Introduction

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For some years now, the field of performative arts has been undergoing significant changes that are shaping the academic field. Within and outside Europe, new degree programs are emerging that train performative practice at the interfaces between art and society. This development comes at a time when a number of ecological, social, economic and cultural upheavals/transformations have been labelled with the buzzword crisis for almost 15 years. Crisis describes the transition between two orders, an old and a new one. The term crisis can be found in the media, in the language of politics, but also on flyers announcing and describing (theatre pedagogical) projects and theatre productions as a warning, a need for action and a mode of explanation. For the development of a new order, the necessity of comprehensive social transformation processes is attested. This interface is addressed in the publication. The authors' contributions pursue the development potential of "performative arts in contexts" in relation to social structures that need to be reorganized. It traces possible intermediate spaces in which alternative models of thought can grow. To this end, it brings different positions from university teaching into play. In relation to current social challenges, it also poses the question of transformation processes in the discipline itself and aims to cautiously explore the potential of in-between spaces.

The publication builds on the 1st annual conference Performing Arts in Contexts (PAC). This took place from 13–16 October 2022 under the title "perspectives: in_between spaces" at the Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland. In addition to an intensive exchange on different work and training contexts in an international comparison, it was remarkable for

us how the individual professional self-images characterize the pivotal point for country-independent perspectives. In the admittedly very broadly diversified field of work, divergent convictions exist side by side and differ greatly in terms of the social responsibility inscribed in them. It is precisely in this network that we want this publication to be located.

This follows a certain program, as the aim of PAC is to form an international network of teachers, researchers and artists in the higher education sector and to develop a permanent conference for the Performing Arts in Contexts (PAC). Within the framework of PAC, the fields of applied theatre, theatre pedagogy and theatre work in social fields will meet, create connections and explore differences. The network enables dialogue between different working principles, goals and self-images, which can be critically questioned through benevolent friction. Being international means getting to know and understand the specific practices in certain cultures, as well as creating space for joint discourse and interrelated further development. For all of us, as participants, this harbors the potential to initiate change. We hope that the anthology will provide further impetus and that reading it will broaden your own tradition of thinking.

In this anthology, authors from Germany, Canada, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Ukraine and Hungary analyze current challenges in the field. They focus on lines of development and desiderata in the discipline and provide insight into reflections on their own practice. In some places, examples clarify the explanations more than didactic strategies; in others, they emphasize perspectives on the social field or place application possibilities in the foreground.

In her article **Mira Sack** analyzes the role of crisis narratives and their significance for theatre pedagogy and influence on society and education. She questions conventional representations and advocates an approach that takes into account the complexity and ambivalence of social challenges. She describes the importance of theatre as an instrument for social criticism and change and at the same time points out the danger of misuse for ideological purposes. The concepts of a "communauté desavouée" and the ethical dimensions of theatre pedagogy are understood as an invitation to accept fragmentation and incompleteness. An under-

standing of education that includes ambiguity and the "politicity of ed-ucation" could lead to transformative theatre education practices. Mira Sack argues for a re-evaluation of how to deal with crises through the-atre pedagogy that is reflective, dialogical and aware of the ethical and political dimensions of education and society.

The contribution "(Never) Mind the Gap" takes a critical look at teach-ing and learning practices at university. **Kevin Hobbs** argues for the ne-cessity of an emphasis in curricular practice on the inbetween space. He positions this approach as critical and contrary to neoliberal, modern approaches based on the ideas of positivity and objectivity, along con-cepts of Joseph Schwab, Richard Schechner, Homi Bhabha and others. He concretizes them with his expertise, nourished from his co-created curricular settings with students and other actors in the medical field.

While Hobbs focuses on the concept of the gap as a critical point of view against current tendencies, **Milena Meier** develops a dialogue-based approach as a possible response to differences and crises in cur-rent segregated societies. She also addresses the concept of educational processes and theater pedagogical practice against the backdrop of the current crisis. Along examples from her practice as a lecturer, she ar-gues for the "Bildungspotential" (change in world-self-relations (refers to Hans-Christoph Koller)) of verbal and nonverbal dialogical encoun-ters. Meier refines the educational discourse with the introduction of the "present moment" concept by psychology scientist Daniel Stern and de-velops the idea of "contact zones", places where encounters besides dif-ferences as in socioeconomic status, categories of identity or contrary political opinions can take place. Within these contact zones "familiar problems take on new contours when the shadows of the foreign fall on them", as Bernhard Waldenfels wrote. Meier asks which procedures and practices can be derived from psychologically oriented concepts for the-atre pedagogical artistic dialogue-oriented practice?

Ádám Bethlenfalvy explores the development and critical discus-sions in classroom drama that differentiate fictionality and reality as they emerge in theatre. The passing on of stories, their playful adap-tation and transformation, functions here as a learning opportunity. His strategies are based on process drama and Dorothy Heathcote's

methodology. They show how school classes can find alternative ways of acting and developing attitudes. Despite the trend of the last decade for more non-fictional formats, he argues for a critical potential of fictional narratives in a time where narratives with political and social themes are riddled with fiction.

Ute Pinkert sets a different spotlight in her contribution "Theater pedagogical response to climate crisis". She emphasizes the need for theatre pedagogy to respond to the climate crisis by integrating an ecological perspective into its practice and theory. She describes the climate crisis as part of a multi-layered crisis that is exacerbated by neoliberal power and domination relations and calls for an activist turn in theater that is reflected in production and discourse. Finally, she pleads for global justice and solidarity with those disadvantaged by the climate crisis by establishing a link between theater pedagogical work and ecological and social justice issues. As a professor, she perceives an increase in psychological stress among students, which manifests itself in exhaustion and anxiety and can be understood as a subjective reaction to various crises. The author calls for an expansion of the reference disciplines of theater pedagogy in order to overcome anthropocentric views of the world and to use subjective crisis reactions as a starting point for transformative educational processes. She emphasizes the need to rethink the relationship between people and the world and to use theater as a medium to explore and experience alternative, existentially affirming practices.

Andreas Bürgisser takes a different perspective on crises in his article. He broadens the view from one to various current crises—that are occurring globally and affecting the Global North more strongly than previous—and asks about their influence on current perceptions. He reflects on the polarized public discussion in social media and looks for alternative strategies to deal with his dissatisfaction by looking at complex logics and paradoxes after Alexander Henschel. He emphasizes the importance of non-digital encounters and the need to create space for different positions in the theatre pedagogical context, thus giving space to differences without making judgments. He illustrates this with selected practical examples.

Oleksandr Tokarchuk and **Yaroslava Bondar** take the reader into their own acting method practice. They contemplate the artistic value of acting method practice. They see the emphasis on the artistic value of acting method practice as an inescapable value, which is sought after in their "School of Imagery" through 'imagery acting behavior'. Instead of constructing images, they are concerned with tracking down the impressions that are effective in us in order to bring them forth by means of imagination. In a social context, status often obstructs direct communication and interaction, according to the authors. They propose a compositional method that is beneficial as training for free and liberating communication. Its central element is a "Compositional behavioral Image", a form of interaction for groups that is based on team building and uses the acting methodological knowledge of the "School of Imagery".

Luca*Jacqueline Rudolf's contribution "UN_REST. Practices of rest in performing arts in social contexts, mediation and education" describes a different practice as a response to current crisis events. Luca*Jacqueline Rudolf explores on practices of rest, interrogating Hannah Arendt's idea of 'action', the associated dichotomy of a 'private' and 'public' realm and notions of productivity and availability. Rudolf sees potential in a shared practice of rest to effectively challenge, shift and expand our hegemonial perceptions and conceptions of space, of time, of communality and community and asks how this can be applied to the context of performing arts in contexts, their mediation and referring institutionalized education.

In their contribution, **Stanislaw Godlewski** and **Judith Philippa Franke** enter into a dialogue about awkwardness. They discuss how awkwardness occurs in different contexts and how it can be both creative and challenging. They discuss the role of awkwardness and queerness in the context of Performing Arts in Contexts (PAC) and how these concepts can challenge and change. They describe awkwardness as dynamic and changeable, creating both discomfort and creative possibilities. The authors reflect on their personal experiences with PAC, the importance of trust and openness in discussions, and the opportunity

to learn and grow through allowing awkwardness and the pursuit of discomfort.

The volume "Performative Arts and Social Transformation. The Potential of In-Between Spaces" enables experts with curricular responsibility to critically scrutinize current principles and think constructively about them. The international framing of the volume aims to place the performative arts in social contexts in an overarching discourse and is done with the interest of bringing knowledge from different theatre-mediating traditions and cultural contexts into a dialogue. The aim is to work out common interfaces and concerns, but also differences. The aim of the publication is to open up new perspectives and facilitate new alliances. For this process, we have implemented a dialogue-based practice in this publication: each contribution was forwarded to a different author with the request to formulate a short response, a thought-provoking impulse—following on from an initial reaction when reading the contribution—in the linguistic gesture of an email. We have placed this reference to each other after the individual contributions, so that a response to a discussion is already part of the publication. This form attempts to create an equivalent to the principle of dialogue-based thinking in textual statements as well, to open up an intermediate space from which further discussions can arise. Experience in editing the responses has shown that a new back and forth has already begun in many places.