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PAPER

### **Can Rehearsing Lead to Over-rehearsing?**

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This paper is based on personal observation and the researcher as participant in action research. As a theatre director, the researcher has always endeavoured to achieve precision in a theatre production in order to generate the desired expressions/emotions in the spectator during a performance. Every director must attempt to accomplish this precision through the set of signs and the sign system of the production in order to obtain the desired reactions from the audience. But as the director cannot control a live performance or all the circumstances that surround it, s/he must use the rehearsal process, which is generally under her/his control, to search for precision. Every moment and movement of the play must be designed and well-rehearsed; the accuracy of the expression achieved through well designed signs to maximise the uninterrupted flow of the play's signs and sign system is what the director expects from the performance. By working with self-trained and semi-professional actors in Sri Lanka, the rehearsal process has become extremely important and crucial for theatre directors to bring the production to the standard that s/he desires.

Experience shows that actors do not display simultaneous development during the course of rehearsals, and to accomplish consistency and precision, directors are compelled to conduct as many rehearsals as possible. However, in the Sri Lankan context, it is often difficult to conduct the number of rehearsals the director desires due to financial constraints and socio-political dynamics.

However, there have been instances where the play has not reached its expected precision, because it has been over-rehearsed rather than under-rehearsed, and in the process, lost its spontaneity, and its actors have become mechanical. They enacted what was 'recorded' into them and lacked dynamism and authenticity. Most of all, the actors did not appear to enjoy their performance. But directors are generally unable to convince themselves to discontinue rehearsals, because of dissatisfaction with the level of accuracy achieved thus far.

This situation leads to a conflict in theatre practice. The director conducts continuous rehearsals to explore and design moments and movements and, record them in actors until s/he is satisfied with the precision of the play. But incessant rehearsals can take the production to a state of over-rehearsing and damage the spontaneity and liveliness of the performance. This paper attempts to explore how a director can avoid this state of over-rehearsing while conducting a rehearsal process and how to let a play take its natural course, once it has reached a desired standard.