The next two chapters are dedicated to two activities critical for the success of service: rehearsal and training. They go hand-in-hand with innovation as they form part of the problem-diagnosis process, by trying to anticipate how a problem might have an effect on service. But they are also the result of one of the Teatro Real’s objectives: ‘Zero defects. We are a five-star hotel.’

An opera at the Teatro Real is the result of an exhaustive process of rehearsal and training. As Daniel Bianco says ‘The final objective of all this work is to arrive on-stage, and to arrive with no defects.’ They strive hard to achieve this. ‘You have to arrive with the prototype practically finished; you can’t start improvising.’ And this is achieved by rehearsing and training. In what follows, we will associate rehearsals with experiments, and review the characteristics of those experiments. We will consider the different types of rehearsals in order to show the process of experimental design that this leads to. Each rehearsal is carefully defined in the ‘theatrical common sense’. Who’s in charge, who’s rehearsing, what repercussions this might have; all of this is perfectly delimited and (almost) nothing is left to chance. Or maybe not... because there is always a residual uncertainty, that must be dealt with in other ways. Everybody trains to be able to deal with residual uncertainty, considering the possible repercussions and the actions necessary to prevent them.

How is this managed in the world of business? How do we manage uncertainty? For example, Operations in service companies are characterised by the considerable uncertainty of demand. What steps must be taken in companies to reduce these uncertainties? Our proposal is the DLAI approach (Debug, Learn, Anticipate and, as a result, Improve).

Our interviewee in this chapter is Daniel Bianco, and we are concentrating on the structure and significance of the rehearsals.

What is the rehearsal room for?
The set rehearsals are done in the rehearsal rooms; the full set isn’t there, but there is a pre-set which, in addition, gets further developed throughout the rehearsals.
The senior stage manager attends all the rehearsals and it’s in the rehearsal room that we work out many of the *tops*. The ones we can’t do there are the lighting cues, which need to be done on stage. Let’s suppose that the Stage Director says ‘Ah, very good, then right now is when I want the wall to rise, and the smoke to come on-stage from Felipe’s side and the monitors get switched off, because they become visible at that point.’ Well, the senior stage manager notes all this down and assigns a *top*.

**What’s the rehearsal room like?**

*At this point Daniel turns on a television monitor, on which we can see the rehearsal room with a built set.*

This is the set of *Macbeth*, built in the rehearsal room... Look, look, there’s the stairs, the whole set. But this isn’t the real set; it’s just the pre-set. None of this has cost us a Euro! We do it all with wooden modules that we already have, previously bought and prepared.

We make the stairs, the platforms... but the real pieces are 12 m high, whereas these are only 5 m so they fit in the room; we only have a limited ceiling height, obviously. Nevertheless, it’s a real space to rehearse in. This is fundamental, for our way of working. But don’t go thinking that many people do this; it’s only typical of this theatre.

**Why is it fundamental?**

Well, can you imagine if you had to spend a month rehearsing in a set that wasn’t spatially correct? Imagine that the singer has to sit at table like this [he gestures towards the office desk] but, instead of having her sit at that desk with this space and a swivel chair in which you can adopt this posture [he leans on the desk], you make her sit at a small desk and then say to her ‘No, not like that! The real desk is bigger!’

**So, in order to rehearse you need to have everything as close to the real set as possible?**

Maybe you don’t give her the actual chair, because the actual chair is made of white leather and it marks easily, but we’ll certainly give her one that swivels. The singer also has to create. She probably knows how her character would use the swivel movement, and she can experiment with the amount of time it takes her to approach another character, and so on. But we don’t give her the actual things. The stairs, for example, there’s no point in building them from bricks – what’s the point? But we do have to give them realistic representations, so that, when she rehearses the aria during which she has to go up the stairs, the tempo as she’s ascending can be identical to the performance. And all of this represents time that we’ve saved.

We’ve already said that a minute on stage costs much more than a minute in the rehearsal room. Imagine a theatre brought to a halt because the singer needs to practice going up the stairs. And, of course, the first time she...