Theatre and Democracy

Building Democracy in Post-war and Post-democratic Contexts

Petro Janse van Vuuren, Bjørn Rasmussen
and Ayanda Khala (Eds.)

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Contents

Introduction: The Political Potential of Applied Theatre Practice, Education and Research 7
Petro Janse van Vuuren, Bjørn Rasmussen and Ayanda Khala

Chapter 1 Watch Out! Theatre Is Anywhere – Redistributing the Ethics of Arts Education and Applied Theatre 25
Kristian Nødtvedt Knudsen and Bjørn Rasmussen

Chapter 2 Drama/Theatre and Democratisation: What Two Revolutions Reveal 43
Courtney Helen Grile

Chapter 3 Theatre as Inclusive Arts-based Research: A Key to Political Art in the Post-democracy? 65
Petro Janse van Vuure and Bjørn Rasmussen

Chapter 4 Performing Theatre and Democracy 87
Leila Henriques

Chapter 5 Democratic Theatre Practice in Donor-funded Projects: Challenges and Interventions 99
Muneeb Ur Rehman

Chapter 6 What Role Can Physical Theatre Play in Reimagining Democracy in South Africa? 121
Kamogelo Molobye

Chapter 7 Creating Democratic Spaces Through Theatre: The Case of *Speak Out*! 143
Cletus Moyo

Chapter 8 Redemptive Theatre – When the Performance Is in the Silence. 163
Tshego Khutsoane, Petro Janse van Vuuren and Les Nkosi

Chapter 9 Performing Young Adults' Reflections on Work, Citizenship, and Democracy 173
Vigdis Aune

Chapter 10 The Aesthetic Model of Disability 193
Nanna Kathrine Edvardsen and Rikke Gürgens Gjærum

Chapter 11 Celebrating Neighbourhood Birds: Performing Equality in Avian-human Performance 217
Heli Aaltonen

Chapter 12 Liezel's Story – #NotInMyName: Playback Theatre in Post-apartheid South Africa 239
Kathy Barolsky and Cheraé Halley

Chapter 13 The Hospital Scene: Deepening Democracy with Theatre-led Inquiry 261
Ellen Foyn Bruun

Author Biographies 279

Introduction: The Political Potential of Applied Theatre Practice, Education and Research

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This edition is a result of a longstanding collaboration between two centres of applied drama, theatre education and research: the Department of Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa and the Department of Arts and Media Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim. From 2017 to 2021 this collaboration has included student and teacher exchange, as well as arts-based research involving theatre companies and cultural centres. Joining our efforts and shared expertise from different cultural traditions, we collaborated to achieve our overall aim – to strengthen the quality of our work as well as bring increased attention and consciousness, within our universities and society at large, to the humanities and to the political value of theatre education and research.

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Equality and reciprocity are important virtues connected to democracy and to this collaboration project. Symbolic of the democratic ambition that filters through this edition, is the space and opportunity given to several new researchers and PhD students, including an innovative collation of master's student contributions (chapter 4). In the same spirit, we have deliberately chosen the Open Access publication format to ensure our research and stories – originating from many continents – reach all interested readers, among them students and creative partners who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to engage with our offering. We also considered the differences in the socio-economic conditions for doing collaborative research in Norway and South Africa, respectively. Notably, a lack of paid research time is significant amongst the South African partners, and as a result this edition has been produced jointly, but on unequal terms. Consequently, in gratitude, we acknowledge that this has made great demands on the energy and dedication from some contributors, editors included.

Our project title[1], which also became the title of this edition, demonstrates our ambition. How can theatre possibly build democracy? Even in societies where some value is ascribed to theatre arts, a political role beyond entertainment and sensuous experience is seldom acknowledged by key national stakeholders and policy makers. Indeed, the very institutionalization of art, historically and in many contemporary instances, can be regarded as a kind of controlling strategy to distinguish the fictitious from real matters, in hopes – by those in power – of protecting our democracies from unpredictable as well as critical performances and playfulness (Hallward, 2006; Rancière, 2009; Rancière & Rockhill, 2013). This western perspective must, however, be moderated somewhat when the context is South Africa and the arts outside of the institutional spaces continue to flourish and are increasingly recognized for their political-educational value. This is thanks to a legacy of theatre as a consistent contributor to

1 "Theatre and democracy: Building democracy in post-war and post-democratic contexts" grew as an international follow-up from a previous Norwegian project, "Drama, theatre and democracy 2014–2017", which unified 60 Norwegian university teachers and researchers in one common project. The current project and collaboration has been kindly funded by our universities and the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education.

civil action and political commentary. Today, wherever we are working in applied theatre – predominantly with cultural democratic ambitions – our joint frustration is that there are fewer funding support initiatives for arts activities, resulting in far more artists than funding structures, within and beyond the arts industry. Nevertheless, applied theatre studies acknowledge the significant presence of aesthetic modalities in our societies and their applications to healing, education, individual and social development – perhaps more explicitly so and more culturally integrated in South Africa than in Norway, in spite of a frequent lack of economic structures in South Africa.

When we approach our students – all post-graduate – as citizens and community members, we introduce a notion of qualitative research which is closely linked to building democracy. We understand theatre art as research and as cultural production through its inquiring into individual and social conditions and concerns. At both centres of applied drama and theatre, we are united in a strong interest in arts-based research methodologies. We trace this interest in the arts as social-aesthetic cultural production and qualitative research, both from indigenous cultures as well as from western arts history – that is, historical practices and thinking that lead to reforms both in art (political avant-garde art) and in research (action research) (Argyris & Schôn, 1989; Lewin, 1946; Rasmussen & Kristoffersen, 2011; Reason, 1988).

At the beginning of the last century, among European modernistic experiments, art was conceived as a platform for the individual to relate intentionally to society. Art was renewed as a social communication platform for investigation and problem solving on urgent life matters, not least on behalf of minority groups (Shahar, 2004). In this light, theatre research not only reaches beyond the art discipline, it also becomes an integrated cultural practice and a platform to generate social knowledge as well as improve life practices in which all participants are simultaneously related as researchers and the researched. Hence, through theatre agency, we seek transferable knowledge as well as skills about, and through, the making and communication of theatre as a complex multimodal medium. In this edition, all the chapters will, to a greater or lesser degree, present research questions and designs that endeavour to embrace

the double ambition of researching theatre as well as theatre acting as methodology for inquiring into social issues through aesthetic means.

A radical notion in both theatre and qualitative research generally, this way of working highlights multimodal ways of knowing evidenced at the research level and thus replaces objects of measurement, objectivity and generalization with other validity criteria such as self-reflexivity, context awareness and arts methodology skills – revealing and processing intentions (see above) at play in human communication. Through this perspective, all theatre and performance artists become cultural agents in their struggle to develop aesthetic forms of inquiry and in their journey as creative problem-solvers. Our research training therefore provides knowledge that enables students to recognize their theatre making as arts-based qualitative research.

Furthermore, our current base for inquiring how theatre may build democracy is already suggested by theses from cultural studies (Williams, 1981), stating that symbolic media offer the (perhaps only) way of linking sensuous knowing/felt experience to propositional, system knowledge. Concurrently, we teach theatre work and theatre research from a specific epistemological point of view: art and symbolic media as a way to bridge and heal a split between sensuous experience and knowledge that seems to characterize modern existence (Reason, 1994), an existence sometimes leading to passivity, apathy, frustration and even violence for some of our students, actors and audience.

In other words, we stand on the shoulders of a longstanding tradition of theatre art as healing, problem-solving and relational knowing that implies a distinct engagement with current democratic conditions. This is why we have framed our collaboration and edition around political theories on "post-democracy". Applied theatre research and politically framed theatre theory have recently pointed at the "post-democracy" and the associated "neo-liberalism" as critical frames for cultural practice and research (Davis, 2014; O'Connor & Anderson, 2015; Szatkowski, 2019). This is a condition of democracy that seems common to democracies that are in tandem with a global market liberalism. In this post-democracy, democratic government, neo-liberalism and market liberalism have fused, forging a democracy with distinct characteristics (Swyngedouw,

2019). Since we are particularly concerned with the human consequences of our democratic condition, and since we face theatre artists and participants whose emotions, ideas and imaginations affect and are affected by the condition, we find such characteristics important.

Following Swyngedouw, one obvious trait is **the economization of politics**, where societies nurture political decisions that are reasonable within a strict market logic and associated "new public management". A fusion of politics and economic politics affects all citizens in our democracies. Closely connected, another characteristic is the **de-politicization of a predominant economic rationale**, where this rationality seems internalized in bodies and systems, unquestioned and beyond political dispute. Any other rationality of organizing the production and distribution of life is deemed non-sense.

Furthermore, **power is given to unauthorized political actors**, such as experts, managers, consultants, and we face a techno-managerial governance where "doing politics" is reduced to a form of institutionalized social management. This has a great impact on citizens, creating a "permanent state of emergency" (Swyngedouw, 2019) including the nurturing of fear, expectations of pending catastrophes – where the catastrophe is always reserved, not for the elite, but for the excluded and powerless. Liberalist individualism, consumer "freedom" and competition also carry with them uncertainty, accentuate social polarization and produce exclusion. A relevant example of this seems to be the polarization effect of the digital divide caused by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on work, study and social patterns and practices, with so much of it now being done online. The pandemic can be exploited for its potential to cause more fear, and can be used to substantiate the apparent threat of pending catastrophe already well nurtured in our post-democracy environment.

In addition, a distinct power strategy of consensus policy, **regarding the "People-as One"** adds to the exclusion. In fact, a system strategy of diversity tolerance adds to a form of sophisticated repression: the inclusion and subsumption of different opinions on anything imaginable as long as it does not question that of the neo-liberal, political-economic state of affairs. Many political scientists have noted the number of people

feeling increasingly frustrated and excluded in the post-democracy (for example Crouch, 2004; Mouffe, 2005; Rancière, 2006). Moreover, it is suggested that ways of repressing antagonism by seemingly allowing diversity can lead to intensified outbursts of antagonistic violence (Rasmussen, 2017; Swyngedouw, 2019).

This brings us back to one very serious backdrop for investigating the potential of theatre in democracy, namely the terror attacks we currently experience in our democracies, such as the Norwegian July 22 2011 event carried out by an ethnic born Norwegian who had the privilege of 12 years' public education. In this edition, chapter 1 specifically elaborates on the concept of post-democracy and how it can affect theatre practice. We might here also include the way in which the Covid-19 pandemic has been mismanaged by governments to provide them with an excuse to take stronger control of "the people", excusing violent and brutal police action and authoritarian restrictions to further political agendas in the guise of protecting citizens. In South Africa, in June 2020, 49 cases of police brutality had been reported since lockdown began (Mngadi, 2020). Reports of other cases across the world had been reported including in, the Philippines, Brazil, Pakistan and India (Delvac, 2021).

The reader will find the philosopher Jacques Rancière features prominently as a reference in the chapters of this edition. He makes the point of staging "dissensus", both in art and society, allowing the unheard and unseen voices of the marginalized standing outside the given consensus management in our societies to be heard – claiming not only freedom of expression but also equality (Nash, 1996). Following Rancière, acts of dissensus are the political means by which to redistribute policy-making and he suggests that certain types of artistic work provide a (peaceful) space for such acts, by blurring politics and art. His thinking can be seen as performative idealism, something which many applied drama and theatre practitioners will relate to. This is notwithstanding the fact that political scientists and art philosophers often dismiss educational, therapeutic and applied arts practices as being part of an "ethical turn" rather than seeing them as dissensual and "unethical" actions (Bishop, 2012; Rancière, 2006b). See chapters 1, 3, 10, & 12 for elaboration on this topic.

We find little correspondence between, on the one hand, the accusations of being ethical and policy supportive and, on the other, the fact that theatre and the arts are seldom acknowledged as social and political ways of knowing in current democracies. On the contrary, we experience that our societies fear the kinds of diversity, agonism and critical creativity that arise from citizens who might play unpredictable roles in unpredictable spaces. Even though applied drama and theatre may take place in regulated schools and institutions, we still think applied theatre maintains informal and unpredictable practices where art is not expected. We think attempts at belittling applied theatre as being too ethical to be recognized as autonomous art, or as being "not quite" art or performative politics, is unfortunate, and we hope this edition will throw more light on the current democratic potential of theatre and its practitioners.

To summarise the context that served to motivate our work, we cite the following from our joint project Manifesto: https://www.democracythroughtheatre.com/

> We launch the "Building democracy through theatre" project in response to the conditions of the post-democracy that we experience in our societies. We want to understand and engage with conditions that:
>
> 1. *Enrol the citizenry as passive*, quiescent, even apathetic receptacles, responding only to what is given to them.
> 2. *Force alternative thinking and behaviour* to take form as either radical and *violent exclusion* and rejection *or an uncritical inclusion* of different opinions on anything imaginable as long as it does not question the neo-liberal, political-economic state of affairs.
> 3. *Strategically de-politicize the arts*; stimulating theatre industry as compensatory, non-binding entertainment; muting the educative and political potential of theatre, impeding the staging and negotiations of the unseen bodies and unheard voices in non-violent spaces.

The manifesto also lays down what values we are committed to in our work in opposition to these conditions:

1. A belief of the **intrinsic value** of each person in each context as an active citizen who is already contributing to their society.

2. An appreciation of the **multiplicity** of voice, body and perspective.
3. The promotion of **participant-audience centred** education and theatre making.
4. The **critical interrogation** of habitual and dominant narratives.
5. A search for the meaning and practical implementation **of deep democracy**.
6. An acknowledgement of the **systemic nature** of the human condition in all its aspects.
7. An understanding of **theatre making as political act**.

The book structure

We conceptualised this anthology as having two distinct types of submission: traditional research articles on the one hand, and submissions of arts-based artistic/creative research in the form of a link or links to representations of arts productions, videos, photo journals or play scripts on the other. This second submission type was to be accompanied by a short framing document that should contextualise the work and link it to the methodological theoretical underpinnings that inform it and the ideas and concepts of democracy that drive it. Our edition process ended up including two contributions of this type (chapters 4 and 8). The first of these reports on student-teacher activities on our joint MA exchange project whilst the second explores the representation of gendered and raced identity in South Africa through an Applied theatre and performance research lens.

This choice of two types of submission correlates with our joint emphasis on traditional academic research and a more recent "arts-based" research focus, as well as with our inclusive, democratic ambition. The thinking was that, in a democratic context, the use of the arts is essential to reframe what can be known. This is particularly important in our context of theatre as a way of making visible those bodies and making audible those voices that might be marginalised by post-democratic politics and neo-liberalist conditions.

Another implicit structure which the reader will notice grows from a number of subtasks on the agenda when practices are reported and analyzed:

(a) The **theatre-making task** of how to create/explore form, workshops and performances with, and for, post-democratic communities (chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13).
(b) The **aesthetic reflection tasks** for generating multimodal aesthetic understanding in a context of democratic agency (chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 & 13).
(c) The **societal tasks** of pro-active involvement in human and social dynamics in Norway and South Africa – involvement in building deep democracy at the level of everyday living, and in engagement with participant-driven issues (chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12 & 13).

After some discussion, we chose to sequence the chapters following the different contextual relations implied, so we start with the contexts of history, post-democracy and arts-based research, and proceed through elaborations of politically framed theatre cases to single and detailed case analyses.

In **Watch out! Theatre is Anywhere – Redistributing the Ethics of Arts Education and Applied Theatre, Kristian Knudsen** and **Bjørn Rasmussen** explore the conditions of the post-democratic, placing emphasis on three characteristics: consensus, fictionalization and paradoxicality. By highlighting the examples of two performative interventions, one in Germany and one in the USA, they emphasize the need for the arts to question the effects of neo-liberal conceptions of democracy. They maintain that arts education and particularly theatre education with its understanding of the performative can be harnessed to do the work of creating Rancièrian dissensus, and making visible the fictions of the post-democratic state we are in. In this way they set applied drama and theatre up as the leading field in such work.

Courtney Grile, in her chapter **Drama/theatre and Democratisation: What Two Revolutions Reveal**, sets the historical frame for ways in which theatre provides both dissensus and confirmation. She does this by offering a background for understanding the various ways in which theatre may intervene and become powerful and influential in crises of democracy. Notably, Grile reminds us that theatre history shows that theatre can contribute to both democratization as well as de-democratization.

Through her analysis of two pivotal events in the history of democracy, the French Revolution and the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia, Grile shows how theatre is instrumental in bringing about democratic change in some phases, as well as in consolidating governmental control in other phases. Moreover, she discusses not only how theatre became politicized in crises but also the performative parallel: How political and judicial practice became theatricalized in the same crises. Interestingly and perhaps controversially, she argues that the function of theatre relates to the way theatre is structured as communication. Even if dissensus and political change can be directed through a one-way flow from sender to receiver, Grile in fact finds this form of "monologic" theatre to be predominant when the state tightly controls drama/theatre, and "dialogical" theatre to be dominant when theatre is influential in the "democratization processes". Although the field of "applied theatre" has little place in this historical retrospect, Grile does acknowledge how current interpersonal approaches of applied theatre resemble the dialogic qualities that worked effectively for democratisation in the revolutionary space.

In chapter 3, **Theatre as Inclusive Arts-based Research: A Key to Political Art in the Post-democracy?** the context of history gives way to the context of arts-based research and its democratic potential. **Petro Janse van Vuuren** and **Bjørn Rasmussen** explore the terrain of academic research within the creative arts, and write a necessarily ambiguous and thought-provoking argument on the complexities of navigating the politics of inclusion and access, quality and political relevance in creative research in Norway/Europe and South Africa. The research includes a discussion on different conceptions of artistic/arts-based research as well as the differences within the creative and applied theatre fields across the two countries. They highlight, also, the points of intersection and congruence, and the risk of exclusion in artistic research, and argue for a common inclusive approach to research in applied drama and theatre. Given the global context of the decolonization project within education – most pronounced in spaces where colonization is a historical context – the authors point to the ways in which practitioners in both countries confront contemporary politics and resist marginalization within their local creative industries. The authors examine perceptions of theatre

practice as political threat and political opportunism and ultimately present arts-based/creative research as a platform evidencing the effectiveness of praxis in both post-war and post-democracy contexts.

In chapter 4, **Performing Theatre and Democracy,** Theatre educator **Leila Henriques** looks at applied theatre, democratic issues and cultural differences in another context, the educational. She reflects on the pedagogical exchange between two universities, across two continents, and through the perils of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, and presents the creative work resulting from a self-reflexive Performance Ethnography course embarked upon by the postgraduate students participating in the exchange programme. In their creative practice projects, the students courageously and candidly engage the myriad of opportunities and problems taken on board by communities as a part of citizenship in democracy. The video installations explore struggles of self-determination in circumstances of poverty, love and intergenerational family relationships, crime and masculinity, death, violence, mental well-being and democratic citizenship. All the themes are explored in ways that portray how acutely personal the bigger political questions about human life and fulfilment in democratic spaces are, and will continue to be. As programme facilitator, Henriques provides a context for the work of each student and allows it to tell a unique story about performing theatre and democracy.

In subsequent chapters the reader will find reports and analyses from politically framed theatre work from a considerable period of time in four different countries, all set in a common context of criticizing and building democracy. **Muneeb Ur Rehman** is a theatre maker working in Karachi, Pakistan. He is currently working among the young of that city on projects to counteract violent extremism. Grounding his work on Stephani Ethridge Woodson's understanding of Community Culture development as a model for treating young people as civic assets and social actors in their own right, he asks if the democratic values of the model can be sustained in the context of a donor-funded environment where donors constantly seek tangible proof of its effectiveness in curbing violent extremism. In chapter 5, **Democratic Theatre Practice in Donor-funded Projects: Challenges and Interventions,** Rehman looks at the work done with 42 youth groups over 11 months culminating

in a social action project with the express goal of seeing if the values of democratic collaboration can carry the project into the everyday lives of the young people once the donor funds are no longer available to bolster the projects. Amongst other things, he examines the impact of issues like categorizing participants by age, the complexity of stakeholder relations, and the requirements for theatre expertise vs. superficial cultural training.

In chapter 6, **What Role can Physical Theatre Play in Reimagining Democracy in South Africa? Kamogelo Molobye** frames his creative questioning by asking how physical theatre might facilitate, in its participants and audiences, a process of rethinking democracy in South Africa. Specifically, Molobye focuses on the work of Mamela Nyamza in *19-Born-76-Rebels* (2014) and *Pest Control* (2020) in order to explore how the performed lived experiences of dance artists can serve to challenge the status quo in society and activate political thought and change so as to address what Molobye identifies as the ever present tensions between South Africa's apartheid past and post-democracy present. The author speaks frankly about the effervescence of historical pain in South Africa, expressed through issues of inequality, race and economic class. Molobye positions theatre as well able to excavate and grapple with the complexities of being an artist of colour in South Africa's creative industry, and advocates for physical theatre's role in fostering agency as a part of citizen participation in democracy.

In chapter 7, **Creating Democratic Spaces Through Theatre: The Case of *Speak Out!*, Cletus Moyo** reports on a theatre project that he facilitated with young Ndebele-speaking people from the region of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. There is a strong political background to this work, since it was devised as a response to the Gukurahundi genocide as well as to the subsequent silencing of the victims. Moyo reports on a specific case of offering theatre as a democratic space for second-generation sufferers to share stories of pain and suffering when mainstream media platforms do not seem to offer the same opportunity. Moyo understands devised community-based theatre as a research methodology. Through Boal-inspired workshops and a process of performances, and by means of observations, interviews with participants and group discussions, Moyo

explores how theatre offers a space for telling inherited and personal stories and looking for new ways of dealing with the past. In particular, Moyo shows how theatre offers a safe but also direct sensuous way to "speak" and hence process past violence, terror and abuse. The chapter provides evidence of the ways in which theatre can recognize people and stories that are elsewhere being silenced and unrecognized, even in democracies.

Through the artistic work described in **Redemptive Theatre – When the Performance is in the Silence** (chapter 8), **Tshego Khutsoane, Les Nkosi** and **Petro Janse van Vuuren** wanted to work methodically to generate a dialogical and democratic theatrical design, following principles that can be applied to stories of privilege and questions of guilt and injustice in the South African context. This contribution offers another close look at the potential and the tools of theatre. Through phases of identification, script development and performance, the authors and artists argue that their work seeks routes for redemption and comes close to the realization of Jacques Rancière's idea of an aesthetic regime and the concept of democracy as a redistribution of what can be seen, heard and experienced. The work includes voices calling for decolonization, voices for African wisdom traditions and marginalized knowledge systems, as well as the voices of the privileged race, gender and generation experiencing silencing in a vulnerable democracy.

In chapter 9, **Performing Young Adult's Reflections on Work, Citizenship and Democracy, Vigdis Aune** reports on the creation of a performance in the Norwegian democratic context, where themes and questions regarding the dreams, expectations and realities of young people in relation to future work, employment and vocation are explored and performed. It highlights two phases in the process, namely theme exploration in "democratic fora" and performance development. In both the phases emphasis is placed on making the interactions as democratic as possible – in the first instance looking for ways to democratize the relationship between researcher-facilitator and researcher participants, and in the second between actor-facilitators and audience participants. For its philosophical inspiration Aune also relies on the writings of Jacques Rancière, particularly his understanding of political subjectivation,

equality and dissensus. The chapter culminates in a set of observations and insights gained from the whole process, including a reflection on power relations and a reference to the impact the 2020 Corona lockdown had on shifting the perspectives. Central to this is an analysis of the layered complexities around who gets to choose the vocation of their dreams and who must accept the burden of doing necessary but menial and boring work that no-one wants, of which jobs are deemed valuable and desirable and which are not, and of how Covid-19 in some ways challenged these categories.

Another challenge to Norwegian democracy and artistic work is treated in **The Aesthetic Model of Disability** by **Nanna K. Edvardsen** and **Rikke Gürgens Gjærum**. They examine the political-aesthetic implications of the integration of disabled participants within the Norwegian Arctic Arts Festival's youth initiative. The authors present observations and voices from selected responsible artists who found that the participation of disabled people either caused a deterioration of artistic quality or contributed a specific expressive style that was aesthetically interesting. Calling on the scope and concepts of Rancière and his aesthetic regimes the authors argue how arts practice does distribute common policies by confirming negative conceptions of the disabled. Even when the artist tries to avoid "enfreakment" and further stigmatization, the attempt at protection actually creates or confirms the negative conception. However, the study also provides evidence of practices of artistic redistribution where the aesthetic of the disabled is approved in its own right, or, put differently, where disability appears as an aesthetic phenomenon. This leads to a proposal of an aesthetic model of disability. A reconstrued conception of disability occurs when human expressions or actions are perceived and recognized aesthetically, perceiving the aesthetic quality of the disabled as being able. The model and the study offer a cultural democratic approach and a precise insight into ways of building democracy that promote the aesthetic and political equality of minorities. This also demands a reconfiguration of what should be recognized as "proper" art and artistic quality.

In the final section we present detailed analyses of single case studies of theatre methods and works applied to various social issues,

such as environmental protection, gender-based violence, poverty and injustice.

Heli Aaltonen reports in chapter 11 from a particular student performance week and invites the reader to consider the work within a non-human performance research approach, as a means to achieve social justice for human beings and the environment, specifically birds. Referencing Kirkkopelto's (2017) thoughts on the capacity of human beings to transform the current trajectory of climate change, Aaltonen reflects on philosophical questions of being and knowledge, on the present ethical complexities presented by human life on the planet and on the practical implications of avian-human performance as an intervention for change. The author, who acted as both teacher and researcher, created a narrative of the process with students that involved the embodied engagement of corporeal activities in children's theatre. This was done so that the life of birds could be understood in as visceral a manner as possible. In Aaltonen's own words, "Participating in the avian-human performance practice, carries a potentiality to imagine a more equal world and voice the needs of birds" (Aaltonen, 2020, p. 14). A photographic journal compliments the author's writing and is demonstrative of the interactive engagements that form part of the work.

Kathy Barolsky and **Cheraé Halley**'s critical investigation in chapter 12 is a reflective journey into the power dynamics present in a playback theatre re-telling of a story of gender-based violence – **Liezel's story**. The playback conductor, Kathy, and actor, Cheraé, were tasked by the theatrical form to question the silencing and invisible-making of the stories of women who live through gender-based violence. Drawing on the work of Jacques Rancière on the political responsibility of the arts to redistribute what can be experienced by the senses, they illustrate the difficulty of meeting this requirement as artists. The weight of this responsibility and the intensity of the affective entanglements they experienced contributed to them missing the heart of Liesel's story and failing to create the dissensus that can illuminate the plight of women. They conclude with an allusion to the importance of the playback rehearsals as being the site where the artist-researchers should wrestle with their own entanglements in relation to social issues, so as to prepare them for their important political work on the playback stage.

Ellen Foyn Bruun's chapter **The Hospital Scene: Deepening Democracy with Theatre-led Inquiry** offers a detailed insight into how theatre as an experiential learning tool can appear as performance activism in one single ninety-minute theatre workshop, and where participants from many backgrounds and cultures unite in the sensuous processing of a shocking real-life story from one participant and witness from Uganda. The author and workshop leader Ellen Foyn Bruun argues that the workshop in the playing answered to democratic ambitions in ways of equal investigation, making explicit diverse power structures, intentions, and tacit relations. And furthermore, what comes into being in play, comes into being in life; the workshop brings together performing practices on stage and in life. She introduces to theatre the concept of "deep democracy" from psychology, and argues how theatre offers a space for increased awareness, diversity of voices, and revelation of embedded wisdom – which emerged when the fictional and factual levels of the investigation merged at one particular point. By working through several potential emotions and responses involved, and staging the story in several ways, the lens shifted from each participant's personal responses to an enhanced awareness of the context and its difficult conditions. Bruun reports on a moment of transformed, shared experience from where the work elaborates through character work, monologues and shared reflections. The chapter offers a detailed insight into how learning through theatre can operate as a way of moving the participant through stages of inquiry and reflection on both a sensuous, cognitive and perhaps political level. By addressing a story that otherwise would have remained silenced, the work also proves to be a form of performance activism.

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CHAPTER 1

Watch Out! Theatre Is Anywhere – Redistributing the Ethics of Arts Education and Applied Theatre

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Abstract: The intention with this study is to examine and develop the discourse of arts in education and applied drama/theatre in relation to democracy, in particular the concept of "post-democracy" (Crouch, 2004, 2016; Mouffe, 2009; Rancière, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2011). Post-democracy is a concept that holds a critical view on current societies, describing conditions of economic, ecological and social crisis including boredom, frustration, oppression, apathy, disillusion and violence. We have identified a few key characteristics and challenges within a post-democratic society, such as "consensus", "fictionalization" and "paradoxicality". In this chapter, we are interested to see how such characteristics may influence individual democratic life, and how drama/theatre in education can respond to those key characteristics and influences. We argue that such responses concern the working procedures and production formats, as well as the recognition of the social and political role of arts education. This relation of art and society asks for aesthetic platforms that allow young people to explore felt issues of (post-)democracy on the individual and/or the collective level. It furthermore asks for a social responsibility and an ethics which are autonomous to the critical, artistic participant, ethics perhaps different from the ethical expectations distributed by neoliberal society. This is shown by two cases of performance that also solve the potential relation and political role by blurring art and social activism.

Keywords: post-democracy, applied theatre, fictionalization, ethics, Rancière

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Introduction: Applied drama/theatre and issues of democracy

> / … / the ability to create dialogue that challenges and critiques terrorism from within a felt understanding of its force and horror is the true democratic response to the great issues of the early twenty-first century
> (O'Connor, 2015, p. 145)

Issues of democracy are frequently addressed in many research reports and documentations of applied drama and theatre (Hughes & Nicholson, 2016; Noorani et al., 2013; O'Connor & Anderson, 2015; O'Connor & Neelands, 2010; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009; Prentki & Preston, 2009). Stakeholders of the field suggest that applied theatre practice may be acts of "radical democratic citizenship" (Nicholson, 2005, p. 24), through the ways in which theatre practice allows participation, plurality of voices, co-ownership and the negotiation of equality and difference. One might even assert that applied theatre follows a democratic ambition by its performative and agency-driven cultural production both on and off the formal art stage. This ambition is also the case for centres of applied drama and theatre research and practice in Norway and South Africa, which currently collaborate under the joint project umbrella of "Building democracy through theatre" (see editorial chapter). Democracies and democratic characteristics are obviously different in South African post-apartheid society and Norwegian post-industrial society, asking for different approaches when theatre is involved in or evaluated in social and societal contexts. However, human rights are a common global concern, as is the current state of post-democracy (Crouch, 2004; Rancière, 1999), since democracy that meshes with market liberalism seems to be flourishing on a global scale.

In other words, we assume that analyses of our post-democracies are highly relevant in fomenting a better understanding of the societies and living conditions where theatre is applied. Furthermore, we believe certain characteristics of democracy imply an understanding of the cognitive, the sensuous, the experiential and the ethical that may be paramount

to the approach of the theatre artist, teacher and therapist, influencing the quality of her work. Not least, the everyday experience of democracy is relevant material for the theatre participant and its audience. However, we carry no romantic or idealist conception of the harmonized, well-adjusted and responsible citizen which is negotiated through theatre; on the contrary, the courage to speak up, the staging of the marginal and the accepting and voicing of diversity are catchwords – at once more pronounced and needed – in the political critique we wish to address. This is a critique that also, through its performative orientation (see below, for example Swyngedouw, 2017) strongly relates to the aesthetic and theatrical potential of applied drama and theatre. We assume that a citizen's possible participation in the (re)building of democracy basically relies on a felt and critical comprehension of her democracy, as well as on the knowledge of how she may (counter)act, contribute and find meaning as a valued citizen.

Notwithstanding the great interest in democratic issues, we lack analyses of post-democracy in the context of arts education and applied theatre, and of how the arts may answer some of the specific challenges in post-democracies. This chapter aims to face this need by unpacking some of the characteristics of post-democracy. These are characteristics that will serve as issues for the discussion of ways in which theatre may approach the complex strategies of post-democracy. Theatre director Rustom Bharucha reminds us that "It is one thing to formulate democracy at a constitutional level, but it is quite another matter for people across the diverse class and social groups to actually perform its negotiations of difference" (Bharucha, 2014, p. 147). Hence, we are not primarily concerned with democracy as abstract system on the constitutional level, rather in identifying the specific conditions within the system, those which affect our daily life, those which we also recognize when listening to citizens who participate in theatre and performance.

Characteristics of current post-democracies

Post-democracy denotes a supra-national condition or a current regime which is "the depoliticized state of liberal democracy" (Toplišek, 2018,

p. 8). The current situation of democracy has turned into a defence and promotion of neoliberalism, a situation where democratic government and liberalism have meshed (Crouch, 2015). Instead of liberalist attempts to protect the market economy from democratic governance, post-democracy is the polity in which "all institutions of democracy and constitutional order are in place, but where the creative energy of the political system, at least for economic affairs, has passed into the hands of a politico-economic elite" (Crouch, 2015, p. 122). Neoliberalism is thus understood as a governmental rationality that manages the market economy through a complex nexus of political knowledge and institutions, which operates across the political/economic division prevalent in former political economies. Colin Crouch defined this new regime as follows:

> While elections certainly exist and can change governments, public electoral debate is a tightly controlled spectacle, managed by rival teams of professional experts in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams. The mass of citizens plays a passive, quiescent, even apathetic part, responding only to the signals given them. Behind the spectacle of the electoral game, politics is really shaped in private by interaction between elected governments and elites that overwhelmingly represent business interests. (Crouch, 2004, p. 4)

Following Toplišek (2018), post-democracy's support for neoliberalization has recognizable effects. One effect is a fall in support for, or at least an increase in distrust of, political parties, not least the parties that defend the welfare state. Furthermore, there is a political alignment around the neoliberal consensus of the governing economic rationale. This also fosters political space for unrepresentative institutions that are empowered by elite business interests. Politics, including its expensive election campaigns, is professionalized. There is an increase in the polarization of politics and protest activity. Additionally, Kingwell (2012) suggests that both increased wealth inequality and an empathy deficit are notable features of post-democracies.

Neoliberalism becomes one of the key drivers of de-politicization of politics into a "polis" state where governmental decisions and strategies become a managerial approach for the marketization of society,

such as in New Public Management (Crouch, 2015). The economy is thus de-politicized (Bourdieu, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2011), protecting the economic rationale from political dispute. This creates a "terror of neo-liberalization" (Giroux, 2015, 2018). What we name and see as politics is actually not real politics, but a masque of "democratic" against "republican", or "bourgeois" against "socialist", disputes on the surface, only to make available options too complex for ordinary citizens to conceive, or to conceal the existing basic alignments across parties. The apathy of ordinary people with respect to democratic political processes is noted but banalised as not central to the "proper" functioning of democratic institutions (Vergopoulos, 2001). Crisis and turmoil in Greece and the yellow vests protests in France, and more recently the storming of the United States Capitol, exemplify some of the consequences.

Traces of post-democracy in the arts in education – implications and challenges

It may be argued that the field of art and arts education is not exempt from the condition of society and democracy. The aesthetic is also part of a "distributed" polis society (Rancière, 2004), implying that the arts are controlled, made predictable and de-politicized in Western democracies. This is partly done by stimulating the theatre industry as compensatory, non-binding entertainment and, as a consequence, muting the educative and political potential of theatre by attempting to remove or relocate aesthetic performance and theatricality from the social sphere to an institution of the unreal and fictitious (Rasmussen, 2017). In arts education, similar de-politicized strategies can be found in the position of the arts in the curriculum in many Western countries. Gert Biesta (2018) describes it as the presence of instrumental justification, a tool for predetermined goals, meaning that engagement with the arts is useful because of its significance for or in relation to something else – for instance, as a way to learn language or mathematics, or to develop desirable qualities and skills, such as empathy or creativity. We acknowledge, following Rancière, that both the "representational" and "ethical" regimes are operative within a post-democracy. Furthermore, we think arts in education, theatre in

general, and its participants are influenced by more specific characteristics of post-democracy. In the following sections, we will shift our focus to three key characteristics that are valued, but also have an impact on the individual citizen and cause challenges and difficulties, namely: "consensus", "fictionalization" and "paradoxicality".

The value and challenge of consensus

The French philosopher Jacques Rancière is just one of many political scientists, philosophers and sociologists who for the last 30 years have reported how late modern democracies have faced a new global environment, an expanding information society and market globalization in general. Following Rancière, efforts of de-politicization are enforced by certain consensus strategies. People are invited to have different interests:

> /…/nevertheless there is one unique reality to which everything must be related, a reality that is experienceable as a sense datum and which has only one possible signification. The context that is invoked to enforce the ideas and practices pertaining to 'consensus' is, as we know, 'economic globalization'. (Rancière, 2010, p. 152)

While economic growth, or an overall economic rationale, is one "agreed" condition, others may be sustainability, competitiveness, creativity, responsibility and participation. A flourishing liberalism upholds a plurality of opinions and interests – the freedom of expression and of the press, the right to association, human rights, gender liberalism – at the same time as democracy is a "tightly controlled spectacle", often in favour of consumerism and corporate interests, and consequently causing harm to the very sustainability, human rights and human values it claims to promote.

Rancière's thesis of consensus rests on the discursive phenomenon of "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2010, p. 45) – that is, arrangements of selective sensibility that also maintain and produce inequality which, according to Rancière, not only implies cultural practices, but eventually leads to hate and violence in a democratic "polis" society (Rancière, 2006). Democracy has become both an excuse for and an aim of a neoliberal agenda, which includes the free flow of global capital

(Chaturvedi, 2008). Such a consensus-driven society has little place for "otherness" and this may lead to violence: " … /violent encounter remains one of the few courses open for the affective staging of active discontent" (Swyngedouw, 2011, p. 373).

Since disagreement is encapsulated within the distributed order, there is no escape or gateway from a consensual mode of governance other than violence, exclusion or the "inclusion of different opinions on anything imaginable – as long as it does not question fundamentally the existing state of the neoliberal political-economic configuration" (Swyngedouw, 2011, p. 371). Problems are never the result of the "system", but are blamed on the otherness that can be marginalised or cut loose without affecting the functioning of the (economic-managerial) system (Swyngedouw, 2010). Following this line of argument, neoliberal post-democracy therefore causes repression on the individual level, through an inability to act, or paralyzation, a repression perhaps more sophisticated, internalized and irreproachable than in tyrannies or distinct apartheid regimes. We are reminded by theatre director Augosto Boal and his European experience of participants having "a cop in the head" (Boal, 1995). Boal suggested that theatre may empower those that are repressed by society. However, we still doubt that his aesthetics of the theatre of the oppressed can grasp the current paradoxical nature of post-democratic repression. The paradoxical nature of consensus in the post-democracic world makes an important backdrop for participative and ethically framed forms of theatre. More specifically, it may reopen a discussion about the convention of consensus-ridden negotiation within forms of participative arts education.

The value and challenge of fictionalization

The concept of fictionalization stems from literature and rhetoric but is implemented in a variety of other areas such as performance studies, communication on social media and in politics (Behrendt, 2015; Jacobsen et al., 2014; Knudsen & Krøgholt, 2019; Walsh, 2007). Fictionalization can be described as an action in which you intentionally do something to reality, with the purpose of sending a concrete message. In *The Rhetoric of Fictionality*, Richard Walsh (2007) describes it as a communicative

strategy that differs from fiction as it does not represent a specific genre or act as a marker of something "made up". Fictionality is a communicative quality that can be applied to a wide range of different forms of narrative: "The rhetoric of fictionality is brought into play whenever a narrative is offered or taken as fiction, regardless of issues, of form, style or reference" (Walsh, 2007, p. 44). Walsh argues that the distinction between fiction and nonfiction rests upon the rhetorical use to which a narrative is interpreted – either one or the other. Hence, the interpretation operates with a categorical distinction which is framed within the context where it is received. For the receiver, strategies of fictionalization are ways of signalling that the narrative does not refer directly and referentially to a fictional or non-fictional world, but instead invokes the recipient to perceive the narrative as fictional without it being a lie. For the sender, fictionalization allows him/her to mediate between a narrative and its cultural context.

Furthermore, fictionalization becomes a signal to the receiver that the message does not necessarily describe the world as it is, but rather an exaggerated kind of world. When implemented in a post-democratic society, fictionalization challenges the concept of objectivity, as well as the subject's understanding of the world. For instance, in everyday life on social media, the *influencer* is a person who can spread his/her message (good or bad) to thousands of followers within a second. However, the ability to reach a huge audience, combined with the sophisticated repression that occurs in post-democracy on the individual level, can be dangerous.

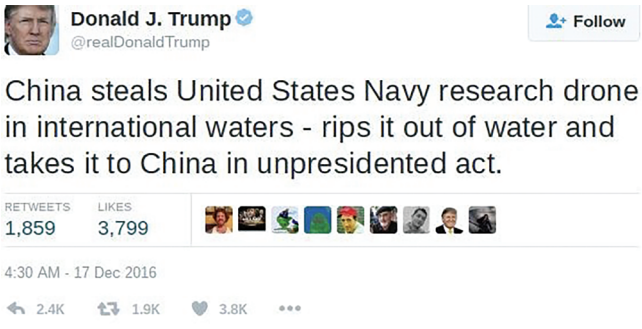

Figure 1 Donald Trump used Twitter as an active platform for spreading his political messages and statements

In the last few years, several incidents, such as the 2016 presidential election in the United States, the #metoo campaign and the hearings against Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, have shown that communication on social media holds numerous pitfalls. Another example is the use of Twitter as a communicative platform for various demagogues in democracies around the world. As such, the content communicated on such platforms can be characterized as fictionalization. Intentional communication does not correspond with empirical facts or intersubjective knowledge; in fact rhetorical persuasion is valued in liberalist-corporate democracies. The performative nature of drama and theatre allows for playful, educational and political investigation into fictionalized communication. Reminded that fictionalization is part of the social discourse, theatre communication also becomes part of social-political discourse. In applied drama/theatre this may include the citizen who is non-certified in theatre skills, however skilled in fictionalized social communication.

The value and challenge of paradox

What can make post-democracy incomprehensible, impenetrable and irreproachable is the complexity of its many occurring paradoxes. We have already pointed at the discourse stating that everybody's opinion is heard, everybody has a chance to succeed, while many in fact experience repressive marginalization. Furthermore, the democratic virtues of freedom and equality also appear to be paradoxical virtues (Mouffe, 2000) that are discursively acclaimed, only to allow individual freedom to rule over social equality in neoliberalist societies. In fact, it seems as if paradoxical communication is a major discursive power tool used to uphold democracy as a neoliberal regime. What this means is a kind of "sales talk", a positive distributed discourse of pluralism (Mouffe, 2000) and diversity that evokes consent and attraction, only to hide the less positive implications, for example concerning "sustainability":

> / … / the post-democratic turn / … / mobilises democratic values and redeploys decentralized, stakeholder-engaging forms of governance as a tool for legitimizing and stabilizing the politics of unsustainability. (Blühdorn, 2013, p. 18)

There are several other examples of this strategy of power by way of paradoxical communication. First, the label of democracy itself can be used to legitimate non-democratic power, as when cultural imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and business obtainment are enforced and protected by virtues of democracy. Secondly, it occurs when there is no separation between market economy and political governance even when this is stated to be the case. Thirdly, it occurs when democracy promises human rights and equality, while it synchronously fuses with economic power that works against equality, shaping the environment according to the dreams, tastes and needs of the economic, political and cultural elites (Rancière, 2006). Fourthly, it occurs when there is bragging of the welfare state, altruism and common good, while those in power are really stimulating individual consumerism, egocentricity and greed. Fifthly, it occurs when a corporate social responsibility is introduced, but only as a cover-up and excuse for replacing political power with corporate power, to prevent criticism when, for example, business corporations engage local community participation only to exploit land or cheap labour.[1]

On the individual level, such paradoxes create a range of conflicting affects. When the pronounced promise of freedom, equality and success clashes with experiences of inequality and being unsuccessful, frustration occurs, sometimes followed by self-blame and self-contempt. Moreover, when freedom is the stated principle, experiences of constraint are intangible. The public discourse of success and opportunities makes individual loss and failure unbearable. The digital exposure of the subject in the performative society (Kershaw, 2001; Knudsen, 2018) furthermore nurtures narcissism and sometimes possibly amplifies the feeling of not being seen. We wish to argue that ignorance and contempt is one possible outcome when the citizen has a right or duty to vote, but learns that nobody is listening to her voice. Many people experience no choice between unmediated repression, apathy and reluctant accommodation, on the one hand, and reactive desertion, destruction and violence on the other. When the citizen is faced by paradoxical discourse, drama/theatre

1 As argued in the television documentary on "Norsk Hydro" in Brazil: https://tv.nrk.no/serie/brennpunkt/2018/MDDP11001118

and arts education has the potential and perhaps the responsibility to investigate, deconstruct, attack and unpack social communication critically, by way of the aesthetic and of symbolic media.

Theatre is anywhere – performing post-democracy

The selected characteristics of post-democracy presented above are frequently accompanied by performative concepts in political theory, such as "enactment", "choreography", "staging", "theatricality", "role" and "simulation" (Blühdorn, 2013; Rancière & Rockhill, 2013; Swyngedouw, 2011, 2017). This social and political application of the theatre metaphor is instrumental to understand the performative dimension of post-democracy, possibly reinforcing and legitimatizing the potential of educational and political applied theatre: "Political subjectivation unfolds in and through the staging/enacting of equality that exposes a 'wrong' in the in-egalitarian distribution of the sensible" (Swyngedouw, 2011, p. 375). Swyngedouw refers to the performative act of Rosa Parks, who sat down in a bus seat for "whites", and became a telling case for realizing "the process of subjectivation that announces the new, interrupts the common sense of the situation, aspires to produce a new common sense, and transforms mere life into the possibility of more life" (Swyngedouw, 2017, p. 58). This eventually leads to the argumentation for the significance of the arts in education, as when Biesta (2018) calls for an understanding of art education beyond pure expressivism and creativity.

In the following, we look for cases that show cultural democratic approaches that seek to answer current political-aesthetic theory – that is to say, when culture "re-inscribes the equality of all in their capacity to speak and act" (Swyngedouw, 2017, p. 59). We have selected two cases of performance work that we think comply with acts of redistribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2004). This concept means acts of dissensus that work against the ways in which we are distributed in the polis democracy, and where art (the aesthetic regime) may have a renewed political role. They are neither examples of typical applied drama nor arts in education, but they are nevertheless chosen to discuss the interface for both art and

education, the real and the other real, the heard and the unprecedented, not least the ethical issues linked to the kind of autonomy that is insisted on in the two cases.

"Thank you very Nazis!" – applied theatre as activism

On the 3rd December 2018, the group *Zentrum für Politische Schönheit* (ZPS) invited journalists and photographers to attend a press conference about an artistic and political action called *Soko-Chemnitz*. ZPS is known to operate in the crossover between activism and performance and to be rather apathetic towards where the boundary between the two goes. Over the past ten years, they have "crowdfounded" a plane with Syrian refugees to Berlin and erected a false Holocaust monument in the Alternative für Deutschland politician Björn Höcke's backyard. Their purpose is to show that political decisions – or the lack of them – must not go unnoticed. The purpose of *Soko-Chemnitz, in particular*, was to systematically identify right-wing extremists who had participated in a violent conflict between neo-Nazis and refugees in Chemnitz in August 2018. During the press conference, the group announced that they had found and identified a large databank of potential suspects. The suspects' profiles and names were published on an open website for everyone to see. Two weeks later, ZPS revealed the mandatory "extra twist" of the action: "Thank you very Nazis. You fell into our trap and have helped us identify many more Nazis than our own research ever could." It turned out that the action was designed as a so-called "honey-pot", an IT-technical method that aims to get people to do things online, without being aware of it. In this way, ZPS found a far larger network of right-wing extremists than they had already identified, as many people had searched this website – and thus revealed themselves as participants.

In relation to the characteristics of post-democracy, the ZPS can be described as an example of being in the frictional confrontation between the political and politics. Through strategies from the world of theatre and performative aesthetics, such as fictionalization, staging/enactment and the relation between actor and audience, the socio-spatial self-positing of

Soko-Chemnitz (right-wing extremism and lack of political engagement) becomes the stand-in for a generalized democratic demand ('Help us identify the Nazis in our society'), a stand-in for the people, thus enabling political subjectivation (cf. Swyngedouw, 2011, pp. 374–375). *Soko-Chemnitz* might also be interpreted as an example of how artists can stage equality in a way that exposes the wrong, the inegalitarian distribution of the sensible. However, in order to do so, they are questioning the ethical aspects of the performance. ZPS's "real" agenda is hidden from their audience, which is manipulated into participation.

Figure 2 The QR code leads to the movie *The Yes Men Fix the World* on Youtube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajkItiDgTLY)

On January 16, 2019, thousands of people in Washington, D.C. were handed a fresh edition of the Washington Post, only it was dated May 1, 2019. The front-page headline said Donald Trump had fled office. This was not the first time the Yes Men had presented a "false" newspaper, aiming to communicate "stories that are more reasonable than the current reality".[2] The Yes Men consists mainly of two satirical performers and activists who have interfered in business and politics for almost twenty years in the United States. By impersonating representatives of corporations in conferences or sales events or by running "false" press conferences, they publish radical "news" such as billion dollars compensation from the chemical corporation Dow to the Indian Bhopal victims of the chemical disaster in 1984. What is presented as radical real "good" news for some people affected by corporate power is eventually revealed as a hoax. When these performers' actions then release only temporary happiness in India, or unmask unethical business interests, they are themselves accused of being unethical by spreading lies and cheating gullible participants of a framed set-up of "invisible" theatre. These "lies" are, however, only means

2 The Yes Men blog; https://theyesmen.org/democracyawakensinaction

to present a different truth, a new possibility that is generally concealed in the real social sphere of communication. The blurring of fiction and reality is highly successful due to their mastery of digital communication and propagation, their political insights and skilled use of disguise, and their identity shifts and acting, along with construction of props and devices. Lately, their work has achieved increased political influence by meticulously publishing responses and events online, by networking and through the recruitment of many followers and voluntary activists.

To sum up, neither ZPS nor the Yes Men can be described as "applied" or arts educational practices. However, both examples hold some artistic strategies or poetics that can be explored further in relation to arts in education, such as manipulation and blurring the lines between fiction and reality and the relationship between audience and actor. We do acknowledge that the implementation of these strategies into an educational context will challenge ethical considerations, and, furthermore, question the way ethics and values are distributed in arts educational practices. However, in order to get the ability to create dialogue that challenges and critiques post-democratic ethics and values from within a felt understanding of its force (cf. O'Connor, 2015, p. 145), we think that engaging in new ways of art and performance might be a way to question such practices.

Redistributing the ethics of arts education and applied theatre?

While none of our selected examples of performance activism is taken from the realm of arts education, the urge to break down the political segregation between non-political fiction and non-fictional fact is common to both applied theatre in education and performance activists. When fiction and reality become blurred, ethical dilemmas occur when socially provocative or "false", even "unethical" behaviour is enacted or allowed under the umbrella of "just art", or when social participants are lured to co-act on "false" or unknown premises. The accusation of "unethical" behaviour of political performance work is, however, counteracted by a defence for the "unethical" by current aesthetics. Again,

following Rancière (2006b), art has always been part of an ethical ambition by being committed to social mediation and repairing social bonds or by (only) witnessing the catastrophes of the world (Rancière, 2006, p. 10). This is done by two seemingly opposed strategies, both serving the polis state: the one being the "soft ethics" of consensus when art dismisses itself (auto-suppression) and becomes part of polis society, and the other the "hard ethics" of aestheticism and autonomy which does not affect the polis distribution. We think our shown examples, and many cases of applied theatre, point at a different route, seeking to avoid both of Rancière's deadlocks by staging a concealed form of repressed ethics that does appear as unethical. No one should question the strong ethics behind the political actions of ZPS or the Yes Men.

Following this line of argument, arts in education and applied theatre might reconsider what is considered ethical in arts practices in post-democracies. We have presented a selection of three aspects of neo-liberalist post-democracy that seem to be established values to ensure post-democratic life and business: consensus, fictionalization, and paradoxical communication. We think that it is ethically incumbent upon us to question practices formed by post-democratic values and their associated ethics. We argue that we can question those values and even re-install alternative values for the democratic citizen through art and performance. In this way, art, applied art and arts education can work to redistribute the ethics of art and society.

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CHAPTER 2

Drama/Theatre and Democratisation: What Two Revolutions Reveal

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Abstract: This paper will assert that drama/theatre has a role to play in the democratisation process by presenting research that reveals how various forms of drama/theatre practice coincide with democratisation or its opposite, de-democratisation. Correlation between the use of monologic and dialogic discourses within drama/theatre practice and the process of democratisation will be evidenced in two case studies: the early years of the French Revolution and the 1989 Velvet Revolution in (the former) Czechoslovakia. By analysing the conditions and patterns of theatre practice that coincided with the democratisation of these two countries (and in one case, away from it soon after), parallels emerge between monologic discourses within drama/theatre and de-democratisation, and dialogic discourses within drama/theatre and democratisation. The great experiment of liberal democracy is an ongoing process that can be buttressed by process-based theatre practices that exemplify theatre's ability to foster dialogue and create community amongst participants.

Keywords: drama, democracy, democratisation, dialogue, dialogic, French Revolution, Velvet Revolution

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Introduction

People today either don't believe in politics or
don't believe in theatre – woe to those
who would dare to combine the two.

— Randy Martin[1]

Charles Tilley (2007) speaks of the state of democracy as being regularly in flux when he writes, "democratisation is a dynamic process that always remains incomplete and perpetually runs the risk of reversal – of de-democratisation" (p. xi). While the smaller nuances of the process of democratisation change subtly from day to day within any given democracy, looking to moments in history of radical shifts on the democratic spectrum can provide key insights for the deepening of democracy. This paper will focus on the relationship between democratisation and drama/theatre in two case studies: the French Revolution of 1789 and the Velvet Revolution of 1989. These events will be analysed to uncover how the form of drama in a nation relates to democratisation/de-democratisation. Evidence of how audiences during the French Revolution pushed to expand the limits of their power in the theatres to assert popular rule will be presented, as well as evidence of a struggle for control within theatres between the governors and the governed. In the former Czechoslovakia the organisational processes and language of drama emerge as valuable tools in the democratisation process, leading Olga F. Chtiguel (1990) to entitle her article on the subject: "Without Theatre, the Czechoslovak Revolution Could Not Have Been Won."

To begin, I would like to frame how the terms "theatre" and "drama" will be employed in this paper in an effort to be as specific as possible. Because the characterisations of "drama" and "theatre" hinge on an understanding of "performance," I will begin there. Notwithstanding the vast array of performance studies across multiple fields, in the interest of this research a "performance" will refer to a completed action that has a beginning and an end and that is aware of itself as having an audience

1 See Cohen-Cruz, J. & Schutzman, M. (Eds.). (2006). *A Boal companion: Dialogues on theatre and cultural politics*. Routledge, p. 23.

of some kind (Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 27–28). As for "drama" and "theatre," the two terms are often used interchangeably or with one designated as the larger field within which the other resides. Geared toward this research, "theatre" will refer to performance that is crafted and intended for a specific audience who are separate from the creative process. There may also be mention of a theatre in reference to a physical structure, at which time it will be specified. The term "drama" is sometimes used to refer to the written text of a play as well as to delineate a genre of performance. However, given that the Greek root of the word drama is *dran*, which means "to act" (Lyman & Scott, 1975, p. 2; Nicholson, 2005, p. 4), in this paper the term will be aligned with the interpretation of Kathryn Dawson and Daniel Kelin, II (2014) who associate it "with the type of meaning-making and interaction that occurs between participants and/or audience and performer" (p. xiv). To refer to the entire field of the art practice, the term "drama/theatre" will be used.

Drama/theatre has been used throughout history in a variety of forms to educate, entertain, and communicate with audiences. The theatre has been a space used for the cultivating of passive, receptive audiences, as well as a type of public sphere for engaging public debate and dialogue. Borrowing from theories of monologic and dialogic discourse used within education as detailed by Gordon Wells (2007) in "Semiotic Mediation, Dialogue and the Construction of Knowledge," the dramatic activity taking place during these revolutions will be classified in these terms. Wells posits:

> one (monologic) mode makes the assumption that there is only one valid perspective, which is put forward with no expectation that there is more to be said, while the other (dialogic) mode embodies the assumption that there is frequently more than one perspective on a topic and that it is worthwhile to present and discuss them. (p. 261)

While the use of monologic and dialogic discourse theory does not capture all of the nuance within drama/theatre, it provides a clean and distinguishable way to speak about the practices of drama/theatre and how they relate to democratisation. According to Catherine O'Connor and Sarah Michaels (2007), monologic discourse is "less open to challenge, less open to change, [and] more 'authoritative'" (p. 277). With an eye toward this

paper, it will include the use of censorship over what artists are allowed to create and perform, as well as propaganda used within theatres and by politicians adopting performance techniques in order to persuade an audience to conform to a point of view. Drama/theatre's ability to tap into human emotion through thoughtful storytelling makes it a potential tool for use within what Maria-Lucia Rusu and Roman Herman (2018) refer to as white, grey, or black propaganda (ranging from most harmless/transparent to most harmful/opaque.) Alternatively, "[d]ialogic discourse is prototypically realized as discussion" and implies "possibilities for critique and creative thought" (O'Connor & Michaels, 2007, p. 277). For the purposes of this paper, practices of drama/theatre in which there is multi-way communication fostered within the theatre space and/or within the dramatic activity taking place will be categorised as dialogic discourses.

Drama/theatre and the French Revolution (1789–1799)

The period between 1789 and 1799 was a time of tremendous turmoil in France, during which the monarchy was overthrown, a form of democracy was established, and was subsequently replaced by a dictatorship. In a time of such political and social turmoil, the theatre flourished. Through the use of the theatre as a space for asserting popular rule, legislative control over theatres and artists by the government, playwrights' and actors' use of drama as a political tool, and the built-in theatricality of the Legislative Assembly and the National Convention, the relationship between theatre and politics was fraught with complications, contradictions, and parallels in their development during this time.[2] Janie Vanpee (1999) writes that "each of these areas of public discourse fused with the others so that theatre became politicized and, conversely, political and judicial practice, theatricalized" (p. 50). While many historians

2 The Legislative Assembly was the legislative body of France between October 1791 and September 1792. The National Convention was a single-chamber assembly and the first government of the French Revolution, lasting from September 1792 to October 1795. (For more see Davidson, 2016).

have placed great emphasis on written text (due to the printing press) as being singularly crucial to the social developments of this time, more recently scholars have begun to acknowledge the pivotal role of theatre.[3] The immediacy and collectiveness of drama/theatre, which aids in community-building, is central to its role in politics. Additionally, theatre was accessible to all social classes during this time, even those unable to read and write.

According to Marvin Carlson (1996), thousands of new theatres were created to respond to the times, signifying the value of theatre to the people (p. v). Three theatres enjoyed royal backing and dominated the theatre market in Paris before the start of the Revolution: the Académie Royale de Musique, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne. The Revolution encouraged the opening of smaller theatres, taking power away from the three national-sponsored companies. Within this context, individual theatre companies began to take pronounced political stands, with their views reflected in the plays selected for presentation. An instructive anecdote to set the tone for the way in which drama/theatre would be used in the Revolution is the case of *Charles IX, ou l'école des rois*, by Marie-Joseph Chénier.

Susan Maslan (1995) writes that *Charles IX* "was the focal point of what was perhaps the Revolution's greatest debate over freedom of expression" (p. 30). The play presented the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre through a critical lens – critical towards the monarchy and the clergy. The royal censor banned the play in late 1788, but Chénier continued to advocate for it. After the events of July 1789 his "struggle attracted the attention of the popular leaders, who saw in his play's references to St. Bartholomew's Day a means for stimulating Revolutionary opinion" (Carlson, 1966, p. 22).[4] During a performance at the Comédie, Georges Jacques Danton, a revolutionary leader, led a demonstration calling for the production of *Charles IX*. Maslan (1995) writes, "[w]hen the actors refused to accede to the audience's demand, citing lack of official permission, the audience responded with the shout 'No more permissions', asserting that no permission and

3 See Carlson (1966), Maslan (2005), and Friedland (2002) for more on the evolving view on theatre's role.

4 The storming of the Bastille took place on 14 July 1789, a flashpoint of the revolution.

no command beyond its own were any longer relevant" (p. 34). Carlson (1966) asserts that:

> this demonstration was particularly significant in that it was the first time within memory that a play had been demanded by a political rather than literary agenda. (p. 23)

In his writings, Chénier also championed freedom of the theatres to match the freedom granted to the press. Many champions of the free press opposed the same freedom in theatres, agreeing with Paris's first revolutionary mayor, quoted as saying:

> I believe that freedom of the press is the foundation of public freedom, but the same cannot be said for the theater in which many men assemble and mutually electrify each other, all of which may tend to corrupt morals or the spirit of government. (Maslan, 1995, p. 33)

Charles IX was finally approved for production in November 1789, but the political controversy surrounding the production exemplifies many of the ways in which theatre would challenge and change politics during the Revolution, including demonstrating artists' will to act in the political sphere. Additionally, the theatre during this controversy provided a democratic space of representation in which the people demanded that the power of censorship should rest with them. This challenge to the royal authority is significant and led to the Freedom of Theatres legislation.

After the establishment of the French Republic in 1792, the concept of representation became an urgent and serious matter that played out in theatres and led to the elements of theatre practice to be layered within the National Convention. The new government grappled with issues of direct and representative democracy which created friction amongst representatives. Some, referencing Jean-Jacques Rousseau, felt they were rendered obsolete when large bodies of the population assembled now that sovereignty had reverted to the people. However, the majority of revolutionary representatives felt they were elected in order to represent, relegating the masses to passivity once elections were over. This dominant view of representation within the Convention contrasted sharply with what was playing out in the theatres:

> because theatrical representation, unlike political representation, was thoroughly subject to direct popular control, the theater constituted, and was widely perceived as, an embodiment of direct democracy and, hence, an alternative to and potential rival of political institutions. (Maslan, 2005, p. 30)

Revolutionary citizens felt strongly that they should be a censor to the government, and they found a voice and the power to do this in the theatres.

Theatres provided a consistent space for public assembly at which citizens could express their views throughout the Revolution, rivalled only by the gatherings at festivals. Carlson (1966) details an incident during which the Jacobins:

> went in great numbers to the Théâtre du Vaudeville; it was their intention to avenge their friends Palissot and Chénier, mercilessly ridiculed in the clever playlet entitled L'Autuer d'un moment, which was performed that day. But the Jacobin clique was powerless, for the great majority of decent citizens succeeded in reducing the Jacobins to impotent silence. (p. 121)

The audience wielded their power to assert new, democratic words within the space as well:

> An actor wished to announce to the public that one of his company would not appear that evening and began, as was customary, with "Messieurs…" He was interrupted by the observation that there/were no longer any titles but "citizen." "Citizens" he began again, "Mlle. Jenny…" Again an angry interruption drowned his words. "So be it. Citizen Jenny…" (Carlson, 1966, pp. 163–164)

In addition to the heckling and shouting that occurred, the practice of note-throwing became popular for a time. The first occurrence is recorded to have been at the Opéra on 22 January 1795 when two poems were thrown on the stage, and the audience demanded that the actors read them aloud. Note-throwing was replaced for a short time by bust-throwing, which entailed members of the audience throwing down and destroying busts of Marat. The theatres were made into political spaces, less at the will of the artists and those in control of the government – whether Royal or Jacobin – than at the will of the citizens in attendance.

Awareness of the audiences' power within the theatres led to the new government's attempts to regulate and control these spaces once again. Prior to the Revolution, theatre was heavily regulated. With the energy created in the beginning of the Revolution, theatres were granted freedom from censorship by the state in January 1791; however, that freedom only lasted until February 1792. The Jacobins, witnessing the vast influence of the theatre during those thirteen months, decided to regulate the space again: "A new and select 'Commission for Public Instruction' had been appointed to address the dilemma which theatre posed for the Jacobin government, at once uncontrollable and a cornerstone of education" (Wiles, 2011, p. 169). In the summer of 1793, the Committee of Public Safety began making "suggestions" and imposing regulations on theatres, banning all but the most extremely patriotic plays. Following the execution of Danton in April 1794, "controls on the theatres now increased sharply" (Carlson, 1966, p. 192). In late 1798, the Council of the Five Hundred passed a decree placing all theatres under the supervision of the Directory and restricting the number of theatres to six.

For all the regulations placed on theatres, they remained a vital outlet for political expression throughout the Revolution. For this reason, it is no surprise that elements of theatre began to appear within the ruling bodies in different forms than had existed during the monarchy. The monarchy used theatrical elements of presentation to exhibit the divine right of monarchs in lavish displays. The revolutionaries, well aware of this use of spectacle, sought to rid themselves of all theatricality within the government. However, returning to the concept of representation and adding in a desire to rid the government of all theatricality through transparency, Maximilien Robespierre, a revolutionary leader and member of the Jacobin Club, relied heavily on the idea of surveillance by the people. Vanpee (1999) writes:

> the vast locales necessary to accommodate the various assemblies of delegates of a government claiming to represent the people resembled the public space of theatres, with a stage-like podium facing the delegates and with reserved space on three sides of the hall for the public spectators. (p. 50)

The paradox of attempting to rid the government of theatricality while simultaneously inviting larger audiences for the purpose of surveillance was

something with which the Jacobins constantly struggled. They insisted that spectators observe decorum and remain silent within the assembly halls, which could be viewed as an attempt to create audiences that could be disciplined and repressed. This is also evidenced by the decision to use the guillotine as public spectacle for punishment by the new government (considered to be more terrifying than public hanging). During a session of the Assembly on 4 June 1791, a statement was made asserting that punishment should not be made in consideration of the guilty, but rather in consideration of the public watching. This aligns with Michel Foucault's (1977) assertion that "[t]he public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power" (p. 49).

However, the behaviour audiences freely exhibited in the theatre (engaging directly with those on the stage) was mirrored in the assembly halls during legislative or judicial matters. Despite great efforts by the Jacobins and strict regulations placed on the public, aimed at making them silent observers, Maslan (2005) writes: "[t]hroughout the Revolution, as the Convention's records amply demonstrate, the encouragements, insults, and threats shouted daily from the galleries effectively ratified, amended, and vetoed the deputies' decisions" (p. 26). With the presence of an ever-watching populace, the legislators became actors of sorts. This dynamic is evidenced in the strained relationship between Robespierre and Fabre d'Églantine,[5] each distrustful of the other. Robespierre accused "Fabre not of being an actor himself but of making other representatives into actors" (Maslan, 2005, p. 123). Meanwhile, Fabre believed that Robespierre was operating behind a mask to gain power. Sandey Fitzgerald (2015) writes:

> With everyone in the "play," opening up the legislative session led to such confusion over which citizens were authorized actors and which were acting as spectators engaged in scrutinizing those actors, that the government was forced to prescribe a costume to be worn by officials in order to differentiate between them. (pp. 146–147)

Thus far, the new government had incorporated from theatre practice the elements of audience, costuming, and "deceptive" actors (evidenced in

5 Fabre d'Églantine was a French actor, playwright, revolutionary leader, and member of the Jacobin Club.

the accusations levied by Robespierre and Fabre against each other for behaving in a false manner). While "purging theatricality from politics was Robespierre's central preoccupation," the Convention nevertheless decided to make the trial of the king a public affair, further theatricalising the matter and, in some way, undermining the new Convention (Maslan, 2005, p. 132).

The changing ways in which drama was used leading up to and throughout the French Revolution can be mapped onto the transitions occurring in the state moving towards democracy and then back to authoritarian rule. Prior to the Revolution, the theatres were controlled by the monarchy and subject to censorship by the state and the church. Three nationally sponsored theatre companies dominated the market, and the narratives within them were tightly controlled. As new, private theatres began to open and the theatre spaces transformed into venues that demanded dialogue between those in the audience and those on stage, this happened simultaneously with the state beginning to move towards democratisation, with the formation of the National Assembly in 1789, one of whose tasks was to of write a constitution. Maslan (2005) explains that "[w]ithin the theater, audiences developed a distinctly popular conception of the legitimate relationship between the representative and the represented" (p. 27). With more theatres operating and audiences demanding the production of taboo plays (such as *Charles IX*), the Freedom of Theatres legislation was passed in 1791, further democratising the theatre. This ran parallel with another shift towards greater democratisation in the state, as a Constitutional Monarchy was declared and the King was forced to share power with an elected legislative assembly. With theatres finally free to produce diverse and opposing narratives and audiences secure in their ability to demand dialogue and assert their desires in the theatre, it is fair to argue that the transformation of the theatre into a space comparable to the democratic public sphere was complete. Within a year of establishing a constitutional monarchy, the state progressed deeper into democratisation by abolishing the monarchy and establishing a constitutional republic. This would be the peak of democratisation in France during the Revolution. Theatres were engaging public spaces open for dialogue and free from censorship, and the state was a democratic

republic with universal male suffrage. From this point the shift toward de-democratisation began as the Assembly placed restrictions on the involvement of the public who came to view the legal proceedings. Theatres began being censored by the state again only thirteen months later, as the Committee of Public Safety started to censor the theatres as well as other modes of communication and behaviour, moving forward into the Reign of Terror. The state also took back control the narratives allowed in the theatres (as the monarchy had done) and to attempt to end audience disruption within theatres (removing any trace of the theatre's dialogic discourse); meanwhile, the new government continued the trend toward de-democratisation, distinctly marked by the dissolution of the National Convention in October 1795 and its replacement by the five-member committee of the National Directory, which suspended elections in 1795. All of this eventually led to Napoleon's rise to power and the last push back into authoritarian rule.

The dramatic fluctuation of the state of democracy during the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799 matched the changing function and form of the theatres of the time. The Assembly's (and then the Convention's) ability to reassert a restrictive form within the theatres, in which information flowed unchallenged in one direction after a year of a more dialogic discourse that encouraged freedom of expression and thought, provided a powerful lesson for revolutionaries and theatre-makers to come. Almost two hundred years later, the people of Czechoslovakia would successfully manage a revolution, and the move towards greater democratisation succeeded partly thanks to their creative and innovative methods for maintaining a dialogic and subversive theatre movement championing democracy, despite the Soviet Union's attempts to control them through intimidation and censorship.

Drama/theatre and the Velvet Revolution (1989)

Czechoslovakia's journey toward liberal democracy ebbed and flowed in the twentieth century. It was the only Eastern European country to maintain a democracy between the World Wars and was then able to

re-establish democracy following the German occupation during World War II. However, in 1948 the Czechoslovak Communist Party took over, and "political democracy was suspended" (Brook, 2005, p. 40) until 1989. The events that occurred in November and December of 1989 (commonly known as the Velvet Revolution) transformed the state into a liberal democracy. Theatre artist and activist Petr Oslzlý (1990) asserts that "[w]hat happened in Czechoslovakia on 17 November 1989 is, according to historians, the most momentous fusion of theatre and society in the entire history of world theatre" (p. 97). Dennis. C. Beck (2003) backs up this claim when he writes, "Establishing through empirical data the significant influence of Czech theatre artists on historical events during the performance of revolution itself is comparatively simple due to well-kept records" (p. 202). This section will refer to much of this documented evidence with an eye toward understanding what forms of drama/theatre were being employed to achieve greater democratisation.

Immediately following the devastating assaults made by the police on a group of student demonstrators on 17 November 1989, while "[o]n the pavement near the National Theatre great pools of blood remained," (Oslzlý, 1990, p. 104) a theatre student from the Faculty of Arts at Brno University interrupted a performance of *Rozrazil 1/88* to relay to the audience and staff what had just happened. Janet Savin (1999) writes that on the next day "six hundred Theatre artists and technical staff from the Czech Lands and Moravia gathered in the Realistic Theatre in Prague to react to the attack of the previous day and to the student initiative against it" (p. 138). It was decided that the theatres would go on strike immediately, to accompany the general strike planned to begin on 27 November 1989. The *Obcunske Forum* (Civic Forum), commonly referred to as the O.F., was created the next day, 19 November 1989, in the Drama Club theatre in Prague, with Václav Havel as its leader. Drama practice went on to inform and aid in the success and peaceful nature of the Velvet Revolution through the use of theatres as sites for civic dialogue, the use of theatrical working methodologies in organising and planning, and the use of effective communication techniques honed by theatre artists. What follows in this section is a review of the events and the state of theatre in Czechoslovakia leading up to November 1989, followed by an analysis

of the ways in which dramatic practices were used as tools during the revolution.

In 1968 a brief gasp of democratic spirit, referred to as the Prague Spring, occurred in Czechoslovakia. Many of the leaders of this movement "were writers, literary critics, and almost all were intellectuals" (Shepherd, 2000, p. 31), with playwright and director Václav Havel as a prominent member. The Soviet Union reacted swiftly, invading the country in August 1968 and replacing First Secretary of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubcek, in April 1969, effectively extinguishing the movement. Daniel Brook (2005) critiques why the Prague Spring was not successful, especially compared to the Velvet Revolution almost two decades later:

> The Prague Spring, further, was in essence an undemocratic approach to democratic change. The Prague Spring entailed a top-down change in policy, albeit one which acquired some autonomy against civil society. In contrast, the Velvet Revolution, twenty-one years later, was more radical and more democratic not only in its demands and tactics, but also in its nature and demographic composition. (p. 52)

What followed was a regime focused on "normalisation", "which entailed a two-pronged attempt to repress public dissent and buy off the population with material benefits without modifying the party's monopoly over power" (Glenn, 1999, p. 193). Denisa Hejlová and David Klimeš (2019) write that "[n]ormalisation was a time when social communication was merely staged theatre, in which everyone knew his or her role" (p. 218). The backlash against the intellectuals was harsh, and "censorship of the media and arts was re-established the following September" (Brook, 2005, p. 46). Many plays, books, journals, and movies were banned (Chtiguel, 1990, p. 91). The regime's use of force to stifle intellectual and creative voices sets the backdrop for how theatremakers would adapt and respond in an attempt to sustain the spirit of freedom and democracy.

Mainstream, state-funded theatres in Czechoslovakia were referred to as "stone theatres" and "were largely administered by the Party's members who were installed into controlling positions. Frequently the actors

themselves joined the Party in order to advance their careers" (Chtiguel, 1990, p. 89). However, Oslzlý (1990) describes how theatres in the country resisted the Party's control:

> While the attention of the forces of totalitarianism was concentrated on the leading actors of the 1968 Prague Spring … at the periphery of their sphere of vision, where their destructive activities scarcely reached, there arose experimental, open, alternative, fringe theatres. (p. 99)

These were termed "authorial theatres" and operated in what was commonly referred to as the "grey zone", "a steadily growing, strong, intellectually dynamic and active sphere between official culture and the forbidden culture of the dissidents and the underground" (Oslzlý, 1990, pp. 101–102). The theories and techniques of the authorial theatres were "designed to evade the authorities' control of authorial processes" (Beck, 2009, p. 90). The experimenting of authorial theatres led to the creation of many metaphorical, non-verbal performances focused on movement, gesture, and improvisation. Oslzlý (1990) writes about the predicament he and other theatre artists were experiencing, stating: "we had to seek a language of symbols, similes, metaphors, and models" (p. 99). Authorial theatres maintained a close relationship with their audiences and found ways of getting feedback through direct dialogue with the audience from the stage, as well as "mini-interviews by coat check personnel" (Beck, 2009, p. 95). Setting the stage for the role drama/theatre would play in the Velvet Revolution, Beck (2003) writes:

> Media and government controlled by a one-party regime could not act as public forums for engendering wider historical or social awareness. Neither could independent assembly, since a "normalization"-era law prohibited twelve or more persons to gather without a permit. The theatre, as the most articulate of venues in which the public could gather lawfully, thus became the prime arena of public self-reflection. (p. 210)

These small theatres formed a dense network throughout Czechoslovakia and "became the primary gathering place for makers and members of parallel culture" (Beck, 2003, p. 215), which would prove to be invaluable in the revolution to come.

Several key events took place in the year leading up to the start of the Velvet Revolution. Throughout 1988 a petition "demanding democratic freedom for society and the release of various writers and artists held as political prisoners" (Oslzlý, 1990, p. 102) was circulated and gained popularity among theatre artists and audiences. In October, Theatre on a String and HaDivadlo premiered *Rozrazil 1/88* (On Democracy 1/88), referred to as a "stage magazine," amidst large demonstrations in Prague which were broken up by police force. The production was "dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic" (Oslzlý, 1990, p. 102) and, without mentioning Havel (who was imprisoned at the time) by name, included his play, *Tomorrow We'll Trigger it Off*. By December the production was banned. In January 1989 "a huge demonstration was held to commemorate the suicide of Jan Palach, the student who committed suicide in 1969 in Wenceslas Square" (De Candole, 1991, p. 9), and Havel was arrested again. In February, after support from the public, Theatre on a String and HaDivadlo's "stage magazine" was given permission to resume performances, and in March a petition for the release of Havel was circulated. By mid-May Havel was released from jail, and "[i]n mid-June a proclamation for freedom entitled 'A Few Sentences' was issued. A great many theatre people and other writers and artists were among its original signers" (Oslzlý, 1990, p. 103). In July the secret police failed to prevent an international theatre festival in which the participants openly expressed solidarity with the artists and people of Czechoslovakia. Each of these precipitating actions added fuel to the desire for democracy and also exhibited the power of drama/theatre to act within the political sphere.

From the start of the revolution, theatre spaces served as public forums. It was in the National Theatre that a student demonstrator communicated to the public the severe police brutality committed on 17 November 1989. The next day theatre artists gathered at the Realistic Theatre and decided to begin an immediate strike affecting all theatres and cancelling the performance of plays. However, it was agreed that:

> the theatres would not be closed, but would remain open. Performances would be replaced by public discussions. Theatres would make rooms available for political meetings. (Oslzlý, 1990, p. 104)

It was within and through theatres around the country that news of the strike was communicated to the masses. Martina Klicperová-Baker (2015) writes about the significance of theatres in communicating what was happening:

> In 1989, electronic information technology was only developing and mass media were under communist control. The information campaign had to be led via personal communication: theaters canceled performances yet stayed open for free political debates—the first free public spheres since the democratization attempt during the Prague Spring of 1968. (p. S92)

Theatre spaces served as venues for public dialogue around important social and political matters, operating much like the democratic "public sphere". Theatres became the heart of O.F. activities, with Laterna Magica serving as the headquarters for Havel during the crucial early stages of the revolution. In his article "Competing Challengers and Contested Outcomes to State Breakdown: The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia", John K. Glenn (1999) analyses why O.F. was successful in their effort to democratise the country, emphasising the role of the theatres and explaining that:

> the democratic outcome was not given by the breakdown of the Leninist state; rather, it was the result of successful mobilization by the civic movement that linked their demands with striking theater networks, which enabled them to overcome their organizational deficiencies. (p. 187)

Glenn's focus on the theatre networks' aid in the administration and facilitation of political affairs supports and demonstrates drama's capacity to be instructive within political frameworks.

The long tradition of dialogue and collaboration within theatre spaces provided the framework for this peaceful and successful revolution towards democracy. At a public rally on 22 November, Havel said, "The dialogue between the power and the public has begun. From now on, we all participate in managing this country" (Schermer, 1990, p. 20). Each night during the revolution, theatres across the country "assembled a broad spectrum of social classes and age groups under relatively safe conditions, and provided them with two elements essential to co-ordinated mass action" (Savin, 1999, p. 141). Savin continues, describing the two elements:

> The first was current, uncensored information about rapidly changing developments. Initially theatres were the only regular source of such information because television and radio remained under Communist control … The second important element was leadership in discussion and organisation. (1999, p. 141)

The programmes for these nightly meetings were organised much like the productions of the authorial theatres, with a great deal of collaboration, music, symbolic metaphor, improvisation, gesture, and movement. Much like an improvisational performance, these programmes were designed to be responsive to everyone who was in attendance. Additionally, personal testimony, daily news, and informational sessions on the current state of education, the economy etc. were incorporated into the evening. At Theatre on a String, where Oslzlý (1990) was an organiser, he writes, "the evenings always began with the whole audience watching the news on a TV screen" (p. 106). The content and focus of dialogue for the evening would often flow from that.

Outside the theatre spaces, public demonstrations conducted by O.F. were organised just as in the theatre:

> Theatre people in Civic Forum drafted each demonstration, with Havel, the playwright, preparing a "scenario," to which others proposed additions and developed details. Structurally they reflected the strike evenings' montage dramaturgy, with songs and readings providing an entertaining and emotionally cathartic complement to the speeches by various dignitaries, dissidents, and visiting émigrés. (Beck, 2003, p. 204)

Oslzlý (1990) writes, "If we needed to come to quick agreement, we used theatre jargon" (p. 107). Dramatic language and structure informed not only the planning, but the "in-the-moment" operations of each demonstration. Theatrical symbolism can also be found in the demonstrators' actions. Schermer (1990) writes, "Bells rang, sirens wailed, cars hooted, demonstrators rattled their bunches of keys. The meaning is: for them the bells toll – in other words, they have had it (literally, "maji odzvonino" = the bells have tolled their end)" (p. 22).

In addition to informing the structure and aesthetics of events, drama practice provided enhanced communication skills. Janet Savin (1999)

attributes the "remarkable freedom and richness of exchange between speakers and crowds" (p. 145) to the actors' capacity for meaningful dialogue with the public. Beck (2003) notes, "Without such dialogue and the sense of good will and tolerance it fostered, Savin concludes, 'dismantling the economic and political structures of Czechoslovak socialism would have been a longer and more difficult process'" (p. 205). It is critical to note that although the formalised study of applied drama did not begin until the 1990s (Nicholson, 2005), this use of the tools of drama/theatre within a social and political setting to foster community and dialogue by Czechoslovakian artists resonates strongly with the practice of the burgeoning field.

The success of the Velvet Revolution and the democratisation of Czechoslovakia are notably linked to the theatres and the drama methodologies and practices that supported it. John K. Glenn (1999) details how the theatre-led movement's success was not inevitable, as it had competing challengers (reform Communists, the Democratic Initiative, and Slovak nationalists) who were unable to organise and connect with the public as Civic Forum had (p. 195). Glenn (1999) notes:

> While the removal of the Soviet threat was a necessary condition for the movements to occur, it is far from a sufficient condition for explaining the form of reconstruction of Leninist states. By analogy, to say that the French monarchy had been fatally weakened in 1789 is not to explain the outcome of the French Revolution. (pp. 192–193)

The ability of Civic Forum's leadership to incorporate drama processes into the structure of their organisation, and the effectiveness of that choice in the creation of a democratic state, have implications and potential solutions for deepening and strengthening democracy today.

Conclusion

Through this exploration, what becomes evident is the influence drama/theatre has on democratisation and de-democratisation when used in monologic and dialogic modes. Points of decreased democracy correspond with times when the state tightly controls drama/theatre for use

in state-driven propaganda, as well as the adoption of performative techniques by politicians to manipulate and control audiences. Periods when the tools of drama are employed for use in a monologic discourse, not open to critique or questioning, correlate with periods of a weakening of democracy. Through these case studies, a connection between increased democratisation and moments when drama/theatre is used as a site for collective assembly, participation, and as a means to create constructive dialogue is also evidenced.

Drama/theatre that cultivated dialogic discourses aided in the democratisation of France in 1789 and in the following years, and of Czechoslovakia in 1989. These case studies indicate that models of drama/theatre that promote dialogical discourse could have a role to play in democratisation in the future, with the Czechoslovakian example having strong ties to the emergence of the field of study of applied drama. In his 2018 article "(Re)Constructing Democracy in Crisis", K. Sabeel Rahman posits that the solution for fighting de-democratisation lies not in attempting to return to old approaches that in practice failed many people, but rather to "develop radically new democratic institutions, organizations, and practices" (p. 1555). This challenge encourages going beyond standard political practices, calling for innovations from all fields.

Drama/theatre's history of participating in the democratisation process through dialogical discourses places it in a prime position to take up Rahman's call. What might that look like in a twenty-first century context? Could a drama-based digital humanities approach that incorporates social media offer solutions for democracies currently defined by deeply polarised electorates? How might that approach navigate the online information silos created through algorithms that filter what knowledge users are exposed to? Might drama/theatre respond to Rahman's call using a more interpersonal approach through the use of applied drama, the now-established practice in the field of drama/theatre that even more fully embodies and advances the dialogic qualities that were effective for democratisation in the revolutionary spaces outlined above?[6] What effects might

6 Applied Drama is a process-centred practice that uses dramatic activity and exercises to engage with communities, individuals, and societies in meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and creation.

the use of applied drama practice within liberal democratic governance have on civic engagement and attitudes toward politics and policymaking? While further research is needed to unequivocally determine cause and effect between drama/theatre and democratisation, what is demonstrated as happening in the French and Velvet Revolutions indicates the use of drama/theatre for dialogic discourse as a potent democratising influence. These case studies provide a base for the further innovation of democratic practice combined with a dialogically-focused dramatic form.

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CHAPTER 3

Theatre as Inclusive Arts-based Research: A Key to Political Art in the Post-democracy?

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Abstract: In this chapter we investigate different approaches to art as research (arts-based) in relation to applied theatre practice and research from a cultural democratic perspective. In particular, we discuss theatre as "inclusive" practice and research and how this relates to different traditions of arts-based research. Based on literature analyses and experiences from Centres of Applied Theatre Research in South Africa and Norway, we unveil some different and dominant traditions of arts-based research that are currently voiced and familiar in Norway and South Africa. We explore four notions of exclusiveness within European notions of "artistic research": The alternative epistemology, Knowing for the sake of the arts only, The limited artistic context, and Only qualified artists do artistic research. Seen from a different cultural angle, the South African, we find that tendencies of exclusiveness are challenged by different notions of inclusiveness: The role of the arts and its embeddedness in social life, Inter disciplinarity, The extended political and historical context, Embracing intersectionality. As answers to potential accusations of applied theatre art running errands for the liberalist post-democracy, this chapter discusses inclusive arts-based research as a form of cultural praxis that may negotiate paradoxes of post-democracy

Keywords: artistic research, cultural democracy, applied theatre, arts-based research

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Introduction

One major purpose of the south-north collaboration that has produced this anthology is to build postgraduate teaching that establishes and further develops arts-based approaches to research. Although arts-based or performance as research methodology is not established as an agreed or dominant approach to research in applied theatre[1], its status is increasing (O'Connor & Anderson, 2015) and it is a commonly defined area of concentration for the project partners involved.

The context of the post-democracy in which the project also unfolds is understood as political climates where the external systems of democracy (e.g. elections and freedom of speech) still appear, but where their influence is increasingly diminished (see also chapter 1). In such a situation a political and economic elite makes the decisions, co-opting democratic systems for their agenda (Crouch, 2004). Furthermore, our project is sensitive to ways in which conditions of the post-democracy affect human life, cultural activities included. In both Norway and South Africa elements of the post-democracy are present, though created by very different political and historical influences.

Anyone who is interested in "arts-based" research as a field of research is met by a vast conceptual disparity and a great variety of contemporary global traditions such as performance as research (PAR), performance ethnography, practice-led research, a/r/tography, artistic research, creative research, arts research or even, lately, "research-creation" (Stévance & Lacasse, 2018). Our postgraduate teaching and research in applied theatre have been particularly influenced by performance ethnography (Denzin 2003), practice-led research (Haseman & Mafé, 2009) and, not least, practice/performance as research (PaR) (Kershaw, 2009; Riley & Hunter, 2009; Nelson, 2013; Arlander et al., 2017). In South Africa, PaR has been introduced particularly by Mark Fleishman (2012; 2015), and by exploring the epistemological value of performative repetitions within

1 For example by the major journals of *Applied theatre research* or *RIDE: The journal of applied theatre and performance*.

his own longstanding Clanwilliam Arts Project, he makes an important contribution to understanding performance as research.

Our intention is, however, not to relate theatre research to a specific tradition or label of "arts-based" research, but rather to inquire about inherent tensions concerning different cultural and artistic approaches that can be detected within many of the current traditions or labels.

While most of the labels of arts-based research reveal local (both geographically and disciplinary) innovation and discourse, they often share common traits and philosophical underpinnings. However, they also sometimes denote quite profound differences in understanding and methodological approach. Even to find an umbrella term for this scope of research variety is hard. "Arts-based research" is one such attempt here, but it may confuse those who identify this term with the American approach to social sciences and education (Barone & Eisner, 2011).

We start from an interest in looking into the possible democratic dimension of arts-based research, including notions of cultural agency and participant-driven research. Such notions are well developed within applied theatre research (O'Connor & Anderson, 2015). We believe that a shared ambition of building democracy through cultural praxis should take in both arts practice and research practice, or, to put it differently, should approach research as the cultural and political praxis. However, the attempt to realise this ambition reveals dilemmas, and is also met by critique. In particular, we meet notable differences in discourse and practice between applied theatre and the arts institutional theatre industry (Rasmussen, 2017). Without any intention of defending a certain normative view on the "nature" of applied theatre, we still think it is important to explore some of the influential arts-based research traditions from a cultural democratic vantage point. The inquiry leads us to a concept of "inclusive" theatre practice and research and its appurtenant dilemmas.

Our study has been conducted mainly by analysing the growing literature base on the topic of "arts-based research", as well as by references to selected and familiar examples of applied theatre research in the north-south perspective. We will start by unveiling the different and dominant

notions of arts-based research (still the umbrella concept we use) that are currently voiced and familiar in Norway and South Africa.

The exclusiveness of artistic research

In Norway, a dominant notion of "artistic research" is linked mainly to the European university reforms carried out since the nineties and the physical merging and co-administrative arrangements of arts institutions within universities. This is again part of the harmonisation of higher education and research within the European Union, often named the "Bologna process" (Piro, 2016). Many centuries of institutional separation between theatre and dance schools, conservatories, art academies, on the one hand, and the arts sciences on the other have in a relatively short time span been replaced by shared privileges and shared obligations towards research and research-based education. From a cultural perspective one could expect at least two consequences when the university houses new members: first, that newcomers adapt to the "rules of the house", and, secondly, that the house adapts to the newcomers by welcoming a new excitant to renew its established culture. "Rules of the house" implies that a cultural entity has an interest in protecting certain values and identity markers achieved and nurtured over time. By cultural exchange and excitant, we have in mind an unchallenged and rigid research concept, not least within the humanities. This is a research concept well grounded in Western modernity, that resists multi-modal approaches to knowledge production beyond the written and spoken word. To start with, the traditionally strong focus on the written thesis and on research based on reading has been challenged by recent changes in attitudes to research, and by an upgrading of the value of practical research, with the implementation of "practice turns" in many disciplines, such as health and engineering (see, for example, Kara, 2015). Furthermore, this development includes an "affective turn" that came a bit later, linked to the notion that feelings and bodily expression should be considered in the gathering of data (Athanasiou, Hantzaroula & Yannakopoulos, 2008).

Notwithstanding recent noteworthy development in research, the expected or potential cultural consequences of Art meeting Science

are yet to happen in the Norwegian university context. The dominant impact has rather been to maintain and protect separate parallel cultures, including discourses of knowledge development, even to the extent of producing different and parallel PhD training or regulations within the humanities, insisting on the difference between "research" and "developmental work" within the same research institution[2].

If we look beyond the economic rationality and urge for positions, titles and privileges that are linked to the harmonisation of higher education, we see a determination to build a platform for artistic research through networks[3], years of conferences and a growing literature base (Hannula et al., 2005; Wilson & Ruiten, 2013; Borgdorff, 2012, 2018). During this development, diverse initiatives are taken by arts schools in the effort to adapt to given standards of qualitative and even quantitative research, or else to reject scientific standards altogether, in order to maintain and defend a set of professional interests – a virtual sub-culture – at the expense of working towards the new ideals of integration and new forms of research.

Artistic research as a term does not frame common principles and thinking at all, but some characteristics are frequently addressed, all seemingly and closely linked to the identity, exclusiveness and liberalism associated with the modern arts institution. We suggest four traits of exclusiveness belonging to artistic research.

Exclusiveness 1: The alternative epistemology

One sense of artistic research identity is linked to a notion of applied knowledge (Mode 2) which is different from the knowledge (Mode 1) which is governed by academic interests (Gibbons et al., 1994). In the discourse of artistic research, Mode 2 knowledge offers a different knowledge production culture from that of traditional social science and humanities, and it hence denotes artistic knowing in the ways that the knowledge production is carried out in the presence of practical goals, applied to

2 http://artistic-research.no/

3 Such as ELIA, the European League of Institutes of the Arts

local needs, including the interests of the partners/actors involved. It is furthermore often cross- or transdisciplinary and develops its own theoretical structures, research methods and modes of practice. The research results are communicated to those who have participated and they are accomplished in the process of the art production rather than being generated after the practice (Borgdorff, 2009).

What becomes a challenge to artistic research is that Mode 2 knowledge identifies a new knowledge culture in neoliberalist societies. This also links artistic research to a business corporative discourse. Here, applied knowledge meets the needs of business and society involving research that can take place in institutions outside universities, and is managed by stakeholders and other organisations outside academia. The understanding of "application" as adaptation to relevance, needs and commissioned work means that universities share research with counties, NGOs, non-university institutes, other research centres, government agencies, industrial laboratories, think-tanks, consultancies. In other words, liberalist societies harmonise all higher education in research institutions with one hand, while with the other hand decomposing those institutions by "democratising" research and research funds to any societal stakeholder and "concerned groups" with "research needs".

By accommodating this discourse, artistic research can be accused of paying naive lip-service to the market, producing knowledge and goods for use without questioning the contexts and their prerequisites. This may be a reason why researchers, such as Borgdorff, do not include Mode 2 knowledge in later writings on epistemology (Borgdorff, 2018), or why the difference in "academic" and artistic knowledge is presented in somewhat less dichotomic ways in later contributions (Dunin-Woyseth, 2018).

By leaning to Mode 2 knowledge, the discourse of artistic research aims at justifying a professional and applied knowledge culture being outside and inside the university privileged culture at the same time. In the act of resistance to a knowledge culture at the university, comprehended as Mode 1, artistic research comes out against university conventions or even prejudices of university culture, then acts exclusively, even if the neoliberalist management of research is seemingly inclusive.

Applied theatre research may also seem like a liberalist phenomenon in the way participants are offered voices in the setting of the research agenda as well as in the subsequent decision-making process of research. However, the urge for democratic empowerment in the wake of the political avant-garde is very different from European liberal politics where values and demands are often measured by market competitiveness and cost effectiveness.

Exclusiveness 2: Knowing for the sake of the arts only

In literature on artistic research, such as the SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education (2013), the discipline focus of artistic research is predominant. Art may produce some explicit humanistic knowledge, but this is not the main focus of artistic research. It seeks not so much to make explicit the knowledge that art is said to produce, but rather to develop the art or provide a specific articulation of the pre-reflective, non-conceptual content of art. In order to delineate the identity of artistic research, an article from 1993 entitled "Research in Art and Design" has proved instrumental (Frayling, 1993; Borgdorff, 2006). Frayling differentiates between "research into art", "research for art" and "research through art". This builds on early distinctions from another British philosopher, the arts education pioneer Herbert Read, who much earlier made a distinction between "teaching through art" and "teaching to art" (Read, 1948 (1943)). In the current discourse of artistic research, teaching or research "through" is exactly the notion that is rejected, accepting only research "on" and "for" arts, preferring "in" arts. Research in the arts seeks to articulate the embodied knowledge throughout the creative process and in the art work/object. The artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results. This is knowledge in, for and of art, not any other knowledge through the means of art. In other words, the progressivist notion of "play as a way of knowing" beyond the art, which associates with Read's modernist heritage, is omitted in the arts' institutional context. This is an exclusive standpoint, seemingly due to the

Western institution of Art. It somehow neglects art and the aesthetic as social platform for communication and neglects artistic research as a political and educational operation beyond itself. In the context of applied arts, this is where applied theatre may lose ground as a legitimate form of artistic research because of its use of the arts as means to research other fields outside of the arts such as health and education, political issues and community development.

Exclusiveness 3: The limited artistic context

All sub-categories of arts-based research attempt to establish criteria of validity that both meet scientific standards or suggest alternative standards. Contextual attendance, relevance and reflexivity are three common criteria, working against the artist-researcher who might get lost in her sensuous, sometimes private, creative approach without relating to valuable input that may improve quality or public value. For example, in practice-led research, two out of six basic conditions concern contextual awareness. Deploying critical contexts aims at bringing in perspectives that extend horizons and counteract self-confirmative and circular practice. Engaging with "professional" frames within which practice is pursued, is another contextual concern. This is crucial not least to see how selected techniques and traditions dictate work or whether the work challenges its traditional frames (Haseman & Mafé, 2009; Mafé, 2010).

In the dominant discourse of artistic research, only the last understanding of context is seemingly pursued. Context here stands for the "art world" – the artistic universe. This means considerations that are delimited to the arts institutional sphere: the public reception, the technical, cultural and historical environment (of the art), art philosophies, the state of the industry, economy, etc. (Borgdorff, 2012; Wilson & Ruiten, 2013).

This marks another exclusive position when "context" in artistic research does not include the wider political, educational, therapeutic contexts of arts practice, as is the case of applied theatre. One could again assert that this delimited understanding of context proves that artistic

research mimics the conditions and hegemony of the Western European autonomous Art institution, dwelling on the secluded arts environment provided by this societal institution.

Exclusiveness 4: Only qualified artists do artistic research

The tendency to act exclusively and hence protect a professional culture is visible also in other parts of the artistic research discourse. It is repeatedly argued that only artists are capable of conducting practice-based research where arts are activated (Arlander, 2011; Borgdorff, 2012). Claiming professional training or merits as an admission requirement to artistic research at doctoral level studies is one way of selective control. The saying is that artistic research should be undertaken by artists, who should try to benefit the field of art in question. It is a logical consequence of a goal of artistic development, but it is nevertheless another exclusive trait that will exclude non-certified or less pronounced artists from artistic research. This research is limited to the professional, "proper" or renowned artists who are educated in the different professions of art.

Applied theatre researchers or makers do not argue against professionalism or the important relation between aesthetic-political potential and craft. However, by sometimes empowering participants as co-producers and co-researchers, applied theatre will value people's aesthetic contribution notwithstanding artistic licences or certificates. From the perspective of Norwegian and South African applied drama and theatre research, which is historically grounded in a broader global, performative base, creative or practice-led research is less true to institutional borders of art. "Artistic research" and its exclusive tendency do not fully satisfy a democratic and broader cultural approach which is evident in applied theatre research. This is research that involves cultural agents both from the inside and outside of the artistic profession, often aiming at knowledge production beyond theatre itself. Our next approach is, then, to examine arts-based research and applied theatre from a different cultural angle, the South African.

Decolonial thinking and urge for inclusiveness

In South Africa too, "arts research" is being promoted as an alternative to the more traditional academic research paradigms prominent in the West. This is a term coined at Wits University to denote the collection of research endeavours that has been termed arts-based research above. However, the thrust of this arts-based or performative research paradigm, also referred to as the "third research paradigm" (Haseman, 2015), is less based on a move towards exclusivity, as argued above, but more towards a rediscovery of and inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems and modes of expression found in African traditions and cultural expression (De Lange et al., 2018). Here the motivation towards forging a path for arts research has become part of what can be broadly termed the decolonial project attempting to reintroduce, revalue and research indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices unique to the African continent (Owuso-Ansah & Mji, 2013). This is more than "Mode 2" knowledge production. Here, there is a strong motivation not to follow the separation of the arts from other disciplines, or even from daily life, as is evident in Western thinking and culture. The motivation is to view the arts as an integral part of an integrated indigenous knowledge system that permeates all human endeavour including spiritual practice, social science, politics and natural science (Osman, 2009; Owuso-Ansah & Mji, 2013). In tandem with this move is the reintegration of theory and practice, another western split that is challenged by an acknowledgment of the integration between thinking, doing and context in indigenous knowledge systems, including arts practice and its role in social life (Osman, 2009).

Even so, given the strong influence of the academy as imported from Western cultures, the move towards this inclusion of the arts as research endeavour is plagued by the legacies of this background. Here too the merging and co-administrative arrangements of arts institutions within universities have made their mark. Moreover, the previously mentioned practice turn and affective turn have penetrated thinking and supported the move towards the "third research paradigm". Yet, in contrast to Norway where the "artistic research" tendency may seem to separate, distinguish, categorise and demarcate in its move towards exclusion, the

thrust in South Africa contains strands of inclusion, boundary crossing, intersectionality, interdisciplinarity and integration, thanks to the influence of decolonial thinking. We argue therefore that, in the face of the exclusivities visible in the Norwegian/European landscape, there is a move toward inclusivity in the South African landscape. We also argue that this move aligns with the principles and theoretical perspectives of applied theatre, while at the same time acknowledging the influence and ongoing complexity of this move in the midst of the tensions that characterise the decolonial project.

Finally, we argue that both Drama for Life at Wits University and Drama/Theatre at NTNU, as departments within academia and in particular in their association with the Building Democracy through Theatre project (see editorial chapter), are dedicated to aligning themselves with this inclusive thrust.

Inclusiveness 1: The role of the arts and its embeddedness in social life

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1974) was one of the first scholars to distinguish between what he called liminal and liminoid cultural practices – "liminal" practices being those associated with rituals, social drama and religious activities embedded in the workings of a society, and "liminoid" activities being those related to secular arts and non-religious activities that nonetheless function to bring about critical interrogation of values and change such as the Western concepts of art like "theatre" or "visual art" (Turner, 1974; Turner et al., 2017). Liminal activities are collective and communal, undertaken with feelings of belonging and commitment; while liminoid activities are not so fully embedded in societal values and belief systems, but are undertaken by individuals through choice, including subversive playfulness. Both kinds of activities make use of the arts for their meaning-making through symbolism, for example movement, song and performance. In liminal activities the arts are embedded in the values and daily social practices of community. In liminoid activity they are consigned to spaces like theatres and galleries reserved for the exclusive practice and exhibition of specific art forms. Furthermore, through

liminal activity the arts are not separated into multiple disciplines, as might be the case in limonoid activities, but are drawn on, as and how they are needed, for the collective purpose of the community. This notion of liminality and the embeddedness of the arts in social life resonates with the character of indigenous knowledge systems as holistic, integrated and systemic (Osman, 2009; Owuso-Ansah & Mji, 2013).

The apparent move towards inclusivity of the arts as basic human endeavour fundamental to relationship and community and social and spiritual health has become somewhat tainted in South Africa by a move to increased materialism and commercialisation of the arts. This means that, rather than working towards reclaiming community life and social interaction for the arts, some moves have been towards working harder to make the arts economically viable as industrial endeavours, embracing a neoliberalist manifestation of the "desire to be included among those who are at present feeding at the table of capitalist wealth, opportunity and privilege" (Cloete, 2014, n.p.a). There are even those scholars who would characterise some versions of the decolonial project as entrenching these very values – on the one hand criticising colonial capitalist notions, and on the other keeping them in place by seeking not to upset the status quo put in place by capitalist economic structures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014).

Instead of reserving the arts for exclusive privileged spaces like theatres and galleries, the decolonial move aims to break down the boundaries of such spaces. Because so much theatre is made in communities quite removed from central cities where the theatres and galleries are usually built, site specific work has become a strong theme of the decolonial project. Collaborators of the Phakama interactive theatre project (2017) write about such a struggle to create and perform a play in a traditional theatre space. The Phakama theatre group were used to being able to light fires or make it rain when working in warehouses and open spaces. Working in London and New York in formal theatre spaces, these options were not available to them and they found it difficult to adapt. Not being able to own the space had, for them, colonial undertones (Calburn, in McAvinchey, Santos & Richardson, 2017, pp. 223–236).

At the same time, in the recent South African Department of Higher Education and Training's "Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Output

and Innovations" (2017), attention is given only to work that has been presented in recognised art spaces, revealed as such by tell-tale phrases like "venue of recognised standing"– those very venues that are not accessible by communities far from central cities. Community arts productions and performances for schools seem to be neglected in this document. These are the same spaces to be reclaimed by the decolonial project and they are the spaces where most of Drama for Life's work happens. An example is the Mvuso project where selected secondary school teachers and community artists are trained over the course of one week in introductory applied drama and theatre methodologies and reflective practice strategies – in order to go back into their communities to run drama process-based workshops, creating performances with groups of adolescents around contemporary social issues (Drama for Life, 2019b). It is in acknowledgment of this non-categorical inclusion of the arts as being in the service of social goals that Drama for Life in South Africa endeavours to build the field of the applied arts as an integral part of social transformation and healing (Nebe, 2018).

In the Norwegian applied theatre context, the embeddedness in social life is, to some extent, also present, perhaps driven by other forces than liminality, such as a late consequence of the avantgarde, and what is identified as a performative or social-ethical turn (Bishop, 2012). The inclusiveness is here visible in, for example, site-specific or participatory theatre, engaging groups of people where they live and act – children, the disabled, the elderly, inmates. In such approaches, there are perhaps fewer artistic goals monitored by the expert for measures of objective art quality, but rather a criterion of the "good enough" drama being sufficient (Rasmussen, 2010). The argument is made that when a participant, who is not certified as either artist or researcher, makes artworks, for example draws pictures or writes poems, this is understood to be part of creative research. In this way, art generated by "untrained" artists is also included in the research as data (O'Connor et al., 2015).[4]

The next three "inclusivenesses" were first identified during a final reflective conversation on Day 3 of the ArtSearch Symposium held at

4 See also next section of interdisciplinarity.

Wits University School of Arts at the start of 2017. Here 60–100 scholars from across the African continent came together to discuss what should be understood by the phrase "creative research" – also called arts-based research above. Here are the three requirements, taken from conference notes:

> Is the work interdisciplinary in the sense that it serves other fields too beyond the field of its own creative medium?
>
> Does the artist-researcher understand the historical and political context and significance of his/her work?
>
> Does the work invite engagement from a diverse group of people and not only other artists and academics on the same level as the creative researcher and in the same field? (Janse van Vuuren, 2017)

Inclusiveness 2: Interdisciplinarity

At another South African conference in 2017, this time on Decoloniality at the University of South Africa, Ramon Grosfoguel spoke for a reframing of the discipline-centred ways of academia when he said:

> We need to think beyond disciplines in relation to the problem of humanity. We need to transform social sciences from discipline problem centred to humanity problem centred. (Quoted by Naidu-Hoffmeester, 2017)

This is more than what might be understood as "inter-disciplinarity", yet it still denotes a new way of thinking about disciplines that is less exclusive and more inclusive, looking towards a way of transcending and not just crossing the boundaries laid down by the dictates of the inherited academic disciplines – especially when working with the larger problems of humanity. Again, there is a sense that the arts might be of greater use if they were brought to bear on problems not only related to themselves, but those related to social life more generally.

This inclusiveness relates to Exclusiveness 2, identified above, speaking to the idea that preference is given to research "on," "for" and "in" arts.

Instead there is a move in the decolonial conversation in South Africa towards looking for applications of the arts beyond themselves.

Once again, however, this strand is countered by equally powerful moves reinforced by more traditional thinking from within the academy. The policy works with overtly Western ideas of the arts, where each art form is seen as a separate and categorised discipline relating to entertainment and public spectacle. From this perspective a requirement of interdisciplinarity will sound exclusive. It will still be a long process to renegotiate the inclusion of boundary-crossing artworks that do not fit into one discipline and that are showcased in other places and contexts than recognised conventional performance or exhibition spaces.

Drama for Life, with a focus on the applied arts, often works in interdisciplinary spaces, especially between such areas as public health services or water resource management, and theatre. An example is the Blood Sugars project, a collaboration between Wits's Health Communication Research Unit, Drama for Life, and the diabetes and endocrinology clinic at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. The project used a variety of drama techniques to work with people living with types 1 and 2 diabetes, at-risk groups, health professionals and researchers – to create a healthier, more nuanced and better-informed dialogue around physiology, treatments and cultural context (Hume, 2016). Another example is the Wakkerstroom water project that uses drama and other arts processes to teach environmental conservation to primary school children, working with stakeholders to ensure culture-appropriate and context-informed action in communities (Preston, 2021).

In Norway, a discipline defence has so far often overruled inter disciplinary research at the university level. However, interdisciplinarity has been enacted in the field of drama education, where theatre aiming beyond itself has been accorded some respect, although without receiving satisfactory acceptance in schools (Sæbø, 2009). Interdisciplinarity is also seen in the burgeoning encounter in the West of arts and research. This approach to research is aligned with the epistemology of historical action research (Lewin, 1946; Adelman, 1993) and current performance ethnography (Conquergood, 2002; Lincoln, 1995). Here one finds the attitude

that all participants are not only actors and audience but may also be both researchers and the researched by ways of symbolic media. Here the participant inquires by applying and enacting current communication skills, notwithstanding objective measures of artistic skills.

Inclusiveness 3: The extended political and historical context

In his article "Performing the archive and re-archiving memory", Samuel Ravengai (2015) criticises the above-mentioned work of Mark Fleishman and his company Magnet Theatre in and with the community of Clanwilliam in the Western Cape, South Africa, for choosing to "de-historicise its performances and in that process clos[ing] out other issues that have the potential to raise the consciousness of Clanwilliam subalterns" (Ravengai, 2015, p. 218). While Fleishman does, according to Ravengai, challenge the traditions of the academy, he does not adequately challenge the political environment and historical systems in which his work is performed. The requirement that the South African artist should, in fact, do this, and thereby transform the community, is a theme of the decolonial project. This notion challenges the idea of the limited artistic context referred to in our delineation of Exclusiveness 3 above.

Apart from the numerous productions of Drama for Life that challenge and engage current social and political issues, its Reflective Practice and Critical Reflexive Praxis Curriculum overtly aims to satisfy the requirements of a decolonial arts pedagogy to engage the broader socio-political context. Fook & Askeland (2006) define reflexivity as "an ability to recognise our own influence – and the influence of our social and cultural contexts on research, the type of knowledge we create and the way we create it". In this sense, then, it is about factoring ourselves into the situations we practise in. For postgraduate students in Drama for Life, namely Applied Theatre Facilitators and Drama Therapists, the ability to be conscious of what they bring into a situation, and how this relates to the broader context, is of vital importance.

Norwegian applied theatre also, perhaps to a lesser degree than in South Africa, connects to the extended political context outside the arts

institution by interfering and relating to child and health care, immigration and marginality as well as to the contemporary situation of the post-democracy (Crouch, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2011). The historical context has often been downgraded or neglected in contemporary Western applied theatre research, but interesting exceptions occur (Hughes & Nicholson, 2016; Kershaw, 2016).

Inclusiveness 4: Embracing intersectionality

Whether or not it is true, as we assert, that in (European) artistic research the tendency is towards arguing that only artists can conduct creative research (Exclusiveness 4 above), there is a certainly a tendency in South Africa to question this notion, a challenge based on theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). These theories assert that, because of the intersection between race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other identity markers, some people face systemic injustices that may exclude them from the privileges of white male-dominated societies. It is argued that, thanks to the impact of intersectionality, the arts, too, have begun to offer a way to exclude and shut out certain groups of people – mostly those dispossessed and dehumanised by colonial endeavours – from the mainstream art world. It is, therefore, the work of the applied arts to counteract the effects of intersectionality.

Drama for Life, South Africa, chooses to strongly align with inclusive tendencies and values greatly its community partnerships where work is being done in and with communities aimed at strengthening the role of the arts in giving voice to those disadvantaged by the effects of intersectionality. An example here is the AfriQueer project, an evocative, dreamscaped site-specific ritual performance that celebrates LGBTIQ human rights. Based on an ancient creation myth of how the stars were made, it is written by Tlotlego Gaogakwe and directed by Warren Nebe (Drama for Life, 2019a).

In Norway, cultural intersectionality occurs in the way arts institutions exclude certain citizens from the stage. For example, criticism has been raised against the dominance of white, ethnically Norwegian actors. They do not reflect today's expanding multicultural society well (Halilovic, 2019). However, applied theatre projects seek to include new

agents on the stage, such as the disabled or the "extraordinary" (Gürgens & Rasmussen, 2010) or the homeless (Aune, 2017).

Reconsiderations of resistance

The very conversation about finding just the right term for "art as research" is an indication of the fact that both exclusive and inclusive tendencies are ever present in the landscape of applied drama and theatre research. Even if we have pointed at cultural differences in a north-south perspective, we do not aim to create new dichotomies in arts-based research, and we realise that there are arguments for both exclusive and inclusive approaches within a political context of applied theatre. What is more important to underline is the resistance and marginalisation with which both exclusive and inclusive approaches in applied theatre are still met both in the north and in the south.

In Norway, institutional compartmentalisation is predominant, including exclusive discourses and practices. In this landscape, applied theatre holds a marginal position, rendered suspect from the point of view of social anti-theatrical prejudice as well as from current European aesthetics. From the latter, applied theatre is met with hostility towards an "ethical turn" affecting aesthetics or politics today (Bishop, 2012). This hostility reflects the view that exclusive approaches are necessary, approaches that are often depoliticised and that consequently may impede transformative or ethical ambitions of applied theatre.

Within the South African decolonial context, inclusive tendencies are heard and often heeded in resonance with the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems. Yet, in the face of the resilience and entrenched nature of Western thinking and epistemologies, the applied arts continue to struggle against the exclusive tendencies present in the academy and in commercial contexts.

At the same time, increasing political polarisation can swing in the opposite direction, excluding and vilifying attempts to host democratising theatre interventions, calling it neo-liberal, or aligning them uncritically with colonial traditions, before allowing artists and facilitators the opportunity to set the frame and create the context for the interaction.

The north-south project collaboration which is reflected in this chapter consciously relates to our post-democracies by considering, realising and opposing applied theatre as a liberalist phenomenon. As answers to potential accusations of running errands for liberalist post-democracy and the accompanying denigration of art therapy, social collaborative art and arts education, we aim to enact research as the cultural praxis that negotiates paradoxes of post-democracy.

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CHAPTER 4

Performing Theatre and Democracy

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Abstract: This collection of performances that is linked to this chapter was created as part of the MA exchange project between NTNU and DFL (Drama for Life). Students used performance ethnography as a method for generating performance material in answer to the challenge of building democracy through theatre. South Africa has a rich theatre history that has always engaged with the South African political narrative. Through developing an understanding of the many theatre-making processes that created this unique history, as well as through exploring other contemporary South African performances, students created and tracked their own research methodology so that they were able to hold up a mirror to the world around them. While each performance captured the individual perspective of the performer, they also engaged directly and indirectly with broader South African realities.

The course consisted of four components, each shaped by the individual's journey into their own research methodology. These were: generating material, interpreting the material, rehearsing the material and performing the material. This submission consists of a framing statement written by the lecturer as well as a collection of ten performances that include a short framing statement from each performer. Permission was obtained from all the students to showcase their work apart from one student who has submitted it under a pseudonym. Out of this exploration and through a practical laboratory, students created an embodied experience that addressed the notion of democracy.

The value of the work was to gain a fresh embodied perspective of democracy in South Africa. It spoke to our unique South African theatre-making legacy, but also challenged and disrupted our understanding of what democracy is and how it might be performed.

Keywords: performance ethnography, embodied experience, democracy

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Introduction

"Democracy" is a contentious word with many different meanings and associations. The concept of "democracy" is also filled with contradictions. It evokes images of individual freedom within a world of majority rule, of the sacrifices we make in order to preserve our capacity to make choices in the future, and of countries and systems and peoples who all follow its basic precepts but experience entirely different results.

The concept of "democracy" was explored by two groups of students from two different democratic countries: South Africa and Norway. In 2019 and 2020, a student exchange took place between the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and the South African University of the Witwatersrand. As part of this exchange, Drama for Life (housed at the University of the Witwatersrand) received two Norwegian students in 2019 and one in 2020. These students joined the Performance Ethnography course at master's level. The theme of the work was "stories of democracy".

Each individual demonstrated a different understanding of "democracy" – of how choices are located in his or her life, or of how agency is affected by predetermined facts of birth, culture, gender and nationality. Through their research, the students provided us with diverse insights into the meaning of "democracy".

In this contribution, we provide a framework for the course in which we present a collection of pre-recorded student work that showcases creative explorations into stories of democracy. The work is part of the students' process that goes towards their final master's submissions. We invite the reader to consider the collection from this perspective and to explore the ways in which the students came to the issues of "democracy" from their own contexts, countries and experiences.

For the purposes of this research, it must be noted that "democracy" was understood in all its iterations. It was not defined merely as a political system, but also as individual agency, cultural freedom and conceptual understandings of "choice".

Aims and purpose of the course

The Performance Ethnography course encourages students to explore their own unique relationship with "democracy" by drawing on the world around them. It allows for a balance between theory and their own embodied knowledge, as well as provocation from site observation. Norway and South Africa are both democracies, yet how they function is very different. Theatre practices give researchers the opportunity to explore their own lived experiences of democracies. The collaborative exploration between the South African students and the Norwegian students afforded researchers a chance to interrogate universal ideas of democracies as well as on-the-ground individual realities.

The course also encourages students to explore different methods of working with "democracy" stories, investigating various forms that include verbatim performance, documentary performance, performance art and devised theatre. Through rehearsal, students use a performance laboratory to share their work with each other, receive feedback on the work from their peers and then return to rehearsal. Ultimately, students perform their work for a wider audience.

Some students located themselves deep within the research. They found their own very personal democracy story. South African students Tshepang Moticoe, Paul Noko, Bongani Malinga, Simphiwe Mbonambi, Grace Barnes and Hector Kunene all explored their own lived experiences in response to a "performed" democracy today. Whereas South African student Bongani Ngomane and Norwegian students Glenn Thomas Johansen, Nicole Smith (pseudonym) and Mirabelle Breidvik commented on democracy conceptually – questioning their understanding of and relationship with it.

Conceptual and theoretical frame

The Performance Ethnography course pedagogy is embedded in the notion of the performance laboratory: a space of investigation, interrogation, experimentation and exploration. All creative tasks were backed up with theory so that students could reflect on the work they created

through different theoretical lenses. Students were able to draw on theorists that were useful to their own investigations. I attach their reading lists at the end of the document. The readings fell into three groups, categorised according to purpose:

Group 1: those aimed at enhancing observation skills and performance choices;
Group 2: those aimed at providing an understanding of what performance ethnography means;
Group 3: those aimed at furnishing a case study of other performers' work that reflected notions of democracy.

My role

In both years, my role was one of teacher-director. I facilitated a process that heightened the value of social research, explored different theatre-making methods and ultimately encouraged students to create performances about critical life issues, people and society that impact on democracy.

Emakhazeni

In both 2019 and 2020, students engaged with the local municipality of Emakhazeni as a site of observation. Emakhazeni is unique in that it captures many of the issues that South Africa is facing today, but all in a small and accessible space. Students were able to observe life in the town Machadadorp and the township of Emothonjeni. Both are part of the larger Emakhazeni in the province of Mpumalanga. This small South African town served as a microcosm of South Africa. The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative (FATC), which partners with Drama for Life, is situated in Emakhazeni. This too afforded students a unique opportunity to observe the work that FATC does in the community, as well as to collaborate with the interns working with FATC. Here they were able to share creative workshops. Emakhazeni gave the students a chance for quiet reflection and deep rehearsal work. This type of observation and stillness

was valuable in helping students to distil and practise their work, in a retreat-type space.

In 2019, at the start of their exchange, Norwegians Nicole Smith and Glen Thomas Johansen (whose work is featured here) travelled to Emakhazeni in rural Mpumalanga in order to conduct their creative site work. On return to the Wits campus, students performed the resulting work to peers and lecturers in a university studio.

Their South African counterparts performed at Emakhazeni during the "My Body My Space" festival, which occurred after the Norwegian students had returned to Norway. The "My Body My Space" festival is a street festival. Performances are site-specific, taking place all-over Emothonjeni and Machadadorp. The audience moves from site to site. The feeling is fluid, exciting and improvisational, changing all the time to accommodate responses from the audiences. While the two Norwegian performances were recorded in a studio at Wits University, the South Africans' performances at "My Body My Space" were not recorded.

In 2020, students from both countries visited Emakhazeni at the start of the course. The final performances occurred in different virtual settings due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The "My body My Space" festival was delayed. Thus, all works are recorded, and viewings took place online. All student work from 2020 is featured here.

Context of creation

In both 2019 and 2020, unique circumstances affected the students' work. It is important to note what these were and how they were felt.

In 2019, the academic year began with the Fees Must Fall student protests. Students were protesting against the fee structure at South African universities. Lectures were disrupted and a choppy, volatile feeling was experienced on campus. Students were encouraged to enter into the fee debate. This dialogue provoked and challenged their understanding of what South African democracy was.

In March 2020, the Covid outbreak influenced the practicalities of the course. Lectures took place online and creative explorations had to occur

in challenging conditions for the students. Some had little to no connectivity while others had no electricity. It was a difficult time – which can be felt in the tone and platform choices of the work.

However, despite the differing circumstances over the years, the work remains unique to the creator. The work cannot be easily boxed into annual categories of 2019 or 2020 as the responses from the students were fiercely individual, drawing on their own lived experiences.

Practical component

Description of content: Performances

2019

Five performances were created as a result of this process. They were performed in different sites around Wits and at the "My Body My Space" festival. It is interesting to see how individual responses to stories of democracy differed according to circumstance and performer. Due to the nature of the festival these were not recorded. Here are brief outlines of what they consisted of:

Tshepang Moticoe created a piece around the role indigenous games played in forming identity. She explored how indigenous games allowed her to access memories of playing as a child. She performed on the side of a rural road and used the spectators to play games with her. The games spoke to her identity and gave her an agency in her formative years. Through her work, Tshepang linked ritual to agency. She explored how using a set system of rules could facilitate a greater understanding of identity, and ultimately enhance personal freedom. All democracies involve a form of ritual at their core – rules aimed at providing a framework through which choice can be maximised, repetition and marking of change. Thus Tshepang's research wove together the concepts of democracy, choice and cultural ritual – themes often separated in theoretical understanding.

Paul Noko took the audience on a physical storytelling journey. We followed him from a small house, to a crèche and then to a school. The

audience paused with him at each relevant site. He told the story of his relationship with two friends from crèche and how their friendship developed as they grew. Starting from childhood, when they watched gangster movies together, moving towards adulthood, when they eventually became actual gangsters themselves. Eventually, a tragic event forced Paul to confront the reality of his life and choose a different path. Paul investigated the role early education plays in forming identity. He used traditional storytelling devices, intertwined with audience participation and site-specific provocation in taking us on this journey. The theme of democracy was present in his work in innovative ways. By using site-specific locations, he rooted his understanding of democracy in his life, and explored the ways in which location and circumstance direct our freedom and pressure us to conform to pre-established patterns of behaviour. The result is a deeply personal investigation into democracy.

Bongani Nicholas Ngomane explored priesthood in South Africa. He investigated false prophets and their effect on their congregation. He examined the theory of priesthood and the performative quality they use to transfix their audience. He questioned African mythology, juxtaposing it with current popular Christianity. He performed on the street in Emthonjeni as well as the Origins Centre at Wits. His work explored democracy by looking at the relationship between religious leaders and the community they serve. An examination of this dynamic can have broader implications for power relationships that exist in democracies. By looking at the interaction between Christianity and African mythology, he also interrogated the relationships between different cultures, and how they can give birth to new forms of belief and practice – even if their source was one built on a lack of choice and coercion.

The remaining two performances were recorded, the links can be accessed below. They took place in the Emakaya theatre at Drama for Life. Here are the brief outlines of these performances.

Glenn Thomas Johansen questioned the democratic process of voting. He held a mock election where there were no actual choices. The audience were asked to choose from three small films that he had made.

They knew nothing about the content of the film and they did not know what they were voting for. The audience viewed two of the films, both exploring Johannesburg from different positions. They never got to see the third film and had no idea what they were missing out on – commentary on the fact that democracy requires knowledge as a precursor for genuine choice. Glen assumed a joker-clown character who held the election. (Link to "Democracy In Practice" by Glenn Thomas Johansen: https://youtu.be/UHFQHa-rYO8)

Nicole Smith explored self-silencing in a democracy. Every time she tried to speak, she found herself mute. She had pages and pages of research that she had gathered, but she was unable to communicate it. She handed pieces of her research to the audience, fragments of observations of her time in South Africa. It was an exploration into whose voice is heard in a democracy and the courage needed to speak out. (Link to "7000 Words and Nothing to Say" by Nicole Smith (pseudonym): https://youtu.be/3IF51DbiWoY)

2020

In 2020, a further five performances were created.

Hector Kunene explored the impact of absent fathers on adolescents. His work was autoethnographic. Hector used video and re-created a scene from his childhood, examining democracy through the choices that others have made despite us – and how that shapes our own agency.

"[T]his is an autoethnographic exploration of absent fathers, more especially in the black community, through the use of applied theatre techniques. I use practice as research as an applied theatre practitioner and also as a reflexive practice practitioner. Here and there will be elements of facilitation in order to probe engagements and pave a way for interactive dialogue. The performance involves boys who discover their friend sleeping in the middle of the railway. They ask him to get up and they force him up as he complains. In his mind he is thinking of the train that might have taken his father to wherever he left to. He is grumpy and angry that they found him. The stones on his body are a symbol of him being below the surface and his body position underneath. This performance is an

exploration of the body feeling the pain, the body lying on top of the railway stones and other stones on top of the body. The heaviness of death and the death wish in his mind. The relief of being discovered on the verge of death and the exploration of feeling and tampering with death itself and dying dangerously." (Link to "Absent Fathers Research Exploratory" by Hector Kunene: https://youtu.be/rZogchNQ86w)

Simphiwe Mbonambi examined intergenerational relationships in the family structure and how these shifted and changed over time. She conducted an interview with her mother, examining the meaning of democracy through generations, and how the past underscores our relationship with choice. Her creative submission was captured on video and was autoethnographic.

"Exploring family and identity: What does family mean to you? My performance is a self-narrative shared between my mother and myself. I have chosen to focus on storytelling as my preferred medium for unfolding truth. Truth is a deeply personal and subjective experience to me, and I'm interested in where this type of personal reality comes from – my heritage, my identity – the origins of myself identification." (Link to "Rise up" by Simphiwe Mbonambi: https://youtu.be/sWQhyeiIGVs)

Grace Barnes used body knowledge to question performativity in gender. She emphasises the place that identity and gender structures have in influencing the choices we can make for ourselves – how this moulds the democratic landscape. Her work was autoethnographic. She used video and captured her bodily responses to performed femininity.

"'Alt-Her' begins to look at the embodied experience that women encounter in everyday life to live up to certain gendered expectations. As an auto-ethnographic exploration, it considers the performativity of gender and draws attention to the repeated acts that inform appropriation of women's bodies and how they should look, act, dress and exist in the world. The performance calls for a return to the body and senses and unpacks my experience in living in a gendered body that is not defined by myself, but rather by the 'putting on' of shoes, this used as a metaphor to the idea of 'putting on a character' in order to present myself as acceptable to the world. This comes in the form of knowing by doing, that a consciousness of repeated acts allows the body to be aware of itself through

the senses, memory and thought." – Grace Barnes (Link to "Alt-Her" by Grace Barnes: https://youtu.be/LuGDZjJ_VNw)

Bongani Malinga disrupted notions of masculinity in rural South Africa. He presented a photo journal and unpacked the influence that masculine bodies have on the choices available to men in a democratic context. His work was auto-ethnographic, both personally and in his social context.

"The photo journal presented traces of the process I am currently undertaking and is made profound by the fact that I am at home. A place where I grew up and had ideas of who I am in relation to others formulated. Although the larger picture of my research is around testing out and teasing out that which is detrimental to the well-being of individuals one can classify as subaltern, I find that my current location affords me the opportunity to begin from the base. This is so that the frame is better prepared to stably undertake radical intervention through performance as a tool. It is necessary work for, if it were not done, I would be forgoing my own sense of agency. The assemblage of images seems to have negated home (the family house) but this choice communicates a contributory factor to this journal." – Bongani Malinga (Bongani Malinga's photo journal can be accessed in its entirety at: https://press.nordicopenaccess.no/index.php/noasp/catalog/book/135)

Bongani Ngomane[1] created a public ethnographic discourse into democracy and poverty. He used video to capture the role poverty plays in a South Africa democracy.

"'Mr President' is the public ethnographic museum of illustration in the mind of the poor that serves to protest. It is a composition that exhibits images to illustrate the conditions that suppress the mindset of *abantu base kas'lam*. Through the pictures, a collage is used to create an abstract image of the mindset that bases the reality of *abantu base kas'lam*. The aim is to puzzle together the reality of the people from Ivory Park – to

1 Bongani Ngomane was in both groups. In 2019, he joined as visiting creative researcher, not as registered student. In 2020, he was participating as registered student.

create a museum to explore public ethnography as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology to disclose the invisible faith in democracy towards *abantu base kas'lam*." – Bongani Ngomane (Link to "Mr. President" by Bongani Nicholas Ngomane: https://youtu.be/84quRCzd3XM)

Mirabelle Breidvick explored the relationship between language and democracy.

"My intention was simply to highlight how democracy is a 'work in progress' and how the flaws of one type of democracy might not be flaws somewhere else." (Altschuler, 2006) "My wish is for the observers of this piece to start thinking for themselves and explore what democracy means for them and their community and country. We all have negatives and positives when living in a democracy; some want to change their existing democracy, some feel like they can't, and others do not wish to change it" – Mirabelle Breidvick (Link to "Somewhere Else" by Mirabelle Breidvick: https://youtu.be/aG_qnLtgq6c)

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CHAPTER 5

Democratic Theatre Practice in Donor-funded Projects: Challenges and Interventions

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Abstract: Karachi, Pakistan is a mosaic of marginalized communities belonging to diverse ethnicities with distinct yet overlapping histories. Set against a backdrop of gang warfare and extremism, the city's development sector has endeavoured to channelize the energies of at-risk youth toward educational and creative outlets. This chapter will explore if, and how, theatre projects restricted by specific attitudinal goals of countering violent extremism can organically foster more basic values of deliberative democracy within the logistical and temporal constraints of a donor-supervised project. In a divisive climate of struggling institutional democracy and governance, can a grass-roots theatre practice emerge that inculcates collective goodwill and critical generosity in the community while meeting official goals of countering violent extremism and growing even after the project period ends? Using Stephani Etheridge Woodson's *Community Cultural Development* as a guiding theoretical framework, this chapter will explore the possibilities, challenges, roadblocks and opportunities of using *Theatre for Youth Third Space*, within the parameters of said project, to transcend the goals of Counter Violent Extremism (CVE). The project was carried out with 42 youth groups in six districts of Karachi over a period of eleven months, divided into two 18-week cycles, each culminating in youth-devised Social Action Projects (SAPs) that directly or indirectly address violent extremism.

Keywords: democracy, theatre, donor-funded, TFY Third Space

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Introduction

Counter Violent Extremism (CVE)-focused development initiatives in Karachi are born out of post 9/11 interventions in Pakistan's northwestern areas, where many international donor agencies contributed a significant amount of resources to counteract the social and cultural influence of extremist militant groups. By the end of 2005, the US had no results to corroborate the much-touted "decapitation" strategy of the global War on Terror (Kundani & Hayes, 2018). The US State Department's rhetoric, which professed to "kill and uproot … Al Qaeda leaders" to enforce "regime change" (p. 4), with attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, was starting to be viewed with deep skepticism. In fact, it may have helped escalate violent conflict, with countries in the West that had not previously been targeted, such as the United Kingdom and Spain, facing attacks in 2007 and 2014, respectively. This precipitated a change of tack from the Bush administration, aiming to "win hearts and minds" as well as triggering "shock and awe" (p. 4), which, as had been seen in both Afghanistan and Iraq, had significant limitations and even counter-effects.

By 2006, CVE had entered the global policy lexicon and become a widely accepted measure in the fight against terrorism, having achieved prominence through Tony Blair's "Preventing Violent Extremism" (PVE) (Kundani & Hayes, 2018, p. 7). The rallying cry from Washington and London against Al-Qaeda coincided with the rise of the term "Violent Extremism" in English language news sources, from close to zero articles in 2005 to seven thousand by 2015 (Fig. 1).

The parallel broadcasting of "violent extremism" by western power centers and media outlets respectively as a fundamental threat to peace made it synonymous with Islamic radicalism, which, consequently, led to large-scale Islamophobia in the western world It is important to note that prior to 9/11, the term "violent extremism" was exclusively used to refer to aggressive far right and neo-Nazi politics (Kundani & Hayes, 2018). Thereafter, uncritical feverish global discourse rebranded "violent extremism" as militant Islamic terror.

CVE programmes adopted two distinct approaches. One was more developmental in outlook, in that programmes spanned across all areas of life including agriculture, infrastructure, education, environment

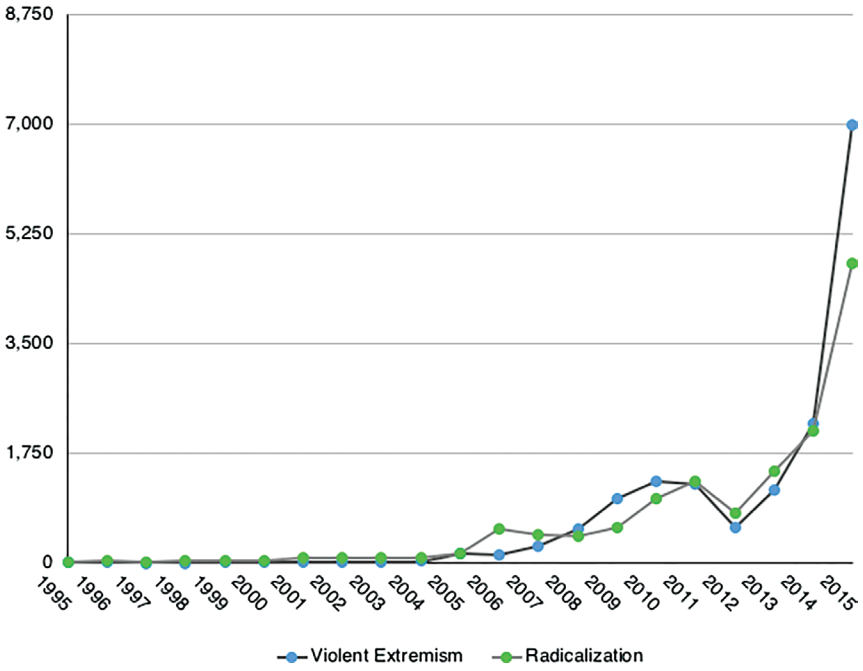

Figure 1 Articles mentioning radicalization and violent extremism in English-language news sources, 1995–2015. (Kundani & Hayes, 2018)

and sports, and were executed over the course of five years. These activities were conceived under the canopy of "Crisis Prevention" (M. Javed, personal communication, April 8, 2020), encompassing all stakeholders of the local communities including youth, local partners, provincial government bodies, federal government bodies and the armed forces in their planning, execution, and assessment. The UNDP collaborated with countries like Japan, Saudi Arabia and Italy to fund and organize these long-term developmental projects. The fact that these projects only came about in response to the threat of Talibanisation has significant philosophical and conceptual ramifications, setting a precedent in which Counter-Violent Extremism became a singular overarching aim for multitudinous projects in the following years. Starting in the late 2000s and continuing well into the mid-2010s, the initial reactive drive to soak up extremist elements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the north western province of Pakistan, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), spread into a widespread movement in Pakistan's development sector to actively shift behaviours and attitudes toward

positive civic engagement amongst marginalized communities, which, according to conventional wisdom, were vulnerable to the influence of hardliner religious rhetoric (Kundani & Hayes, 2018).

The other approach to preventing/countering violent extremism, known as "emergency response" (M. Javed, personal communication, April 8, 2020), adopted a swifter and more short-term trajectory. Funded by USAID, these interventions took the form of a myriad of projects in communities potentially receptive to religious extremism, but their timescale was strictly limited, from six months to a year at most. By the mid-2010s, USAID had reset its CVE mission base in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest metropolitan city, to strategically soak up extremist elements in communities struggling with socio-economic and infrastructure issues. It was believed that the youth of these areas, lacking avenues for healthy social engagement, and educational opportunities for personal and professional growth, could grow alienated from society and potentially ally themselves with rogue networks that were operational in the north-western parts of the country and Afghanistan (UNDP, 2016).

In order to understand the evolution of CVE work in Pakistan, it is necessary to understand the structural hierarchy of the landscape in which an array of projects in schools, community centres and public spaces came to life, carried out by local NGOs and welfare organizations via USAID grants. Authorized by the US Congress under the Foreign Assistance Act (USAID, 2013) USAID operates under the guidance of the US National Security Council, hiring third-party contractors in recipient countries to govern, regulate and assess grants-based projects awarded to organizations working on social development in the fields of education, health, sports, community development and the like. A skimming review of these projects post 9/11, through third-party contractors disbursing grants to organizations working with marginalized communities in Pakistan, indicates that the collective focus of this ecosystem has expanded from buffering the encroachment of violent extremism to long-term skill-building of the beneficiaries, beyond the scope of official project timelines (M. Javed, personal communication, April 8, 2020). However, the desired target of sustained independent community engagement beyond the penumbra of donor-funded projects faces many

administrative, economic and cultural bottlenecks, which may be resolved through community-centred artistic and cultural exploration, as this author asserts on the basis of his experience as a Theatre Trainer in *AzmeNaujawan* (AeN), a CVE-focused community engagement programme with marginalized youth across several districts of Karachi.

The genesis of *AzmeNaujawan* came from an environment that had seen a spate of USAID-funded "emergency response" projects in the post 9/11 landscape pregnant with the global CVE discourse. From the late 2000s till the mid–2010s, almost all civil society organizations and NGOs of Karachi executed programmes in diverse domains as means to counter violent extremism. The running reflection over the efficacy of these programmes – from donor agencies to third-party contractors to on-field organizations – was that different organizations holding expertise in different areas of human development needed to join hands for more enduring and far-reaching results. In acknowledgement of the logistical and resource gaps of various organizations under the donor umbrella, a new USAID-funded project was introduced which convened a consortium of 10 organizations with an established presence and engagement in 10 districts of Karachi, its aim being to cast a wider net in its involvement in communty engagement along the lines of countering violent extremism. All ten organizations pooled their intellectual resources from years of working with the youth of their communities to design a comprehensive curriculum. It spanned from areas as broad as civic engagement and political awareness to topics as specific in skills-development as social media and media literacy, benefitting approximately over 1,000 youth from under-privileged areas of Karachi with a total of 90-teaching hours in an out-of-school engagement drive. This new project was *AzmeNaujawan*.

The lens of TFY third space CCD framework

For three years running – six cycles in all – the AeN programme has undergone structural and curricular adjustments, most notable of which, for the interest of this chapter, was the incorporation of specialized theatre and arts modules in the third cycle. As to how theatre and arts can be most, if at all, effective in donor-defined civic engagement programmes,

it is helpful to approach the subject from the scholarship of Theatre for Youth (TFY).

Theatre for Youth (TFY) has traditionally treated children and youth as "audience" and "learners" (Woodson, 2015, p. 4) who are presented with pre-defined, pre-conceived learning outcomes and educational outputs designed to lead them to wholesome and moral citizenry. This banking model of transference (Freire, 1970) assumes youth as passive recipients instead of active cultural creators. Theatre for Youth Third Space, on the other hand, building on the understanding of cultural processes defined by political theorist Harry Boyte as "free-space" (Boyte, 2004, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 15) and critical theorist Homi Bhabha as the "between landscape" (Bhabha, 2004, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 15), sees artistic and theatrical engagement as a non-judgemental space for "new ways of looking at the world"(Woodson, 2015, p. 15), and "call[s] into question fixed categorizations" that "foster new possibilities for cultural meanings" (p. 15). Stephani Ethridge Woodson's (2015) work with TFY is a revisionist attempt to redefine cultural engagement of children and youth as a space of "play, reflection, public-making, recognizing children and youth as civic assets and social actors" (p. 16). The "third space" of TFY is then really an ideological play-space between polarities conventionally marked as clear signposts for young people in their educational conditioning to approach any conceptual, moral, social or practical mode of life, a "free-space" where "powerless people have a measure of autonomy for self-organization and engagement with alternative ideas" (Boyte, 2004, p. 61). The challenge, on a practical level, is to extend the said idea from figurative conceptual use to implemented practical reality whereby youth are treated as capable participatory citizens, building the social, political, economic and cultural power of their communities through principles of deliberative democracy rather than directorial relationships.

The values of deliberative democracy in artistic facilitation with the youth treated as cultural producers places "reasoned, pluralistic discussion front and centre in the process" (Woodson, 2015, p. 34), of collectively deriving measures and interventions involving "both formal publics and informal public spheres" (p. 34). The dicta of deliberative democratic values, in any sort of intervention in a community, thus proposes a

wholesome ecosystem that encompasses all varieties of flows amongst various viewpoints, coalesces communal life and bridges "informal and formal publics" (Gutmann & Thomas, 2004, p. 125). Grounded in the philosophical assumption that "people are not objects to be governed (or risks to be managed); instead, are self-directed agents collaborating in their own governance" (p. 125), deliberative democracy is a core tenet of third space facilitation for youth and informs the author's critique of AeN and similar donor-funded projects.

The scope of third space facilitation imbued by the values of deliberative democracy transcend the "service" or "welfare" mindset heavily prevalent in development and humanitarian sectors. Gutmann (1999) discusses how third space facilitation widens the scope to focus on other essential skills, such as reading and writing, numeracy, and critical reasoning, all of which will help develop and build communities that are empathetic and understanding, and willing to consider other people's points of view (p. xiii). These are not learning outcomes for employable skills – which are often the aim of engagement with the youth for their future economic prospects in the capitalist labour market. Rather, in combination with virtues of "veracity, nonviolence, practical judgment, civic integrity and magnanimity" (p. xiii) these skills make for "a spirit of collective goodwill and critical generosity" (p. xiii) in the affairs of community life, in its functioning and decision-making.

The theoretical formulation of a deliberately democratic TFY third space, idealizing a holistically reflexive grounds-up exploration of self-engendered change and meaning-making, cannot be divorced from the broader and deeper cultural and economic contexts of the life of youth in a community. The nexus of artistic expression with cultural evolution in the ontology of a community's life is articulated by Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard (2001) in *Creative community: The art of cultural development*, as a macro-level value spanning the system at all levels of power that "collaborate[s] with others to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change" (p. 8).

Such a conception moves the arts away from being an embellished presentational artefact intended for entertainment, to a collective meditative

laboratory, outgrowing the model of community engagement in which external "service providers" impose pre-determined outputs, instead allowing the youth of a community to explore and create modes and means of living from their own unique perspectives, capacities, and imaginations. The goal of TFY third space facilitation is, therefore, to break the fixed categories of the consumer economy and, by engaging with the cultural fabric of the community itself, collectively renegotiate their modes of living and the assumptions underlying them. It is not about giving youth power, which has more the ring of populist sloganeering than grounded social engineering, but rather models that suggest to them how to "navigate and practice power" (Woodson, 2015, p. 34) flowing at multiple levels in what Arendt (1958) calls the "web of relations" that constitute the ever-shifting culture, norms, and demographics of a community (Woodson, 2015, p. 39). Such a phenomenon enables "people (to) see themselves as the co-creators of democracy, not simply as customers or clients, voters, protestors or volunteers", who unquestioningly perpetuate status quo power structures to their own disadvantage by continuing to perform rigid, prescriptive, and functional roles in society (Boyte & Kari, 1996, p. 5). A collective navigating and negotiating ground powered by exploratory thrusts of the arts, TFY third space as Community Cultural Development casts a wide net across civic, social, and political structures intersecting with the cultural life of a community, calling what Sampson (2012) labels "collective efficacy"(p. 152) from youth through social cohesion and shared expectations for control in communal life, with "building belonging" (Woodson, 2015, p. 31) taken to be the hallmark of building the public sphere.

TFY in the Community Cultural Development framework thereforesees empowered participation of the youth in "culture as means of emancipation, not the primary end in itself" and "artists as agents of transformation" (Adams & Goldbard, 2001). The particulars of emancipatory transformation are not ipso facto curricular goals but determinable by explorations and reflections of the youth themselves through artistic mediums, not by vested interests of external agents in particular prohibitory behaviours of community members, i.e., violent extremism.

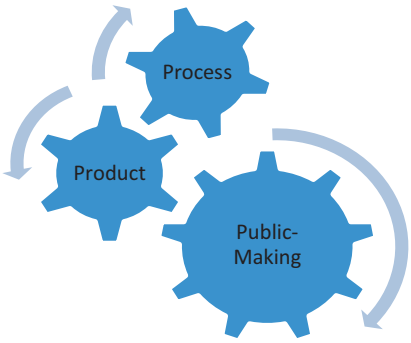

Figure 2 Intertwined fold of TFY third space practice. (Woodson, 2015)

If the cycle of process, product and public-making in TFY CCD theatre facilitation sustains continuity in communal life (Fig. 2), it has the potential to organically "weave multiple endeavors and professions into the never-ending work of building and rebuilding the social, civic, physical, economic and spiritual fabrics of communities" (Borrup, 2006, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 14).

Woodson (2015) places TFY third space at the epicentre of the evolving process of culture-building, through which the experience of shared meanings, multiple identities and existing power structures is reflectively and proactively explored by the youth via theatre to continuously expand and materialise new possibilities of living. Thus theatre, and the arts in general, are viewed to be the engine driving the evolution of youth-centred, self-empowered cultural action. What sets Woodson apart is the insistence on youth's artistic engagement as a "collective" force, not an avenue for individual development, one that takes ownership of articulating, sharing, evaluating and re-imagining community dynamics. TFY CCD offers a long-term, deeper, grounds-up approach to youth development that is not congested by unreflective top-down value impositions. This requires integration of all stakeholders as they collaborate amongst each other (Morse, 2004, p. 55).

To sum up the above, this front-running empowered stance of youth in the complex life of a community distinctly draws away from development models that treat young people as subjects to be trained in modes of being, assumed valuable from the outset, by supposedly superior entities/forces that perpetuate status quo power structures (Woodson, 2015,

pp. 11–12). It is through this lens of TFY third space as Community Cultural Development that donor-funded projects such as AeN can transform into more meaningful interventions.

With TFY third space CCD as our conceptual guide, what opportunities and challenges can donor-funded project like AeN, with pre-set goals of CVE, encounter in pursuing the goals of TFY third space?

Reflections on donor-funded theatre teaching

The AeN programme was structured as follows. In the first phase, each member organisation hired one lead trainer and one co-trainer, both of whom were assigned to schools/youth centres of one locality, to teach the AeN curriculum to two cohorts of local youth, one aged between 14–17 and the other 18–25.

Viewed through the lens of CCD TFY, the move to categorize participants based on age has inadvertent discriminatory consequences which, though mostly indiscernible amidst the administrative rigmarole of designing and executing a programme, are deeply counterproductive to project goals. Segregation based on age, carrying with it deep cultural assumptions regarding maturity and seniority, paradoxically perpetuates the hierarchical power structure that CCD TFY purports to disintegrate and replace with "explorations of power beyond … control structures most youth experience in school settings" (Woodson, 2015, p. 62). Of course, a hierarchy emerges from every group based on its emergent leadership, division of resources and objectives at hand, but pre-determined separation on none of those factors but age implicitly assigns a hierarchy that is not organically determined from empowered interactions of the individuals of the group. Instead, it implicitly affirms organizational hierarchy along assumed notions of seniority attached with age ipso facto. Even beyond the immediately relatable experience of school settings, such categorization based on age is already deeply entrenched in our cultural milieu. A CCD framework, on the other hand, intends a "more complex awareness of the circulation of power among the youth" (p. 62).

During implementation of phase 1, however, strict segregation based on age was not possible for logistical reasons. There was overlap between

the two age groups due to the limited availability of participants for the programme after school. In phase 2, therefore, total training hours were compressed from 90 to 50 hours owing to challenges faced by AeN trainers, consortium NGOs and partner schools, along with prior commitments of the participants. The burden of schoolwork, tuitions, part-time employment to support family income, domestic responsibilities (especially for females) and madrassah (religious school) engagement already made for a hectic schedule for the participants, manifesting in their struggle to attend all 90-curriculum hours with dedication and commitment. With shortened curriculum hours in phase 2, almost halved from the previous phase, the workload for participants could be adequately accommodated within their ongoing academic and personal commitments.

The trajectory of art and culture over three phases of the programme evolved in terms of the scope for personality development of beneficiaries and not just as a colourful cushion against behaviours potentially signalling violent extremism. In phase 1, a theatre company, a drama school, and an art collective conducted theatre performances and gallery exhibitions at youth centres in marginalized areas, the benefits of which could be seen in subsequent arts- and theatre-based SAPs undertaken by the participants, despite their lack of direct training. Acknowledging the innate inclination participants had for theatre and visual arts, the consortium devoted ten hours to art and culture modules in phase 2, to be developed and imparted to AeN trainers by the performers from the previous phase.

The trainers, however, encountered difficulties in delivering the specialized content of the art and culture modules. With only a fringe involvement in theatre and the arts, limited to the AeN training programme, the trainers required a deeper grounding to teach these disciplines in the context of community development with a particular focus on CVE. Therefore, for phase 3, specialized trainers for theatre, visual arts and music were hired. The first cycle of phase 3, with these three specialized modules, delivered to 35 youth groups from six districts, produced a promising engagement, manifesting in four, five, and 21 SAPs from theatre, music and visual arts respectively. Amongst the three modules, the

theatre module is being evaluated against TFY third space principles for CCD potential. In each cycle, a new cohort of beneficiary participants was enrolled from the communities.

This author was brought onboard as Theatre Trainer in phase 3. The first challenge was to draw out a curriculum that enabled participants with little to no theatre exposure to learn the basics of theatre and how, apart from its entertainment value, it could be used as a tool to transform tendencies of violent behaviours. With 35 groups (one organization's grant process was delayed, so the total of 42 groups was not available in the first cycle) to teach, each containing approximately 20 to 25 participants, sometimes even more, the learning objective was to be delivered in less than 3 hours per group at a local venue. (Venues were partner organizations of the consortium NGOs active in the locality.) Later in the term, the training session was to be followed up by mentoring sessions for those participants using theatre for their SAPs.

The theatre curriculum drew from improvisational theatre and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. From September 2019 to January 2020, this author taught the curriculum to 35 youth groups comprising over 1,000 students. The lesson plan reflected the inherent difficulty of introducing theatre novices to theatrical practice not only under extreme time pressure, but also the extreme specificity of the predetermined CVE outcome. The first half of the three-hour plan was devoted to ice-breaking, theatre warm-ups and improvisational games to build a sense of an ensemble for the ensuing work. The second half was devoted to problem-hunting from the experience of the participants through variations of Image Theatre, with the problems thus identified to be used as themes, should participants so choose, for subsequent SAPs which would, albeit loosely, address CVE and, in so doing, meet the programme's objectives.

The time constraints on participants' availability, however, contracted theatre sessions to around two hours. Issues gathered from collective imaging of problem scenarios from participants' lives included girls' struggles in their homes and community for education and independence, e.g., a girl being dissuaded by her brother from going to tuitions alone, or a girl standing up to her mother pushing her daughter to devote time to housework instead of her studies. Issues involving religion indicated

differences of opinion over ritual or consumption, e.g., disagreement over setting up lights across a shared fence with a neighbour on occasion of the Prophet's birthday, or a row with parents over listening to *Noha*, an elegiac form of Muslim minority Shiite sect, on television. Points such as these were far more common than incidents of violence, and even those incidents were more likely to be of a secular or mundane nature, such as adolescent disputes in games of cricket or football.

Issues generated from boys' imaging also included disagreements with parents, e.g., being disallowed by parents to ride motorcycles for safety reasons, or pressure to meet expectations of masculinity by fulfilling household responsibilities. There was objective identification of communal problems as well, e.g., rampant drug use in the area, from individual experiences in the community.

With the participants neither speaking nor acting radically, the problem-generation through theatre revolved around conflicts – domestic, economic, adolescent and generational – that could be expected in any young person's life. However, in the absence of CVE-related issues, the community organizations and trainers framed the youths' issues as building Community Resilience, a sister-term to CVE, to present to donors results of trainings in the field. This is an indication of the rift between the donor mindset harking back to the post 9/11 discourse and the real lived experience of the marginalized youth in developing countries fifteen years hence, calling for essential revisions of the conceptual basis of programmes such as AeN, if they are to make a long-term, deeper, more grounded impact in the lives of young people in marginalized communities.

Using image theatre to draw problems from the lives of the participants ensured that theatrical content generated was grounded in community experiences, a fundamental element of TFY third space CCD. This did not, however, prove to be the beginning of a new approach to the TFY *process*, because the focus from there on out became the presentation of SAPs before the end of the cycle. This is typical of donor-funded programmes in which the *actual* efficacy and potential of teaching methods is compromised by the need to *demonstrate* outward evidences of predetermined outcomes to donors. This meant that the groups interested in

presenting theatre-based SAPs received only two of the planned mentoring sessions before they presented their projects. Under these constraints, it was impossible for any of the groups to conduct long-term SAPs – all six of the theatre-based projects, presented by six different community centres, covering themes of interfaith harmony, the ravages of drug abuse, violence against students, street harassment, abuse of language, and thalassemia awareness, were one-day events. While a couple of other programmes had produced self-sustaining projects that survived beyond the programme cycle, theatre- and arts-based SAPs that lasted no more than a single day were able to meet the requirements of community development, even though their ephemeral nature meant they could not have long-term effects on the community.

The compressed cycle of most CVE programmes is symptomatic of the "emergency response" approach to CVE that took hold in the early 2000s, when, in the frenetic political climate that followed 9/11, marginalized communities throughout the Muslim world were thought to be potential hotbeds of terrorist activity. This run-and-gun approach, with its rapid bursts of projects, assumed a centrality and an urgency in the ascent of religious radicalism that was not borne out by subsequent research on these communities. In effect, the idea that these communities were in imminent danger of turning to violent extremism led to projects that attempted to solve a problem that did not exist, while failing to address deeper and more relevant issues that were not related to foreign policy. Furthermore, the short-lived nature of the projects did not allow for long-term impact of any kind, even within the parameters of CVE.

AeN, while more developmental, and therefore more long-term in its approach, was nevertheless designed to correspond to the academic calendar, with most of the participants being adolescents or young adults who were enrolled in school or university, and programmes under AeN were therefore built around academic schedules. The already cramped nature of these schedules meant that no cycle could extend beyond a single term, i.e., about five months. With as many as seven community organizations engaged simultaneously, this was only just enough time to cover training for all participants, let alone for the TFY process to take root in communal life. With new participants inducted at the beginning

of each cycle, participants' exposure to AeN training was limited to no more than five months, which meant the emphasis of these programmes became the delivery of CVE-related SAPs in order to meet donor requirements, rather than the holistic approach to transforming communal life that was the original aim of TFY.

Old seeds don't grow new trees

It can be seen that programmes like AeN are tied to the foreign policy interests of the governments that fund donor agencies, creating a functional relationship between the donors and participants of such programmes, in which CVE becomes both the primary goal of project planning and the sole yardstick for project evaluation, at the expense of larger possibilities of youth empowerment and community development (Woodson, 2015). There is, therefore, a lacuna in the current methodology for a counter-approach that, rather than "focus[ing] on what communities lack (or the risks they carry of violent extremism), suggests asset development as a useful lens" (Woodson, 2015, p. 52) for community-based artistic interventions.

Although AeN avowedly targeted CVE outcomes, it remained ambiguous as to the *means* and *reach* of achieving such. Each cycle was to culminate in SAPs designed by participants that, while ostensibly grounded in the critical reflections and personal experiences arising from their theatre practice, were nevertheless required to explicitly address CVE in one way or another. This overarching concern incentivized trainers, organizers, and participants to frame SAPs in CVE-related terms, and to subsume the broader developmental goals – such as self-determination, critical reflection, and collective nurturing of multiple capitals – into the narrow CVE agenda.

Such ambivalence regarding the *means* to achieve CVE outcomes in donor-funded projects is symptomatic of the fundamental policy-level vagueness surrounding the *means* to counter radical behaviours and attitudes. In the frenetic aftermath of 9/11 and subsequent to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the notion that broad-ranging development goals (which sought to reduce poverty and provide education)

would help "reduce violent extremism" (Kundani & Hayes, 2018, p. 11) captured the imagination of policy makers despite the fact that "there is no evidence to demonstrate that such a causal mechanism exists" (p. 11).

Recent research on causes of terrorism also identifies the tenuous relationship between radicalization and terrorism. John Horgan, director of the International Center for the Study of Terrorism at Pennsylvania State University, has said:

> The idea that radicalisation causes terrorism is perhaps the greatest myth alive today in terrorism research … [First], the overwhelming majority of people who hold radical beliefs do not engage in violence. And second, there is increasing evidence that people who engage in terrorism don't necessarily hold radical beliefs. (Knefel, 2013)

However, the groupthink carrying over from the 19 years since 9/11 has translated into the designing principles of development initiatives such as AeN, because the impetus behind such initiatives itself came from that line of thinking. The fact that this line of thinking has been extensively discredited by nearly two decades of research has not been sufficient to undo the founder effect of post-9/11 panic. Therefore, development initiatives and human rights praxis that should be established because they are an end in themselves become "subsumed within a counter-terrorism agenda" (Kundani & Hayes, 2018, p. 11) as can be seen in the compromised potential of TFY CCD in a donor-funded project such as AeN. Furthermore, the broader social and political contexts impacting the life of a community are sidestepped or airbrushed by donors' project designs which are informed by a simplistic model of radicalization, in which the causes of radical behaviour are located in "individual motivation and belief systems" (p. 12) rather than wider cultural and socioeconomic factors. This naturally results in the "emergency" CVE approach, with long-term developmental programmes, emphasizing self-determination and reflection in community life, supplanted by brief project cycles with predetermined outcomes.

The *reach* of TFY CCD aims beyond the parameters of donor-funded projects tethered by foreign policy interests like CVE. The TFY CCD lens

provides a counter-approach to the limitations of the risk-management approach of donor-funded CVE projects. This ambivalence can be mapped on a spectrum:

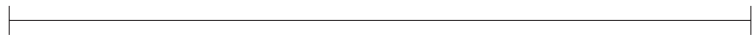

Figure 3 Spectrum of risk management and asset development

A CVE-centric programme nevertheless undergoes its own strategic evolution over its 3-year cycle. AeN was no exception. Measures to improve the curriculum for greater civic engagement – which measures included the introduction of art and culture modules – were pushed by all stakeholders, but aims of an educational and developmental bent eventually faced obstacles emerging from the enterprise's own contradictory foci, manifesting in manifold ambiguities at all levels of the operational hierarchy of the programme. The operational focus from NGOs, trainers and participants, during evaluation of each cycle, aspired toward asset development; the conceptual focus of the entire enterprise, however, remained rooted in managing the risk of countering violent extremism. While the curriculum goals aim clearly at developing attitudes and skills of active citizenry among the participants, the overriding concern of meeting the criteria of CVE caused an organizational strain – from donor to donor administration right through to recipient community organizations that assessed and appraised SAPs against a strict standard of addressing CVE. The overall drift of the enterprise thus became risk management rather than the ostensible aim, namely asset development. This author argues that these aims need not be set in opposition to one another but can only be brought into alignment if the good of the community itself is prioritized, rather than the need to meet circumscribed donor requirements.

From the lens of TFY CCD, theatre-based intervention can have a reach far beyond the parameters drawn by donor-funded projects. The use of theatre primarily as presentational evidence of community engagement undermines the creative and self-determinative potential of its participants whilst also undervaluing the developmental capability the

process of theatre affords. A single theatre session culminating in a short theatre performance does not pave the way for "multiple axes of participation"(Sen, 2006, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 69) for the youth to have the "substantive freedom to lead the lives they have reason to value" (Sen, 1999, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 68). TFY CCD recognizes the intertwined "web of relations" governing society and envisions critical navigation of "both formal publics and informal public spheres" (p. 34). With theatre contact limited to an introductory session, the importance of building on those spheres could not be explored nor reflected upon by the youth through the theatrical lens.

A theatre programme on TFY CCD principles ought to target both formal and informal public spheres; the scope of AeN, however, tilts more toward the informal sphere, whereby the programme's point of contact with the community is through community centres, welfare organizations and schools in designated localities; and that, too, not for a sustained period but only for the brief duration of the grant period. Thus, sustained reflection dissecting the matrix of formal and informal public spheres through the embodied criticality of theatre is inconceivable for participants working under the ambit of strictly defined donor-funded projects.

How to govern TFY third space potential

Under these conditions, a TFY third space initiative faces certain existential and ontological obstacles, arising from the circumscribed aims of donor-funded development projects, the limited duration of project cycles, and the lack of a long-term plan to nurture an ecosystem in which sustained theatre practice is possible.

For instance, participants willing to practice theatre regularly are not able to, because of economic, domestic, and educational pressures, and programmes such as AeN do not provide an ongoing infrastructure for them to do so. The efforts of such participants are restricted to one-time performances, which take as their themes certain social issues, commissioned by a donor.

There are, however, certain measures that can be taken that would, this author argues, make significant headway in surmounting these obstacles.

First of all, community organizations with continuing presence in their communities can augment the potential of TFY third space CCD by training participants in arts governance and dramaturgy, in addition to theatrical performance modes. These participants would then be in a position to incorporate the social and cultural phenomena of their own communities into ongoing communal theatre practice, even after the completion of the donor-funded project where they received their training. An introduction to theatre training, when paired with an awareness of social, historical, and political forces, can allow for the organic cultural development of a community, with the goals and concerns of this development arising from community members who have been trained in methods of performance and communication. This is a far more impactful strategy than one that pushes community members to enact the concerns of external donors. Rather, this vision of TFY Third Space takes as its ultimate goal a systemic overhaul of the marginalized community that is driven by a critical evolution of collective thought and behaviour, beginning with the community's youth. This is a truly progressive and long-sighted approach, in marked contrast to the closed-ended, conservative anxieties of post-9/11 projects, and, unlike those projects, the philosophy behind such an approach would engender sustained, mindful project designs, in which the welfare and development of the communities themselves would be the core consideration.

Community organizations, if trained in art administration and dramaturgy, will be in a position to devote sharpened attention to engaging the youth at their community spaces through theatre. Donor-funded projects with specific aims can, instead of overlaying the organization's operations wholesale with a new project, integrate their aims with the existing network, as the artistic governance models already in place will be able to mediate the gap between donor requirements and the given community's own needs, pressures, and limiting factors. This will allow for community organizations and donors to have a symbiotic relationship that has more balanced terms of contribution to the design and content of projects, further reinforcing the self-determination and self-governance that are the long-term goal of these initiatives.

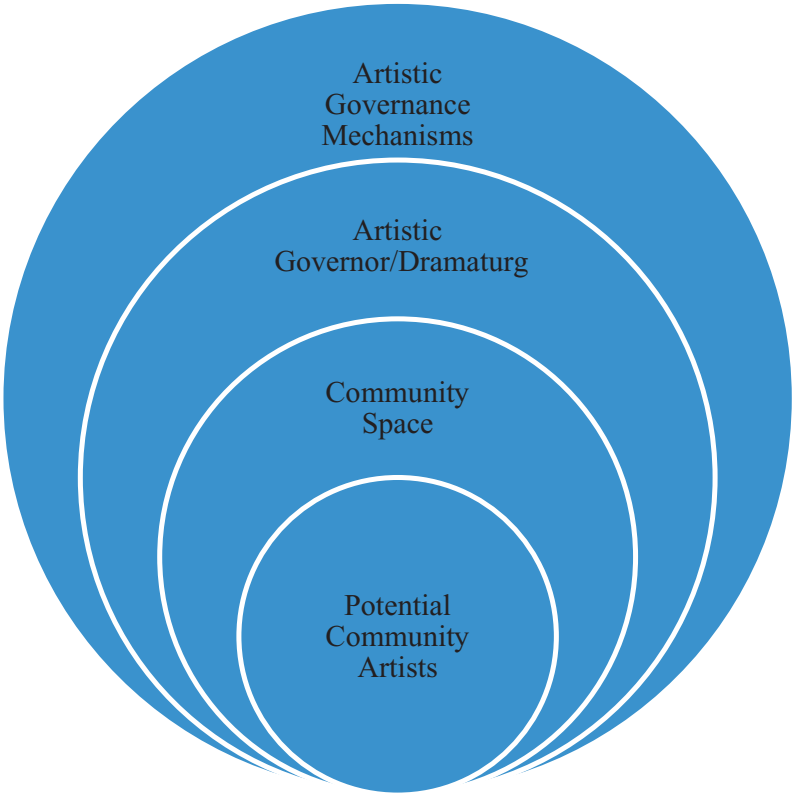

Figure 4 The fold of artistic governance in community theatre practice

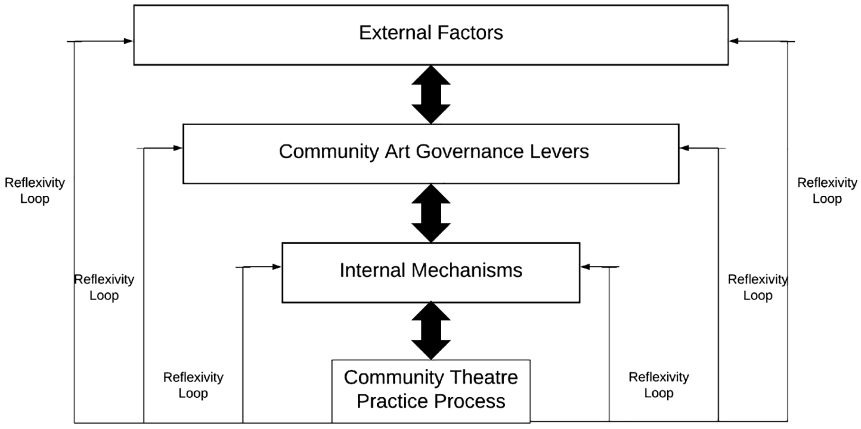

Figure 5 Framework for community art governance informing community theatre practice. (Turbide & Laurin, 2014)

Art governance in the community, dually informed by external factors and internal constraints, and fed by reflexivity at every stage, can inform a theatre curriculum that goes beyond the conventional welfare game of building awareness of specific issues defined by donors or governments. The "beyond" is the "in-between" space of TFY third space where, provided a continuous process of artistic governance, young people can collectively navigate ways of living for themselves and their communities.

Future research

For community organizations in agreement with the TFY third space CCD vision, the artistic governance model requires bespoke acknowledgment of internal and external factors influencing their socio-cultural landscape. Further research can investigate donors' interests and reservations in investing in projects with TFY third space ethos as primary goal which can helpfully inform art governance mechanisms, including human and artistic development needs at the level of the community.

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CHAPTER 6

What Role can Physical Theatre Play in Reimagining Democracy in South Africa?

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Abstract: Mamela Nyamza's body of work is an act of performance activism that reflects and speaks back to society, making critical commentary on the slippages, gaps and moments of silencing that persist in post-apartheid democratic South Africa. This paper makes use of Mamela Nyamza's *19-Born-76-Rebels* (2014) and *Pest Control* (2020) as key physical theatre case studies that provide images of recalling and remembering in order to (re)build and (re)imagine democracy in South Africa. The paper, through employing Nyamza's productions, discusses the ways in which physical theatre engages with the consolidation of democracy through dealing with complex questions about philosophies of identity, representation and expression – that are perceived politically, socially, culturally and economically in South Africa.

Keywords: democracy, rainbow nation, social cohesion, physical theatre, Mamela Nyamza

Introduction

Narratives on women's contribution to democracy in South Africa is often forgotten. Women's involvement in challenging the apartheid government and its laws is often reserved for celebration once a year. On 9 August, otherwise known as National Women's Day, the nation pays tribute to women who, in 1956, marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the country's pass laws. This marginalisation

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of women in South African history holds an equally disturbing seat in South African theatre that ignores and/or misrepresents the presence and contribution of women towards the liberation of South Africa, including their contribution to the growth of theatre in South Africa. Temple Hauptfliesch states that, during apartheid, "women operated mainly in the private and commercial world, for … the state funded theatre organisations have hardly ever allowed women into prominent positions of power" (Hauptfliesch, 1999, p. 55). The argument that Temple presents is supported by Yvette Hutchison who elaborates that theatres during apartheid functioned to further the socio-political agenda and stories of men who protested against apartheid (2018, p. 356). She goes on to state that "the plays of this period (apartheid) tended to explore male experiences of apartheid in mines, gangs, or prisons, with women being represented *in absentia*, through male memory or fantasy narratives" (Hutchison, 2018, p. 356). This refusal to acknowledge the power and contrition of women during apartheid, and in South African theatre, perpetuates systems of erasure, exclusion, silencing and oppression which mirror those that existed during the apartheid regime.

Many South African female visual, dance and theatre artists such as Sethembile Msezane, Zanele Muholi, Nelisiwe Xaba and Mamela Nyamza, to name a few, challenge the status quo of contemporary South Africa. In spotlighting one, Mamela Nyamza engages in projects that seek to interrogate issues of identity and positionality within democratic South Africa. Nyamza can be said to produce works that seek to ask: what does it mean to be South African, and a Black[1] female, in democratic South Africa? It has to be said the whole question of what it means to be South African in post-apartheid South Africa is one that is in constant flux. It is a question that seeks to understand democracy and to define it in a manner that shelters all who live in the country.

1 Although the artists mentioned above are categorized as Black in South Africa, I use the term 'Black' as an inclusive agent for all women of colour in South Africa. That said, it should be noted that there are vulnerabilities that we ought to be aware of when making use of such terminology to refer to all women of colour within the South African context. See Erasmus, Z. (2000). Some kind of White, some kind of Black: Living in moments of entanglement in South Africa and its academy. In B. Hesse (Ed.), *Un/settled multiculturalism: Diasporas, entanglements, transcriptions* (pp. 185–207). Zed Books.

What has become apparent is that, in attempting to (re)define and (re) imagine the South African democratic nation, there have been numerous attempts at consolidating democracy. The consolidation of democracy raises complex questions about philosophies of identity, representation and expression – that are perceived politically, socially, culturally and economically. Many South Africans find themselves conflicted with the formal structures, laws and processes that govern democratic South Africa with their personal interpretations and responses to the formal structures. This in turn causes difficulties in many South Africans to recognise and locate their identity in post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, the sensitivity to recognise a democratic identity is encountered with the need to seek a sense of being and belonging through the "doing of democracy" that realises itself in participation and representation.

Democracy in South Africa functions in two ways, namely first in post-apartheid South Africa, and secondly in post-1994 South Africa. In both these ways, democracy is defined as a system of government that celebrates difference and national unity. This celebration of difference is particularly understood through the eyes of the law that recognises different cultures, races, sexes, sexual orientations, religions and ethnicities equally – as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Wonke Buqa equally reiterates this idea as he states that "democracy functions as a system that accommodates difference and favours tolerance" (Buqa, 2015, p. 7). Key to the definition and framing of democracy in South Africa is interrogating whether there has been success in reconciling the tensions of its colonial past, in order to re-imagine new ways of pursuing nation building.

The paper makes use of a secondary research methodology which occupies itself with already existing data and literature. It takes as its point of departure the investigation of "what is already known and what remains to be learned about the topic through reviewing secondary sources" (Johnston, 2014, p. 620) in order to analyse, interpret and formulate arguments and critiques. Consequently, the paper makes use of three pillars in respect to problematising the ways in which democratic South Africa is spoken about. The three pillars discuss:

1. Physical theatre as a theatrical form of embodied resistance (Sichel, 2018) that makes use of strategies of "intimate revolts" (Finestone-Praeg, 2010);
2. The on-going project of "decolonising the mind" (wa Thiong'o, 1986) as a means of deconstructing thinking, language and values that perpetuate neo-colonial systems of oppression and hegemonic social and political control, and finally;
3. A critical engagement of performances by Mamela Nyamza which reinforce the notion that "the body is a site of social, political and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution" (Grosz, 1994, p. 23), a notion which is central in creating discourse that directly speaks to democratic South Africa and theatre's ability to comment on it.

The crafting of a post-apartheid democratic society is positioned through the diverse expression of the previously marginalised and repressed. It is to proclaim that "a democracy is consolidated not according to the number of free and fair elections or alternations in office, but according to the ideas and behaviours that individuals [and institutions] reveal [and uphold] in those processes" (Garcia-Ravero et al., 2002, p. 166). The proclamations of free participation, organisation, access and distribution are among some of the affirmations that the South African democratic state prides itself in. However, the design of the all-inclusive and consolidated society continues to be challenged and baffled by how it defines and materialises what it posits to uphold due to the deferred dreams outlined in its democratic pronouncements.

Mamela Nyamza in conversation with democracy

The emergence of physical theatre, coupled with a new generation of artists that are Black and female, preoccupies itself with projects that overtly situate their race, sex and gender into the politics of contemporary democratic South Africa. Drawing inspiration from the new generation of physical theatre artists, this paper pays particular attention to the works

of Mamela Nyamza, who, through employing dance and physical theatre, uses her body as a site of knowledge that serves the intention to challenge marginalised and silenced histories from the past. Nyamza's theatrical works overtly comment on and critique democracy in order to confront issues that adopt the agenda of recovery, (re)imagination and rebuilding the post-apartheid South African state. Her work involves itself in the embodied practices of the "doing of democracy" through interrogating the discrepancies inherited from apartheid that continue to seep their way through the cracks of democratic South Africa.

Mamela Nyamza is a South African choreographer, performer, and arts activist who was born in 1976 in the township of Gugulethu, Cape Town. The significance of the year Nyamza was born, and her work in 2013 titled *19-Born-76-Rebel*, reflect the 1976 Soweto uprising riots which took place on 16 June, led by students who were protesting for better education, equitable resources and infrastructure to learning, and the refusal to be taught in Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. As a young child Mamela was introduced to formal training in ballet from Zama School of Dance in Gugulethu. She continued her dance training career by pursuing a National Diploma in ballet at Pretoria Technikon in 1994, then went on to pursue a one-year fellowship in 1998 with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Centre.[2] Her upbringing in a township space, together with her race, gender, sex and sexual orientation, have become significant points of discourse in her theatrical conversations that present insights into the oppression that many women – many Black women, and many Black queer women – in South Africa experience in democratic South Africa. The battle that she experiences as a Black queer female has grounded many of her productions which include *Hatched* (2009), *Shift* (2011), and *Isingqala* (2011). Additionally, her works critique the lack of attention and equitable opportunities for Black people, specifically Black females, in South African institutions of employment and theatrical spaces, as evidenced in her productions *Rock to the Core* (2017), *De-apart-hate* (2017) and *Pest Control* (2020) which confront the prejudices that Black women

2 *I Am Woman – Leap of Faith*, – Episode 2, Season 2 – Mamela Nyamza, SABC (2013). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkeP3aCoEwE (Accessed: 13 February 2021).

experience economically at places of work that disempower them in the same way the apartheid system did.

The legitimacy of South Africa as a democratic state should be questioned and interrogated in the light of the quality of what it promised to uphold through the values of equality, political participation, free speech, expression without fear or repression, cultural consolidation, access, and development of the state. However, it seems to be confronted with some challenges in bridging the formal structures of democracy as written in law with the realisation and materialisation of the democracy as observed in society. In taking into consideration the challenges that the country continues to face in consolidating its democracy, one needs to ask: does South Africa fully engage and confront the political, social and cultural challenges that it inherited from the apartheid regime in order to recover, (re)imagine, and (re)build itself?

The aftermath of South Africa's colonial apartheid regime primarily left many South Africans with a sense of damage that manifested itself emotionally and psychologically. In addition, it presented reminders of a set of complex systems and constructs that needed to be reimagined in order to build and construct a democratic nation that is free and equal for all. Many South Africans found themselves in positions of emancipatory reflexivity where they had to rethink, negotiate and construct socio-cultural, political and economic ideologies that create meaning for themselves and their community(ies).

In this paper, I ask what of the past remains in the present and can be utilised in physical theatre performances to explore and provide a critical questioning and reflexive challenge to democracy in South Africa? While Mamela Nyamza has a rich body of work that is relevant in discussing physical theatre and democracy, this paper places a particular focus on two of her works – *19-Born-76-Rebels* (2014),[3] and *Pest Control*

3 *19-Born-76-Rebels* has been commissioned and performed multiple times. It debuted in June 2013 at Young Blood (Cape Town), and was commissioned in July 2013 for the Festival d'Avignon in France. It continued to be performed in March 2014 at the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts' Infecting the City Festival (Cape Town), then continued in June 2014 at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival (Makhanda). The paper makes reference of the June 2014 performance watched by the author at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.

(2020)[4] – as key physical theatre texts that provide images of recalling in order to speak to, and against, processes of (re)building democracy in South Africa. In addition, the paper examines the intersecting relationships between expression and interpretation, as embodied and performed in physical theatre performances. Important in the research is the recognition that both democracy and theatre function as continuing processes of interrogation (of the self and the other) through an active embodied practice. It is this discipline of theatre, as embodied practice and in physical theatre performance, that open up avenues for considering and mapping transformations, shifts, and developments towards imagining and building democracy in South Africa.

Democracy as nation building and social cohesion

The framework that democracy functions under in South Africa, which is of interest in this paper, are the pillars of nation building and social cohesion. These pillars have manifested themselves through the model of "the rainbow nation" as articulated and endorsed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former South African Presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has been engaged in processes of national building and social cohesion which aim to (re) build the country from the traumatic legacy established by its history. Mamela Nyamza's work positions her as an artist who employs physical theatre as a form through which she engages with intersecting lenses of history and post colonialism in order to speak back to systems of marginalisation, silencing, misrepresentation and denied presence in narratives of belonging within processes of nation building (McEwan, 2003, p. 740).

The Department of Arts and Culture highlights the difficulties in consolidating the "divide attached to race, class, space and gender" (Department of Arts and Culture, 2020) which continue to persist post-apartheid.

4 A production performed during the 2020 virtual National Arts Festival due to Corona Virus Covid-19 regulations. The production was triggered by Mamela's dismissal from her role as the Deputy Artistic Director of the State Theatre in 2019.

In a letter written on 4 February 2020, the Department states that the project of social cohesion positions itself as a strategy aimed at promoting national unity through "advancing constitutional democracy, human rights and equality; promoting non-racialism, non-sexism, equality and human solidarity; building unity amongst South Africans, as well as the region, continent and the international community; and encouraging healing of individuals and communities" (Department of Arts and Culture, 2020).[5]

Nation building and social cohesion seek to promote democracy through the lens of national, political, social and cultural identity(ies) for South Africa and its citizens. As stated by Mathebe (2002, p. 139) "national reconciliation and the idea of the rainbow nation were generally regarded as the main pillars of social cohesion and integration." The model of the rainbow nation, including national reconciliation, functions as political and social symbols of unity. They position themselves as binding agents for a diverse country that seeks to engender a move away from racial, cultural and political segregation.

Theatre, dance and physical theatre have a history of functioning as artistic forms of cultural and political activism towards the same goals held within systems of social cohesion and nation building in South Africa. In her book entitled *Body politics: Fingerprinting South African contemporary dance* Adrienne C. Sichel states that "South African activist artists of the 1980s and 1990s, with many dancers and dance professionals among them, helped fight for democracy and the establishment of a cultural policy and legislated institutions such as the National Arts Council and the Department of Arts and Culture" (Sichel, 2018, p. 24), which both fund the arts in South Africa and advocate for social cohesion and nation building – through the arts. The history of physical theatre in narratives of resistance and change is evident in its ability to continually challenge tradition through experimentation. Physical Theatre insists on "experimenting with traditional narrative structures and deconstructing known dance and theatrical codes and languages … to question conventional

5 Department of Arts and Culture (4 February 2020). Social Cohesion and Nation Building compact. [online] https://www.gov.za/SocialCohesion# (Accessed: 14 February 2021).

perceptions of what dance or theatre might be" (Finestone-Praeg, 2010, p. 30). The importance of South African physical theatre in deconstructing traditional modes of storytelling is in its ability to innovatively tap into the theatrical aesthetics of personal and historical memory to provide biographic and autobiographic embodied narratives that position the body as a site for resistance against the status quo (Sichel, 2018, p. 56).

The key question to ask is: how does physical theatre performance enter into and position itself in spaces that historically did not allow for access to, or allowed for only a restricted access to, social and political discourses about systems of power? The response to this fundamental question is that physical theatre in South Africa positions the arts as a medium for social, cultural and political engagement specific to the South African context. Physical Theatre functions as a medium that artistically and critically questions the micro and macro aggressions embedded within democratic South Africa through remembering narratives that have been silenced or misrepresented.

19-Born-76-Rebels is one such production that evokes memory to creatively narrate and engage with the Soweto Riots of 1976 which were motivated by the inadequate and unequal education of Black pupils in South Africa. In addition, the production provides an insight into the negotiations that took place between the African National Congress (ANC) and the apartheid National Party (NP) to shape the journey towards equality (specific to education of all pupils in the country) and democracy in South Africa. The performance is predominantly physical theatre-based with very few words and dialogue. It makes use of movement, embodiment and physical gestural performativity to convey the narrative and plot.

The evocation of memory in South African Theatre functions as an important tool used to articulate narratives of violence and trauma in order to "offer a glimpse of the ways South African drama [and physical theatre] negotiates the experiences of trauma in the twenty-first century" (Maufort, 2015, p. 242). It is this ability to collect and re-collect memories of trauma embedded in the body that provides theatre-makers with the ability to complicate and nuance South African experiences of identity and pain through artistic mediums of expression, as evident in *Karoo*

Moose (2007) by Lara Foot and *I Stand Corrected* (2012) by Mamela Nyamza and Mojisola Adebayo, both of which explore sexual abuse, violence and rape in South Africa. Jay Pather, a South African choreographer, in speaking about the body, trauma, physical theatre and democracy, states that "as a South African choreographer, it has not been difficult for me to draw connections between a social and political context and such formal choreographic principles as proxemics, kinesics, cellular memory and sentience, both during and after apartheid" (Pather, 2015, p. 317). Important in Pather's statement is the recognition that apartheid sits firmly in moments of trauma – within and outside the body – that reveal themselves in South Africa – both in the body and in society. Mamela Nyamza's work identifies and interrogates these moments of trauma that show themselves through violence that perpetuates systems of nuanced racism, sexism, homophobia, abuse and inequitable access to education and resources.

Postcolonial and decolonial perspectives in South African physical theatre

The call to provide new ways of thinking and living that unshackle South Africans from colonial history and racist culture is a difficult project since this history and this culture continue to find ways of breathing in post-apartheid South Africa. It cannot be denied that democratic South Africa struggles to resolve the colonial legacies that have been left behind by the apartheid regime, and which somehow find themselves surviving in institutions of governance, employment, education and social interactions. Gilbert and Tompkins argue that postcolonialism provides an ability to interrogate and question colonial pasts, and propose critical ways in which the present can interact with the past in order to build a democratic nation. They state that "the notion of the postcolonial is endlessly differentiated because it positions the artist and the reader/spectator in changing the structures of power, empire and national formation" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1998, p. 384). Postcolonialism is political in its ability to create a platform that acts to interrogate the hegemony that underlies colonial representations. It is said to be "an engagement with and contestation of

colonialism's discourse, power structures, and social hierarchies" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1998, p. 2). As such it addresses reactions to colonialism in a context that is politically and historically motivated, and extends to contexts that are not necessarily determined by temporal constraints.

The project to dismantle the inequalities that are prevalent within South Africa calls for a united front that makes use of both postcolonial thinking and the project of decolonisation so as to redefine and restructure institutional cultures in democratic South Africa. Mbembe notes that "'decolonisation' is a project of 're-cantering'. It is about rejecting the assumption that the modern West is the central root of Africa's consciousness and cultural heritage. It is about rejecting the notion that Africa is merely an extension of the West" (Mbembe, 2015, p. 16). The argument that Mbembe presents marries well with the line of thinking expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, whose project concerns itself with Africans engaging in processes of "decolonising the mind" (wa Thiong'o, 1986) in order to reassert themselves within their society(ies). Ngũgĩ[6] states that the most important aspect of colonialism was the "domination [of] the mental universe of the colonised, the control through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relation to the world" (wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 17). While the project of decolonisation means different things to different people, one can gather, from Ngugi, that it is an act of freeing Africans from the residual effects of colonialism on their cultures that negatively affects their ways of thinking and institutional cultures. To state this differently, "decolonisation … is not merely (or indeed primarily) an *event* that took place when and where formal colonial rule came to an end, but rather a *process* of challenging the cultural and epistemic legacies of colonialism in broader fields of history, aesthetics and culture" (Andersen, 2018, p. 1).

In talking about the performing body on stage, particularly within the postcolonial context, Gilbert and Tompkins state that:

6 Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born James Ngũgĩ. Ngũgĩ's name is not in the western form of last name, first name, because neither Ngũgĩ nor wa Thiong'o is his "last name" in the sense that is used in the west. He returned to the traditional Gikuyi form of his name, which roughly means Ngũgĩ son of Thiong'o, and is referred to on his own web site as Ngũgĩ. [online] http://www.librarything.com/author/thiongongugiwa (Accessed: 29 March 2021).

> In the theatre, the actor's body is the major physical symbol; it is distinguished from other such symbols by its capacity to offer a multifarious complex of meanings. The body signifies through both its appearance and its actions. As well as indicating such categories as race and gender, the performing body can also express place and narrative through skilful mime and/or movement. (1998, p. 203)

In saying this, Gilbert and Tompkins speak to the idea that the body is a site of knowledge-power that holds many signifiers about its history and culture, and as such the performing body can be seen as a site of resistance that can find alternative ways of self-representation. This idea is supported by Terese Migraine-George in *African Women and Representation: From Performance to Politics* (2008); she draws parallels to the dynamic role of African women playwrights and performers to speak in spaces in which they previously did not have an opportunity to speak about their politics (Migraine-George, 2008, p. 8). Migraine-George's discussion is important as it bring into the conversation works by artists such as Lara Foot with *Tshepang* (2004) and *Karoo Moose* (2009), Chuma Sopotela with *Inkuku ibeke Iqanda* (2016), Nelisiwe Xaba's *They Look At Me and This Is All They Think* (2011), and Mamela Nyamza's *19-Born-17-Rebel* (2014). These works by these Black female artists serve as a tool for physical and symbolic presence that supplies a voice to the many silenced and misrepresented narratives of many other women within democratic South Africa. In support of this, as Jeanie Forte observes, "one crucial aspect of contemporary feminism is the expression of pain, the pain of the female body in patriarchal culture" (Forte, 1992, p. 252). This is because the body, and her body, in its interrogation of the status quo of social and political moments, becomes political. It authors narratives that mirror society in order to allow audiences to reflect on possibilities for change and transformation.

The conversation between postcolonialism and decolonising the mind has recently also been accentuated through the #RhodesMustFall movement which began in 2015 with protests by students at the University of Cape Town. These protests demanded a shift and restricting of the education in higher institutions of learning with a call to decolonise the curriculum into an inclusive curriculum that dismantles the hegemony

of Western knowledge systems. In addition to this, the movement and protest called for three things to be decolonised:

> First, changing or removing iconography, monuments and other material legacies of colonialism in and around the universities, notably the statues of the British imperialist and colonial politician Cecil John Rhodes (1953–1902); second, a call for more Black South African academics (in the case of UCT) and more racial diversity (in the case of Oxford); and third, the inclusion of more non-Western authors, approaches and topics in order to decolonize curricula and allow a broader representation of epistemologies. (Knudsen & Andersen, 2018, cited in Andersen, 2018, p. 2)

The #RhodesMustFall movement served as an important process towards decolonisation and postcolonial approaches to thinking, a process which was captured, documented and embodied by Sethembile Msezane. Her performance art and live sculptures document and speak back to the erasure of South African women in South African history.[7] Similarly, this act of documentation and critiquing is evident in Nyamza's work *19-Born-76-Rebel* which tackled issues of race, class, and social development in South Africa – specific to the education system within the status quo.

Historically – within institutions of higher education and faculties of dance and movement training – the practice of movement studies and physical performance has been perceived as meaningful curriculum when solely approached through the codified forms supplied and taught within Western Discourse dance canons. This is to say that, for many years, institutions of higher education considered dance forms such as ballet, contemporary dance, and modern dance as acceptable forms to teach because of the history – both written and codified – that they hold. The popularisation of Western dance forms – in theory and practice, within institutions of higher education – has remained largely unchallenged because the academy has failed to see emergent ways of knowledge production as valid epistemologies and ontologies. In addition, institutions of higher education seem to harbour a reluctance (within contemporary

7 Sethembile Msezane, *Living sculptures that stand for history's truth,* TEDGlobal, 2017 https://www.ted.com/talks/sethembile_msezane_living_sculptures_that_stand_for_history_s_truths (Accessed: 14 February 2021).

democratic South Africa) in relation to the changing and transforming demographics of the student population whose ways of knowing, of being, and of becoming need to be equally considered, in addition to those that are already established within the academy. The challenge, therefore, presented to institutions of higher education by students follows similar trajectories to Mbembe's postcolonial and wa Thiong'o's decolonising the mind projects.

19-Born-76-Rebels remains relevant even in contemporary South African education as many institutions seek to explore ways of decolonialising the education system in order to make it equal and all-inclusive. This has been evident in the calls to transformation prompted by the #FeesMustFall Movement which, in many ways, echoes the dialogue and discourse that Nyamza and Sopotela reveal in *19-Born-76-Rebels* as they read a passage in the book in Afrikaans and commence to tell the audience about where they come from in Afrikaans – which was the medium of instruction for teaching and learning during apartheid. In addition, the production echoes areas of inequality to educational prosperity and access – much in the same way as the #FeesMustFall Movement did – as the performers reveal to the audience the reality of apartheid government spending on education per child in 1982, with a Black child receiving R146 while a white child received R1 211.

Important to note in the works by South African physical theatre artists is questioning "when, or in which moment, a movement becomes political" (Foellmer, 2016, p. 58). The notion of movement being political in physical theatre is aligned to the politics of body which places the performing body has a site of knowledge and socio-political and cultural inscriptions that are layer the body, and, subsequently, to the narratives that it performs. The body being situated means that it is inscribed with narratives about the past and the present, about history and culture, about struggle and triumph that can only be known through embodied practice. Such performativity can be observed and disseminated through physical theatre that allows for the self-exploration to challenge the institutional systems and constructs. The body in postcolonial theatre, through the use of the discipline of physical theatre, demands a degree of engagement that, in contrast, cannot be achieved in text-based theatre.

The (re)imagining of language and dismantling the hegemony of language – both in the language spoken in traditional theatre and in the physical language of embodied performances – serves as a fundamental process towards decolonisation. For Ngugi, decolonising the mind goes beyond challenging the colonial structures that remain in Africa, but is additionally embodied in the act of embracing indigenous knowledge systems, languages and writings (wa Thiong'o, 1986). In speaking about Ngugi's work, Casper Andersen notes that "the colonised mind had to be decolonised. For Ngugi this meant giving up the language of the coloniser in his own writings and a struggle to change an educational system that gave precedence to Western traditions at the expense of all others" (Andersen, 2018, p. 4). In considering physical theatre and the works of Mamela Nyamza, "giving up the language of the coloniser" functioned as a process of disarming the coloniser's language as important in two ways: first, it is observed in the ways Nyamza challenges the hegemony of dance language through overtly moving against ballet, the formal dance training that she received, as the predominant physical and dance form of use in her works. Her productions explore a movement language that makes use of mime, physical theatre motifs, and traditional and indigenous dance forms in collaboration with ballet, allowing them to co-exist uniformly without one being dominant over the other. Secondly, Mamela Nyamza subverts narratives of power and hegemony through refusing silence, and to be silenced, as a strategy of the oppressed to counter the oppressor. This is made evident in her production *Pest Control* (2020) which premiered during a screening at the virtual National Arts Festival (vNAF) in 2020 as an act of resistance against her oppressor – her former employer, the South African State Theatre.

Adam Jarowski is quoted as saying "silence is oppressive when it is characteristic of a dominated group, and when the group is not allowed to break its silence by its own choice or by means of any media controlled by the power group" (Jarowski, 1988, cited in Houston & Kramarae, 1991, p. 388). *Pest Control* is a work that refuses to be dominated and to be silenced. It is a production that overtly and loudly speaks up against the injustices of Black female exclusion in places of employment and the lack of transformation in such spaces. Similarly to her work *Rock to the Core*

(2017) the production serves as a protest to gain access into spaces where Black women are denied entry, even in democratic South Africa. Nyamza is quoted as saying:

> It must be emphasised that the protest had nothing to do with us wanting to get awards for ourselves, but rather, had everything to do with equal acknowledgement and access to mainstream theatres, and recognition of all Black artists, whether as performer or director. (City Vision, 2017)

Pest Control is a production that seeks to find a language to express the dissatisfaction with Nyamza's previous employer, the South African State Theatre, which dismissed her in 2019 following a speech by Nyamza in Cape Town in 2018 which was about the lack of access, transformation and equality in the arts – particularly with regard to the lack of Black artists' productions being promoted during the Artscape Dance Umbrella Africa festival. The production amplifies the politics and activism connected with the whole issue of the employment of female employees within democratic South Africa through an autobiographical telling and physical embodiment of Nyamza's dismissal from the South African State Theatre. The production invites the audience into the CCMA hearings and arbitration proceedings that adjudicated her dismissal from the Theatre – everything is explored through texts and audio recordings of the arbitration process. This is further amplified by her choice in costuming, as she is dressed in the attire of a woman in fencing gear holding both a fencing sword and megaphone. The production, which is a screen dance film (due to the social distancing regulations and restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic), illuminates the volatile state of female representation in the workplace and the spirit of transformation as supposedly endorsed within contemporary democratic South Africa.

Pest Control functions as a form of protest dance – through the medium of film – that highlights the gross shenanigans within the workplace that fail to provide justice to female employees. The production alludes to the lack of transformation in employment equality that affects women in the arts and other sectors of the economy, which disenfranchise their ability to grow and develop within their places of employment. During the performance Nyamza resists and protests this lack of

inclusion through a repetitive chanting in IsiXhosa as she says "Rhaaa! Phuuu! Haay!" which are expressions of disgust and exasperation at the system within the workplace that is located within contemporary South African democracy. During the performance she includes a recording of a speech she gave in Cape Town citing the lack of equal representation for artists – and artists of colour – to ensure that their work is visible and accessible to audiences in festivals and theatre venues that are historically white and colonial in nature.

Both *19-Born-76-Rebels* and *Pest Control* make use of physical theatre to create, question, critique, and story narratives that continue to persist in contemporary democratic South Africa. They allow for artists to position themselves as instruments for disseminating information about social, cultural, and political engagement specific within the South African context. Physical theatre, as evident in the works of Mamela Nyamza, provides platforms and artistic mediums of negotiating identity, being and belonging in contemporary South Africa. It is through the discipline of physical theatre that artists like Nyamza are provided with the platform and ability to question and interrogate the ways in which they have experienced and engaged with democracy beyond the nostalgia of post-apartheid and post-1994. At the heart of both productions is the strong challenge that Nyamza presents to the pillars of free speech, equality, and access as entrenched in the Constitution.

Janine Lewis notes that Fleishman suggests that for most people making theatre in South Africa the word alone is insufficient to portray or explain the full complexity of the reality they face (Lewis, 2010, p. 175). This is to say that in postcolonial theatre the art and discipline of physical theatre allows for the live to function as a means of communication that provides information that can be meaningful – both to the performer and the audience. As such, the body allows for points of embodied reference that cannot otherwise be perceived. This is a key idea in Merleau-Ponty's writing (as quoted in Cavallaro, 1998, p. 88):

> The body is primary a way of being in the world. It is a form of lived experiences which is fluid and ever-shifting. And it is also a way of interacting with one's environment, of shaping it and being shaped by it.

This notion of the body functioning as a vessel of lived experiences entails that it has the ability to transmit and disseminate information, through physical theatre performance, that carries the body's discourses and value systems – as experienced and lived within society – which assist in formulating narratives on political developments – for example, on ways of building democracy in South Africa.

The self-representation of the body, through physical theatre, functions as a political tool that is central in strategising considerations of ways to create work while challenging the status quo. This notion is supported by the notion that the narratives are inscribed within the body, and as such allow for a postcolonial approach to theatre that challenges the dominance and hegemony as experienced and lived in daily lives.

Conclusion

Jolley and Bernard, cited in Buqa (2015, p. 1) state that "ubuntu became one of the key concepts of the new democratic South Africa which inspired people of different races to embrace one another after apartheid." The concept of ubuntu encouraged a blind belief in an imagined multicultural country experiencing the enforcement of national reconciliation and cultural integration, but that did not adequately tackle the social, economic and political implications inherited from the apartheid regime.

The building of a national identity, as positioned through the rainbow nation, prioritised the acknowledgement of differences within multicultural South Africa over the understanding of these differences. The idea of the rainbow nation is that it functions as a space of tolerance of the various races and cultures in the country through the understanding that "the rainbow is incomplete without each of the colours, but none of the colours or strands is dominant over the other" (McAllister, 1996, p. 12). It positioned itself as a system of belief that encouraged the marketability of equality, representation, tolerance, and co-existence.

In his reflection on democracy and the rainbow nation Adam Habib (1997, p. 16) warns that:

> the rainbow metaphor, by only focusing on race variables, is thus theoretically misleading … Very little, if any, attention is paid to the socio-economic and other variables that will impact on democratic consolidation in South Africa.

Important in Habib's writing is the recognition that there are fundamental omissions in the rainbow nation that produces incomplete realisations and materialisations of social, cultural and political empowerment to the pillars of equality, representation, and co-existence entrenched by the Constitution. The building of democracy in South Africa calls for a critical engagement with formal, structural, and institutional systems of power that converse with issues of – apart from the established social, racial and cultural differences that are said to live in harmony – economic stability, class, gender, sex and sexuality, sexual orientation, authority, and many other variables that make up a stable democratic state.

Both *19-Born-76-Rebels* and *Pest Control* make use of physical theatre to create, question, critique, and story narratives that continue to persist in contemporary democratic South Africa. As already noted, the discipline of physical theatre affords artists like Nyamza the framework to make strong statements about the society around them. It allow for artists to position themselves as instruments for disseminating information about social, cultural, and political engagement specific to the South African context.

Theatre and performance are rarely considered as avenues for exploring political and social discourse in South Africa. However, what becomes clear, particularly in works such as Nyamza's, is that theatre, specifically physical theatre, allows for the body to speak and present the fundamental contradictions and complex demands of a democratic state. Her work opens up channels for engaging with the pain of living in South Africa – a pain that is translatable to the issues of race, class, gender, and sex. The utilisation of physical theatre allows for a visual and visceral representation of the loopholes that are within the South African democratic state. It allows for the body to politicise sentiments that hold historical residues from the past – economically, socially, politically and culturally. In so doing, physical theatre allows for an active and visual engagement with the fractured democratic state and can generate conversations, discourse, and dialogue about the possible arrangements that can be made

to mobilise a conscious activation of democracy as an active and process towards transformation.

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CHAPTER 7

Creating Democratic Spaces Through Theatre: The Case of *Speak Out*!

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Abstract: A few years into Zimbabwe's independence, there were disturbances in the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces, resulting in the massacre of about 20,000 unarmed civilians in what has become known as the Gukurahundi. The atrocities ended with the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. The government has, however, refused any culpability in the matter and has muted dialogue around the issue. To explore ways of speaking about the Gukurahundi issue and of aiding the grieving process for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi, I worked with a group of young people to devise and stage theatre on this emotive subject. This chapter reports and reflects on the activities involved in devising and staging *Speak Out!* phase one and phase two plays. It also identifies and discusses challenges and opportunities that lie in using theatre to create democratic spaces within silencing and oppressive structures. The chapter is framed within decoloniality theory as envisioned by Walter Mignolo. I argue that devised theatre is rich with potential to create democratic spaces that can give a platform for telling stories of pain and suffering when the mainstream media and channels are closed for such. I observe that techniques such as improvisation, storytelling and use of songs, when deployed during the devising process, assisted in creating a social and aesthetic space to speak about the Gukurahundi issues, creating a potential for helping those who are grieving.

Keywords: devised theatre, grieving, Gukurahundi, *Speak Out!*

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Introduction

As part of my PhD research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in 2019, I worked with young people from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe to devise and perform theatre on the subject of the Gukurahundi genocide that took place from 1983 to 1987 in Zimbabwe (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace [CCJP], 1997). Devised theatre can be simply defined as an original production, generated by a creative collective working process (Felseghi, 2017; Oddey, 1994; Perry, 2011; Syssoyeva & Proudfit, 2016). Participants were part of the second-generation victims of the Gukurahundi. Phase one consisted of devising and staging the first play, which was staged in Nkulumane, Bulawayo. The second and last phase consisted of reworking the phase one play and then staging it at Hope Centre, Bulawayo Central Business District. Both performances were followed by post-performance discussions.

This paper reports and reflects on the processes that were followed in devising and staging the plays. It identifies and discusses challenges and opportunities that lie in using theatre to create democratic spaces within silencing and oppressive structures. I argue that devised theatre is rich with potential to create democratic spaces that can give a platform for telling stories of pain and suffering when mainstream media and channels are closed for such. The overarching question of this study is to inquire into how devised theatre, through the creation process, staging and post-performance discussions, can provide an alternative democratic space to the second-generation victims of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe to process and reflect on their stories of pain and suffering in order to manoeuvre past this pain and face the future positively?

Theatre can offer an alternative space to speak for subalterns (Ravengai, 2011; Spivak, 1988) to raise issues affecting them and to seek to transform their conditions (Boal, 1979; Freire, 1971; Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001; Young-Jahangeer, 2014; wa Thiong'o, 1986). This resonates with Paulo Freire's (1971) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Augusto Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* concepts. The subalterns are those social groups that are marginalised or suppressed, especially within colonial contexts. Freire and Boal argue for the empowerment of the marginalised in order that they may transform their oppressive situation. Boal views theatre

as an important tool in achieving positive social transformation. Both Freire and Boal aim for a democratic society free of oppressive structures.

Background and theoretical framework

After Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain in 1980 there arose suspicion and mistrust between Robert Mugabe's 1. ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front) and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) political parties. ZAPU had more support in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe. The Matabeleland provinces have a predominantly Ndebele-speaking population. There also arose a dissident problem in Matabeleland. The government, led by Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, unleashed a Korean-trained 5th Brigade to "crush" dissidents who were operating in Matabeleland and Midlands, and civilians became the biggest casualties (CCJP, 1997). As noted in the CCJP report of 1997, "it is clear that thousands of innocent civilians in Matabeleland were killed or beaten and had their houses burnt during these years, mostly at the hands of Government forces" (1997, p. 15). The genocide resulted in the death of about 20,000 unarmed civilians, destruction of homes (largely through burning) and destruction of infrastructure. The government has, however, denied any culpability in the matter and has muted dialogue and debate around the issue (CCJP, 1997).

The Gukurahundi was a two-pronged conflict. The first conflict featured the state security forces versus the dissidents, whilst the second conflict featured the 5th Brigade soldiers versus ZAPU members and unarmed Ndebele-speaking civilians (see CCJP, 1997). A few years into independence, the Ndebele people (who were mostly affiliated to ZAPU) suddenly found themselves on the receiving end of a brutal onslaught by the ZANU-PF-led government (largely made up of Shona people) in what became known as the Gukurahundi (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2004). Because of the Gukurahundi issue and other forms of marginalisation that have continued long after independence, the Ndebele people see themselves as the subaltern other, the marginalised in the context of Zimbabwean political, social and economic strata.

Silence around the Gukurahundi issue has meant that the victims of the Gukurahundi have been hindered in voicing their pain, in reflecting on their painful past and in dealing with their emotional wounds. As a result, there are many who feel that their stories of pain and hurt remain unheard and that they have not been given a space to reflect on their suffering, and thus to be in a better position to face the future positively. Those of us who have observed this injustice by the government are obliged to act (against it) in order to build a just society. Freire (1971), in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, invites us to take this responsibility, and Boal (1979) shows us that one of the ways of doing this is through theatre.

The Gukurahundi episode was ended by the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 between Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU. The Unity Day celebrations are held annually in Zimbabwe on 22 December. However, to many people of Matabeleland, these celebrations carry no meaning, and this creates a dilemma since one would expect this day to hold more meaning for people in this region, as the Gukurahundi happened there. More than thirty years after the Gukurahundi episode and the signing of the Unity Accord, wounds should have at least begun to heal; however the anger and pain induced by the Gukurahundi are still evident, both among the first-generation and the second-generation victims of the Gukurahundi.

This research is implemented within the conceptual framework of decoloniality, particularly the concepts of "decolonial aesthetics and aesthesis" as envisioned by Walter Mignolo. Speaking in an interview about art that is aimed at decolonization, Mignolo (quoted in Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2014, p. 201) argues that "what decolonial artists want is not to create beautiful objects, installations, music, multimedia or whatever the possibilities are, but to create in order to decolonise sensibilities, to transform colonial aesthetics into decolonial aesthesis". Decoloniality is interested in addressing coloniality. Coloniality, meaning effects of colonization, continues to linger, even long after colonization has ended. In Zimbabwe, I argue that the effects of the Gukurahundi have continued to linger long after the Gukurahundi period ended with the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. What we are witnessing is "gukurahundiality" – the continuing effects of the Gukurahundi. The Unity Accord was

not followed by corresponding efforts to address gukurahundiality. Instead, the ZANU-PF government concentrated on silencing any voice that spoke about the Gukurahundi. The resultant environment arguably did more harm than good, exacerbating the continuance of gukurahundiality.

Mignolo argues that decolonial aesthetics are artistic creations that seek to challenge domination that colonises. He advocates for "decolonial aesthesis" which is concerned about art which awakens our sensibilities to see colonial injustices so that we can change our circumstances. He is of the view that the Western concepts of art are dominant and continue to colonise, forcing others into positions of weakness, inferiority and of lesser value. To change this scenario, decolonial art exposes coloniality and its injustices and contradictions, and is determined to cause change. This concept is important to my research and my interest in devised theatre, which seek to expose the injustices of the Gukurahundi and change things for the future by using art to create a democratic space in which to challenge such injustice, and create a space for the second-generation victims of the Gukurahundi to process their pain and move on, without feeling inferior in the Zimbabwean socio-political context. Decolonisation, as envisioned by Mignolo, is concerned with dismantling colonial power and healing colonial wounds (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2014). Similarly, this research seeks to heal the Gukurahundi wounds.

This study locates itself within the broader category of subaltern theatre, seeking to create democratic spaces to voice concerns for people who find themselves shut out of the mainstream channels and platforms (Ravengai, 2011; Spivak, 1988). Young-Jahangeer (2014) in her work in participatory theatre with inmates at Westville Correctional Centre demonstrates theatre's potential to create democratic spaces in oppressive structures. She deployed popular participatory theatre to create a space for prison inmates to explore sexual issues and other issues affecting them as female inmates. Georgina Schmukler (2013) reflects on her project that addresses xenophobia in the new South Africa. The script was based on interviews of the victims of xenophobia and it thus testifies to theatre's potential to create a space for expression and dialogue for those in conditions that deny them such a space. In Kenya, *I will marry when I want* stands as one

of the examples of community theatre's potential to address post colonial challenges, specifically the suffering endured as a result of failed nationalism and neo-colonisation (wa Thiong'o, 1986).

Among the few available plays that address the issue of the Gukurahundi, I am not aware of any that does so from the perspective of devised theatre. Notable plays from Matabeleland that have spoken out on this issue include *Talitha Koum! Someone Lied* (2018) by Victory Siyanqoba, written and directed by Desire Moyo/Moyoxide, *1983: Years Before and After* (aka *1983: Dark Years*) (2018) written by Bhekumusa Moyo and directed by Adrian Musa, and *The Good President* (2007) written and directed by Cont Mhlanga, which was banned by the Zimbabwean government. There has also been a Gukurahundi documentary by Zenzele Ndebele (2018) entitled *Gukurahundi Genocide: 36 Years Later* which was showcased at Rainbow Hotel in Bulawayo on 29 September 2018 as part of Intwasa Arts Festival koBulawayo. The visual arts category has also made its footprint. Owen Maseko's exhibition entitled *Sibathontisele* (Let's Drip on Them) opened at the National Art Gallery in Bulawayo for a few hours, before the exhibition was shut down and Maseko arrested for allegedly undermining the government (Mpofu, 2019).

Whilst the period of the protracted liberation struggle that led to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 has generated a lot of research, the Gukurahundi genocide of the 1980s has remained less researched and less documented. The current research, in part, seeks to contribute towards filling the gap in literature on the issue of the Gukurahundi and documenting the Gukurahundi experiences. Recently, the current Zimbabwean government has said people can speak out on their experiences regarding the Gukurahundi. However, many still fear to do this, and there are many who doubt (reasonably so) the genuineness of the government in this regard. As a result, a lot still remains unchanged. Silence and fear are still there.

Research methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and deploys devised theatre as a methodology. Devised theatre can be simply defined as a production which is generated by a creative working process (Oddey, 1994). The

central characteristic of devised theatre is innovation and experimentation. It affords an opportunity to its creators to question the issues or topic or ideology under exploration and it also offers new ways of thinking and of building new forms and structures. These qualities of devised theatre were well-suited to the issue of the Gukurahundi. According to Jess Thorpe (2014, p. 13) devising theatre "is essentially the process of creating something new from scratch. Its power is in its infinite possibility and the opportunity it offers individuals to experiment with ideas of content, form, structure, staging and new styles in order to 'make' a brand new piece of work". Devised theatre offers democracy and freedom in the working process, a kind of democracy and freedom that may not be available in a conventional play written by one author (Oddey, 1994).

The focus was on the process of collectively devising and staging theatre works that resist enforced silence and encourage voicing out/speaking out on the Gukurahundi experiences. In devising this performance, collective experiences of dealing with the Gukurahundi stories were central, together with the documented experiences such as those contained in the CCJP report of 1997. The CCJP (1997, p. 3) report notes that:

> One of the most painful aspects of the 1980s conflict for its victims is their perception that their plight is unacknowledged. Officially, the State continues to deny any serious culpability for events during those years, and refuses to allow open dialogue on the issue. In fact, there is a significant chunk of Zimbabwean history which is largely unknown, except to those who experienced it at first hand. All Zimbabweans, both present and future, should be allowed access to this history. Only by fully exploring how the 1980s crisis developed, can future Zimbabweans hope to avoid a repetition of such violence.

Being cognizant of the above, we set out to devise theatre that creates a space for second-generation victims of the Gukurahundi to reflect on the stories passed down to them and to also dialogue with members of the community in search of ways of manoeuvring past the Gukurahundi pain. Between six and ten members of the Ndebele-speaking community in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe participated in this research. The number of participants is recorded as a range, as opposed to being a fixed figure, so as to cater for those who left the group and those who joined the group during the

process. We were guided by Willis Sutton and T. Munson's (1976) definition of "community" that included a "specific population" as its elements. Participants were selected from young men and women aged between 18 and 35. This is the age group that fits well into the category of second-generation victims of the Gukurahundi. Participation in the project was voluntary but the participants were purposively sampled so that Ndebele people from Matabeleland and/or Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe were included.

My analysis examined data generated from play production processes and its staging, as well as the reflections of the cast and audience after the performance. Multiple rehearsals and two final performances were held. I facilitated the process of devising theatre. This involved the holding of workshops that incorporated theatre games and exercises to build trust (Boal, 1979), the sharing of experiences, and improvisations. Workshops/rehearsals ran for a month followed by the staging of the plays. After the first performance we reworked the play and staged a second performance. During the research I documented the proceedings and my observations through journaling, video recording and audio recording.

Data was generated from the rehearsal process, the process of staging the theatre pieces, post-performance discussions and from reflections during and after these processes. Of particular interest was to see how devised theatre was able, or not able, to create a democratic space for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to tell inherited and personal stories, and start to explore ways of manoeuvring past the pain associated with this period. Observations (of the creation process, staging and post-performance discussions), interviews with participants and group discussions were used to generate data for the research. In data analysis I referred to my videos, audio recordings, journals and notes to reflect on the processes of the research. Data analysis and interpretation was carried out in order to arrive at valid conclusions.

Creating democratic spaces through theatre – *Speak Out!*

Harnessing the possibilities offered by devised theatre, we created our stage play entitled *Speak Out!* Whilst a scripted play would have limited

us to the script, devising theatre gave us a democratic process in the creation of the script, empowering each participant and giving them agency. At the centre of the creative process was improvisation. We devised the first play and staged it. We then reworked it and staged it again, creating *Speak Out!* Phase 1, and *Speak Out*! Phase 2. The plays were not written by a single person but were a product of collective improvisation. During the rehearsals, I encouraged all members of the group to be free to contribute and I emphasised that they would not be censored for their views. Putting improvisation in the centre of the creative process resonates with Ian Watson's (1993, p. 94) observation that improvisation:

> places the actor at the center of the creative process. This is particularly obvious in the initial stages of creating a new mise-en-scene, because it is the actor who bears the greatest responsibility for providing the raw material for the production. It is the actor who develops the initial improvisations, and it is the actor who adapts them.

We started the creative process by coming together to discuss the Gukurahundi. This discussion was aimed at affording the participants an opportunity to share what they understood had taken place during the Gukurahundi. Some participants said they did not know much about what had happened while others knew a lot. With participants drawn from an age group that at the time of the Gukurahundi were young or not yet born, some said they did not know whether the stories they heard about the Gukurahundi were true or not. The words that the participants used to describe the Gukurahundi atrocities were telling. One participant talked of "*babetshisana*", meaning "they were burning each other". This description is an infamous metaphor of the Gukurahundi, capturing the gruesome atrocities of the period that included, among other things, people being shut up in thatched huts and burnt alive.

On the other hand, the term "*babetshisana*" shows how the so-called "official" narrative of the Gukurahundi has distorted the facts of this period. The official description implies that the "burning of each other" was a type of atrocity carried out by both sides, creating the impression that the other side was also returning fire for fire, yet it was the armed 5th Brigade versus unarmed civilians. The government has actually created

the distorted narrative by referring to the Gukurahundi as a civil war (see CCJP, 1997).

The CCJP (1997) report was very useful as a foundational text of reference. We referred to it a lot to get a broad view and exact details of what transpired during this period. We also collectively watched a 2018 Gukurahundi documentary film by Zenzele Ndebele. I then tasked the participants to go and do their own research about the Gukurahundi. We agreed that they were going to ask their parents, guardians or relatives. They came back with varying results. For some, relatives shared with them what they know about the Gukurahundi whilst some were not given any information except that talking about the Gukurahundi *kuyatshayisa* (it can get you beaten) or *kuyanyamalalisa* (it can make you disappear). Despite the mixed outcomes, the exercise of asking parents and relatives about the Gukurahundi started a process of talking about the issue. Even for those who preferred not to speak about it, the information that talking about the Gukurahundi can get you beaten or can make you disappear is still vital. It speaks volumes. We captured these sentiments in the phase one play monologues and in poems that were recited by the performers in the plays.

The phase one play was centred on the story of a young woman who narrates the story of her aunt, who was killed during the Gukurahundi by 5th Brigade soldiers who found her pregnant and ripped her stomach open with a bayonet, claiming that they want to remove a "son" of a "dissident" she was carrying in her stomach. The young girl was told this gruesome account by her mother. In narrating the account, the young lady says, "I believe – this is how my aunt would have told her story if she had had a chance to, but she never had one, she died on the spot" (*Speak Out!* 2019). Accounts of pregnant women who were bayonetted are a common theme of the Gukurahundi atrocities. CCJP (1997, p. 10) reports that "there are four accounts among CCJP records of two pregnant girls being bayonetted to death by 5th Brigade in Tsholotsho in February 1983". Participants picked up this account as one of the most depressing accounts that have been shared to them through stories.

We used a flashback technique to transport this story to the stage. The flashback happens during a scene where young people are seated on

different parts of the stage. One after the other, they tell their stories – the stories of the Gukurahundi that they have heard. The last to tell her story is a young woman who, at the beginning of her narration, transforms to play the character of her aunt during a day she and her family were rounded up by the 5th Brigade soldiers. The transformation marks the beginning of the flashback, and the other actors on stage freeze. The "aunt" narrates how the 5th Brigade soldiers arrived in her rural village in Tsholotsho armed with guns. Many people were shot dead and some were wounded as the 5th Brigade soldiers ruthlessly attacked the unarmed civilians. She was 8 months pregnant. She tried to run away. However, because of her advanced pregnancy, she could not run fast. The soldiers caught up with her. As the actor playing the role of the aunt reaches this point in the narration, two male actors who had frozen on the stage come alive and transform into soldiers and start intimidating the pregnant aunt and eventually rip open her stomach with a bayonet.

The transformation into the soldiers' roles was aided by the putting on of red berets, a technique that uses minimal props for the transformation into another character – and resonating with Jerzy Grotoswki's (1968) poor theatre concept. The 5th Brigade soldiers that massacred civilians during the Gukurahundi wore red berets, and these became their infamous trademark. After the bayoneting, the flashback ends and the events of the play return to the present time. One of the young people who, all along, had been listening to the narration exclaims "*ngamanga lawo!*" (that is a lie!). Others defend the young lady who narrated the story. The young lady declares that the story she has told is the story of her aunt, which was told to her by her mother. The character who is disputing the account should, it was suggested during the devising stage, represent those who have sought to trivialise, to distort, and to dispute the Gukurahundi experiences as shared by the victims and survivors. By reacting to this character, the participants not only voiced their pain and frustration stemming from the attempt to silence their Gukurahundi narratives, but also protested against any attempts to silence them.

Whilst this was the central theme of the play, other issues were also taken up: For example, the account of a man who was burnt alive in a

thatched hut. His only crime was that of being a former ZIPRA[1] member and being a member of ZAPU. Arguably, the ZANU-PF government used the Gukurahundi as an opportunity to crush ZAPU, the main opposition party in the country. One of the participants shared this account as a true story that happened to his maternal grandfather. It is an individual account that also embodies the accounts of many who suffered the same predicament. Using a storytelling technique that draws heavily from the Ndebele storytelling culture, this account was narrated as a monologue at the beginning of the phase one play. Physical abuse in the form of beatings and torture were also captured in the play through dramatised re-enactments that sought to mirror the atrocities of the Gukurahundi events. Theatrical re-enactments not only mirror what happened, they also provide an opportunity to comment on the events (Katherine, 2015).

In *Speak Out!* Phase 2, the issues of identity and of failure to get birth certificates for victims and children of victims of the Gukurahundi were introduced. One of the participants had a first-hand experience of this as his family has experienced a related crisis. As we incorporated his real life experience into the play and recorded accounts of similar experiences, our play shifted to a story of two people planning to marry, who are haunted by their history to the extent that their wedding is threatened. The young man's father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers during the Gukurahundi. Authorities refused to process a death certificate for him because Gukurahundi was not acceptable as a "cause of death". As a result the young man failed to get a birth certificate bearing his father's names. He had to get a birth certificate using his mother's surname. As the young man approaches marriage, he is worried that even his children will use the "wrong" surname and may never get to know their true lineage, something which also speaks of their identity. His fiancée is also trying to come to terms with the death of her aunt, who was bayonetted during the Gukurahundi. These past experiences not only threaten the couple as individuals, but the future of their

1 ZIPRA was the name of the ZAPU armed wing during the war for Zimbabwe's independence.

marriage and children. The issue of identity documents for the victims and children of victims of the Gukurahundi is a deep-seated crisis that has existed since the Gukurahundi days. According to CCJP (1997, p. 6):

> Possibly hundreds of murder victims have never been officially declared dead. The lack of death certificates has resulted in a multitude of practical problems for their children, who battle to receive birth certificates, and for their spouses who, for example, cannot legally inherit savings accounts.

Music and dance were incorporated as the storyline revolved around the groomsmen and bridesmaids preparing the wedding dances for the anticipated wedding. The participants collectively participated in the choreography of the dances and in selecting the songs for dances. One of the participants, an experienced professional wedding dance coach, was given the responsibility of being the overall coordinator for the wedding dances. In the rehearsal room, dancers would take turns to propose dance moves and then the rest of the members would be taught the moves once they had been adopted by the group. At times, other members would suggest changes. Just as it was the case for the roles being "acted", in perfecting the dances during rehearsals one individual or one section would perform whilst the rest would watch and then make suggestions for improvement or comment on the issues at the centre of the performance. We thus used Boal's (1979) concept of the Spec-Actor to provide feedback to each other and comment on the content of our work, and to collectively participate in shaping the theatre work. One of the greatest challenges perfecting the dances during the rehearsal was that dancers would learn the dance moves at a different pace. Those members who had previously been bridesmaids or groomsmen relied on their experiences whilst others struggled.

Songs were used as commentary in the plays – for example, "*Senzeni na?*" (What have we done?) by Albert Nyathi, and another version from South Africa that speaks to the Apartheid era issues. Some participants also composed their own poems to capture their experiences and to protest against being silenced. These were incorporated into the plays. One of the poems by one of the participants goes like this:

> Now that they say we may speak and we are speaking – *hatshi ukuvinjwa, hatshi ukwethuselwa* (no to silencing and gagging of our voices, no intimidation). We may forgive and forget but without answers *eish ngiyasola* (eish[2] I have doubts) …

The use of art this way is in line with Magwaza (2001) and Barber's (1997) writings on African popular culture. Magwaza argues that cultural forms and artefacts (like beadwork) are used in African culture to communicate, and often as a form of protest. Zondi (2008) echoes the same sentiments as she sees songs which emanate from people's experiences as a form of negotiating and commenting on these experiences. Barber (1997, p. 5) observes that songs from the Mozambican plantations were "generated by people's suffering, giving collective voice to memories of pain to make them serve as a 'map of experience'". The plays that we created fit this mould of art as they reflected on and commented on the participants' Gukurahundi experiences.

Langalezo – exploring theatre as grieving

The climax of both plays came as a *langalezo* experience. Through theatricality a *langalezo* space was created. A *langalezo* space is a space provided for in the Ndebele culture for showing solidarity and offering support to each other during times of bereavement or extreme difficulty. Among the Ndebele people, when a beloved passes on people gather to express condolences in support of the bereaved (Moyo, 2018; Ndlovu et al., 1995). The same applies to other difficult experiences such as loss of property and injury. In the context of death, this solidarity and sharing of condolence messages is manifested not only immediately, but also after a long period of time. The *langalezo* remains pending as long as the bereaved and the person offering comfort have not met or spoken to each other. Another critical element of *langalezo* is the narration (by the bereaved or affected) of how the painful experience happened. This sharing of distressing experiences is part of the necessary healing process after a painful event.

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2 In this context "eish" means "I have doubts".

The listener empathises with the affected and offers hope through words and deeds.

Among the Ndebele people, the person coming to show solidarity greets the bereaved or affected by saying "*langalezo*". The Ndebele word *langalezo* means "you have seen it" or "it has been seen". It is both an acknowledgement that the painful event has happened and also an encouragement to manoeuvre past the pain and face the future positively. A *langalezo* space is a space for the sharing of painful experiences, the witnessing and validation of stories of pain, loss and suffering, and the mapping of the way forward in order to face the future positively. I argue that devising and staging theatre created a *langalezo* space for the participants and the audience members.

In the phase one play, after the young lady has narrated the story of her aunt who was bayonetted, other actors gather around her, embrace her and, true to the Ndebele cultural tradition that has just been described, say "*langalezo*". In the phase two play, after the narration of their painful accounts, the future bride and groom embrace each other comfortingly whilst other actors gather around them and say "*langalezo*". This moment is followed by a popular song of lament "*Hamba nhliziyo yakhe uye ezulwini" (May her soul find peace in heaven).* The post-performance discussions also form part of the *langalezo* experience, for, in a *langalezo* space, value is placed on problem narration, problem discussion and seeking ways of moving forward.

Both the process of devising theatre and that of staging theatre created democratic spaces for participants and audiences to speak about their Gukurahundi experiences, something that is "forbidden ground" and a taboo in everyday circles. Felseghi (2017, p. 68) observes that in devised theatre in "creating a performance, the authors always start from human resources and their personal biographies, from a pre-existent theme, from society, politics – or all of these combined, creating unlimited possibilities". In our project, this was done through encouraging participants to share their personal experiences and then incorporating those into the devised play. One participant, for example, shared the story of his relative who was burnt alive inside a thatched hut – a type of atrocity already mentioned in this paper – and this was incorporated into the play.

During reflection sessions after devising and staging the plays, one of the participants said:

> As for me, as a young person from Matabeleland, Bulawayo in particular, participating in the *Speak Out!* project gave me an opportunity to express my views and feelings concerning the Gukurahundi accounts that I have heard. So I think I was empowered to be able to express myself and to voice my feelings on the Gukurahundi issue … the theatre project empowered me because my fellow participants came with things that I was previously unaware of and as we shared stories and experiences I developed a broader understanding of the Gukurahundi issue … the project also made me aware that we can speak about issues of Gukurahundi using all these channels even if other platforms are closed.

The sharing of stories during the devising process was enhanced by improvisation which empowered participants to break silencing and oppressive boundaries and to "rediscover" their silenced voices through playfulness that we created through the playing of games, particularly at the start of sessions. Some of these games were also played in the middle of the devising sessions. One of the games we used to play is a concentration game whereby participants stand in a circle. Each person is assigned a unique number. All participants then start making a rhythmic sound by tapping above their knees while saying numbers. The first person chants his or her unique number along the tapping rhythm and ends by adding someone else's number. The person whose number is added is supposed to be the next to do the chanting of numbers and so it goes on, with new people being brought in. The trick is to maintain the rhythm and also not to miss your chance when your number is mentioned. The first person would go like "ah 1, ah 1 1 4". The person assigned number 4 would have to pick up the chanting, like "ah 4, ah 4 4 2". Number 2 would have to be next, and so on. The games set the stage for improvisation. Boal (1979, p. xiv) argues that "improvisation is life". That is what improvisation brought to our devising process – life.

Staging the play marked one of the milestones of the process, as participants claimed their democratic spaces – where they could speak. The act of performing in front of an audience is important in that participants tell their stories and have them validated by the empathic audience. Life

experiences are given added validity by depicting them dramatically with, and in front of, others (Jones, 1996). This is not always the case though – there can be conflicts and negotiations during the devising process.

The rehearsal for action concept was important in this research. Boal (1979), borrowing from the avant-garde, particularly Moreno's expressionist psychodrama, describes his aesthetics of the oppressed as a rehearsal for action. He argues that participation in the theatre gives participants an opportunity to rehearse what they would do in real life if faced with similar circumstances. During the reflection sessions participants testified that after the project they had felt emboldened and empowered to go out and speak to their families, friends and community members about the Gukurahundi, something that they had been reluctant or afraid to do before embarking on the project. One participant said, "the support that we got from the audience when we did the play is encouraging me to speak about this thing [the Gukurahundi]".

Post-performance discussions provided a democratic space for audiences to express their views on the Gukurahundi experiences. One audience member revealed that he and his drama group were being harassed by members of the security sector for participating in theatre works that speak of the Gukurahundi, labelling this as unfair treatment. Mignolo (2014) argues that decolonial art exposes injustice, challenges domination that colonises and is determined to bring about change. Through *Speak Out!* we challenged oppressive structures that refuse to people the chance of speaking about their Gukurahundi experiences. The silencing of the Gukurahundi victims was definitely challenged through devising and staging theatre. The theatre space on the margin became a democratic space to create works that can shift consciousness (hooks, 1990). In line with hooks's observation the place at the margin became a place of radical openness (hooks, 1990). *Speak Out!* is an attempt to deliberately place oneself at the margins so as to be better able to speak truth to power, and by doing so to challenge oppressive, silencing structures and to create democratic spaces for speaking out on the issues of the Gukurahundi.

The attempt to create a democratic social and aesthetic space for addressing the Gukurahundi had its own challenges. At the beginning of the project some participants were very uncomfortable speaking

about the Gukurahundi, citing fear of state repression. At one point I was asked about the backup plan in the event of their being arrested. I did not have a solid backup plan that could meet their expectations. Another major challenge was that most of the participants were new to devising. They were used to acting in plays where they would be given a script. As a result, at many points when they felt frustrated by the process of devising, they would request that I just write the script and give them ready copies. Through negotiations, we managed to steer the ship to the intended destination. Despite the challenges, the overall outcome was encouraging.

Conclusion

Theatricality in the form of devised theatre offers potential in creating a social and aesthetic space to speak to and about the issue of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. Techniques such as improvisation, storytelling, the use of the Spec-Actor concept in rehearsal, use of songs as commentary and using personal experiences as material for creation of the play help in achieving this. The nature of devised theatre, which requires people to discuss and work together in creating a play, makes a *langalezo* space possible. The post-performance discussions enhance the creation of a *langalezo* space which, within the Ndebele culture, is a grieving space. Participating in both devising and performing theatre created a platform for young people of Matabeleland to voice their frustrations, concerns, pain and suffering from the Gukurahundi experiences. Most of these experiences were passed down to the young generation through stories told by their parents and other relatives, or by community members. In a repressive environment like that which has prevailed in Zimbabwe for many years, devised theatre offers an alternative platform to build democracy by providing alternative spaces for the subaltern to speak.

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CHAPTER 8

Redemptive Theatre: When the Performance Is in the Silence

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Abstract: In this short frame for a creative research project, we outline a theatrical form that we are tentatively calling "redemptive theatre" – theatre that tells stories of people struggling with a mistake, a burden of guilt or an experience of being wronged. We created this form in the context of privileged South Africans navigating the landscape of systemic injustice and unconscious bias. We have performed the first version of redemptive theatre three times and, through a participatory action research process, documented the form and its principles as outlined here. The process has shown itself to consist of three distinct phases: first, identification of the story; second, developing the script; and third, the performance. After the initial identification process, it was performed and reworked three times to produce the current structural design. We present this design to encourage performances that reframe dominant and habitual narratives, disrupt boundaries, challenge stereotypes and give people a chance to redeem themselves, both in their own eyes and in other people's. The form of redemptive theatre aligns with Jacques Rancière's idea of an aesthetic regime and the concept of democracy as a redistribution of what can be seen, heard and experienced. By framing stories that are politically unpopular, we bring stories to the fore that are silenced (unseen and unheard).

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Introduction

This contribution offers insight into a theatrical invention we tentatively call "redemptive theatre". The artistry and subsequent redemptive value of the work relies on the art of story sharing rather than on clever or profound words or on performances that are high in artistic quality or impact.

For us, redemptive theatre is an experiment in theatrical form – an experiment that in itself is worth noticing. While the experiment is ongoing, we report here on the result of three iterations. To help the reader understand what we present, we offer an overview of the aim of the artistic enquiry, the context in which it was undertaken, the elements that have emerged as important for its ongoing value and an overview of its theoretical underpinnings. As evidence of the artistic work itself, we offer the script of the last performance, a video clip of the performance, a plan of its facilitation (which forms a central part of the design) and transcriptions of audience responses to the work.

Worth noting, too, is that the work is created in the frame and discipline of applied theatre – a field that places as much value on the impact of the work in terms of its intentions to shift perceptions and bring about learning and social change, as it does on aesthetics and artistic integrity. This means that as much artistry might be present in the interactive design of how audiences engage with the work as in its execution as performance.

Aims of the creative enquiry

The main aims of the creative enquiry are threefold:

1. To create, through theatre, a dialogical performance form that can redeem a story that is generally perceived as, or conventionally accepted as, irredeemable.

2. To make theatre where the silences between words have body.
3. To ask the whole community to own the voices that they silence and accept them as part of our collective reality.

Context

In 2018 three theatre makers came together to explore stories of privilege in a world focussed on giving voice to the silenced, oppressed voices in South Africa. We experienced a polarisation in the conversation about prohibition and privilege, oppressed and oppressor. Our observation was that when women voice out against patriarchy, there may be silent male voices who want to challenge patriarchy in their own lives and minds but cannot find a platform for working through their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Against the backdrop of the voices of Africa calling for decolonisation and working towards understanding how to give voice to African wisdom, traditions and marginalised knowledge systems, the voices of the privileged race, gender and generation – experiencing silencing when trying to recognise the problematics this embodies – seeks somehow to address these through theatre-making. Likewise, the voice of the disenfranchised race, gender and generation encounters opposition from the privileged or oppressive who prefer that the status quo should not be disrupted. Silence sits in, and is discovered in, the in-between.

Description

Redemptive theatre currently exists as a collaborative workshop performance in its third rendition. It is theatre that tells stories of people struggling with a mistake, a burden of guilt or an experience of being wronged. We created this work in the context of privileged South Africans navigating the landscape of systemic injustice and unconscious bias. We did this through stories that spoke through the lenses of race, gender and generational issues, using the creation of the work as an attempt to centre the unpopular story.

While many different elements were experimented with, those aspects of the design that remained stable fall broadly into three phases:

1. Identification of the story; 2. Developing the script; 3. The performance. We focus here on the design of the actual performance. The elements that had remained present through all three performances are as follows:

1. The stories are lived experiences documented by the performers themselves.[1]
2. The space is arranged so that there is no level difference between audience and performers – e.g. stairs to climb to get on stage. Audience and performers are placed as close to each other as makes sense in the space available.[2]
3. The script is made available to everyone either on printed copies, or by projecting it behind performers for the audience to follow.[3]
4. Performers each hold their own script in hard copy or on a tablet.
5. At the start, audience members are introduced to the characters/ story tellers, including the character named "Silence".
6. The "rules of engagement" are explained:[4]
   a. Any audience member may, at any point in the telling, walk onto the performance area, tap a story teller on the shoulder, and swap places with them: thereby the audience member takes over from the story teller.
   b. Any character may, at any point in the telling, choose to get off stage by leaving their script behind.
   c. The telling will not be resumed by any remaining character until the story is picked up again by someone from the audience.[5]

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1 Like Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre, the stories used are real-life stories rooted in lived experience rather than fictional made-up stories (Boal, 1993, 2002).

2 This relates to the breaking of the fourth wall in Brechtian theatre practice and many other interactive theatre forms since (Brecht, 1964).

3 Reminiscent of Brechtian alienation effect (Brecht, 1964).

4 Here we are influenced by our experience of applied improvisation, where an improvisation game is explained through a set of rules or restrictions within which certain surprising connections and creative resonances become possible (Johnstone, 1981). Anne Bogart's (2005) theatre principles, encompassing an improvisational frame that drives awareness and sense play through considerations of Time, Space, Story, Movement and Shape, have had considerable influence in this participatory design. John Wright's (2017) suggestions for using text as mask are influential here.

5 Robert Landy and David Montgomery's ideas about how theatre can be leveraged for social action and reflection are an influence here (Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

7. The performers present the three stories as an interwoven script with characters plaiting the stories together – linking, overlapping and weaving as time progresses.
8. After the performance there is a short reflective discussion, involving the story tellers and the audience.[6]
9. At the end, audience members are invited to share stories or thoughts of their own in silence. Various forms of capturing these thoughts have been experimented with including post-it notes, flip chart paper or a combination of the two. [7]

We present here two of the scripts. The latest one (Script 3 below) contains two stories: the first is "Racist", the story of a white woman who discovers the misguided "othering" motivations behind her acts of activism while the second is "Trash", the story of a black man who gets caught up at a women's march and is accused of being "trash". The script of the second iteration (Script 2 below) has the same story as "Trash" but also includes two other stories: "Boer", the story of a white woman who makes a racial remark unwittingly and experiences an onslaught of guilt and shame; and "Brat", the story of a girl "born free" (born after apartheid) who learns to navigate a relationship with her father, who grew up during the apartheid struggle.

Script 2: "Trash, Boer and Brat" (Script for second rendition performed at Die Woordfees – an arts festival held in Stellenbosch, near Cape Town, March 2019. This script can be accessed in its entirety at: https://press.nordicopenaccess.no/index.php/noasp/catalog/book/135).

Script 3: "Racist Trash" (Script for third version, performed at the Arts Research Africa Conference at Wits University, Johannesburg, January 2020. This script can be accessed in its entirety at: https://press.nordicopenaccess.no/index.php/noasp/catalog/book/135).

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6 Reflection is an essential moment in applied drama and theatre facilitation (Janse van Vuuren, 2016).

7 These activities are influenced in various site-specific and site-responsive ways, along with the reflective practice aspects of applied drama and theatre. These aspects can be traced back to the works of the myriad practitioners referenced across footnotes as well as the anchors Schechner (2013) and Romain (1996).

A performance clip of the final script can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/oWpuz2XeLik

The form becomes an arts based research enquiry into the struggles, mistakes, burdens, injustices, silences and redemption-seeking between us as global citizens. We ask participants to step into the shoes of the existing narratives, to reflect on resonance and identification, and we further invite story contributions intersecting with and connecting to race-relations, varied injustices, silencing occurrences and contemporary movements like #MenAreTrash and #BlackLivesMatter. The full session design can be accessed at: https://press.nordicopenaccess.no/index.php/noasp/catalog/book/135

The conceptual and scholarly framework in which the work should be considered

In relation to the highlighted stories existing in the current form of redemptive theatre, race and gender authority Kimberlé Crenshaw (2016, 2017, 2019) locates the conversation by writing about the complexity of privilege. She argues that it is often these roles, of whiteness as it relates to womanhood, and maleness as it relates specifically to blackness, that are the points of departure for conversations about discrimination. And while it cannot be denied that these types do indeed experience discrimination, it is more the fact of their constant and consistent centring in almost all conversations to do with sexism and racism that complicates our ability to see the privilege complexities of these positionalities, or, as in the frame of this explorative form, the redemptive potential of their stories, experiences and identities. The voice of Crenshaw, in the way that it grapples with the complexity of being a privileged identity, is an inspiration for conversations around intersectionality and provides a basis for scholars, practitioners and grapplers to seek avenues for visibility and representation.

In speaking about transforming silence into language and action, Audre Lorde (2017), a noteworthy voice in feminist scholarship, highlights vulnerability and a perceived danger that comes with speaking what might bruise or be misunderstood, because that act of transforming

silence is an act of self-revelation and it is fraught. "In the cause of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear – fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the visibility without which we cannot truly live." She also offers the thought that death is the ultimate final silence, and highlights that – in big and small ways, no matter who we are, or what our backgrounds are – we share wars with tyrannies of silence, we betray ourselves with small silences daily, silences which may help us survive, but do not necessarily help us live. Silences which in essence do not protect us.

The above are but a few voices with whom redemptive theatre connects. In general, there is resonance with the works, words and practices of those who believe that people are able to liberate themselves, and can find healing from places of shame, regret and despair, and of those who believe and explore the ways that democracy and basic human rights are inseparable, discovering through methods of action. An essence of this has been captured by Toni Morrison, who famously (1979) stated that "the function of freedom is to free somebody else".

There are also those who argue that it takes building new frames and models to challenge existing realities. These include myriad figures such as Buckminster Fuller (n.d.), Ernesto "Che" Guevara (Guevara & Waters, 2002; Löwy, 2007), Nelson Mandela (2010), Raya Dunayevskaya (1973) and bell hooks (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2014) to name a few. Thus redemptive theatre, in its current make up, interacts, intersects and engages in scholarship with ideas around humanism, Marxist-humanist thought, complexity theory, identity politics, feminism, and culture and community.

As a contribution to an anthology about building democracy through theatre, we position the work as an experiment in expanding the conventions of traditional theatre performance. In the way that forum or playback theatre exist as archetypal structures, it seeks, through development, to arrive at a replicable form for use in processes attempting to engage with the unpopular story – to redeem, to conflict resolve, or for inclusivity.

Redemptive theatre aligns with some of the ideas of Jacques Rancière (1995, 2006a, 2006b) when he speaks of theatre offering a redistribution of what can be seen, heard and experienced. Specifically, it creates a frame

wherein that which exists in silence can be foregrounded. It does so, firstly, because introducing Silence as a character draws attention to the idea of silence having body and presence, and, secondly, because the script creates deliberate moments of silence in it that compel audience and characters alike to listen to their thoughts in response to what has just been said out loud. Thirdly, each time a character chooses to step off stage leaving their story, in the shape of the script, behind, there is a silence that stretches for as long as it takes for someone to pick up the story, step into the character's shoes and resume the telling. In these silences, thoughts arise: "Who should take up the story? Should I do it? Can someone please step in? What will happen next?" Thoughts like these rush into the minds of participants, requiring all to consider who the story and its implications belong to. Finally, once the telling is over, audience members are asked to respond, in writing or conversation, to the stories or the thoughts that has been stirred up for them in response to the experience, and these are captured on posters outside the venue, or in conversation with cast members. This process democratises the stories in a way that is intended to build bridges and provide routes for redemption. Whether it in fact does so is part of the experiment. Results are as yet inconclusive because the work is still unfolding.

The process design and accompanying documentation can be accessed at: https://press.nordicopenaccess.no/index.php/noasp/catalog/book/135

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CHAPTER 9

Performing Young Adults' Reflections on Work, Citizenship, and Democracy

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Abstract: Can theatre be a significant arena for reflections on work as an essential part of life for youth and young adults? This chapter reports on an arts-based research project that involved a cultural centre (ISAK) and participants aged 15–30 over a period of seven months. The overall framing perspective was an ethos of equality and a concept of dissensus inspired by the works of Jacques Rancière. The chapter discusses in particular Democratic forum, a workshop designed so the participants could reflect on, and perform, dreams, questions and challenges concerning work as part of their life and future. It also incorporated the development of exercises as well as the use of artistic ensemble, focal point and metaphor for further dramaturgical work. In the making of the performance Happy Land 2048, strategies for post-dramatic dramaturgy were applied, and this chapter discusses how experiences from Democratic forum can also be transformed into aesthetic experiences for an audience. Throughout an interactive performative event, the audience was co-performing in six different functions.

Keywords: democratic forum, interactive performance, work, crises

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Introduction: Happy Land 2048 – an applied arts-based research project

Director Welcome
Welcome to Happy Land
Welcome to 2048
What are you going to be?
What is your dream job?
What kind of job will make you happy?
Welcome to seek happiness in Happy Land
(Excerpt from the opening of the performance)

The Cultural Centre ISAK (https://isak.no/) arranges various arts and cultural activities and brings together a wide range of youth and young adults, including several youth and student theatre companies in the city of Trondheim. My idea was to explore the topic of "work" together with young people and, through collaboration with the producer at ISAK, the centre became a professional non-academic research partner. There was an important double goal: to increase interest and further competence in theatre, and, secondly, to create an interesting performance at ISAK. An invitation to prospective participants was developed and made public, informing about two phases: first, the investigation of theme, and, second, the creation of performance. Participants did not have to commit for the entire period of seven months. Information about the project was available on ISAK's website throughout the whole period.

In phase one, around 20 people attended, once or more frequently, two-hour weekly workshops spread over five weeks. They were asylum seekers as well as Norwegians and international exchange students, all aged 16–39. Thanks to the open invitation, and because it became a heterogeneous group, there was soon a climate of great diversity of experiences and opinions and a positive attitude towards new inputs and responses. We actively invited participants who were not primarily interested in theatre, and their voices and backgrounds became important both for developing research questions and for approaches to the theatre production. According to the ISAK producer, such an open group-based and "devised" production platform was new to the theatre-people at ISAK. This made it challenging to

recruit participants especially interested in theatre. The initial collaborative process in devised theatre projects is often both intense and confusing. As a facilitating director-researcher, I consciously wanted to give priority to voluntary participation, an open exchange of experiences and the emergence of questions, rather than simply hand out a hypothesis, with clear, pre-set plans, purely to cater for participants' desire for predictability. It created a dilemma I chose not to solve in this phase.

Phase two was led by the researcher in close collaboration with the scenographer, the producer and an artistic team of eight film- and theatre students. This artistic team developed and extended into a dynamic relationship between participants, presenting competences they wanted to share and develop, and co-operating with digital media expressions and needs in the aesthetic communication. Two groups of 6 and 20 audience members participated in showcases with critical response process (Aune, 2018).

Methodology and theoretical framework

The chosen arts-based research design (Haseman, 2006; Nelson, 2013) includes an ethnographic approach where participants are considered as co-researchers, not informants (Denzin, 1997). This is important in order to draw on experiences and resources in the specific context. A research design dominated by experimental and improvisational modes of work generates and presents findings in, and through, an interactive performance production: Happy Land 2048. To conduct research within a performative paradigm also requires elaboration and reflection on methodological and aesthetic decisions, and on how documentation and reflection are integrated as essential tools. However, while acknowledging the importance of the role of co-researchers, Robin Nelson (2013) underlines the researcher as the central knowledge-producing subject (p. 37). Hence it is the researcher's responsibility to clarify the theoretical framing perspectives, make explicit the guiding intentions and choices made, and be aware of the specific context and its existing relationships. Important also is a self-reflexive attention to the researcher's roles and functions.

As a facilitator I tried to adapt a high degree of open and mutual communication. I documented the workshops in a report, including significant statements and reflections on further opportunities. The report was distributed by email to participants and discussed in the next workshop. During the workshops in the first phase participants wrote on post-it notes in different colours and these were mounted as wall newspapers. This served as a support in presentations, as shared visual archives and as drafts for dramaturgy. Reports and wall newspapers were widely used as common continuity-creating empirical material. Furthermore, I wrote drafts of dialogues, and these served as a poetic form of documentation and as text material for improvisational work. Two of the participating students analyzed parts of the process for their written assignments and these works have been freely available as mutual information and as a basis for reflection.

Jacques Rancière's theories on democracy and performative aesthetics act as a framework for our democratic and aesthetic strategies and also serve to enlighten dilemmas that occur in the process (see "Concluding thoughts"). Rancière's (2004) notion of aesthetic distribution includes sensuous and bodily experience in the ways we understand our being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1994). His view on "political subjectivation" (Nash, 1996) fits in with theories on performativity where self-construction takes place both in verbal and theatrical acts and in reflecting between these forms of being (Schechner, 2002). The design which fosters reflection through aesthetic experiences therefore emphasizes the importance of a dynamic relationship between different ways of communication; conversation and oral presentations, improvisation and role playing, and performing for an audience. A fusing of systematic and critical reflective representation of experience together with scenic presentation, characterizes postmodern performing arts based on lived life (Aune, 2017a, 2017b; Martin, 2010; Saldaña, 2005, 2011). Rancière's view on democracy rests on his conviction that a basic human equality and the right to utter/stage dissensus are human rights in healthy democracies. This became instrumental in Democratic forum, a workshop design for our arena for young adults to raise their voices about work as part of their lives today and in the future. These forums had a fixed form: a brief introduction of

a question or aspect regarding *work* was followed by a group/individual exercise and a sharing. The forum closed by reflecting on questions for further investigation. The first four forums revolved around two issues: the concept of free choice of employment, and work as community, meaning and self-development. The closing Democratic forum summed up and developed a focal point and a metaphor for working out the performance.

Democratic forum 1: Disclosing the myth of the right to work and free choice of employment

The first paragraph in Article 23 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights was chosen as material for the first Democratic forum. This paragraph reads: "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment." (UN, 1948). Norway ratified the Declaration in 1948 and it has been fundamental to all policy areas, including work and education. The Declaration has been accused of being an expression of Western domination and a legitimation for military, economic and cultural abuse of power and arrogance (Rathore & Cistelecan, 2011). Moreover, Rancière (2011) argues that the Declaration is written as a representation of a society in which all individuals are seemingly free and equal. It gives the appearance of equality, equal rights and opportunities freed from social contexts and individual life stories (Rancière, 2011, p. 173). "Political subjectivation" is a process of verifying or activating the right of equality, and to bridge subjective existence and the Human Rights. Inspired by Rancière's views we wanted to facilitate actions for the participants to examine and perform their understanding of Article 23, towards a process of becoming critically reflected subjects and citizens.

In the first forum exercise, *Green, Yellow and Red Card*, each participant was given three coloured cards and one of the statements in the first paragraph of Article 23 (see above). Participant 1 read her statement, tagged it to the green card for *agree*, red for *disagree* or yellow for *not sure*. The choice of colour had to be justified. Then the others in turn

laid down their choice of card and accounted for their choice. After this round, participant 1 repeated the statement and the participants were able to change their cards. The routine was repeated until all statements had been considered. The finding of this exercise was clear; all participants stated that the right to work is important, especially for young people. Work relates to income, community and identity and the opportunity to grow. Unemployment was considered "evil", personally, socially and financially, and the participants shared experiences of meaninglessness, inferiority and isolation caused by unemployment. The participants stood together behind this statement, summarized by an exchange student: "It is a hunger for work."

Furthermore, they doubted that the right to free choice of employment was valid for them. They experienced great discrepancies between official policy offering a variety of educational rights and their opportunities to get relevant work. Many had experienced short and temporary employment contracts and uncertain freelancing, and expressed a need for more predictability. Participants also shared uncertainty about what kind of employment and opportunities they would have in the future, especially with regard to the environmental crisis, robotization and globalization. The exercise *Green, Yellow and Red Card* offered a space to openly reflect on experiences because the exercise demanded justification (one had to account for one's choices), accepted uncertainty and allowed participants to change their mind. The structured form helped to open the dialogue between the participants and the researcher. One participant put it this way:

> The exercise gave us equal time and right to present individual views and doubts. It made us eager to listen to differences and reflect on each other. It warmed us up for the following conversation and people were really responsible and reflexive. (My translation)

The exercise revealed the right to work and free choice of employment as a myth in the dominant political narrative. It created insight into the paradox participants experienced between official politics, and the personal uncertainty associated with the opportunities to establish and realize their own interests and dreams of work. Moreover, the young

participants did not consider work as a question only for them as individuals. They related work to social responsibility and citizenship and confirmed Norwegian research findings showing that young adults see their narrative of work in a perspective of responsible solidarity (Bø & Håland, 2017; Hyggen, 2017; Stjernø & Øverby, 2012).

Democratic forum 2: Performing concepts of dreams, obstacles and strategies

The second Democratic forum followed up on participants' dreams and expectations. Some had clear careers in sight, while others were uncertain. In the exercise *Dramaturgy of the Character* participants could choose to start from themselves, or from an alias, or make up a fictional character, making for an open, playful response. The journey of the character towards the dream job was to be challenged by four types of obstacle: personal, relational, horizontal and vertical – and everyone had to search for strategies to overcome these obstacles On post-it notes, in different colours, they wrote, under the name of the character chosen, goals, obstacles and strategies. In this way they visualized the dramaturgy of the character.

In a similar manner, participants reflected on personal and relational obstacles and strategies. Personal obstacles were education and school results, and strategies could be, for example, the determination to work harder to qualify and to become more secure in oneself and what one wanted in life. Relational obstacles was a category that included family and expectations of choosing secure jobs, for participants often hope for status equal to or higher than parents had. Even the absence of expectations – such as is revealed here: "You can be whatever you want. It's your choice!" – was considered to be an obstacle.

Norwegian participants showed difficulties identifying horizontal obstacles related to law, tradition, gender, ethnicity, age and social class. In this they seem to reflect the dominant ideology of equality in neoliberal democracy (Rathore & Cistelecan, 2011). Participants from other geographical backgrounds reflected more strongly on such structural obstacles:

> I want to be a truck driver. Education is difficult due to language, but I work hard and don't get in trouble. I have no family to help but I will ask teachers and the refugee service. The horizontal obstacle is losing the right to asylum in Norway. Here I have no strategy, but if I get my license, I can work anywhere in the world. (Based on participants' post-it notes and oral presentation; my translation.)

Vertical obstacles are apparently beyond human control. In theatre, especially in classical tragedies fatal crises are caused by the wrath of gods, plague, and the wars of tyrants. Vertical obstacles first appeared in our exercise when participants confronted the characters with apocalyptic future scenarios such as a breakdown in the global environment or the internet. Facing such obstacles they found no strategies to complete the dream of the character.

Whether characters were based in themselves, an alias or fiction, and regardless of background, they reflected with a high degree of confidence, trusted their own powers and devised creative solutions to personal, relational and horizontal obstacles. Despite both self-perceived and thought-provoking challenges, they did not see the characters as victims of circumstances. The exercise *Dramaturgy of the Character* offered a common space for performing dreams, expectations and challenges across backgrounds and life situations. The exercise highlighted the challenges of being co-responsible for realizing their own right to work both within the framework of the welfare state and in communities with far weaker social and economic safety nets.

Democratic forum 3: The issues of vertical obstacles to work

The third Democratic forum focused on characters struggling with vertical obstacles. The participants wrote on post-it notes the kinds of work they presumed might be of value in a future environmental crisis. They made notes in turn, as a starting point for interviews in role.

We did role playing on the mostly fictional jobs in the unknown and uncertain future and this triggered engagement, dramatic tension, joy, and creative playing. Again, participants' dreams and expectations were revealed: "If the internet breaks down, I cannot become a youtuber." "If the

oil ends, I cannot become a truck driver." Not least, the exercise opened for reflections on how goals that are too fixed can reduce possibilities and perspectives, while the unexpected can open your mind. The role-playing method provided a meta-perspective on how one thinks about oneself and work. A story is told, the story is also a story of "telling one's world", and it points to the fragility of our daily ways of understanding.

Democratic forum 4: Performing concepts of community, meaning and self-development

By the word "work", participants included income, meaning, community and the opportunity to develop. They excluded, for example, work being monotonous, boring, and meaningless, but added in the same breath: "But someone has to do it." The fourth forum examined this paradox. In the exercise, they wrote on post-it notes the kinds of work they would identify as "shit jobs" and work they would identify as "status jobs". In the following exercise they added smell, sound and movement associated with the different kinds of work. They were again encouraged to draw on their own experiences.

The participants strongly agreed that the value of high-status work was high income and a lot of power, concretized by the roles of a cabinet minister, bank manager, director, landowner, lawyer, doctor, and manager. High-status work was characterized as "odourless", and was associated with distinct and low sound such as polite chatter and laughter and controlled movement. Presentations were characterized by clichés, references to media and to a lesser extent to their own experiences. "Shit jobs" were of low value because they are dull and routine and characterized by the smell of stools, blood, garbage and exhaust, the noise of people and machines, and physical wear and tear. In the participants' presentations of these jobs, the various backgrounds appeared: work as miners, in agriculture and care, teaching, sales, office, transport and renovation. Participants referred to their own upbringing to a much greater extent, and several had positive experience from temporary work in these types of jobs.

In a joint exercise, participants reflected on the issue of "necessity work". In the form of drawings, they portrayed frightening creatures threatening small individuals followed by a cheerful, critical, self-reflective

conversation: "How do we really think about how we think about ourselves, work and the others?" As in the interview in role exercise, this contributed to metafiction and deepened thematic reflection.

Democratic forum 5: Towards a production concept of the "Fairground"

Based on interest in both theme and performance, the participants chose the following shared statement: "The freedom to choose employment is replaced by luck and bad luck. Anyone wanting work must fish in a river where all sorts of work can be found."

In devised performing arts projects, where participants seek critical reflection on aspects of reality, the establishment of a focal point is crucial (Aune, 2017a; Aune & Haagensen, 2018). It is about gathering fragments of dramatic tension into a shared starting place being "focused, clear and delimited. A point where the temperature rises to the maximum. A place where it starts to burn" (Rønning, 2018, p. 19). Memories of luck and bad luck and the excitement and happiness of seeking out risk further led to the metaphor *Fairground*, a theatrical place entertaining the audience through the staging of games of luck and bad luck, winners and losers. The development of a focal point and metaphor are statements of reflection at a metalevel; participants reflecting on their way of reflecting. This is a vital distancing quality for actors going to transform experiences into aesthetic communication with an audience.

Simultaneously with our process, young people in different parts in the world were taking part in a powerful international climate protest. This became the backdrop for our choosing the environmental crisis as a relevant framework for our dramaturgical work. The "right to work" formulated in 1948 came soon after the Second World War had torn down and overturned basic premises for the right and opportunity for young people to shape their own lives. The title of the performance emerged from an interest in questioning what might happen when young people search for work in 2048.

With these conceptual frameworks, the growing arts project took a different direction from document-based forms such as ethno-theatre

and documentary theatre. In line with Rancière's notion that art may approach politics by contributing to a new division of material and symbolic space (Rancière, 2008, pp. 536–537), we found that aesthetic experiences in an unusual and unknown time-space dimension allowed for the reinterpretation of social reality, the establishment of new, self-owned perspectives and an opportunity for emancipation. Against the background of the environmental crisis we revealed dominant behaviours and ways of thinking and explored the possibilities, obstacles, and alternative strategies of resistance.

The next level of the cultural-democratic approach: Towards staging the audience in an interactive performative event

The final performance was adapted to the ISAK venue and theatre festival at ISAK and aimed to be a relevant and entertaining performative event for youth and young adults. We wanted to involve the audience in an aesthetic space, so they would experience states of ambivalence and rupture, and participate in discussions and possibly in the formulation of some answers. I am aware that spectators' participation is not a guarantee of equality and democracy (Bishop, 2012, p. 284; Rancière, 2008, pp. 21–22). There must be an object, story or event – a medium that both spectators and participants can negotiate or a narrative they can interpret. The dramaturgical process therefore concerned both the design of the fictional world and the staging of the audience in relation to actors, room and objects. The material was to be found in notes and reports and in the embodied knowledge of participants, and a researcher gradually shifted role from being a facilitator to becoming a director. One challenge was to recall the most potent moments of experience and develop them into dramaturgical form. Flowing from an overriding interest in the relationship between aesthetics and politics, the aim was to create an interactive, performative event: "It is no longer the stage but the theatre as a whole which functions as the 'speaking space'"(Lehmann, 2006, p. 31). We started to develop a space and improvise with visuals and objects, followed by the integration of body, text and film, music and light. The development

of dramaturgical strategies was led by the director in close collaboration with the scenographer, the ISAK producer and the artistic team. Two groups participated in showcases with a critical response process (Aune, 2018) and these responses were of great importance to the work. In Happyland 2048 the audience are exposed to six different interactive strategies, some of which were hinted at in a pre-performance posted on social media. The presentation refers to a scenario in six sequences for five characters and a participating audience.

Audiences staging themselves as playful subjects

> A video display outside the venue: The director (character) welcomes visitors. The assistant (character) demonstrates how visitors can get access to Happy Land 2048 by writing their dream job on a card and attaching it to their forehead with a rubber band.

Film is a popular activity at ISAK and we added a new, very competent young member to the artistic team. Inspired by a board game, *Kortskalle*, the video invites members of the audience to a playful activity where they can identify with any dream job, without being confronted with the truth of its content. The video sequence launches an extraordinary world represented by the Director, elegantly dressed, and accompanied by caressing, amusing music. The video makes a ritual for access demonstrated by the Assistant.

Audience staged as objects of luck and bad luck

> As they have entered the stage, the audience must give away their personal written card. They are going to fish for a job. The Director appeals to enthusiasm.

The venue is an elongated stage designed for 30 audience members and the five actors. In the middle is an oval pond surrounded by sparkling light chains, and on a richly decorated bridge stands the Director,

welcoming "visitors". Due to the design of the pond, audiences and actors can see each other and everyone can see the Director. The pond is filled with orange, yellow, blue and green bathing ducks and on each duck is a card attached with the title of a type of work. Fishing rods are placed around the pond. The showcase revealed that the audience needed guidance into the venue and the Assistant led the group into a circle around the pond.

In creating the 2048 labour market in an environmentally friendly future, the pond contained 65 % necessity work, 15 % teaching jobs, 15 % management jobs and 5 % creative professions. Each category had jobs producing communication, food, energy and empathy. Having to swap the dream job for a casual, unknown, or unusual job was a critical point for the showcase audiences, as it was for participants in Democratic forums. The challenge was to establish a space that cared for emotional response without losing momentum in the excitement of the play. The audience faced uncertainty, frustration and rupture, as well as passive resistance and withdrawal. Without disclosing their function, actors moved around the pond, initiated conversations, failed to communicate with each other or the Director, and helped the Assistant in distributing places and fishing rods. The Director's monologue combined flattery and accusatory threats and, together with the music, the soundscape created the atmosphere for the temporal setting of 2048. The pond was emptied of ducks, and luck and bad luck were distributed through chance and political demagogy.

Audiences staged as audience

> Characters Alessia, Lasse and Hermann are pulled out for an Extra Chance and given three new opportunities. Confrontations with the Director develop into conflicts as they accuse each other of imposing impossible demands on content, status, and value of the work they catch. The Director leaves.

The three characters are developed from fragments presented by the participants, including the actors. Thus, Alessia is also a representation of the actor's own dream of a performative profession, and Hermann's total

lack of orientation is an expression of the actor looking back at himself as an 18 year old. Lasse represents statements like: "I want to be a journalist, but I can well become a caregiver if it doesn't work." The Director is representing the ideology of crises, where the need for control of work trumps all individual interests. Dreams, frustration, and anger about not being successful, respected and understood, are met with the Director's rhetorical phrases: "In a complex and uncertain world we, alternatively, all, alternatively, must all understand that …"

In this sequence the audience watch the stage actions, still within the contract of equal ratio developed in earlier sequences. Even the smallest form of interaction is a push towards courage and interest in interaction with actors and each other. Hence the audience show engagement and identification when characters are challenged by unknown or "necessity work". In order to secure co-ownership of the experiences and co-creatorship of the aesthetic communication played out, the actors needed to combine presence in interaction, flexibility and responsibility for progress of theme and conflicts, as well as a cautious use of theatricality in line with the audience's playfulness. During improvisational rehearsals the actors had developed a useful repertoire, a toolbox of strategies in interacting with the audience: sympathetic strategies such as swapping, giving and begging, and unsympathetic strategies such as tricking, stealing, lying.

Audiences staged as members of jury

> The three characters are standing on the bridge, asking the audience to judge their dreams versus the regime in Happy Land 2048. Audiences make judgements by moving to the same side as a character, to the opposite side or to somewhere in the middle. In turn, the actors interview audiences.

At this stage of the performance event, several members of the audience had forgotten both their personal written cards and the one they got while fishing, and these now received renewed attention. Those who take a clear stand for or against a character often argue from the perspective of the character and reflect on how they identify with his/her point of view. The

members who place themselves in the midfield more often refer directly to their own dreams and future challenges. After these responses, more members of the audience swap places.

Audiences staged in an open discussion

> Hermann asks for help to understand what kind of work belongs in communication, food, energy and empathy. He asks the audience to gather in groups – giving very unclear instructions.

Amongst the audience, many had "fished" unusual and unknown work, and the four categories mentioned represented an unusual form of classification. In our show cases there was no need for active participation from actors nor the Assistant. Hermann's messy leadership triggered a high level of interactivity and conversations and movements intersected at the venue. Gradually, small groups emerged arguing they have work of equal and similar importance to the community. Particularly the category of empathy opened surprising reflections, such as: "I wanted to be a writer, but then I became a bird guard. I think it's good and important to work with empathy in the future." (My translation)

Audiences returned to 2020

> Assistant announces that Happy Land is closing. Everyone will find their access cards at the entrance.

Depending on the intensity of the interaction, the previous two sequences tended to be very long-lasting and sometimes outlasted their allotted time at the theatre festival. The performance ends in accordance with the fictional universe, the fairground is closing for the day. The performance does not attempt to summarise fixed answers. But we argue that this form of theatre offers a space for actor and audience to gain critical insight into dreams, opportunities and challenges, here creating their own work narrative. This is the pleasure and dilemma of applied post-dramatic theatre:

"The transition may not deliver immediate results, but it produces the possibility of change through dialogue and exposure that allow space for feeling, and are not bound to rhetoric" (Angelaki, 2017, p. 3).

Concluding thoughts

Our theatre research project had a double agenda. We wanted to add new knowledge to how theatre can be a significant space for critical, informative and entertaining experience and reflection. Secondly, we wanted to highlight questions of work as part of life and future for youth and young people, and essential for concepts of citizenship and democracy. This double intention sets premises for designing Democratic forum and for our dramaturgical strategy to include the staging of the audience in the performative event. We strove to follow an ethos of equality inspired by, among others, Jacques Rancière (2016), and found Democratic forum to be quite successful. It was sufficiently open to tempt different young people to share experiences, opinions and competences and it was sufficiently structured with plans and phases. It was inclusive, sharing all kinds of documentation and systematically using time on thematic as well as aesthetic decisions. It was, moreover, sufficiently slow to allow both theme and form to take hold and spread among participants and to create interest for the performance to come. It was sufficiently uncertain and complex to attract young adults with their powers, courage and skills to create something they experienced as entertaining, complex, critical and important.

However, the ideal of political subjectivation and dissensus, also inspired by Rancière, needs further, careful thought in a theatre process initiated and directed by a researcher. Despite our democratic intentions, the project gave me – as researcher and director – a tremendous advantage in that I could decide topic, develop questions, procedures and make aesthetic decisions on my own. It is essential to reflect on the power relations. How is power distributed by facilitation, and when does this distribution exclude someone's voice? According to Raniciére, politics as political action arises when the excluded uses an opportunity to express herself and take a seat in the common room (2004, p. 70). This is why we did not start from clear hypotheses, pre-set questions and a production

concept, but applied techniques, methods, and competences that accorded with the chosen venue and its motivated participants. The facilitating director-researcher navigated in a state of dilemma, listening to the participants and to her own intentions, ongoing reflections, and ideas. We strove to find the design that embodied a dynamic relationship between the researcher`s knowhow and performance-sensitive presence and experiences with the artistic and cultural competence of participants. However, it must be admitted that this unpredictable platform did not suit everybody or all situations, and I did not solve the dilemma arising from youth at ISAK primarily wanting to play theatre.

Finally, two days before the first performance, the ISAK venue was closed due to the Covid-19 lockdown. The Covid-19 crisis made the questions raised highly relevant as it revealed the fragility of the welfare state. Young workers are the first to lose their jobs, and among these are students doing part-time work while they study, and other young people on the doorstep of the work market. Many participants in Happy Land 2048 shared dreams of a future in the professions of the performing arts and some had experience as freelance artists, dancers, and singers. Conversations about this topic was an undercurrent throughout the project period and the performance provided no secure answers. However, the performing arts project became an arena for open and broad reflections on being an artist in the future. One participant said: "Now I have become even more eager to be an actor and make important, engaging theatre." Another had second thoughts: "Perhaps I better get an ordinary job. Get me a home and a workplace". At the moment of the shutdown, we sat together preparing the last pieces of scenography. As it was time to leave, one of the actors raised his voice to express a common experience: "We are about to create something that really matters to young adults."

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CHAPTER 10

The Aesthetic Model of Disability

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Abstract: This chapter explores the questions of how and why certain behaviours are perceived as an expression of a disability – and not, for example, as an mic expression – and what role art can play when it comes to constructing and (re) framing disability as a phenomenon. The chapter is based on three field studies conducted at the NewYoungArt [NyUngKunst] festival in Northern Norway during the period 2017–2019, and uses dissemination methodology derived from art-based research and performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003; Haseman & Mafe, 2009; McNiff, 2007). The authors' purpose is to present the "aesthetic model of disability". This is a new model that clearly deviates from the medical model, but which complements the social model of disability and the Nordic GAP model (Owens, 2015; Shakespeare, 2004). The theoretical framework consists of Rancière (2012), Seel (2003) and Dewey (1934), among others. With this chapter, the authors wish to contribute to cultural democracy by identifying an opportunity, through applied art, for people with disabilities.

Keywords: aesthetic, democracy, relational, drama, youth, disability model

Introduction

Aesthetic practices such as applied dramaturgical and theatre projects can help to construct disability, as well as revealing new ways of

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understanding disability within the framework of cultural democracy (Gjærum & Conroy, 2012). This chapter will discuss how disability can be understood as a relational phenomenon by examining field examples (2017–19) from an inclusive arts festival for young people with different abilities (NUK – NyUngKunst). We rely upon a broad and political concept of aesthetics and theories of art evaluation, as well as models and theory related to disability. We explore the question of how and why something appears and is perceived as an expression of a disability – and not, for example, as an expression of art, and what role art can play in reframing disability as a phenomenon. The purpose of this chapter is to present "the aesthetic model of disability", a new model that can be used as a supplement to the recognized social and relational models of disability (Owens, 2015; Shakespeare, 2004). This model is designed to contribute to cultural democracy by identifying an opportunity within the arts for people with disabilities (Gjærum, 2017).

Aesthetic recognition and the distribution of the sensible

The term "aesthetic" was originally derived from the Greek words "aisthesis" which means sensation or feeling, and "aistethikos" which means sensory (Baumgarten, 1750). According to Baumgarten, aesthetics is based on mankind's ability to perceive the entirety of a thing by combining sensory impressions. It can then be understood as a separate knowledge sphere in which the "lower cognitive abilities", the senses and emotions, prevail (Baumgarten, 1750). Aesthetic knowledge thus functions as a supplement to logical, scientific or intellectual cognition, or the epistemic knowledge form (Gustavsson, 2000).

Baumgarten's understanding of aesthetics is shared and further developed by several philosophers, including John Dewey, Martin Seel and Jaques Rancière, who all associate aesthetics with recognition and experience. Dewey emphasizes that aesthetic experiences always have an emotional quality, together with a present and relational quality, which binds different sensory impressions together, in an encounter between

the "created", the "creator", and the "active recipient" (Dewey, 1934, pp. 201–202). He claims that the aesthetic experience is a holistic one, at once intellectual, practical and emotional. Seel (2003) also distinguishes aesthetic perception from the acquisition of all other knowledge. He defines aesthetics as a science of the appearance of phenomena through our sensory consciousness, and argues that aesthetics should, in a phenomenological way, be based on, and examine, the processes by which these phenomena appear to us. In accordance with Seel, we should therefore explore the moment when art expressions appear to us. Furthermore, we should strive to understand the aesthetic perception in terms of its object (what is sensed), and the aesthetic object in terms of how it is perceived (and by whom). This is because socialized and cultured individuals transfer their understanding and knowledge to the moments of sensory recognition (Seel, 2003).

Rancière expounds on a similar perspective, linking aesthetics to politics, in which he claims that our shared human experience is created and organized by distribution of the sensible – the aesthetic (Rancière, 2012, p. 11). This distribution is the essence of what Rancière believes is the content and experience of politics: The division of time and space, of the visible and invisible, of speech and noise (Rancière, 2012). This distribution represents a "system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" (Rancière, 2004, p. 12). The system thus provides guidance for what is imaginable and possible and determines how different phenomena and expressions are presented, as well as how they are interpreted and who is perceived as what, if at all.

In light of the perspectives outlined above, we can argue that aesthetics as a field investigates how different phenomena, from a purely sensory perspective, appear, are classified, and understood by us. Aesthetics is a form of recognition, primarily related to the immediate, to the senses and emotions. Consequently, the aesthetic perspective is available to all people, in all arenas where we feel, experience and recognize – not only in the presence of art and not confined to the field of art at all (Gjærum, 2008, p. 85).

However, in this chapter we will bring to light how art is an arena for the division and distribution of the sensible – a place for knowledge production. This is because artistic disciplines are what Rancière calls modes of action that intervene towards behavior and visibility (Rancière, 2012). Therefore, Rancière suggests that we examine how different artistic practices contribute to the division and distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2012, p. 13). A performative re-distribution can put positions of power into flux by, for example, increasing visibility or giving someone a voice in a public forum (Gjærum, 2017).

In this context, the following questions are posed: how and why is something perceived as an expression of a cognitive or bodily impairment rather than as an expression of art, and what role can art play when it transforms disability as a phenomenon?

Models of disability

Before moving on to a presentation of field examples, we will examine some existing models of disability. These (like the model we have drafted) do not claim to be theories. They describe the causes and effects of disability (Grue, 2014; Thomas, 2004a; Tøssebro, 2004). In this context, it must be noted that in western culture over the past 60 years, two conflicting perspectives, in particular, have characterized politics, practice, and research on the phenomenon of disability. These perspectives are primarily represented by two models, the medical and the social.[1]

The medical model

The medical model defines disability as a failure or defect in the individual's isolated body or cognition, caused by an underlying health or genetic condition (Grue, 2014, p. 83; Tøssebro, 2004, p. 3). Disability is understood as an individual problem where the goal is prevention,

1 More precisely, we should say that there are several socially informed models, and that these have evolved in different directions in different countries (Thomas, 2004b). However, they all are socially rooted and removed from a purely medical understanding of disability. We therefore refer to the social model in singular form.

treatment or healing (Marks, 1997, p. 86), and the impaired body (including its cognitive function) is defined in contrast to a norm that is assumed to possess a natural superiority (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 19). Historically, both the political and the professional conceptualizations of disability have been based on this medical (normative) mindset, but since the 1970s it has faced increasing resistance in the form of an "environmental turn" (Tøssebro, 2004). This entails a shift in focus from the individual's isolated body, and towards the environment around the individual.

The social model

Researchers, activists, politicians and practitioners have gradually become more concerned with aspects of disability beyond the purely psychological and medical, and therefore seek to establish an understanding of disability as a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon (Grue, 2014, p. 71). Representations of disability as a purely bio-medical problem are now being challenged (Grue, 2014, pp. 72–73). Social models are based on the interaction between society and the body, focusing on how societal systems and institutional and structural conditions create and maintain disability (Grue, 2014; Marks, 1997). Disability originates in a discriminatory and exclusionary society, not in the so-called "disabled body" (Marks, 1997; Shakespeare, 2004, p. 9; Tøssebro, 2004). What one might call a "strong" social model (Shakespeare, 2004) breaks the causal link between a medically defined impairment and a socially inflicted disability (Thomas, 2004b, p. 25).

The relational model

In the Nordic countries, we prefer to employ a third, relational model, often referred to as the "gap model". Here, disability is located in the gap that arises between an individual's abilities and the expectations of society or the environment (Tøssebro, 2004). This model differentiates between a "physical impairment" – damage, abnormality, or loss of a body part or one of the body's functions (Bufdir, 2019) – and a "disability" which describes an encounter with an environment in which the impairment is

experienced as a disadvantage. Disability is understood as a phenomenon dependent on context. If the environment can make accommodations, a person with an impairment does not necessarily have to be disabled (Fylling & Sandvin, 2014, pp. 219–220).

Over the years, all of the above models have been criticized. Because they are models, they ignore key aspects of the construction and experience of disability, such as the embodied experience and conditions associated with the body (Goodley et al., 2018; Hughes & Paterson, 1997; Morris, 1991; Owens, 2015; Swain & French, 2000) as well as psycho-emotional forms of disability (Thomas, 2006, p. 182). The models have also been criticized for neglecting people with cognitive disabilities (Chappell et al., 2001; Owens, 2015; Walmsley, 2001, p. 189), which, due to their complex nature, are often difficult to define (Ellingsen & Sandvin, 2014). For the sake of brevity, this chapter will not broadly address this criticism or introduce more models (which do exist). However, in discussing the field examples, we will highlight some aspects and theories related to what one might call the *aesthetic dimension* of disability. These are not emphasized in the models mentioned above, but by artists, art historians, art scientists, linguists, and sociologists, among others. These perspectives are not new. We in no way take credit for their "discovery", but to our knowledge they have never before been combined into a holistic "aesthetic model of disability", equal to existing medical, social and relational models.

Method

This chapter is based on three field studies at the Arctic Arts Festival's[2] youth initiative NyUngKunst (NUK) in the period 2017–2019.[3] The data

2 https://festspillnn.no/nb/informasjon/nuk-ny-ung-kunst/om-nuk

3 The first author, Nanna Kathrine Edvardsen has, since the fall of 2017 had the main responsibility for the project and the second author, Rikke Gürgens Gjærum, is the initiator of the collaboration as well as the supervisor and co-researcher in the research team. The research team from UiT has consisted of three people in total; the final one being a scientific assistant named Tine Skjold. The second author and scientific assistant have participated in the research project in connection with data production (interview and observation), transcription and dissemination of preliminary findings, and have, in keeping with an action research model/inclusive research, also been involved in parts of the analysis process, together with reference groups and seminar participants. However, it is the first author who has led the process and has undertaken an

material consists in its entirety of observations of art interactive projects and interviews with 43 young participants, 26 artist instructors, 11 companions/family members and 5 administrative staff/supervisors. The Arctic Centre for Welfare and Disability Research began a partnership with Festival Director Maria Utsi in 2016, when she wanted research assistance in the process of changing and developing the festival.[4] Over a period of three years, the researchers prepared an action research project that put inclusion and artistic diversity under the microscope. The research project has evolved to explore and develop the festival's artistic, pedagogical and social opportunities by, among other things, democratically involving the festival's participants (with and without impairments) as "co-action researchers" within an "inclusive research" design (Gjærum & Rasmussen, 2010; Melbøe, 2018).

Although the research project as a whole thus involves individual and collective processes of change where research participants have implemented, evaluated and refined different approaches to art production in diverse groups, the focus in this particular chapter is to examine and compare/discuss three such approaches in connection to how they frame – or reframe – disability as a phenomenon. The processes of change that may or may not have occurred prior to, or because of, these experiences will be presented in the first author's dissertation at UiT in 2022 along with the rest of the data. This chapter examines only one dimension of the data: the aesthetic model of disability. The methodology is derived from the art-based and practice-led-research tradition (Haseman & Mafe, 2009; McNiff, 2007), understood as a staging of data using performative (in this case, linguistic) means, i.e., a form of "performance ethnography" (Denzin, 2003).

Before we begin our discussion of the aesthetic dimension of disability, we will present the field examples. These are entitled: "Scenes from NUK". The scenes are based on observations and interviews done with

in-depth systematisation and analysis of the data, chosen theoretical perspectives, and written the thesis to which this chapter can be linked.

4 This is not mission research, but a collaborative effort to develop cultural democracy. The research is fully paid for by UiT and is carried out without the need for specific results or reporting. Thus, the researchers have been free to develop organisational, educational, and artistic models, and data-based theories and concepts.

artist-instructors at the festival, and are the result of a data reduction process. In this chapter we have taken some artistic liberties with the source material, deleting and moving content, as well as merging interviews from different people. However, the content retains its original meaning and nothing has been added except for a few linking words and phrases. In all of the scenes there is a recognition and interpretation of the phenomenon of disability through artistic practices which readers might encounter themselves upon entering a dance studio, a music hall, a gallery, or venturing onto a theatre stage.

The chapter now embarks upon a dramaturgical journey through three scenes that represent the study empirically, albeit in a performative and condensed form. In Scene 1, we meet an artist schooled and experienced in the field of performing arts, working at NUK to create a stage-performance with a group of fifteen-or-so differently abled participants and her artistic partner(s). In Scene 2 we meet another artist, this time working a visual performance art practice where the outcome is an interactive exhibition. Finally, in Scene 3, we meet a musician talking about the experience of facilitating music production in a diverse group of participants.

The authors then discuss the scenes through the prism of the theoretical perspective presented initially. In conclusion, the authors answer the chapter's research questions: how and why is something expressed and perceived as an expression of a disability – and not, for example, as an expression of art – and what role art can play as a means of reframing disability as a phenomenon?

Three scenes

Sneaker-clad feet squeak against linoleum. Old paintbrushes scrape across canvas, glass, wood and styrofoam. A floodlight buzzes over our heads. Pencils scratch against paper. Clicks, clangs, groans and creaks emanate from old objects that are now being cobbled together in new constellations. Human bodies move and breathe, in and out of synchronicity with each other. Words find their way from mouth to audience in a cacophony of different voices. The disjointed tones from an out-of-tune

guitar echo in the corridors. A silent film recorded with a mobile phone broadcasts on repeat against a white wall.

Scene 1

The abandoned classroom is small and quite hot.

The room contains an old piano, a few chairs and some rickety desks that are covered in small written messages and symbols, scratches from keys and other sharp objects and plastered with bullets of dried gum on the undersides. It's late. Almost eleven pm. The soft glow of the midnight sun is creeping through a crack in the blinds. The artist looks a little tired and the researcher is flipping through her notes.

Researcher:
This is an inclusive festival … how does that affect the artistic expression?

Artist:
You get a different product or result than you would if it was a more homogeneous group. In a way, I think we would have come further. We would have been able to teach them even more if it were a normal youth group.

(PAUSE)

It feels very rude to sit here and say that. But that's the reality. Because that's the thing about people with learning disabilities – they usually learn more slowly. They need more time. Then you have the beaming faces here who do their very best, but from a purely artistic standpoint, you will not be able to launch them up into the heavens. They are good, they are rhythmic and everything, but they don't have the agility which is required.

(PAUSE)

We found out already on the first day that we had to divide up into smaller groups. Because we noticed that either *they* were bored or the *other*s were bored.

Researcher:
In what situations did this happen?

Artist:
When we work on specific scenes and give directions. Instruct, make suggestions, play. When it gets too technical or too intellectual. So – that's when people lose their focus.

Researcher:
But what exactly becomes too technical and intellectual? What does it consist of?

Artist:
No, it's just about having the stamina to stand or sit in one place for a long time, for example. To have one's attention concentrated on a single thing, or to focus on the person who is talking.

(PAUSE)
For example, we were standing in a circle, and were going to do exercises that were based on a steady tempo. When it came around to someone with a learning disability, the rhythm stopped. Because they needed more time to think about it or they were uncertain. And then we were like, "Send it on, send it on!" (The artist laughs a bit) So all of these circle exercises became a test of patience for those who were normal-functioning.

(PAUSE)
I guess my answer is that if you look only at quality – yes, it goes down a bit.

(PAUSE)
I think you actually get a better process. But purely … artistically … if you're going to measure …

Scene 2

A silent corner in a shopping mall.

Artist: For example, we really wanted to include a participant who hears things and makes very interesting sounds – which is a deviation, so to speak. We were hoping to work a little bit with those sounds – record them, listen to them, maybe develop and use them in a performative way in the installation.

(PAUSE)

Artist: But that's kind of touchy, isn't it? We tried to clear it with her companion first, but he didn't think it was a very good idea. So we let it go. We think it would have been very fun to work a little with that "differentness". We artists generally think that things that are different are a little bit more interesting.

(PAUSE)

Artist: But then there is that balance … that kind of …

Scene 3

In the basement of the old school – musicians guide a diverse group of young participants.

The artist's story

Jonas could really play in only one way through a whole song. Constantly the same way. And we got a little frustrated. All attempts to create form and structure were suddenly just exhausting and pointless, and we were not musically motivated. For example, agreeing to add an extra measure or make a sudden stop was hard. Because if *he* didn't add the extra measure, or if *he* just continued playing as usual when everyone else had stopped, well, that didn't sound so good. He affected everything. So then you were constantly asking yourself if you should just abandon the form idea. But then the music gets poorer artistically: smoothed-out and boring and ordinary … Should you do it? Or should you try to get him to follow? Try to change his playing just a little bit? We ended up making some adjustments. For example, in the middle of these songs we added two measures that were completely without tempo, where we could break up his rhythm a bit, and rebuild it from scratch. There was a section where the music was more floating, where we could play outside of tonality, in a free rhythmic space. So there was this element of "art music" right in the middle of everything. And it was very successful. It was not an emergency solution. Or, maybe it started out that way. But it turned out very well. It was kind of fantastic. Also, a rhythm emerged between Jonas and Torill in one of the songs. Jonas played his regular "dyng – dyng – dyng – dyng"

and then Torill came with her "dyngdyngdyyyng – dyyyng – dyng". It was like hearing a railroad crossing or two bells ringing at different speeds. You could imagine the printed notes right in front of you. Five, seven … five beats against seven beats, four against five. Wow.

Discussion

In Scene 1, we see how the artist, leading an artistic exercise where several of the participants have a cognitive impairment, experiences that the great physical and cognitive diversity in the group causes the artistic quality to deteriorate. We see in this context that the artist feels that it is in particular the participants with a learning disability who do not achieve at the same level as the "rest", a group of people the artist calls normal youth. This happens when the performance gets too technical, goes too fast, or when you engage in an activity over a long period of time. Statements like "they don't have the agility required" and "they need more time for things" substantiate this. We can draw parallels to the medical model, or an individual understanding of disability, as the challenges are located in the individual and identified as a failure or defect in body, cognition, adaptive abilities, traits, etc. These do not harmonize with the stated artistic goals, or the approved methods for achieving them.

The artist thus refers to established craftsmanship or formal quality criteria (Gran, 2014) and to a formal aesthetic art didactic (Aure, 2013), where the aim is to teach already established techniques and skills in order to achieve a specific and qualitatively good result. Because of the artistic practice and the artist's experience, it can be interpreted not only that there is a clear hierarchy of design and craftsmanship but also that there are traditional norms for the creation and assessment of art. The experience that something becomes qualitatively inferior is directly related to the fact that some individuals do not master these established norms. This type of pedagogy can, generally speaking, be linked to what Rancière calls a "representative art regime", where art is created, identified, judged and classified according to different representational techniques, and according to fixed principles (Rancière, 2012, p. 27).

Here we can adopt the social model of disability, and assert that it is the artist's pedagogical approach, principles, and understanding of art that is causing a problem, not the young performers. In the exercises and situations referenced above by the artist, environmental and attitudinal barriers arise. It is these that create the disability and contribute to stigmatization and exclusion. By the artist's own account, there is limited room for participation or expression in ways other than those established as "correct". In this situation, we can further argue that the artist's system of self-evident facts of sense perception (his or her categorization of what art is and is not) not only determines the pedagogical approach, but also has an impact on how the project participants' expressions are perceived. Or more precisely, on how they are *not* perceived – namely, as artistic expressions. The artist has a clear concept of what art *can* and *should* be, and how it should be produced. Expressions that fall outside the limits of this classification system are categorized as bad or non-art – or perhaps simply as an expression of a medically defined disability?

In Scene 2, we see that disability as a phenomenon is not merely created on the basis of discourses and philosophical discussions about art, but based on perceptions of what is deviant in a negative sense, as well as what is ethically or morally justifiable. In this scene, we see how the artist and a companion agree not to artistically include the verbal expressions of one of the participants. Both experience it as a delicate topic and a difficult balancing act. One way to interpret this (based on the whole interview as well as observations) is that the artist and companion were afraid to use the sounds of the participant in an art project. Perhaps they wanted to avoid what Colette Conroy refers to as "enfreakment": to make a subject perform as an oddity on the basis of what is considered to be a strange or peculiar trait (Conroy, 2008, p. 342). They may not want to put themselves in the position of staging what is considered by many to be an aberration (hearing voices and making "meaningless" sounds) because they see it as potentially unethical or stigmatizing, i.e., an ethically challenging position – which is also discussed in several studies (Gjærum & Rasmussen, 2010; Hargrave, 2009; Tomlinson, 1982, in Conroy, 2009).

The ensuing ethical debate thus trumps what we might call formal or artisanal criteria when it comes to how a *potential* work of art is judged.

This is related to what Rancière calls the "ethical art regime". Under such a regime, art should contribute to maintaining a moral standard (Stabell, 2012, p. 49). Art is judged on the basis of instrumental, moral criteria, and is linked to "ethos", that is, what the majority of society (or authority figures) think is right (Rancière, 2012, p. 25). In this example, we can assume that the artist and the companion do not wish to contribute to further stigmatization of already vulnerable groups.

One could, on the other hand, argue that their actions, or the choice *not* to act, created such a "freak". As Conroy points out, freaks are created by processes involving cultural consensus and discourses concerning power and normality (Conroy, 2008, p. 342). In keeping with this, those who decide not to use the sounds of the person are so-called "functional" and thus belong to the normative majority. Both of them, by virtue of their positions in society, have the power to define: they exert this power by identifying the participant's noises as an expression of something abnormal or a disability (cf. a medical model), and frame the person as aberrant or disabled.

Furthermore, we can assert that they determine that not only are the participant's actions expressions of abnormality, but also take, as a starting point, a common cultural stereotype associated with having a disability: that it is experienced as a loss, or something that is undesirable (Kuppers, 2001, p. 27; Kuppers & Marcus, 2009, p. 143). This exhibits what Swain and French call "the tragedy model of disability", where disability is viewed as a personal tragedy and an exclusively negative experience (Swain & French, 2000). Gjærum & Rasmussen also describe prejudice against actors with developmental disabilities in their study of inclusive theatre: "as researchers, … often coming across people who are prejudiced against the intellectually disabled and who are convinced that the creation of so-called 'real art' is beyond their reach. They seem to believe that cognitive shortcomings of intellectually disabled people will inevitably turn any dramatic rehearsal into a kind of social gathering where they can at best practice self-development" (Gjærum & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 102).

Scene 2 shows how two people belonging to the normative majority, based on a discourse of normality, not only frame disability as a

phenomenon by confirming the prevailing classification of the sensory, but also associate *negative meaning* with the phenomenon. This is instead of presenting disability in accordance with an affirmative model, in which having a disability can also be *positive* (Swain & French, 2000, p. 574). "This means that disability art – audiences included – participates in both the creation and confirmation of disability" (Gjærum & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 111).

The artist (in scene 2) shows an interest in the aesthetic outcome of the scenario that he/she can choose, by pointing out that it could be exciting from a purely artistic standpoint to use the sounds in a performance. However, the perception that it would be problematic wins out. Perhaps in this situation, one could safely assume that the discomfort felt by the artist and the attendant was determining their actions? This is another aspect of the aesthetic dimension of disability: the aesthetic disciplines can be said to trace "the emotions that some bodies feel in the presence of other bodies" (Siebers, 2005, p. 542).

The field of Disability Studies emphasizes that aesthetic or sensory appearances, *and how they make us feel*, affect access to economic, social, and political rights, and influence how we act (Harris, 2019, p. 932). Sensory interaction with a physically impaired individual can cause emotional reactions in the form of, for example, discomfort, sadness, and pity (Grue, 2014; Kuppers & Marcus, 2009). The so-called *affective* response (Goodley et al., 2018) affects the experience of and interaction with people with disabilities (thus helping to frame disability). For example, a stigma in the larger community can cause people with disabilities to be ontologically invalidated or pathologized (Goodley et al., 2018). Keeping this in mind, the expressions of the individual in Scene 2, which are understood from a pathological perspective to be a medical disorder or a functional impairment, could also be defined as simply one of many possible human expressions that could be staged and presented as art without any problem? If so, could the person then take part in the exercise *as herself* rather than being excluded?

In both Scene 1 and Scene 2 we can see a classification of the sensible that corroborates with what might, among the normative majority and those with discursive power, be the established consensus regarding art

and disability. This tendency is also present in representative and ethical regimes of art where the sensible is distributed in a way that conforms to pre-existing forms of visibility, social structures and hierarchies (Stabell, 2012). Here we can again draw parallels to Rancière, and claim that the artist and the companion function as police – institutions of authority (including individuals) that create and maintain a shared system of sensible self-evident truths, and preserve dominant social norms (Rancière, 2012).

Likewise, in Scene 3 we can identify a policing authority, namely one of the artists leading the ensemble. We read how in his meeting with Jonas, a musician with a learning disability, he was initially frustrated that Jonas could not play within the musical framework originally intended for the ensemble. In this situation, the artist considered trying to get Jonas to accommodate the group and change the way he played in order to follow the planned structure of the music. We can claim that the artist initially operated within a representative art regime, or at least with preconceived notions about what form the art – the musical work – should have. Likewise, we can surmise that he viewed Jonas's musical expression and/or adaptive ability as a musical challenge, something that could weaken the artistic product. This concurs with the experience of the artist from Scene 1.

However, we see that the artist in scene 3 ultimately chose to change his concept for the song, rather than Jonas changing *his*, which led to unexpected artistic effects. The artist described what arose as "a free rhythmic space" and "an element of art music", and characterized the event as fantastic. We see, in accordance with an affirmative model of disability, that Jonas's manner of playing, which was initially perceived as limiting variation and development within the song, instead became a strength, perceived as something positive. The art project got what we might call "a new aesthetic direction" built upon a contribution that the "deviant musician" set in motion. This new aesthetic direction is an aesthetic (communication) process that Gadamer (1986) describes: it occurs when "the game plays the player along". Thus, a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) may emerge from those involved (as the artist mentions in scene 3). All of them, including the audience, can have the opportunity to reap

an aesthetic experience (Dewey, 1934). Based on Rancière, we can say that there is a redistribution and re-classification of the sensible, of definitions, structures and hierarchies. In reference to Seel (2003), we can argue that Jonas's playing suddenly appears differently than before.

At this time, we can refer to Rancière's third art regime: the "aesthetic", which, unlike the other two regimes, is based on a reinterpretation of "what constitutes art and what art does" (Rancière, 2012, p. 32). Within Rancière's regime, a deconstruction of the principles of previous regimes takes place, hierarchies are broken down, and the singularity of art is identified. It is freed from specific rules, subject, genre, and art hierarchies (Rancière, 2012, pp. 30–31). The third regime thus contrasts with the others, where one adheres to the usual principles of art production and appraisal, and helps to maintain the status quo regarding the distribution of the sensible. In this aesthetic regime art demands to operate independently of social structures and classifications (Stabell, 2012, p. 50), thus presenting new ways to categorize and participate, to challenge the prevalent political and moral order.

This is exactly what occurs in Scene 3. What could have been presented as a tragic personal flaw, a challenge, or a lack of skills and abilities, was instead presented as "art music". The way Jonas played was no longer perceived or portrayed as wrong or bad, but carried the potential for artistic innovation and creative design – and it was appreciated. This, in turn, has an impact on how Jonas is categorized: namely, as an artist – a resource, and not as a disabled person, an interpretation that is consistent with previous research on art and disability (Gürgens, 2004; Ineland, 2007; Sauer, 2004).

The aesthetic model

Disability can thus appear as an aesthetic phenomenon, which we have now observed through a discussion of three scenes. The phenomenon is created and understood by association with and distribution of the sensible, based on how physical, cognitive, and linguistic expressions appear, are experienced, and are presented aesthetically. This can be visualized in a model (see Figure 1). As we see from the model, disability occurs

when human expressions or actions are perceived and recognized aesthetically as expressions of precisely that – categorized as, for example, social, physical, or cognitive aberrations or challenges, or they are given negative meaning. The phenomenon is additionally framed when these expressions or actions are then staged as expressions of a disability, or are imbued with a narrative and with connotations that confirm and support a "disability" categorization, according to cultural norms.

As we know, the physically disabled body has social, cultural, and historical meanings (Goodley et al., 2018, p. 208), and cultural representations can confirm or reject these, as well as lead to further debate about the nature of disability (Grue, 2014). Cultural representations can, for example, support the medical perspective and present disability as an injury, a deficiency or a personal tragedy.

Aesthetic experiences engage us emotionally, which can lead to an affective response in the face of staged performances or other cultural representations of disability. As Goodley et al. and Harris point out, affect is deeply rooted in social and cultural norms (Goodley et al., 2018; Harris, 2019). If we draw parallels to the aesthetics theory presented at the outset of this chapter, we can argue that cultural (including artistic) representations thus contribute to the distribution of the sensible, because they shape what we see, think, feel, and then *do* with regard to disability. Consequently, they help to delineate and make sense of the phenomenon – that is, to *frame* or *construct* it.

Additionally, this model implies that aesthetic practices can also *reframe* disability as a phenomenon. This can be accomplished by classifying and presenting human expressions and actions in a manner that challenges existing systems and categorizations. What was previously defined as a spasm, an expression of sickness, can now be defined as an interesting artistic quality, as an invitation to dance (Gjærum, 2004; Gjærum & Rasmussen, 2010). For example, cultural representation through visual arts, film, theatre, or literature, attributes meaning and narrative to the disabled body (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Grue, 2014). As Kuppers points out, pre-existing narratives can be challenged by the way artists with disabilities present themselves (Kuppers, 2001, p. 93). This is because disability, according to Judith Butler's theories of performed acts

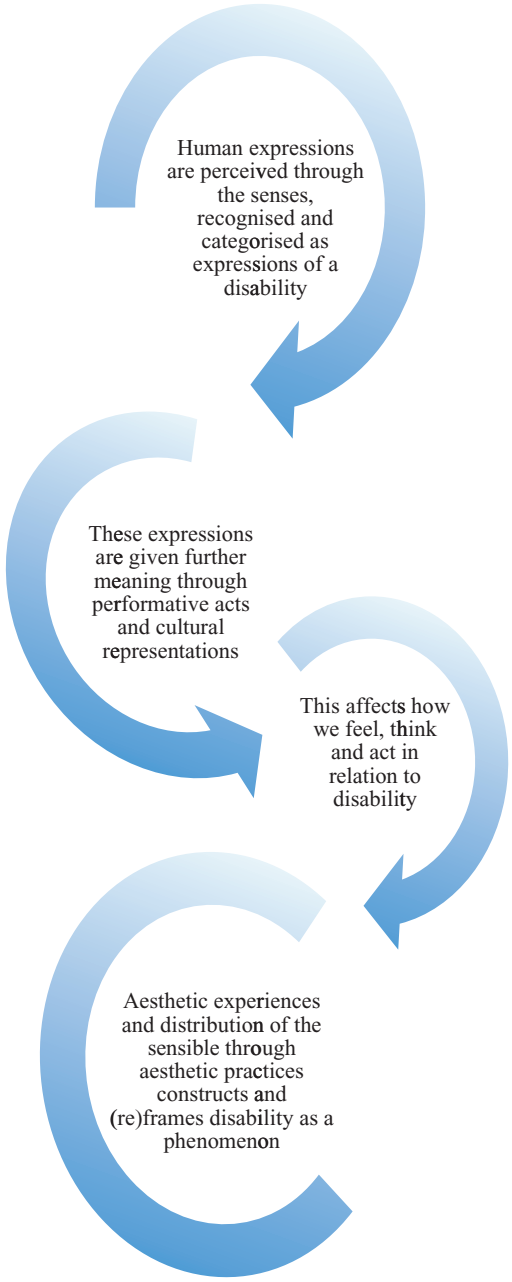

Figure 1 The aesthetic model

(Butler, 1988), is something that is *done*, or *performed*, partly based on social and cultural expectations and norms.

Summary

We have now illustrated how and why something can be perceived as an expression of a disability – and not, for example, as an expression of art. We have discussed what role applied art can play as a vehicle for reframing disability as a phenomenon. This chapter has shown that artistic practices (applied arts) can either confirm existing interpretations of disability, or they can negotiate new identities, narratives and categorizations.[5] Such progressive/innovative artistic practices may lead to increased equality for people with disabilities, as pointed out by, among others, sociologist and theologian Nancy Eiesland (Eiesland, 1994, p. 98, in Garland-Thomson, 2005, p. 525). Applied art can, by introducing or molding sensory forms, challenge or confirm the present division and distribution of the sensible. Artistic practices shape how we think, act, and feel about disability. They can also help open or close windows of opportunity for participation and inclusion, and promote or inhibit cultural democracy.

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CHAPTER 11

Celebrating Neighbourhood Birds: Performing Equality in Avian-human Performance

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Abstract: Birds are messengers of climate change and loss of biodiversity. As a backdrop I use Henrik Ernston's and Erik Swyngedouw's suggestion of politicizing the environment in the era of the Anthropocene. Politicizing the environment is here fundamentally performative, which means that questions concerning environment are related to ecological understanding, egalitarian acting and respectful relationships. I argue in this text that considering and performing a non-human perspective is an equalitarian bodily practice of politicizing non-human beings around us. In this text I ask: how does avian-human performance practice politicize birds? I am interested in analysing what effects of differences are generated in the entangled relations of performance practice, and how do they relate to performative politics of equality. The concepts eco-justice, diversity, agential realism and Rancière's performative politics, which are actualized in "distribution of the sensible", are central in the diffractive analysis of non-human performance practice. In this pedagogically inclined artistic research project, I combined three bird discourses: the scientific, sentimental and "the reality-of-a-bird" discourses are embedded in performative avian-human performance inquiries. However, such studio practices are not enough. Scientific studies, combined with studies in indigenous knowledge systems and direct intra-action with diverse non-humans, can open deepened ecological understanding of the needs and desires of a more-than-human-world. Combining these aspects with performance practices may reveal more ways of politicizing non-humans and of voicing their needs and desires.

Keywords: eco-justice, performative politics, human-avian relationship, non-human performance, acting

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Introduction

This text explores the relation between "avian-human performance" practice, on the one hand, and political emancipation and eco-social justice, on the other. Performance activists, participatory applied theatre practitioners and radical drama educators have a long history of working with questions related to political activism, diversity and justice. Inequalities between different social groups have motivated applied theatre practitioners to develop multiple Brecht- and Boal-inspired reflective practices to explore questions concerning social justice which focus on human categories such as race, colour, class, sexuality, gender and ability (Nicholson, 2014; Vettraino & Linds, 2015). However, the whole idea of racism is rooted in "speciesism", which can be defined as "an idea that being human is a good enough reason for human animals to have greater moral rights than non-human animals" (BBC, 2014). Apocalyptic news about climate change consequences and biodiversity loss (IBPES-report, 2019) have influenced many humans, who now demand eco-system rights on behalf of non-human entities.

Esa Kirkkopelto (2017, pp. 87–96) notices that "'non-human-performance' is intrinsically related to ethical concerns about global suffering". At the same time interest in non-human performance does not mean that inhuman suffering is put on one side. Interest in non-human performance is a sign of a radicalisation and expansion of ideas concerning social justice. Kirkkopelto (2017) presents contemporary examples of Finnish non-human performance research which represent the testing of the limits of the scene, and the agency of performers and spectators. There are various ways of carrying out the non-human and investigating relationship between human and non-human. In my experiments with trees and birds, I have explored what Kirkkopelto calls "the transformative potential of human bodies, the 'non-human in us'" (Kirkkopelto, 2017, p. 88); I have also carried out what Kirkkopelto refers to as "staging performances in unconventional venues and in relation to their non-human factors" (Kirkkopelto, 2017, p. 88).

The focus of this chapter is an avian-human performance workshop in February 2020 which was a preparation for an immersive children's outdoor theatre performance-walking, *Bird Path*, to four-year-old pre-school

children. My bachelor students of drama and theatre studies performed stationary local birds in the performance. Such practice resonates well with Anne Beate Reinertsen's "walkingthinkingfeeling"-practice when she suggests "mixed child/adult group walks in nature as insect experimentations and collaborative inter-/intra observations always and again, looking beyond" (Reinertsen, 2016, p. 170).

Through the analysis of this work, I will argue that performing the non-human – considering a non-human perspective – is an equalitarian bodily practice of politicizing non-human beings around us. This kind of practice resonates with David Wright's "argument for the recognition of drama, theatre or performance as methodologies that can enable ecological understanding …: a theatre that changes" (Wright, 2015, p. 247).

This has implications for how to think about being, knowing and ethics. I find Karen Barad's "agential realism" approach fruitful. She writes: "We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world: we know because we are *of* the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming" (Barad, 2007, p. 185). She suggests combining ontology, epistemology and ethics. Barad proposes "something like an *ethico-onto-epistemology* – an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing and being" (Barad, 2007). Agential realism is based on an idea that non-humans and humans are entangled in intra-active processes of becoming. It is an ongoing process in drama educational studio practice to create different material enactments and focus on different *agential cuts*. Arlander (2018a, pp. 140–141) suggests that "agential cut" may be a valuable tool for researchers who include practice in their research. She explains that "differences are made not found, and dichotomies derive from specific cuts" (p. 140). This is useful for my purpose, because the agenda is to develop drama educational work which contributes to deeper ecological understanding.

I pose the following question: how may avian-human performance practice materialise and distribute agency? Arlander (2018a) proposes that "the task for an artist-researcher is, then, not only to acknowledge her subjectivity and entanglement with the object of research but also account for the agential cuts within the phenomena at hand – that is, what is included and what is excluded from mattering". By means of

describing agentic forces in, and analysing agential cuts in, some central exercises from a drama workshop, and with some snapshots from the performance, I discuss how this case and similar performance practice relate to performative politics of equality.

In the next section I first present some theoretical approaches which have been actualized for my diffractive analysis. Elinor Vettraino and Warren Linds (2015, p. 17) write about reflection as diffraction. Diffractive approach follows Barad's (2003, p. 803, 2007) idea of analysing intraactions as a process, and defining agential cuts during the moment of writing the analysis.

The concepts, namely eco-justice, diversity and Rancière's performative politics, which is actualized in "distribution of the sensible", are central to the analysis of non-human performance practice and eco-equality. The analysis is preceded by my methodological choices of research practice. Finally, in the concluding section, I look to the future to see where such performative inquiry does appear to be moving.

Performing with theories

Drawing on the work of C. A. Bowers (1997, 2001), Rebecca A. Martusevicz, Jeff Edmundson and John Lupinazzi (2015) write about the urgent need to include questions concerning eco-justice at all educational levels. Ecological problems do not disappear by using green technology. Humans need to change their mindset from an anthropocentric worldview to an eco-centric worldview (Martusevicz et al., 2015, p. 11). This means that instead of seeing living plants, animals and minerals as resources for human use, humans are required to understand that their whole existence and wellbeing is dependent on a healthy system of life.

Ernstson and Swyngedouw argue for acts of politicizing the environment. Their approach is performative, and they suggest that "the political unfolds through the performative act of equality" (Ernstson & Swyngedouw, 2019, pp. 265–266).

The performative act of equality means re-thinking whose acts and words matter, and how much time and space is provided for different actors. Ernstson and Swyngedouw (2019, p. 266) are inspired by Jacques

Rancière's ideas about performative politics. Rancière (2004, pp. 12–13) has coined the concept "distribution of the sensible", which links aesthetics and politics. For him it is simply a political act of distribution that decides who gets a specific amount of time and space, who has, through distribution, the ability to be visible, audible and articulate. and who are denied the same abilities and rights.

Distribution of the sensible is clearly an issue when women, children, humans with disabilities and different ethnic minorities have increasingly urged for an equal position to perform their point of view. Kirkkopelto (2017, p. 94) goes even further with the idea of equality. He writes: "The claim of equality *has to go beyond the human, unless it is not unconditional* (his italics)."

How then is it possible for humans to understand birds and their needs? It seems not to be problematic at all, because "we are part of the world in its differential becoming" (Barad, 2007, p. 185). It is a question related to ways we enact with diversity.

In my case, the diversity of neighbourhood birds is the focus. Martusewicz et al. (2015, p. 26) point out that "diversity is the condition of difference created when there is a relationship between one thing or idea and anything else". Barad's flat ontology suggests there are only material differences, and that material-discursive practices act as agential cuts creating hierarchies between different materialities (Barad, 2007). The first thing in political emancipation is to pay attention to a differently-bodied someone, become interested in someone else's perspective and difference, here including the non-human someone. The next step is to make choices of who or what performs the subject or observer, and who or what performs the observed. In each case the subject or observer becomes a part of "measuring apparatus" (Arlander, 2018a, p. 142). Different material-discursive practices create diverse agential cuts of inclusion and exclusion.

In everyday life, there are at least two discourses in use when thinking about and discussing birds. They are discourses of science and sentimentality (Mynott, 2009). The scientific discourse is mainly interested in classifying, measuring, and updating knowledge about birds. New scientific discoveries about birds' cognitive capacities and their life are

fast changing and increasing human understanding of bird behaviour (Emery, 2016). A sentimental discourse concerns affects and experiences. It has to do with different feelings that the birds awaken in us. Sentimental discourse tells not so much about birds, but it tells a lot about our "structures of feeling", our culturally and personally tuned ways to react to different non-human beings around us.

Finnish literature researcher Karoliina Lummaa has a third perspective on discourse in her analyses of eco-poetry. She explores the materiality of birds, how "bird-ness, the reality of a bird" (2017, p. 57) is expressed in Finnish eco-poetry in the 1970s. How can we address ontological questions about bird-ness? Instead of asking separate ontological or epistemological questions about birds, it is relevant to ask about their performative enacting with us. What does it do to us to inter-act with birds? Andreas Weber (2016) believes that "a poetic first-person ecology" is a way to address this. It means that we take our entanglements with non-human life forms more seriously and believe in our poetic imaginations on the matter. He writes that "[we] are deeply interwoven into the material, mental and emotional exchange processes that all of the more-than-human world participates in" (Weber, 2016, p. 7). I aimed to combine all three discourses – scientific, sentimental and "the reality-of-a-bird" discourses – in my performative avian-human performance inquiries.

Methodology for practice and the analysis of practice

This study relates to performance as research methodology. I choose to name my approach "pedagogically inclined artistic research" (Arlander, 2018b, p. 344). This means that the exercises made in the workshops are also methods of inquiry. Later in the chapter I present and analyse some of the exercises. Pedagogically inclined artistic research belongs to a performative paradigm (Bolt, 2016, pp. 130–142). According to Bolt "the performative act doesn't describe something, but rather it does something in the world, this 'something' has the power to transform the world" (p. 137). Methodologically the aim is to

make repetitions with difference (p. 140). This is exactly what I have attempted to do. I have worked for five years, starting in 2016, on relating performative practices to the issue of climate change/biodiversity loss. Because the focus in this text is my own drama educational work, it is important to define my role.

Pauliina Maapalo and Tone Pernille Østern (2018, p. 15) write about the performative bodymind researcher, who is an important performative agentic force in ongoing intra-active processes of becoming. Maapalo (2019, p. 48) describes how a researcher's bodymind and experienced intensities/differences create agential cuts during the research situation. I have understood participation in the world from a wider, not only from a human, perspective for many years (Aaltonen, 2015, 2019). My own embodied interest in birds and their wellbeing is a starting point for the research. Crows perform agentic force in my everyday life (Image 1). When I write these words, it is autumn, and this is a time when many bird species gather. As do the crows.

Image 1 Crows in an autumn sunset. Photo: Heli Aaltonen

The focus of analysis is my own studio practice where agential cuts have happened during the drama educational work. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2012, p. 265) writes: "I understand diffractive analysis as an embodied engagement with the materiality of research data". Vettraino and Linds (2018, p. 18) write about implications of thinking reflection as diffraction:

> The implications of this for reflection is that our attention then shifts from thinking back on our practice through the elements of actors, experience, tools and activity becomes a process of enacting through theatre the relationships, their patterns, who is excluded and included and the boundaries that are created by "the intra-actions making up complex communities" (Keevers & Treleaven, 2011, p. 508). Through this process, we can see that the world can be different, with different relationships and different practices.

Diffractive approach means in this case that I revisit my practice with reading together with bodymind, intensities, diverse theoretical approaches, student reflections and analyse the agential cuts of inclusion and exclusion.

The research material comprises the creative process of planning and implementing the workshop, which is informed by a range of theoretical sources: political, philosophical and feminist new materialist theory as well as performance as research theory. The research material also includes reflective process notes, video and image documentation of the performance. From a questionnaire to the students after the work I received 38 reflection notes, together with their written consent to these notes being used as text and images in the research context.

The Bird Path performance process: An overview

One central purpose of the avian-human performance workshop was to create a site-specific, immersive (Machon, 2013) theatre performance for four-year-old children in an outdoor space, a forest site. The students were asked to act in the forest as if they were to visit someone's home. The forest area was considered an animistic space (Image 2), where all living creatures had subjectivity, feelings and understanding. The same gentle way of listening and attuning with the forest environment

was introduced to the children. The children were told: "We need to remember that the forest is our friend, and we are not supposed to be mean to it! We can't destroy trees and throw garbage in the forest. If we did, the birds, fairies, and trees would become sad."[1] The practice resonates well with Anne Beater Reinertsen's (2016, pp. 163–175) "sustainable eco-justice placemaking" thinking. She writes how "a post- or rather non-Anthropocene view reconsiders and portrays agentic forces in the biosphere beyond the human hence questioning human supremacy".

Image 2 Entering the magical forest. Photo: Kristoffer Holmen Dye

The methodological journey started from lectures to the realization of the Bird Path performance, from theory to practice. The students performed birds, voiced their understanding of the birds' needs and used interactive dramaturgical strategies when playing to and with children.

1 Extract from the play script of the performance is translated by the author: "Vi må huske på at skogen er vår venn, og at vi ikke må være slemme mot den! Vi må ikke ødelegge trærne og kaste søppel! Hvis vi gjør det så blir fuglene, alvene og trærne lei seg."

The students participated in two two-hour seminars. The student group was divided into two sub-groups of around 20 students. I facilitated the first seminar, and the second seminar I co-facilitated with Troels Vestergaard Jensen, a specialist in rhythmic dance and movement. In the first seminar scientific knowledge about birds, sensory exercises and problems experienced by the birds were intertwined. At the end of the seminar the students combined aspects of their explorations and added a poem written by them about their specific bird. The poems were reshaped by the students while working with rhythm, movement and sound in a seminar led by Vestergaard Jensen. Later on, I had more to do finding the form of performing bird stories and rehearsing the performance at the chosen forest site.

In the following diffractive reading I am inspired by Lenz Taguchi's (2012, p. 268) advice to not ask interpretative questions like "What does this mean?". The focus is to ask: "Does it work, and how does it work?" (Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 268). It is not possible for an artist-researcher to be focused on all possible intra-actions which appear in the practice. However, as Arlander points out, "it is important for an artist-researcher to focus on articulating the apparatuses used, the specific agential cuts enacted, and especially the marks on bodies generated" (Arlander, 2018a, p. 141).

For the purpose of this short study, I have selected some activities from the first workshop (not the complete workshop) where the focus specifically concerned equality and diversity. I also include some snapshots from the performance.

Agential cuts in avian-human performance practice

The multifunctional Black Box theatre (Image 3) was a site for the workshop. Around 20 students worked for two hours with exercises which were designed to help them create embodied bird roles in the performance. The site, the participants of the workshop, and the time frame are all measuring apparatuses that create difference (Arlander, 2018a, p. 142).

Image 3 Experimenting with bird movements in the Black Box theatre. Photo: Heli Aaltonen

Firstly, I worked with an exercise which was designed to connect scientific knowledge and observation of the birds with theatre movement exercises. Then I introduced sounds of the birds to the group, and facilitated exercises where they combined scientific knowledge, observation and embodied performing practice. By means of a process drama (Neelands & Goode, 2015) they had to create bird roles, and they performed and explored the problems of the birds. The workshop ended with a writing exercise in which the students wrote and presented poems from the perspective of a specific bird. This became material for the performance and was later shared with the children. The entanglements of discourse and matter happen in the ongoing intra-action.

Performative entanglements and agential cuts with neighbourhood bird knowledge and video films

When I met the students in the Black Box theatre, I had asked them to wear comfortable clothes, suitable for training physical theatre. Instead

of starting with warming up exercises (which are typical in body-based work), I started by exploring birdiness from scientific discourse. In groups of four, students were asked to choose one common Norwegian stationary bird species out of eight species, and start working with others who had chosen the same bird. The species were: rock dove, called also common pigeon or city pigeon (*Columba livia*), great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*), great tit (*Parus major*), Eurasian blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Eurasian magpie (*Pica pica*), and European herring gull (*Larus argentatus*). Naming the birds and dividing them into different species belong to a scientific discourse.

The students were required to learn basic differences among these day-active, resident and non-migratory "neighbourhood birds". The source material for exploration of the bird species was a one-page fact sheet where they could read, in a short format, third-person ornithological facts about the birds: how much they weigh, what their wing span is, what they eat, what kind of nests they have etc. All these questions are relevant to explore because they help the students to perform a bird, and to understand differences between birds and themselves. Students also studied different web sites, where they could find many wild bird documentation films.

Each choice of agentic force makes a difference, and distributes agency in different ways. It is important to explore what is included and excluded during the different phases. I started the studio practice from scientific discourse, but the starting point could be sentimentality connected with embodiment. In that case I would have distributed agency for the students to tell about and perform their experiences with different birds. This could be done in an autobiographic storytelling workshop where the participants could share their experiences of real-life birds. It is important to follow scientific discourse carefully, because new bird studies discover aspects in bird behaviour not recognized in earlier scientific work, which was dominated by "bird-as-instinct-machine"-discourse.

The starting point could be "a reality-of bird-discourse" as well. Barad (2003, p. 822) suggests that "On an agential realist account, matter does not refer to a fixed substance; rather, *matter is substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency*" (her italics).

In order to explore "intra-active becoming" with birds, the students need to meet real-life birds and make field studies. This way the students could intra-act with real birds instead of intra-acting with mediated visual and auditive signs of birds. Such things as autobiographic stories, embodiment with memories and real-life encounters with birds could be included as agentic forces in the beginning of avian-human exploration.

Listening, differentiating, embodying and making audible the bird species

The Black Box theatre was full of students who explored embodying the birdiness of their chosen species by means of physical theatre. They investigated "the transformative potential of human bodies, the 'non-human in us'" (Kirkkopelto, 2017, p. 88). Next step in the workshop was listening to the birds and exploring a bird language. This exercise reminds me of a poetic action convention that Neelands and Goode call "Soundscape" (2015, p. 107). I used Podcast Soundboard Windows program with recordings of the sounds/songs collected from the database Xeno-canto (2020). Xeno-canto is a database for "sharing bird sounds from around the world". From there I chose the sounds, recorded – because I wanted to use local bird dialects – in Norway.

Firstly, I played bird sounds and encouraged the students to imitate the sounds and movements of their chosen bird. This exercise is also closely related with a Verbatim-theatre exercise (Schulze, 2017), where the actor works with recorded interviews and the aim is to perform the interview and imitate all audible details of the real-life person's testimony as authentically as possible. Then I mixed the different bird sounds, and the students' task was to listen for their own bird sound carefully. When the different groups of "birds" heard their own bird sound, they were asked to imitate both the movement and sound of the bird. Every time I stopped playing the sound, they were asked to make a still image. The aim of this sensory exercise was to increase attentiveness and to enter into the agency of bird. One student reflected the importance of mimetic approach: "we learned to be birds … This leads to human-animal relationship, that we were physically outdoor and had to work with our whole

body".[2] Corporeal exercises helped students to develop an awareness of entanglement with "other-earthly creatures" through encouraging students to get physically, sensually and emotionally immersed in the life of birds. However, another important aspect, to be "physically outdoors", is also mentioned in the student reflections. The birds are outdoors, and real-life intra-action with them is possible only there.

One of the groups worked with the Eurasian blue tit (2020). This little bird moves, like many other small birds, quickly from one place to another, and it seems to have a stressful life turning its head and looking from one side to another to make sure that it is safe. A student reflected on this in their reflection note: "Playful, got the first taste of what it was like to be a blue tit with both body and voice. It was quite exhausting so I was very excited about how it would be out in the woods and snow".[3]

Imagining and imitating bird behaviour and sounds has "spacing power". By exploring the agency of different bird species students started to understand how the different species varied in their behavioural relationship with humans. Such bodily practice is an example of performative politics, and distribution of the sensible.

The materiality of the birds is mediated in the exercises of sound and movement. In the studio environment, fact sheets on birds, sound scape, bodies and voices in action are agentic forces which create intra-active becomings with mediated sounds, images and video films of the birds.

What kind of potentialities of improvement does such practice have? Listening to birds could easily be developed in an investigation of "the discourse of local birds" (Abram, 2010, p. 270). It means that it would be important to learn the basics of bird language. Bird language teacher Jon Young defines five vocalizations as being important to identify. They are "songs, companion calls, territorial aggression (often male to male), adolescent begging and alarms" (Young, 2013, p. 1). Various studies indicate that birds belonging to the *Corvidae* family – crows, ravens, magpies and jays – use much more complicated languages. They do not sing at all, but can utilize 23 different vocalizations (Haupt, 2009, p. 76). The bird sound

2 I have translated student reflections from Norwegian to English.

3 Student reflection.

recordings which I had collected represent different vocalizations. Had the students been guided to pay attention to different vocalizations, and used their knowledge in the improvisations, they would have been able to create concrete situations between different species of birds. In order to make invisible and inaudible non-humans visible and audible, and voice their needs and desires, it is not enough to make embodied studio practices, and imagine the needs of other species. We need to learn more about non-humans. We need to be more together with them and appreciate their diversity. Kirkkopelto (2017, p. 93) writes about "the process of *equalization*". The process is always relational and concrete[4]. Participating in the avian-human performance practice carries a potentiality to imagine a more equal world and voice the needs of the birds. However, embodied exploration of bird agency didn't awaken interest in all students. There was one student who reflected on her lack of interest in the bird world: "I'm not very interested in this, so I have nothing to write about."[5] Another student found performing the non-human in us, and this borderline investigation, to be uncomfortable, a rather weird experience: "I think playing an animal is strange and unpleasant."[6] Reading such reflections makes me think how an anthropocentric world view impacts students' understanding of performing. It makes me sad to read negative student reflections, but at the same time I have noticed that only a small minority of the students do not connect with this kind of work. Many more find new insights and beginnings with human-non-human borderline investigations.

Outdoor bird path performance

In the forest area bird groups chose a "station" for the performance. They performed their staged poems and in the interactive parts the children were asked to help the birds with their everyday problems. The framing story of

4 Kirkkopelto (2017, p. 93) defines "concrete" as follows: "It is concrete in that it is never merely a juridical operation, but is also a social, ethical, economic, aesthetic and bodily exercise, an *ascesis*, which may change us thoroughly. This ascesis of equalization, which always departs from the encounter of the other, has to be undertaken over and over again in different ways and on various levels, and it has to be undertaken by everyone otherwise we cannot live together."

5 Student reflection.

6 Student reflection.

the performance was an ornithological trip through the forest on the "bird path" to a friendship party, which was arranged around a campfire site. It was Valentine's Day, 14 February, and at the end of the performance the birds and the children gathered to celebrate human-avian friendship. One student reflected on the importance of the whole concept of the outdoor event: "Being out in nature and having direct contact with it – through forest walks, storytelling around the fire – brings you closer to nature".[7] Another student wrote: "The fact that we hung up bird food [in the trees] and became birds to teach about nature, helps to create a good relationship with the animals and show respect for nature."[8] Celebrating a Valentine's Day party with birds invited the participants to imagine a more equalitarian world where humans and avians are friends, and neighbours, with each other.

The students studied the outlook of the birds and painted their own faces as well as choosing "birdy" costumes for the performance (Images 4–7). The four-year-old children came to the forest site with the educators of the kindergarden and with a student who performed as a bird path guide. She guided the children from one station to the other. The ground was covered with snow. The first birds the children met were city pigeons (Image 4).

Image 4 Performing city pigeons. Photo: Kristoffer Holmen Dye

7 Student reflection.
8 Student reflection.

Two pigeons carried a third pigeon which was strapped around her legs. The pigeon's legs were tied with rope, which represented city pigeons' problems when they got hair or plastic waste around their toes. The city pigeons asked children to help them untie the rope.

Many students reflected on the importance of "performing facts" or "the real-life problems of the birds" and emphasised performative acting of species-beings in a real-life venue. The children helped the pigeons and continued their trip to the next station, where they met a group of house sparrows (Image 5).

Image 5 Children playing with house sparrows. Photo: Kristoffer Holmen Dye

The house sparrows explained that domestic cats ate up their chicks, and the sparrow group created a game with children, where the birds were escaping from the cat and protecting their chicks.

Many bird groups made interactive games with the children, where children would play diverse animals and birds. One student wrote that an important aspect in creating better avian-human relationships is [to] "let children themselves be animals, to get into their lives and their world".[9]

9 Student reflection.

Image 6 Children help crows to find silver spoons. Photo: Kristoffer Holmen Dye

I was happy to read from one reflection note that four-year-old children can recognize crows (Image 6). One student wrote: "The children were able to recognize the crows, and we (practitioners) had to observe crows to work on our scenic movements. It has made me personally more aware of how other animals move too".[10] The student shows important insight by way of the created performance text. To act as a crow required an interest in the crow world if one was to find a way to make and embody crow movements. The attention to one bird species made an impact on this student and the student gained interest in observing other animals as well. It relates to a "transformative potential" of practice.

On the bird path eight different species got an equal amount of time and space, and at the end all species were gathered to celebrate Valentine's Day together (Image 7). It was a time to celebrate friendship with all neighbourhood birds, not only with the quiet and cute ones, but also with the noisy ones that challenge us.

10 Student reflection.

Image 7 Children celebrating Valentine's Day with their bird friends. Photo: Kristoffer Holmen Dye

One kind of re-diffractive conclusion

In this study I have asked *how does avian-human performance practice politicise birds?* I have analysed agential cuts in avian-human performance practice, and have been especially interested in analysing what the practice does. I think that the diffractive analysis has shown tellingly how distribution of the sensible is affected by material-discursive practices. Birds do not communicate directly with humans about their needs and problems. It is our ethico-onto-epistemological duty to find out more how we, with our material-discursive practices, influence non-humans. It is our task to create knowledge apparatuses which offer space for the birds to be equal partners in the ongoing process of justice. Performative inquiry has revealed how the material-discursive practices act as cuts of inclusion and exclusion. Each agential cut in ongoing intra-action carries a potentiality for change. Performative practice, it is suggested by this study, has the power to act as an agentic force for change.

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CHAPTER 12

Liezel's story – #NotInMyName: Playback Theatre in Post-apartheid South Africa

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Abstract: This chapter explores a stop moment in light of a story told during a Playback Theatre performance (PT) in South Africa. The inquiry guiding this chapter asks: How may diffractive encounters through a stop moment in PT illuminate possibilities for dissensus? The stop moment is examined to reveal how the distribution of the sensible has impact on women's lives in post-apartheid South Africa, through the eyes of two Drama for Life Playback Theatre members: Kathy as conductor and Cheraé who was one of the actors. It argues that for PT performers to redistribute the distribution of the sensible and to stage dissensus requires a recognition and understanding of power on multiple levels.

Keywords: Playback Theatre, distribution of the sensible, gender-based violence, performative inquiry, diffractive ethnography

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Introduction

In this chapter, we invite the reader into the story of Liezel[1] who shared a memory in a Drama for Life Playback Theatre performance (DFL PT)[2]. The story of her rape twenty years earlier triggered a more recent story – the betrayal of a female friend. This was the heart of Liezel's story, and we as DFL PT "missed" it. In this chapter, we elaborate on this, using Jacques Rancière's concept "the distribution of the sensible" in order to critically examine decisive moments and their political and ethical consequences as part of memory work in post-apartheid South Africa. The aim of the study we present is to uncover more about the consequences of a stop moment[3], and it constitutes the recognition as a PT ensemble of the opportunities we missed in staging Liezel's story. Cheraé and Kathy both felt compelled to further investigate by asking the question: *How may diffractive encounters through a stop moment in PT illuminate possibilities for dissensus?*

The performance took place as part of the Building Democracy through Theatre project. The project employs theatre as a primary method of inquiry to reveal how embodied knowledges can contribute to addressing complex social issues connected to building developing democracies. The PT performance during which this critical moment opened up was guided by the project's aim to explore the challenges of addressing stories concerning gender-based violence in South Africa through PT. The laissez-faire attitude of political leaders and institutions in South Africa, combined with deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes, seriously thwart the country's ability to build a strong democracy. Undertaking this research is an effort to commit to the seriousness of relating to gender-based violence in order to work towards combating it.

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1 The teller's name has been changed to Liezel for the sake of anonymity, as have other names, except Kathy, Cheraé and Tarryn: names of Drama for Life Playback Theatre group members.

2 DFL PT was founded in 2008 by Kathy Barolsky as part of her master's. Kathy was the Artistic Director until 2016. DFL PT continues to exist under the artistic direction of Cheraé Halley and Tarryn Lee.

3 In performative inquiry stop moments are learning moments that jump out at us. These stop moments are a "potential call for action, an in-between space of engagement like the pause between exhalation and inhalation … A stop moment invites us to interrupt our habits of engagement, to recognise absence within presence, to renew an opportunity of choice" (Fels, 2015, p. 511).

Uprising–#NotInMyName #AmINext

At the time this performance took place at the University of the Free State (UFS), South African women and many men were collectively raising their voices through a wave of mass protests against gender-based violence across university campuses, and spilling over into the city streets. In August and September 2019, the brutal attack and murder of Leighandre Jegels, Uyinene Mrwetyana and Jesse Hess caught the news headlines (Francke, 2019),[4] fuelling nationwide outrage. People en masse had taken to social media to express their anger and frustration at the killings, under the hashtags #NotInMyName #AmINext and #SAShutDown. In response, civil society gathered to express anger and sorrow through various public marches.

The shadows of these marches, murders and rapes hung heavily in our rehearsals preceding our performance at UFS. Despite this, the UFS performances had a different mandate around student leadership. Each of us in the PT ensemble had our own stories connected to gender-based violence. Kathy felt as a conductor that it was fundamental to invite stories related to the issue in our rehearsal process, but also not to overemphasise it. The issue of gender-based violence was such a source of tension that we felt it was incumbent upon us to ensure that enough space remained open for other stories to emerge. As a result, some stories spoke of the ongoing crisis, but Kathy did not make it a specific focus in rehearsals. As we reveal, this choice was to have a substantial impact on the UFS performance.

A stop moment – missing the heart of Liezel's story

This section describes Liezel's story and her reflection on it that DFL PT played back for her on a Saturday afternoon at UFS in Bloemfontein,

4 In honour and memory of Leighandre "Baby Lee" Jegels, Uyinene Mrwetyana and all women who have been killed by the hands of men, as well as women like Liezel who continue the fight to live despite the scarring endured by GBV. See: www.facebook.com/groups/SAwomenfightback/permalink/620603725233475

South Africa. Liezel's reflection on her story mirrored the discomfort that we felt during and after the performance at not addressing Liezel's story adequately – subsequently becoming a stop moment for both of us. The enactment of Liezel's story was witnessed by her son and daughter, along with approximately twenty-five other UFS students and a few staff members.

> ***Liezel's Story***
>
> Liezel has come to the teller's chair and has told a story filled with harrowing events. As she sits on the teller's chair, Liezel explains she is here because of something that happened two days ago but is connected to the harrowing event 20 years ago when she was raped. Her rape 20 years previously altered the course of her life, but it is the event two days ago that triggered an inconsolable, unfathomable sorrow that brought her to the teller's chair. Liezel explains that in light of many women across South Africa speaking out about gender-based violence, she took to Facebook to tell her story of being raped, a secret she had kept for 20 years. Her friend Charlene, who was there at the time of Liezel's rape, lashes out at her on Facebook, shaming her, accusing her of being a liar. Liezel is now on the teller's chair, tears streaming down her face. (Stop moment, Conductor's journal, September, 2019)

In the DFL PT reflection after the performance, we collectively recognised that we missed what is often referred to in PT as the "heart of the story" (Salas, 1993, p. 23). The inadequacy of our response to Liezel's story was not directly related to how we responded to the horrific rape she endured; it was about the aftermath, the betrayal of a friend, the way Charlene tried to silence and shame Liezel by not allowing her to voice her story. This was verified in a focus group we had with Liezel after the performance.

> Liezel: … I liked the way you were all so artistic, even the music lady, that you portray everyone's story immediately. It shows an artistic mind is really a deep mind. I liked the way the lady [Tarryn – a DFL PT actor] started my story; it was really the highlight. I felt the emotional build-up because she started it off so nice. Okay for me it didn't end so well. I think she ended on a high but still left people guessing, because I was like okay is, she still going on … I just gave a little bit, but I felt like maybe she could wrap it up more. Because to me, it

started off with a very nice build-up, but then she just left me hanging, because I really expected more. But as I say, I know more, and I only gave you guys this little part.
Kathy: From what you told us you are in the middle of an unfolding experience, a story 20 years ago that is being revisited …
Liezel: YES
Kathy: I'm wondering for you what felt incomplete?
Liezel: I felt maybe you guys since we are amongst students, and me and Charlene were that age at that time. Maybe show Charlene as the friend.
Kathy: You missed her presence …
Liezel: Yes, because I wanted to tell, I wanted for people to see Charlene … because to have really devious friends that will tell you, you know what, you deserved that. Because there is that, people really can be horrible. (Audience focus group, September 2019)

In our analysis we discuss the stop moment, and our conversation reveals how multi-layered the impact is both of gender-based violence and of the struggles connected to it in post-apartheid South Africa. It also illustrates how the PT ensemble becomes entangled in these layers, which can obstruct the deep listening required in finding the deepest note in a teller's story.

Gender-based violence in South Africa and points of becoming with Liezel's story

The "we" in this chapter – Kathy, and Cheraé – are both South African women. Our identities, even if different in multiple ways, offer points of connection with Liezel's story concerning themes of gender-based violence. Cheraé is "Coloured"[5], bearing the intergenerational trauma of being Coloured in South Africa, where to be visibly Coloured is complex, neither being white enough nor black enough (Erasmus, 2017, p. 7). Zoë Wicomb writes about the formulation of Coloured identity where shame

5 The "Coloured" racial classification was created under the Population Registration act No.30 of 1950 (Erasmus, 2017, p. 87). Erasmus capitalises Coloured as a way of acknowledging its history and its contested classification as a racial category (2017, p. 20).

was "exploited in apartheid's strategy of the naming of a Coloured race" (1998, p. 92). In this, "miscegenation", being of mixed race, was appropriated, forming a complex entanglement with shame that persists in post-apartheid South Africa today (Wicomb, 1998). Thus, Coloured women's bodies carry the tracings of this historical violence perpetrated by the arrival of white settlers in South Africa. Kathy is white and Jewish, yet not fitting neatly into either of those categories. During the 1930s the Nationalist party had sympathies for the Nazi party in Germany but ultimately South African Jews had the privileged position of being classified as "white" during apartheid (Adler, 2000). The tension and negotiation of this white privilege, with its connection to historic shame, is carried by Kathy. The presence of this tension is something Kathy is actively interrogating as part of her commitment to post-apartheid South Africa.

Both of us have experienced acts of gender-based violence together as friends and separately in our lives. We come from families where domestic violence has been present but remained behind closed doors. We are acutely aware of the patriarchal surveillance of our bodies in a brutish South African capitalist society, and this has heightened our awareness of power and actively promoted us to engage with queer, decolonial and feminist spaces and ideas. Being part of DFL PT together for 11 years, we have navigated and celebrated our many differences whilst also being bound by a connection of similarity. These similarities regarding gender-based violence each met Liezel's experience through our intra-actions with her becoming in different ways.[6]

In the next section, we present the theoretical-philosophical perspective of Jacques Rancière outlining concepts of the distribution of the sensible, politics and art, dissensus and police.

The distribution of the sensible

The distribution of the sensible, according to Rancière, is how social regimes in societies are structured and ordered (Rancière, 2013). This

6 Here we use the terms "intra-action" and "becoming"; these are discussed below, in relation to Karen Barad's diffractive methodology.

ordering reflects "what is visible and audible within a particular aesthetic-political regime" (Rancière, 2013, p. 12).

The distribution of the sensible is "the implicit law that parcels out places and forms of participation … the distribution of the sensible thus produces a system of self-evident facts of perception based on … what is visible and audible as well as what can be said, thought, made or done" (Rockhill, 2013, p. 89). What underlines this are assumptions about which individuals and groups are capable and which are not. In this chapter, we draw attention to how women who have endured gender-based violence are marginalised in multiple ways that render them invisible. However, before we do this, we must lay out key terms from Rancière that are necessary to help orientate an understanding of the distribution of the sensible.

Politics and art

Politics, which is equivalent to democracy for Rancière, is not about state politics, according to Steve Corcoran, but a breaking away from, and a challenge to, "the rules governing 'normal' experience" (2010, p. 3). It is a form of political engagement by people who contest normative distributions of the sensible. "Politics", writes Rancière:

> consists in reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible which defines the common of a community, to introduce into it new subjects and objects, to render visible what had not been, and to make heard as speakers those who had been perceived as mere noisy animals. (2009, p. 25)

When the senses are re-arranged and people subvert social orders ascribed to them, they occupy new spaces in time and place. Rancière describes these occurrences as an "Aesthetic Revolution" (Rockhill, 2013, p. 85). Such happenings are what constitute democracy as opposed to representational forms. Rancière situates democracy at a grassroots relational level where "these intermittent acts of political subjectivization that re-configure the communal distribution of the sensible" (Rockhill, 2013, p. xiv). These moments occur through acts of perception and experience which create avenues for the birthing of new identities and subjectivities through art.

In this study, we utilise Rancière's philosophy of the "politics of aesthetics" to illuminate the relationship between politics and art using his concept of the "distribution of the sensible". We do this in order to provide a political articulation of PT practice and argue that there is an intrinsic link between art and politics, in particular their potentially disruptive effect. Along the way, as part and parcel of this, we also examine how PT can unwittingly collude in the regimes of the distribution of the sensible, becoming part of ethical or representational regimes.

Rancière understands art and politics as egalitarian methods of practice which have a fundamental role to play in the fracturing of what is perceived as normal. Both art and politics are capable of destabilising and disrupting the normalised rationale of who has authority to speak, think and act.

Dissensus

Art and politics are thus seen as one entity that have the potential to generate dissensus (Corcoran, 2010, p. 3). Dissensus is when those who are unseen and have no form of political power become visible. It raises Rancière's political theory to an active approach in support of those who are not usually made visible. Accordingly, "at the heart of dissensus, therefore, is a process of dis-identification, or the undoing of bonds tying people to specific places, of the various forms of the privatisation of speech and emotion" (Corcoran, 2010, p. 5). What, then, lies at the heart of democracy or, in Rancière's terms, politics, is dissensus, that those who have been previously ignored as "noise" become visible as political bodies by disrupting the social hierarchy. In this study, we trace our intra-actions in an attempt to identify if and where diffractions for making a difference through dissensus emerged, and how we engaged with these moments in seeking a re-distribution of the sensible. We do this to contest "depoliticised" understandings of PT, where art and its distributional procedures are depoliticised, which tend to conceal any political analysis.

The distribution of the sensible and the police

According to Rancière the DS is organised by the "police". The police in this instance stipulate and enforce rules in society that are inegalitarian forms of the distribution of the sensible. "The police is not a social function but a symbolic constitution of the social. The essence of the police lies neither in repression nor even in control over the living. Its essence lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible" (Rancière, 2010, p. 42). In this chapter, we use the notion of "police" to be understood as a means of "policing" and enforcing social order in a way that marginalises and literally "invisiblises" women.

Playback Theatre and the distribution of the sensible

In PT, according to the distribution of the sensible, PT performers are all governed and implicated within distributed discursive orders where we as practitioners may not be able to abolish the *police* and all the orders of the distribution of the sensible that they co-ordinate. What we can seek out is to identify democratic moments that re-distribute the supposedly predefined co-ordinates, and to re-configure them. What this implies is being able to hear and identify the distribution of the sensible in a teller's story and to re-distribute the sensible through PT enactments in order to draw attention to the invisible. To understand the distribution of the sensible and ways in which it impacts the performance, we trace significant intra-actions in our performance where we find ourselves entangled with the distribution of the sensible.

Methodology

In this section, we sketch out the methodological approach to our inquiry. The study is a performative inquiry (Fels, 2008), placed within Karen Barad's agential realism (2007) employing Jessica Smartt Gullion's diffractive ethnography (2013).

In performative inquiry (Fels, 2008) stop moments are learning moments that jump out at us. These stop moments are a:

> potential call for action, an in-between space of engagement like the pause between exhalation and inhalation … A stop moment invites us to interrupt our habits of engagement, to recognise absence within presence, to renew an opportunity of choice. (Fels, 2015, p. 511)

To add further depth to performative inquiry, we draw on diffractive ethnography (Gullion, 2013). In diffractive ethnography "the researcher is a presence, and active force, in the assemblage that becomes research" (Gullion, 2013, p. 122). Diffraction as a methodology "involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how differences get made, what gets excluded, and how exclusions matter" (Barad, 2007, p. 30). Diffraction is not just about recording difference; it attempts to account for and take responsibility for the producing of that difference too, especially when it produces frictions. This methodological practice examines both material and discursive matter. We read the stop moment through the philosophical perspective of Rancière in the diffractive analysis of this chapter. According to Alecia Jackson and Lisa. A Mazzei (2012) such readings encourage an insight that "opens and diffracts, rather than crystalizes, representations" (p. xi).

Through our analysis of the stop moment, we attempt to trace our intra-actions – which is Barad's term for relations – to account for how we missed the heart of Liezel's story. As Barad explains:

> Intra-acting responsibly as part of the world means taking account of the entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world's vitality … Meeting each moment, being alive to the possibilities of becoming, is an ethical act, an invitation that is written into the very matter of all being and becoming. (2007, p. 396)

To Barad, intra-action is a "becoming" that is dynamic and not simply about the present unfolding moment. Barad explains that "As the rings of trees mark the sedimented history of their inter-actions within and as part of the world, so matter carries within itself the sedimented historialities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming" (2007, p. 180). These historialities are in a constant dynamism

through relating and become entangled matter as part of intra-actions. In turn affects are produced, where "power resides in affective flows between relations" (Fox & Alldred, 2017, p. 154) which shape materialising intra-actions.

We draw on *diffraction, intra-action,* and *affects* as a way of framing an understanding of distribution of the sensible in relation to gender-based violence and the way in which it manifested. We trace this matter created through our intra-action with Liezel, where we became entangled as performers. We do this in an effort to discover how we missed the heart of Liezel's story, the stop-moment of this chapter. In this way, we endeavour to paint a socially just, and detailed, account of our intra-actions from the various viewpoints of actor and conductor towards Liezel's story. Through this, we hope to demonstrate how our different perspectives, embodied through the performance and the analysis, may create a pathway for a more just and political understanding of PT by looking closely at our intra-actions in PT stories.

The material we use is taken from video-excerpts, excerpts from the focus group with audience members and the DFL PT group. Material from Kathy and Cheraé's post-performance conversations and journals is also used. Kathy was theoretically informed about the distribution of the sensible in her PT practice. Cheraé was also informed about the distribution of the sensible, but only after the performance where it became central in our post-performance reflections. In fact, Cheraé in her PT practice has always employed a bodily knowledge of the DS by seeking to disrupt intersectional power structures in her listening and enactment of PT stories. We now head into our analysis of the consequences of the stop moment.

Affects and glimpses of seeking a re-distribution

Liezel's story in South Africa: An embodiment of the marches, a site of resistance

> A political subject is not a group of interests or ideas but an operator of a particular *dispositive* of subjectivation and litigation through which politics comes into existence. (Rancière, 2010, p. 47)

By telling her story in PT, Liezel became a political subject. This moment presented an opportunity for the ensemble to recognise Liezel's story as more than personal noise: it was a declaration of the politics of what it is to be a woman in South Africa living under a patriarchal and violent social system, and of the impact of other women not acknowledging one's experiences of gender-based violence.

Suddenly we were in a room full of entanglement heaving under the weight of what Liezel had brought us. Her story is a symbol of why all the marches had been taking place in South Africa as a site of resistance. As we engaged with Liezel, we knew this was an ethical moment for our actions as an ensemble. Brian Massumi maintains that "[t]he ethical value of an action is what it brings out in the situation, for its transformation, how it breaks sociality open, it's not about judging each other as right or wrong" (2015, p. 10). Liezel's story broke open sociality, presenting the opportunity for transformation. From the moment Liezel began to tell her story, the materialising affects hit both of us as Liezel became an embodiment of speaking truth to power.

Through her telling, Liezel began to construct her sensory experience, challenging the sensible orders as a "victim" of rape, a view which allocates people to a position of invisibility and dispossesses them of the means to equality – implying that such a woman cannot imagine the possibility of occupying a different position in society. Her act of telling took her out of her "victim" station. Liezel was not neat and tidy. She was not easy, ordered and refined. She had a story to tell, and she did not hold back. She sat on that chair, an amalgamation of strength and vulnerability pushing aside the sensory noose in society that voices what is possible to express pertaining to stories of friendship, women and rape. For us it appeared that Liezel had identified and seized the opportunity of PT to create an alternative space where those who are ignored by the sensible orders are given access to re-story their place in the distribution of the sensible. Liezel subverted the distribution of the sensible, "this subversion implies the reframing of a common sense. A common sense does not mean a consensus but, on the contrary, a polemical place, a confrontation between opposite common senses or opposite ways of framing what is common" (Rancière, 2009, p. 286).

Liezel reclaimed her voice confronting South Africa's patriarchal denial twice, once through her Facebook post and again by coming to the teller's chair. Yet not even this could rectify how she had been silenced in the past and how in the present her voice could still not be fully realised, as Cheraé elaborates:

> She was not able to say it to the police and open up the case, she was not able to say it to her family and friends, she has not been able to say it to her children that she gave birth to. She was not even able to say it on an online campaign because she was told it was lie. (Cheraé, post-performance conversation, September, 2019)

Liezel initiated a diffractive encounter that created the possibility of a re-distribution of the sensible. Her occupation of space made the gap visible in the sensible social order of women who are relegated to being silent "victims" of gender-based violence by butting up against the orders of the police. Liezel was engaging with her power to create dissensus, reframing her position in society. We felt the materiality arising from the silencing of generations of women and from its wounding – women who have never received justice – and from the impact of this.

From our position of power, in our roles as actor and conductor, we desired to meet this equality presented to us by Liezel, but we became bound up in the entanglements of the affects of the distribution of the sensible that we detail below. Very quickly, the entanglements of our life histories from different perspectives intertwined with Liezel's story of what women face in South Africa. We listened to Liezel's story, longing to rectify that history in a single moment. We were hungry to provoke a politics – "an intervention in the visible and the sayable" (Rancière, 2010, p. 43) – that would give meaning to these traces of silenced women. We craved this for Liezel, for ourselves, for everyone present in the room.

Conductor's work – an act of navigation: Liezel's story, guiding the actors and layers of matter

After giving Liezel space for a while, Kathy needed to guide her telling. She had to work within the frames of PT to help the actors navigate through

the many layers of Liezel's story. Kathy sensed early in Liezel's story that her rape was only the prelude to why she was sitting on the teller's chair. This was something the audience and actors did not necessarily know, however. The excerpt from Kathy's journal captures the predicament:

> Liezel was not an "easy teller". I had to work a lot with her in terms of the shape of the story .... I was searching in myself around how I could serve her and not be the distribution of the sensible and shut her down but also having to be the conductor with the story sense ... As a woman that is meant to be an ally for her as another woman and feeling super self-conscious that I wasn't doing it adequately. (Kathy, PT Journal, September, 2019)

Kathy did not want to come across as dismissive of Liezel's rape, as she followed her intuition about the heart of Liezel's story. Liezel had altered perception, in Rancière's terms, by attempting to express this often neglected and unheard aspect of her story and Kathy was struggling to catch up with the significance of this rupture in the distribution of the sensible. Liezel's telling was episodic, jumping back and forth from different happenings. Kathy's role as a conductor in this moment was an opportunity to exert her voice as a conductor in relation to Liezel's voice. Instead, she feared she could not match the ideal picture of what a woman activist should embody and articulate at such a moment. Kathy was overcome and had internalised the material affect of the distribution of the sensible that attempts to squander the authority of women's voices who speak up. The distribution of the sensible that judges a woman for seeking voice no matter what its modulation might be. Hélène Cixous so eloquently captures this feeling for many women, "heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away – that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak – even just open her mouth – in public" (1976, p. 880). The echo of this invisible territory bled into and interrupted Kathy's capacity to assert her political being to support Liezel's voice. Kathy was vulnerable at this point, negotiating her own story of being impacted by gender-based violence in the shadow of Liezel's story, and resistant to acknowledging this. That avoidance of attuning to herself allowed hypercritical Kathy to emerge. She began by having a moralising internal dialogue with herself, emphasising

that if she put a foot "wrong" she would come across as a reflection of the distribution of the sensible, of yet another person not being able to listen and hear her deeply.

The conductor role at that moment needed Kathy to sit with Liezel and listen with depth, to call on a combination of softening and guidance directed towards herself and Liezel. Kathy's moralising in fact blocked her, and she did not view these qualms as part of the uncertainty of the ethical step she was attempting to make. Waiting for the "right" moment to interject removed her from Liezel. Kathy became so consumed with her need to "perform" and do justice in the right way that she sacrificed the tools that she needed to conduct. Had Kathy asked Liezel to slow down to clarify further, she would have given herself more time to digest Liezel being beside her. That transparency would have grounded her as the conductor and, in turn, helped the actors absorb better an enormously complex story.

Kathy hoped that the actors would be able to find a better "translation" and expression of that sense of connection with Liezel that she struggled to find in the conductor interview. During the interview Kathy felt as though she had become part of the police, "the police … which says that here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but move along" (Rancière, 2010, p. 27). The guilt of this made Kathy look at Cheraé, trying to find connection again and at the same time realising that Cheraé was entangled in another affect as she explains:

> I was conscious of listening and competing with how my body wanted to react, the way my emotions were reacting … I had to sit there battling with my emotional response and performance requirements … all I wanted to do was weep, but I had a different responsibility. And it's so hard to name because I don't know where it came from why it hit me. (Cheraé, Journal, September 2019)

Kathy's eye contact with Cheraé was not only about wanting to support her but also about expressing her desire that Cheraé serve the socio-political echo of the story as one of the supporting actors. In PT the teller chooses an actor, known as the teller's actor, to play them in their story. Cheraé had not been selected by Liezel to be the teller's actor, so she had the opportunity to play multiple roles. Kathy wanted the politics to be

served in Liezel's story by re-configuring it in such a way that we did not just "move along". This required a dwelling in Liezel's experience with Charlene, to foreground it, making it visible. Kathy sensed Cheraé recognised the themes around power and gender-based violence in Liezel's story and the way in which women are made invisible with the distribution of the sensible, and Kathy wanted her, along with the ensemble, to disrupt it in a way that she knew she could not from the conductor's chair.

Affective flows and the responsibilities of the citizen actor in Playback Theatre

We were aware that our affective flows would shape our ability to make aesthetic choices which were part of a broader ethical act. The pull of Liezel's affect instigated an intensity of awareness of the ethics around being a PT performer, bringing questions to mind around what the responsibilities of a citizen actor[7] (Fox, 1994) are at such a moment. How Cheraé's affective response would play out would be part of an ethical act.

Cheraé and Liezel are both Coloured; this was to play a significant materialising role in the intra-action that unfolded. This complex racial identification prompted an over-identification on the part of Cheraé. The affect of intergenerational trauma became in the space between Liezel and Cheraé. Cheraé found her body overwhelmed with the affect of relating to Liezel's story, entangled by it. Cheraé's difficulty in being responsive demonstrates the "body's historicity in which its very materiality plays an active role in the workings of power" (Barad, 2003, p. 10). Cheraé encapsulates this in our post-performance reflection: "It was personal, it was so personal that it erased what normally would happen. I did hear the distribution of the sensible in her story. It's just that I was deeply connected to the teller that I didn't make choices, make choices based on it" (Cheraé, Post-performance conversation, September, 2019). The marks of Coloured history in South Africa became an active material agent between Liezel and Cheraé – a complex materialisation of psychic-cultural,

7 According to Fox, "the citizen actor, who performs as needed by the community, then melts back into the social fabric" (1999, p. 214). The citizen actor adopts the role of a healer by taking in the pain and challenges of others to support them in finding their wisdom and potential.

socio-historical force of the affect. In this, she was confronted by the ghosts of the past and their traces activated in the becoming moment while trying to wrestle with her awareness of power through the distribution of the sensible. In this instance, Cheraé's affiliation with Liezel was that of consensus, seeing herself as part of Liezel's story. This consensus was, in fact, an impediment to Cheraé exercising her ability to serve Liezel's story entirely. This continuing material historicity of Coloured history and shame in South Africa was evoked in the space.

Seeking ways to navigate through the whirlpool of affect: "Let's watch!"

At this point, we were all swimming in a whirlpool of entangled affects, the affect of carrying women's voice and stories, including our own. We needed to find ways to navigate through them. All of this was present in the room, and Kathy had not even uttered "Let's watch", the actors' cue in PT that alerts the audience and teller to ready them for the enactment of the teller's story.

> Cheraé: It is very clear we (DFL PT) understand where women are excluded, we know this, and we are equipped as a team of female players performing in a time when women are a site of war. And someone like Liezel comes and tells a story, she tells that exact story and then there is no comment made.
> Kathy: it becomes so generalised, and the heart of the story becomes lost.
> (Post-performance conversation, September, 2019)

From our respective roles, we struggled to seek a re-distribution of the sensible despite the affects that we were wrestling with. Charlene needed to be represented, not only on the level of what she was to Liezel as a friend who betrayed her as a personification of the distribution of the sensible, but also because staging the distribution of the sensible and commentating on it would have further re-distributed the sensible beyond Liezel's verbal telling. Cheraé expands:

> On re-distributing the sensible it would have been Liezel's online campaign (Liezel's FB post) being told what she can and cannot reveal. And when she does reveal

> something she's told "you're a liar". So, it's that. It's that moment, how those around her failed to support her. (Post-performance conversation, September, 2019)

This scene not being present, however, is only the result of assembled moments that diffracted that possibility. In our case the diffractive encounter hindered our ability to illuminate dissensus in Liezel's story and re-distribute the sensible. As Cheraé points out, we could not assume that because we are an all-female team, who share a gender location with Liezel, we would automatically be able to unearth the layers of Liezel's story. "We can't just expect because we are women and understand the context fully that we are all going to re-distribute the sensible together in those moments…" (Post-performance conversation, September, 2019). A recognition that, even if we considered ourselves allies to specific groups and individuals, our entanglements and our listening would not necessarily be brought closer and embolden us to make innovative dramatic choices, choices which might move performers towards an aesthetic revolution. On the other hand, entanglements can also easily disturb that potential where we as performers become further entrenched in the partitions of the distribution of the sensible.

In recognition of the fact that we had battled to re-distribute the sensible co-ordinates of Liezel's story, Kathy attempted to make up for what was missing in the enactment. Cheraé points out:

> … what you say in the interview shows how the conductor is re-distributing the sensible … do you know what you asked Liezel in your post-enactment interview? You asked her, "What was it like witnessing this version of your story?" (in a dubious tone) Do you know that? And I remember thinking thanks, Kath! (laugh) It was good, the critical actor goes "thanks Kath you just called it a version" (laughs), but it was true, it was right.
>
> Cheraé & Kathy: "It was incomplete."
>
> (Kathy and Cheraé post-performance conversation, September, 2019)

Although Kathy subtly alluded to Liezel's story not being fulfilled in the post-enactment interview, she did not help her to elaborate on this further. It could have been an opportunity for Liezel to go back to what was not present in the enactment – her encounter with Charlene – and speak about that. Staging this was necessary as a statement about women in

South Africa who silence other women who endure gender-based violence, a statement that such silencing is part of the distribution of the sensible and needs to re-distributed. As a conductor, it was a missed opportunity to acknowledge the distribution of the sensible in the story, and Liezel's bravery in challenging it. Liezel's story and the enactment raise questions about how we address PT's potential to re-distribute the sensible within the PT's ritual frames. The stop moment asks that PT practitioners pay more careful attention to how we may attend to the unfolding intra-actions that present opportunities for re-distribution and dissensus.

Summing up: A political moment of dissensus and the co-creation of Power in PT

In keeping with the aims of the *Building Democracy through Theatre* project, we uncovered vital knowledge about the nuances of PT practice when faced with the opportunity to address the issue of gender-based violence, which is, as was noted above, such a significant hindrance in building post-apartheid South Africa.

PT is a form of power, and as practitioners we can become more aware of how we utilise this power. We demonstrate how power in PT is co-created through relationality; how we act as agents collectively re-configures entanglements. What we discovered through the stop moment is how, in PT, the role of the teller brings PT's political potential to the fore. Liezel claiming the teller's chair was a political moment of dissensus. In this instance, Liezel was the subjectivation by which politics comes into being. The ensemble needs to hear if and in what way the teller is challenging the distribution of the sensible, in order to be able to recognise the political becoming of the teller in the first place. From there, the most challenging task of the ensemble is not just how they listen to the teller, a political being, but how the ensemble collectively honours the act of political dissensus. As we have shown, the first level of listening and recognising is easier than the second level where ensemble members can face multiple material affects arising from intra-actions.

Upon hearing Liezel's story, we struggled to resist the normative force of the "police" concerning gender-based violence in South Africa. We

illustrate how the appropriation of aesthetics can be employed inadvertently as a political tool, justifying social orders that we ourselves reject. These choices are where the staging of democracy can miss a beat, and a choice must be made between maintaining the status quo, or challenging and questioning the construction of the societies we live in. We demonstrate that the distribution of the sensible is a critical discourse philosophy and a discursive power affecting individual social and political life. In the performance it materialised as an assemblage of intergenerational trauma, gender-based violence, shame and loss. The entanglement of affects we experienced became an obstacle to embodying this further and re-distributing the sensible.

Attunement to the distribution of the sensible, to the socio-political echo of stories in PT, is ongoing work. What we need is to be courageous enough to bring these themes into our PT training space. Our tracing of how these diffractive moments occur began behind the scenes with the preparation we did before the performance. We were all deeply invested in gender-based violence concerns, but we had not thoroughly processed this engagement as a group. In turn, our intense entanglements challenged the capacity we had in the PT performance to ground ourselves in listening to Liezel.

This study has traced our intra-actions within Liezel's story – reading diffractively with the optics of Rancière and the PT performance, we folded the two "texts" into one another. We did this to elucidate our understanding of the relationship between PT and the distribution of the sensible, trying to find how an awareness of power shaped our becoming at the critical moment.

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CHAPTER 13

The Hospital Scene: Deepening Democracy with Theatre-led Inquiry

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Abstract: This chapter proposes one way of building democracy through theatre. The empirical content is drawn from a workshop conducted in Greece 2019, at a conference dedicated to performance activism worldwide ("Play Perform Learn Grow," 2019). Performance activism draws upon the human capacity to play, create and perform, the premise being that people – even if their economic, social and/or political interests are in conflict – can create new relationships, new activities and new ways of moving forward together. The aim of the workshop was to allow a creative conversation that would unpack multiple ways of creating understanding from a real-life incident from rural Uganda, in which a pregnant woman was refused help to give birth at a clinic. Theoretically framed within Brechtian thinking and the concept of deep democracy as introduced by Amy and Arnold Mindell (Amy Mindell, 2008), the chapter argues that the theatre-led inquiry contributed to destabilise customised thinking and provide potential for multifaceted thinking and awareness. In this way, the workshop design enabled complex and embodied ways of reflecting, providing an example of how to build and deepen democracy through theatre.

Keywords: performance activism, Bertolt Brecht, deep democracy, theatre-led inquiry, creative conversation

Introduction

The image of a young woman in labour – dying – strikes like an arrow through the flesh and bones of my body. I see her on the floor in front of

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me – at the entrance to the clinic, the nurse refusing to treat her because she does not have the money to pay. The unborn child dies with her. For one moment, I feel exposed and vulnerable. Then I compose myself and move on as facilitator. This is what I experienced in a split second while co-facilitating a drama workshop at an international conference in Thessaloniki in 2019. In this chapter, I will analyse and discuss the themes that arose from the workshop that investigated a real-life story from rural Uganda, the hospital scene, about a young woman in labour who died after she was refused treatment because she could not pay the fee as the hospital rules demanded. The aim of the workshop was to explore ways of applying theatre-led inquiry for experiential learning and new insight.

The legacy of theatre as a vehicle for change represents experimental avant-garde theatre as well as educational and therapeutic traditions. Shapes and forms vary, yet there seems to be a renewed interest currently in exploring the coming together of performance practices in the arts and in everyday life (see for example Citron et al., 2014; Jennings & Holmwood, 2016). At the same time, Western notions of democracy are under pressure and grassroots initiatives outside the conventional political sphere are emerging worldwide. One of these is performance activism that originates from the US, inspired by radical performance practice and studies from the 1970s and onwards (Friedman & Holzman, 2014). Performance activism draws upon the human capacity to play, create and perform. The premise is that people – even if their economic, social and/or political interests are in conflict – can create new relationships, new activities and new ways of moving forward together.

This chapter argues that the theatre-led inquiry demonstrated in the workshop accords with performance activism because of the joint objective to challenge habitual thinking and action patterns, and to foster creative conversations that accommodate awareness of diversity and oppression. The chapter is arranged as follows. First, the background and context of the workshop is presented. Then, the theoretical framework is introduced, combining Bertolt Brecht's theatre of everyday life (Brecht et al., 1976) and Arnold and Amy Mindell's concept of deep democracy (Amy Mindell, 2008). Thereafter, the practice-led methodology and the performative research design are presented. In the main body of the

chapter, I analyse and discuss the workshop through the lens of the theoretical framework, before the conclusion that sums up the outcome in the light of the performative research paradigm and the aspiration of building and deepening democracy through theatre.

Background and context

The choice of story stemmed from an online course on social therapeutics and performance activism hosted by the East Side Institute in New York ("East Side Institute", 2020). Drawn from theories of Lev Vygotsky and Ludwig Wittgenstein, the East Side Institute has developed radical approaches to bringing human and community development to the forefront of culture change (Holzman, 2018). My co-facilitator, David Keir Wright, joined the course with other international students. One of them was David Kawanuka from Uganda, who worked for Hope for Youth Uganda, a non-profit organization that supports youth and vulnerable children by addressing education and health issues ("Hope for Youth Uganda," 2020). During the online course, stories from their realities and experiences were shared by the participants, and these often depicted challenging conditions in deprived communities. Kawanuka, unable to join on zoom, shared the story from his community in the outskirts of Kampala in an email. The encounter between the young woman in labour and the nurse refusing to help her had made a strong impression on him, and his sharing it sparked off a whole range of thoughts and feelings for us as listeners, such as questions around differences, power relations, health education, ethics, policies and the need for meaning and hope. For me personally, this included a biased sense of indignation that generated my curiosity and motivation to work in more depth with the story. Its microcosmic specificity seemed to represent a bigger reality, like a macro-cosmos, that put forward dilemmas and questions that would be interesting to investigate further through drama- and theatre-based action methods.

The opportunity to do so presented itself at the conference *Play, Perform, Learn, Grow: Bridging Communities, Practices and the World ("Play Perform Learn Grow," 2019).*

The first *Play, Perform, Learn, Grow (PPLG)* gathering took place in 2017 in response to the refugee crisis, and was supported by the East Side Institute, by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and by Lesvos Solidarity. Stimulating community creativity, *PPLG* aims to create places of belonging across national, ideological and social borders and embrace cultural diversity through its focus on play and ritual. The initiative was impacted in its creation by performance activism and drama and movement therapy. It ignited a collective movement, nourishing homegrown initiatives and creating new spaces of belonging across borders and cultures. The focus of the 2019 conference was "the exploration of methodologies that support educational, therapeutic, academic, artistic and community initiatives to discover dialectics in between polarities, capture complexities, articulate and perform new kinds of relationships" ("Play Perform Learn Grow," 2019). After Kawanuka had granted us permission to use his story, we submitted a proposal for a workshop, "Unpacking unheard voices through participatory drama". At the same time, we followed up the contact with Kawanuka and the conference organizers, and, helped by their efforts, it became possible for Kawanuka to join us in Thessaloniki and take part in the workshop. At the start of the conference, we finally met in person in the park at Anatolia College to go through the final preparations. Beforehand, we had given him the session plan and now we went through the stages of the workshop. We agreed that he would join the workshop as a participant with no other prepared task than playing the drum during the warm-up. However, the ethical awareness of his special role was pertinent, as the original teller of the story from his personal experience. He was the key human link to the tragedy at the clinic. As facilitators, we brought this awareness with us into the workshop.

Theoretical framework

This chapter addresses and reflects on practice that explored the coming together of performance practices in the arts and in everyday life. The theoretical framework therefore draws from theatre studies and process-oriented psychology. In his dramaturgical poem "On everyday

theatre", Brecht put a street accident forward as a basic model for an epic theatre – a model he developed theoretically in the essay "The street scene" (Brecht, 1964; Brecht et al., 1976, pp. 176–179). In the poem the witness of a street accident demonstrates, as an actor-storyteller, how the accident happened. From a third person's perspective, he describes the actions of the driver and the actions of the old man who was hit – the point being that the accident could also *not* have happened. For the exploration of the hospital scene, this was relevant because it puts forward the Brechtian claim that human beings are social beings with choices – hence they could have chosen otherwise (White, 2004). Brecht does not bring in the term democracy, but the notion of democratic practice is present throughout the poem, with the main image of the street as stage and shared social space. Brecht scholar John White points out its efficiency through means of rhetorical antitheses, such as temple vs. street; cloistered theatre vs. real life outside (White, 2004, p. 166). This indicates the stage as a communal space for exchange of stories on street level, meaning on *equal* level, and it brings together performance practices on stage and in life. Acting here means to engage in the world with the purpose of social investigation – together.

The distancing or estrangement encouraged by Brecht was also relevant because of its invitation to allowing complex and dialectical thinking – in line with the workshop objectives – to investigate the story from different angles and perspectives. Brecht writes that the aim of the estrangement is to portray human social incidents as "something striking, something that calls for explanation" and "not to be taken for granted, not just natural" (Brecht, 1964, p. 125). By "the direct changeover from representation to commentary" (Brecht, 1964, p. 126), Brecht wants "to allow the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view" (Brecht, 1964, p. 125). This stance seems somewhat old-fashioned today, unless the critical lens is also held up towards the staging procedures of the workshop itself and looks at them as "something striking" that embeds interests, power structures and intentions – both conscious and unconscious ones. For the analysis of the workshop and a closer, critical look at how it was intended and worked, this critical lens was useful because it revealed underlying and tacit relations that it was important to make explicit, such

as my sudden emotional response described in the introduction, and my indignation and disgust when hearing the story for the first time.

To cater for these more intuitive, sensory and feeling responses, it seemed therefore appropriate to bring in the notion of deep democracy from the field of process-oriented psychology, which represents a deepening of democracy beyond classical democracy, which has focused on majority rule (Green, 1999; Amy Mindell, 2008; Arnold Mindell, 1992). Deep democracy involves an increased awareness of how we as individuals and communities listen to each other's lived experience and diversity of voices, conscious and unconscious, explicit and tacit, including deconstructing the power relations of rank (Fernández-Aballí, 2016, p. 373). By focusing on awareness of diversity of rank and privilege in discursive interactions, it is used in international peace work and collective healing work in post-war zones (Audergon & Arye, 2005). Deep democracy merges psychology, the arts and politics, and seemed particularly significant in the context of performance activism because it filters through the private and public spheres of life and supports critical reflection of action. It was appropriate for the workshop investigation because it invites storytelling arising from within the phenomenological body as well as the kind of storytelling that Brecht advocates, prompted critically. Amy Mindell states that deep democracy brings democracy "to life *in the moment* as a living reality" by summing up that "[o]nly when all aspects of an experience are unfolded with awareness does the wisdom embedded in the experience reveal itself most fully" (Amy Mindell, 2008, p. 213). This assumption will be inquired into below. What kind of wisdom was revealed during the workshop, and what kind of transformation, if any, was at stake?

Methodology

The purpose of the workshop was two-fold. On the one hand, the aim was to unpack and explore some of the not-yet imaged stories generated from the antagonistic situation in the hospital scene. On the other hand, the objective was to propose a theatre-led inquiry that would allow the diversity of mainstream and marginalized perspectives to co-exist and interact – even if they should reveal uncomfortable power structures and emotional responses.

This dual and performative approach is in line with "practice as research in the arts" (Nelson, 2013). Robin Nelson proposes a model mapping the creative research process in cycles of transforming subjective know-how and tacit knowledge into explicit and contextualized knowledge available to many (Nelson, 2013, p. 37). Estelle Barnett proposes that all artists-researchers validate their research by questioning themselves: "What new knowledge/understandings did the studio enquiry and methodology generate that may not have been revealed through other research approaches?" (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p. 1). In this kind of performative research, the expressive forms of research work performatively, which means that the research may inaugurate movement and transformation, much in line with Mindell's claim of potential emergence of group wisdom (Amy Mindell, 2008, p. 213). Brad Haseman writes that "[i]t not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself" (Haseman, 2014, p. 150). This resonates with the intentions and thinking behind the workshop, where it was the practice itself that generated the outcome.

The workshop design was carefully planned in six stages: focus, warm-up, bridge-in, main event, bridge-out and grounding – the intention being that each exercise would reveal new layers of stories to emerge. This structured design followed the dramaturgy of a ritual and represents a key element in the training and practice of the Sesame Approach to dramatherapy, in which I was trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London 2005–2007 (Bruun, 2012; Hougham, 2006; Pearson et al., 2013). The six stages build up from the focus, warm-up and bridge-in to the main event that represents the anti-structure of the ritual where liminality and a state of betwixt-and-between may challenge habitual thinking and feeling responses, and in turn, when addressed in the bridge-out, may inspire new patterns to emerge. To wind down and return to the "reality", the bridge-out, therefore, in this Jungian-based approach, is essential because staying with the ambivalence of the experiential exploration during the main event may provide potential new insights and transformative learning, individually and collectively. Finally, the here-and-now reality is reinforced, making sure that everybody is grounded before the session ends. The potential for transformation and new insight is embedded in this kind of ritualistic structure that

goes well with the performative research paradigm. Barbara Bolt argues that "the performative needs to be understood in terms of the performative *force* of art, that is, its capacity to effect 'movement' in thought, word and deed in the individual and social sensorium" (Bolt, 2016, p. 130). With the objective to explore how to stimulate new reflexive awareness of personal and cultural bias, this would mean, in Bolt's understanding, that the workshop outcome could only be validated by how the group would be *moved* by the experience of the arts practice as a collaborative and relational performative event in the here and now.

The workshop – analysis and discussion

The 90-minute workshop took place on Sunday morning 6th October 2019. In addition to Kawanuka, my co-facilitator Wright, and myself, six female conference delegates attended – their ages ranging from mid-twenties to fifty plus, representing several parts of the world, Sweden/Ireland, Norway/Austria, South America and the US. The analysis and discussion of the workshop has four sections: stepping into the story, dwelling in the story (main event), stepping out and moving on.

Stepping into the story

After a short informal presentation of all present, Kawanuka played soft rhythms on an African djembe while the rest of the group moved around, at first individually, then meeting and greeting each other, moving around to the rhythms, arriving energetically in the same space and collectively creating focus. Then, in a standing circle, the bridge-in exercise, floating sculpts, was introduced: one person A creates a body-shape inside the circle and the next person B responds with another shape. When both sculpts are still, there is a moment of observing and sensing the relationship of the two before A withdraws, leaving B alone before the next person C responds with his or her body-shape. The rationale was to prepare the participants for the creative exploration of the story during the main event. The five themes were chosen beforehand with the intention to start unpacking the complexity of perspectives:

plea for help (the dying woman/victim),
rejection (the nurse/oppressor),
despair (victim, family, community, and potentially including oppressor),
grief (family, community, and potentially oppressor)
consolation (family, community, and potentially oppressor).

When the group investigated the themes as floating sculpts, several versions of each theme emerged, often with two body-shapes expressing the same feelings but in different ways and with a variety of intensity, or expressing opposite feelings, which was most pertinent with the theme *rejection,* where the antagonistic relationship was shown in different ways. This bridge-in was mainly intended to raise the group's awareness and evoke affective responses to the themes, but it also had another purpose – to demonstrate through practice that everyone would have their own response and creative imagination, and that these were equally valid. It was also a way to underpin Brecht's theatre of everyday life because everyone present embodied the roles of actor-storyteller and witness (Brecht et al., 1976). The multiple versions of each theme started the creative conversation in the group by evoking everyone's personal experience and imagination. The floating sculpts induced a variety of feeling responses and, in concordance with deep democracy, the idea was to let all the feeling responses be of equal value, having the same right to be expressed and voiced (Amy Mindell, 2008). It was important to introduce this non-hierarchical mindset experientially during this phase of the workshop before the main event. It seemed to work well and create a collective awareness of ability to move to the next stage of the workshop with embodied curiosity and playfulness.

Main event: dwelling in the story

In the main event the group explored the scene together in three rounds based on initial pair work. The six female participants paired up with each other and Wright paired up with Kawanuka. Each pair was asked to create a sculpt together of the climax of the scene and the four sculpts were then shown one by one. The antagonism between the woman and the nurse was clear in all versions, but the woman in labour was shown

in different ways, from lying down, to kneeling, and to standing, while expressing agony, pain and her plea for help. The nurse stood in all versions with a clear body language of rejection, expressing disgust, power and determination. The exploration then continued with the whole group focusing on one sculpt at a time. With the first two sculpts the group was asked to voice out loud the two characters' feelings and thoughts. This exploration resulted in lines, such as:

> *Nurse: Why is this woman bothering me? I must follow the rules of the hospital, [it is] that simple! If not, I lose my job. There are too many other patients here, I cannot make an exception with her.*
> *Woman in labour: What is the matter with you? Please, help me, my child will die. My husband will soon be here, I know, you must help me. How can you be so cruel? I do not want to die.*

With the third sculpt, the group was invited to voice what the two characters did not dare to say out loud. This resulted in lines, such as:

> *Nurse: Why do these young women get pregnant all the time? She should have been more careful. I am tired of this work. Nothing we do seems to help. We need more staff. I am exhausted from this work. She has put it on herself by getting pregnant with such a man. It is not my concern.*
> *Woman: She thinks she is better than me for having an education. Why isn't my husband here? It is not fair that I go through this. I am not a person to her. I hate people like her. Only living by the rules and regulations, without empathy. Why can't she think for herself? She should not be a nurse!*

In this round, new voices arose from the young woman that seemed to set the scene within the larger African social context, as imagined by the group, of general female conditions relating to education, (early?) pregnancy and dependency on men. The severe standpoint of the nurse was loosened when more nuances around her working conditions and expectations as a nurse were revealed.

These rounds of exploring the climax of the scene brought out expected responses along with more unexpected ones, including empathy with the nurse. As a result the exercise allowed the mainstream and marginalized

voices of the group to interact and co-exist in a creative conversation in line with the notion of deep democracy that "sees the emotional experience at the margins of group life as potentially transformative" (Audergon & Arye, 2005, p. 113). I would not claim that the exercise was transformative for the short-lived workshop group at this point but working with the sculpts like this served the purpose of letting new, more surprising, perspectives come forward. There seemed to be a shift of group perspective that lifted the lens from each participant's personal responses to an enhanced awareness of the context and its difficult conditions.

Stepping out of the story

After the main event, the process of stepping away from the dramatic scene started. At this point, my co-facilitator and I had chosen *not* to encourage the participants to emotionally identify further with the dying woman, but rather encourage affective distance, as advocated by the Brechtian notion of estrangement (Brecht, 1964). Still, it seemed appropriate to acknowledge that there would have been a burial in the community and, rather ironically, this was when the vivid image of the dead woman struck me as real, and de-stabilized me emotionally for a few seconds. The charge of the moment seemed to raise not only my awareness, but also the whole group's awareness of the specificity of the story context and the significance of it being brought to us by Kawanuka from his community – a community shared with the woman *and* the nurse. The shared experience of this moment seemed to create a deeper group awareness amongst us that somehow mirrored the realities of pain and frustration within the event itself. It can be understood as a transformative moment for the group, in line with deep democracy raising awareness of diversity, rank and privilege in discursive interactions (Fernández-Aballí, 2016, p. 361). It also somehow seemed to honour the story and the realities of it. This made a difference for the last part of the workshop and its outcome.

For the last exercise, the four pairs were asked to imagine a new character and create a first-person monologue from this character's perspective sometime after the burial. The new characters were:

the sister of the pregnant woman,
her husband,
a junior nurse/witness to the event,
a doctor/owner of the clinic.

The pairs worked on their own for about ten minutes and when presenting the monologues everybody wanted to take part. Eight chairs were set up in a square with two chairs on each side, back to back. In this way, each pair spoke out into the space while the other pairs could listen as witnesses with open or closed eyes. The four monologues created new experiential perspectives related to the scene, based on the participants' imagination and what they brought to the workshop of their personal assumptions. The sister spoke about her hard work taking care of her dead sister's children and her feeling of responsibility, while giving up her own education and a future of her own. She had little respect for the widower and there was bitterness and resentment in her monologue. The husband, on the other hand, regretted that he had had to work and was not able to come in time. He expressed a deep sense of grief and feeling of guilt. When the turn came to the junior nurse, new issues were introduced by her, such as of nurses not daring to oppose the matron's decision. In an inner dialogue, she presented the dilemma between loyalty to the senior nurse and indignation and repulsion at her rigidity. Last was the monologue of the doctor and owner of the clinic, performed by Kawanuka, supported by Wright. The doctor expressed his worry about the reputation of the clinic after the incident, and his concern about the press and about the future of the clinic after the tragic event. He defended the policy of charging the patients money and revealed that, before this was implemented, too many patients would come, and that it was not professionally sustainable.

After the four characters' monologues had been presented there was a moment to de-role and for the pairs to dissolve. In resonance with deep democracy and non-hierarchical storytelling it was of no interest during the workshop to interpret or speculate about the group's creations. It was up to each participant how they related to their own curiosities about their pre-conceived understandings and expectations. This agrees with performance as research and theatre-led inquiry that regard the tolerance of ambivalence and complex thinking as an aim and epistemological

pre-requisite as "a recognition of the generative potential of the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the aesthetic object and the necessity for ongoing decoding, analysis and translation" (E. Barrett, in Bolt, 2016, p. 132). The role of the unconscious as a motor for knowledge creation is acknowledged in this kind of performative paradigm – meaning that it is acceptable and anticipated that stories may contradict each other. Just as in Brecht's poem about the street accident, the point-of-view of each storyteller came to the foreground, underpinning that we are all storytellers and witnesses. The sharing of the four monologues made the real-life origin of the hospital scene pertinent once more, particularly with the last monologue by the doctor and owner of the clinic. Kawanuka's direct knowledge and relationship to the story contributed to a new contextual understanding: the doctor's concern for the consequences for his clinic and its survival. In this way, the bridge between the fictional and the real, the imaginative and the factual, was emphasized one last time.

To close the workshop, the chairs were turned back, and the group met in a sitting circle for a last opportunity to share responses to and reflections about the workshop investigation. After an invitation to say whatever was felt to be relevant, there was silence for a while. First voiced was indignation towards the social injustice and oppression represented in the story. This triggered a shared group feeling of empathy with the pregnant woman, as the victim, but then other perspectives emerged, such as:

They were all right in their own way.
None of them were evil.
It must have been difficult for the husband.
This could have happened in my country too.

From this point onwards, a new conversation surfaced where the participants started to share stories and thoughts about difficult topics from their own social contexts, for example human and animal rights issues which are difficult to address because of politics, the climate crisis in South America, issues around views on women's rights and free abortion in Ireland. There was a felt group acknowledgement of how antagonistic conflicts may cause individual and collective trauma. During this last part of the workshop, the image of the dying woman

with her unborn child re-appeared as the communal reference point for the group. In solidarity, it seemed, the focus expanded to other difficult conditions for women worldwide. The dialogue was charged with empathy but what was said also grew out of indignation and anger. Still, the workshop investigation seemed to have raised an awareness of innate structures of feelings that tend to understand and think in exclusive binaries and antagonistic opposites, and this enabled the group, at the end of the workshop, to reflect together with a non-judgemental and a searching attitude.

In my view, the workshop, even if it only lasted 90 minutes, caused a shift in the group that resonates with Barrett's notion of "movement in thought, word and deed" – a notion she refers to as the aim of performance as research (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p. 130). In the last group reflection, the hospital scene seemed to transgress what its meaning had been until then, and it became a symbol of circumstantial injustice worldwide, including in other times than ours. Through this shift of meaning, our empathy for the pregnant woman, and the emotional charge, returned, but now understood with a different and critical lens, seeing her as a representative of the many victims of social injustice and of undemocratic power relations. This seemed significant because it somehow gave the meaninglessness of the hospital scene a new meaning – namely that *we as a group* had chosen to explore *this specific* story this Sunday morning, and without our workshop investigation the story would have remained silenced. With this shared group recognition, the workshop ended leaving us with a deep humility regarding the circumstantial context of the story.

Moving on

After the workshop and the *Play, Perform, Learn, Grow* conference, I was left with a sense that the theatre-led inquiry during the workshop had resulted in quite a complex unravelling of perspectives and voices from the hospital scene. As a proposal to building democracy through theatre, the workshop explorations had supported both mainstream and marginalized voices of the group to surface and interact. By encouraging the

expected as well as the surprising responses to the a-symmetrical and antagonistic encounter between the woman and the nurse, the group's awareness of diversity, rank and privilege seemed to grow and develop step by step during the phases of the workshop. There was a decisive shift after the acknowledgement of the burial that put an extra emphasis on the coming together of the fictional and factual levels of the investigation. This could be interpreted as group wisdom emerging in resonance with the notion of deep democracy as claimed by Amy Mindell (2008, p. 213). Still, it is important to recognize the limitations of such a brief workshop exploration when it comes to changing the context and the circumstances of the people who live their lives in the community where the event that formed the kernel of our workshop took place. Some months after the conference in Thessaloniki, I received an email from Kawanuka in which he wrote:

> Before we started the workshop, I was normal and okay, but when it got started, I became emotional. All my mind came back home, showing me a picture of that pregnant young lady. Though I didn't know her much, but I used to see her in our community. (Kawanuka, 2019)

He continues to express frustration for not having been able to do anything "to bring justice" and "remind us in our community to prevent such incidents to happen again" (Kawanuka, 2019). In another scenario, I imagine that it would be interesting to bring the workshop to the community where it all happened and, also, to have the opportunity to offer it to the college of nursing education, and other similar institutions, in Uganda. Still, knowing that the conference workshop did not cause or intend to cause any change of policy, I would argue that it served a purpose in holding up a critical lens at practices that lead to such tragic outcomes as represented in the scene. One of the other workshop participants, Hanne Tjersland, a Norwegian dancer and peace worker, has reflected on this, pointing out the value of theatre for deepening our understanding of conflict and therefore also of peace work. She wrote in an email some months after the workshop:

> I found that the session … left me with a little bit deeper understanding of the messy and beautiful condition of being human, and as a peace worker I believe that is one of the greatest understandings I can have. (Tjersland, 2019)

Conclusion

The outcome of the workshop was an experientially founded recognition and awareness of how binary and habitual thinking patterns in us-them, good-evil could be challenged and loosened by complex thinking and affective understanding inspired by the theoretical framework that integrated inspiration from Brechtian thinking and the Mindells' concept of deep democracy. The new knowledge generated was only possible through the performative research approach that engaged the group in a shared theatre-led inquiry permitting transformative moments. It was essential for the outcome that the group was able to meet and connect on an intersubjective level that respected the individual circumstances of everyone involved. The theoretical frame proved to be useful because it raised an awareness of a broader spectrum of phenomenological ways of knowing, through sensation, intuition and feeling, on an equal term with the more intellectual standpoint as advocated by Brecht. The result was a creative conversation that unravelled a range of experiential perspectives and allowed mainstream and marginalized voices to be articulated and interact. Throughout the workshop, there was an embodied group trust that supported the facilitation and contributed to the group's ability to keep a fluid and generous mindset while exploring the story. Together, we exposed and investigated voices that would otherwise have remained unheard and silenced. I understand my moment of unbalance during the bridge-out as an invitation not only *to* the group, but also *from* the group to deepen our communal awareness of the layered complexity of the story together. In this way the workshop contributed to stimulating new reflexive awareness of personal and cultural bias or, in Bolt's wording, to being moved *by* the experience of the arts practice as a collaborative and relational performative event in the here and now (Bolt, 2016, p. 130).

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the theatre-led inquiry reached its double objective. On the one hand, the workshop unpacked not-yet imaged stories generated from the antagonistic situation in the hospital scene by inviting the participants' sensory, intuitive, emotional and critical responses to a creative conversation where these perspectives could co-exist. On the other hand, the workshop offered a model for applying theatre as performative research inquiry and experiential learning.

The methods discussed in this chapter will hopefully be of interest to theatre practitioners and performance activists who are in search of inspiration about how to facilitate creative conversations that enable complex and embodied ways of reflecting, and who are interested in the challenge of building and deepening democracy through theatre.

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How to catch a flying pig: Facilitating embodiment work in online rooms. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 2020, Vol 25(2), 268–285, DOI: 10.1080/13569783.2020.1730169

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Applied theatre in times of terror: Accepting aesthetic diversity and going beyond dilemma. *Applied Theatre Research* (2017), Vol. 5(3), 169–183.

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Advancing freedom to be alive-in-connectedness – Nr 02 – 2020 – DRAMA – Nordisk dramapedagogisk tidsskrift – Idunn.
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Drama, teater og demokrati. Fagbokforlaget 2017 (a documentary theatre, a research documentary (film) and articles)

Teaterproduksjon – Ti produksjonsestetiske innganger. Cappelen Damm Akademisk (2018) 267 p.co-author Cecilie Haagensen) https://www.cappelendammundervisning.no/_teaterproduktion-9788202590253
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Gjærum, R.G., Cziboly, A. & Eriksson, S. A. (2021). The case of drama: ILSA exemplified in arts education. What learning competences can be developed through drama education? Springer International Handbooks of Education.

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