case an ass-head). Pascal has assured me that I will still be able to perform naturally without having to manipulate my face artificially. This is a relief since I generally find exact replication of performance to be difficult, even though I know it's a useful skill especially in the context of film.

It seems this is the 'prestige' effect of the tech in this show, so there are a lot of people involved in making it. No pressure! My job is to understand it well enough that the audience will buy into the illusion (which may actually be more real than it appears) while still performing freely and irreverently.

Dec. 4, 2012

In the FFT this week to get an early look at some of technology we'll be using. I felt some fatigue in the morning so I started with a good warmup. That will be essential in this show, especially with the number of things I'll be negotiating in terms of costume and technology on top of my lines and the character demands. Neck tension is a factor to consider with the size and weight of the headcam. I have to stay released in spite of this.

I'm enjoying the attention of being the guinea pig for this technology. This is a good opportunity to be a part of a new development in animation that might be an avenue for future work. Pascal (from Motives in Movement) is demonstrating the facial capture technology for some film students. I notice that when he looks over the top of the camera it gives a strong impression of looking skywards. I might need to be aware of where my gaze is in relation to the camera in order to control where the donkey seems to be looking.

It's nice to know that so many people are invested in making this idea work. I don't feel as though I'm creating this entirely on my own. I think this might help me get out of my own head and become less private in my process. Or maybe I have to cancel the idea of 'process' period. At least I will have to stay flexible enough to endure any unhelpful acting advice and learn how to work creatively within the bounds of this technology.

Jan. 30, 2013

Worked with setting up the head-cam at a digital media studio (SIRT) located within Pinewood Studios. I got to see the rough-cast of the Donkey head. It's amazing how many people it takes to make this effect come to life. Far more than a mechanical prop would take. There's still a lot of uncertainty around whether it will work or not. We still don't have a live example. Should I be worried?

Feb. 3, 2013

Going into the rehearsals I feel a bit apprehensive about my process. I feel like I'm losing confidence. Maybe I'm putting too much pressure on myself. Or maybe I've been looking for encouragement in my life outside work and haven't found it so that could be affecting me. A sad clown (or an angry one?) Maybe this can be useful. Bottom may seem ultra-confident in his abilities because he actually has none. The most inflexible and insecure actor ever. Maybe Bottom also has a deep mistrust in women, misogynistic. Our acting company has 3 women and 3 men, Bottom may need to assert his dominance over the female director. Then maybe it takes a magical fairy queen to make him see the light and appreciate the power of the feminine. And Love! Maybe Bottom's never been in love before? And he's loved in spite of looking like an ass, when the animal in him is revealed he finally sees the inner world. Maybe this experience can inspire him to be a better team player. Maybe women aren't so bad after all.

Bottom's Dream (in this reading) becomes self-reflective on change. How does this affect my relationship with Quince? What does the dream signify, if I could expound it? I have been an ass. But I have also been loved. A woman (or a feminine power) has revealed that

to me. Now I have another chance to be a better man, a better friend, perhaps even a better lover. This interpretation may be unique to the casting in this production, but it's a good opportunity nonetheless.

February 12, 2013

I am not called in to rehearse today, but I'd better work on my own some. I have to confess I don't feel as focussed on this play and this character work as I think I should be or even as I usually am. Life goes on outside the rehearsals and sometimes it can be distracting. Can I set personal issues aside? Can I overcome the sense of self-doubt I have had lately because of it? Or will I be able to use these things to inform my character? It's like falling in love and feeling rejected at the same time, this could be an interesting choice to play with for Bottom.

My excitement about playing with dreams has waned, I haven't had many revealing dreams lately. I need to make sure I take time to work physically today. What do I want to do? - Focus on lines for an hour or so. - Then spend 2 hours on emblems and gestures.

Revisit: Mask (what & how?). Tree (seedling to adulthood). Weapon.

Try out: Look over the shoulder (what do you see?). Dread Death. Want out of life? Time when most humiliated. Creature (maybe?).

Want out of life - "I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me".

- Junkyard dog, feet wide, knees bent, arms round, motion into a full body flex.
Quick side steps with arms pumping in same motion.

Look over shoulder – I see love, wonder. "And yet to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays".

- Upper arms flap against side once, elbows bent at shoulder height, head angled like Popeye, press hands forward, grasp and pull in.

Dread Death – *gibberish, lips loose, jaw flopping around*

- Jumpy, heels of hands press down, feet stiff, chills down spine, eyes wide.
- Feeling of suddenly seeing snakes all around you on the floor.

Time when most humiliated - “Heigh ho! Petra Quince!”

- hips bent at pelvis, tucked under, left hand grabbing at pant leg and pulling up slow and deliberate.
- Like a little boy lost in a big mall.

Two hours of work has yielded four emblems. Some of them are very interesting in terms of adding to the character. Animal images are beginning to appear within the gestures. I feel like the emblem is just a title for the gesture. They don't necessarily describe it accurately, but this is not an exercise in being accurate. My goal is to be invested in the action and satisfied with the exploration. This is technically called 'river work' or 'impulse work', but I put it in the category of 'structured free-play', similar to the way I began creating my solo show.

The states of being for Bottom tend to be primarily right-handed. Even my Dread Death emblem has a comical energy to it. This is probably fine for now. Eventually I'd like to drop in some left-handed primaries in some moments. At this point I want to see how 'big' I can go while retaining a sense of truth in the character.

February 15, 2013

Feeling a bit low today, as I have lately. It's becoming essential to do some self-affirming ego exercises before any real rehearsal can happen. I have been practicing internal monologues to make me feel better about my ability to fulfill this role. It requires more

confidence and gumption than I have had lately. By the time we open I had better have this figured out.

Staged/re-staged Pyramus and Thisbe. My Savage Imagination feels dormant. Is it fatigue? Lack of sleep? Focus? Never mind. Be irreverent. Do it wrong. Have fun with it!

Act1 sc. 2 – Frustrating! Am I the only one who prepped anything for this? No one else seems to be bringing any ideas to the table.

Stumblethrough – Well we seem to be in surprisingly good shape with this show after all. I was worried about the lack of creative inspiration I was feeling in rehearsal so far. But the show already looks near complete based on the run. My scenes still feel loose and I hope to be able to continue bringing new ideas in. I made a choice to be very indignant over the script at 'first rehearsal' as a ploy to keep control over the 'show'. This created some good conflict. My animal work still needs fine tuning. I need to find a donkey voice. I've discovered Uncle Rogers' laugh to be a good place to start. Overall, most people were off-book already and I feel like the show is in a good place heading into reading week.

February 22, 2013

Today I experimented with preparing incubated images for dreamwork. I want to work on 'Bottom's Dream'. It's a major turning point for me and I don't quite know what I'm doing there yet. What's the struggle? What's the fear or wonder?

First I will create the place: A Forest. Dark, green, mysterious, moist and cool. It's pulsating with shimmers of energy. Feminine.

Where do I feel this? It stirs my gut and arouses my sexual excitement. Naked. Clean.

What do I smell? There's a mist hanging in the air. It smells fresh and close, pungent. I smell the dark soft earth.

What do I hear? Sounds of scratching, coos, echoes, morning birds, owls? Breathing?

Am I alone? Or am I surrounded?

Before bed, I ran these images through my mind. Walking through the imaginary landscape and sensing the feelings in my body. I walked around with them and then ran through the three questions again while lying down.

This is the dream I had:

I'm at a family picnic somewhere with a bunch of cousins. People are watching me with curiosity, expecting me to do something. Am I performing something? There are animals attaching themselves to me. Little monkeys keep latching on to my legs and arms. Also there are snakes wrapping around my chest and neck. I try to ignore them but they are cumbersome. I try to shake them off, but don't want to be cruel. My family is sympathetic but offers no help. I feel more and more controlled by the animals and less connected to people.

Then I'm at the family farm. I've brought a girl home to meet everyone. It's pouring rain on the south lawn but it's not soaking in, the grass is like cement. I watch the water run off the southwest corner and wonder when it'll be dry.

We are watching something like the Oscars on TV. My brother and sister as well as the girl I brought are there. She wants to fool around, as do I. The others watch us without comment. I say we should be careful and respectful since we're not alone. She gets annoyed. I get a text message from her asking me what a man is actually allowed to do. The tone is exasperated but not angry. I've let her down. I don't know the answer and I feel helpless and trapped.

The most powerful images in this dream for me are:

1. The animals clinging to me, controlling me. I feel it in my limbs and head.

2. The sensuality and excitement of being with the new girlfriend.
3. The trapped feeling in my gut, my sense of propriety at war with my desire.
4. The grass like cement juxtaposing natural and man-made materials. Also, the (feminine) earth unwilling or unable to receive the rain from the (masculine) sky.

I see immediately that this can apply to Bottom's Dream. Being overwhelmed by non-human energy. Snakes are seductively feminine and monkeys are mischievously childish/playful. Titania seduces me and I feel out of my depth. The other fairies are watching. I would rather be alone with her. The helpless and trapped feeling is similar to waking up in a strange place, alone and not knowing where to go.

Mar. 1, 2013

What's going on in the 'Play Casting' scene? What's my real relationship with Quince? I think I need to acknowledge her more. What do I need from her? Assurance. Approval. I need to build her up so she can build me up. Alison wants me to 'swing right' more here. So far I've been playing the petulant 'Star' actor, but this doesn't allow me to connect with the others in the scene as much. Maybe if I was the benevolent star who does everyone a favour by agreeing to be in the show, I could encourage them to feel good about the show. Treat them like my little cousins or my 1520 class that relies on my expertise to teach them about acting. This could be useful in the 'Rehearsal scene' as well.

Played in studio with some of the images from my incubated dream while on a break today. Somehow I got the idea to try layering in a New York accent and some of the Orangutan character body from last years' movement class. Some of the emblems and

vocal choices felt more natural in this body. I need to feel how Bottom relaxes, how comfortable in his skin he is. I put some of this into the scene when we ran it. No one commented on the choice. Maybe they're just used to seeing me do crazy shit now.

This reminds me of what Melee said about some actors working more bravely and freely when they drop in an accent. I have to make it feel authentic still. It may not stick, but I want to keep playing like this for a while.

Mar 23 – Opening Night

We have finally arrived! I don't know when I have ever had this long of a lead up to an opening other than in community theatre. But of course here it's a full time thing. During the day leading up to showtime I felt like I didn't have anything to do, though I was called for a short rehearsal in the afternoon. It started to make me anxious. Was I forgetting something? I've been so busy lately, not having a list in front of me of things that need to be done now was strange. I focused on eating well and mentally resting and staying positive. On a personal note, I got some news in the afternoon right before rehearsal that was a let down. It was an unintentional and poorly timed blow to my self-esteem. I felt myself drifting into negativity as I realized how vulnerable I truly was. My challenge now was to keep this negativity from affecting my performance. Oddly enough it helped keep me from getting anxious about the show. But I knew I was raw and swinging left on the inside, which isn't useful for Bottom. In my warmup I tried to simply release and let myself feel these things with the hope they would pass through me. I focused on opening my throat and my ribs, vibrating in my face. These parts felt good, but I still needed to

add in some irreverence. I needed to get swinging right again. I retreated from conversation with others and put in my headphones. Listening to Buck 65 feels like a reliable way to loosen and ground me. I don't have any feelings or personal histories attached to his music so I can really just be with it in the moment. It's intelligent, independent and irreverent. I've never been a 'headphone music guy' before a show but that might be what it takes to quiet my own thoughts. Especially when my head is full of self-doubt and rejection.

How did it go?

Tonight was a clean show. A lot of marks were hit that have been missed before. The donkeyhead worked better than it ever has. I almost enjoyed inhabiting it for the first time! The audience was less excited than they were last night and I felt the impulse to push more to inject some energy into the scenes. I recognized this though and reminded myself that I wasn't the expert on the audience experience. In the end, we got through it. What did I feel though? Not elation. Not satisfaction. What was missing? Was I unable to overcome my own personal distraction? I tried to use whatever feelings I couldn't ignore as Bottom when they fit the scene. The Dream was one of these moments. I tried to swing it right though. Bottom doesn't wallow in despair the way I do. I think the thing that lacked somewhat tonight was just the thing I started this journey looking for. The Savage Imagination. Where was it? Did I retreat to playing it safe because I was afraid of where it might go? I rehearsed the show with savage imagination, so the choices I made in this spirit have helped put the character in the field. But I think I could have done a better job

of breathing it in the moment. There could be more danger. Alison doesn't seem to like it when I play unsafe like this, but I'm sure it's the thing the show needs to carry it over the threshold of being merely good into great.

March 28, 2013 - Closing

Dead tired after the matinee. I made sure to lie down for an hour and ate early. Not sure where I would get energy for tonight, I drank a coffee, I had a headache too. Things were looking bleak around 5:00.

The vocal warmup helped with my headache, some energy came back too. Not only that but I found a sense of fun and excitement had entered the room. I started to hope for good things again. I did some gentle cardio to get my blood moving, this helped too. Now I just needed that focussed irreverence that would bring life to the moment and the experience.

I was afraid to hope for too much tonight. Maybe there's something about closing night that lifts a performance up. Is it the realization that we'll never have a chance to do it again? Or maybe it is the supportive crowd of friends and family? I finally found some fun and freedom in the role that was lacking in some of the other shows. I prepared much the same as I did in the minutes before the show began. I was more nervous this time though. My family and some friends were here and I was anxious to do well for them. I consciously tried to stay loose, doing an ego pep talk before going on. Instead of really feeling like Bottom off stage before my first entrance, I felt the wonder and anticipation of knowing it might be totally new tonight. And it was! The play casting scene exploded with excitement. It hasn't worked this well since our preview. I think I owe this to a return

to the sense of mischievousness that pervaded my creation of Bottom in rehearsals. And I'm embarrassed to admit that I had to do this to discover a stronger desire to play the objective of working the casting to my own advantage which was way more fun than playing the 'attitude' of fun and hoping for laughs. A bad habit I fell into on some nights.

I wonder how different I actually was night to night from the audience's perspective? I felt a lot different from one show to another. But I always felt like I was listening and fighting for something. Did I really risk failure? Maybe I could have done so more, knowing that accessing the Savage Imagination involves an element of risk. Because my research was so heavily based on the unconscious, I wonder if I am blocking my own awareness of my actions?

Conclusion

Choosing the Savage Imagination as a research topic to address my artistic challenge has been a fascinating and transforming journey. I set out to work on my confidence and creativity, to enjoy the work more and let go of my fears and anxieties. I do not think I could have picked a better role to work on this than Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Even though he is rustic (and perhaps unaware of his rusticity) he is unconcerned with what others think of him and never has a doubt about his own abilities.

Attempting to harness the invisible and indefinable power of the Savage Imagination may be a fool's errand. Deeply rooted in the unconscious, finding specific ideas or images to work with can be haphazard at best and near impossible to control. It is this desire for control that I have been learning to let go of. "We cannot control reality [...] the illusion of control is deeply reassuring. And the price we pay for this reassurance is unimaginable" (Donnellan 41). So perhaps 'harnessing' is the wrong verb to use with the Savage Imagination. I can stimulate it or engage it, but I can never harness it or control it. To do so would be prescriptive and an example of 'end-gaining'. Letting go of control is difficult, especially when so much of my work relies on my ability to repeat a performance night after night. An active way I have found to do this involves practicing an attitude that allows room for unconscious processes to take on a life of their own. As Robert Avens says in *Imagination is Reality*:

Most people are ignorant of this art of letting things happen, of action in non-action, letting go of oneself, because consciousness is forever interfering, correcting and negating and never leaving the simple growth of psychic

processes alone. [...] It is an art of being fully attentive and at the same time fully relaxed – one of the hardest possible things for modern man (37, 39).

Warming Up

In the past I focussed my warmups mainly on physical and vocal preparation. Freeing the breath and letting go of unnecessary tension in the body have been reliable ways to get into character. This time I added in the 'ego preparations' and 'irreverent warmups' inspired by Eric Morris' ideas in *Irreverent Acting*. “An actor reaches a state of BEING through irreverence, which leads to Ultimate Consciousness! That is the state of complete connection with the unconscious flow of life” (Morris 242). I wanted to get into Bottoms' ego, his habitual state of being. I have a tendency to carry events of my day with me into runs and performances. Or I go into 'auto pilot' mode and lose connection with both myself and the play. This was especially challenging for the run of this show because I was feeling exhausted by anxiety and stress at the end of a long process and an intensive program. The mindset I decided on for the character was one of anticipation mixed with cockiness. Some nights I managed this better than others. I discovered the best time to do ego preparations was either before rehearsal began or within ten minutes of showtime. Once I was in costume and physically prepared, getting my imagination ready to play became a priority. I found it necessary to be alone for a few minutes to do this. As Morris says: “[t]he irreverent actor is a selfish animal who must work for his own benefit” (242). I admit I was not always the responsible actor backstage: dancing around with headphones on, sometimes joking with the dressers, I probably seemed less focussed than I should have been. But this definitely helped abate any anxiety I had about my abilities

and I was able to walk onstage with confidence. The results of this warmup preparation were not consistent, sometimes I needed more or less warmup time depending on how I was feeling that day. Nevertheless, the act of attending to my ego-state provided me with a touchstone that I will definitely carry forward in my future roles.

Dreamwork

Incubating dreams in the rehearsal process was part of the new technique in character exploration I wanted to experiment with in this show. It worked best for me in 'Bottom's Dream' (IV.i.). Using the images of my own dream (recorded in my Feb 22 journal entry) to personalize and deepen my association to the content of the monologue, I discovered some unique ideas to work with. As Bottom, I realized how separate my masculine and feminine natures were. Experiencing the force of Titania's love and acknowledging the transformative nature of the experience also became major keys to the character.

The idea behind using incubated dreams in rehearsals is to “place the actor, the character, and the world of the play in the same sphere” (Sonnenberg 185). Translating my dream life on stage felt intensely personal and revealing. The end result may have had little to do with the actual dream I experienced, but it is impossible to know whether I would have made the discoveries I did without it. I believe this is an example of the “invisible work” that Declan Donnellan talks about in *The Actor and the Target*:

[N]othing should ever be 'made clear' and particularly nothing in the invisible work. [...] The invisible work manifests itself by grace, where it will, and when it will. Any attempt to control it by showing its workings, any attempt to expose it in public, and the invisible vanishes (94).

It seems to me that dreamwork might be most effective where substitution or 'key and transfer' falls short. If an actor simply cannot identify with their character in a particular moment, embodying the images from the scene and dreaming about them might open a whole new world of possibilities. I also find that substitution can sometimes take me out of the moment in the play. If I am thinking too much about recreating the feeling of an old memory, then I am not fully present and available in the scene. Dreamwork has the ability to take me directly into the imagined life of the character in a personal way that does not feel affected or 'put on' in any way.

Working with Technology

One of the biggest features of this production was the use of new and innovative technology. Since much of it had not been used in theatrical productions before, there was a lot of stumbling over how to implement it without it getting in the way of the show. On the whole this was not as successful as had been hoped. There are still a lot of bugs to work out. My experience with the animated donkey head was novel, but I failed to find freedom within it as I had hoped. Despite the early start we had on it and the number of people working on the effect, there were still kinks being worked out on opening day. Out of the seven performances, only three featured a fully functioning animated donkey head as planned. Often at least one thing would go wrong with it. Either the rotation tracking, or the facial capture would get glitchy or crash just before going on stage. I was aware of this as an actor and felt the need to compensate for it and justify what the image was doing rather than just playing the scene truthfully. It became very difficult to connect with

Titania and the fairies. As a result, some of the most sublime moments in the show were lost because we as actors were being upstaged by an ass-head frozen in space with his mouth hanging open. On the whole this became the most frustrating part of the show for me. I found enjoyment and relief in taking the apparatus off, in character, on stage. Revealing the unplugged cable as part of Bottom's Dream felt like a great release, I was finally shaking off the restriction and finding true freedom. This synchronized with Bottom's journey back into embracing life and appreciating his fellow actors, lifting them all into giving the best performance of their lives in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Animal Work

In my preparation work, I outlined a plan to build a character body for Bottom using an animal as a guide. I spent some time researching and playing in studio to find my 'moose', the animal image that came to me in a dream. Some of our early rehearsals were devoted to 'river work' as led by our voice coach Lopa Sircar. Through this process we developed 'emblems' that informed our gestures and character bodies. The animal work I had already been doing likely informed some of my emblems unconsciously. Later in rehearsals the use of big, external physical choices was curbed and a lot of emblem work got muted. I still found use for mine in warmups. I would run my emblems while finding the feet and spine of my 'moose', which had to be adapted somewhat when I started rehearsing with my costume boots which featured a two-inch heel!

The animal work I did for Bottom also became part of the invisible work on the character, not intended to be obvious on stage but valuable for the background information it

provided. I found working on an animal body closely tied to working with dream images. Using symbols generated by the collective unconscious or our 'psychic instinct' we (like animals) intrinsically adopt certain patterns of behaviour (Van den Berk 51). In other words, I was able to connect with an animal body through my own unconscious, or 'animal mind'.

Improvising in Shakespeare

While rehearsing for the previous Theatre @ York show (*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*), I was encouraged to improvise text and blocking freely. The director (Timothy Askew) wanted to retain a feel of immediacy in the meta-theatricality of the show. The sense of irreverent play that I found doing this strongly influenced my approach to rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Even though the process was far different and we were continually reminded to "use the words" to convey an impulse rather than adding sounds or pauses not explicitly written in.

I wanted to use my time in rehearsal to explore and make new offers nearly every day. I allowed myself to go as big as I could with an idea, and in the early stages I tried to never repeat myself. I used to worry that this approach would make me 'difficult' or 'unreliable' as an actor. But now I felt empowered to challenge my fellow actors and maybe even keep stage management on their toes, wondering what I was going to do next. As I discovered in my summer improv class, I was much more comfortable making offers than receiving them. "An offer is anything that an actor does [...] A block is anything that prevents an action from developing" (Johnstone 97). If I felt like my fellow actors were

“blocking” my offer or not giving me a strong response, I kept trying to push my idea forward. In doing this I was also guilty of blocking whatever was being offered to me, even if it was subtle or indifferent to the offer I had just made. I could have benefitted from my own earlier discovery that I work more creatively when I wait for the offer to come than when I impose my own ideas on everyone else. Part of this was a character choice. My Bottom was not the type to wait around for an offer. He rarely asked for permission to do anything, he acted without thinking and generally assumed that his ideas were the best. To a certain degree I maintained these characteristics throughout, even on breaks and after rehearsals I was playfully uncooperative and full of myself.

Although this rehearsal process had a different sense of freedom than my previous experience, I discovered that it is possible to maintain a spirit of improvisation even when it is not being specifically encouraged. Respecting my own needs as an actor as much as any instructions I was given to fulfill a concept, I carved out a place for my own imaginative work to take place. As long as I satisfied the physical demands of the show, I found I was able to keep my mind open and access a more indomitable, intrepid and valiant creativity.

Imagining a Way Forward

While I was in this process, I had no idea whether the work was any good or not. 'Good acting' was never really my goal. I was genuinely surprised to receive compliments on what I was doing since I had no idea what was specifically 'good' about it. Nor did I want to know. This is part of what I felt was successful about this new process. I have learned

that there must always remain an element of mystery in the actor's process that is unknown even to himself. Trying to find a conscious way to always be 'good' in improvisation is a sure way to kill it. By putting my focus on finding a sense of play and being irreverent in it, I was able to bypass the intellectual evaluation process or the “rogue eye” as Declan Donnellan calls it (39).

I had some problems later on in rehearsals when my desire to not repeat myself caused some difficulty in justifying the set blocking. I was still experimenting with ideas and found it difficult to repeat a physical choice without checking myself to inhibit another impulse. I did not always feel I knew the reason for doing what I was doing or standing where I was standing, except that it was convenient for the stage picture. If I had spent more time exploring one choice I may have been able to justify it more, going deeper into my reasons for it rather than merely jumping to a new idea as soon as I could.

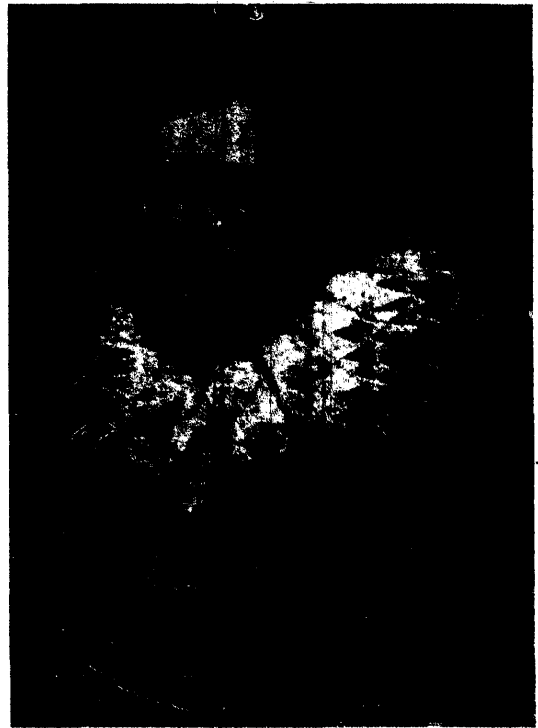
If I ask how my personal approach to acting has been altered by this experience, I would say the most radical shift is in my attitude. I also have some new terminology, a better arsenal of tools and greater faith in my ability to use them than I had when I began. The two most important ideas that have come forward in engaging my Savage Imagination are:

1. Having faith in the invisible work.
2. Encouraging irreverence in play.

I used to approach acting with the idea that only those things that were readable to the audience were of any importance. I treated clarity and transparency of objective as the most important things to reveal. My work was fine with this approach, but there was nothing special about it, nor was I able to put my own stamp on the character. I saw myself as a pawn to be manipulated into a character by the playwright and the director. I was afraid of judgement or being seen as a fraud because my acting revealed a lack of talent or imagination. Keith Johnstone claims there are three things to realize:

“1) that we struggle against our imaginations, especially when we try to be imaginative; 2) that we are not responsible for the content of our imaginations; and 3) that we are not, as we are taught to think, our 'personalities', but that the imagination is our true self” (105).

By asserting myself more and allowing some irreverence into my sense of play, I discovered that I could take more ownership of the role. The positive qualities I had before were still there. I no longer needed to worry or think about them. My confidence and sense of enjoyment in acting has grown. I also feel less fear of judgement when I engage my Savage Imagination. I know that I am tapping into something bigger than talent or conscious preparation. It is as if it is not 'me' doing it *per se*, the Savage Imagination frees me to truly become the character. It still originates from my self, but not in a consciously deliberate way, so I do not feel as though I have to make excuses or apologize for it. I know I have much more to discover in applying these ideas to my work. Engaging my Savage Imagination is an exciting journey that invites me into a lifetime of exploration, application and practice.



Clockwise from top left: David Waller as Bottom in 1970: photo by David Farrell, a portrait of the Duke of Alençon: Getty Images, a young bull moose: photo by Sam Abell.

1. How old am I? - *Mid 30's - early 40's*
2. Ancestors? - *Mostly dead.*
3. Stock/Class? - *Working class*
4. Breeding (religion?) - *Old faith, probably Catholic but only nominally so*
5. Position trained for? - *Weaver*
6. What am I like physically? - *Wiry and thin, strong arms for weaving*
7. What am I like mentally? - *Linear, not deep*
8. My strengths? - *Performing for crowds, solving their problems*
9. My weaknesses? - *Women, flattery.*
10. a) What do others think of me? - *I am bossy but also rarely talented*
 b) Do I know? - *No, except about the talent*
 c) How does it affect me? - *I am always trying to impress others*
11. a) What way do I speak? - *Declamatory, obtusely*
 b) What way do I listen? - *Hardly at all*
12. My physiological quirks? - *I need to be doing something all the time, never idle*
13. Personal patterns of life? A Typical day? - *I eat breakfast and lunch in the main square, I converse with others in the market, I make sure to make the rounds of the other members of the actors guild.*
14. What is my emotional range? - *I prefer tyrannical parts, high drama. I avoid emotional encounters.*
15. Basic action? (main objective expressed as a verb) – *To elevate*
16. Moment by moment action expressed as a verb? - *To impress*
17. Where am I going? - *From the market to the palace, via the forest.*
18. Where am I coming from? - *The country and the working class neighbourhood*
19. a) Who am I talking to? - *Petra Quince and the other tradespeople of town*
 b) Relationship? - *We are acquaintances through the market and the acting guild*
20. a) What do I expect of them? - *Praise and affirmation of my talents*
 b) How do I get it? - *I remind them persistently of how skilled I am*
 c) Do they come through? - *Usually, unless they challenge my authority.*
 d) If not, then what? - *I threaten to abandon the project.*
21. Physical preoccupation? - *My hair and my physique*
22. What happens physically to affect action? - *My head is transformed into a donkey frightening them away and abandoning me in the forest.*
23. What has happened before? - *I have been abandoned by lovers in the past.*
24. What is about to happen? - *A fairy queen will fall in love with me*
25. Do I know that? - *No.*
26. a) How much information do I have? - *A fair amount, much can be inferred.*
 b) Am I able to use it? - *Yes, absolutely!*

Scene	Driver(s)	State of Being and (opposite)	Objective	Action/Tactics	Image(s)/ Icons
Act 1 sc. 2 'Play casting'	I behave this way for fear that no one will love or respect me.	I am in my element	To impress the rest of the company with my talent and range of skill	to correct	The audition room
				To prod	Romeo
		I am powerful (I am impotent)		To one-up	Anthony Robbins
		To remind			
To sell					
Act 3 sc. 1 'Rehearsal in the forest'	I behave this way for fear that all my work has come to nothing.	I am in control (I have no control) - swing	To elevate the play to my standards	To conjure	thea1520 class
				To solve	
				To soothe	
				To provoke	
'Bottom's transformation'	I behave this way for fear I am not worthy of being loved	I am alone. (I am loved)	To overcome the dark mysterious forest	To catch out	An empty swimming pool
				To defy	
				To glorify	First kiss
				To manoeuvre	
Act 4 sc. 1 'Titania's Bower'	I behave this way for fear I have made all the wrong choices	I see I love	To make my love known to Titania and the world	To primp	It's like the first time having sex
				To calm	
				To impress	
				To beckon	
'Bottom's Dream'	I behave this way for fear that I will die alone	I am fully awake! (I am lost)	To discover the true meaning of life	To call	It's like the morning after / the revelation
				To unearth	
				To stun	Getting the role of a lifetime
				To overcome	
Act 4 sc. 2 'The play is marred'	I behave this way for fear I am now old	I really see it now (I am falling/lost)	To rally the troupe for the big event	To embrace	The resurrection
				To impress	
				To arouse	

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