

III. COLLOQUIUM

Declan Donnellan and **Nick Ormerod**¹ are joint Artistic Directors of Cheek by Jowl, the theatre company they founded in 1981, for which they have staged over 40 productions, performing in over 400 cities, across six continents.

Declan Donnellan was born in England of Irish parents in 1953. He grew up in London and read English and Law at Queens' College, Cambridge, before being called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in 1978.

Cheek by Jowl's first production, *The Country Wife*, directed by Donnellan, was presented at the Edinburgh festival in 1981. In 1989, he was made Associate Director of the Royal National Theatre in London where his productions have included *Fuenteovejuna* by Lope De Vega, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* by Stephen Sondheim, *The Mandate* by Nikolai Erdman and both parts of *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner.

Donnellan has directed for the Avignon Festival (*Le Cid*); The Maly Drama Theatre of Saint Petersburg (*The Winter's Tale*), The Noel Coward Theatre (*Shakespeare in Love*), the Piccolo Teatro Milano (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), as well as the opera *Falstaff* for the Salzburg Festival and the ballets *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* for the Bolshoi in Moscow.

He has written a play, *Lady Betty*, and translated works by De Musset, Erdman, Sophocles and Lermontov. He has received awards in London, Moscow, Paris and New York, including four Olivier Awards, the Order of Charlemagne of Andorra, the Stanislavski International Prize in Moscow and the Golden Lion of Venice.

His first feature film, *Bel Ami*, co-directed with Nick Ormerod, and starring Uma Thurman, Kristin Scott Thomas, Christina Ricci, and Robert Pattinson, was released in 2012.

His first book, *The Actor and the Target* was originally published in Russian (1999), and has since appeared in 15 languages, including French, Spanish, Italian, German, Romanian and Mandarin. His second book, *The Actor and the Space* was published in 2024 in English, the Romanian translation, by Associate Professor PhD Carmen Stanciu, appearing only two months after the original.

Nick Ormerod, after qualifying as a barrister, trained in Theatre Design at Wimbledon School of Art. His first job in theatre was a year as an assistant at the Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh. From there he went on to work with Declan Donnellan on various productions for the Royal Court and Arts Educational Schools before founding Cheek by Jowl in 1981. Since then, he

1 The full biography can be accessed on <https://www.cheekbyjowl.com/>

and Declan Donnellan have taken work to over 400 cities, and received awards across the world.

His credits also include *Fuenteovejuna*, *Peer Gynt*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Mandate*, and both parts of *Angels in America* for the National Theatre; *The School for Scandal*, *King Lear* and *Great Expectations* (which he also co-adapted) for the Royal Shakespeare Company; *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* for the English National Opera, *Martin Guerre* for the Prince Edward Theatre, *Hayfever* for the Savoy Theatre, *Antigone* for The Old Vic, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* for the Bolshoi, *Falstaff* for the Salzburg Festival and *The Revenger's Tragedy* for the Piccolo Teatro Milano. In 2012, Ormerod co-directed the feature film *Bel Ami* with Declan Donnellan.

Ormerod's work is characterized by its simplicity and directness, an approach that has shaped the visual signature of the company's work and led to winning the Corral de Comedias Award with Donnellan in 2008 and an Olivier Award nomination for Designer of the Year (1988) for *A Family Affair*, *The Tempest* and *Philoctetes*. In 2017, he was awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for services to theatre design.

Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod first came to Romania in the late '80s, with two performances: *The Tempest* and *Philoctetes*. In 1994, their production of *As You Like It* opened the first edition of the Craiova Shakespeare Festival. Over the last three years they have staged two productions at the National Theatre in Craiova. As a token of great esteem, the city of Craiova granted them the title of Honorary Citizens in 2023.

In 2024, during the XIVth edition of the Craiova Shakespeare Festival, Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod received the Doctor Honoris Causa title from I.L. Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film Bucharest.



Nick Ormerod, Laurențiu Tudor and Declan Donellan.
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29 October 2024, I.L. Caragiale UNATC Bucharest.

MASTERCLASS WITH DECLAN DONELLAN AND NICK ORMEROD FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OF I.L. CARAGIALE UNATC IN BUCHAREST²

29 October 2024

Carmen Stanciu: *I am here as a kind of mediator because I had the privilege to mediate, as translator, the meeting with this second book of Declan Donellan, *The Actor and the Space*. I have also asked Laurențiu Tudor to join in. He has been the assistant director and the voice of the two in the teams that they worked with for the two performances done in the last three years at the National Theatre in Craiova.*

*I would like to start with the special relationship that a director has with the text and his actors. In the book, the two attempts to describe the different work methods when creating a theatre work, according to the director-actor-text relationship, starts from an applied analysis of two plays: the first, *Romeo and Juliet*, the second *Macbeth*. In his demonstration, Declan uses fake rehearsals with two imaginary Russian actors. How was it working with Romanian actors, coming from different schools?*

Declan Donellan: The atmosphere in the room is very important. Some people say, “it’s wonderful that you don’t shout at the actors”. And no, I don’t shout at the actors, but not because I am a nice person, but because rehearsals depend

² The Masterclass with Declan Donellan and Nick Ormerod took place at UNATC on the 29th of October 2024. The discussion was moderated by Assoc. Prof. PhD Carmen Stanciu, the Romanian translator of Declan Donellan’s second book, *The Actor and the Space*, with the live translation help of Laurențiu Tudor, theatre director. Transcribed and edited by Octavian Szalad.

on good flow in the room and aggression will always block this crucial “flow”. I think I also speak for Nick, that, although we have worked in different cultures, from Kathmandu to Dublin, what is most moving is what remains the same. Yes, you are aware of different accents, for example and the food is different, but the problems that the actors face when they are acting tend to be universal. The biggest difference is that in certain cultures, including yours, here in Romania, there is a very strong sense of the permanent company, of the ensemble. That is the major difference that affects the rehearsal period.

C.S.: *I am under the impression that it is extremely important that, in the two performances done in Craiova, there should be some conditionings. For example, in Hamlet you had to bring into the team actors from outside, for roles such as Ophelia. This was a different experience to Oedipus, where the entire team was from the theatre company. What are you looking for in a young actor?*

***“The best we can do is to see things,
for example, other people.
In a way, I am what I see.
That strikes me as being very important.”***

D.D.: I would need to see if the actors can *see* anything. The problem is that often actors will feel their job is “to show”, which is very different. For me, it is not so much “internal qualities” that are important, but what the person *sees*. We each see a different predicament for ourselves. The problem is when actors think you are looking inside of them, and they fantasize. They are given fantasies of truth, some sort of authenticity towards what is internal. But I think our existence is, in theatre certainly, completely relational. When I talk to you today, it may seem like I am bringing things up from inside of me, but, as it happens, I asked for the lights to be dimmed on me and Nick purely so that we are not blinded, to actually see you. The reason we need to see you is to harvest the energy of your attention. It’s as if we need to be able to plug ourselves into that flow, that space, to complete the circuit. It is very important that the actor can see and hear things. The problem is that we don’t really like seeing and hearing things, probably because reality is rarely what we want it to be. What happens most often is that the actor thinks that what is important is to show a feeling or to make something clear. *Making things clear* is one of the worst things that you can do. All you can do is *to see* other people. In a way, *I am what I see*. That strikes me as being very important. I look for actors that can *see* things and not people that want to *show* me things.

C.S.: *In the book, his idea starts from the fact that, similar to life, a theatre production is a negotiation between the actor and the space in front of him, inside of him, or the space which we know exists, but is not visible on stage. This space that we relate to and with which we continuously negotiate is the space in which there is a mortal danger lurking. Every action is an attempt to delay and renegotiate this imminent and immanent danger.*

He uses, in the beginning of the book, the metaphor of a sandcastle in the tide. Declan says there is no fun in building a castle under a wall, safe, far from the tide, on dry sand. The castle must be in the tidal area where the water is coming and going. Only this makes it unique, spectacular, alive. I would ask him to explain this will of the artist to squeeze all the energy out of a moment, so as to push it beyond the limits of the stage. Nick and Declan say that the actor must never be like a samovar. Can you expand a little on this idea, the exchange of energy and how you create life on stage?

***“What I am here to say is that you should not try
to put your energy into the scene.
Because that means the scene cannot put its energy into you.”***

D.D.: It is very simple. You must take energy from the outside every second of your life. But we don't like doing that because reality is dangerous, or because we cannot control reality. Many problems in acting come from that little phrase: „and we don't like it“. We want to be able to exist, to survive without relying on the outside world because it may not always be there. The problem is that what is outside us is effectively the source of all our energy. The word “samovar” in Russian means literally a self-boiler. You don't want to be a samovar, but most of us, surviving the educational period of our lives, we take on mad responsibilities, which is foolish. “I must make everything happen. I take responsibility for everything. I must put all my energy into this scene.” What I am here to say is that you cannot put your energy into the scene. The only energy that you can use is the one coming from outside of you. The actor might get nervous and say that it is not there. All I can say is: “Yes, possibly that is true. But that is only true because you are blocking it with your concentration. You need some faith. You need to develop some trust, that if you open yourself, you'll find something wonderful and life giving.” There is no freedom if you insist on independence. Because we are all dependent on external things: on oxygen, on food... We are also dependent on other people noticing us. We all need attention, and most importantly we need the right sort of attention. But many of us get desperate that we don't get that sort of attention.

C.S.: *In this book they propose a set of keys that you can use. From the many metaphors that they use, one idea that surprised me is that the character is not the friend of the actor. I would ask him to expand on why we can't put our faith even in the character.*

“I am temporary too and one day we will be completely forgotten, including Shakespeare.”

D.D.: Because we don't. I don't sit here thinking I am going to be Declan. The only thing that I do is try to relate to you. That is as near to me as I can get. Part of the problem in *Hamlet* is that of “being”... Have you ever seen *Fame* on television? It was an old TV series about how fun it was to be at a drama school in New York. Students would burst into song now and then. There is a famous song from it and the second line is “*FAME! I'm gonna live forever! I'm gonna learn how to fly*”. We can't deal with our ephemerality. This impermanence haunts us. We just don't like it. So we need “stuff”, that's why we like to buy stuff, so we can store it. But we can't. I spent many years at school trying to learn French and actually now I speak good French. It was difficult for me because the vowels are so strange. I'd really like to give this to someone when I die because it was so difficult for me, and I can't. It is absurd to think that way. I think each of us, if we think about it, will realize that we will come to an end, and it is insulting and ridiculous, but that is the nature of what we are doing. I like to direct plays; I like to direct actors and work with actors. That is fine, that is true because it is the doing, but I don't want “doing”, I actually want “being”. I'd like to *be* a theatre director. But I am not, I am just a guy who directs actors and plays. If you follow as a detective, many of the things that go wrong on stage, I think that they are hidden in the fact that our ephemerality is ridiculous. Stanislavsky's first title for his second book was *An Actor's Work on His Role*. In English, for a hundred years, that book was changed to *Building a Character*, which is enough to terrify anyone. It is nonsense because that is not what human beings are like. We don't build characters. Of course, I am different from Nick and each of you, but it is not in our being, it is in the doing, and the seeing. I am different from you because from where my shoes are I see a different world and that there are patterns. I tend to see something, not as well as other people are seeing, but you have to deal with that.

C.S.: *In English the idiom is „to be in somebody's shoes”, in Romanian we say, „to be in the character's skin”. To be in somebody's shoes is to see the world from the space, from the place from which the character sees what happens around him. What makes him act is given by his capacity to see the space from a precise point. Declan uses an example: imagine a very long tunnel and a single point from which you can see the other end. I will ask them, again, to explain why you can't root yourself, not even in this sketch of the character that the the actors draws for himself?*

D.D.: Because you cannot build from the inside out, you must investigate the space. For example, we will talk about Chekov, the *Three Sisters*. Let's say someone

is playing Olga. She is playing the first scene, when the soldiers come around. Say that the actress is nervous, the reason she is nervous is not because she does not know what she is doing, the reason is more fundamental. Maybe she thinks that she is a terrible actress, she is not good enough, she does not know what she is doing. Those are symptoms. Let's call her Theodora. Theodora is playing Olga, and she feels nervous and uncomfortable, the reason will probably be because she is standing in her own place, in her own space. She is anxious about how other people will think about her and she will see the space around her in a very different way from the way Olga will. Olga would see a different space. It's good trying to think a bit about what I mean by that, that you can't transform, you can't become someone else. What you can do is stand in their shoes and, although Theodora the actress and Olga the character is in the same place on stage, she cannot do anything as Olga until she sees Olga's space. She has to step in another pair of shoes.

C.S.: *Another interesting idea in relationship to the character is that the characters do not like themselves. If the character was fine with the way he is, with what he does, with what he is, he would not act, we would not have a plot, we would not have a character's evolution. Therefore, in order to build from the start some characteristics of the character, that he is a certain way, does things a certain way, is not useful, from Declan's point of view, because it does not let you see the world from the shoes of the character.*

“A problem is that sometimes people go into theatre because they think they can explore their feelings. I think that is very dangerous.”

D.D.: That is right, you have to *see* what the character *sees*. If you end up, for example, feeling what the character feels, some people might think that's great, real tears, but if you feel what your character feels you are giving a bad performance. It's not about you; it's about someone who *sees* a completely different world. One of the problems is that sometimes people get into theatre because they think they can explore their feelings. I think that is very dangerous. What you can do is stand in somebody else's shoes and see what they see. Everybody is going to see some sort of danger in the space. In this moment for me, I am seeing you and the danger is that you don't understand me, or that this is sort of intellectual, esoteric, and pretentious. Yes, I do think that, and I work very hard trying against that. If you were to act me, that would be as near to my character as you can get.

Student: *I would like to know if you consider the actor as a vessel, a mediator between the director and the public?*

D.D.: I think the actor is there to *see* things from the character's point of view. It is not just a point of view; it is where the shoes are. Sometimes I get actors asking: "how do you want me to play the scene?" HOW do you want me? How? *How* is the question. And I don't think there is an answer to that. For example, how am I speaking to you? I cannot answer that question. I am just in a position seeing you and imagining things that are good or bad and that is where my internal movement comes from. There is no internal movement, it all has to do with the outside.

"The director's job is to help the actor realize the space, to help the actor absorb the possibilities of the space."

Nick Ormerod: I think there is quite a prevalent idea in some areas of theatre that somehow it is the director's ideas that we convey to the public. My personal view is that it is a road to death and is kind of sterile. The director's job is to help the actor realize the space, to help the actor absorb the possibilities of the space, the predicament in the space, the danger, and then let it happen. Afterwards, surprising things will happen, they will become alive. Whereas if you try to channel the idea of the director it may work for a short time, and I have a feeling that it will become dead.

D.D.: That may seem obvious, or maybe not. But it is not only the director's idea, it's any idea. You should not be playing an idea, you need to see things, and if at that point the characters see this, or a threat coming, that is what you have to do. Say you are waiting for someone at the café, and they are a bit late, what do you do? You can't just be somebody waiting, largely because it disturbs us, so you take out your mobile, or you order a cup of coffee. You don't need a cup of coffee, but you think: "Oh, that is what normal people do in a café! I know how to be normal! Look at me being normal! I would like some coffee please."

Not only that I got a problem with the character, but I also got a problem with the word "action". Because it implies that we do what we do because we want to do it. Maybe, occasionally. But what I found more useful in rehearsals is to find what is the thing that you want to avoid. You spend your life trying to avoid things you want to avoid. I have the image of a little baby: immediately, coming out of the womb, he/she started making the space better. As soon as they have life, that is the relationship with the outside world. The blanket is uncomfortable; I have this horrible feeling, which becomes hunger. They don't come out to be a baby, what they do is they start avoiding things immediately. I think it is a more useful way of looking at what we do. You could probably interpret that as: "What you say is that we don't direct for positive reasons, but I want to be an actor, I want to

be a director, I want people to think that I am good at this, that is a positive thing.” I think, if that is how you see it, it’s fine, but you are acting that person, it is more interesting to think about what you dread: that nobody is paying me any attention, I will fail, I will look stupid, people think I am a loser. I think it is more useful to do that; for everything we do is we try to avoid something. I think it is how we survive, but I can’t generalize about real life. I am not a philosopher or psychologist. It is very useful to think about how humanity is defined, that what I’ve got isn’t enough: I want to be successful like her, I want to be respected like him.

C.S.: *What does Hamlet dread?*

D.D.: I don’t think that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare’s best play, but he tries to do something that you cannot do, he tries to get us to imagine non-being. It is interesting to think that every character is trying to prove they exist. In other words, all the characters are somehow frightened that they don’t exist. I don’t say this is the truth; I say that it is a useful door to go through. If you look around you, people are trying to convince themselves that they exist by making noise, all the funny little ways that we try to get a bit more attention from the other person. That instability is horrible in real life but is great for the actor. Like with Shakespeare, overall, the plays are about people who do stupid things that will probably destroy them. In a comedy they don’t get destroyed, they often find love. In tragedy they always die. Why are they doing it? I really think they are doing it to prove that they exist. You could say: “That is rubbish, Declan, I have no problem, I know that I exist.” Then, why did you spend a year’s salary on a watch? Why did you make so much noise? Why do you do all these things to get attention, why are you doing a lot of funny jobs for an expensive car? Because it is nice to have expensive things. If you look again, you will see that the person is trying really hard.

Student: *Are there characters outside the stage space? Do they live outside the stage space?*

**“You do not come first, before the space.
The space comes first,
you are put into it, and you have to deal with it.”**

D.D.: No, absolutely not. Not only that, but you also don’t exist outside the space, either. That is the problem. I only exist because I am here with you. You do not come first, before the space. The space comes first, you are put into it, and you have to deal with it. No one can exist independent of the space, and if you were born 15 years earlier or 15 years later, you would be a completely different person.

Student: *I have another question. Then, the actor's work is finished when he/she gets out of the space, off the stage?*

“To learn anything, you have to be, at a certain degree, empty. Emptiness is different from nothing. Nothing is emptiness without possibility.”

D.D.: I am worried about „the work“. Sometimes people are lazy, they don't do enough work. But sometimes people enjoy suffering and would like to rehearse through the night. It is not very good for your work to do too much. I think I should say it to you, it is a horrible thing to say, you shouldn't read too much, you should read selectively. How do you do that selection when you are young? I don't know, but too much information is toxic, and sometimes we can reassure us by reading, reading, reading. You need experience to know when to deploy it. I would just say, in general, the director's job is more to take things away than to give forth. I remember an actor I worked with once; we saw him in a Chekov, and we were walking outside the theater and this actor ran after us and said: “Any notes? Can you say some things now about what I should do?” I was quite crossed, you can't ask another director to direct you afterwards, not because it's disloyal to the first director, but because you put too many ideas into the pot. The other thing I would like to say, is a bit disturbing and is worst when you are young. I think, you often get, in a way, frightened if you are too empty. There is a feeling of emptiness, a kind of dread. Sometimes I see actors and they say: “Yes, Declan, yes... I do it but I have to think a bit about it first. Just let me be, just let me get my character right first then I will look at the space.” But you don't have a character without the space, you don't exist at all. You have to start with the space. Stanislavsky said something very similar when talking about circumstances, which is very useful. The only way I would add to that is that circumstances are unstable, they are not just evolving, they are changing all the time. And also, in the circumstances there is an element of dread. You are starting as theatre people, there will be a dread of failure; there will be a dread of looking stupid. And that is, going along, what you do. What I am saying is: “No, no Declan, my character wants to be a success.” I say, yes, but don't think about it like that. It won't help you. What helps more is to be terrified of failing, and that will move you. This thing about *emptiness*, I often look at actors, students for example, any actors, very often what is going wrong is that their heads are too full. If you don't make space for a new idea, you can't take anything new inside. To learn anything, you have to be, at a certain degree, empty. Emptiness is different from nothing. *Nothing is emptiness without possibility*. I don't want to talk quantum physics to you but the best way to think about what

happened before the Big Bang is not that there was nothing, there was *emptiness*, and then it split into two, into four... Another thing I just think is really useful to meditate on is some advice I once heard, which is: you either serve, or be a slave. You choose. You don't have to understand that, I don't understand that, but it haunts me. I think that being haunted by things is much more useful than understanding things.

N.O.: Connected with the *emptiness*, there is another statement that I know is in the book. It is that "Acting is reacting". And you cannot react if you are already full, if you already know what to do. You can only react if you are empty. Because you don't know what is coming at you, which is connected with a pretentious habit we have in teaching, I don't know if you have it here, in Romania, which is "actioning". It is about choosing a verb, we have books of verbs...

C.S.: *We don't have it in Romania.*

N.O.: You are lucky not to have that... In the West you see actors choosing a verb, how they are going to react. Which gives them like... I am going to attack; I am going to become...

D.D.: An alcoholic does not drink alcohol because he wants to drink, he thinks this, maybe. But the reason the addict takes the addiction is because, if he does not, the "dogs will come again"... There is a bad feeling that threatens to overwhelm us and we have many different ways of shifting that away. You get on social media; you got things to do. And, when that is taken away, you get frightened again, it was the thing that kept the dogs off you. You do things to prevent the terrible thing from happening. The reason you can't give up is because of the bad feeling. The horrible thing about that feeling is that you can't give it a name. I call it *dread*, which is a vague thing that does not have a clear outline but is always there. And always there slightly.

Student: *Why did you choose to get rid of Horatio in Hamlet?*

N.O.: The first impetus was to look at the whole first act of *Hamlet*. For some reason, I simply do not understand why Shakespeare is so keen to make sure that so many people see the ghost, so many characters that we never see again. Horatio is one of those people who sees the ghost. It seemed to me that this is a whole issue we could completely distance from. If you look at Horatio, he has absolutely no impact on the story. He is just someone that Hamlet could talk to.

And, I think, by giving those lines that he says to Horatio... in English they are very famous lines and if you cut them, you have a problem with the critics, but in Romanian maybe you don't. It gives Hamlet even more of a relationship with the audience, which he had with Horatio in the text. I must say I was a bit worried because he was the only nice person in *Hamlet*. Nobody has really missed him.

“I would say that there are two questions that you should keep to a minimum: all questions beginning with the word HOW (...) The other one is WHY?”

D.D.: This is why I never do meetings after the show, because people will say: why did you do this and why did you do that? The answer is: because it seemed like a good idea at the time. But if I say that, people will think I am being malicious. If Nick and I say to each other *How do we do this scene?*, we are in big trouble already. We shouldn't have a choice. Often, when you have a choice, it means that you are not free. It's very difficult to understand that. But you have to see and think about things so that what you do is inevitable. For example, I don't need to like the work we do, it is not about my taste, it's about an *inevitability of things*. That is also connected with this idea of being empty.

I would say that there are two questions that you should keep to a minimum: all questions beginning with the word HOW – How should we play this scene? How should I play this character? How should I tell this story? The scene is the struggle of the actors, of the characters, to do things, and they change, and they have to be different because that is how it is. That is very important. The other one is WHY? Why is rather a sad question... I think it's quite a dangerous question because it implies that all things happen for a reason. We are taught that because of the Enlightenment, we force every situation into that. There was a student your age, two women who were sharing a flat at university, and they had a fight over a phone charger, and one of them stabbed the other 71 times. Why, why, why? I think it is right that we ask that, and we come up with all sorts of reasons. But it is very dangerous for us to think that you can ask why about any situation. The punchline is that, when the police dragged her away, what do you think she said? She said: “She should have given me that charger. It was her fault.” I ask you to worry a bit about *why* and *how*. This will be the bane of your life when trying to start as a director. For example, people will ask you questions like why you chose this play, how do you want to do this scene, and I couldn't answer that for myself. It is very difficult when you are young, and there are limited funds and people need to measure some things. I see why people want the answer to those questions, but there is a problem with them, they are the problems of life.

I should just say, as directors, for those who are directors, it is going to be very difficult to enjoy each other's work and I think that is based on envy. No one talks about envy because it is so shaming. It is a thing each of us have, it is different from jealousy because there is great pain... Jealousy also causes a lot of pain, but envy causes more... You should think about the difference between the two and just know that everybody else suffers from it.

Student: *As actors, what should we work on first when starting on this road?*

D.D.: You should work on seeing, really. And...

N.O.: Your bodies...

“But you can split nothing. You can split 0 in -1 and +1. So, what you can do is start taking this splitting.”

D.D.: The job of theatre is to take an idea and embody it, to incarnate it. The first thing that I say to the actor that comes on stage and says: I am poor, I have nothing, I am empty; I say that you can split nothing. You can split 0 in -1 and +1. So, what you can do is start taking this splitting. A very good one is „here and there” and to understand that there comes before here. We are in this room, we are “here”, but there is a “there” outside of which we are conscious. There is a future, there is a dangerous future. There could be a good future, or it could be horrible... There is a job we want to get, a job we are afraid our rival will get, there are all these “there” that pressure “here”. The importance is that there is a split. In the *Book of Genesis*, God does not create the world, he separates, he splits: the sky from the earth, the waters from the land. Creation is by splitting, and that is, in a way, how you can establish space. We are inside, you have to be conscious about what is outside.

N.O.: I hate to contradict you in any way, but the first thing young actors have to do is work on their bodies, so their bodies are available, and not just their heads. Until their bodies are available, they can be nowhere.

D.D.: You are right, that is very important, so it flows into your body and your body becomes available to you. One of the reasons it is difficult to do theatre is that, inside each of us, there is something that doesn't want us to get hurt. Christians sometimes call it Guardian Angel. But, in fact, it is something internal,

it is easy to prove it. You cannot kill yourself by holding your breath, even if you will it. There is a primitive part of the brain that if we didn't have, we would not have survived. The image I have, and I don't think I put it in the book, is that of an actress I know. She was on a film set playing herself dead and her child was there, a little boy. He was running up to her, kicking her and saying: Wake up! He thought she got hurt and she kept saying: "No, no, I am well, I work". We should meditate on that because we all got that little boy inside of us that says it is dangerous. "Don't do this, it is dangerous!", another part says: "Yes, but I must do this. I need to see this", and there's a part of you that says: "No, don't see that, it will hurt you!" Great actors, I noticed in the past, they don't know what they are doing, and in the best of my work I didn't know what I was doing. But I know that is about switching off parts of my brain. The best actress I know, when she directs, says: "I don't understand Declan, why can't they just say their lines, actually it is so simple: Just say your lines!" I also say: "It is easy for you!", because it's like she has some amazing mechanism to switch it off, and she performs something on stage, and you just completely believe it. I like to think that it is not because she has a formed head: "I know what I am doing here, I know what I am doing there". She just switches something off and it is completely alive. Just because you want to commit suicide, you can't hold your breath that long. And, as directors, writers, or actors, we find ways of doing something, but we are not really doing it. It would be as if the mother of the actress were dying on the ground, and she said: "I am only pretending I die". The director would be very crossed with her. But we can do that in a lot of different ways by not fully committing to things. It is good to think about those two things inside you. Because plays are about people in different dangerous situations.

C.S.: *Nick, something else to add?*

N.O.: We did a workshop recently with young directors attached to the Royal Shakespeare Company and we were talking about space. The first exercises that we did were about Macbeth and Banquo, the first lines in the play. They had this huge rehearsal, and we all sat in a group thinking: "Oh my god this is going to be amazing in this huge space!" They were not actors; they were young directors but one of them had to direct the ones that were playing Macbeth and Banquo. And we set there thinking: "Oh, the possibilities of that space!" The director appeared to completely disable them because he ended up with two people, and they seemed to me like two people staying at a bus stop, standing side by side. I asked to look around him, look what the space is like. He said, no, they are being surrounded by darkness, and you must imagine things. So, by bringing in his idea,

a lighting idea, he managed to convey absolutely nothing. So, the first thing that he needed to do was to address a very basic thing: Where these actors were. That is all, really.

C.S.: *Thank you, Nick and Declan.*

