

Mira Sack, Milena Meier,
Andreas Bürgisser (eds.)

**PERFOR-
MATIVE
ARTS AND
SOCIAL
TRANSFOR-
MATION**

The Potential of
In-Between Spaces

[transcript] Theatre Studies

Mira Sack, Milena Meier, Andreas Bürgisser (eds.)
Performative Arts and Social Transformation

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Performative Arts and Social Transformation

The Potential of In-Between Spaces

[transcript]

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Introduction

Mira Sack, Milena Meier, Andreas Bürgisser

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 inter-related 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 education” could lead to transformative theatre education practices. Mira Sack argues for a re-evaluation of how to deal with crises through theatre 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 teaching and learning practices at university. **Kevin Hobbs** argues for the necessity 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 concepts 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 current 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 argues for the “Bildungspotential” (change in world-self-relations (refers to Hans-Christoph Koller)) of verbal and nonverbal dialogical encounters. Meier refines the educational discourse with the introduction of the “present moment” concept by psychology scientist Daniel Stern and develops the idea of “contact zones”, places where encounters besides differences 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 theatre pedagogical artistic dialogue-oriented practice?

Ádám Bethlenfalvy explores the development and critical discussions in classroom drama that differentiate fictionality and reality as they emerge in theatre. The passing on of stories, their playful adaptation 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.

Numerous people have actively supported us in making this publication possible. Our thanks go in particular to Danielle Green and Stephanie Pleasants from Carl-Schurz-Haus in Freiburg (Germany) for the proofreading. This publication would not exist without the generous financial and ideational support of the Institute for the Performing Arts and Film (IPF) and the Media and Information Centre, both part of the Zurich University of the Arts.

To stuck in_between crisis

A self-positioning

Mira Sack

Almost all social science articles I have read recently begin with a reference to current crises in our society. Confirming this, I could set the starting point for the following reflections here with a few quotations and references. Or I could also bundle the prevailing diagnosis of the present in my words and thus manifest and present it once again. In an attempt to confront this central perspective, three voids stand out that I would like to mention as the beginning of a self-questioning and position-taking:

1_ The recently deceased theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann, internationally known above all for his publication “Postdramatic Theatre” in which he analytically illuminates this term for theatre creation since the 1980s (Lehmann 2006), put the invoked crisis mode into perspective in the context of a guest lecture at the “Foreign Affairs” festival in 2012 (Lehmann 2012). Lehmann outlined the talk of crisis as an ideology of the present and pointed out that crises tend to be of shorter duration, but that today we are dealing with a situation that will be with us for longer. So if I want to understand the starting point in a more differentiated way, I need a less generalised and buzzword-like understanding of ‘crisis’ and its content-related connotations.

2_ The increased urgency attached to the appeal to crisis conditions is always also a rhetorical instrument. It is noticeable that a chain of arguments is built up very quickly here that seeks to induce, sometimes almost force, my mental allegiance to the scenarios presented as a way out. As necessary as a convincing analysis is for mobilising an audience,

the denunciation of one's own concerns through the subtle mobilisation of an affectively charged following is problematic in my view. The complexity and the ambivalences inscribed in it are more or less casually resolved in this strategy and end up in a simple, conclusive-sounding solution scheme. I wonder which dimensions in dealing with the comprehensive social challenges are thereby pushed into the background. In my opinion, the reflexive practice of art education must stand in opposition to this kind of rhetoric and insist on recognising complex and ambivalent issues as such and that can enable an appropriate approach to them.

3_ The invasive mode that the omnipresent 'crisis' seems to take is probably not incidental to the selection of my reading: The shattering world situation in which we all find ourselves together is the starting point and motor of my search for landmarks for a rethinking and further development of theatre pedagogy. The disorientation that arises in the course of this can be read as an attribute of my crisis in relation to the existence of professional knowledge and action. At the same time, it can create indications of predetermined breaking points between concerns and challenges that the profession is currently facing without already knowing their solution.

With the following reflections, I attempt a first classification of this initial situation and thus indirectly answer the question posed by Ole Hruschka in the *Zeitschrift für Theaterpädagogik* (Journal for Theatre Education) as to what ethical and political mandate and what aesthetic consequences we draw for our field of work from the current crises and emergencies and those predicted for the future (cf. Hruschka 2021: 4). My responses are to be read as thinking aloud with the desire to enter into a dialogue about it. It is a searching concern and is rather comparable to an initial linking of different reading experiences with one's own thinking without wanting to be a scientific theory.

1. Crisis ideologies

How we relate to the global challenges of our time is made clear linguistically. Whether we speak of climate change, climate crisis or climate catastrophe, for example, says something about how we evaluate the processes surrounding and including us and their consequences. A change suggests a rather epic development that brings about modifications without already conjuring up a threatening scenario. A crisis, on the other hand, suggests a short-term phase of radical reorientation or realignment. It demands decisions from us that will be crucial for future development. If, instead, we speak of a catastrophe, a solution-oriented approach to the crisis has already been gambled away and the conflictual disturbances have reached a dimension that no longer allows us to avoid the consequences and can only be aimed at limiting the damage.

I find myself justifying my plans and goals in a university context with the comprehensive processes of social transformation, the necessity of which no one can deny. Am I not downplaying the urgency and radicality with which we have to explore and initiate other strategies of thought and action? Or am I—unconsciously—using the idea of transformation aimed at change as a rhetorical phrase that suggests something encouraging, a backward-looking promise of a possible lifeline, despite catastrophic prospects?

In turn, crisis and catastrophe are central concepts of theatre and the performative arts. From a dramaturgical perspective, the narratives generated from them form a central axis of the time-based arts. Even an absolute standstill of the plot points to the necessity of change and plays with the consequences of inaction, which not infrequently end in catastrophe. Dealing with these common dramaturgical, dramatic and post-dramatic building blocks of theatre shapes my teaching to a considerable degree. Students, I have observed, are increasingly irritated by such thinking. They are not so much looking for the intensification of conflict, nor do they experience the development of tension in the play as a central component of performative practice. Accordingly, their designs often show experiential spaces that are immersive, focus on moments of biographical integrity or invent scenarios that convey political mes-

sages in an easily readable way. This in turn makes me think and stimulates reflection and critique of my taken-for-granted knowledge. Experiencing a difference in narrative concerns and preferred representational strategies, I find myself in a position that critically thwarts the alternative gesture of the students' theatrical language. Am I their alter ego? Is that what I am supposed to be? It also shows me that I act with an experiential knowledge that becomes fragile and evokes alternative thinking and acting. Nevertheless, I play with my now 'historical', 'classical' or 'outdated' foils and thus try to intervene in the debate. Even though irritations can be deliberately aimed at in educational contexts, I doubt their effect at this point: At a time when talk of crisis has become an everyday ideology, don't we need a different view of theatre scenarios? What could be ways of promoting knowledge that allow alternative settings? In my opinion, emerging discourses of dramaturgy, such as the consideration of *crip time* and a reversal of the parameters of attention-economies in the performing arts, already speak to this (cf. Umatham/Deck 2020). A different perspective on the relationship between theatre and reality after the social turn—beyond the presentation of everyday experts on stage or the interaction with the audience in immersive space—would be interesting in many respects in the search for expanded forms of play and performance for theatre-education contexts. Thereby, dialogue as a practice is central for me. This includes the creation of performative settings taking into account the specific contexts and framework conditions in each case—with the concern to change and shift these through dialogical practice.

Talking about social transformation processes, states of crisis or catastrophe involve both personal positioning and professional decisions. Theatre education related to educational processes suggests becoming capable of acting in an increasingly complex and ambivalent present. How and by what means the ability to act can be achieved today would have to drive the discourse in the field and accordingly give far more weight to the reference to society than has so far been the case under the goals of aesthetic education and personality development. The crisis as a momentum in which decisions are urgent and paths are taken into an-

other possible present offers us the challenge of going against the grain with our own experiential knowledge and the expertise gained from it. We do not get enough momentum for a radical change of course just by resorting to proven experiential knowledge but remain stuck to proven models of action (cf. Sack 2019). Which horizons of expectation we are able to think about within contingent realities of life plays directly back into theatre pedagogical practice. If we take the catastrophe as a starting point, dramatization and dramaturgy of situations and chains of events have a chance to test alternative futures in the here and now. The oscillation between these three parameters as a characteristic of conscious process design in performative mediation settings is still pending and can be considered a desideratum of subject didactic reflection.

2. Rhetoric & Doubt

Similarly far-reaching as the reference to global crises is the desire of art in Central Europe to be demonstrably effective. This is linked to the hope of influencing, shaping or changing people's thoughts and actions outside the aesthetic framework. This concern brings artistic work into relation with social tasks. At the same time, it refers to the ever-fragile creed "theatre can change the world" and asks about its relevance for social developments. The question of how, derived from the general longing for effectiveness, is thus conclusive: how can theatre change the world?

Thinking about this requires a determination of the relationship between artistic and political practice. Mediation aspects are currently being followed with particular attention along these two dimensions and lead to a critical theatre pedagogy. In the broader discourse, however, they also produce questionable concatenations of artistic and pedagogical arguments, operating with a fuzzy concept of mediation or the general devaluation of didactic reflection (cf. Sack 2019).

The philosopher and cultural theorist Gesa Ziemer, on the other hand, explicitly calls for an examination of pedagogical implications against the background of the artistic opening up of new forms of communication and fields of action when she asks about the value of

artistic disruptive mechanisms, potentials for irritation and innovation for areas remote from the arts or calls for exploring interfaces for a meaningful interaction between art and other areas of society (cf. Ziemer 2009).

I prefer this cautious, searching way of thinking to the rather shirt-sleeved use of mediation for the counter-hegemonic struggle as found in Chantal Mouffe's (cf. Mouffe 2014) work. As convincing as her analysis of political power relations may be, in my opinion, the use of art and culture for populist interests is rhetorically weak and problematic in terms of content (cf. Sack 2023). To claim that the strategic objective of cultural and artistic practices today is the "production of affects" [trans. by M.S.] (cf. Mouffe 2014: 18) that intervenes in the identity of social actors in order to mobilize them for political struggle (ibid.) may be effective, but from my point of view, it is not a proven theatre pedagogical motif. Along the two positions of Ziemer and Mouffe, it becomes clear that theatre pedagogical mediation moves between the poles of art and politics. In this field of tension, the balance can quickly tip to one side, and theatre can be misused as a means to another end. According to Lehmann, it works as theatre as long as it remains a practice that is closely connected to politics, but still different from politics (cf. Lehmann 2012). Far from understanding theatre only as a product or staging, Lehmann, with reference to Jacques Rancière, assumes a necessarily shared learning process through which reality can be experienced differently and precisely but must not manifest itself in a jointly asserted ideology (cf. ibid.). Rather, following Jean-Luc Nancy, he speaks of a "communauté desavouée", i.e. a community that does not realize itself in a work and thus remains without a work, so that theatre cannot help but "betray the utopian expectation of communality that it nevertheless repeatedly awakens as a practice" [trans. by M.S.] (cf. Lehmann 2012). This idea, which goes back to Derrida, is in my opinion of immense importance for theatre-pedagogical mediation practice. In this interpretation, promises of wholeness, harmony or even healing would not only be obsolete for the individual subject, but also not adequate goals for the interpersonal experiential space of collective performative practice. Rather, the ethical dimension of this thought can

be taken further with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and make us aware that aesthetic education should enable an emancipatory process that overcomes the understanding of the subject that has become dominant through the Enlightenment. Nikita Dhawan receives Spivak and emphasizes that for her the process of “othering oneself” is in the foreground, through which the subject acquires the ability to “enter into the text of another” and leave behind the supposedly own self (cf. Dhawan 2023: 67). She writes: “The ethics involved in this is in turn to be understood as an aporia in which the ethical relations of human beings to each other are recognized as a necessity as well as experienced as an impossibility.” [trans. by M.S.] (ibid.). This underlines reflexive practice as an essential moment of aesthetic education and at the same time locates it on a relational level that focuses on the relationship to the Other.

Within critical theatre pedagogy, this seems to be a way of dissolving the focus of the individual subject that predominates in the European disciplines. Just as theatre does not focus on the human being as an independent subject, but on his or her entanglement with others and the environment, i.e. relationships, pedagogical contexts are inconceivable without being-with. How we evoke this possibility of encounter, which points beyond itself, determines the effectiveness of our actions.

What is the role of aesthetics in this? Our longing to engage in political education through the imagination can be seen as equivalent to the longing of the arts for social efficacy. The expenditure or transgression of the self along practices of imagination would have to consider the Other as a binding reference point. However, if we declare political and aesthetic processes in these procedures to be structurally identical and thus exclude the essential ambivalence between aesthetic and political dimensions of action and thought, we place ourselves in the service of activist political struggle. Alternatively, if we focus precisely on the ambivalence of power relations, we elude ideological appropriation on the one hand and find our goals in the acquisition of capacities for action that deal in and with these contradictions on the other. With Spivak, such a play with the ‘double bind’ would be a worthwhile goal of aesthetic education (cf. Castro Varela/Haghighat: 12). Mediation in structures of am-

bivalence would then mean subverting the dominant ideas of theatre, representation or mediation as well as the patterns of thought and interpretation of a postcolonial culture that we have internalized, with the ideas of the subject and education inscribed in them.

3_ Where do I read myself to?

Shocked by the blindness of my own actions and thinking of only a few years ago, I feel in retrospect the catastrophe of permanent inadequacy as well as the hopelessness of achieving even a remotely satisfactory state for it or even dealing with it. I read out of a crisis, seeking discussion, stimulation, and knowledge in dialogue with other authors. I look expectantly into the process of change, already feel a whiff, want to go further and have more of it. While reading, I stumble over vocabulary and ideas that empty out. Postcolonial concepts become “empty iterations” [trans. by M.S.] (cf. Varela & Haghighat 2023: 23), the concept of education is divested (Bünger 2013), vocabulary in everyday jargon is in vogue that is unrestrainedly ripped out of other fields of knowledge and sometimes even quickly devalues conflicts and differences between positions in all sharpness (e.g., toxic, traumatic).

Referring to the discursive model of communities of practice, Rathna Ramanathan argues that learning is a process that aims to become part of a sustainable and practice-oriented community. Against the horizon of current transformation, crisis and disaster scenarios, she justifies her departure from traditional concepts of knowledge located in the minds of individuals and speaks instead of knowledge acquired through active participation in a cultural practice (cf. Ramanathan 2017). Communities of practice foreground social learning and the culture produced in each case as the backbone of teaching-learning contexts. Not only reflecting on the global contexts of action of seemingly local events, but also reacting to them in action would be a longing of theatre pedagogical practice for today. Performing Arts in Contexts (PAC) wants to offer a possible framework for this. If the international networking of teachers initiated by PAC can be further developed into a practice that is dialogue-based

and critically grounded, then expanded capacities for action for global and local challenges could be gained along the way. With Homi Bhabha, such a practice would imply that our ways of life, projects and communities are intertwined (cf. Bhabha 2017: 44). As a consequence, these would be occasions for a transformation of theatre education. The art of becoming an ambivalent community in which we practice nonconformity attracts my interest.

The prerequisite for this seems to me to be an understanding of education that is “to be understood as ambiguous in a constitutive way” [trans. by M.S.] (Bünger 2013: 17). This leaves room for the different social conditions and practices of the social in which we are all involved and which constitute us as subjects. Understanding this ambivalence as productive and recognizing in it the ‘politicity of education’ could free us to some extent from the grip of prevailing theoretical constructs and possibly even open up alternative, hybrid spaces in the respective understanding of the profession (ibid.). For theatre pedagogical action and its political implications, the reflection of real conditional structures on the one hand, and the transcriptions and transgressions of currently valid or common social practices produced in the fictional framework on the other hand, are accordingly groundbreaking. Locating education where the constitution of the I take place in the We forces a reflexive approach to the taken-for-granted agreements of common action. In this way, cultural practices become conscious, describable and thus possibly also changeable. Performing Arts in Contexts grows through actions that form culture. It is in_between.

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Response by Milena Meier

Dear Mira,

Your contribution jumps out at me from many different angles. I see your text as an invitation to look closely, to think carefully and to consider the implications of the various narratives of change, crisis and catastrophe. I like to follow you as you point out the proximity between crisis and catastrophe and the performative arts. Your work also serves as a reminder: Has the concept of crisis and catastrophe slipped away from my understanding of theater unnoticed, as with the students you describe?

Have crisis and catastrophe also been pushed to the meaningless margins in my understanding of theater? You ask for “paths of knowledges”, that bring theater and reality into a different relationship and enable theater pedagogy to create alternative futures, and you plead for new possibilities for play and performance. Dialogically oriented practice is one of these new play and performance possibilities. I would be so interested to hear more of your thoughts on this! This is a point in your text that sparks something in me and makes me think further. In my engagement with dialogic practice, I hadn't yet thought about the close proximity of crisis and catastrophe in theater. Bringing the crisis into the dialogical process as something deeply intrinsic to theater ignites a fire in me. I ask myself, what qualities could a dialog practice expand if I understand it as a game within an agreed performative framework? Does the game make it possible to expand and transcend individual positions? When does resistance arise within me, when is the gap between my position and that of my dialog partner so great that it

leads to a catastrophe that ends in failure, or what alternative options for action open up to me at precisely this moment of crisis? For me, dialog practice has a great proximity to the subject from whose understanding you want to move away, if I understand you correctly. However, I also see dialog practice as a practice of entanglements and of entering into relationships. Perhaps we should fundamentally describe it as a dialogical-cultural practice that is no longer (only) about the individual subject, but about the reflection of cultural practices, about “learning unlearning” (Nora Sternfeld) and the expansion of cultural practices? This does not mean giving up one’s positions, but opening up to other patterns of thought and the biographical, historical and cultural particularities that have shaped these patterns and practices. Perhaps this occasionally leads to personal crises that deeply question the seemingly familiar. My hope is that other paths, perspectives, thoughts and actions will become possible in cultural dialog practice, which creates ambivalence as a permanent state in which alternative forms of living together are generated and in which de-subjectification (Elisabeth Sattler) is always already part of the process and which always considers the subject in relation to the cultural context.

I would like to address another point in your text, the self-questioning about your figure as a teacher and the comment that your experiential knowledge becomes ‘fragile’ in a changing, still transforming, crisis-ridden time, does not take sufficient account of the demands of contingent societies. What strategies, beyond irritations, could become essential? What comes to mind? I am exploring the concept of irritation. I deliberately leave out the extensive theory on irritation as a moment of educational processes and ask myself what associations the concept of irritation currently has for me. Does irritation also have something to do with deception, deliberately luring someone into a trap, irritating them in their usual or strategically repositioned approach? Is irritation part of the logic of war, or does the background of current war events influence my associations with ‘irritation’ (which I am actually very attached to in educational contexts)? I would like to explore with you and others what further steps we could take to remain capable of acting in training contexts. The mode of ‘getting involved’ comes to mind. ‘Getting

involved' in the thinking of students and, conversely, getting students involved in the thinking of teachers with their other historical connections and, in general, getting involved in other ways of thinking (beyond positions) as a possible way of teaching-learning contexts. This would take time and is diametrically opposed to artistic education in the form of a timetable that can be mapped in credit points and is contrary to economically oriented study programs. Would amazement, as a form of pausing and reflective realization of a possible other or third way, be a moment to strive for in the teaching-learning processes? Nicola Gess, Professor of Modern German Literature and an expert on amazement, states that "there is also a long tradition in cultural history that reflects on amazement in the sense of a contemplative or meditative practice that can also be learned, cultivated and practiced" (Gess: <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/staunen-affekt-nicola-gess-100.html>).

In times of change, a state of emergency, which leads to uncertainty on the part of all those involved in the teaching-learning process, what is perhaps needed in addition to irritation is communication that is characterized by the ability and willingness to enter into a relationship, to follow the thought paths of others like a path through the forest that has never been taken before, or perhaps to follow the other person diving unexpectedly and discovering the underwater world of the other person. This requires one thing above all: trust. Is trust a foundation that needs to be developed in order to remain capable of acting in the future? Would trust be the prerequisite for living, as you write, "the art of becoming an ambivalent community in which we practice non-conformity"?

*Warm regards,
Milena*

(Never) Mind the Gap

Kevin Hobbs

This paper considers how performance can bridge the gaps in social and personal knowledge created by a neoliberal education system. Gaps need not be intimidating entities but opportunities, a third space or an in-between space where ideas can be explored and celebrated outside of the limitations set by particular social standards. Gaps are the ideal space for performative inquiry, where theatre and all its characteristics can shine a spotlight on a different approach to meaning making.

I write as a Canadian, theatre-based researcher and educator. I go by he/him. My background consists of professional actor and playwright, medical educator and university instructor in Drama in Education, Applied Theatre and Social Issue Theatre for Community Engagement. I am president of a research and education theatre company called “Mirror Theatre”. I have a master’s degree in Social Justice and Equity and am presently pursuing a PhD in Curriculum Studies, investigating the benefits derived from two different performance pedagogies when training medical students in professional identity. All these elements influence my approach as much as my straight, white male North American demographic.

The in-between space fascinates me. It exists in our lives, hiding in plain sight, socially ignored in preference for positivist approaches to knowing. August Comte’s legacy of a “naïve realism” (Ryan 2018: 17) still holds wide sway, mostly the result of primary, secondary and much of post-secondary schooling that positions learning in binary paradigms. With it comes the binary logic of right/wrong, pass/fail, guilty/innocent, yes/no, body/mind, with no sense of something more, other possibili-

ties that exist in the spaces between the binaries. Along with positivism, the neoliberal prioritization of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) has increased in many North American education systems (a comparable example is Germany's MINT- mathematics, information, natural science, technology), acting as a "rhetoric of educational 'preparation'" (Yanez/Thumlert/de Castell/Jenson 2019: 28). Neoliberalist education prepares students for employment as producers of products that they, the students, will ultimately consume. Notably, STEM subjects such as math and science have a firm grip on positivistic values, presenting themselves as agents of objectivity. For example, imparted upon students in the field of science education is the claim that science must "uphold the values of autonomy, neutrality and impartiality" (McNamee 2005: 15). The words 'autonomy', 'neutrality' and 'impartiality' have become lionized as the norms of all important education (which is code for STEM education). Blakely and Hemphill challenge this notion: "The widely accepted standard definition of learning is not neutral; it is part of the neoliberal discourse of commodification, which turns schools into producers and students into consumers of knowledge products." (Blakely/Hemphill 2021: 89) As a result of this powerful neoliberal pressure, other approaches to living in and understanding our world are overshadowed and attempts to transition from a STEM approach result in "'othering' non-STEM culture" (Oliver/Nesbit/Kelly 2013: 183). I argue that theatre (Applied Theatre, particularly) and other performance pedagogies such as role-play are educational tools that reside intercostally in the gap, the in-between space, and that they provide a way to celebrate all that is non-neutral, partial, and subjective. It is a way to celebrate the breadth of our shared world.

I first became aware of the in-between space as a youth, beyond the strict borders of school, in the pages of comic books. And while the illustrated panels—the series of squares (usually) that hold pictures and dialogue—dazzle the eye at first, it was the in-between-the-panel blank spaces known as the 'gutter' that ultimately grabbed my curiosity. As Wallner states, "[t]he gutter provides opportunities for readers to add their own narrative details, creating a story that transcends the panels and text" (Wallner 2019: 820). In the process of devouring comics, I

realized I had agency to add to the story, to fill in the ambiguous blank spaces, to create the mini moments that bridge one panel to another. I stepped outside of the limits set down by the comic book artist, however briefly, and took control of the story, imagining something more than what was perceptible to the eye. I found agency through a creative act. The little, invisible moments I introduced into existence strengthened my relationship with each story in each comic book, building—if you will—intimacy with the narrative and the artists behind it.

Years later I came to know the theories of Homi Bhabha, the Indian-British critical theorist who proposed the concept of the third space. In the third space one has freedom to focus “on power relations through the relational perspective” (Sterrett 2015: 654) without allying oneself with one side (positive) or another (negative). This space provides the opportunity to explore numerous relationships with the world. Indigenous (Opaskwayak Cree) researcher Shawn Wilson lists people, environment/land, cosmos, and ideas as important relational possibilities in the world (cf. Wilson 2008: 84–96). Remembering my beloved comic books, I recognized that art is one doorway to that third space and to my world relations. Bhabha argues, “to live in the unhomey world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity: ‘I am looking for the join... I want to join... I want to join.’” (Bhabha 2004: 27)

Ambivalence and ambiguity can be frightening, however. Certainty provides comfort, familiarity. My Drama in Education teaching students display confusion in their eyes when I encourage them to fail. They are uncertain when I quote Samuel Beckett: “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” (Beckett 1983: 8) They ask for rubrics to guide them precisely in the tasks they have been assigned so they can achieve the highest grade. They ask how to do things “the right way”. They say they wish to explore drama and all its possibilities for teaching subjects to their own classes when they graduate, but they are hesitant. More precisely, they are ambivalent, torn between their reflexive desire for certainty (something trained into them for nearly twenty years by the time they reach me in university) and their curiosity about rule-break-

ing as a way to discover another approach in simply *being*. It is in this moment that the third space, delivered through the methodology of art and performance, can make its entrance so they can dialogue with fellow searchers and find new ways of being.

Joseph Schwab, the late 20th century leader in education and curricular studies, speaks of three operations that must take place in a collaborative, social setting to ensure a strong educational impetus. The operations are, “‘discovery’ of one another by collaborators, ‘coalescence’ of what is discovered, ‘utilization’ of the coalesced body of concerns for generating new educational materials and purposes” (Schwab 1973: 501). He also notes that the interaction between these three operations takes the form of a spiral. Rather than a scientifically modernist “linear sequence of logically related steps” (Blakely/Hemphill 2021: 16), the necessary movement for this kind of curricular, exploratory work is anything but straight-lined. Schwab, the educator, and Richard Schechner the performance theorist, are closely attuned to one another. In speaking about modern theatre Schechner (1988: 21–22) states:

The dynamics of the theater of Beckett, Genet, and Ionesco (among others) are drawn from life-rhythms: eating, breathing, sleeping-waking, night-day, the seasons, the phases of the moon, etc. These rhythms do not have beginnings, middles, and ends in the Aristotelian sense. One rhythmic cycle is completed only to begin again.

Schechner recognizes circular and cyclical patterns throughout theatre presentations. I suggest that it is not merely the theatre presentations that exist in circular/spiral forms, but also the devising of theatre. Creation—such as theatrical devising—is as much about failure as it is about success. ‘Fail again, fail better’. We know what works because through chaotic effort we come to know what doesn’t work. Hammering a nail into a wall works much better when your thumb is out of the way; that is a lesson you need to learn the hard way only once, but you do need to learn it. I call these creative moments of uncertainty and ambiguity a ‘magnificent chaos’. It is through the chaotic interactions between multiple elements and insights that artists/creators can discover a new sense

or meaning of the world. Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990: 106) would disagree with my assertion of chaos within the creative act:

Creation is not the replacing of nothing with something or chaos with pattern. There is no chaos; there is a vast, living world in which rules for specifying the pattern are so complicated that after you look at a few of them you become tired. The creative act pulls out some more inclusive shape or progression that gathers an immense amount of complexity into a simple, satisfying notion.

Whether you buy into Nachmanovitch's hidden-pattern theory, or my magnificent chaos theory doesn't matter since we both seek the same thing: a simple, satisfying notion. And to reach that, one needs the time, place, and latitude. One needs a third space.

Before I move too far from Schwab, I would like to mull over his three operations for curriculum development: discovery, coalescence, and utilization. Schwab makes it clear each of these operations "must be done in collaboration" (Schwab 1973: 501), requiring a social gathering of learners/devisors/participants/curriculum-builders, however you wish to designate them based on context. Within the gathering there is an inevitable dialogic encounter, an exchange of ideas and a shared meaning-making leading to some sort of growth in knowledge. Schwab is not alone in this thinking. Vygotsky speaks on how knowledge is co-constructed through human interaction and dialogue (cf. Churcher/Downs/Tewksbury 2014; cf. Vygotsky 1978). Augusto Boal, founder of the "Theatre of the Oppressed" outlines four stages of knowledge development in theatrical form that include knowing the body, making the body expressive, theatre as language and theatre as discourse (cf. Boal 1985: 126). In their theatre-making, Perry, Wessel, and Wager identify six steps including Reflection, Inquiry, Development, Framing, Rehearsal and Performance and note that Inquiry can be repeated several times in different ways: Inquiry (observation and discussion), Inquiry (automatic writing), Inquiry (scene work) and Inquiry (monologue writing) (cf. Perry/Wessel/Wafer 2013: 651–652). Some of this reflexive, creative work might be carried out as an individual's enterprise but, in this

theatre-making context, the group of individuals will always reconvene to share their accomplishments once they enter into dialogue with each other. Norris, when devising theatre through a Playbuilding methodology, emphasizes how critical an interpersonal skill set is to create a cohesive atmosphere in the group, and argues for faithfulness to the creative concepts of trust, spirit of play, safety, risk, and co-ownership (cf. Norris 2009: 59–63).

In my work as a teacher of Applied Theatre or as a theatre-maker through Mirror Theatre, I pick and choose from the examples above, curating elements to establish the strongest theatrical approach to a particular subject, but always focusing on those three essentials of discovery, coalescence and utilization. Let me provide you with an example. In the research for my master's degree in Social Justice and Equity, I worked with members of Mirror Theatre to devise a series of dramatic scenes that illustrated the struggles and triumphs of family members and medical professionals when caring for people with dementia or traumatic brain injury (TBI) in a long-term care setting. I have fully outlined the process in my thesis "To Know Their Stories: Using Playbuilding to Develop a Training/Orientation Video on Person-Centred Care" (Hobbs 2019), but for the purposes of this paper I provide a brief sketch of my work. The cast of Mirror Theatre—Actors, Researchers, Teachers (A/R/Tors)—pored over numerous transcripts of interviews with caregivers. What we discovered were many instances of conflict between healthcare professionals and family members, both seeking the best for the individual with dementia or TBI. The polarities between the workers and family were considerable. As theatre creators we problematized the issues we gleaned from the interviews by bringing in our own experiences and mixing our stories with the stories in the transcripts, then we devised short dramatic scenes that presented an issue without judging the participants in the issue¹.

1 The scenes were videotaped and placed on Mirror Theatre's website: <https://mirrortheatre.ca/performance/understanding-person-centered-care/>

We then engaged in Forum Theatre, Boal's theatrical intervention, to bring forward in a live public performance the polarizing issues between the family and healthcare workers. Through the performance and the subsequent facilitation of discussion and activities with the audience—known as *Jokering* (cf. Prentki 2015)—we shone a light on the conflict and dialogued over how the conflict might be resolved.

That was the process of this inquiry. Where was the third space in all of this? It could be found twice in the process. The third space appeared the moment the *A/R/Tors*—inspired by the transcripts—began sharing their own experiences with the healthcare system, introducing contradictions and affiliations between all the stories. This is a dialectical activity in which one story (thesis) may encounter (and counter) another story (antithesis), leading to the generation of a new, third story (synthesis). The third stories—both complicated and simple—were devised to provoke audience members (healthcare workers, family members) who had watched our performance into thinking and talking about their own experiences immediately after the performance concluded. It was during that 30-minute post-performance time of 'thinking' and 'talking' between *A/R/Tors* and audience that another third space appeared. New stories, which were shared by audience members, emerged. From those stories, new scenes were improvised by the *A/R/Tors* leading to even more responses from the audience. People were given space not only to talk in public about what happened to 'them' in a non-neutral, partial and subjective manner, but also to assist in creating new theatrical scenes. It was as if they gained agency by imagining what happened between the illustrated frames of a comic book.

In another context, when I work with teacher candidates in my Drama in Education class—students who have been exposed to a neo-liberal education—I give space and opportunity for them to theatrically work through their anxieties and consternation over entering the education profession by devising scenes that implicate and celebrate them. And, on behalf of arts educator and curriculum theorist Elliot Eisner who said, "Imagination is the source of new possibilities" (Eisner 2009: 9), I encourage the students to put aside notions of neutrality and impartiality and take a leap of faith into that in-between space of right

and wrong. I have found that the students who take that chance find out what Irwin and Reynolds mean when they say: “Framing teaching and learning through an aesthetic lens shifts our perceptions to time, space and place as a way to create teaching and learning practices that are personally meaningful and socially active.” (Irwin/Reynolds 2010: 161)

I will take this moment to spiral back towards the beginning of this article when I implicated myself in the third space through the ‘gutters’ of comic books. In doing so, I now move deeper to share my ongoing process to locate and relocate myself in the third space. Like many, my schooling (early years and undergraduate) indoctrinated a sense of certainty in knowledge and methodology, something finite (i.e., no need to keep on exploring) and at the time, comforting (i.e., thank God I don’t have to keep exploring because it is hard work, and I might get things wrong!). In science class I was trained on the process of a positivist scientific methodology, and in creative classes such as drama, art, and literature I learned how layered colors were coded and that words were metaphorically and symbolically specific to one meaning only. Imagination may have been lauded in these educational forums, but the enthusiasm for it felt more like lip service when faced with restrictive contexts that demanded a ‘correct’ answer.

It was after I completed my undergraduate studies and delved into the world of theatre that I began to sense dissatisfaction within myself, particularly with the use of language. Does a rainbow, I asked myself, always have to represent hope, or an owl wisdom? Instead, can rainbows and owls take us to different understandings if we free ourselves from imposed structures? I did not know it, but at this time my thinking was skirting the edge of a posthuman paradigm—one that to this day I still haven’t fully engaged with—in which the “human and other-than-human” (Aslanian 2018: 420) participate in moving away from language as a corresponding descriptor of reality to focusing on “matters of practices/doings/actions” (Barad 2003: 802). I’m not there in my thinking and practice, but I am close.

What does this mean? It means that over the years I sought the time and place to be playful, to challenge my assumptions and the assump-

tions imposed by the world, to fail in a most marvelous way only to discover something new. Theatre allowed me to do that. Stage rehearsals provided me an opportunity to transform words into movement or other visuals or non-verbal sounds. Theatre was that third space where a chair was permitted to not be a chair but a horse. It was exciting to discover that the phenomenon of the chair need not be bounded by its 'chairness'. In that context of playful theatrical exploration it was okay to ask, "what if...?" I suggest that this process is akin to the hypothesizing stage in scientific methodology. Yes, scientists thrive on imagination. According to Stuart (2019: 712):

[...] all experiments begin with hypotheses generated by imagining different ways the world might be. Before testing them, we explore these hypotheses by imagining what else would be true if they were. When it comes time to experiment, we take the real-world system we are interested in and recreate it inside our minds, laboratories, or computers by imagining analogous systems that could be investigated. And even though our idealized experiments remove confounding real-world factors, we imagine that the natural world also instantiates the regularities observed in experiments in order to refine our theories. Different though they are, each of these uses of imagination is necessary for scientific progress. If we want to understand science, we have to understand scientific imagination.

Stuart's in-between space is in his mind or laboratory or computer; that's where his imagination flourishes. Yet, I have encountered academics and artists who diminish the role of imagination and praise adherence to established rules as the way to build new meaning. One example of artists selecting rules over imagination can be found in Shakespearean rehearsals where some actors religiously dedicate themselves to the meter of the verse without allowing for vocal variation through personal interpretation. Those actors miss the possibilities that can emerge when relationships with humans and non-humans are able to occupy the in-between.

I carried the idea of relationship into my work as a medical educator. I used the performance pedagogy role-play as a tool to assist healthcare students in finding new perspectives and approaches to being a medical professional. I wrote case studies (the guiding story that role-players would learn for their portrayal with students) that undercut stereotypes often taught in health education (cf. Hyett/Gabel/Marjerrison/Schwartz 2019; cf. Ly/Crowshoe 2015). For example, many case studies that came across my desk indicated Indigenous patients as diabetic, traumatized, or alcoholic. That's it, nothing more. These are deficit-based cases, highlighting only problems in the Indigenous community. I countered with my own cases that celebrated the Indigenous patient. This can be done in any number of ways, such as writing cases about successful pregnancies or positive, caregiving inquiries. When the roleplays took place, they were essentially the third space where students could imagine a different kind of patient in front of them, someone not stigmatized by the stereotypes reinforced by the teaching and administrative community. In tandem with the role-player, healthcare students could perform (i.e., rehearsal) affirming relational interactions.

A reader of this article might well ask how can one ensure that students imagine possibilities that inspire growth and understanding? Will they get to the realization that I, the teacher/performer, wants? The answer is: you can't make that guarantee. As such, it is anxiety-making for any teacher, any performer. Will they—whoever 'they' might be—get it? The third space is always accompanied by ambiguity. Goals and Objectives have little to no place in the third space. This, of course, is heresy in a STEM-based education system because imparted predetermined knowledge is the status quo. I mentioned earlier that my students exhibit confusion and concern when I tell them to try and fail and hesitate to provide rubrics. Frankly, I also get nervous at times when faced with the same fog of ambiguity, when I ask nothing but questions of my students and audience and avoid all statements of personal/academic/aesthetic belief. It is during this time that I remind myself of an adage a close friend and colleague says, "I don't know where we are going but I do know how to get there" (Norris/Saudelli 2018: 3). By following a highly flexible process of asking questions, being curious, trying different ap-

proaches, embracing failure, and trying again, this approach guarantees something—an insight, an experience, an emotional encounter, a new relationship. I simply can't tell you in advance what the benefit will be. Such is the joy and trepidation when working in the third space.

Connelly notes that “educational reform in the middle of the last century focused explicitly on recognizable curriculum matters. It did so by marginalizing curriculum scholars in favor of disciplinary scholars” (Connelly 2013: 624). Once the disciplines of education (e.g., sciences) took hold there were fewer voices raised in favor of other approaches to knowing. It is for this reason that I lean so heavily into arts-based research and pedagogy. By employing theatre and performance pedagogy as a tool in the gap or third space, I resist the tidal wave of STEM and positivism paradigms. I encourage others to take a chance and do the same. Gaps are not to be ignored or feared. They are exactly where we need to be right now.

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Responses by Stanislaw Godlewski and Judith Philippa Franke

Stanislaw Godlewski

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for your text. It was really inspiring!

When you wrote about the space between frames in comics, I immediately thought of control—is it possible to be between spaces without wanting to control something, to separate, to order? What you write about teaching seems very beautiful to me, but also difficult to implement. I envy your students for having you as a teacher. It's very difficult to learn to let go, to allow yourself to be ignorant (as Ranciere would say—an “Ignorant Schoolmaster”) and to fail—especially as the system and often the students themselves expect us to ‘know’, to give them concrete ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’ (that’s what we get paid for eventually). Students often treat us as an authority—is it possible not to step into that role and teach at the same time? Not to mention that the ability to admit a mistake also requires awareness and responsibility, and in teaching, trust. And building trust in a group is sometimes very, very difficult.

I was thinking further about the fact that very often students (and myself too) are trained to think in a certain way. We are pushed into certain frames, but stepping outside the frame—being creative and allowing ourselves to fail—also requires training. It is a kind of practice that needs to be repeated while not falling into a routine. I wonder what ways

you have of keeping thinking outside the box fresh and surprising all the time, including for yourself.

Looking forward to seeing you at the next PAC conference!
Stanislaw

Judith Philippa Franke

Dear Kevin,

Already the first four lines of your paper were such a challenging joy and joyful challenge!

And more to the point: the almost sensory memory of subway stations excitement to read further about the potential of gaps of joints, to explore where there is anarchic space in-between...

...to imagine...

...what if?

I wonder if the educational system, instead of what you describe it to be dominated by, was informed by and rooted in curiosity, the willingness to fail, maybe feminism? It is exciting to imagine the practices we would apply.

You muse, “the in-between space fascinates me. It exists in our lives, hiding in plain sight, socially ignored in preference for positivist approaches to knowing”. Hiding in plain sight, the in-between spaces—almost as if they are only there if you care to see them instead of the one-directed lane of knowledge-accumulation. Again, it is almost physically there: the excitement about places between the binaries, beyond them. And furthermore: yes, what about the act of unlearning? How do we each go about that?

I am curiously asking myself when was the last time I learned from and unlearned through the students I have the pleasure working with? As Stanislaw writes: how can we thrive in not-knowing in our positions as teachers? With your referring to Bhabha’s “doorway”, I think about

the moments of hesitation. How do we dwell in them? Maybe even enjoy them? How do we together stay in the unknown?

You are so kind as to share your thoughts about your students being “torn between their reflexive desire for certainty [...] and their curiosity about rule breaking”. Again concurring with Stanislaw: Your students must be so glad to have you! What a mastery in openness—if that not in itself is an impossibility.

My mind wanders, following you to new stories shared and developed with audiences. I am filled with joy thinking about reading and trying to apply both Donna Haraway and Saidiya Hartman in wondering how new stories emerge and how to find different narratives and ways of narrating differently... Maybe apart from other things and situations just through dwelling in what you quote Norris about: “[...] creative concepts of trust, spirit of play, risk and co-ownership”.

Inspired by your writing to keep exploring in settings marked as educational and beyond, I will go into my next encounters trying out some of the scores below. I look forward to exchanging with you next time we are in the same place.

- Who inspires you to keep exploring? Spend time with them. Spend more time with them.
- Find certainty. With it, dwell in a moment of hesitation.
- Have a logbook of unlearning. Make six entries at least. Share with someone.
- Assume the system you are working in is radically based in the willingness to fail. Act accordingly.

Break a rule. Have fun with it.

Warmly,

Judith

Contact zone dialogue – don't lose the other person

Milena Meier

I lie in bed next to a one-year-old child and ask myself what kind of world this little person will see when he is 30, 50 and 70 years old. Snippets from the news fly through my head: the gap between rich and poor is widening, climate change, water shortages, floods, people fleeing their homes, war, terror. The list goes on. These are bleak scenarios that sometimes seem very far away, yet suddenly seem oppressively close. “Die Muster der Ungleichheit” (Bauer et al. 2023) (“The patterns of inequality” [trans. by M. M.]), an impressive graphic realization of a data collection on income distribution in major German cities in 2023, comes to mind. I search for this study on the internet the next morning. There are illustrations with blue and red dots that form patterns. They reflect sections of German cities in which the difference in household income is large within a few meters of each other. What I find interesting is the clear demarcation between the color red, which stands for low income, and blue, which stands for high income. The pure, rich blue or red patches also attract my particular attention. I take a closer look at Figure 2 under the title “Sharp edges”. It is an excerpt from my hometown of Berlin—and with it the question of which income levels and classes shaped me. A voice inside me repeats the often-heard assertion: “A state primary school is one of the few places where ‘everyone’ can still meet.” This statement, which I distrust, motivates me to investigate further: I locate two neighboring primary schools. One of them is in a deep blue, very affluent catchment area. I see one of many (invisible) lines that sort children according to their parents’ income. Within a district, a city,

within a country, but also between the so-called global North and South, many (in)visible lines could be drawn to mark social differences. As long as catchment areas for primary schools are not defined according to the criterion of the greatest possible diversity in terms of the educational level of the children's homes (to name just one), in reality it is often predominantly children from socializations perceived as their norm who meet, i.e. children of academics meet children of academics, etc. Once again, we see one of these constructed differences.

In the following, I will refer to the consequences of segregation due to social inequalities for democratic processes. I will introduce dialogue-based practice as a possible response to differences and crises. In doing so, I will reveal the specific qualities of artistic dialogues using a teaching example and question the difference in dialogue as an educational potential. An extension of educational theories, which could entail a formulation of a dialogical practice, will be sought. Finally, I will draw on the concept of the contact zone and the reference discipline of inclusion, explore where a dialogue-based theater pedagogical practice could develop beyond the coming together of individual subjects, and investigate what changes this implies within the institution of higher education, teaching and theater pedagogical practice.

Dialogue—democratization process

Social imbalance(s) in connection with a separation through invisible borders represents a danger for democratization processes because

Democratic societies are based on the exchange of conflicting opinions and opposing interests—and the search for compromises. All of this requires not only open and constructive dialogue, but also the open handling of conflicts. Constructive conflict is less of a threat to the community and more of an important element for social cohesion. Strong coexistence requires a good and functioning culture of dialogue and debate [trans. by M.M.] (Wissenschaftsverbund Vierländerregion Bodensee 2022).

However, when societies are organized in such a way that encounters and coexistence often take place predominantly within the familiar, e.g. within a red or blue marked area that is assumed to be the norm, special efforts and initiatives are required to recognize the invisible boundaries and to create and open up spaces in between.

The initiation of programs such as “Social Cohesion” by the “Wissenschaftsverbund Vierländerregion Bodensee” (“Lake Constance Four-Country Region Science Network” [trans. by M. M.]) can be read as a sign of concern for a democratic basis. In these current and future crises, which imply social inequalities and can entail the radicalization of individual positions, theater education can become involved in practice and higher education. This is not with the intention, as postulated in the “Social Context” program, of reaching compromises in dialogue, but to establish dialogue between people in the first place. According to Krenz-Dewe and Mecheril, democracy is not a status quo, but must be permanently established, because “in terms of democratic theory [...] democracy is above all an unfinalisable process [...]” [trans. by M.M.] (Krenz-Dewe/Mecheril 2022: 55) theater education, which claims to be socially relevant, must participate in democratic negotiation processes with its own artistic forms. If the world produces crises in quick succession, theater education must not be allowed to ignore this, but should, in my opinion, lead to the question of what changes. New orientations of content and forms are needed in order to remain capable of acting and, beyond that, to actively shape life together.

Stopover—difference within my biography

At this point, I would like to pause for a moment and answer the question raised at the beginning about the income situation and the class that shaped me. I grew up taking it for granted that I would have butter on my bread and juice in stock every day. I can tell you that I grew up as a child of academic parents. This allows me to categorize myself seamlessly as a member of a class. However, I am not telling a significant part of my story. I also grew up with the knowledge, acquired through sto-

ries, that it is not a matter of course to put butter on your bread every morning, to open a bottle of juice or to be warm in winter. So there is a difference running through my biography that defies classical categorization. To add another ambiguity: I grew up in Germany and grew up being read as German. At the same time, I was confronted with being the one who showed the 'typical' characteristics of a Swiss woman. Later, I lived in Switzerland and was read as German. Perhaps my biographical experiences of difference are also the reason for my interest in dialogue. I am aware that with this contribution I am making a strong case for the category of difference, which could run the risk of reproducing stereotypical attributions and producing exclusions. I would like to think of differences as a changeable scope within a dialogical process and not as a binary organized logic that reduces differences to attributions. Rather, I am interested in difference as a changeable medium within a subject in the dialogue process with other people, beings or artefacts.

Dialogue practice

The term 'dialogue' has been with me for several years. It has taken up residence with me, somehow settled in. I take this article as an opportunity to explore dialogue as a theater pedagogical practice and to question its potential with regard to the exchange of differentiating perceptions and constructed differences that imply disadvantages.

These are imbalances of politically provoked crises that entail individual crises. theater pedagogy as a discipline that is characterized by special expertise in the conception and design of artistic, performative and social settings, frameworks, interventions and occasions seems to me to be particularly suitable for initiating encounters and dialogue. theater pedagogy is also adept at playing between reality and fiction and is capable of shaping and changing reality. In my understanding, theater pedagogical work must not leave the world in its multiple crises outside the door of the auditorium. They belong on the stage and/or theater pedagogical practice should be located with dialogue-based projects in urban space and/or in institutions themselves.

In the following I describe the qualities of artistic, theater pedagogical dialogue processes. By these I mean artistic, performative arrangements/actions/interventions that enable people to come together and participate in something that generates a verbal or non-verbal exchange, the special quality of which is to be sought in the moment of complete togetherness, in which new paths are tried out together and negotiated on a trial basis. Reflecting on the process reveals the realization that perception is subjective, or even a questioning or a change in the interpretation of subjective perception, habits of thought or action.

Verbal dialogue—teaching example

With a teaching example from the Bachelor's degree in theater Education at the Zurich University of the Arts in the module "Perception of Art", I would like to use a practical example to show what I understand by a dense verbal dialogue moment that contains the above-mentioned dialogical quality. To do this, I zoom into the micro-perspective: the students had the task of selecting a picture during an exhibition visit that "speaks to them, touches them, hits them" [trans. by M.M.] (Sturm: 2011: 52f). They were asked to engage in a dialogue about this artistic work with another person whose perception and taste they assumed to be different from their own. The students then recorded the process in writing. Student Daria Thüring vividly describes what changed in her perception of a painting as a result of the dialogue with her grandmother:

She [grandmother of the student] was taking my Bertha [figure in the picture] away. She took my Bertha away from me and gave me another one. [...] I can't see Bertha in my old way anymore. [...] I see her strength as well as her strictness and her pride. [...] First I was sad, really, I was sad that Grandma took her away from me, that dreamy Bertha who is so far away, who is so beautiful but doesn't even know... (Thüring 2020: 2).

Something has happened between the grandmother and her granddaughter. Through the conversation with her grandmother, the student

reflects on the changed interpretation of her perception. This oscillates between an experience of loss and joy at the perception of a new figure, a product somewhere between her own perception and that of her grandmother. According to Waldenfels, this could be interpreted as an experience of foreignness: “Familiar problems take on new contours when the shadows of the foreign fall on them.” [trans. by M.M.] (Waldenfels 2016: 8) The familiar problem here is the student’s own perception, which takes on new facets in the exchange with the grandmother. The student describes a threshold. She still remembers the interpretation of her perception as a figure that she describes as “dreamy Bertha” (Thüring 2020: 2) and now also recognizes other characteristics of the figure in the picture, namely “strength as well as her strictness and her pride” (ibid.). She thus describes a state of ambiguity and ambivalence.

The example shows the quality that can arise in dialogue encounters. The dialogue between two (or more) subjects has the potential to reveal the differentiating perceptions or positions. An intermediate space can open up, a space of play between the subjects in which the differences come into motion with each other, figuratively speaking changing their color, texture, size or volume. This is not static, but changeable, within or in the aftermath of a dialogue-based encounter. The unambiguous either becomes ambiguous or maneuvers into an expanded understanding of an indissoluble ‘as well as’. If ambivalences and ambiguities can be brought forth with and in dialogue practice, then this encounter has changed something. Daria Thüring’s written account, which bears witness to different interpretations of a picture, tells of a conflict between her and her grandmother and also of a conflict within herself. In her written reflections, Daria Thüring wrestles with the contradictory interpretations. According to Hans-Christoph Koller, this articulating conflict should be read as a sign of a transformative educational process,

as those linguistic procedures in which a conflict is witnessed—be it by keeping an already articulated conflict open or by (finding) a new idiom to articulate a previously concealed conflict. Only those transformations could be described as education that do justice to the conflict in the sense mentioned, i.e. that are suitable for keeping an al-

ready articulated conflict open or for helping a previously inarticulable concern to find a voice. [trans. by M.M.] (Koller 2016:159).

For Koller, language as a medium for the articulation of conflict is therefore constitutive for transformational educational processes. As the observation of images has shown, dialogue practice can enable transformational educational processes according to Koller. With a further example, however, I would like to make a suggestion for an extension of educational processes.

Non-verbal dialogue—artistical example

The following example is an excerpt from a multi-year art project by artist Lenz's "Workshop for Change" [trans. by M.M.]. This was based in Berlin Neukölln in Carl-Weder Park from 2003 to 2010. The park was placed on top of the newly built city motorway that divided the neighborhood and remained largely unused by the residents. I don't want to go into the project in detail here but would like to pick out a documented encounter to open up the search for change processes using this practical example. In 2005, Seraphina Lenz publicized the arrival of a white horse named Hannibal in Carl-Weder-Park with a postcard campaign. This horse was to be found in a marked-out area in the park for several weeks. A special dialogue between a local resident, Mr. Hartwig, in his early 60s, and the horse Hannibal can be found in the project documentation (cf. Lenz 2011: 131). The regular attention, the responsibility for the horse's welfare and the exchange of affection brought back childhood memories for Mr. Hartwig. As a child, he had a close relationship with a horse and, as the son of a butcher, was also confronted with the killing of animals at an early age. He describes the actualization of his childhood in the non-verbal exchange with the horse Hannibal as follows:

It was a wonderful feeling to be with a horse again. A lot of memories came back to me at that moment. [...] Images of my childhood flashed before my eyes when I was supposed to lead the little calves or sheep to the slaughterhouse. Sometimes I would go into the barn beforehand and let a calf suck on my finger and stroke it before it was killed. I was always

really upset then, but as a child I couldn't confide in anyone what was going on inside me. [trans. by M.M.] (Lenz 2011: 131)

Psychological concept

Mr. Hartwig's written reflections reveal an intrinsic conflict, which according to Koller is a prerequisite for a transformational educational process: the feeling of attachment to animals and the pain of killing animals, as an unauthorized feeling.

In Mr. Hartwig's reflection, however, I also read a process of change based on perception. Many senses are involved in the dialogue process between Mr. Hartwig and the horse. Smelling, hearing, feeling and seeing are in the foreground and spoken language takes up little space. In the dialogue-based encounter with the horse, Mr. Hartwig's childhood memories are evoked and, years later, actualized in the dialogue with a horse. This process of change based on perception can be linked to the psychological concept of the "present moment" [trans. by M. M.] (cf. Stern 2007). Daniel Stern and the Boston Group researched this concept in therapeutic settings, which describes the processes of change within psychotherapeutic processes. It is about the present moment in perception that can occur in the relationship between therapist and patient. This can be transferred to dialogue-based artistic practice.

As the example of Mr. Hartwig and Hannibal shows, present moments can also occur in a non-verbal dialogue practice. It could be an indication that childhood memories and experiences are actualized in dialogical actions, i.e. memories become present and at the same time a new experience becomes possible. In this case, the difference would be between the two experiences, in this example the dialogue with a horse from childhood and years later with the horse Hannibal from the art project "workshop for change" [trans. by M. M.].

These procedures and practices can be derived from psychologically oriented concepts, such as the concept of change in therapeutic settings, for theater pedagogical artistic dialogue-oriented practice, which would

also have to be developed within the framework of university teaching and training.

Against the backdrop of current and future crises, it seems necessary to me that theater pedagogy, especially in its dialogue-based approach, should include well-founded psychological dimensions as well as people's specific social and cultural backgrounds. Because they shape us and our past and are an intrinsic part of dialogue processes. The demarcation line between red and blue leads to different dispositions for educational processes; here we should create differentiated knowledge and take it into account in our TP practice. For it is the differences between people and within the subject that are to be brought into play in dialogue, in recognition of the constant change of these.

Concept of the contact zone

With the concept of the contact zone presented in the following, I would like to attempt to formulate an extension of the dialogue beyond the dialogizing subjects because political and historical contexts are also narrated in the concept of the contact zone. This seems relevant for crisis contexts. For seemingly subjective narratives are expanded to include their historicity and traces of the past, which co-determine the present, are taken into account in the dialogue process. With the concept of contact zones, narratives are no longer left to individuals; instead, the subjects can be understood as carriers of collective processes. The concept of the "contact zone" was originally developed by literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt in the 1990s to describe transcultural encounters in which the traces of the colonial era still have an impact today: "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today." (Pratt 1991: 34)

The concept can be applied to various spaces in which different forms of social inequality, power relations and discrimination are effective, while at the same time recognizing their historical dimension. In the

concept, the border remains significant as an actual territorial or social line of difference but is expanded in the consideration of a zone:

“border’is often thought of as a one-dimensional, dividing line; in contrast, ‘zone’ includes an area, an atmospheric [sic] network with blurred contours and overlaps. Borders have something unifying per se, because through their existence they construct a local dimension and/or a communicative space in which their overcoming is negotiated. The most important function of borders in this context is therefore the contacts across them.” [trans. by M.M.] (Spieker 2019: 30f)

In the concept of the contact zone, the border is not only seen as something divisive, but also as special spaces of cooperation:

Border regions are spaces of closure and exclusion, they are the focus of political anti-migration campaigns and, where they are permeable or completely lack a material marker, they are also spaces of everyday coexistence in the context of political and nation-state developments. [...] The ‘contact zones’ are thus influenced by political and social demarcations; they are conflict zones full of co-operation, spaces of coming together despite social barriers and exclusions. [trans. by M.M.] (Kleinmann, Peselmann, Spieker: 1991: 14f)

Application of the contact zone concept

How could the concept of the contact zone be applied in practice? The concept of the contact zone is suitable for use as a thinking foil in the process of planning, realizing and reflecting on performative dialogue practice. It could be helpful as an analytical tool when it comes to selecting a territorial location. Zones in which structural differences of inequality are effective can be analyzed and selected as an occasion for dialogical encounters and joint activities. If I go back to the beginning of the article and ask myself where and with whom I would like to realize a project in the red and/or blue marked area, then I would now refer to the concept of the contact zone and neither describe one neighborhood as a problem

neighborhood, nor understand the other as one of privileged residents and in the end probably opt for a project in the red zone, because it is obvious that there are apparently fewer—or different—resources available there. Using the concept of the contact zone as a reference, theater educators and mediators could succeed in critically distancing themselves from their own desires and incorporating the historical significance for seemingly subjective narratives of crises and conflicts. In the example above, the movements between the red and blue zones become interesting. Or the focus would be on initiating something that enables movements and encounters in an in-between. It could be possible to enable other narratives on (historical) narratives characterized by interpretative sovereignty or to recognize the social, hierarchical, historical shadows in seemingly subjective narratives and to formulate their effects on the respective subjects. In the space of the blue and red areas, for example, the question of the influence of the inner-city (and inner-German) Wall or the West German history of the guest workers of the 1950s-1970s could become relevant. The differences in the dialogues would then no longer be understood only as subjective narratives, but the subject would also act as a carrier and mediator of historically based patterns of perception. The past would have to be included in current narratives. The concept of the contact zone could just as well be applied to the creation of social spaces, accompanied by the following question: which categories of difference are revealed when I look through the template of the contact zone? Which social spaces do I try to create through a dialogue format? What kind of intervention is needed that is read and accepted as an invitation to a polyphonic gathering?

University as a contact zone

I see the influence of the concept of contact zones on teaching firstly in a changed view of the institution of the university itself. The university should be defined and scrutinized as a social and possibly also a territorial contact zone. What power relations are evident in the entire staff structure of the university, from the kitchen and cleaning services to the IT department, students and teaching staff, etc.? Formats that invite di-

dialogue could be developed on the basis of dialogue-based practice. Dialogue-based research methods could also be developed to explore social differences and their historical dimensions. Against the backdrop of multiple crises, this seems relevant insofar as universities have to ask themselves to whom they grant internal or explicit access (to study) and which marginalizing structures the universities reproduce. Against the backdrop of current crises, which are also making war events prominent in everyday university life, a dialogue-based practice could create answers with dialogue spaces based on the concept of the contact zone. The central question here would be how universities can be a safe place of education for students whose countries of origin are at war with each other without becoming mute in the process. It seems more necessary than ever for universities to establish a culture of dialogue in which differences are not perceived as something divisive, but can be experienced as something changeable, unstable and fluid in cooperation. As part of theater pedagogy training, the curriculum must be expanded to include a basic knowledge of historical interdependencies and the ability to develop artistic responses to dialogue.

Dialogical practice in connection with inclusion

Finally, I would like to think about dialogue practice in connection with the concept of inclusion in a different direction. The guiding question here is: how does dialogue-based practice change in connection with inclusion? The inclusive approach is also binding for dialogue-based practice, because:

In principle, inclusion is the task that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities gives the right to participation, to education throughout the course of life, and the structural conditions must then actually ensure that people are allowed to participate as they are, without the children or young people or people having to adapt to the structure, but vice versa. Conditions must be created under which people who are made different by society or who see

themselves differently have the opportunity to realize their potential.
[trans. by M.M.] (Bitiş/Borst, 2022, 08:32-08:54)

In contrast to the criticism of the neoliberal tendencies towards participation (cf. Kup 2017: 30) in theater pedagogical practice and academic higher education, this also results in a mandatory requirement for dialogue-based practice and its educational institutions. From an inclusive perspective, the aim is to change the structures that create differences in such a way that they enable participation. With the following everyday observation, I would like to share what a moment of dialogue within inclusive structures could look like: five horses. Ten children. One child sits on each horse, while one child leads a horse on foot along a stream. On the second last horse, a child sits backwards on the horse and moves his hands and arms in the air. The child on the last horse also moves their arms through the air. Riding forwards and backwards, the two children maintain eye contact and perform the theater exercise “Mirroring”. A non-verbal dialogue. Both are so challenged that the moment demands their full concentration, which is released in shared laughter—and allows me to observe the scene from a distance. I actually want to stop writing here, because “inclusion is when you no longer have to talk about it” [trans. by M.M.] (Bitiş/Borst, 2022, 07:12-07:15). But the image is intended as a metaphor for an inclusive space that enables participation. That is why I add: this scene is a metaphor for an inclusive space that enables children to participate. I add further: this scene is a metaphor for an inclusive space that enables the participation of children with and without disabilities. I amend: the inclusive space enables children to be together in which this is in the foreground and the construct of disability is (temporarily) meaningless. I reduce to the essentials: two children play a game together while riding—within inclusive structures.

The quality of dialogue can be seen in the joint search by taking up and continuing movements, a non-verbal back and forth movement, a non-verbal negotiation process. In the inclusive space, the dialogue process seems to change and a different quality becomes visible. Significantly different from the example of looking at pictures described at the beginning of the lesson is the fact that differences in content do not be-

come a negotiation process in the dialogue. The focus is on the joint process of searching and trying out what is possible for both children. In this way, the inclusive approach shows a proximity to migration education. With his perspective on migration education, Paul Mecheril argues that the focus should not be on differences, but on similarities: “Dualistic views of culture, difference and identity should be opened up.” [trans. by M.M.] (Mecheril 2012: 33. This does not mean that differences in the interpretation of content within inclusive dialogue practice cannot become an object per se, only that they are not reduced to their binary identity categories. Perhaps the shared experience leads to a future change in perception and new options for action, in each case in the majority. Differences that appear as the content of a dialogue-based practice should, as a fluid, multifaceted quality, constantly open up new options for perception and action, crossing and expanding patterns of perception. This would be in line with the migration education perspective, because it is not difference and the construction of difference as such, “but the processes and phenomena of contamination and dissolution of boundaries, of displacement and dislocation that run counter to order come into view” [trans. by M.M.] (Mecheril 2012: 33).

Institutional mission of a dialogue-based practice

I would now like to return to the thought process of inclusion. Mai Anh Boger points out that inclusion not only implies the right to education for people with disabilities, but describes her understanding as follows:

Accordingly, my approach to inclusive education, where it is already a lot about disability and society, but on the other hand, I am also often concerned with bringing together different disciplines that deal with difference and power relations, i.e. working in an interdisciplinary way. [...] On the one hand a very broad concept of inclusion, where it can be about all possible lines of difference and on the other hand a focus on disability. [trans. by M.M.] (Bitiş/Borst, 2022, 03:24-3:42)

Inclusion therefore refers to various forms of differences and power relations, as does the concept of the contact zone, but implies a specific intention: participation in education, while I would characterize the concept of the contact zone as a searching approach. An institutional mandate for dialogue-based practice can be derived from this. This consists of using artistic, dialogue-based practices to initiate inclusive institutional change processes. The experiences of recent years from the graduates of the Master's program in theater Education at the Zurich University of the Arts, under the direction of Mira Sack, can be groundbreaking here. They have shown that institutional change processes are possible through performative dialogue practices. The aim of the Master's degree project is to initiate a process of change in an institution. The aim is not to transform the institution, but to initiate a change process adapted to the educational framework. Based on these experiences, I dare to say that a dialogue-performative practice is suitable for initiating change processes in institutions that explicitly focus on the structures that create difference.

Contact zone dialogue in resonance with crisis dynamics

We must make an effort if we do not want to leave the playing field to global and local crisis dynamics in which differences lead to radical positions of individuals or groups. The danger of social demarcation of individual groups, which harbors the risk of producing discriminatory and hostile attributions, is relevant. The development of a dialogue-based practice could be a possible path for theater pedagogy that helps to negotiate and shape social coexistence and the future. In the dialogue process, it is possible to experience one's own perception of the world and of oneself as contingent. In dialogue, we experience that we can see, hear, speak, feel, think and act differently. As the example of granddaughter and grandmother looking at a picture has shown, it is possible to experience a change in one's own perception and its interpretation through dialogue. Recognizing politically and historically based social inequality on the basis of subjective perception seems particularly necessary in

the current crises. The concept of contact zones would be a possible approach to expanding dialogue practice with its perspective on shifts in differences in subjective perception to include the historical dimension and reference to the world.

The artistic practice and expertise inherent in theater pedagogy offers a profound basis for readjusting social and territorial contact zones in design processes. In the context of dialogue-based practice, familiar forms such as interventions could be reoriented as inviting gestures, in addition to their potential to create disturbances. What interventions in public spaces and within institutions are needed so that people feel invited to enter into dialogue with one another? Dialogue means not losing the other. Temporary dialogue-based interventions should be decoupled from classic theater pedagogical production logics and concepts of presentation. In order to be sustainable, their duration should be orientated towards the circumstances and intention of change.

Establishing a dialogue-based practice of theater pedagogy at art colleges would mean training people in dialogue skills alongside the training of their artistic profession. This includes recognizing differences, enduring them and placing oneself precisely in these areas of tension or creating contact zones within which differences are negotiated. Impulses from psychology could be helpful when it comes to training dialogue skills. In addition, educational theories could be expanded to include the knowledge of change processes from psychology.

From the connection with the field of inclusion, another orientation of dialogue practice can be undertaken. The structures that create difference come into view and the unifying aspects of dialogue come to the fore.

The world that the child will see in adulthood can possibly be surmised, and yet remains uncertain. There will certainly be diverse worlds with multiple life plans and different conditions. Schools and universities should develop dialogue skills and the ability to engage in dialogue in order to create peaceful negotiation processes that transcend all differences.

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Response by **Ádám Bethlenfalvy**

Dear Milena,

I found reading your chapter really exciting! As a resident of a highly polarized East European country, your focus on dialogue as a crucial component of democracy made real sense. In my immediate environment, it is quite clear that institutional politics does everything possible to quash dialogue. The aim seems to be for people to stay behind their barricades and be suspicious or judgmental about people who are on a different 'side'. There is also much literature about how social media bubbles (created by the algorithms) radicalize and mislead people—these spaces create a false sense of dialogue, when actually they are echo chambers, reinforcing notions that are not contested, fact-checked, or related to any other perspective or human experience. I really appreciate the example of Daria and her grandmother where the task was to talk about a piece of art with someone who is possibly in a different position. The safety of talking about a piece of art seems important! Reading your text raised questions in me concerning what makes people open or even capable of dialogue. How can you 'practice' listening to ideas or experiences that deviate from yours?

The notion of the concept "contact zone" seems a really useful one. I can relate it to some of my experiences working with diverse groups where exploring stories or trying to create an open space for dialogue between students from very different backgrounds. Again, the aim of creating something together and the importance of understanding each other to be able to do it is mediated through the task itself.

I was wondering about whether you have any thoughts on what the content of dialogue should be preferably, or is the act of engagement the aim itself?

You claim that dialogue can lead to change in the individual. Connecting this with the notion of the concept “contact zone” shifts the perspective of dialogue to a social encounter, a change in social understanding. I agree that these encounters would definitely make the world a more livable place. It also opens the question if dialogue leads to action and if action is needed for social change.

Thank you for sharing these thoughts—it raised useful questions concerning my own practice, and I am sure others will find it useful as well for our field!

*Best wishes,
Adam*

Fictional contexts that liberate educational and artistic processes

Ádám Bethlenfalvy

This chapter will explore the role of fictional narratives in classroom drama and why their use might be especially important in being able to relate critically to narratives as such in today's narrative-dominated political and social reality.

Narratives and society

Narratives have played a central role in understanding the world around us and defining our relationship to it. Since the 1980s there has been a well documented shift towards the study of the social and personal impact of narratives, which is at times referred to as the “narrative turn” (Vassilieva 2016: 1). The transmission of knowledge and cultural values from generation to generation through stories is a widely accepted notion. Jerome Bruner claims that societies collate their interpretation of the world into the culture that transgresses through generations, many times embodied in narratives (cf. 1990: 12), he also points out that the process of self-making is also a narrative act (cf. 2002: 65) and that “if we lacked the capacity to make stories about ourselves, there would be no such thing as selfhood” (2002: 86).

This narrative nature of human identity is being exploited by consumer culture according to Jayne Raisborough, who examines how material goods play a role “not just as ‘props’ in the story of self, which can be touched, used and read from and into, but as narrative devices that

shape and give future form to the narrative arc” (Raisborough 2011: 31). Naomi Klein sees the concept of brand building as a process of creating narratives around companies that allows them to sell their products as expression of peoples’ selfhood, their values, when they choose a specific brand of shoes for example. Besides marketing, the political field has also relied heavily on narratives. The examination of this phenomena has only gathered momentum in the last fifty years. Nordensvard and Ketola (cf. 2022) offer a detailed analysis of the use of conspiracy theories—a specific form of narrative—in Donald Trump’s election campaign and the Brexit vote. They conclude that “populist tropes and plotlines guide people’s sensemaking in policy areas characterized by contestation and complexity” (ibid.: 879). Madisson and Ventsel state that “political narratives are often constructed as endangering *our* existence” (Madisson/Ventsel 2021: 110) after examining the political exploitation of narratives related to George Soros in different countries. These examples above show that our consumer/populist social reality is riddled with fictional narratives. We drama practitioners need to examine our own practice and reflect on how ‘real’ and fictional narratives are used in them, on how we facilitate the participants of our drama/theatre lessons to take a critical relationship to narratives that are surrounding them, and also the ones they form about the world and themselves.

While there are various reasons for engaging in theatre or drama activities in educational contexts this writing is based on the premise that one of the aims of these practices is to create social and/or individual development as part of the artistic process. Different traditions within the field of theatre/drama education use different types of narratives. The use of fictional narratives is a crucial point of the Anglo-Saxon Drama in Education approach. However, it is perhaps in part due to the growing influence of postdramatic theatre and devising that other traditions rely more heavily on autobiographical (self-)narratives. In this article, I argue that working with fictional narratives offers greater liberty to explore them both feelingly and critically; while performing identity- and self-narratives directly carries the danger of reinforcing them rather than being allowed the space to explore and question them critically.

I need to clarify from the onset that I am offering these arguments fully engaged with multiple practices to contextualize their benefits in comparison (not contrast) with each other. As my training and background are primarily in the Anglo-Saxon Drama in Education domain, I will be relying on theory and terminology related mostly to this tradition, starting out by offering some context and then exploring the issue of my paper more directly, first within my main territory of interest and then within a wider sphere.

Narratives and drama in education

The movement of Drama in Education, or Process Drama to which it is now referred nowadays, is based on the idea that students can safely engage with a variety of issues through fictional narratives, often by stepping into role themselves. “The dramatised, fictional world of make-believe drama draws our attention to aspects of the ‘real’ world; it helps us to recognise a sense of our own reality, and to understand it better” states Brian Wolland (2010: 2), offering a clear expression of what can be considered the traditional stance on using fictional stories in drama lessons. Gavin Bolton (cf. 1979) locates this mode of meaning making on a spectrum between ‘natural’ dramatic child play and theatre as performance. While both forms rely on engagement with fiction, there is more emphasis on the performative aspect in the case of the genre of theatre. Bolton explains that “play is not only *being*. It uses the form of being in order to *explore being*” (ibid.: 22) and infusing structures and forms of theatre can enhance this exploration while its fictional nature offers a safe space. The general dynamic of stepping into fictional contexts is expressed by Patrice Baldwin as the following: “Through the taking of roles, drama supports, models and enables active citizenship through the children as a community working in role in imagined contexts that draw from and transfer back to ‘real life’ contexts” (Baldwin 2009: 8). She also quotes a pupil explaining that drama is different from other school subjects because “you get to really experience real life things and problems” (ibid.).

Of course, the relationship between ‘real’ and ‘fictional’ is much more complex.

While Baldwin connects the taking of fictional roles in general to citizenship, Bolton offers very specific long-term objectives that lie behind his drama work. He explains that through facilitating participants into being in a fictional context, he aims to “help the student understand himself and the world he lives in; to help the student know how and when (and when not) to adapt to the world he lives in; to help the student gain understanding of and satisfaction from the medium of drama” (Bolton 1976: 1 quoted in Davis 2014: 22). It is important to highlight that Bolton considers it a central aim for students to gain understanding of the aesthetics of drama as a medium, alongside enhancing personal and social understanding, together with a critical agency that suggests that the learning derived from engaging with the fictional context should influence decisions (concerning what not to adapt to) and actions in real social contexts.

The history of Drama in Education could also be mapped as a series of debates on what sort of fictional context is the most useful to engage in and what sort of role or perspective/frame offered to the participants is the most fruitful in enhancing a shift in understanding. The well-known pioneer of British drama education, Dorothy Heathcote worked well longer than half a century developing a variety of approaches and methodologies. Her early work, referred to as “Living Through Drama” (LTD), or “Man in a Mess”, is seen by many (cf. Bolton 1998; cf. Davis 2014) as creating the possibility of engaging in a fictional crisis—the mess—in a role that needs to deal with problems as if it were its own. In a well-known example of Heathcote’s LTD drama (cf. Bolton 2003), participants make a play about a prisoners of war camp—based on a scenario suggested by the students—and deal with a ‘stool pigeon’, a traitor amongst their lines. Heathcote’s later work, known as the “Mantle of the Expert” (MoE) approach to drama, was described by Bolton¹ (cf. 1998: 170) as a reinterpretation of her earlier LTD approach, frames

1 Heathcote and Bolton worked in Newcastle and Durham respectively and were in a very close work relationship. Even though Bolton’s own work took him in a

participants in a more distant role, as experts of some sort. For example, workers in a recycling unit having to categorize and so to make meaning of the objects and histories left to their care. The position of the expert offers a more distant perspective, a more rational position on the situations and stories examined, but on the other hand opens fantastic opportunities for incorporating situation-based tasks and curriculum learning. Heathcote explains that Mantle of the Expert is an “approach to the whole curriculum, not a matter of isolating just one theme. Any one thing you want to teach must become meshed within broad curriculum knowledge and skills.” (Heathcote/Bolton 1995:16) However, Davis argues that while MoE drama constitutes a powerful and human-centred teaching method the perspective offered to the students by the expert frame lacks “questioning the values in the social context” (Davis 2014: 58) and is “too often caught within the present parameters of society and within those parameters we work to develop a positive human ethos and try to move things forward as best we can” (ibid). So, while the participants are busy trying to solve a problem as experts, they are not questioning the social structures and values ingrained in the situation.

Making to explore narratives

It is crucial to note that in both modes of drama the participants are not presented with a pre-written fictional world but take part actively in the creation of the drama world. This allows students to build their own interests, topics, content into the context and the drama itself within the structure offered by the facilitator, especially in the case of LTD where there is great independence from school curriculum. Actually, in his final research exploring the differences between acting behavior on stage (of actors) and in classroom drama (of student participants) Bolton comes to the conclusion that in LTD besides presenting and performing acting behaviors, students are in a “making” mode in the improvisational

different direction they co-authored several books, including Heathcote’s seminal book on the Mantle of the Expert approach to drama (cf. 1995).

moments that are at the center of this type of drama lessons. Bolton describes making as “any dramatic exercise in which participants are free to explore without any sense of preparing for showing to someone else. It is not rehearsable nor directly repeatable.” (Bolton 1998: 274) He clarifies that because of their previous investment in creating elements of the dramatic world participants take on the functions of dramatists besides that of actors in these improvised sections of the narrative as they are consciously forming their own and the group’s experience within the dramatic constraints, while also being in the fictional situation. I tend to use ‘making’ to describe the tripartite process of working for those moments of ‘living through’ that form the key moments of the experience: I am making it happen (the role building in the drama event); it is happening to me (the living through experience); I am conscious of it happening to me (producing the metaxis effect) (Davis 2014: 53), explains David Davis (2014) in relation to his own form of Process Drama that is connected strongly to Bolton’s approach. The concept of metaxis refers to “recognising that one is in two social contexts at the same time” (Davis 2014: 52). It is considered a central component of the social developmental strength of Process Drama as participants can actively test out their (real world) values within the safety of the fictional world that they have been actively creating. It is useful to note that participants are not just stepping into the shoes of others, as could be the case with performing a role from a written script but are actually taking part in making the fictional shoes that they then step into.

Real life versus fictional narratives

Let us open our focus to the wider field of drama and theatre education. Because of its strong connection to the theatre form Drama in Education incorporated new developments in the field of performative arts, (perhaps sometimes even influenced it in a participatory direction) and the movements that were later defined as postdramatic (cf. Lehmann 2006) have created—within the wider field of drama education—a shift towards the performative. This shift has brought about changes in emphasis within the field. One among these is the move towards engage-

ment is autobiographical narratives rather than fictional. Devised performances based on real-life experiences can offer a lot to both those creating it and their audiences. Just like the creators of professional devised performances, the drama teacher can also ask: why use fictional narratives when there are so many exciting real-life stories in the room? Working with these experiences artistically offers evident educational benefits as well. They validate the students' lived experiences by taking their reality seriously and empower participants to articulate their subjective perspective. This way of working might also offer space for the critical examination of social structures and narratives connected to the specific incidents that are drawn into the process of creation. These are truly valuable components of powerful educational and also artistic processes. However, the autobiographical nature of the content might also create additional pressures with its closeness to reality. The fact that the content is part of the participants' actual life raises the stakes of what and how can be questioned around it and to what extent can the perspective of examination be changed. Perhaps the primary aim of the aesthetic work with the content shifts from exploration to expression, the performative representation of the participants' reality that needs to represent their reality truthfully. This description is far too general perhaps, but it incorporates some of the strengths and issues I have encountered when working with autobiographical narratives. When the work moves towards celebrating rather than exploring the self-narratives of the participants, it becomes more difficult to facilitate a safe space for examining the impact of socio-political narratives on our narrated identity.

Fictional narratives elevate these kinds of pressures and also open space for a different kind of exploration that builds powerfully on the imagination. In an interview with Peter Billingham, the dramatist Edward Bond points out that "we think that imagination is somehow an escape from, a relaxation from, reality. But fiction to perform its function has to have an 'extra reality', an 'extra device' that we don't have in real life. So Hamlet's death is nobody's death (the actor doesn't die) yet it is everyone's death." (Billingham 2007: 8) Using fictional stories allows more space to engage with universal human questions and examine these, it also allows extreme situations that represent the burning

questions of our times to be incorporated safely into an educational setting. But mostly the stakes of (self-) questioning are elated, especially in Process Drama where the participants are offered space to incorporate their knowledge of the world into the fiction. This provides the opportunity to explore these actively from within a role as the fictional narrative is developed through improvisations. The created narrative also allows participants to take on the stance in relation to the scenario in their role-play that could be very different from the position they hold in reality.

Extreme fictional narratives

I will offer a practical example from my own practice to illustrate this. I was facilitating a Process Drama lesson with nine/ten-year-olds inspired by a play by Edward Bond as part of an action research process (cf. Bethlenfalvy 2020). We had created and stepped into our roles (following a lengthy process) as a community of children who created their own playground besides an unused rail track escaping from a deprived city. In this community and whole group improvisation that I shared with my friends, I played the role of one community member whose mother had asked that I burn down a house on the rich New Estate that was on the other side of the rail track. This created heated debate in the group of course, with a variety of opinions on the issue ranging from whether a parent has a right to ask such things from their child to the subject of vengeance and social injustice. I developed the narrative further in the lesson and asked the participants to imagine that the characters they had played in the group heard the sirens of fire-engines that night and could see flames lighting up the dark of the night as they peeped out of their windows. The improvisation continued later, but in the focus group discussion conducted as part of my research I was especially interested in how the participants related to this moment. Interestingly, they agreed that (as I am remembering) “It was needed”, “Because otherwise it would be boring” and “Exciting things need to happen”. They also reflected on the difference between extreme events happening in fiction and in reality, the difference between being in the fiction and watching it from out-

side, and also the difference between the point of view of children and adults: “When we are in the story we feel that it is completely fine for us. But if you are an adult watching it from the outside you might think it is too heavy”, “If it happened in reality then it would be too much, but if we are playing it and imagining ourselves into it then it is not a problem”. The powerful image of the burning house also allowed one participant to make connections with images from the wider reality, he said: “Terrorists come and burn houses down, Putin drops bombs”. When probed further about this thought, he continued: “I just said it because of the burning house, that is what they do these days, burn down houses. Blow them up”. The clearly fictional nature of the narrative liberated the participants to engage with the narrative on multiple levels.

Linking fictional and real-world narratives

Cecily O’Neill offers some useful remarks on the process of making a productive fictional context. She states

that the successful creation of an imagined world depends to a considerable extent on the degree to which participants can make links between the world of illusion and their understanding of the real world. They will not be attempting a mere imitation of real life. Rather, like children at play, they will be rearranging and transforming the components of the world they know in actuality into, at the least, fresh patterns and, at best, the kind of abstraction and generalization which approaches art. For them, the value of this abstraction may be to reduce reality to manageable proportions. (in Taylor/Warner, eds. 2006: 84–85)

As I have remarked before, the discussion on the content of the fictional narrative and especially the structure that facilitates the participants into creating it and being in it is ongoing; however, some of the continuing sharp debates stem from the commitment of those using these approaches. There are many useful and engaging questions that allow

different methods and approaches to flourish in the field of Drama in Education. In the end, it is undeniable that there is value in using fictional narratives, situation as an approach to enhance exploring safely how constructed narratives of consumer and political reality burrow into our very identities.

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Response by Mira Sack

Dear Adam,

It is so interesting to read this clear description from a completely different theatre pedagogical tradition and to see how you pursue it. Please take my response as a kind of thought log documenting my critical curiosity. This is where my search overlaps with yours. In the best-case scenario, I hope that this could create a helpful basis for processes of understanding, unlearning and development.

Narratives play an essential role in your practice. They are charged with explicit or implicit ideology, aren't they? Following your conviction that the transmission of culture, education and becoming human runs along fictional narratives leads me to a thought by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She also sees aesthetic education as an opportunity to develop other narratives and to critically undermine the existing principles of belief, the usual ethical imperatives. Imagination makes it possible to supplement seemingly valid ideas about the world, social relationships and their logic with other possible perspectives. In this way, one's own value standards and judgment of situations can be recognized as no longer tenable and changed. This in turn can lead to more complexity, a more differentiated perception and categorization, and different actions in our life together. By incorporating the power of imagination, we thus create a relational relationship between aesthetics, ethics and politics and have the play of imagination as a potential partner at our side. It entangles us in this dynamic system and can make connections conscious and comprehensible. It initiates our emancipation from

outdated beliefs. Dorothy Heathcote and process drama are excellent instruments for a reflective, emancipative theatre pedagogical practice. In the recapitulation of behavioral patterns as they relate to everyday actions, as you so vividly demonstrate with examples, subjective dispositions can certainly become clear and socially desirable. Successful actions can be questioned, while contradictions and paradoxes show that justice is a fiction. There is no escape from this ambivalence. To what extent can this constitution of human action with process drama not only make social and personal convictions comprehensible and tangible, but also focus on outstanding, future narratives?

You make a comparison between fictional and biographical approaches. I agree with you that fictional narratives can open up other spaces. In the context of contemporary culture as a culture of contingency, I'm interested in how social and fictional realities are currently juxtaposed. What this tells us about ourselves. What imaginative spaces we can and should develop in order to advance social transformation and emancipation processes.

Processes in which everyday motifs are used symbolically come to mind. Metaphors that express more than what is analytically accessible. Interruption and surprising changes in levels of attention become the key to aesthetic perception processes and dialogue intelligence. These focusses are not superficially directed towards adaptation versus rebellion. They do, however, create free spaces in perception, they can refuse to fixate on dramatic plots. Perhaps it is this dimension that could combine a different way of recognizing, an aesthetic and political rationality. At this point I realize that my thoughts are becoming more and more clouded and so is my answer...

Heathcote with the *Man in the Mess* and *Mantel of the Expert* approaches are excellent learning arrangements and are too little known or integrated in the German-speaking context. What would result from these concepts if they had less than a serving function for existing curricula and instead could make playing with narratives fruitful for the further development of teaching content and perhaps even for the establishment of new curricula and transdisciplinary practices? Does the critique you mentioned (Davis) go far enough to be able to respond

to the current processes of social crisis and transformation? Further in-depth work at the interface of artistic and content-related narration under the signs and challenges of our time could point the way for the transformation of theatre mediation. That would be an exciting project for a transnational collaboration!

Best wishes,

Mira

Theater pedagogical response to climate crisis

Outlining an ecological perspective on an academic discipline

Ute Pinkert

We are currently experiencing a destruction of our planetary foundations of life on an immense scale and at an unexpected pace. Even in our latitudes, in the increasingly rigidly demarcated area of a Western European civilization, everyone has had direct sensory experience of withered harvests in steppe-covered fields, burning forests, missing insects and storms of previously unknown magnitude. The scientific context for this is provided by the regularly published report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The fact is that we are in 'mortal danger' and action must be taken immediately. That this realization does not immediately lead to internationally coordinated political action is due to the description of the climate crisis "does not follow as a matter of course from changing precipitation patterns or the rise in sea level, but [...] is the result of power- and dominance-driven struggles for interpretation between different actors in business, politics or science" [trans. by U.P.] (Brunnengräber/Dietz 2011: 97). We are dealing with multiple crises that cannot be solved with better environmental protection measures, as it forms "a historically specific constellation of various mutually influencing and interrelated crisis processes in neoliberal financial market capitalism" [trans. by U.P.] (Bader et al. 2011: 13). The authors of the cited study name four concrete, interwoven "crisis complexes: the crisis of financially dominated accumulation [...], the socio-ecological crisis [...],

permanent crises of reproduction [...] and the crisis of parliamentary democracy” [trans. by U.P.] (ibid.). The inner connection of these crises, they conclude, results from the relations of domination, power relations and conflicts of neoliberalism (cf. ibid.).

Theater education, as a social, artistic, pedagogical and discursive practice in the medium of the performing arts, is embedded in this crisis situation. There is no ‘outside’, not even in the arts, which, as a social field of practice that is publicly or also increasingly funded by private foundations (just like the social field of education), is involved in the struggle for interpretive sovereignty. How do we as theater educators act in this situation of a complex transformation process with an open outcome? How do we respond to the increasing exhaustion and resignation that we encounter in ourselves and in the young students we are dealing with? How do we cope with the (overwhelming) plethora of concepts and proposals for mitigating multiple crises? What do we align ourselves with and to what values, to what theories, and to what examples? How does a theater pedagogical practice, theory and teaching describe itself in the (climate) crisis? My perception is that academic theater pedagogy is still in its infancy here. Fortunately, for the last two years there has existed an English-language publication that reflects from a university perspective on the requirements and possibilities of theater education in the climate crisis.

This text directly follows the reflections of colleagues from Canada, the USA, Nigeria and Australia, focuses on the ecological dimension of the crises and is written from the perspective of a representative of academic theater education (cf. Alexandrowicz/Fancy 2021). My focus is on the situation in German-speaking countries and the specific research questions arising from it. I will not derive my considerations programmatically from a normative concept of ecology but will start from the needs or interests of my students as I perceive them. My search is directed at connections between needs that seem individual on the one hand and overarching discourses on the other, which can contribute to the development of an ecologically oriented theater pedagogy. In my estimation, the great challenge here is not to lose sight of the interconnectedness

of the various crises and thus not to abandon the critical claim of theater pedagogical theory formation and practice in the face of the 'new' object.

Become active, act, be effective! Change reality in a real way!

This demand, which is expressed and unspoken to me especially by students, challenges us at the moment in the content design of the study program theater education. The attack on the boundary between symbolic action (in the theater) and real intention of effect (in the socio-political context) seems to have similarities with the spirit of awakening of theater pedagogy in the 1960s. The basis of this demand is an attitude that, with understandable impatience and radicalism, no longer wants to resign itself to contradictions between claim and reality, but vehemently advocates doing what is proclaimed: 'Practise what you preach'. This corresponds with an activist orientation, which can be observed in Germany, above all, in the intermediate field between free performing arts and theater pedagogy (cf. Pinkert 2022). Their focus is on the social situation of theater-making itself, in which the "conditions, settings, and consequences of one's own creation" [trans. by U.P.] (Falk/Schüler/Zinsmaier 2022: 15) are critically reflected upon.

Frank Oberhäußer, member of the independent performance group Turbo Pascal, speaks of an "activist turn" [ff.trans. by U.P.] (Oberhäußer 2022: 5) and defines it in terms of the following characteristics of (one's own) work: a decidedly political statement within the projects; bringing "marginalized perspectives" (ibid.) onto the stage; making one aware of 'one's own exclusion mechanisms' as well as a strict discrimination-critical examination of the content and artistic forms, but also of (the) organizational forms (cf. ibid.) of one's own work. What happens if one looks at this activist orientation from an ecological perspective? According to my thesis, the energetic conditions of the social situation of theater-making would then also come into view: the structural location of rehearsal and performance, the material and energy consumption in production, the (care) energy expended to enable concentration on rehearsal and per-

formance, etc. in short, the interplay between performance (production) and environment.

Here I draw on a thought by Maximilian Haas, who suggests that the term ‘environment performance’, “can be used to focus on the intimate entanglement of performances with their technoecological environments, indeed the environmental condition of performances in general” [trans. by U.P.] (Haas 2022: 130). Such a view could add aspects of sustainability to the claim of real effective changes of theater pedagogical “[production] conditions, settings and consequences” [trans. by U.P.] (Falk/Schüler/Zinsmaier 2022: 15). A practical example for one such approach was the master’s project by Anna Hübner and Moritz Tölle entitled “Weltenwandel” (2022), in which a group of eight players examined their relationship between humans and nature and explored the generational conflict in relation to the climate crisis.

The production’s set was made from large, recycled paper packages that end up as waste in supermarkets, the costumes came from second-hand sources, and the team took responsibility for feeding the group healthy, sustainably produced food during rehearsals. Energy use of the rehearsal space was not yet an issue in this production. But it is to be expected that after studies on the use of resources in state-run cultural enterprises, the currently ongoing study on climate-friendly cultural policies by the “Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft”, and the plans for energy conservation at universities, smaller, municipal cultural institutions will also have to report their energy balance.

This opens up a large field for sustainable action in the sense of ‘practice what you preach’: it is a matter of a) paying attention to resources in a comprehensive sense and negotiating their fair distribution, b) defending complex attention to the interaction of ‘environment’ and theatrical practice against a reduction to certain parameters of ‘energy saving’, and c) a fundamental questioning of production methods and principles of performing art: “The political agency of theater is thus not limited to its artistic and discursive positionings, but includes a whole range of infrastructural forms of relation and action” [trans. by U.P.] (Haas 2022: 131).

Fight for global justice and solidarity with the disadvantaged!

The pursuit of justice and the exposure of oppressive relationships is a strong concern of my students. So far, however, this has focused primarily on the realm of their own work practice (in theater and in school) or on the social relations and conditions of theater pedagogical work in a migration society characterized by unequal power relations. In my opinion, there is an urgent need for an impulse that the power- and discrimination-critical perspective of “contemporary theater pedagogy” [trans. by U.P.] (cf. Falk et al. 2022) expands to include the ecological dimension. This would open up both a transnational perspective (for example, on the connection between neocolonialism, extractivism and migration) and focus on very local contexts of inequality in access to material resources such as space, water, and energy. But what are the consequences of such a perspective for a decidedly artistic-pedagogical practice? Here we can learn from the Californian art historian T.J. Demos, who has made the interaction of contemporary visual art, environmental activism and political ecology the basis of his research. Demos sees the climate crisis first and foremost as a political crisis, which is reflected in the lack of will on the part of political and economic decision-makers to ecological issues systematically and comprehensively (cf. Demos 2016: 12). Together with political activists, he thus advocates a major transition that must consist of a reorganization of social, political, and ecological life. “We cannot address climate justice adequately without also targeting the corruption of democratic practice by corporate lobbying, or the underfunding and failure of public transportation systems, or indigenous rights violations by industrial extractivism, or police violence and the militarization of borders.” (Demos: 12) Demos conceives of an ecology based on the recognition of the interconnectedness of these ecological, economic, political, and social issues, as a “political ecology” (ibid.). According to Demos, its ambitious and highly complex project can only be accomplished by artists, activists, and creative workers working together (cf. Demos: 16). It includes not only a critical analysis of corporate modes of production and corresponding power relations, but also a decolonization of concepts of nature in the various fields of politics,

economics, agriculture, justice and so on. (Demos: 18). The artistic examples that the art historian presents from these premises move beyond the boundaries of specific genres and also beyond the art framework as a whole, such as “in close proximity to field research, creative pedagogies, political mobilization, and civil society partnerships and solidarities, whereby interdisciplinary collaboration mirrors the very complex relations of political ecology.” (Demos 2016: 13) Explicit references to such artistic examples are a way to connect theater pedagogical theory and practice in a transnational way to questions of justice (of resource and burden distribution) and solidarity (with losers of the climate crisis).

In the field of performing arts, one example would be Rimini Protokoll's “World Climate Conference”, which was staged at Hamburg's Thalia Theater in 2014 in the run-up to the Paris Climate Conference, and made it possible to experience the complexity of international negotiations on concrete climate protection goals and strategies in a participatory installation. Another way is the connection between (transnational and local) protest cultures and academic theater pedagogical practice, as the critical pedagogue Richard Kahn has called for in reference to Gregory Martin as urgently needed: “a revolutionary critical pedagogy based in hope that can bridge the politics of the academy with forms of grassroots political organizing capable of achieving social and ecological transformation” (Martin after Kahn 2010: 18). In the above mentioned publication on “Theater Pedagogic in the Era of Climate Crisis” (Alexandrowicz/ Fancy 2021), one can find instances of such a connection, for example in the report by Rachel Rhoades, professor at Brock University in Canada. Rhoades invited the participants of her theater course to take part in a BLM-TO (Black Lives Matter Toronto) action at Pride, “in which they held a sit-in and used carnival-style presentation with a float covered in images of historic Black transwomen activists” (Rhoades 2021: 22). Against the background of my own practical experience, I am convinced that a connection between the power- and discrimination-critical claim of theater pedagogy and the ecological dimension must necessarily lead to an expansion of the theater pedagogical self-understanding: with regard to a) an expansion of the concept of theater in the direction of open actions and processes; b)

an understanding of who/what is actually the participants of a theater pedagogical process; c) the positioning of the discipline in educational policy, especially in relation to the program of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); and finally d) the positioning of the discipline itself in the context of politically legitimized action.

These first two needs and related examples are strongly oriented towards actively formulated demands of young people. However, in my perception, there are also other needs of my students that are articulated less actively than reactively and find expression in denial and despair instead of loud protest.

Exhaustion and depression—longing for other forms of making theater

As a university professor of many years, I perceive that the psychological stresses of our students are increasing and that exhaustion and anxiety (from burnout and depression) are omnipresent. One can also interpret this condition as an (inter)subjective response to the interplay of the four crises mentioned above, which affect (student) subjects in the form of concrete 'stressors'. It is a task of theater pedagogy to give expression to this dimension of grief and despair as well. A successful example of this is "We for Future", a Zoom production by a youth club at the 'Theater an der Parkaue', which was created in 2020 during the pandemic under the direction of Joanna Praml. But how does one get beyond the theatrical (re)presentation of a world relationship that has fallen into crisis? Here, a fundamental change in the direction of thinking is needed: what if one were to question the human-world relationship as such and thereby not limit 'world' only to the social world of humans? What if one tried to get to the bottom of the "matrix of domination" (Collins after Kahn 2010: 9)? In view of these questions, I plead for an expansion of the reference sciences of our subject. I consider (historical-)philosophical considerations essential, which work in various ways to overcome a fundamentally crisis-ridden anthropocentric view of the world and of humanity. With a critical awareness of the interrelated crises mentioned

above, depression would then become less of an individual (neoliberally interpreted) deficit, and more of a subjective response to “alienation” and “loss of world” [trans. by U.P.] (Rosa 2020: 33), as a “state of relationless relationship in which subject and world are inwardly disconnected, indifferent, or even hostile to each other.” [trans. by U.P.] (Rosa 2020: 37). Exhaustion, in turn, could then be interpreted as the result of a dilemma: subjects of Western societies often have the best intentions to contribute to ‘climate salvation’, but within their social structures there is no way out for them from being invoked as “*homo economicus*-human as accumulator [...] forever consuming and bound to economic growth” (Gabrys 2018). For me, these findings give rise to the question of how theater education can process these subjective responses to crisis events as starting points of transformative education in Koller’s sense in the medium of the performing arts. The orientation of this kind of transformative educational processes would then no longer be (arbitrarily) open, but, in view of the “new problem situation” [trans. by U.P.] (Koller 2012: 16) of the climate crisis, would be oriented towards a transformation of anthropocentric world and self-relations. The direction of which could be described, for example, by the notion of the “resonance relation” [trans. by U.P.] (cf. Rosa 2016: 285), that of sympoiesis (cf. Haraway 2018b: 51), or the revision of the understanding of “modern man” by the “earthbound” [trans. by U.P.] (Latour 2017: 488). An immense field of research opens up not only in the orientation towards—in the broadest sense ecologically oriented—new fields of knowledge, but also towards the medium of theater/performance, the subject of our discipline. In this context, it can be observed that the theatrical arts of our Western tradition, as “the most anthropocentric of all the arts” (Una Chaudhuri after Alexandrowicz 2021: 135) face particular challenges in rethinking the “tectonic shift” (Raddatz: 62) of the dissolution of the traditional subject-object relationship. This is demonstrated, for example, by the theatrical experiments of Tobias Rausch and Frank M. Raddatz. Tobias Rausch has conducted practical research on the representability of nature or natural phenomena on stage for many years (cf. Rausch 2019), and Frank Raddatz is currently testing an interweaving of scientific and artistic forms of knowledge and representatives of both fields on a stage of “hybrid nature” with

the “Theater of the Anthropocene” [trans. by U.P.] (Raddatz 2021: 72). Author and director Kevin Rittberger accuses such attempts of ignoring the reality-constituting power of the theatrical apparatus and thus reproducing outdated dualisms (cf. Rittberger 2019). Rittberger, on the other hand, demands that

[t]he protagonists of a theater of climate change must first allow for apparatuses that do not permanently reproduce exclusions, but allow for the expansion of anthropocentric body boundaries. Next, dualisms and hierarchies must give way. So that there is no longer the impression that culture can observe and represent nature. Instead, multiple cultures of nature are intertwined and interwoven in an ongoing practice of becoming-with [trans. by U.P.] (ibid.).

To explore and experience these possibilities of a practice of ‘becoming-with’ in an aesthetic way, I consider an elementary area of theater pedagogical work. For in such a practice, the actors not only focus on the negative effects of the crises, but also try out alternatives in an existence-affirming way, as marginal as they may seem for the time being. It is becoming apparent that in order to develop this practice, a further contemplation of performative settings, some of which are also designed for participation, is productive. I am thinking here, for example, of the “Animals of Manchester (including humanz)” project that Sibylle Peters tested in Manchester in 2019, or of “Kritter. A Speculative Narrative of Beings of All Kinds”, which was performed by Turbo Pascal at the Feld Theater in Berlin in 2023. Also to be mentioned here would be my own experiments with performances in/with landscape that I have been undertaking with students at the UdK for over ten years (cf. Pinkert 2023).

With these reflections, I have placed the needs of my students at the center, as I perceive them. But they are, of course, also my own needs and my question of how to deal in a professionally informed way with what “drives me insane” [trans. by U.P.] (Latour 2017: 41). With this in mind, I refer in the end to the manifesto of the publication *Theatre Pedagogy in the Era of Climate Crisis*, whose last sentence reads, “We do not expect

ourselves, or our students, to remain unchanged by the agendas articulated here: we embrace individual, collective and planetary transformation” (Alexandrowicz et al. 2021: 206).

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Response by Kevin Hobbs

Hello Ute,

I very much appreciated how you jumped into the deep pond of ecological debate with both feet. I struggle with the challenge of theatrical representation when it comes to climate change. Theatre, it seems to me, has become such a separate entity from world-wide concerns—at least in the popular culture. Therefore, I applaud anyone who attempts to break through the fortified skin that disconnects humanity from earth's reality. As you wisely said, “There is no ‘outside’, not even in the arts”. I’m one of ‘those people’ (people who are sometimes pilloried for arguing that the world is an interconnected, holistic place that cannot be examined in pieces but only appreciated in its entirety) who believe that artists have a responsibility to live in two worlds—actual world (real intention) and art world (symbolic action). And boy, we could have a significant phenomenological discussion on that concept, but I won’t digress!

Instead, I will express my meditations on the activist impulse that theatre can inspire. You speak of the social and energetic conditions that theatre conjures. I agree, particularly when it comes to the social entanglements of generational, economic and political influences. We artists are also generational, economic and political influences and through theatrical performance we can imagine not only a present reality, but a future possibility co-created by us and the audience. In my teaching and theatre-making I have shifted some of my terminology to ‘human animals’ and ‘non-human animals’ in an effort to remind myself and anyone in earshot that I am as much a part of this world as the birds eat-

ing the berries in my backyard and the cactus sitting on my windowsill. There is no subject/object dichotomy. Sometimes my students roll their eyes and, yes, a change of words won't solve the climate crisis, but it contributes to the necessary—nay, critical—revisionism of humanity's place on earth.

Can we theatricalize revisionism? Absolutely. I think of your example, “*Weltenwandel*”, which had a set of recycled packaging and costumes from a second-hand store, is perfect. Recently I saw a performance by “*Bread and Puppet Theatre Company*”, which has dedicated itself to the kind of environmental approach to theatre-making over the last fifty years.

I am aware of “*Rimini Protokoll's*” work, and it seems they are pushing to something more than an audience's awareness of climate crisis to an ‘embodiment’ of the crisis. This effort of embodied understanding leads me ask—in the spirit of your students who want activists to “practice what you preach”—can we go one step further? Can we not only ‘theatricalize’ but ‘perform’ world revisionism? Can we embody change?

I ask this question because performing-for-change is on my mind. My own PhD work is examining how performance pedagogy may lead medical students to becoming Health Advocates. This kind of advocacy involves physicians taking a lead in supporting individual patients or widening their scope to more community-based work. Such work can also concern environmental and climate change. My research questions investigate how we as educators expand understanding of health advocacy for medical students who are also trying to navigate the demands of medical schools that focus solely on the body's bio-medical processes? Can these medical students think about the wider world and then perform change, transforming both themselves and the world? Well, it turns out there is a hunger with this new generation of medical students to do just that and make a change. They just need guidance. I am trying to provide such guidance through pedagogies of theatre and performance.

And so, it seems, your students hunger as well. We as artists/teachers do what we can. We place the needs of our students at the center and see what kind of planetary transformation results. Fingers crossed.

Kevin

Theater educational framings as complex relations

Answering polarization

Andreas Bürgisser

At the beginning there is a great malaise

Various simultaneous crises are shaping our perception of the present. The current crisis reports are probably characterized by the fact that they are global in scope, emerge in a relatively short space of time and affect the global North more noticeably than in previous decades. Especially in times like these, it seems all the more important to keep the public discourse open with regard to complex global interdependencies and democratic societies. Therefore, we can engage with the present in a differentiated and critical manner from different positions and with different perspectives in order to be able to think and negotiate “possible futures” [trans. by A. B.] (Platzer 2022: 94). In view of the current times, I am concerned about dysfunctional tendencies in public discourse and the resulting impression of a polarized world. In the following, I am reproducing a process: How can I become creative again as a teacher and theaterpedagogue, and how can I deliberate myself from the malaise that has started to paralyze me? The writing of this text is part of this ongoing endeavor.

Spotlight on my social media feed

My perception of public discourse is shaped by my impressions from my social media channels and the many headlines from traditional media that point to disputes on social media. This environment gives a picture of the world, which is polarized and morally charged in terms of crisis-related issues and complex challenges.

Authors such as Nushin Hosseini-Eckhardt (cf. 2021), Andreas Reckwitz (cf. 2019) and Kijan Espahangizi (cf. 2024) see possible causes for the (seemingly) polarized public discourse in powerful mechanisms of order in connection with social media. In a self-reinforcing dynamic, increasingly differentiated communities emerge whose discourse becomes more and more specified. As a result, these discourses become incommensurable (cf. Reckwitz 2019) with the discourses of other communities. The logic of an attention economy of social media (loud, clear and short get clicks) further leads to the impression that only loud, extreme opinion leaders are left in the domain of the public sphere (cf. Reckwitz 2019).

Posts from relatively active colleagues on Instagram tell me what the hottest topics are in my bubble before I consult the traditional media. The content of these posts is often clear, judgmental and condemning of the other side. A friend of mine posts unfiltered, unverified brutal videos from a current war zone. He comments on the videos with clear condemnations of one side and clear victim attribution to the other. Another friend posts daily videos of influencers who expose the attitudes and arguments of the other side of this conflict in an ironic and comedic way. I encounter the portrayal of opponents as stupid in various forms. Christiane Thompson (2020: 192) states in an essay on the type and manner of criticism that the concept of political correctness is met with, that in the current discursive climate, criticism has “transformed into a communication practice charged with resentment” [trans. by A. B.]. Polarization and affect mobilization provoke a communication spiral in which the participants increasingly close themselves off in their positioning and feel confirmed in their assessment of the other side. In its escalation, this can lead to dogmatism. This is present, according to Thomp-

son, “when positions claim that they no longer have to deal with the objections of others or remove themselves from a factual debate through a moral¹ transposition” [trans. by A. B.] (ibid.: 187).

I also observe a kind of response that seems to be open for dialogue with ‘the other side’. At a second glance, those posts are inherently instructive: the other side doesn’t know certain things, doesn’t understand the context, so here’s another explanation. The conclusions and positions that the readership of such posts should come to are communicated indirectly. Within the argumentation logic of my circle of friends, the bubble in which I move, such posts show a certain differentiation and are argumentatively consistent and therefore actually debatable. The arguments, the language, the internal self-evidences of the “collective” [trans. by A. B.] (Reckwitz 2019: 265) lack directionality towards people who have nothing to do with the collective. When a directionality is consciously inserted, I often recognize an enlightening-educative gesture that devalues the others to ‘those to be taught’.

Cell phone off

A colleague posts a video explaining why gender asterisks are less inclusive than spelling with a colon: ‘Autor:in’ instead of ‘Autor*in’. On the same day, I see a headline about a Swiss politician from a right-wing party who is upset about “all that gender gaga”. I also read the same headline in a post by another friend who calls the politician a misogynist and links his statement to the issue of femicide.

Cut. Cell phone off. I am tired. Where is the ambiguity? Where is the openness for the unknown, the undefined? I ask these questions in the knowledge that it all exists. But not in my news feed and not on page one.

1 Christian Neuhäuser and Christel Seidel (c.f.2022) note an increased use of morality in public debates. Moral condemnation as a reaction to a statement or action makes an objective discussion impossible. The moral response would become an end in itself, which is why Neuhäuser/Seidel (c.f. 2022) advocate evaluating moral responses themselves. They propose to do so on the basis of the criteria of effectiveness and appropriateness. Of course, those criteria are discussable. But they open ways for staying in an argumentative exchange.

I am emotionally agitated. I present my experiences unambiguously to make sense of my anger and exhaustion.

I am adding a concept to my search for a constructive way of dealing with my malaise, which should help me to think in other directions. In other words, I am looking for strategies other than just fighting ‘against’ the practices of disambiguation and condemnation described above. The search for ‘counter-disambiguation’, for ‘counter-rapidity’, for ‘counter-condemnation’ and ‘counter-closure’ of arguments harbors a danger, one in which the perceived polarization is further confirmed performatively and discursively and that one’s own reception ignores nuances.

Answering polarization with complex logic

I find an alternative to the concept of the countermovement in various places; for example, I would like to highlight Nushin Hosseini-Eckhardt (cf. 2021), who, among many others, proposes strategies in her PHD thesis “Approaches to Hybridity” [trans. by A.B.] such as deceleration along the concept of the third space and hybridity. At this point, however, I would like to draw attention to Alexander Henschel’s concepts of the paradoxical and the complex to engage with binarity. The art educator Henschel (cf. 2019) describes the extent to which a logic of the binary cannot grasp positions and ideas that do not correspond to it. So, if someone is classified as an opponent, a misogynist or a woke snowflake, then everything that is beside it, that points beyond it, is overlooked. If I, as a lecturer, were to adhere to the binary of ‘improvisation equals everything is allowed’ and ‘language regulation equals the end of improvisation’, a vital exchange with the students in a yet unknown position towards improvisation would end before it has begun. Henschel (2019: 9) goes on to explain that “well-ordered polarities are only possible by ignoring third and further positions” [trans. by A. B.] (ibid.: 9). A binary logic creates the world through its application (performative logic) and can only be practiced through inclusion and exclusion (operation of binary polarity) by “unmistakably stating what characterizes it and from which it is unambiguously distinguished” [trans. by A. B.] (ibid.: 17).

With paradoxes and complex logics, he presents structures that set the closed nature of binary logic in motion (paradoxical logic) or overcome it (complex logic).

In paradoxical logic, the relationship between two poles is set in motion. If two poles are in a stable relationship to each other—in a binary logic—the attribution of opposing properties to both poles unsettles the observation. Referring to Nana Lüth and Carmen Mörsch, Henschel (cf. 2019) thinks through the paradoxical operation at the poles of art and pedagogy. In a clean binary logic, one could ascribe to art the quality of resistance (through unplannability) and to pedagogy that of compulsion (through planning). This relationship is set in motion when one recognizes that in many art projects meticulous planning and regulation can be constitutive for their realization and moments of reception. The same applies to contingency and the unplannable in pedagogical situations (cf. *ibid.*: 17). The paradoxical circle between art and pedagogy picks up speed “when an exhibition is perceived in art discourse as a prime example of artistic freedom, but parts of the audience are struck precisely by its exclusionary coercive character, which in turn turns into resistance through an opening pedagogical situation, which in turn produces new exclusions that can be thematized artistically” [trans. by A. B.] (*ibid.*: 18). The binarity between Art and Education remains intact. However, its constructedness is revealed.

A paradoxical logic opens a new space of imagination and possibility for me regarding possible strategies in public discourse: constructive spaces for thought open in the space between ‘loud’ and ‘timid’ voices. When I describe that in my social media feed polarizing voices suppress the differentiated, calm, timid voices, I may no longer hear the differentiated in the loud or the simplifying of the quiet voices. Note to myself: why not a theater project with voices that loudly express their uncertainty about a crisis in 256 characters?

Henschel (cf. 2019) goes on to speak of a complex logic of relations. This is when many other elements are added to the binary except for least one. In other words, new connections emerge from the two original poles to the new elements. Complex logic overcomes binarity in contrast to the paradoxical relationship (in which the logic of binarity spirals through

the flow of the two poles towards and into each other due to oppositional properties). The original elements become ambivalent. The elements can no longer all be related to each other in the same logic (ibid: 20). Complex relationships “mark unsolvable problems” [trans. by A. B.] (ibid: 20), “or the simultaneity of alternative, equally valid solution options” [trans. by A. B.] (ibid: 20).

Making the relationships of my world references more complex

When I add the element of power to the two poles of ‘loud’ and ‘quiet’ in my conception of communicative strategies and practices, my clear normative-moral evaluation crumbles. From a power-critical perspective, I think about the fact that a loud strategy makes voices heard that would otherwise go unnoticed. While quiet voices can also be accused of shying away from confrontation and thus leaving power relations untouched. Just by taking this first step (delivering the third element), I can already sense the ambivalences that could open in me and my attitude to the phenomenon if further elements were added. My attitude towards the phenomenon becomes unstable and demands further examination. I endure my unstable position towards the phenomenon by understanding it as constantly evolving.

I try to sharpen my impression of a polarized world for moments that set this impression in motion. When and where do I find myself in situations that are so complex that I can no longer fit my position, my division into good and bad, me and the others, into the binary logic of two irreconcilable poles? How does this path inform my professional understanding of conflict?

Adding an element: Non-digital encounters

When I encounter representatives of clearly delineated positions on social media, fighters for one right side and cause, I meet colleagues and friends (and therefore not primarily representatives of a cause) in my

circle of acquaintances who feel the same way I do. I almost never meet someone who divides the world into good and bad, into those who understand and those who don't in a black and white way. We then talk about the discourse on a topic (and less often about the topic itself) and find ourselves in the shared dejection (to the point of despair in the face of what our world currently faces). Many express the desire for encounters between people with different views along with the ability to endure them. These encounters factor into my impression of a polarized world. I could put this into a binary scheme: online everything is polarized and bad, while offline encounters are moments of differentiated debate and therefore good. But when I think about how often I have come across people offline who have a completely different opinion to mine, I can't think of many moments. I am also thinking of forums and blogs in which topics are discussed online with academic precision in a relatively democratic framework. I could continue the spiral here, looking for other oppositional characteristics. It was a small attempt to relate irritations of my perception to Henschel's operations. In this approach, I notice that I had adopted a very judgmental attitude towards the two poles. I recognize forks in the road to be able to think in new directions. On the other hand, I notice the danger of evading any positioning due to the abyss of relativism that it opens. Respectively, this road can be taken to avoid any discussion and confrontation. If I try to see my position as a teacher as a player in making relations more complex, one task is to keep giving space to positions. This includes my own, so as not to give the impression of objectivity. Because then I would be withdrawing from the discourse, an "impossible position" [trans. by A. B.] (cf. Bourdieu/Wacquant 2006) to take in. As I mentioned at the beginning: this article is part of a process. A note to myself: try to reflect your didactical practice along the ways, circumstances and routines you must position yourself around to engage with conflicts and hot topics in pedagogical situations.

From an allover impression to a reflection of pedagogical situations

I would now like to turn to pedagogical situations in which I was more or less centrally involved as a lecturer. Now the question arises: why all this introduction to polarized discourse on social media? The impression of polarized, moralizing political camps and of disrupted public discourse shapes my perception of substantive conflicts, or even just potentially emerging conflicts in pedagogical situations. This impression makes me more anxious, more cautious, as my expectation of possible escalating conflicts takes up a relatively large amount of space in the rolling reflection of teaching events. This does not mean that this connection or transfer of this impression can be clearly derived theoretically, but I still perceive this effect in this way.

Adding an element: conflict in an 'impossible' theater project

During a student's final project, the process developed into a conflict at times due to fundamentally different world views. For example, three women from Afghanistan who are currently living in Switzerland with asylum status and three people who are read as women and with full right of residence created a theater evening. The group was formed while they were taking part in a summer program. This program brings people with refugee experience together with those who do not to work together creatively and artistically. In addition to legal hurdles in connection with the right of residence and financially limited resources, fundamental differences emerged among the participants during the rehearsal process in their approaches to the topic of sex and gender. While the women from Afghanistan wanted to create a play that celebrated women, among other things, others felt disturbed by the fact that it reproduced a binary gender image. One scene, developed by one of the Afghani actors herself, made some of the other actors and the student very uncomfortable. In terms of content, it was a speech in which the actor said, among other things, that the 'woman in general' is a pearl to be protected.

In the end, the project could be carried out and everyone stayed on as actors. The student described the reason for this as that everyone knew that they had something in common, which, however, could not be clearly stated. The fact that women or female read people are doing a project together in a place designed for artistic encounters between people who have or have not fled their home countries is not surprising at first. I rather assume that this setting has created a great willingness to get to know and to encounter each other in all their complexity.

To play on common ground

Through the encounter, during the theatrical development process, the relationships became more complex. In this complexity, conflictual and unifying relationships can be described at the same time. The statement, that they have something in common perhaps describes the relationship between the actors and the Swiss asylum system. At the same time, the discomfort describes the conflictual relationship when the question of sex or gender is added. In contrast to repressive (digital) encounters, this did not lead to judgmental attributions, anger and withdrawal into one's own bubble. Perhaps the project and production logic and the opportunities for trial and error during behavior in rehearsal (in frame of play) opened alternative options for encounters and negotiations. Self-world references could be tried out in front of others with distance to oneself. One's own usual position in the world is interrupted. As a representative of one side or the other, I am not directly questioned in the trial. The 'everyday' position can potentially be taken up again after the play when leaving the rehearsal room. This understanding is certainly helpful to be able to adopt an open attitude for theatrical experimentation and negotiation. These considerations focus on the transitional moments of play and non-play, rehearsal and non-rehearsal. To what extent are the positions and relationships adopted in an improvisation still available in moments of pause, for example? What practices emerge in a rehearsal community? To what extent does this positioning-play reflect real world structures? These experiences of various intermediate positions in the rehearsal space, in the playframe in relation to the world-

self positions outside of play can be compared with the “experience of difference” [trans. by A. B.], as “Differenz Erfahrung” described by Ulrike Hentschel (cf. 2010): that in-between position of oneself between not being the role you play/take in and not not being the subject you are outside of the play. These potential experiences of a ‘positioning play’ can therefore be attributed a transformative educational potential.

Back to the actual project: the following scene on stage was shown at the performance: In a cozy living room, there was a large carpet. During the Afghan actor’s monologue, she fought with another player over who would be allowed to stand on the carpet. In her monologue, the player linked the need to talk about the worthiness of protection with the theme that emerged as a crystallization point in the process and then in the production: access and exclusion to and from spaces. Her monologue recounted the chronology of the disappearance of spaces for women (e.g. hair salons).

Adding an element: (my) emotional response

In a seminar with theater pedagogy students, we try out rehearsal methods. Texts about rehearsals alternate with our own attempts and subsequent reflection. In one such reflection, a discussion arises about what rules should be agreed upon for improvisation. The occasion was a report about an ‘MC Battle’ in which a participant was excluded from the competition because he had rhymed homophobic lyrics. Based on this, the students wanted to apply the rule to improvisations that nothing should be said that could be interpreted or perceived as homophobic, sexist, racist or classist. This is to prevent any of the players or spectators involved from feeling hurt. The fear is expressed that in an improvisation, despite such rules, a hurtful statement could still appear in the heat of the action. The students raise the question of whether improvisation should still be regarded as a legitimate means of the rehearsal process. In my function as a lecturer, I have tried to capture as such the contradiction or conflict between the desire that no one should be hurt and the promise of an improvisation to play into an open, unknown future that none of the participants controls or owns. This suggestion of

an open, unresolvable conflict of goals resonated with the students. This process of pointing out the dilemma was an attempt to keep the issue open, meaning: not to look for an either-or answer to the problem.

I am now realizing that I consciously tried to hide my opinion and my astonishment over the idea of excluding improvisation from rehearsals. My emotion^{2[2]} was linked to my strong understanding that improvisation is crucial to any rehearsing dramaturgy. To what extent is the expression of these useful for the further course of a discussion? I take this consideration further with the basic didactical question posed by Ulrike Hentschel/Ute Pinkert (cf. 2008): What am I doing here and why? Why should I bring the emotional component, my connection to the hot topic or my opinion into play? If I combine this question with my intention to re-inform my reflective practice with the concept of complex logics, I recognize two moments in which I come to a new way of thinking.

By actively involving my own emotions, I first (potentially) complicate my own relationship to the content and the situation, on the other hand, I complicate the matter of discussion for everyone by adding new elements to it. This separation of content and situation is an artificial simplification in order to be able to widen the scope a little.^{3[3]}

Emotions as quasi-content

I initially think further with the supposedly simpler relation, the inclusion of my emotion in relation to the content. It is part of a lecturer's professional self-image to become aware of which subjects are central to the teaching setting. Indirectly, the reflection on one's own emotional reaction can be played back into the lesson in an objectified way. I complicate my situation as a lecturer if I do not ignore my emotion, or rather, if I do

2 In terms of practice theory, Alkemeyer (et. al.: 2015), for example, speaks of "affects", i.e. emotions that can also be regarded as practices, as reactions recognized and acknowledged by others.

3 Situationally, I would describe the spatio-temporally perceived and shared context of meaning with all its interwoven elements and circumstances, all participants with their positions and relative relationships to the topic and to each other.

not simply withdraw to the sober position of the summarizing moderator. Why am I so astonished and somehow also shocked by the idea of removing improvisation from the repertoire of theater rehearsals? What are the concepts behind it? By introducing these concepts in the form of questions and other content-related aspects, I make the thinking and discussion space of the whole group more complex. If I now switch to the situational level, nothing changes from what I have already described, at least when I am sitting here at my desk. My emotion can be added to the situation as a quasi-content element. The way it is perceived is something I can not control. The unfiltered introduction of my emotions harbors the danger of fuelling binary logics and polarized constellations in the actual teaching situation. My emotionality could be understood as a counter-response, a counter-positioning, which in turn evokes a defense of one's own position, the situation could be read as an emotional argument.

It depends: Situational, collaborative handling of emotions

As a lecturer, you have the task of selecting and shaping the aspects of your own emotional reaction contextually appropriate. Only if the situation is understood by all as a situation in which an object can be negotiated, a complexification by thematizing emotional reactions makes sense. In my practice, especially now in the time frame of writing this essay, I encounter not only my affective reaction to a discursive teaching event, but also more or less strong emotional reactions on the part of the students. In one module, for example, I encounter students who react emotionally to the statement made by an expert connected via ZOOM at the end of an input on sacrality and theater. His theoretically derived thesis led three students to a desire to talk again about what had just happened while I am surprised that anything should have happened at all. What situation do we find ourselves in? To what extent does the concept of complex logic make sense at that moment? As a lecturer, I realize that I am getting nervous. I think I perceive anger, disappointment, restlessness, perhaps fear in the students. This perception takes up a lot of space for me. It also triggers fear that the situation could escalate emotion-

ally. How do I remain capable of acting at that moment? Freely adapted from Henschel, I recognize a (moral) logic of the binary from the students: what just happened here was wrong, the content presented is off the mark. This opens up new questions. What was not good or wrong? In conversation (the situation of a discussion quickly arose, I can't describe exactly how this happened in words) we formulated quality criteria for a legitimate and non-legitimate object in this context, i.e. theses: on the one hand, the thesis is legitimate if its derivation is comprehensible for the audience; on the other hand, a more or less calm presentation was desired by the students. We also came to realize that the setting of the ZOOM lecture had triggered a certain feeling of powerlessness among the students as only very indirect feedback could be given. We did not come to a substantive discussion regarding the question of the sacrality or profanity of theatrical spaces. In some situations, the questioning of binary (evaluative) assessments of what has just happened or of the object in the room is a first step towards being able to turn together again to more substantive aspects of the seminar. I think if the thematization of affective reactions makes the discourse structure more complex at this point, I could welcome the 'use' of the emotional component. For this level to be accepted as making things more complex, it needs to be practiced in the classroom community and a grown understanding of the extent to which such a further element in dealing with a problem could suggest new spaces.

An intermediate way to promote such a practice in a "community of practice" (cf. Alkemeyer et al.: 2015) is to understand discussion and joint thinking around an object as a kind of trial action, as action in play. Weaving strands of argumentation whose logics we adopt as a group or as individuals without framing them as our/my opinion. The legitimization of the speech-act lies in the task, founded in the joint teaching-learning setting. What is said is not regarded directly as true, correct, good, but as something that can be placed in relation to. What is said, the emergent argumentation logics, theses can be viewed as objects that change again and again through observation and reflect possible positions back to the observer. These different relationships to the changing object can be thematized, i.e. the in-between: between positions and the

object, between me and the various positions and position-object relationships taken up⁴.

World-relations in play and reflection

This text describes a crisis and has set my relationship to public discourse and theater pedagogical work in motion again. At the beginning there was great discomfort. The transfer and connection of my own perception of a 'dysfunctional public discourse' with Henschel's concepts did not lead to a resolution or calming of the crisis. But it has given me some breathing space and opened new areas of thought. A reassembly of the thoughts surrounding this crisis is still in full swing and will not find a clearly tangible intermediate stop until the conclusion of this text. The various elements cannot be related to each other in a congruent system. Nevertheless, here is an attempt to challenge my insecurity and my lack of formulation with the assertion of clarity and certainty.

If theater performances in all their contemporary forms are moments in which people are in the same place at the same time, and we also understand theater pedagogical work as framing, then theater pedagogical evenings and rehearsal processes represent a great creative potential in playing with world-self relationships. Playful action as a mode and framing of these meeting spaces opens up a distance to one's own actions and also to the emergent practice of these temporary communities.

From this perspective, theatrical rehearsal and performance spaces can be described as discursive, heterotrophic experimental spaces. Care and openness towards complex world-self-other relationships invite the

4 In the field of school theater, I have explained the concept of the "practice of play": in the context of Hans-Christoph Koller's (2018) normative-transformational "education on conflict" [trans by A.B] (*Bildung zum Widerstreit*), I am looking for an orientation of theater work in schools that enables the classroom practitioner community to try out new negotiation actions between play and non-play and to keep conflict open for longer (Bürgisser 2022).

exploration of new ways of dealing with and exploring positions in relation to current crises, conflicts and friction with actual social structures. They invite us to adopt supposedly different positions, to experience ourselves in difference to everyday positions. The theatrical arrangement of the intermediate space of play and non-play enables the endurance and observation of paradoxical and complex constellations. The spaces should leave room for contingency so that dynamics can be pursued that can accommodate the complex element for the respective context of a specific occasion. It takes courage to make circumstances more complex. What kind of voices, what kind of perspectives, what kind of situations does research, a rehearsal or a performance require to enable indissoluble relationships in the respective context? What practices will emerge in the rehearsal communities in order to be able to meet the ambiguities and uncertainties with playfulness?

What has emerged for me as a relatively new (didactical) focus is one's own and situational emotionality as a source and point of allusion for a complexification of binary discursive structures. It is in this area that I would like to observe my practice following this text. I would also like to emphasize the challenge in teaching that I and other colleagues are confronted with perceiving student's strong emotions and first having to find ways to be able to work together again on formal content. Distancing oneself by questioning the binary logics that often lie behind this does not describe the full range of situational work that the lecturer and the entire community of practitioners perform in such moments.

The above considerations are often related to subjective educational processes. The social integration of subjects in communities of practitioners, such as that of a performance or rehearsal, is also considered in passing. At the level of public discourse, my considerations remain very vague. They are intended to inspire me to look further and are more in the tonality of a silent manifesto: theater performances should offer a resonance space to all those who long for communal spaces for negotiation outside of their collective. Furthermore, the perception and imagination of current public discourse spaces as battlegrounds for attention should be challenged performatively through alternative framings.

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Response by Oleksandr Tokarchuk and Yaroslava Bondar

Dear Andreas,

We delved into your text with attention and interest, and found the content of the reflections and the rather personal way of presenting them an unusual approach—from our perspective. Your great attention to your own experiences in relation to the topic of research is respectable and also fascinating despite that sometimes the subject of discourse itself recedes into the background.

For ourselves, we have outlined and defined the circle of your research interests in your article as the following: variations of discursive destruction that are caused by the radical positions of the participants found in the field of communication, how this polarization influences your view of conflicts in the teaching process, the possible causes of these problems and finally a search for ways to overcome destructive binary polarizations through transformational perspectives.

It was interesting for us to analyze our own experiences with the emotional discoloration of the discursive palette—its transformation into a black and white irreconcilable dichotomy, despair from the lack of half-tones and multiplicity of variations is lost in the artificial completeness of the black and white color itself.

Your reflections on the situation in your social networks led us to think about migration processes in Europe, about the difficulties of assimilation of both refugees and migrants, as well as about the cultural

and religious expansion of the South, as one of the possible reasons for the aggravation of discourses.

The idea of attracting attention on social media on the one hand, as well as the struggle for attention, on the other, be it the opponent's or the readers' to the author's narrative, seemed fruitful for further reflections and analysis.

We have an impression that your practice in the process of analysis, exploration of fruitful ideas, and contemplation on solutions to the problem of polarization relies greatly on feeling. You use your own reflection as a research tool, and we hold great admiration for your method.

The subject of the binary between art and education raises more questions. For example: why is Art a priori considered something elusive and accidental? The thesis that there is an unplanned artistic result is surprising to us because of the needlessness, from our point of view, of planning an artistic solution in general. Our views here probably enter into a discursive dispute, which we would like to continue constructively. Here, it would be interesting to discuss the planning and even the algorithmic nature of the educational methodology, which we do not use at all in our practice as we have developed and implement a heuristic methodological logic. Perhaps it would be interesting to develop together the topic of complex logic proposed by you.

Analysis of the discourse itself as opposed to the subject of said discourse is, in our view, a dynamic approach to take. The topic of the directing of paired or collective (group) complements our research on compositional relationships. We thank you, Andreas, for entering this field.

Artistic processing of conflicts or any polarizations is an interesting and fruitful practice, both in psychology and in performative work-activity. The identification of different sides of the dispute in an artistic form gives birth to experiences capable of finding non-linear, completely new ways of implementation. This, in our opinion, is the approach we should take as specialists in the study/research of performative practices.

Once again, we thank you for an interesting journey through the landscapes of your thoughts, experiences and research!

*Best regards,
Oleksandr and Yaroslava*

Social communicative crisis

Oleksandr Tokarchuk, Yaroslava Bondar

The problem of social interactions, in our opinion, is the effort to simplify and schematize encounters between strangers in various circumstances of life to divert the flow of communication into a familiar, safe channel. We believe it happened that, in our society and European culture in general, communication with a strangers a vast majority of the time is not an open and joyful experience. Generally speaking, these interactions are determined by social roles—statuses that the participants of the conversation try or carried on by themselves with complete acceptance. We think everywhere in Europe there is, if not fear, an aversion to communication at the status level. The risk of having ‘status’ communication is the reason for reluctance to casual or random interactions between people in public. There is even a sense of uncertainty as to whether to enter into any kind of communication.

The schematization of socializing, which facilitates status-driven interactions self-evident consequence, of a ‘socially conditioned’ society. Socially stratified societies clearly define who is who and what place each one society member occupies. Therefore, communication in such societies features automatism, modeling, even ‘cyberneticity’. People cease to be humans and become acquirers of certain statuses. Such communication turns people away from each other. The problem is developing.

For clarity, we can consider two interactions between strangers:

- 1) strangers with undefined statuses (social positions).
- 2) strangers with predefined statuses: for example, client and service provider; employer and employee; professor and student; driver

and policeman; concierge and resident; husband and wife; friend and friend—no matter from which side we consider this situation, preferably from both.

The first case, according to our observations, raises the stakes of the participants and requires greater energetic inclusion in the initial moment of contact to find the starting territory wherein it can develop. For the second case, additional effort is not required. There are clearer options for developing these interactions further, but it is a priori schematic, functional, and potentially has a predetermined 'correct' (known) path. As a rule, an algorithm of communication of people with determined social positions is already compiled and put into effect.

As soon as the people of the first situation determine their statuses (social positions) or perhaps try on the status (role) offered by their partner and accept it by their own free will, they immediately begin to search in their memory for known scenarios of the development of a similar situation and begin to perform this social "ritual". We have seen this both in life and, especially, in classes at our acting school when students receive a sketch game assignment. A universal unified solution to a 'behavioral task' becomes typical, recognizable and accepted by students.

A behavioral task is usually formulated as follows: "How should I behave in certain circumstances of the place or time in relation to this person?" or "what line of behavior should I choose? An acquaintance or a stranger?"

The second situation is characterized by a conflict between a person and a social position. A priori there cannot be complete identification of the status and the person. Therefore, potentially, this seemingly built-in backlash can lead to an imbalance of the entire communication system and, eventually, to its collapse, leading to isolation, alienation and marginalization. When a person steps out of line in this system, eventually disorders and other unhealthy psychological conditions arise.

In our society, the status of the people is very often identified by special clothes, uniforms marked by insignia. Since ancient times, the theater has used masks to define the character of the personage. It is important for us that overalls, masks, insignia(s)—indicate a social role, status

or position, thereby highlighting an important option: it is easier to communicate at the level of statuses!

We also can look into typical cases of communication between familiar people. For example, in the literature, we often come across described situations of meeting old acquaintances who have not seen each other for a long time and did not know about each other's fate. In the beginning their conversation is a human connection—it takes place with the memory of the past relationship they had, but later, over time, when they learn the current 'position' of each other, the style of communication and even relations is transformed into a 'status' one.

Even communication between colleagues and friends can have two distinctly different levels: the level of working relations and human, friendly interactions. There is nothing inherently wrong with having various levels of communication. The problem we see refers to such a strong and deep self-identification with social status/position that any interaction transforms in to an interaction between statuses.

We see the aggravation of this crisis, by increasing requests from various call-center businesses to improve the communication of their employees-operators with clients in the direction of prioritizing humans and moving away from automation. In addition, we observe the growth of a vacuum in communication in unregulated interactions where there are no prepared scenarios and roles. Most people get lost in the absence of instructions and do not want to take risks in the face of the unknown. That is why the problem of human interaction is taking on the scale of a crisis.

Have we forgotten how communication with each other should look like—communication that is free from the imposed stencil of statuses? The complete absence or ignoring of social positions probably makes it impossible to have a functional and rational interaction due to contemporary needs. Positional interactions make it impossible to make an irrational, a sensual connection or, at least, make it accidental, even wondrous. Therefore, a person can get to know another person mainly outside the boundaries of exclusively status communications.

Our acting school School of Imagery offers society a different model of human interaction than the one we observed and described

above, perhaps somewhat thickening the colors. This model differs in the Imagery format of communication. In order not to get lost in the depths of the Theory of Imagery, let's consider only one of its manifestations, which is tangential to the topic raised, namely, "Compositional Imagery".

The Compositional Method

The compositional method of solving communication problems in society is based on the concept of "Compositional Imagery", which was developed at our school. Let's expand this concept. The central element is the 'Compositional behavioral Image' (CI). CI, in our understanding, is such an interaction of a group of people that creates a coherent impression of a cohesive team, one in which each member is busy with his own work and occupies a certain place in the structure of these relationships. A CI cannot be divided into parts without losing the quality of the team. Should this happen, the divided parts will not factor into the primary CI, but the best case, a new CI. The CI is perceived by the observer as a holistic state of a heterogeneous group of people, which has an internal hierarchy and structure.

CI performed by a group of actors is a living functional structure that maintains its unique momentary state exactly as long as it is necessary to obtain a complete impression from CI.

In our social life, the CI can be observed randomly and episodically. They can be analyzed precisely as images of a group of people in a certain structural interaction. But whether such an analysis will help to get a certain holistic impression is an open question. In any case, understanding and feeling the phenomenon of CI in society will activate the initiative of the participants of such communication, to expand their arsenal of interaction, and, ultimately, to improve quality of life.

CI, as we said, has an internal hierarchy and structure. We distinguish the centers of the composition and the periphery that creates these centers. The centers are connected to each other only conventionally, and they only interact indirectly due to migration of the periphery. The com-

positions are determined only by the structure of the centers and their mutual location. Each center has its own territory. Without the periphery, centers do not exist. Each center must be supported by peripheral actions in relation to it. Without such support, the center is not the center of the composition, but only a context, background, conventionally the garbage. It should be noted that an absolutely clean composition without garbage is a product of high-level acting creativity. In acting compositions, we distinguish three main types of centers:

- a) A person
- b) A status (place)
- c) An act/action/deed

The first type of center refers to the creative resume of a specific person, a resume of his/her creative solutions. Knowledge of such 'baggage' determines the actions of the periphery in relation to centers of this type.

The second type of center, Status—or (social) role, refers to a position in a certain hierarchy. We understand this type of center as a place in both the narrow and broad senses of the word. In the narrow—this is a certain place on the site. Broadly speaking, it is a position, a place in hierarchy, a rank.

The last type of center, an act/action/deed, is that can be recognized by anyone on the site.

Let's note that all three centers can be gathered when a certain person occupies a certain position—has a status and, moreover, is engaged in certain activities (for example: sings a song, dances, campaigns, expresses dissatisfaction out loud etc.). This means that the actions of the periphery may differ depending on which center they are implemented in relation to. If the type of the center is not defined in advance, then such definition is assumed by the actor who chooses a peripheral function for himself

If the center is a person, then it acts either in relation to the person (his/her creative resume), regardless of what exactly this person is busy doing at that time, and what position (status, social position) this person occupies.

If a 'peripheral' actor chooses a center—Status, then he acts in relation to it, regardless of who exactly occupies this position and what exactly this center is occupied with. If the center is an act/action/deed, then the actor acts in relation to it, regardless to the person who performs this action and what position or status this person occupies.

What is the periphery and what are the 'actions of the periphery' in relation to the centers?

First of all, it should be noted that any Composition is created by those participants (actors) who have assumed the functions of the periphery. It means that the periphery is more important than the centers although the composition is determined by the presence and structure (mutual arrangement) of the centers. Such a paradox!

Centers exist regardless of the actions of the periphery and do not react on any actions of periphery. The compositional connection is detected when there is a center and a periphery—it is a key factor in the presence of a Compositional Image.

The actors (members of the group) involved in the actions of a periphery determine such a course of action for themselves, in relation to the center, so that the result is in favor of the periphery for the peripheral actor himself. It means that, in such a relationship, the peripheral actor must be more lively and alive than the center. The center does not pay attention to the periphery and lives its own life. The periphery has an ambition to lead a center-periphery pair. With such a course of actions, there appears something what we call a "compositional connection". This is a key element of the composition. A compositional relationship created by the periphery that rests at the center. Without the ambition of the periphery to lead the center-periphery pair, communication does not happen. Instead, there is either copying, replication of the center or an extension-like adaptation (NLP). There is no compositional connection in any of the two options.

A single compositional connection can be a unique composition created by two participants. But this is an exceptional thing, although it is useful for understanding and feeling what a real CI is.

Exercises on creating compositional connections expand the participants' understanding of methods of compositional communication. We

are not talking about pair imagery here, although in the interaction of two personalities, this is the most complete way of interaction—the creation and transformation of a pair image. Compositions are the interaction of several people without establishing a strong mutual (pair) connection.

There are certain psychological methods of studying human behavior in society, for example, the method of placements (for example, according to Hellinger). But the ‘arrangement’ method does not determine the possibility of working in a hierarchy, nor does it have the goal of creating a recognizable compositional connection. The game in ‘arrangements’ is always linear, not picky about the actor’s immersion in the image.

Working on compositional exercises in a group is always more productive than working in a pair or even with three people. The dynamics of rotations of the periphery with a constant structure of the centers opens an understanding and feeling of the possibilities of ‘coloring’ such communication with an awareness of the positional game.

Changing centers is a special technique, although it has a manipulative flavor, but the result—the creation of an unexpected CI—justifies the moral ‘flaws’ of such a change. Compositional Images and their transformations make participants more flexible in communication, optimistic and cheerful at the same time.

Among the most interesting in our context are compositional exercises for creating a connection with one center and transforming it into a connection with another. For example, the ‘periphery’ chooses a Status Center for its actions, or simply the status of a certain person. It acts in relation to such a center, discovers a compositional connection, maintains it, and over time, transforms its actions in relation to another center: to the activities with which the partner (center) is busy, or to the partner’s personality, to the Person.

Laboratory of social transformation

Our school contributes to the development of performative arts by trying to focus the community’s attention on the fact that the real acting, activ-

ity, work and profession of an actor is first of all an art. It is not a craft, not a skill. An actor is not a performer in the sense of one, for example, who performs written music. Distinguishable from other forms of art, an actor is a creator of a unique Imagery, completely Imagery, authorial art.

It is customary to call the art of acting performative art, but if there is no clearly defined 'score' of the acting, but a creative task that involves a great deal of unregulated freedom, then an actor's performance always includes a great deal of improvisation! In the traditional director's theater, the ambition of the directors to prescribe the actors a detailed score of internal states and behavior is widespread. The only thing that remains for the actors is to follow along the laid 'rails', without turning to the 'margins'—a freedom beyond the 'rails'.

We offer a different concept of actor's art, where the actor is a full-fledged artist, a creator of a play or a movie, similar to the director who solves his own tasks, inherent in his profession, without entering the 'territory' of the actor's creation. To realize these ambitions, we clearly distinguish the performance of a role as a certain imitative work (of a 'hot' or 'cold' variety) on the one hand, and as the solution of creative tasks by an actor who is an independent creative unit—creator, on the other. In this essay, we invite others to consider social interactions in a compositional (by definition of the SoI) perspective. Since the educational practice of our school is based on research principles, we also consider the possibilities of transformations as a laboratory.

Based on our school's experience in creating and transforming Compositional Images, we suggest using our methodology. More specifically, we propose the study of possibilities regarding the identifying of statuses as a certain quality of relations, and further, its transformation into purely human relations. In these laboratories, it is important to understand what a composition is built on, namely such a thing as a compositional connection. This is a key question in understanding what a Compositional Image is. Social relationships from a compositional point of view suffer from the uncertainty and rawness of human relationships, in contrast to very carefully worked out status relations. The laboratory of

social transformation can offer both performative and social-play work in separate working groups and classes.

The laboratory of social transformation can be deployed anywhere—in a university, college, gymnasium or in a public(gathering) area at the place of the residence of the participants. The work is possible in the project format with either the involvement of specialists in Compositional Imagery or in the open format with the association of the citizens under the guidance of competent curators.

To develop a curriculum for such a laboratory, we have to use certain dramaturgical material such as real-life situations, complex or specific interactions-relations, poorly understood relationships within teams of colleagues etc., or any specifics of the social life that the participants would be able to present in a metaphorical, magical or other fictional, fairy-tale form. For the primary dispersal of the group, we can use typical or problematic from the point of view of communication that already appears in literature or journalism. Through compositional games, the laboratory will explore both familiar and understandable crisis communicative situations, as well as unique, intimate and private ones presented in metaphor.

Imagery, and in our case the Compositional Imagery, precisely because of its ability to impress, will sow the seeds of new creative solutions in the hearts of the participants and give a powerful impulse to the transformation of social communication to its rise to a new level. This is the level of Imagery that we promote in our acting school, and to which we strive in social life.

Response by Luca* Jacqueline Rudolf

Dear Yaroslava and Oleksandr,

Thank you very much for sharing your text and ideas on ways of dealing with social transformation as part of the composition method from your drama training.

The concreteness of exploring the variations of acting in specific situations is very appealing to me and my understanding of art with its various facets. The framework presented offers the opportunity to act and react in the setting, with the complexity of the interwoven past-present-future(s) fabric as a background and optional explicitness as well as permanent latent point of reference, which inspires me to think further. In this context, I particularly appreciate the complexity and multi-perspectivity that the Compositional Behavioral Image addresses. Inspired by your presentation, I am imagining concrete examples that help widen my understanding of the method and let ideas about the potential you are alluding to flourish, e.g. concerning public space sites, intermedial constellations or the collaboration of actors without and with professional education.

In order to engage more deeply with the method, I would be very curious to know more about how you differentiate it from other acting methods and what this might mean for taking action in specific situations. What does the 'laboratory' situation look like in differing terms? Which examples can help me visualize various aspects of it? What are important prerequisites for the applied method to unfold its potential? What are the challenging and restricting elements of the method or the

settings created? And how could this possibly be incorporated into the continued development of the method?

Your comments also encourage me to think about different places and contexts in which these laboratory-like situations can take place and be redesigned and developed. What implications would different settings contain and evoke? What shifts or focal points could be found and explored? What are the concrete changes that (can) take place and be addressed?

Additionally, I would also like to discuss with you how political such an aesthetic-performative practice can be and what this could mean or how far it can be thought out? Here I would like to come back to the transformational ideas you have—how can they be categorized and maybe linked to other discourses or disciplines?

What is more, I would be very interested in exploring the pedagogical framework further, for example with regard to these questions: what explicit and implicit assumptions are there that shape the method and its pedagogical use? To what extent can or must be a goal set in the methodological setting? Where would you say the setting needs to be fluid and re-active? And what can 'exploration' mean in that respect in a laboratory-like situation? How can this be achieved or what parameters could be set to ensure what is aimed at?

I am really looking forward to getting in touch with you about your ideas (again), deepening my understanding and exploring the initiated dialogue further.

*Yours,
Luca*

UN_REST

Practices of rest in performing arts in social contexts, mediation and education

*Luca*Jacqueline Rudolf*

Future and crisis and contemporaries

With the beginning of 2023 we were continuously surrounded and approached by multiple intertwined phenomena identified as ‘crises’ that urged joint action: the aftermath of the global Covid-19 pandemic; increased social division in terms of right-wing extremism and populism; the growing unequal distribution of prosperity; the immensity of the worldwide rise in the number of people forced to seek refuge; the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine; and the challenges of finding effective responses to the multifaceted implications of climate change—just to name a few (cf. Demirović 2013, Hruschka 2021, Tagesschau 2022, United Nations 2022). What unites the designated constellations of these crises is the expression and problematization of an incapacity to re_actadequately. This account can notably be linked to an enhanced complexity due to extensive interconnectedness on the one hand, as well as to a significant degree of disconnection due to a lack of dialogue and reciprocal resonance on the other hand (cf. Arendt 1992: 272ff, Braidotti 2021, Bröckling 2007, Feist/Geden 2023, Haraway 2018, Rosa 2016). Against this backdrop, addressing the various constellations and aspects of crisis is negotiated on different levels of society. Also, from the standpoint of performative arts, its mediation and in the context of

referring educational institutions, the question of how to respond arises and is concretely invoked with this anthology (cf. Bünger et al. 2021, Eschment et al. 2020, PAC n.d.). Which approach can we take from the perspective of art and education, two societal arenas that have no wider political decision-making power?

In this article I will not try to find solutions or answers for the described crisis scenarios. Instead, I employ the description of crisis due to constricted agency and a lack of relationality as a thematic background associated with urgency and restlessness. The associated urgency becomes the jumping-off point for shifting my perception from a limited decision-making power of the fields of art and education to their potential as possible areas of (collective) experimentation (cf. Peters 2013). The associated restlessness inspires me to engage with 'practices of rest'. In that, I am interested in a possible political dimension of rest, rejecting the idea of rest as 'the opposite of action' or something more or less equivalent to 'doing nothing'. At the same time, I am interested in a dimension deviating from a primarily psychological or spiritual context of "mindfulness" (cf. Marlatt/Kristeller 1999). My interest is to explore 'practices of rest', interrogating the idea of rest as (political) acting and its entanglements with aspects of un_productivity and un_availability. How can practices of rest insofar inspire current accounts of performing arts in social contexts, corresponding mediation and education?

To start my research, I will outline two examples of practices of rest that indicate what I am interested in: projects vaguely located in_between the frames of aesthetic, political/activist, and social/community-orientated practices, simultaneously reproducing and transcending these social scales, thereby reflecting and addressing societal complexity. Then, I will address the idea of "action" with Hannah Arendt, engaging the discrimination of a public and private sphere. Afterwards, I will merge the insights I gained from both lines of thinking, also building on the Arendt-related work of Judith Butler. Thereafter, I will apply my findings to the context of performing arts, their mediation and the referring educational frames before I draw a final conclusion.

Approaching practices of rest and un_availability and un_productivity

I write from a white, able-bodied, queer and academically educated perspective. My perceptions, interests and decisions are influenced by the privileging and marginalizing experiences associated with these positions. My perspective is, therefore, essentially situated and necessarily fluid. In this article, I draw on the work of Tricia Hersey and Raquel Meseguer Zafe. With “The Nap Ministry” and “A Crash Course in Cloudspotting”, both artists base their work on their individual horizons of experience, interrogating and crafting ensuing dimensions of intersubjectivity and collectivity.

Tricia Hersey’s “Nap Ministry”

Hersey’s work includes performance art, writing, activism and theology. Her multilayered practice also ranges from activities as a “teaching artist, archivist assistant, community activist, and arts integrated curriculum developer” (Hersey n.d. a) in the educational sector, the cultural branch as well as civil society facilities. As such, she is committed to the “teachings of somatics, womanism, womanist theology, Black Liberation Theology, Afrofuturism, and her ancestors” (ibid.). In 2016, Hersey founded “The Nap Ministry” subsequently to her performance “Transfiguration” with which she investigated the topics of “reparations, resistance, Black Liberation Theology, and the spiritual practice of rest, and how it can be used as a direct line to our ancestors.” (Hersey n.d. b) Working on “Transfiguration” she developed “the frameworks, manifesto, tenets, and rest practices” that are now the texture of “The Nap Ministry” as an “organization of multitudes” (ibid.). The aim is to “create sacred spaces where the liberatory, restorative and disruptive power of rest can take hold” (ibid.) so that, again and again, temporary communities of rest emerge and dissolve. The idea is to thereby “collectively deprogram, decolonize, and unravel ourselves from the wreckage of capitalism and white supremacy” (ibid.). The book “Rest is Resistance” is the corresponding manifesto. Opening with the phrase “I hope you

are reading this while laying down!” (Hersey 2022), Hersey essentially brings four “tenets of the Nap Ministry” forward: “1. Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. 2. Our bodies are a site of liberation. 3. Naps provide a portal to imagine, invent, and heal. 4. Our DreamSpace has been stolen and we want it back. We will reclaim it via rest.” (ibid.: 13)

Raquel Mesequer Zafe’s “Dreams of Resting Spaces and a Resting Network”

Raquel Mesequer Zafe “acknowledges ‘crip’ as a tool in her artistic process, and ‘rest’ as a creative impulse” (MAYK n.d.). In her work “A Crash Course in Cloudspotting”, (ibid.) she distinctively addresses rest in relation to space. The performative and installational work is motivated by her reflections on the restraints and possibilities she is meeting with her own invisible disability: “I felt relieved to realise I am able, but I am also disabled by a built environment and vertical culture that is simply not designed for me (which is why I identify as a Cloudspotter, my euphemism for the fatigue and horizontal needs of someone with chronic pain).” (Mesequer Zafe 2017) On Disabilityarts.online she draws initiative from the description of “a fellow C[l]oudspotter [sic!]” (ibid.) that “there is literally no where I can go to socialise when I am in a flare up: all social activities involve sitting down, and it is just too painful. So I am confined to lying down at home or in other people’s homes.” (ibid.) She then asks: “Wouldn’t it be neat if there were resting spaces around the city, we could use as pit stops or places to socialise? A network of public spaces that welcome horizontality which we could use to map our days travelling through our cities?”. With this idea she invited people to contribute to a research on “how people with invisible disabilities rest and how they use their public spaces” (ibid.). In this context, she developed “A Crash Course in Cloudspotting” as “an intimate audio journey exploring the depths of human connection and the subversive act of lying down” (Mesequer Zafe 2017) combined with “a gentle choreography of lights, activated in the space by patterns of rest we so rarely see” based on “over

250 stories from people living with invisible disabilities and chronic illnesses” (ibid.).

Deploying the policies of slowing down and adjourning as well as the occupation of (public) space and the formation of new common spaces, the outlined practices involve ‘time’ and ‘space’ as two crucial dimensions of conceptualizing rest. Where Hersey chiefly eludes the hegemonial narratives of white supremacy and capitalism (without generating yet another enclosed counter-narrative but rather relying on decentral dynamics of the multitude), Merseguer Zafe most notably shifts and opens our perception of shared space and the practices finding realization in situ. In both cases, the respective bodies are rendered inaccessible for the societally scheduled operations, paces and modes of activity, enacting a (collective) sense of unavailability. As a result, both disrupt and question hegemonial procedures and rhythms that guide how we move along and inhabit space(s). Thus, the accentuated unavailability emanates into a collective refusal to sustain dominant societal narratives, which I want to comprehend as a form of unproductivity. While Hersey contradicts ‘grind culture’ by tracing it back to capitalist dynamics and the structures of white supremacy, Merseguer Zafe’s project engages a crip perspective, interfering with a dominant ableist view with the aim of making marginalized practices perceptible and dissolving social isolation. Hence, both approaches to rest are substantially informed by the situated and shared knowledge of crip and BIPoC experiences, thereby challenging our hegemonial perceptions and conceptions of space, time, communality and community (c.f. Castro Varela/Dhawan 2015, Davis 2013, Haraway 2018, Winker/Degele 2009). Both can be essentially understood as practices that offer strategies of reciprocal awareness and provide occasions to ally and assemble as forms of getting in touch. Here lies the potential to effectively shift and expand our visions of discursive and material limitations and peripheries (c.f. Ahmed 2006).

The private and the public realms and the marginalization of rest as non-political

From the evolved hegemony-informed perspective on ‘time’ and ‘space’, I would like to touch on Hannah Arendt’s concept of “action”. I will not go deeply into the terminology here but will pick out single aspects that inform my reflections. In “The Human Condition” (1992), Arendt employs the antique idea of a public sphere imbued with political freedom in contrast to a private realm of reproductive seclusion. Two grounding principles for Arendt’s thinking are the precondition of natality, which indicates the capacity to make new beginnings, and the presumption of plurality, constituting reciprocal perception and processuality (cf. Arendt 1992: 17f, 215ff, 224 ff, 293ff, Rebentisch 2022, Weyl 2016: 177–179, 183f). The public realm is thought of as a ‘space of appearance’ where people are perceived by each other, exposed to one another, mutually related and, by that, empowered to act—in opposition to the characterization of reproductive and consumerism-related activities as self-related and lonely (cf. Arendt 1992: 27ff, 216ff, 232ff, Weyl 2016: 184–186). Drawing from that Arendt differentiates three primary human activities: “labor”, “work” and “action” (cf. Arendt 1992: 14ff, 76ff, 124ff, 164ff). Labor is attributed to the private sphere, comprising activities of self-preservation on a biological level; the notion of work refers to activities that produce lasting objects and is considered to be merely in an intermediary position; action builds on these two providing activities but is defined by the dimension of freedom in opposition to necessity and is assigned to the public realm (cf. *ibid.*: 14ff, 27ff, 104, 112, 216, 258).^{1[1]} Drawing a distinction, action is here detached from necessity or productiveness and bound to the appearance in the presence of others (public realm). Labor

1 Because the contrasting of labor and work was repeatedly criticized as inconsistent, I won’t plunge into the precise lines of critique in terms of her definitions since I rather want to introduce her perspective as a basic point of reference for the following examination of practices of rest (cf. Geisen 2011: 274, Spittler 2016: 30).

and work are featured as re_productive and solitary activities (private realm).

While Arendt critically postulates a transitional historic process in which the modern era has manifested a hegemonial status of labor (cf. Arendt 1992: 38, 244ff, 287ff, 312ff), I want to shift the focus from Arendt's discriminations to contemporary positions in the discourse on work/labor, regarding capitalist enforcements of productivity and availability (cf. Bücken 2022, Daum 2020, Haus Bartleby 2015, Hersey 2022). In this context, rest and recreation can be described as marginalized and as primarily understood as instrumental practices to restore the workforce (cf. Bücken 2022, Hersey 2022). This is demonstrated by the marginalization of public or openly accessible space dedicated to rest and/or autonomous utilization (cf. Hersey 2022, Meseguer Zafe 2017): In public space, infrastructural settings like parks, yards and other open spaces can on the one hand be understood as exceptions to the general privatization of rest. But at the same time, they must be acknowledged as remains that are genealogically aligned to exclusive aristocratic and bourgeois fields of activities without common access (cf. Schwarz 2015). Moreover, such recovery-orientated infrastructures can be ascribed to the context of social arrangements that evolved responding to socio-economic deprivation during industrialization—and are consequently linked to work-oriented practices of recovery (cf. *ibid.*). Rest can insofar be considered as tightly connected with the economic sphere ('labor' and 'work'), ultimately facilitating providing/(re-)producing. I therefore argue that, contemporarily, rest is dominantly assigned to the realm of the private, discursively as well as in a material sense on the level of corporal practices (e.g. sleeping, pausing, abiding) and corresponding physical arrangements (cf. Hersey 2022, Meseguer Zafe 2017). In addition to space, this account also addresses the dimension of time, which is notified by the thematization of spare time and "time poverty" in contemporary socio-political and socio-scientific debates on social injustice, precarious employment or care work (cf. Bücken 2022; Whillans/West 2022). From this theoretically informed notion of 'action', I want to draw our attention in the next part to un_productive entanglements concerning the categories of 'time' and 'space'.

Challenging paradigms of the private and un_productivity and un_availability

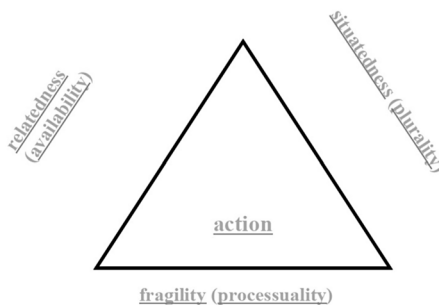
The introduced practices of rest artistically address collective structures of time and space. By that they traverse a one-dimensional affiliation of rest to the private and its characterization as detached from ‘acting’ respectively socio-political relevance. On the theoretical level, Judith Butler’s thinking, referring to central aspects of Arendt’s argumentation but enhancing it, is interesting here: Butler especially draws our attention to the fact that “[w]e cannot act without supports, and yet we must struggle for the supports that allow us to act or, indeed, that are essential components of our action” (Butler 2015: 72). Hence, Butler dissents a rigid dichotomy between the public and private sphere, also highlighting reciprocal dynamics of conditionality and freedom, of (re-)producing and acting (cf. *ibid.*: 71, Tassin 2011). With this practically and theoretically induced idea of rather permeable, intertwined relations of private and public spaces, I turn again to the presented practices of rest, asking how their qualities outlined before can thereupon be (re-)contextualized. Firstly, I conceptualized rest as unproductive in the sense of not serving the binding ideal of industriousness or work diligence. Consequently, it must also not be instrumentally subordinated to the restoration and maintenance of the workforce. By that, two pervasive contemporary narratives are refused.² The (physical) unavailability that is on the one hand devised (regarding those narratives), is on the other hand necessarily inversed in the Arendtian mode of action by explicitly making oneself accessible for the perception of others. This is enacted via remaining in public space while resting aside from designated spots, exceeding presumed durations of resting, as well as shaping formations of collective resting in common/public spaces. Here, Butler can be employed again, stating:

2 In this context, it is interesting to take a look at Arendt’s term of “ideology” (cf. Arendt 1986, Weyl 2016: 178).

No one body establishes the space of appearance, but this action, this performative exercise, happens only 'between' bodies, in a space that constitutes the gap between my own body and another's. In this way, my body does not act alone when it acts politically. Indeed, the action emerges from the 'between', a spatial figure for a relation that both binds and differentiates (Butler 2015: 77).

The depicted facet of 'relatedness' in the context of the examined practices of rest can then be regarded as a quality of action dissolving an inelastic definition of public space. This definition of action can be amplified by the indicated 'situatedness' in the portrayed practices, drawing from Arendt's depiction of plurality as vital (cf. Arendt 1992: 16ff, Butler 2015: 75f, Haraway 1995, Langenick et al. 2022, Rebentisch 2022: 33f). A further quality that can be traced and adjoined is a fragility of—in both cases—decentral, multitudinal frames. These are based on the ephemerality of enacting communalities, emphasizing contingency and processuality as Arendt also does (cf. Arendt 1992: 16ff, Rebentisch 2022: 33f, 43).

Figure 1: Conceptualization of action with Arendt, Butler, Hersey and Meseguer Zafé.



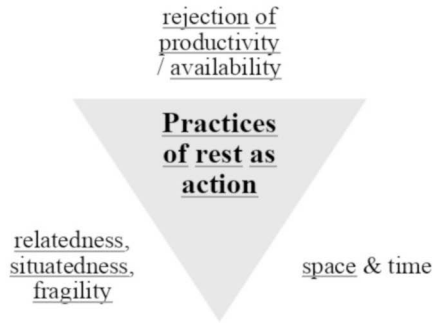
Ensuing this deliberation inspired by the theoretical positions of Arendt and Butler as well as the practical contexts initiated by Hersey and Meseguer Zafé, I comprehend rest as a potential form of (politically

relevant) action. This addresses a dimension of rest to be differentiated from a merely biological, reproductive or work-related instrumental practice—a dimension defined by the qualities of action. For my following reflections on implications for performing arts in social contexts and their mediation as well as corresponding educational settings, I will also build on the itemized qualities of relatedness, situatedness and fragility.

Addressing performing arts and their mediation and the corresponding institutionalized education

The practices of rest employed in the works of Hersey and Meseguer Zafe refuse dominant paradigms of productivity and availability while engaging relatedness, situatedness and fragility. In studying those, I am searching for traces of reverse and traversing that can inspire, reconfigure or broaden current aesthetic and educational practices, for instance, in relation to contemporarily significant difference- and process-oriented approaches (c.f. Bücken 2020/21, Falk et al. 2022, Hentschel 2014, Hinz et al. 2021). For my ensuing reflections, I build on the previously elaborated elements: firstly, the rejection of work-related productivity-narratives that claim extensive mental and corporal availability. Secondly, relatedness (availability), situatedness (plurality) and fragility (processuality) as three dimensions of action. Thirdly, the interrogation of the elements of time and space that informed my perspective on both rest-related artistic works as well as my theoretically inspired reflections. Drawing from these facets, I suggest a conceptualization of practices of resting as embedded and multilayered.

Figure 2: Visualization of practices of rest as embedded and multilayered.



Based on this idea, I suggest the following three elements and correlating questions to research on rest in (one's own) practices of mediation of performing arts as well as referring institutionalized education:

(1) Breaks:

When do I/we take breaks? Why? What are possible variations?

How many breaks do I/we take? Why?

How long are the breaks I/we take? Why?

Who decides on the frequency and duration of breaks? How and why?

What qualities apply for operational constancy in taking breaks (in a setting/between settings)? What qualities apply for variation? How can this inform my/our practice and, if applicable, the framing structure(s)?

What are contexts to reflect on this? Where/when does this happen? How much time is spent on this?

Who is part of this reflection? Who isn't? What are possibilities to find variation?

(2) Mode changes—during and between work and non-work phases:

What are modes (of time and space) that I/we decidedly or out of routine (re-)produce in my/our practices? How can e.g. horizontality, interruptions as well as slowing down enrich our repertoires?

Are there variations in the intensity of mental/corporal availability during my/our practice(s)? If so, what are their qualities? How can they be focused or diversified? If not, what are the options for switching modes on a trial basis? How can phases of transition between varying modes of availability during working sessions be initiated, framed and moderated? Through which forms can they be anchored as voluntary?

What are dominant and marginalized strategies to initiate and accompany transitions from work to rest and vice versa? What different qualities do they possess?

How can the difference between more and less dominant approaches be addressed? When and how can variations be (helpfully) incorporated?

(3) *Exchange*:

Assuming that I/we do not rest alone—What are occasions, spaces, time frames and rhythms of exchange with (a) colleagues, (b) the people acting in the frameworks I/we initiate or moderate, or (c) other people? Try to answer the following questions in relation to a, b and c:

What variations are there already? What variations could be interesting? What are supporting and challenging conditions of this given or possible exchange? What are the resources I/we can draw on?

Is this exchange a regular/institutionalized part of my/our work? If not, where could time and space for it be added or addressed as a need? If yes, what would help to consolidate or expand this space/time for exchange?

Based on these categories I also propose three concrete settings. The first one derives from the thematization of mode changes and is something I have worked with in the field of performing arts and their mediation together with Katrin Maiwald. In various projects, we established a spot (space) for the people engaging with us in performative research to *withdraw* from a dedicated area of occupation. This spot was in variations labelled as a watching/noticing or pause location. The possibility to move from one field of action to another varying the intensity of mental and physical involvement was optional ('fragility'). The withdrawal from one field is then set equal with the entrance to another area, maybe in combination with a spatial 'reorientation' between standing, sitting or lying.

Maintaining a form of spatial ‘relatedness’ is in opposition to leaving the working space. It was interesting for us to experiment with this tool in continuous projects as well as differing settings. The second proposal I would like to make is a ‘shared resting time-space’ for people who have different roles/tasks in a project, institution or yet another system, e.g. students and tutors, participants and theater pedagogues, researchers and their co-researchers (situatedness). Here the idea would be to regularly deploy a concrete location as well as a concrete time frame with the dedicated invitation of those diverse groups to join for resting. This framework, built on the voluntary co-presence of people in different positions resting together, would express appreciation for the act of resting through its institutionalization. For the Bachelor of Arts in Theater Pedagogy at Zurich University of the Arts, a similarly conceived offer was set up during spring semester 2023: students and tutors were invited to gather for a thirty-minute “TP Break” around 10 am. It can be noted that the offer was hardly used from the student side as well as any faculty members who were not part of the core team. Thus, for the considered setting it might be helpful to coordinate the selection of time and space in a joint process from the perspective of the different roles in order to develop a ‘collaborative basis’ for the ‘action of resting together’. In a way similar to this, my third proposition would be to establish a ‘frequent free time-space’ in the common curriculum or timetable. Again, the provision of a certain space or rather several spaces and an associated time frame are necessary elements. This area of corresponding time and space would then be at the free disposal for all members of the concerned context. I would suggest a commonly accessible framing of this time-space as an invitation to rest, maybe co-presently in parts and partly decentralized. This format appreciates rest as a commonly shared practice via institutionally deployed time and space and explicitly valuing the (possible) diversity of practices. In my view, for all three of my suggested formats as settings/practices in progress the exchange with the people involved is essential. Time and space are important elements to realize practices of rest and support their evolution. Yet, rest can never be imposed, since from a psychological standpoint the individual needs the capacity and self-competence to engage in rest. From the theoretical position taken

here, rest as action must remain non-instrumental, meaning without necessity.

Crisis and rest and prospects

The backdrop of my search was the initial claimed observation of the current multifaceted crises—but for this article I decided not to turn to attempts at solving these. Instead, I used the referring lack of effective action and interconnectedness as a starting point for my investigation of two contexts of practices of rest. I argued that the examples I introduced inspire relationality and nurture communion by evoking motions of allyship and shaping more broadly and diversely accessible sites and practices. Drawing from Arendt's and Butler's lines of thinking, I argued for the possibility to classify certain aspects of 'rest as action'—in distinction to 'doing nothing' as well as psychological or spiritual facets in the context of 'mindfulness'. Building on my investigation, I developed impulses for the practice of performing arts and their mediation as well as the institutionalized education in this field. My conclusions from this are: 1) It is intriguing to illuminate a contemporarily marginalized dimension of *rest* in differentiation from work or labor (productivity/necessity)—carving out forms and facets of connectedness enacted. 2) Rest can and should therefore explicitly be integrated in research and learning processes as a line of 'action', independent from refusing the restoration of productivity—simultaneously resituating these practices while relating to the essential framing knowledge and struggles of the Crip and BIPOC community and inviting people to be involved in that process. 3) This approach can be understood as a continuous research process, experimenting with forms and settings based on the provided qualities of 'relatedness', 'situatedness' and 'fragility'—making rest not a 'helpful instrument' to initiate interconnection and communality, but merely an indicated and ongoing 'active' motion.

Pursuing this line of thinking, it would be also interesting to continue exploring rest as part of artistic and mediating practice, anchoring and questioning it with regard to aesthetic consequences and qualities

on a structural level. This investigation appeals for instance to the course of postdramatic theater as well as contemporary crip performance (c.f. Deck/Umatham 2020, Backhausen et al. 2023). How do practices of rest inform our aesthetics and our conceptions of creating and creativity? How can the exploration of a perspective of rest then nourish our perceptions of differences and interconnectedness? Points of reference for this endeavor could be, for example, Michael Turinsky's perspective of varying rhythms articulated in the context of his project "Precarious Moves" or Sandra Umatham's account on "Theatre without Tardies" (trans. by L.R.), engaging, among others, the framework of relaxed performance (cf. Umatham 2020, Turinsky n.d.). Here, diversity and processuality are fostered, particularly thematizing aesthetics in plurality as a more or less entangled 'side by side' of different approaches and refusing binary either-or-searching.

Pause.

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Response by Andreas Bürgisser

Dear Luca,

I was very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to your article. Together we answered the “Forum”, a format in which theater pedagogy students of all years in Zurich can exchange ideas on topics that go beyond the scope of a specific seminar. We agreed to implement the concept of resting together into the seminar. Initiated by your announcement that the following hour will take part in a setting of resting, we rearranged the room. In a kind of campfire atmosphere, we reflected on the last semester. It was still a non-private setting in which compulsory attendance was an important reason for our being together.

In your text, you open up differentiations based on Hannah Arendt’s distinctions between ‘work’—‘action’ and ‘private’—‘public’ respectively with Judith Butler, with whom resting could be described as a common practice that takes place between bodies and softens the rigid boundary between private and public. You raise the question: to what extent can being un_productive and un_available together be a public practice and thereby question, criticize or extend the hegemonic narratives of time and space?

At the described seminar, I had a strong feeling that everyone involved was in a sovereign position, perfectly balancing on the frontier that divides private and public behavior to create a kind of a third place. The distinction between private and public is a central category when I reflect on myself as a teacher in a pedagogical situation. A dilemma arises for me: on the one hand, I find the artistic-research (activist) crit-

ical approach to questioning this boundary relevant, and I hope that it will open up new possibilities for and practices of (non-private) encounters beyond capitalist exploitation logics. In pedagogical settings, I see difficulties that can arise from this. Public gatherings are characterized by 'keeping a distance' on various levels. This is expressed in different practices, depending on the context, on a linguistic level, on a physical level in the distance, in postures, such as sitting instead of lying around together. If there are opportunities to rest together in educational settings, the quality of 'public' distance must not be blurred, but must remain. Perhaps resting in a pedagogical setting is a 'private-non-private-practice', where the quality of distance is crucial to ensure a safe environment for everyone. This is the case, for example, with your proposed concept of a room in the room: there could be a room, where you work together but also an outdoor space where you can retreat in case you need a break.

Besides the question of private/non private practices, your argumentation made me think about curricular matters. What does it mean to incorporate moments of rest into the course of a module? What is the relationship between this rest and the required, expected level of productivity of the seminar participants? What criteria would be used to discuss and debate a supposed thinning out of productivity? Setting and practicing a 'time-space' of rest together calls into question the narrative of offering as much as possible in the limited time available for training. It challenges the narrative that the time of application and processing, incorporation should happen after the training.

A student's life can be described as a hurdle race through countless seminars, from one way of working to another, from one half-baked project implementation to the next. This requires a lot of flexibility, openness and a high degree of self-discipline and self-management skills. There is a lack of time and space to set things in motion. Other metaphors such as fermenting, sedimenting or allowing to rise come to mind. Small seminar groups mean that all students are almost always at the center of the action. In view of the high pace and high level of involvement of the students, I see the idea of rest as action as a critical, possible joint activity. As a lecturer, I will try to incorporate

opportunities for distancing and moments of pausing and stopping into teaching settings. I would also like to pay more attention to the moment of transition between different seminars.

Your focus on rest in action as a common critical practice for questioning hegemonic narratives of time and space is gratefully accepted by me as a reflexive dimension for thinking differently about teaching and curricular design.

I hope that we can share our experiences of this 'in action' at the next PAC meeting at the latest. Perhaps with others, maybe you will do a small session on this?

*Warm regards,
Andreas*

Awe, so awkward

Circles around PAC as a training field for staying with the ambivalent

Stanislaw Godlewski, Judith Philippa Franke

This text is not a typical academic statement, nor is it an artistic manifesto. Rather, it is a notation of joined reflection and discussion, circling around, spiraling into and swirling up the topic of awkwardness.

We decided—at the suggestion of the editors of the book—to focus on one topic: awkwardness. We tried not to attach ourselves to any rules, to test different tools of conversation, expecting that nothing would come of it. In the end—after circling around the topic of awkwardness, common experiences and thoughts on PAC, different emotions and strategies related to awkwardness—there are more questions here than answers, and some themes or sentences are repeated (this is inevitable in dialogue, especially when the topic is about awkwardness). We invite you to think of this conversation as iterations. With each repetition, a given question or sentence takes on a slightly different meaning depending on the changing context. We have outlined the context and our position from which each of us in the following dialogue:

Stanislaw: I have a PhD in theater studies, and I work at the Polish Academy of Sciences, on the editorial board of an academic journal devoted to theater history and theory (“Pamiętnik Teatralny”), and as a theater critic and lecturer. I attempted to parse out the topic of awkwardness in my discussions with Judith more analytically, and I feel that these conversations kept bringing new topics to mind,

mainly those related to the dynamics of interpersonal relations (in the theater and in the academy). It's as if it's awkward to talk about awkwardness per se—or maybe the feeling of awkwardness applies to so many areas that it 'pulls' other topics with it.

Judith: The elusiveness of awkwardness as well as the huge potential for hands-on uproar and crisis has fascinated me—both in my work as senior artist for the MA Applied Theatre—artistic theatre practice & society at University Mozarteum Salzburg and beyond in theatre and education. Working on the text took about 8 months. We exchanged letters through May and June 2023. After the first editorial comments, we changed the structure of our text—instead of exchanging letters, we decided to shorten them, chop them up and organize them into a dialogue. Working on this text, discussing it together and changing it made us get to know each other better and trust each other more. We started as a dialogue from different perspectives, but during it we moved from that *modus operandi* to making it our mutual statement. From a certain point onwards, we knew what we wanted to write, what form the text should take and what roles we would take in it—paradoxically, we got to know each other's perspectives to such an extent that we could write for each other, even disagreeing with each other—Judith would sometimes add passages that Stanislaw would say in the text and vice versa. It's a bit awkward—both for us and probably for the readers. But we decided to embrace it, and we invite you to do the same.

Round 1: Circling around awkwardness and ourselves

Judith: What does that mean in practice... how did we... merge with the topic? Would a different topic have called for a different approach? What are your strategies? I am very much overacting on it. The more I feel it, the more I tend to act 'normal'... not even believing myself. Making it harder and harder to say "wait, this feels off—I don't know what to do". Although we also talked about the power of silence in producing awkwardness, I must admit there

was also an ironic sense of relief when I—or someone else—finally did or said something...

Stanislaw: From personal experience—I don't like to be in a conflict situation, so whenever I disagree or object, I try to smile, turn the situation into a joke—as if I can't bear the awkwardness of the fact that someone might feel offended or think badly about me (this is very narcissistic, in a way). Besides, it 'softens' the discussion, which is sometimes good and sometimes makes the power of critical thinking and exposing differences disappear—'the agon' disappears. Different thought: the relationality of awkwardness was also an important thread in our discussion for me, that sometimes we feel that someone has acted awkwardly, or we ourselves feel awkward because others are looking at us. There is a theme of shame and embarrassment and this strong need to somehow clear it up, smooth it over, get it right, just to make it nice for everyone. This in itself leads me to think that awkwardness is a very theatrical/performative action that can be analyzed from many sides and can also be a tool for change, provocation, etc. If the awkwardness is conscious and planned, is it still awkwardness?

Judith: How did we come up with it? I'm trying to remember. Most likely, it was having long Zoom conversations with colleagues circling around our musings and blind spots with regard to Performing Arts in Contexts, both in PAC and beyond, and our work within it.

Stanislaw: As far as I remember, the topic of awkwardness came up in one of our first drafts of the text for this book... I have a feeling that awkwardness as a topic has also somehow become our way of acting, discussing and thinking, with all its consequences.

Judith: Looking at this first line of our simultaneous writing, one thing keeps appearing: I never seem to spell the word right—awareness... A nice Freudian slip. Hyper awareness? And the moment of misreading. Of being too prepared or too little. Of feeling in the wrong place. Being between assumptions, plans, agendas—if hidden or not. In this, the thought of transparency came up. Who is taking on what role in a process and discussion—and why?

Stanislaw: We've talked about on one of our Zoom calls the various hidden plans, assumptions or pressures that cause feelings of awkwardness, especially when something doesn't go the way we expected. And that these hidden intentions are often a tool to power/control (over oneself, over the process, maybe also over others). This is where awareness is needed, awareness of awkwardness, in order not to abuse one's position and for awkwardness to become an advantage.

Judith: Can we practice being in a state of not knowing? How can we retain the ability and the will to be curious? To be shaken? To dare to stick out and, at the same time, bravely go ahead even though the context is not yet clear? To be as prepared as possible and yet know that the situation will always call for something else? And then there are the well known hands-on moments: the lack of clarity in what others say, think, feel and do. The knowing that I only ever know what I know, and it will bring—when aware—awkwardness in processes with others when confronted with my blindspots and personal perception.

Stanislaw: On the one hand, awkwardness turns out—for me, at least—to be very creative and inspiring. On the other hand, I had a constant need to abolish the feeling of awkwardness. When there was some kind of stop, silence, lack of concreteness, I had the feeling that I was completely unproductive (and I still have this neoliberal conviction in me that I should produce something all the time, just to show that I am useful and competent). This was hard for me, understanding that awkwardness is a natural part of any process—and that it doesn't at all have to lead to the production of some incredibly brilliant thoughts, ideas or plans. Writing about this I have a feeling of slight embarrassment, because somehow I've often heard these kinds of sentences and thought—"mhm, aha, sure, nice, but when it comes down to it, these beautiful ideas have no practical application".

Judith: Have you ever lost contact with someone for so long that it became awkward to get in touch again?

Stanislaw: Yeah. But it provokes me to think about the PAC, which—at least the two times I attended—was a very intense interpersonal experience. It's only held once a year, and then I don't get in touch with most people at all in between. But paradoxically, I somehow like it. I feel comfortable and safe in it. Perhaps because I knew that this was the nature of these meetings and did not feel awkward. Is awkwardness always due to not knowing?

Round 2: Awkwardness as a challenge to standards

Stanislaw: For the moment, it seems to me that awkwardness is a topic for a separate book or collection of essays (probably someone has already written one) or for a performance.

Judith: For the book of essays about awkwardness, titles that I can think of off the top of my head would be: Contexts change contexts; Silence as an amplifier; what was not said—Playing with Power; In your eyes—when you look at me (and) I look away; Hidden agendas and open questions.

Stanislaw: When I think of awkwardness, I'm reminded of one of the definitions of affect I heard in some literary theory classes: Affect is something that is itself in motion and has the ability to move us (emotionally, physically, mentally). It seems to me that awkwardness—as a feeling, an action—is something similar. Something very unstable, dynamic, fluid, and at the same time causing a stir in all involved. In this sense, awkwardness is queer, if we assume that a feature of queerness is changeability, instability, constant transformation. For me, queer is an important category when I think about PAC—not only because of the queer working group and our discussions in Zurich. Queer as an idea and practice can help PAC to practice the ideas of equality, diversity, exchange, inclusivity. And at the same time, queer is very often awkward because it challenges social norms.

Judith: Yes, the non-confirming, the bravery to look for and explore new forms... How do we get from here to there? How do form and context fit together for PAC?

Stanislaw: It seems to me that queer is also about courage—the courage of nonconformism, of saying no, especially to those people who are ideologically close to you. And any such saying “no”/“I disagree” causes a stir—and awkwardness, because it shifts the established order.

Judith: Shifting the established order as an action... taking seriously—or at least trying to do so—the communication and questions, thinking along with each other. How do we ‘really discuss’? How do we go out of encounters changed? Is that always awkward? Before? In the moment of change? Feeling out of the comfort zone, having to re-evaluate, re-center, re-orientate and be in crisis ... Realizing we might not even have been aware of them beforehand... I sometimes only realize my expectations when something does not go to plan... a discomfort I cannot explain at once... And then: how to not only queer but make PAC more awkward?

Stanislaw: Can a PAC be more awkward and more queer? Probably yes, but much depends on—note—the context. We talked several times during our meetings about the discussion that arose after one of the Country Reports, prepared by a person from Egypt (and the room was full of people from Europe) and the dispute over the definition of political, which was not really resolved or pared down. I suspect that if the conversation had taken place in Egypt rather than Switzerland, and if the balance of power in the room and the course of this discussion would have been different. Making the PAC more queer is not just about representation (that’s obvious), but also about the balance of power and awareness of its hidden agendas.

Judith: Then again: who was part of it in which way? When I think back on who was actively involved—the two people mainly discussing and some bringing in ideas to mediate—I wonder: are situations less awkward the more active one is? Also, I remember a lot of emo-

tionality, which might have been part of the awkward—and then again a lot of laughter (perhaps a kind of a comic relief).

Stanislaw: As said: not necessarily a relief—the situation was not pared down but rather we stayed with it. Stayed with the trouble if you so wish. Maybe that is what PAC can be also about? Staying with the unknown, the unresolved, the unexpected.

Judith: Maybe it can be a practice of dwelling in the ambivalent that also informs the way we work together: do we want to really discuss, or just convince others of our view? Are we ready for it to be awkward and for perhaps nothing to come of it, except the fun of the process itself (and even that—the fun—is not guaranteed)? I suspect that it is very difficult for us—people who are established in the theater and the academy, often leaders or teachers—to really allow ourselves that we don't understand something, don't know something.

Stanislaw: You asked, “how do we really discuss”.—I think that's when we really discuss, when everyone involved changes under the influence of the discussion. This, of course, is very difficult—and I think it's easier to achieve in smaller discussions or one-on-one conversations, because then we are really able to understand the perspective of another. And change, I think, is awkward. Or perhaps put another way—uncomfortable. Does uncomfortable always mean awkward? How to get to a queer PAC—I have no idea, except that one should meet and include other perspectives, but that doesn't have to lead to anything at all. I guess it also requires that something clicks between selected people who would have different perspectives and experiences.

Judith: Thinking back on the discussion—there was also a lot of repetition. Again, reformulating, stating a new perspective. Maybe there is a potential of awkwardness as well... Going in circles that turn into spirals... Queering PAC by inviting and staying with other perspectives... as we are in higher education might that be a point... a way... to start?... very open, very abstract question...

Round 3: PAC—Problematizing Awkwardness in Contexts

Judith: When was the last time—in the context of PAC, or the context of performing arts in context—that you felt you came out of an encounter changed? Or maybe... not yet changed completely... but unstable, in flux? I will think about when that was for me and report...

Stanisław: As for meetings that changed me when it comes to PACs—I think, above all, such meetings that had not only a professional dimension, but also a private one. It was with whom I spent time outside of the official conference program and managed to maintain relationships through joint projects beyond the annual meetings (for example, with you on the occasion of this publication). I think change happens when a relationship goes beyond one context, when it exists in other dimensions.

Judith: Interesting: having different experiences and perspectives—what makes you click? A common goal? A common passion? Is PAC passion driven? Does passion lead to awkwardness? Or to the erasure of awkwardness? Brings my thoughts back to the ‘gaps between us’ Mira mentioned and we have also been talking about. What about that we will never fully understand each other? A blessing? A burden? A potential?

Stanisław: Certainly, a common goal unites, passion certainly does too... Whether the PAC is united by passion, it's hard to say. I'm not sure. It seems to me that it certainly unites curiosity, but unfortunately—perhaps this is misleading—I also have the impression, as always with such societies, groups and conferences, that it also unites complacency. Now that I think about it, it seems to me that the PAC is just such a non-place, a space that is safe and interesting, but a little out of the ordinary, detached from our everyday reality. I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but I guess it's hard to feel really uncomfortable/awkward when we meet for 2 days in some super place. It's nice, in a while, and then we'll say goodbye, we'll part ways... I think that in a PAC, inspiration and change don't necessarily come from awkwardness... But maybe I'm wrong.

Judith: Speaking of time in-between: I like the picture of the satellite—being not close but there, knowing there are accomplices and practices of solidarity. Something PAC has taught me very hands on... an anarchic setting in a way. Funny maybe to say, as it is so very institutionalized at the same time. Personal connections within a professional setting—both carrying each other. What an interesting network—an open space (to not say safe space...) for differences, nuances, awkwardness turned openness... and yet, what a romanticized version, as we have pointed out regarding the power dynamics of discussions. I would be really interested to see if PAC has a layer on which it is united by passion... What are you burning for? What sparks your passion—how do we share it? Which ‘we’?

Stanislaw: You said it is an open space, but you didn’t want to use the phrase ‘safe space’—why? Does safe space exclude awkwardness?

Judith: I remember that the two of us were together in a group discussing the concept of safe spaces in Zurich. I had the impression—it was the end of the conference, we were all tired—that we weren’t really listening to each other at the time, we were just having separate monologues about safe spaces... Irony? For me, a safe space is a space where it’s safe enough for you to develop and discuss, and I think that’s combined with awkwardness... It requires attention, vulnerability and real dialogue. Without a false sense of comfort I guess.

Stanislaw: Yes, I too remember the weirdness of the discussion, the feeling of going in circles and some strange sense of fatigue or resignation to talk about the concept seriously. Everyone was talking, everyone was agreeing with each other, no one was really listening to anyone. I had the feeling that before and after this discussion I was exactly the same and had the same mind set.

Judith: What would have happened if we had pointed out the awkwardness/context in ‘safe-space-group’ right away? Would you have been able to? Were you aware and could have named it right at the very moment?

Stanislaw: If we had pointed out our awkwardness right away in the ‘safe space’ discussion, would anything have changed? I’m not sure, it’s possible—but I also think having a frank conversation about awkwardness requires trust, which doesn’t build up that quickly at all. I suspect that some people might be annoyed by this or pretend that it’s not awkward at all. What do you think?

Judith: I guess thinking back to the ‘safe space’ discussion—not wanting to be the killjoy, wanting to give things time to develop kept me from stepping in right away. More waiting than doing. Once tried, then stopped. Was it awkward? More annoying. Or annoyance ‘overwriting’ awkwardness? “I was annoyed” is so much easier to say than “I felt awkward”—much less vulnerable. So I agree: acknowledging awkwardness needs trust. Then again, the more I trust people the less awkward I feel... going in circles... But maybe it’s a matter of training? To feel uncomfortable without feeling awkward? How can we learn to seek the uncomfortable? Learn to want to be changed. Without being petty and clinging to how we used to be. Really be fluid, in transition and embrace that, hopefully with the help of others. Can PAC be a network, a community to evoke that for its members? Who does gain tools for change when and how? Can PAC be a training field for awkwardness?

Stanislaw: You asked: how can we learn to seek the uncomfortable?—instinctively comes to mind a phrase I heard: fear motivates. If you are afraid of something, if you are apprehensive about trying something—do it (within the limits of common sense, of course). That’s what I always try to do when it comes to my work (it doesn’t always work out and probably doesn’t always pay off either).

Judith: Fear motivates—perhaps learning in small settings instead of a big one? Not in the mode of ‘as if...’ but ‘what if...’ I look forward to, in the next PAC, immediately telling you my moments of awkwardness. Staying in them as after this exchange I know it’s just fine. An exchange that would not have happened without the (institutionalized) network of PAC... Where in a process are the awkward moments? Can we shift those to an earlier (or later) point and

thus make a change rather than trying to abolish them? If I point out the elephant in the room—do I make the situation more or less awkward? And what does that have to do with performativity? With performing arts? With contexts? And, as you rightly have pointed out, when that is the *modus operandi*—is it only a nice theoretical idea and not useful when trying to reach aims? Is the awe in there as a word? The ability and the will to be astonished? Can we practice to be in the state of not-knowing? Then again, so much that is connected to it, that possibly constitutes it, that came up in our conversations makes a lot of sense to me when looking at performing arts in contexts: giving space, being aware, trying to read and establish contexts. Embrace the ambivalence.

Response by Ute Pinkert

Dear Judith, dear Stanislaw,

In the encircling of awkwardness, your text is dedicated to a less illuminated side of our human communication. It allows me as a reader to experience how content is formed in the moment of speech, how it is still quite 'raw' and how it is linked to the depths of our personal history and, of course, to the conditions of the reality in which we live. For me, your text is, on an overarching level, a text about the painful realization of being a wounded and vulnerable being in a perfection-obsessed society. The feelings associated with this are complex; shame is an essential part. Thank you for your courage to reach this level of discussion! For me, the success of your attempt has a lot to do with the fact that you enter a real dialog. It is exciting to read how you two meet but also how you miss each other and how your relationship progress.

When I imagine myself as a participant in your dialog, I remember my experience of the PAC conference in Zurich in October 2022. I share your perceptions and, at the same time, I am surprised that you do not mention the importance of language as a medium of communication. We all came together from different language areas and it was a matter of certainty that we would communicate with each other in English. Sometimes there were translations, but it was assumed that everyone had a sufficient command of English. Admittedly, I found this to be the biggest challenge at the PAC meeting. I can speak English, but not well enough to express myself in a differentiated way, leading to a few moments of shame and anger. They always occurred when I had

the impression that things were being oversimplified when I tried to formulate them. I remember that one of PAC's predecessor projects wanted to tackle this problem of different (specialist) languages. The "Glossary Project" wanted to address the phenomenon that our subject, the performing arts in social fields, is anchored in different cultural areas and is based on different traditions and concepts. Manfred Schewe and Florian Vaßen, who are pursuing the project with regard to the relationship between theater pedagogy in the German and English-speaking world, put it this way: "The comparison between German and English terminology made us aware of how strongly the respective theater, cultural and political tradition impacts the translation work and, consequently, can cause significant challenges for translators." You will find further information about the glossary project under the following link: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/scenario/scenarioforum/glossaryperformativeartsdramatheatreineducation/>

We are currently very good at recognizing power relations and enabling accessibility at all levels. But the hierarchies and exclusions that are exercised through the dominance of a language (and the concepts associated with it) form a blind spot in our discussions. If you were to ask me if I know of any other solution for communicating at international meetings, then I believe that artificial intelligence will soon provide us with ways that we can think in our mother tongue and still be understood internationally.

The other aspect that struck me in your text is the notable absence of artistic practice. Isn't the friction in communication, the feeling of awkwardness, one of the strongest motives for the artistic search for a different, more appropriate (symbolic) form? In any case, I find it interesting to think about how the 'desire' to create arises and how I can support it in a professional way. What will distinguish the human capacity for artistic articulation from the creations of artificial intelligence in the future? In my opinion, human creativity needs a foundation in its vulnerability. In this context, I am currently looking again at "resonance" as a world relationship (according to Hartmut Rosa) and its significance for our discipline. Building a relationship of resonance first of all requires recognizing the foreign as foreign in the sense of something unavailable. The

second step then involves not rejecting the foreign, not appropriating it, but allowing it to speak with its own voice. Then, we can subsequently respond to it. In my opinion, this response can only be awkward because it arises anew in every situation and in each unique encounter. I know that this is idealistic: who has the time to listen and to answer in everyday life, especially in our warlike times? I find, however, the (performing) arts provide the space to practice answering and to feel—even endure—the awkwardness of such an answering language in the broadest sense.

I didn't think I would defend awkwardness in the answer to your text..., but I believe that with the unpredictable future of artificial intelligence we are facing, we have to rethink a lot...

Thank you for your impetus.

All the best,

Ute

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