PA:PER

Performing Arts: Practice, Education and Research

INTER
SECTIONS

02 Issue (2023)
Intersections

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Director's Foreword

Foreword

With the success of our first edition last year, we are able to include not only our own staff and students' research, but also five external scholars' work in this year's edition.

The aim of PA:PER is to encourage practitioners/scholars to bring their research developments to the front, to make them known to those in their fields to begin perhaps a conversation that will encourage knowledge exchange as well as collaborations in research; and also to enhance their ability to reflect upon, and share their approach towards practice across the globe; building a PaR community within as well as beyond this Academy.

"Intersection" is about East meeting West in our artistic pursuits. Hong Kong is well positioned in the south of China, and also uniquely so in the heart of Asia. Aspiring to be the East/West Cultural Exchange Hub of the region, we hope that through sharing performing and technical arts and their related research, we will enhance our understanding of the various fields of practice through continuing to connect and disseminate our scholarly work as artists and practitioners.

I hope you will enjoy reading the 12 papers included in this year's publication.

Last but not least, my heartfelt appreciation to the members of the Editorial Advisory Board, the PA:PER editorial team; and of course, the authors of this issue for their support and contribution.
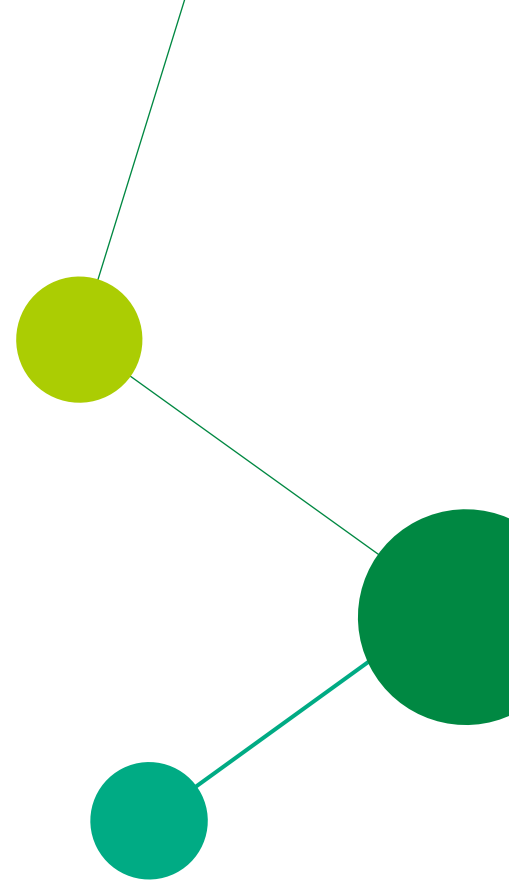
Professor Gillian Choa

Director
The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

Intersections: Editorial

Elizabeth de Roza, Robert Wells, Melina Scialom, Steven Ng

This second issue of PA:PER looks at "intersections" within and beyond performing arts disciplines and asks how practitioners and scholars explore and experiment with ideas and frameworks of intersections within their practice, teaching, and research. Intersections reveal the possibilities and products of the crossovers of two or more different elements, styles, approaches, perspectives that in the arts reveal infinite possibilities of making, analysis, and critique. Cambridge Dictionary defines intersection[s] as "a point where two things come together and have an [affect] on each other"[1]. It further explains that if two things intersect, they are connected and influence each other, usually by having some of the same parts, features, etc[2].

When considering the intersections in cultural and social contexts, the term intersectionality emerges. "Intersectionality" was coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics intersect with one another and overlap. Intersectionality has become a theory that offers ways of looking at different domains, offering the opportunity to theorise and think about art-making and forms in an intercultural manner. As a historic intersection between "East" and "West", Hong Kong provides a point of reference to the encounters of/with crossing(s) and meeting(s) of multiplicities of cultures that simultaneously interact and overlap. But what are the perimeters of encounters, how do these spaces of encounters occur, and how are they addressed within performing arts disciplines?

There is a long history of intersections within and at the edges of the performing arts practices, and artists have explored intersections as spaces of in-betweenness, the liminal, from shamanistic ritual performances to Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* to contemporary cyborgean multimedia VR. These loci for exploration and cross-fertilisation have spurred changes both within and outside of the performing arts and simultaneously, provided spaces for understanding how these intersections converge and impact individuals and groups.

When exploring such frameworks, the interconnectedness of factors can reveal layers of complexity in art making, education and research; and opens space for new perspectives and approaches. "Intersections" reflect how artists, scholars, practitioner-researchers, and educators exist within the spaces of meeting(s) and crossing(s) and the fruition of these encounters. This issue acknowledges that everyone has their own unique experiences; thus, these contributions explore how the production of performance, teaching, and research can examine and articulate the cross-ing(s), over, within, and beyond the performing arts, spawning developments across teaching, learning,

1 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/zht/%E8%A9%9E%E5%85%B8/%E8%8B%B1%E8%AA%9E/intersection
2 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/zht/%E8%A9%9E%E5%85%B8/%E8%8B%B1%E8%AA%9E/intersect

research, and practice. In line with this issue of intersectionality, the editorial team, in writing the editorial, chose to create intersectionalities of how our writing interweaves and overlaps each other.

As Practice-as-Research is the key approach of research adopted at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), the journal opens by looking at three authors' contributions to recent iterations of Practice-as-Research. Two papers articulating a somatic/embodied lens on how the authors' practices intersect with daily life and their surroundings. The third seeks a semantic narrative and raises questions of transforming and transferring canonical understanding of theatre into spaces of cooperation, meeting, and crossing. At these spaces of collaboration, we could argue that spaces of inquiry, in all three papers, sit at the teeming edge of how bodies/persons come together, collaborating and negotiating between forms and cultures. As such, this negotiation becomes a place of intersection through which boundaries expand from societies, histories, artistic expression, and research. If we used the term "bodies" from a larger perspective to mean bodies-in-space and bodies-of-work, we might begin to see how these "bodies" exist within a space and how their singularity of existence expands from the space. The experience of daily living through which one articulates their practice echoes the eco-somatic sensory responses that these authors, Diego Pizarro and Melina Scialom, and Isabela Berto Tescarollo, have encapsulated with/in through the body. Their papers, *CorpoEstuário: Dance and Somatics-as-Research in brackish waters* and *Intersections between studio and daily life practices in contemporary dance making*, emphasise how bodies of practice respond to the environment through which they find themselves and ask what might be of one's practice beyond codified spaces. We can argue that these expanded boundaries also feed into theatre, as José Maria Vieira Mendes' paper argues that the edges of theatre should move beyond systemic disciplinary approaches to intersect beyond codified spaces of inquiry and into what Mendes' describes as the "cosmic". Mendes' paper, *Cosmic Theatre: In search of a verb*, emphasises that a theatre is a place where "different disciplines and arts co-operate" and that theatre-making is more than one discipline, e.g., dance, singing, and acting but a mise-en-scène of all elements coming together. Mendes posits the need to move away from a more traditional concept of theatre and to inhabit the term "performance" (as put forward by Schecdner, who started a new field in 1980 with its first academic department named Performance Studies in NYU) while questioning whether this term fully encapsulates transdisciplinary approaches of performance making. Thus, by borrowing from two authors, Stein and Preciado, Mendes puts forth a new verb, *Cosmic*, to open up the possibility of transforming the conventional understanding of the discipline. In putting these three papers together, we have set up a trajectory of how the authors posit frameworks of discussion to expand disciplinary inquiry beyond codified spaces and at the intersections of how these modalities might intersect and overlap with how knowledge can be received and conceived.

At the intersection of creative practices, artistic disciplines, media, and philosophy, we have categorised three papers under *Imprints: Artistic/ Positionality*. The papers posit that the intersections of creative practice is a fertile provocateur to raise issues unique to artistic research and pedagogical practice. At their intersections, these papers suggest cross-fertilisations among disciplines that can either incite advancements in each of the disciplines individually or encourage new fields to emerge. In the arts, examples of such
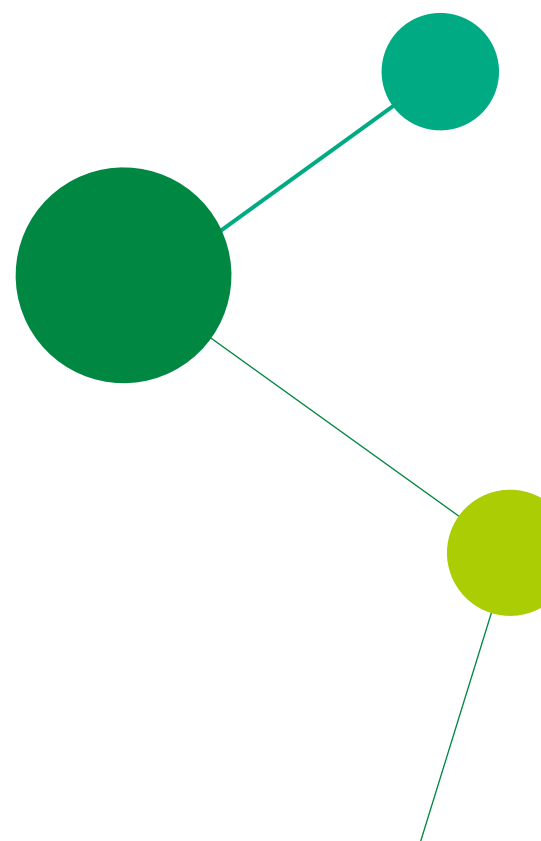
fertilisations are revealed by the imprints of Billy Sy, Mohit Kakkar, and James Else.

Sy offers a contribution from his practice as an actor, theatre-maker, voice coach, and lecturer at the School of Drama at the HKAPA. In his paper *In the eye of the beholder: Creating an immersive life drawing event*, Sy details a collaborative project that created an immersive experience for life-drawing artists-audience. The paper reveals a number of intersections that, when combined, can create an event where the participants become an essential part of the devised immersive happening. Addressing the intersections between visual arts, drama, performance art, and music, he explores the ways that these can stimulate the participant's five senses within an immersive experience. In addition, Sy proposes the role of the participants', intersecting artist and audience, to create a hybrid space of appreciating, and actively contributing to the happening as a whole. The participants are invited to respond to the multiple stimuli through drawing and sketching on paper canvas. Interestingly, these drawings could be considered the material products of the immersive artistic experience, revealing the intersections among artists, participants, stimuli, and senses.

In another intersection of disciplines, Kakkar discusses the artistic and educational results and values of the intersection between Virtual Reality (VR) media and live theatrical practice, incorporating performers and objects to interact with VR. In his paper *Creating an immersive virtual reality experience as a platform for transmedia education*, Kakkar states that the combination of immersion, presence, and embodiment, can generate pluri-modal events that enhance immersive VR experiences. For Kakkar, transmedia storytelling becomes a tool of intersection that allows the audiences to shift from non-virtual to virtual space. This intersection grants embodied experiences to the audience and can also enhance the educational activities in Film and TV pedagogy, generating tools for the pre-production process of cinema narrative VR productions. Kakkar argues that transmedia techniques enhance the conceptualisation of ideas in film making, allowing the creation of visualisations that showcase the storyline and characters involved in the script to be filmed, not only in an educational setting does this intersection exist. The author explains that when VR is associated with live performance, it enhances the audience's involvement in the story. As this integration advances, it might even involve script development. Kakkar concludes by highlighting how VR can serve filmmaking, theatrical performance and media pedagogy and how its hybrid nature allows it to intersect with a range of areas to expand their creative possibilities and consolidate the field as a medium that can be applied in both virtual and non virtual experiences.

The intersection between art and science, is the main theme of Else's paper *The intersections of art and research — Investigating the boundaries between art object and art analysis*. When considering the possible structural intersections between art-work and art-theory, which may include commentary, theory, research, or even science, Else proposes three articulations. The first one sets a binary distinction, where no actual hybrid content is generated. The author points out that when art-work and art commentary intersect, the commentary becomes part of the work itself. In fact, he gives examples of artworks where commentary functions as the work itself. The second one accounts for the intersections where boundaries are blurred, thus having

theory and art as undistinguished materials. Here, art and research merge and feedback into each other, where "the divide between traditional academic research and artistic research is, in fact, an artificial construct". Finally the impossibility of intersection is the third type. Here, art, commentary, and research are all distinct languages and forms. The author concludes by stating that the intersections generated by art and science are unique crossovers that do not belong to one or another field alone.

We are proud to showcase three of our students' reflection papers in our *Student Contributions* section. Two of the student papers are written by BFA graduates from the Schools of Drama and Dance, and one is written by a graduate from the School of Drama MFA programme.

The first paper,「表演者的觀點與角度如何影響角色演繹」*The influence of the performers' viewpoints and perspectives on the interpretation of the characters*, is from student Au Kai-faat, a BFA graduate (first-class honours) in Drama from HKAPA and recipient of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Scholarships, Scholarship of Perseverance, Director's Award, and Outstanding Student Award at HKAPA. His paper sheds light on the influence of the performers' viewpoints and perspectives on interpreting characters. He argues that the growth of performers does not rely solely on skills and theories, but rather on them developing their own perspectives. The first part of the paper focuses on the concepts actors need to clarify during the training process, and the latter part explores his graduation work, *Antigone on the beach*, using this as an example to explain the creation of the actor's point of view. Finally, Au expresses the hope that in the future, he will no longer be obsessed with proving his own value, instead continuing to recognise different forms and aesthetics, training his skills, and developing his own aesthetic.

The second paper, *Company-Ready! A reflective essay on the Akram Khan internship experience*, by Jed Nhiko C Nagales and Natalie Ko Ka-man. They are BFA graduates (first-class honours) in Contemporary Dance. Nagales has a background in cheerleading and acrobatics with The MAG Dancers; he was selected for the Akram Khan Company Internship and began his professional dance career with Aura Dance Theatre in Lithuania last year. Ko participated in the Akram Khan Company Internship and was featured in choreography by Mickael Marso Riviere and Jorge Jauregui Allue and Motion Capture by Alexander Whitley. She joined CDCC last year as a dance artist trainee. This reflective essay focuses on the Akram Khan Company, a well-known dance company that has been touring the United Kingdom, and the world, since 2002. Their productions have received tremendous acclaim and garnered numerous awards worldwide. Internship experiences of eight graduate students from the School of Dance at HKAPA took place in early 2022. Following their internship, they reflected on the importance of building a trustworthy and committed team as a vital foundation for a motivated and rewarding working ecology.

The third paper, *A retrospective reflection of a student dramaturg's encounter with practice in a play's production*, is by Frank Lee Pok-man, MFA student in Dramaturgy at HKAPA. As a Master's student in dramaturgy, he had the opportunity to practice dramaturgy in a production entered for the Emerging Theatre Artists Competition, at the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in China. His paper explores how a less experienced dramaturg might learn through working with more experienced directors. The paper attempts to review how a student
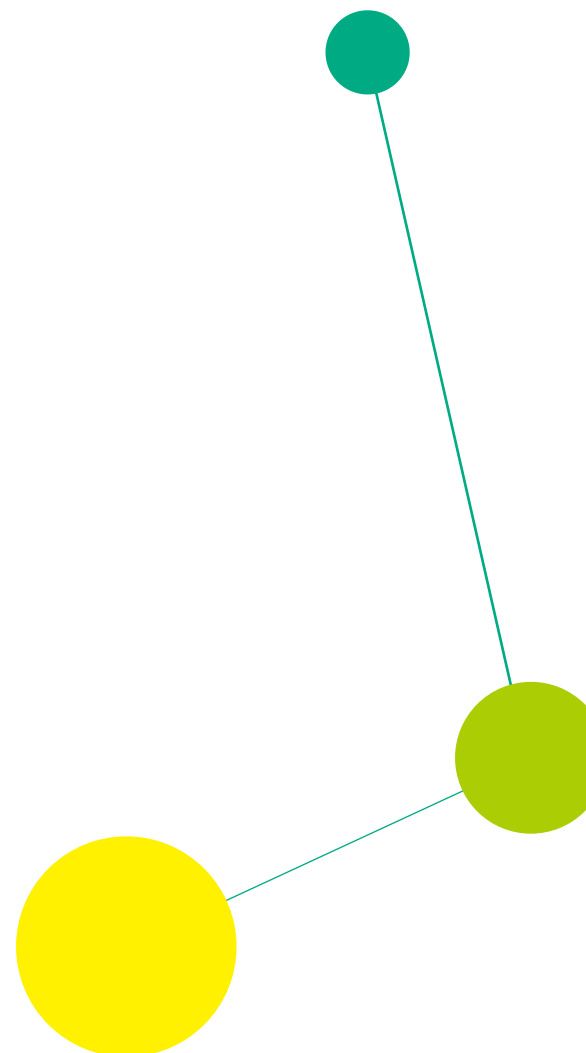
dramaturg practises his profession in a short play, and the tacit knowledge he gained from this experience. Lee concludes that he adopted various ways of approaching the production from page to stage. He also illustrates how a production dramaturg might help shape performances and encourage other theatre practitioners in Hong Kong to involve such professionals in their productions.

In our final section, we have three papers on *Arts Pedagogy, Community, and Social Media*. Michael Li's paper, *The intersection in performing arts education: Engagement and empowerment in teaching, learning, and performance*, uses case study to explore recent changes to teaching and learning in a specialist arts academy. In *Creative Arts Youth Work: Enhancing creativity, participation and inclusion in community and youth settings* by Caleb Lee, action research and sensory ethnography are used to consider the intersection of creative activities and youth work. Finally, in James Woodhams' paper *#Scamilton: Intersectionality's between social media, imitation, and performance*, the intersection between digital recording and social media is explored, investigating where creative and playful imitation drifts into more direct, and nefarious forms of copying.

Educational intersections, within the tertiary sector, are complex. Li highlights how rapid changes within the creative industries, emerging pedagogies, the need for interdisciplinary learning, technological development, and the new landscape brought about by COVID-19, are affecting how education is delivered and received by learners. Indeed, much of the paper might be considered as an intersection with the future; an arts and cultural sector that looks significantly different to today, involving careers that don't currently exist. He highlights how students require diverse skills, many of which sit outside of their field of study. He explores how student initiated projects can flip traditional notions of "teacher led" education, creating models of learning that can better prepare students for this uncertain future.

Stepping outside of the formal sector, Lee's paper considers the practices, and possibilities, of creative art inspired youth work; a hybrid approach that integrates creative art forms and professional youth work practices. Like Li, he argues for taking a more holistic approach, placing the young person at the centre of a carefully curated and creative experience. Within this context, and drawing upon an intersection of two different approaches, Lee argues that there is a route towards enhancing and improving young people's life chances, including their engagement with formal education.

Parody, pastiche, and imitation have been woven throughout much of the history of the arts. Social media, and most recently TikTok, have extended these practices. As a cultural phenomenon, the musical *Hamilton* has been a focus for a huge amount of audience generated media, most of which is welcomed by the original creators. In the case of *#Scamilton*, the Door Christian Fellowship Ministries made a near identical copy of the recording released on the Disney+ channel, even attempting to recreate many of the camera angles. Woodham's paper uses this example to explore the intersections between live performance and online culture; the changing nature of cultural creation, consumption and engagement; and the sacred revelry of certain theatrical productions.
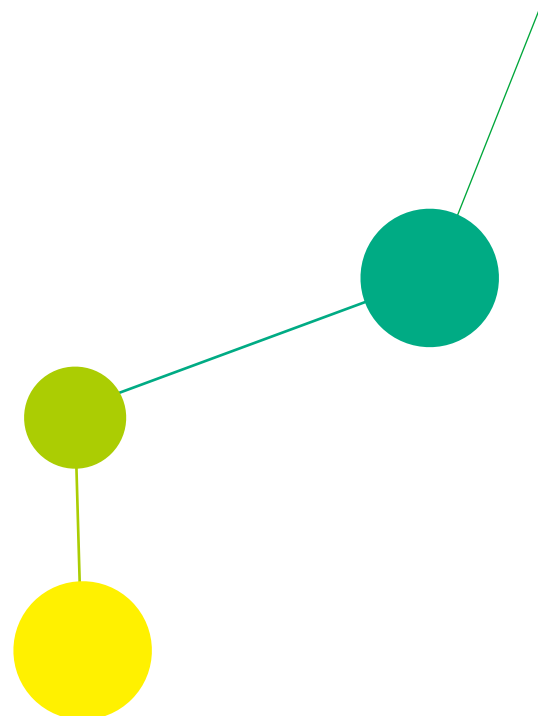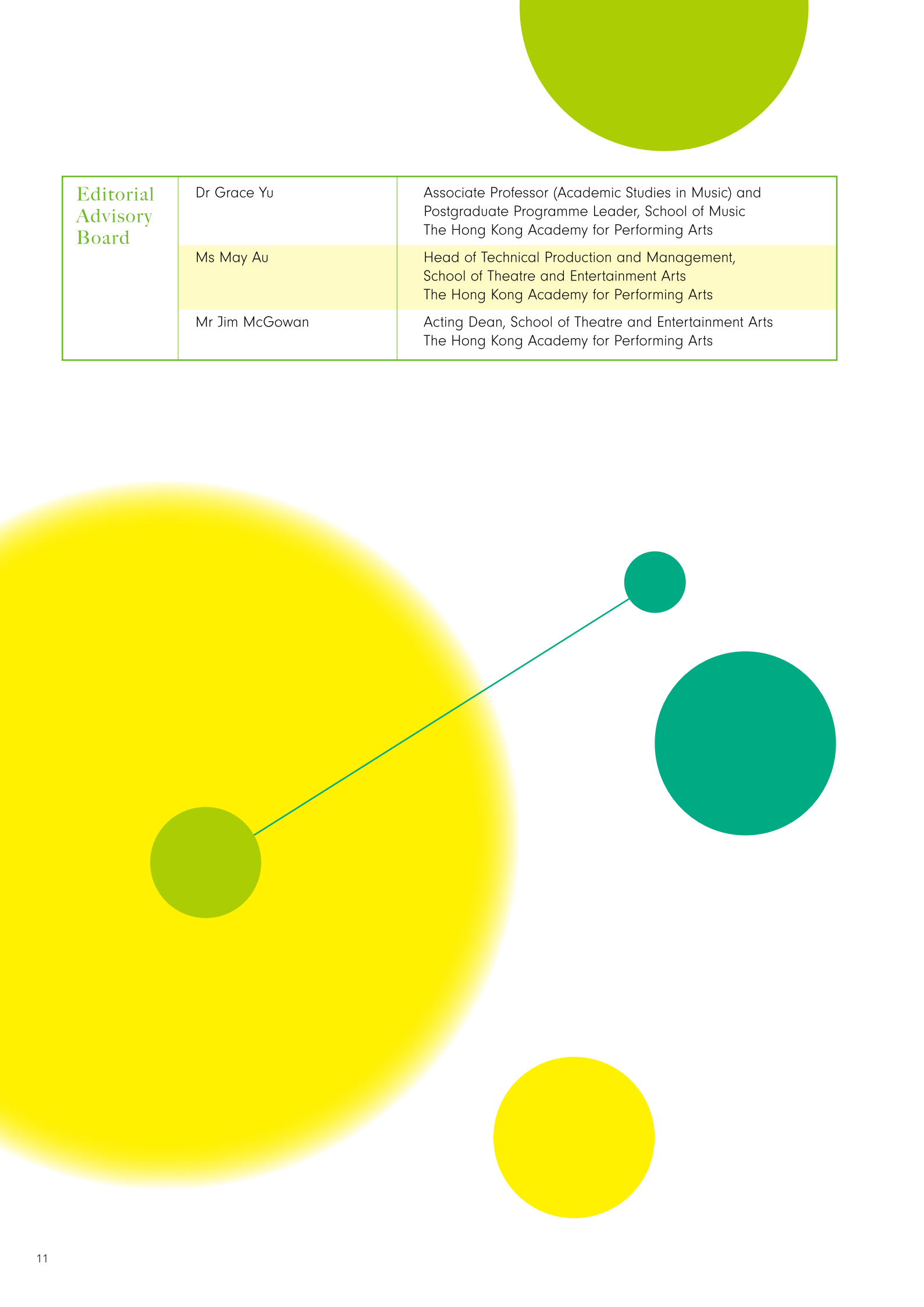
In conclusion, we hope these papers encourage further discourse regarding the intersectionality with/in and beyond the disciplines of the performing arts, their practices, and the related research and education. The international nature of the authors, including HKAPA staff and students, and other researchers from around the globe, intersects geographical, educational, and discipline boundaries, revealing the challenging diversity of opinions and perspectives. As a journal committed to promoting PaR/artistic research in practices and education, PA:PER continues to be a platform enabling multi-modal thinking, doing, writing to stimulate publication of innovative research in performing arts practices and education.
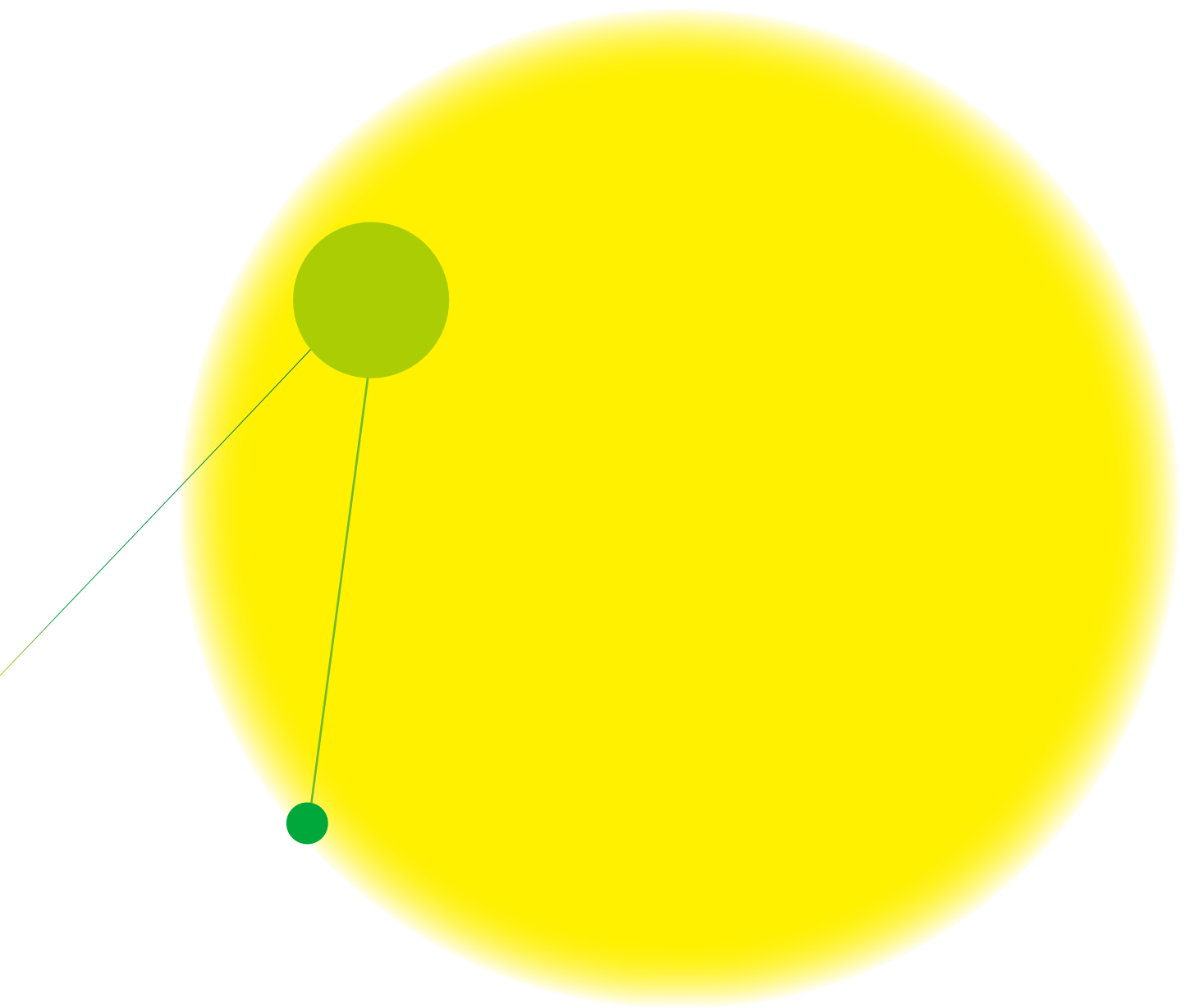
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Issue 2: Intersections

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School of Chinese Opera	*The Crossroads* Photo: Martin Wong
	"Stealing the verse" from *The Romance of Jade Hairpin* Photo: Martin Wong
	Gongs and Drums 22/23 – *Pearl Bay* Photo: Martin Wong
School of Dance	*I Will Jump Over the Fire* by Jorge Jauregui Allue Photo: Liu Sheung-yin
	Coven+ by Mickael "Marso" Riviere Photo: Mickael "Marso" Riviere
School of Drama	Musical: *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22
	A Lie of the Mind by Sam Shepard Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22
	Songs of Innocence and Experience Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22
	Musical: *Lucky Stiff* Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22
School of Film and Television	*The House of Chifan* (Behind the scenes) Photo: Elissa Rosati
	HKAPA Open Day 2023 – SPaRC Studio Photo: Dr Terry Lam
School of Music	Dizi player: Nicky Kwok Chun-hei Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22
	Hornists: Lin Han (Left), Derrick Cheong Man-u (Right) Photo: Ike Li
	Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22
School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts	Collective Media Atelier Prologue Project Photo: Allen Fung
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Education Information Technology (EDuIT)	Source: HKAPA Annual Report 2021/22

About
the Authors

Practice-as-Research

Professor Diego Pizarro

CorpoEstuário: Dance and Somatics-as-Research in brackish waters

Dance artist, researcher, and professor at the Federal Institute of Education, Science & Technology of Brasilia since 2010, where he coordinates the Collective of Studies in Dance, Somatics and Improvisation (CEDA-SI). Certified Teacher of Body-Mind Centering® and Articulation and Muscle Chains GDS practitioner. He is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Brasília (CAPES/Brazil scholarship). He holds a PhD in Performing Arts (UFBA), a master's degree in Contemporary Art and a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts (UnB). Since October 2022 he has been a permanent professor at the Graduate Programme in Performing Arts at Federal University of Bahia. (www.cedasi.com.br)

Dr José Maria Vieira Mendes

Cosmic Theatre: In search of a verb

José Maria Vieira Mendes has been an Assistant Professor at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon and is a researcher at Theatre Studies Centre. He is the Director of the Post-graduate Programme in Theatre Studies at this university. He teaches seminars in Performing Arts, Cultural Studies, and Contemporary Art among other subjects. He is a member of the theatre collective Teatro Praga and he is also part of the artistic direction of Rua das Gaivotas 6, a multidisciplinary venue for young emerging performers. He has published, among others, *One Thing Is Not the Other. On Theatre and Literature* (2022).

Dr Melina Scialom & Ms Isabela Berto Tescarollo

Intersections between studio and daily life practices in contemporary dance making

Melina Scialom is a performer, dance dramaturge, and dance researcher. Currently Lecturer (Performing Arts Research) at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. With a PhD in Dance from the University of Roehampton, UK and a specialist diploma in Choreological Studies (Trinity Laban, UK), since 2002 Melina has been dedicating herself to the creation, performance, and dramaturgy of dance and interdisciplinary collaborations, having performed throughout Europe and Brazil. She is performer, dramaturge, and co-founder of the dance group Maya-Lila (since 2005) and has been publishing widely in dance making and dramaturgy, especially in relation to the performer's dramaturgy. (www.poeticmotions.com)

Isabela is an independent artist and researcher. She is a certified Yoga teacher and has a Bachelor in Dance from the State University of Campinas, Brazil. She is interested in the field of dance dramaturgy and contemporary dance — where she has been choreographing solo performances — as well as the intersections of dance with cinema — where she has been producing works of screendance. (https://isabelabt.com/)

Imprints: Artistic/Positionality

Dr James Else

The intersections of art and research – Investigating the boundaries between art object and art analysis

Dr James Else is a composer, filmmaker, and Head of Postgraduate Studies at Northern School of Contemporary Dance. He is active across a range of art forms, including compositions for the BBC Philharmonic, the Ligeti String Quartet, and Jeremy Huw Williams; and as a TV producer for the BAFTA Scotland award winning programme 'The Great Climb' and the Scottish Adventure Award winning programme 'The Adventure Show'.

Mr Mohit Kakkar
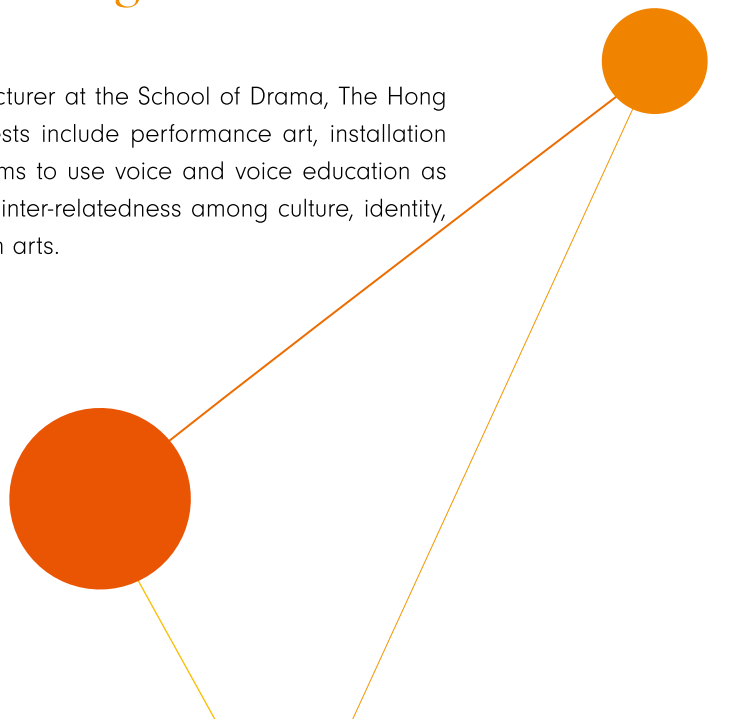
Creating an immersive virtual reality experience as a platform for transmedia education

Mohit Kakkar is a Theatre and Film sound designer. He has trained and worked in theatre, live events, film production, and post production in United States. As a film sound designer, he has worked on short films, fictional and documentary feature films and television shows. He is currently a Lecturer in the School of Film and Television at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Mohit's ongoing focus is on researching how virtual reality can be used to create a cinematic experience through transmedia storytelling.

Mr Billy Sy

In the eye of the beholder: Creating an immersive life drawing event

Billy is an actor, singer, theatre-maker, voice coach and Lecturer at the School of Drama, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. His recent work interests include performance art, installation art, and the practice of wellness in theatre training. He aims to use voice and voice education as tools to empower communities, and is keen on finding the inter-relatedness among culture, identity, memory, migration and food, and make them cross paths in arts.

Student Contributions

Mr Au Kai-faat
表演者的觀點與角度如何影響角色演繹
The influence of the performers' viewpoints and perspectives on the interpretation of the characters

A graduate with a BFA (First-class honours) in Drama from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Au was the recipient of The Hong Kong Jockey Club Scholarships, Scholarship of Perseverance, Director's Award and Outstanding Student Award.

Mr Jed Nhiko C Nagales &
Ms Natalie Ko Ka-man
Company-Ready! A reflective essay on the Akram Khan internship experience

Jed Nhiko Cabanes-Nagales is a 23-year-old dancer from the Philippines. Coming from a background in cheerleading and acrobatics with The MAG Dancers, Jed pursued his Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts on scholarship, graduating with a First Class Honours in 2022, majoring in Contemporary Dance. He was selected for the Akram Khan Company Internship and has begun his professional dance career with Aura Dance Theatre in Lithuania in 2022.

Natalie Ko graduated with a First Class Honours from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in 2022, majoring in Contemporary Dance with a SAPA Scholarship. As a student, she was dynamic and proactive — participating in the Akram Khan Company Internship, featuring in choreography by Mickael Marso Riviere, Jorge Jauregui Allue, and exploring MoCap (Motion Capture) with Alexander Whitley. She joined CCDC in 2022 as a dance artist trainee.

Mr Frank Lee Pok-man
A retrospective reflection of a student dramaturg's encounter with practice in a play's production

Frank Lee is currently a MFA in Dramaturgy student in the School of Drama at The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts. He has earned his BA in English from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His performance reviews have been published by International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong).

Arts Pedagogy, Community, and Social Media

Dr James Woodhams

#Scamilton: Intersectionality's between social media, imitation and performance

James Woodhams is a researcher, theatre maker, and applied theatre artist. He specialises in Theatre for Young Audience theatre, puppetry, and the use digital theatre to engage communities. He has worked widely as an applied artist in the United Kingdom, leading on the young people's activities across the pandemic ensuring the work of Barbican Theatre Plymouth could engage young people creatively whilst they were isolating. James' currently works within the Impact & Innovation Department at University of Exeter.

Dr Michael Li

The intersection in performing arts education: Engagement and empowerment in teaching, learning, and performance

Dr Li promotes a pedagogy that combines creative arts, education, and technology. He is interested in a multimodal approach that leverages artificial intelligence (i.e., ChatGPT or Midjourney) to enhance teaching, learning, research, and administration. Li serves as a Principal Head, co-overseeing the Centre for Education and Research, which comprises General/Liberal Arts Education, Performing Arts Research unit; and Education-Information & Technology at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Dr Caleb Lee

Creative Arts Youth Work: Enhancing creativity, participation and inclusion in community and youth settings

Dr Caleb Lee is Lecturer in Drama at the University of Exeter and Co-Artistic Director of Five Stones Theatre — an international collective creating dance and theatrical experiences for children and young people that are "a little different". His work cuts across the creative industries, applied performances, and digital technologies, with interests in popular culture, social change, and young people's health and wellbeing. He is currently leading a global advocacy project on leadership diversity in the Theatre for Young Audiences sector.
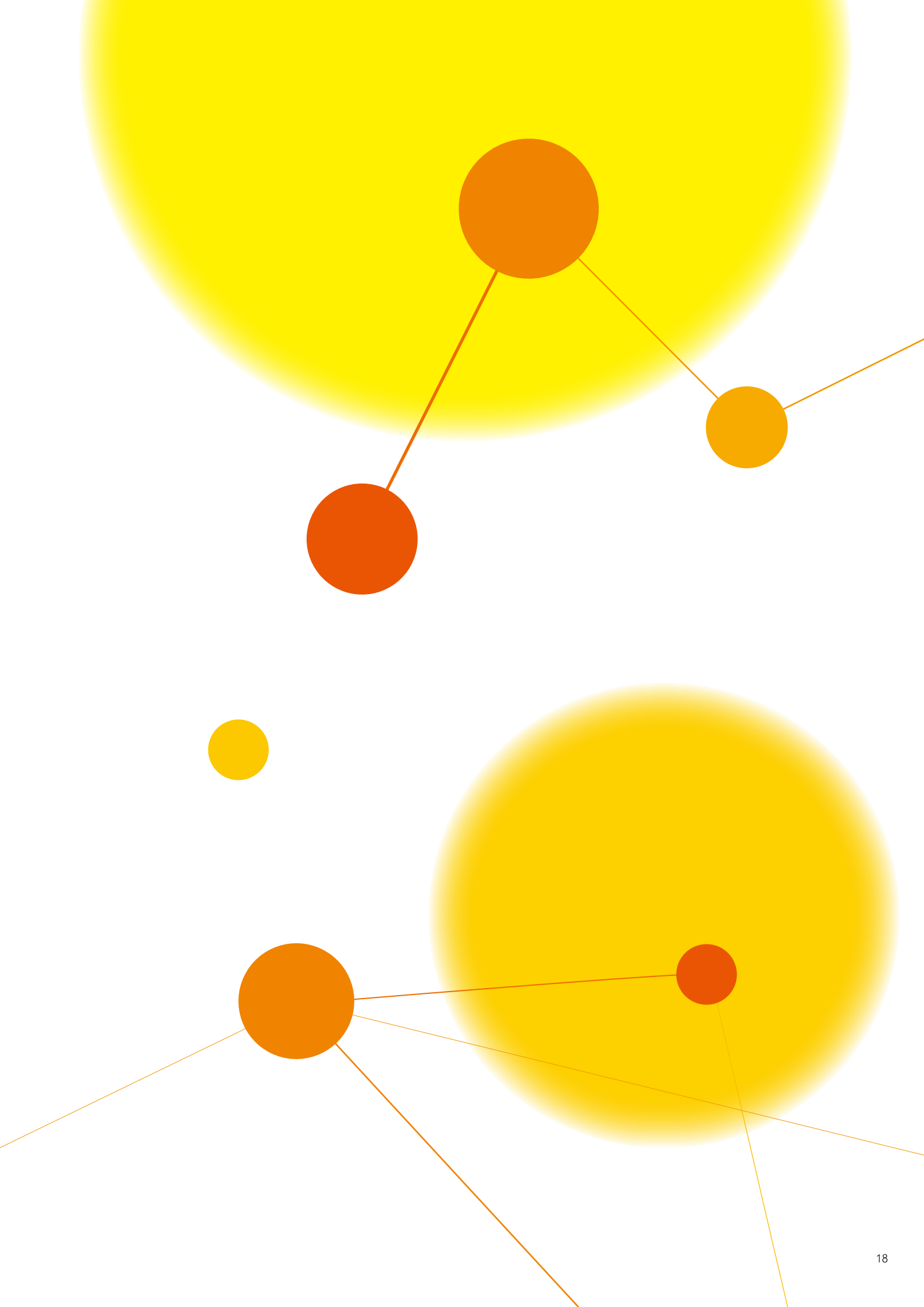
Practice-as-Research

CorpoEstuário:
Dance and Somatics-as-Research in brackish waters

Diego Pizarro

Abstract

In this text, I seek to reflect on how the somatic-performative experience of living at the intersection of two rivers with the sea forged a research path between dance and Somatics, to rethink modes of knowledge production. Through narratives, poetry, somatizations and critical reflections, embodied experiences are updated through their artistic laboratories in order to raise the possibility of immersive ways of carrying out research in/with/about dance. In this sense, the **CorpoEstuário** performance itself proved to be a path of Somatics-as-Research.

PA:PER
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It's late afternoon on the north coast of São Paulo. I'm at Praia da Fazenda, 42 km from the city of Ubatuba. The Picinguaba River estuary is right at the beginning of the beach. There are actually two rivers, the other comes from the mountains of the ecological reserve right behind. When I step on the sand, I feel infinite gratitude for the seawater in front of me and the waters of the rivers behind me; the sandbar that temporarily separates fresh water from saltwater boils in the sun. It's January 2014 and the entire class from the Basic Neurocellular Patterns module of the Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) training course is here. I am acting as a teacher's assistant. This encounter with nature takes me to another state, I enter body-environment immersion almost immediately. As I move, and dance, and smile, risking sounds and words in the orchestra of the waves, the birds and the wind of sand and foliage, something changes inside me, the performative intensities find a home in a tree branch found at the bottom of these shallow... I no longer know the difference between river and sea; unnoticed, the tide rises and shows an ecological environment that until then for me meant waste disposal. Two hours of the performance have passed — movement, water, the branch of a becoming-staff tree — and I realise that I am in the exact space where two rivers meet the sea, dancing with them. My inner sea expands, my cells feel deeply, and my body's modulation is expressed in aquatic and terrestrial movements. It's almost dark... I'm afraid of nature... I'm afraid of what the rivers might bring... I laugh... I go up the mountain... I come back home... moved... shaken... full of fluids.

Figure 1.
Dance with tree staff in Picinguaba's Estuary by Diego Pizarro, 2015. Photo: Still Motion Caption by Flávia Pinheiro.

During my doctoral research (Pizarro, 2020) carried out from 2016 to 2020, I began to inhabit the process of my research as if it were an estuary. In its geological morphology, an estuary is a semi-confined aquatic environment with its characteristic relief, both of fluvial and marine processes, containing sediments transported by rivers, by wind, by rainwater runoff, by waves, and by tidal movement. It is one of the most complex environments that exists, not only because it is a transitional space between river and sea, but also due to its nature of being subject to many interferences, both biological and socioeconomic. It can also be places of recreation and housing in their surroundings for instance. In its ecologically sustainable version, it is rich in nutrients, since some animal species can only be found there, especially because of their adaptation to brackish water — neither fresh nor saline sea water — in its version altered by the action of human degradation, it can be a biological desert, captured by pollution. In other words, many forces act in estuarine regions — an environment highly subject to flows of energy and materials of different types and origins. It is a place of potential (Fontes et al., 2015; Kennedy, 2015; Levings, 2015).

The movements listed above take place in this aquatic ecosystem, configuring itself as a place of biological potential. In an artistic research process as estuary, the allegorical paraphrase refers to a place of poetic potential, with diverse demands to be negotiated before, during, and after the creative process.

Estuarine ecosystems and subsystems can and do exhibit alternate or multiple states of existence. The ability of an ecosystem to absorb disturbance and resist a change in state is termed ecological resilience, [...]. In the last decades of the twentieth century, ecologists observed that ecosystems were not static entities, but appeared to change in response to external and internal forces (Dame, 2008, p. 1412).

Inspired by artistic and somatic experiences of living in biological environments, I have carried out artistic research soaked in different types of fluids, from those that come from the ecological aquatic metaphor to those that materially flow in our veins and arteries and through our tissues; in a process of absorption and transfiguration of saturation gradient and countless expressive dynamics when crossing different channels and membranes of our existence.

When I danced in the estuary of the Picinguaba River with the Atlantic Ocean of South America, first in 2015 (Figure 1), I actually embodied what Ciane Fernandes (2019) has named Somatics-as-Research, a process in which somatic knowledge is in the core of the issue, stimulating performative processes in search of coherence and internal logic to the research that arises in/from the body in movement in space. Fernandes (2019, p. 123) stated that this is a type of Practice as Research, understanding the subject of the research as "immersed in the researched environment, and emphasises the creation of knowledge from the perspective of the researcher, which becomes himself, and in his relations with/in the environment, the very motto of the research". Thus, the emphasis is on Somatics as a way of exploring, structuring, and organising research processes.

In this way, a research praxis is present; praxis is always understood as an imbrication of theory with practice, in an in-between place, in a new process
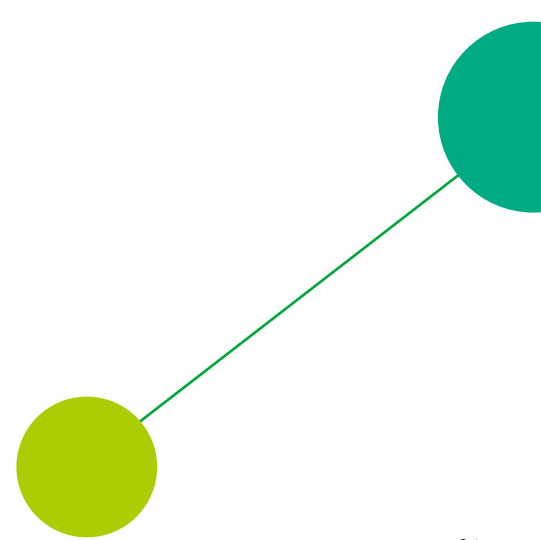
perspective. Robin Nelson (2013) also used the terms *intelligent practice* and *material thinking* to refer to this praxis as the in-between place that is present in Practice as Research. And it is precisely in the sense of praxis that the written texts of somatic pioneers are not enough to account for the Somatic praxis they are about, as it involves an oral and kinesthetic tradition; empathetic by nature; vocation and project, whose written text, even with the use of narratives, is unable to take us to the heart of the matter: somatic wisdom. In short, somatic wisdom is not found in the books of its pioneers — which only provide clues — but in continuous praxis, in engagement with its methods, whose experience is shared in general and specific somatic-related communities of practice.

The West and its networks of knowledge dominated by scientific epistemology still struggle to live the obvious reality of a natural intelligence. This, according to somatic psychology researcher Susan Aposhyan (2007), means integrating the intelligence and creativity of the entire body, an intelligence that arises from due consideration of all body tissues and fluids. This means having cellular consciousness is the very innate intelligence of living bodies. It should also be noted that the whole body means the embodiment of the various nuances and dimensions that form the bodily reality: physical body, mental body, energetic body, and emotional body, relating to the soul body and spiritual body. To speak of somatic knowledge means to state that bodily knowledge is crossed by varied and complex layers of human existence. In this sense, I support Somatics as a new epistemological paradigm, given that its "pioneers" already carried out individual, experiential, autonomous and self-reflective research (albeit in dialogue with the world) at the end of the 19th century, long before or concurrently with all the changes promoted by influential philosophers and scientists in the 20th century, who would prove and/or advocate the primacy of the senses, perception, body and movement in learning and in the modes of operation of living organisms and what is understood as mind.

In this text, I seek to reflect on how the somatic-performative experience (Fernandes, 2020) of living at the intersection of two rivers with the sea, forged a research path between dance and Somatics, to rethink modes of knowledge production. In this sense, the *CorpoEstuário* performance itself proved to be a path of Practice as Research. In fact, in this ecological context, the Picinguaba River showed itself as the river of Dance, of philosophical concepts prior to the profound embodied experience, and the sea showed itself as Somatics, imbibing the experience in the transforming presence of the tides. The Picinguaba River Estuary (Figure 2) became the research environment, physically and metaphorically.

Figure 2.
Overview of Picinguaba's Estuary. Photo: Luisa Garcia Sando. Retrieved on 5 March 2020 from https://guiadeareasprotegidas.sp.gov.br
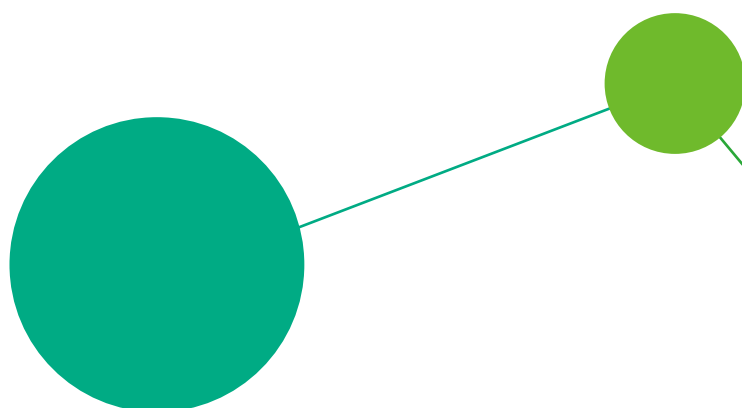
The somatic tide

Somatics is generally defined as the experience of the body in the first person, as the term and its use forged by Thomas Hanna in the late 1960s, who have collaborated intensely for the development of this field, especially through the periodical *Somatics: Magazine-Journal for the Bodily Arts and Sciences* (1976-). Although it is not directly related to dance, many researchers, teachers, and artists refer to Somatics in the search for approaches that are very close to the practices of the body in movement in different areas of dance. Historically, the philosophy that guides the practices that are part of the field of Somatics was also driven by Euro-American movement artists at the beginning of the 20th century, such as Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, and Isadora Duncan, for instance.

When we speak, move, research, and teach, starting from first-person experiences (Varela & Shear, 1999), subjective in themselves, we already place ourselves in a space of marginal discourse in relationship to dominant discourses — such as the scientific one, or as traditional ways of teaching dance, as pointed out by Fortin et al. (2009). The dominant discourse is highly objectifying and tends to homogenise the diversity of knowledge and forms of teaching in different areas, regulating bodies, gestures, and dances. The marginal discourse of Somatics, despite not being dominant, is also a regulatory paradigm; especially, by the way some somatic systems intend to "correct" postures, for example. Despite the misconceptions related to body ideals present in several somatic practices as critically depicted by Johnson (1992, 1994), a somatic approach in teaching anatomy, in fact, has much to offer for the expansion of professional training in dance. My current interest is not in using Somatics to teach scientific content, but in forging a somatic culture in dance through the poetic anatomy of somatic practices.

People guided through an experience in Somatic Education are led "to leave their perceptive, motor and conceptual habits through an organic body intelligence, requested through movement, posture and of interiorised and conscious body expressiveness" (Bois, 2010, p. 12). The systems, methods, and techniques that make up the field of Somatics are diverse and its development began at the end of the 19th century. My research deepens into specific aspects of two somatic systems developed from the 1960s onwards, as is the case of the GDS, and from the 1970s, as it is the case of BMC®, in interaction with dance.

BMC® is a somatic system developed by American occupational therapist and dancer Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and her collaborators. This practice involves deep experiences with infant development (Embodied Movement Development), body systems (Embodied Anatomy), and Embodied Embryology, as well as the psychophysical interrelationships of all these aspects. It is a poetic territory of healing and discoveries about oneself and the world that performs a cartography of body tissues and repatterning through touch, movement, sound, and voice. Its didactics deals basically with three fundamental aspects: visualisation, somatisation, and embodiment.

The Articulation and Muscle Chains GDS was developed by the Belgian physiotherapist, osteopath and visual artist (born in the Belgian Congo, Africa)

Godelieve Denys-Struyf (1931–2009) (hence the homonymous acronym), who studied aspects of human behaviour, observing how the musculature organises itself and structures people's corporeity according to the function and the conditioning postural habits. This system contributed to its development as a body therapy based on the totality and integration of muscle chain typologies, that is, how a postural issue in one part of the body affects the whole precisely and vice versa.

Often when I inform my endeavour to integrate BMC® and GDS, as they are open systems that have quite different logics; their entry points, the way they deal with touch, the way they deal with anatomy, the privilege they give to certain body systems over others and the specific functional theory they developed for the experience of movement — integrating art, health, and education — are quite unique and apparently do not talk to each other. In the practical experience of the two systems, I perceive a common and fundamental point between them: both propose the *modulation of expressive body states, aiming at the free expression of being through life's journey*.

It is precisely this point that connects Somatics to dance, which is nourished by different bodily states for scenic expression. According to Fortin (2011, p. 33), "creation needs a great ability to shift your attention in order to notice new options, new possibilities, new details." Similarly, one of the "somatic clues" that Caetano (2017, p. 173) called creative procedures in the construction of an intense body in the Performing Arts is the "modulation of sensations", in which "[...] the body is experienced in its performative potential through processes of modulations and variations at the level of qualitative materials".

Somatic practices, specifically the BMC® and the GDS, share the experience of embodied anatomies developed according to their specific objectives. More than repeating what traditional anatomy proposes, they recreate the anatomical approach by suggesting new classifications and explorations. Embodied anatomy can be thought of, then, as poetic anatomy. Precisely because it does not aim to experience forged concepts about the topographies of corpses, but rather seeks to experience the sensitivity of (co)motion in the paths of living tissues. Caetano (2017), for instance, differentiated two aspects of anatomy in Somatics — one being the anatomical map and the other the cartography of the affective body:

> The anatomical map is the map of formal representations of the body as an extensive topology. It is stable and outside of experience itself. The cartography of the affective body is a map of the fields of forces and energy flows of the matter-body as an extensive-intensive topology. It is unstable and immanent to the experience itself, that is, it is updated in the lived experience. Each one creates for himself his own affective body cartography (Caetano, 2017, p. 175).

I suggest exploring a new anatomy for creative processes in dance, perhaps even reaching the point of sketching out the development of an anatomical-performative approach. In this case, anatomy can also be invented, created, and recreated according to sensing, feeling and action. A [possible] reality is that, to approach any somatic method, it is not enough to read texts and watch videos, but one must experience its principles through practice, from a first-person experience, in the soma

itself. To go deeper, you need to delve into research about yourself. Especially for the reason that each person will (re)organise different sensations and perceptions, including those experienced by the creators of a certain method. In addition to dealing with the contingency of its patterns in order to repattern habits and processes. Thus, sensing, feeling, and action is a cyclical, singular, and subjective process inherent to each practitioner, with possible similarities when shared collectively (Pizarro & Brito, 2018).

The triad of sensing, feeling, and action is fundamental for BMC®. In a simple way and without delving into the various theories about perception, sensing would be the very mechanical stimulus of the body's sensory receptors, whereas feeling would be the relationship that each person develops with the information that arrives, in an interpretative path (Bainbridge Cohen, 2012). Whereas action is

> [...] a type of activity that makes us again realise how experience is generated by our bodily systems, organised by the somatosensory, visual or vestibular system. The perception of this information reinforces or blocks aspects of the experienced situation, and relational feelings emerge, through the dynamics between the internal and external environment, which is produced by the experience itself (Pees, 2016, p. 34).

Estuary research is an invitation to live in transition, not only with the intention of promoting deterritorialisation, but rather with the desire to be able to deal with the changes to which we are subjected on a daily basis, overcoming fixations and freezes. In dance — an aesthetic terrain subject to very rapid transformations — the idea of an estuary can favour our survival in contemporary times. Moreover, specifically for the kind of research I carry out, it favours the intention of forging poetics, having the creative process as a bed.

What I propose as *CorpoEstuário* is the very possibility of transformation, based on self-regulation and access to our membranes for change, the modulation of our most ingrained patterns. The multiplicity raised by *CorpoEstuário* invites us to an opening in performativity. Getting in touch with ourselves, immersed in the environment, giving vent to the organism's autonomous movements, is a great exercise to open up to what is coming, to becoming.

‘ Thus, sensing, feeling, and action is a cyclical, singular, and subjective process inherent to each practitioner, with possible similarities when shared collectively. ’

The unnamed philosophical river: From rhizome to *CorpoEstuário*

Jodenbreestraat, 3 — I'm on top of the Amsterdam School for The Arts building. Feeling the icy wind prick my face and the sun reflecting its memory of the fire on the grey terrace floor, I see the old Rembrandt house across the street, the modern opera house beyond, and an infinity of centuries-old historical monuments piercing the space with an almost excessive insistence on pointing its towers and masts towards the sky, which at sunset looks more like a painting by Van Gogh than a skyline. My thoughts melt with the images of the city. The organised geometry of the channel rings concentrically dispersing the flow of water across the region drowns me in contradictions. In a single jet, I am dragged by the memory of a quote by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 215) that I had read years ago: "Amsterdam, a city entirely without roots, a rhizome-city with its stem-canals, where utility connects with the greatest folly in relation to a commercial war machine." For a moment, I hold my breath... the sore spots all over my body and the muscles inflamed by the excessive daily repetitions of dance techniques disappear and an anxiety takes hold of my chest: how can there be a course[1] in the same building where I must dance for eight hours a day whatever I am told (with a highly technical approach to dance), and another course[2] in which students spend more time discussing and elaborating the concepts and procedures used to develop their choreographies and much less time experimenting with the possibilities of meaning and movement in the soma itself? On a cold late afternoon in the "rhizome city," I am pinned inside out by this dichotomy... my tissues are reconfigured in the certainty that trust in the cellular memory of a lancinating desire would be transformed and my experience would undergo a transition without return, towards a *CorpoEstuário*.

I really feel as if my dance were the very embodiment of rhizome, that is, open and ready to promote lines of flight, conducive to change and stasis, between substance and form, content and expression, intensity and extensiveness, deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation, and encoding/decoding. Thus, rhizome is part of my cellular memory, and it is worth briefly presenting here to continue with what is configured today in this process as *CorpoEstuário* = place of potential.

However, the question raised by Deleuze and Guattari has never ceased to disturb me: How can I turn my life in dance into a rhizome? This question provoked a radical transformation in my choices, profoundly affecting my trajectory as a dancer, choreographer, and researcher.

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1 Modern Theater Dance was a Dance bachelor's degree offered by the Academy of Theater and Dance, at Amsterdam University of The Arts. In the course prospectus on its official website, it promised to train the aspirant to become a versatile dancer with a unique style, being able to participate in the creative processes of various choreographers of the contemporary scene. I attended this degree from 2006 to 2008, and I left before graduating. As of 2019, it was joined with the course in Jazz Musical Dance and formed a new course that promises a more appropriate integration to the contemporary dance reality, the bachelor's degree in Expanded Contemporary Dance. See: https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/dance-programmes/modern-theatre-dance/. Accessed on: 10 February 2020.

2 A SNDO – School for New Dance Development – is a bachelor's degree in choreography, founded in 1975. After 40 years of existence, its focus remains on experimental dance. Initially, between the 1970s and 1990s, there was an intense focus on dance improvisation, somatic education and the then emerging forms of instant composition. Each direction of the school, however, varied its focus according to different curricular objectives. See the school's website at: https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/dance-programmes/sndo/. Accessed on: 10 February 2020..

Doing rhizome

Rolling cells on the grass

Crushing myself into horizontal filamentS

Eating fruit from a tree
(leave and don't look back)

planting a tree in the hard grounD

not in thought
Healing the hangover of life and soul with ginger cut into a thousand continuouS pieces

beingnomadiCforevER
gifting an orchiD in the shape of a WasP

wearing fern wig

"heart explodes..."

Back to the Asian bambooO
Lie down on a horizontal filament

run down an abnormal linE

subvert trevbus the sexes soxes genres serneg sui generis until the beginning

start all over again trats lla revo niaga

htiw a wen ecaf a wen efil in constant streams of gnimoceb becoming

enter through the middle
leave at any moment
easy
hard
plan of insistence

consistency in PlanS of immanence........

.....................................flighT!

Weed taking over everything

Harvest a tree un reversE

What is the opposite of a tree?   eert a fo etisoppo eht si tahW?

how many trees buried in thoughT
millions of lines inviting roots to stop making us suffeR

Becoming like zillions of multiplicities
intensitieS
fight ideologies

Stop addinG

Continue

and... and... and... and... and... and... and... and... ? and... and...
"all is possible"
Hanna (...1970...)
Middle
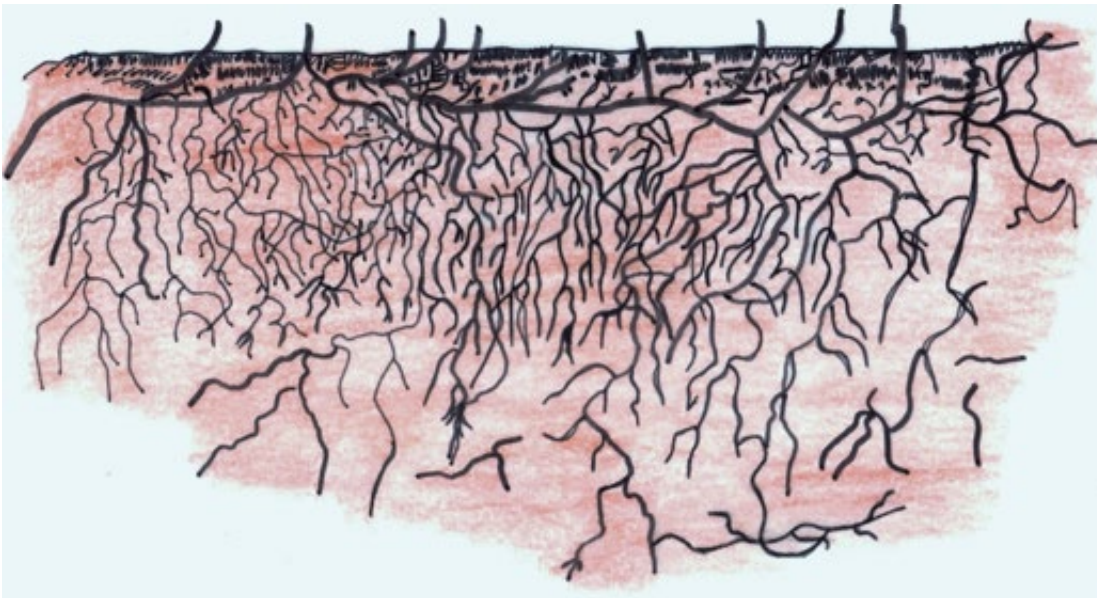
Figure 3.

A typical rhizome: root system of a clover. Felt pen and crayon on tracing paper. Modified from Munns (1922).

[...] becoming-intense within the n-dimension suggests that all bodies are capable of creative and political agency as they extract their differing and particular movements. In doing so, the focus is always on the limitless potentialities of the body: what it can do rather than what it cannot do (Garoian, 2013, p. 141).

Embodying a rhizome means letting unknown multiplicities emerge, inherent to the subjectivity of individuals, allowing the difference to appear to provoke us, in order to destabilise the automatisms rooted in reason. Only in this way will we stop suffering from the dominant hierarchies that insist on crushing us towards a pivoting root that reproduces itself. It is necessary to abandon the infinite decal addiction. BMC® is an example of the rhizomatic conceptual practice, considering that it bets on transformation through the speculation of "not knowing". BMC® usually seeks a predisposition to open the back of the nervous system, making room for new sensory information to access our existence through a more primitive part of the brain. This search exists to alleviate the repetitive patterns already recorded by the central nervous system, which are distributed from the brain to the tissues along the front of the spinal cord, in an incessant repetition of itself.

The general idea is to get out of the automatic response to self-regulate and allow unusual modes of thought and action to emerge and adjust more appropriately to the specific moment. The Austrian somatic educator and Yoga teacher Gitta Stagl (2017), recently also found the potential connection between Somatics (in particular, the BMC®) and the image of the rhizome. She used both the image of the rhizome (especially ginger) and the image of the starfish as ways of giving and receiving language and thought. She reminded us that centre and periphery were always informing and reconnecting and could still move and create new centres.

Therefore, BMC® proposed what has been called repatterning, that is, a renewed way of engaging the current sensations present in the body instead of mobilising automatisms, in order to find new ways of acting (move, dance, speak, think, operate...). In this sense, the botanical model of the rhizome

(Figure 3), that inspired Deleuze and Guattari (1980), has proven to be a very appropriate tool to account for the variety of sensory states and psychology of human beings. In this illustration of Figure 3, we see a typical rhizome — a type of root without central axes, with horizontal stems, that is, an anti-genealogy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) — whose potential for creation and recreation can take place anywhere, any rod, on any filament. And each new connection has a different and unusual potential intensity.

The rhizomatic model abandons the hierarchy of verticality and, thus, truly expands the possibilities of connections that are associated in complex networks, informing multiplicities in their infinite connections, all possible. All multiplicities are flat, no matter their size, and they must be flattened to the same level, forming a 'plane of consistency', that is, the rhizome does not propose thinking from top to bottom, or from left to right, or from the inside out, or the reverse. The proposal is to enter through the middle, through the unknown. It is as if we were diving into a turbid river that picks up movement halfway through and erodes its edges as it accelerates (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980).

> To be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses. We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 15).

The search for a nomadic thought, whose articulated tactics of dispersion to subvert language is related to performativity, seems to be able to rebel against totalising prisons. The concept of rhizome does not seek to fix points, but to run lines. These lines make up a plane of consistency and, by themselves, stir up polarising notions about the body, subject, and identity. The rhizome has no beginning or end, it is the "between" things. It does not go from one point to another, he passes through them perpendicularly and in an a-parallel way. The rhizome has several centres, it connects to everything, but it is not fixed in a crystallised way to anything. These gingers, these grasses, these ferns, these orchids, these weeds, these four-leaf clovers make us lucky to believe in the decentralisation of power, embodying multiplicities. This only seems to be possible by excluding the notion of unity from thought.

The One must always be subtracted from the dimensions. There is no centralisation of power, there is no unity. So, the formula (n-1) is the multiplicity itself, which is not given by addition (n+1), but by subtraction of unified thought. The "n" is not a summation number but refers to the quantity of dimensions. The dimensions are connectable, but they do not depend on each other, they are a-signifying. The rhizome is not made of units, but of dimensions, or rather, of shifting directions.

The dimensions of multiplicity vary, metamorphosing themselves, changing their nature: "Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). This is the opposite of varying binary correlations between points, that is, multiplicity does not occur as a subdivision of the One into two and then into four and into eight, but occurs through the subtraction of the One, forming new dimensions,
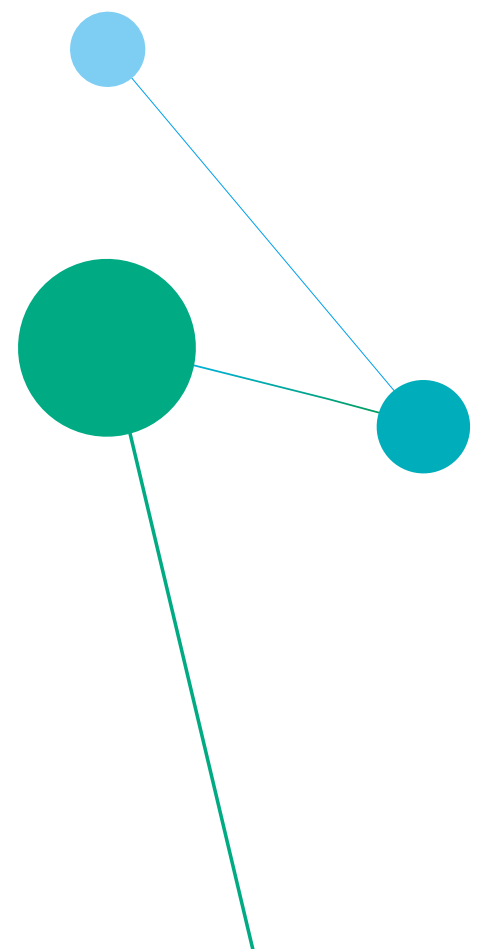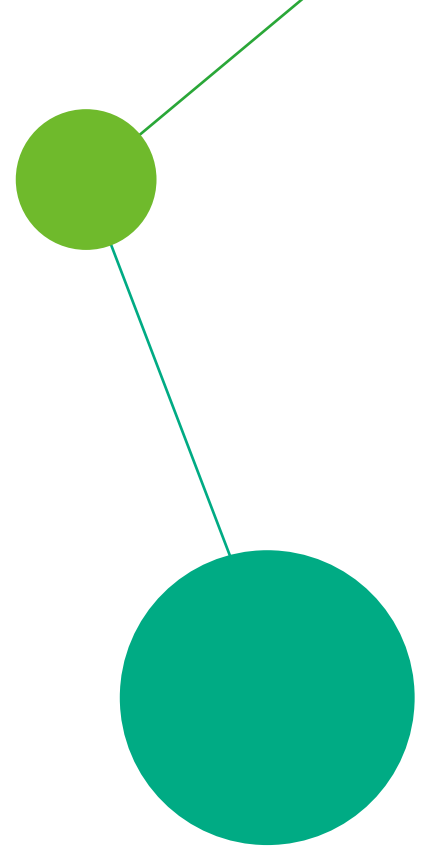
truly disconnected from a central axis that has the illusion of multiplicity, by reproducing two of itself, dependent on it.

The *soma* (living body), for instance, never acts by addition, never engages in mathematical operations, as it expresses "an indivisible and integrating uniqueness" (Fortin, 2011, p. 27). In this sense, it is per se a generator of multiplicities, that is, of infinite creative possibilities. In this sense, a somatisation is pure multiplicity. We can be who we want to be, creating possible universes, connecting with ourselves and with the world from a personal narrative in otherness.

Dance and Somatics are very subjective fields of knowledge and offer us performative maps in which making a rhizome becomes a constant. We live by making connections between theory and practice, life and art, passion and need, and many others. From the beginning, dance and Somatics are marginalised (Eddy, 2009) — dance in relation to the arts themselves, Somatics especially in relation to science and health, sometimes in relation to dance itself. Being part of both, within their intersection, is a daily invitation to make rhizomes: connection, dispersion, and subversion of contrasting multiplicities.

Research as an estuary is precisely a desiring response to totalising prisons of any category, even if they arise from within dance and/or Somatics itself. Starting from the movement that the notion of rhizome provoked in me right at the beginning of my life as an academic researcher, 18 years ago, I then share and offer the fluid experience of a *CorpoEstuário.*

The river that flows into dance: performative somatisation for *CorpoEstuário*

The notion of rhizome is an ode to grass/weed, as it grows in the middle where nothing is grown, invading unoccupied, forgotten spaces. The notion of estuary carries this conviction of a sneaky place of power. As already pointed out, it is a place of transition. *CorpoEstuário* is an allegorical paraphrase of places of potential, as these are transitional means. Initially, they are places to be crossed, be it the endoderm (front body of the human embryo) and the yolk sac, which nourish the embryo and later become the digestive tract, or the flow of a river into the sea, a space where there is the proliferation of nutrients and unique living beings there.

I consider *CorpoEstuário* a corpus of praxis, an important bed for the creative processes I develop. This is the place where we may initially meet our somatic authority (Johnson, 1992), where we are invited to give in and listen to our cells and their ancestral consciousness. This corpus is about deep organismic self-regulation. Here, we meet the fluids (especially the base fluid and the interstitial fluid), the Basic Neurocellular Patterns (BNP), embryological breathing and the behavioural muscle typologies of muscle chains — the AM (anteromedian) and AL (anteromedial) muscle chains, as well as its counterpoint in the PM (posteromedial) and PL (posterolateral).
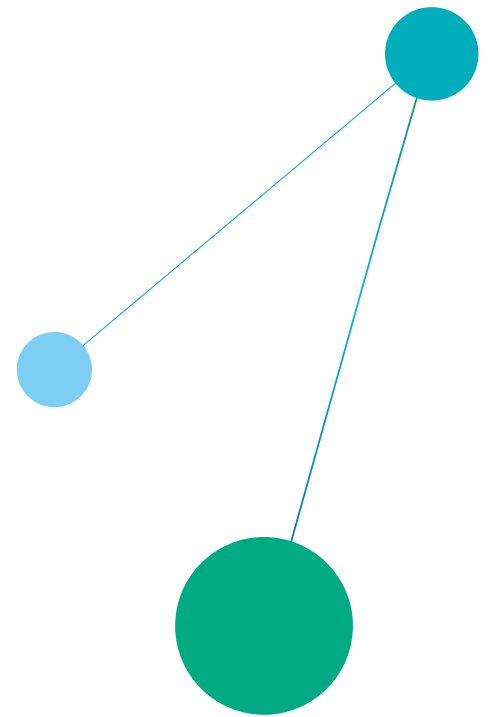
Somatisation[3] — experiencing primary intrauterine transitions.

- Lie down on the floor in a comfortable position, a place where you can really rest in. If necessary, place pillows under your knees to prevent hyperextension of your lumbar spine. If you are cold, cover yourself with a blanket. These are some ideas for you to look for comfort. Follow your own needs.

- Breathe deeply as if you were a single cell, condensing and expanding, as air moves in and out through your skin, flowing through your inner ocean. Rest in the experience of cellular breathing. Take your time to inhabit this one experience, allowing all parts of yourself to condense together and all parts of yourself to expand together.

- Inhabit this base fluid, which we call the internal ocean, in which cells and tissues swim.

- Slowly shift your attention to an experience where this one cell becomes two. What is it like to realise that you are two cells breathing together, condensing and expanding? When a spermatozoon reaches an egg cell and penetrates its core of life, now forming two cells, for the first time there is potential for the emergence of this base fluid (Bainbridge Cohen, 2012), as if it were an elixir created from this encounter. This fertilised being is you for the first time, a zygote, covered in a tough protective layer called zona pellucida.

- As you — a two-celled being protected by a strong protective layer — travel through the fluid of the uterine tube, these two cells transform into four, and then into eight. At this stage, each of the eight cells and their spatial organisation inform us about tridimensionality. What is it like to feel this multiplicity without organs? How is it to experience this stage of pure intensity in becoming?

- Even at this stage, how do you recognise your predispositions? Do you remain in an integrated unit with the collective of sister cells, or do you seek to rapidly differentiate? What would it be like to balance these two behavioural predispositions? Breathe deeply. Take a rest. Yield to the floor.

- Then 16 cells clump together and form the morula — a ball of identical cells that is the same size as the two-cell zygote. You are now made up of many cells occupying the same space from before.

- How does it feel to be filled with cells versus being two cells? Turn your attention to the experience of being just one cell with your inner ocean. The focus here is not necessarily on the number of cells that make up your existence, but rather on the change in tone and density as you multiply in cells.

- As you shift your focus between less and more cell divisions, what do you notice in your body tone in terms of volume, density, and spatiality?

- Keep breathing and observe what happens to the most central cells and the most peripheral cells. Where do you notice more tonus? In the centre or on the periphery?

- How does this experience feel like? What does it tell you?

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3 Inspired by Bainbridge Cohen (2015, 2018) and Sweeney (1998).

- Now, in a composition of 32 to 58 cells, this being in transition transforms itself from a morula into a blastocyst, that is, the cells are grouped into an inner cell mass (embryoblast) and an epithelial structure (trophoblast), the latter in a ring format. The inner cell mass secretes a fluid that fills the inner space of this ring, while it protects everything. So, its space is now filled with an outer ring, an inner mass of cells on one side, and a pocket of fluid on the other. This is a first differentiation of this being into a layer of existence. How do you feel in this space?

- From the third or fourth day of its existence as a multicellular being, swimming through the fluid environment of the uterine tube, the blastocyst reaches the uterine space, passing from the uterine tube into the uterine lumen. Experience the blastocyst reaching this space as it swims through the cloudy fluid of the uterus.

- Slowly, at some point, the protective membrane (zona pellucida) ruptures, detaching from the cell body and causing the morula to hatch towards this space. This outbreak is like a first birth, a unique moment of transformation. Like a chick freed from its shell, the blastocyst swims freely through the uterus and increases in size as it swells by absorbing external fluid. How do you feel about this experience so far? What is it like to be fluid and swim freely in a liquid environment full of potential for transformation? (*CorpoEstuário*).

- Around the sixth day, then, the outer ring of the blastocyst first touches the wall of the uterus of the person who gives birth to you. The internal mass that divides the space from the inside with a bag of fluids migrates to the point of contact and this entire configuration flattens to penetrate the uterine tissue and enter a state of transformation. How does it feel to have one shape and suddenly be available to transform it intensively and extensively?

- In the process of implantation, the inner mass of cells (embryoblast) develops into an embryonic disc with two layers: the endoderm (front body) and the ectoderm (back body). Then the amniotic cavity and the primary yolk sac is created. What is it like to be two layers?

- Once inside the wall of the uterus, the blastocyst can lodge, grow, and transform. How does it feel to experience your implantation in the uterine wall? To be in your safe space as an embryo?

- How are you now? What do you feel like doing? Continue where you are? Redo the path of this somatisation? Focus longer on one part of the path? Move in place? Move in displacement? Share the experience? Dance the experience? What are your impulses now?

For Bainbridge Cohen (oral information[4]), the embryo implantation process is a unique moment of potential transformation. It is a stage in which cells, fluids, and blood migrate towards a specific part, motivated by a point of contact. We can experience this potential by touching someone with our hand, noticing how fluids from our hand migrate to the touched part and how fluids from the touched part migrate to our hand. Relational contact from the embryo seems to be fundamental in the process of otherness. This relationship reaches a high degree of differentiation when the foetus pushes against the wall of the mother's uterus with its feet in order to point its head through the vaginal canal and, after all, come into the outside world for the first time. Either through this passage, or through another cut.

When passing from one environment to another, the foetus (formerly, embryo), now a new-born baby, is licked by the intravaginal mucous membranes while crossing the canal (in the case of

normal delivery), receiving important proprioceptive information on your skin. All the touch-by-touch relationship and contact that ensues between mother (or father) and child during this first year of life will influence their process of differentiation and identity.

Figure 4 illustrates the different stages of the process experienced in the somatisation above. It does not seem to me a coincidence that the flow departs from a source located in the ovary towards the lumen of the uterus and finds a place of potency favourable for its transformation and growth. Interestingly, rivers that are born from the bosom of the earth run down the ground until they meet the sea. The estuarine environments, between fresh and saltwater, form an interplay with unique properties, showing characteristics of both. At the same time, the estuary is neither a river nor a sea, it is a new power. A place of transformation that enables and encourages the creation of entirely new beings, new artistic works, new research, and new performative paths. *CorpoEstuário* is an entirely performative environment, encompassing successes and failures, according to each line of flight traversed.
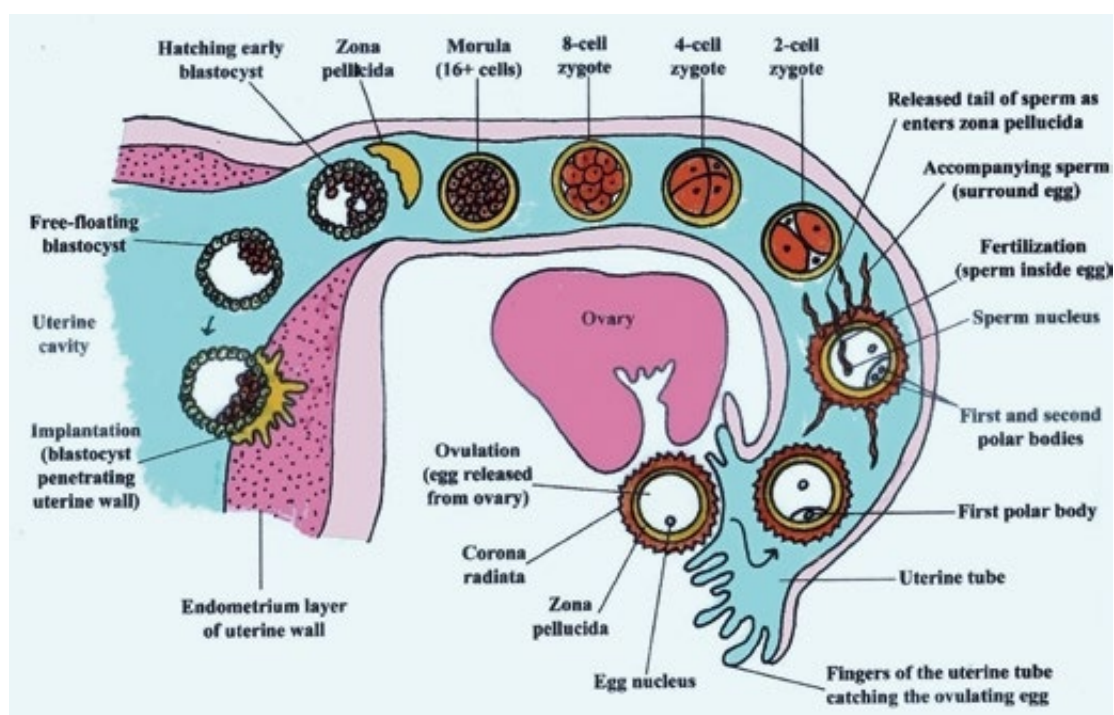
Figure 4.

Presentation of ovulation, fertilisation, migration, and implantation. Coloured pencil and photoshop editing on drawing by Bainbridge Cohen (2018, p. 10). Copyright © Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. Used with permission.

The notion of *CorpoEstuário* deals especially with the performativity of transitional spaces, in the ecological relationship of the encounters of rivers with the sea. It is in this place of high fertility that Somatics as a field of contemporary Western knowledge is lived, in the fruitful genesis of a rhizomatic episteme, moved by the wisdoms that already live with us, that are already present in the authenticity and sensual authority of our cells.

The experience of multiplicity, in this sense, is intrinsic to any experience of *CorpoEstuário*, which seems to contemplate, at the moment of its occurrence, what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 9) presented as "[...] a broken chain of affects and variable speeds, with accelerations and transformations, always in a relation with the outside. Open rings". Dancing in places of transition encourages "open rings", that is, the non-consolidation of fixed and immutable structures, we enter and leave at any point, moved by affections and desire. The recording of this experience in our cells and tissues gives rise to unusual actions and seems to be an excellent principle of modulation, typical of Somatics.

But why do I insist so much on these natural environments to compose the allegorical paraphrase of *CorpoEstuário* as an experience of Practice as Research in dance? The insistence is especially justified because it was not in the aseptic safety of the classroom space, the rehearsal room, or the traditional theatre room that the corpora of my research were developed. On the contrary, it was when I immersed myself in the estuarine environment of the Picinguaba River that *CorpoEstuário* and the entire creative chain became present, in multiplicity and becoming.

Precisely for this reason, I returned to the Picinguaba River estuary in January 2021 for a new somatic-performative experience. I tried to dance an aquatic dance inspired by the process from fertilization to implantation of the embryo, investing in the creative intersections of the ecological environment and the embryonic environment as an updated memory. In this new experience, I also danced the personification of the forms that the satellite images of this estuary evoke (figure 5), as captured by Google Maps.

Figure 5.
Google Maps satellite images of Picinguaba's Estuary.

In the video[5] in which I recorded the aforementioned somatic-performative experience, I am among other people, creating intensities with both nature's and my own internal estuarine environment. Inside me, spaces of intersection of different qualities were present and became the motto of improvised somatic dances in the estuary: pulmonary alveoli transiting between gas and fluid, the beds of capillaries transiting between arterial blood and venous blood, the ileum (part of the small intestines) transiting to the cecum (part of the large intestines). The estuarine micro intersections in me merging with the ecological macro intersections: rivers and sea, sand and water, people and water, fish and people. Which dances can arise from this embodied notion of *CorpoEstuário*?

> ‘ The estuarine micro intersections in me merging with the ecological macro intersections: rivers and sea, sand and water, people and water, fish and people. ’

Resting in brackish water

In this text, I sought to present how Somatics-as-Research can be an invitation to embodied research in an intense process of human, non-human and more than human otherness. The theme of multiplicity is a dear invitation to somatic practices, which today transcend the limitation of closed methods, systems and techniques, to actually welcome a range of possibilities beyond diving only into oneself.

During my research, *CorpoEstuário* was performance, dance, somatic experience, methodological procedure, and opportunity for self-regulation. It was the expanded experience with *CorpoEstuário* that guided the course of my research. It is as if river and sea whispered even what I needed to read and write with said embodied experience.

In the continuity of the research, two other corpora emerged in the practice laboratories: *CorpOásis* and *CorpoÉtico*, consolidating a fruitful triad for a research of/with/about Somatics. Invariably, however, the brackish water, a fluid of potency resulting from the intersection of different aquatic environments, soaked and crossed a dancing research body in search of research paths, which only an environment that is completely open to what comes from the river and to what comes and goes with the sea could offer.

The very notion of *CorpoEstuário* is an invitation to really dive headlong into the kind of practices that make sense and coherence for each research being developed.

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5 Available at: https://youtu.be/2am_SOsmoFA

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CorpoEstuário: Dance and Somatics-as-Research in brackish waters

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Cosmic Theatre:
In search of a verb

José Maria Vieira Mendes

Abstract

At the beginning of the 20th century, theatre was described as a place where different disciplines and arts cooperate, and a place for intersections. But in the last decades, due to contamination from different arts, the word "theatre" has been losing some preponderance in artists', and also academics', discourse, who prefer names such as "performing arts", "scenic arts", or "live art" (art vivant). This search for a greater comprehensiveness by renaming a discipline is a typical consequence of the importance of nominalism in the disciplinary system in which theatre is integrated. The obsession with names has been going on for at least two centuries, but there has been a qualitative shift in debates about disciplinarity, since the mid-1960s.

In 2017, at a conference held in Copenhagen, Hans-Thies Lehmann, the German theatre scholar who coined the term "postdramatic theatre", stated that theatre studies were "rather behind the theatrical reality" (Lehmann, 2017). I would thus like to propose the expression "Cosmic Theatre", with the help of two authors of different generations — Gertrude Stein and Paul. B. Preciado. I am convinced that the meanings that are unlocked by pinning the adjective "cosmic" on the word "theatre" may help tackle an attitude towards intersectionality, which escapes a stable description. The adjective "cosmic" is a way of looking or reading and a way of creating and writing that is not interested in confirming its truthfulness or applicability but rather in offering vocabulary for a doing. It is about "making kin" or "becoming with" (Haraway, 2016) and not about providing knowledge, getting acquainted, or seeking familiarity. In a certain sense, it is the possibility of transforming the noun "theatre" into a verb.

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Names and adjectives

At the beginning of the 20th century, theatre was described as a place where different disciplines and arts cooperate. The British director and writer Gordon Craig was one of the first to mark this turn in *On the Art of the Theatre*, first published in 1911, where he stated: "the Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed" (Craig, 1957, p. 138). Craig was trying to distance theatre from two centuries of a literary tradition. This turn was consolidated in the following decades, which partly explains the fact that, in contemporary theatre-venues, we can experience objects that, not only embrace a plurality of mediums, but also distance themselves from an essence that used to unite them. The importance of mimesis, the centrality of the text or the fourth wall, the fascination for "liveness" and "copresence" or the figure of the stage-director (or the actor) as the protagonist in theatre has been questioned more recently, which contributed to an idea of theatre expressed by the famous American art critic Michael Fried in his polemic 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood": theatre is "what lies between the arts" (Fried, 1998, p. 164).

This expansion has led to the need to rethink the discipline and its name, both in the artistic and the academic realm. Erika Fischer-Lichte, an influential European theatre scholar from the last decades, is a good example of a shift that takes hold of theatre studies. One of her first major publications was *Semiotik des Theaters [The semiotics of theatre]* (1983), but two decades later she published *Ästhetik des Performativen [The transformative power of performance: A new aesthetics]* (2004), which conspicuously demonstrates a turn in her interests.

By calling his 1997 collection of essays on modernism and postmodernism *From Acting to Performance*, the American scholar Philip Auslander is also following a tendency that substitutes the word "theatre" with "performance". In the introduction, Auslander wrote:

> *From Acting to Performance* suggests the course the development of my own interests has followed, from an original commitment to theatre toward a broader conception of performance and its genres. (I hope it is not presumptuous to suggest that many theatre scholars of my generation share this intellectual history with me.) (Auslander, 1997, p. 1)
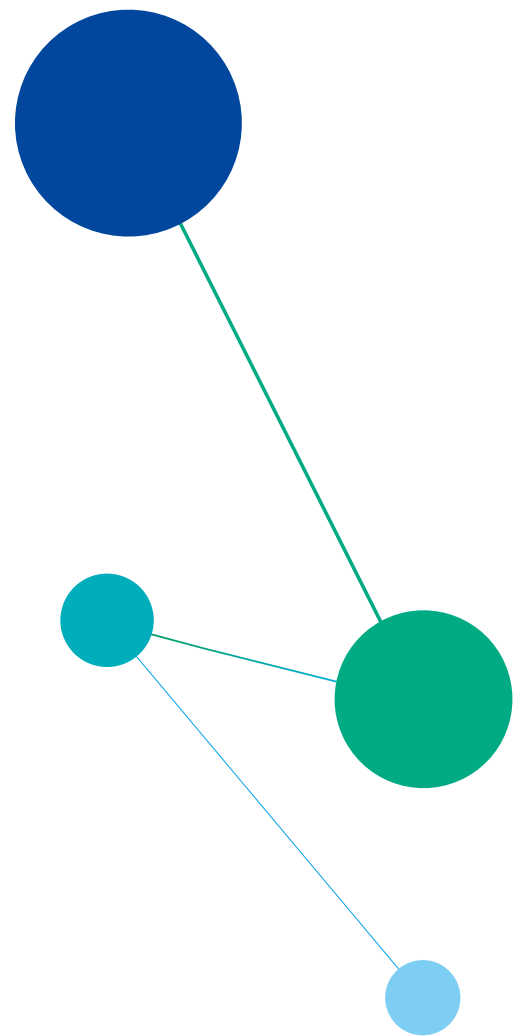
And it was not presumptuous. It was a fact. Richard Schechner was one of the most prominent with his fundamental amplification of the term "performance" (Schechner, 2013), connecting it with the disciplines of anthropology or sociology.

Such examples demonstrate the conviction that changing the name is the preferable way of tackling the turn that is being observed in the works and artists that inhabit the theatrical field. As theatre moves away from drama and its manifestations vary considerably in its forms and mediums, the word theatre loses its adequacy, and a new noun ("performance") has become the protagonist.

But not everyone is willing to abandon the word "theatre", preferring to signal the change with an adjective. In 2011, the Canadian Josette Féral, in *Théorie et pratique du théâtre. Au-delà des limites*, proposed the term "théâtre performative". She justified this adjective with the fact that Western theatre benefited from the achievements of performance art[1] . In 1997, Hans-Thies Lehmann, the author of *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999), the monography that became famous for the much-used adjective "postdramatic" that was to remain dominant in the years to follow, in a short essay called "From *Logos* to Landscape", wrote:

> Theatre was and is searching for and constructing spaces and discourses liberated as far as possible from the restraints of goals (*telos*), hierarchy and causal logic. This search may terminate in scenic poems, meandering narration, fragmentation and other procedures — the longing for such space, a space beyond telos is there. (Lehmann, 1997, p. 56)

These new spaces theatre is longing for, today, are not just the abstract spaces of the past or the procedures Lehmann is referring to — they are architecture too. Artists that work within the theatrical field occupy museums or galleries. In the same way, the theatre venues welcome works that can also be present in art biennials or in Tate's Turbine Hall.

Nevertheless, twelve years after the publication of *Postdramatic Theatre*, Hans-Thies Lehmann was still reluctant in discarding the connection between the words "theatre" and "drama", since "even today, theatre as well as performance artists are confronted with the long-lasting norms and ideals of dramatic tradition". However, in the same paragraph he wrote: "If in future times or cultural space there aren't to be any trace or memory of dramatic theatre, then, without a doubt, the notion of postdramatic will lose its meaning" (Lehmann, 2013, p. 875).

More than twenty years after *Postdramatic Theatre*'s publication, we can safely acknowledge this loss, not necessarily for all the theatrical experiences, but definitely for some. In 2017, at a conference held in Copenhagen, Lehmann himself stated that theatre studies are "rather behind the theatrical reality" (Lehmann, 2017) and revealed an interest in visual arts and the need to cross-reference its history and theory with theatre studies. Underlying this interest is the sign that the approximation between theatre and visual arts has already been made by the artists themselves. The contribution of performance art is not negligible, nor are the paths that modern and new dance have opened up.

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1 "Actors becoming performers, the event-based nature of a stage action to the detriment of representation or a game of illusion, a performance centered on image and action rather than text, an appeal to the spectator's essentially specular receptivity or to modes of perception specific to technology, etc" (Féral, 2011, p. 109).

However, conceptual art's influence in the visual arts and contemporary art's discourse has been far more significant than in theatre and theatre studies' discourse and literature, specifically in what concerns the limits of disciplines and medium. If the obsession with names has been going on for at least two centuries, there has been a qualitative shift in debates about disciplinarity since the mid-1960s. "Transdisciplinarity" is a term that has been around for decades, along with prefixes including post-, inter-, or de-. Conceptual art's freedom to make art from any of a potential infinity of material and immaterial and its refusal of categorisation has left its mark in what could be named, following Peter Osborne, a "postconceptual" art (Osborne, 2017) that is today, in contemporary art museums and galleries fairly consensual, but not necessarily serene.

One of the most interesting discussions concerning disciplines and this tendency towards intersectionality is the contradiction sustaining, on the one hand, the necessity to conform to disciplinary procedures (in order to be recognised) and, on the other hand, the will to transgress them, to be original or "innovative". As the philosopher Peter Osborne has put it:

> Whatever one makes of that tension (and it can certainly be a productive one, as well as a source of incoherence), "indiscipline" about disciplines has undoubtedly become a marker of the defence of the broader cultural function of universities — as well as a feature of advanced research organisations — under the conditions of a departmentally structured disciplinary system that has remained largely unchanged for over a hundred years. (Osborne, 2015, p. 8)

If calling some performances "theatre" could mean reducing them to a tradition they do not recognise as theirs, it is also a possibility of innovating or expanding the theatrical tradition and the discipline itself. What sustains the "performative turn" (Bachmann-Medick, 2016; Fischer-Lichte, 2008) in theatre studies is also what sustains the nominalist impetus: the eagerness to know, to define, to set the limits, and to provide a common frame or set of vocabulary for a discipline that was in danger of losing its relevance — it was "behind the theatrical reality" (Lehmann, 2007). By choosing "performance" as a more suitable word to characterise the "new aesthetics" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008), scholars are recentring their knowledge on what theatre is or should be: the blurring of art and life, artist and audience, body and mind (Fischer-Lichte, 2008); the liveness of the event (Auslander, 1997), or the liminality of the performance.

I am not interested in this exclusionary and extractive way of thinking and describing theatrical works and works of art in general. By acknowledging the importance nominalism has in the disciplinary system in which theatre is integrated, the adjective that we combine with the word "theatre" may open up a possibility of simultaneously transforming the discipline and acknowledging its (hi)stories, whatever the dialogues with such (hi)stories may be. I would thus like to propose the expression "Cosmic Theatre". I am convinced that the meanings that are unlocked by this adjective, that I relate with two authors of two different generations — Gertrude Stein and Paul B. Preciado —, propose a different approach towards not only objects that have been confined to the concept of transmediality or transdisciplinarity and its derivatives as well as to those that have been invisible to theatre and theatre studies.
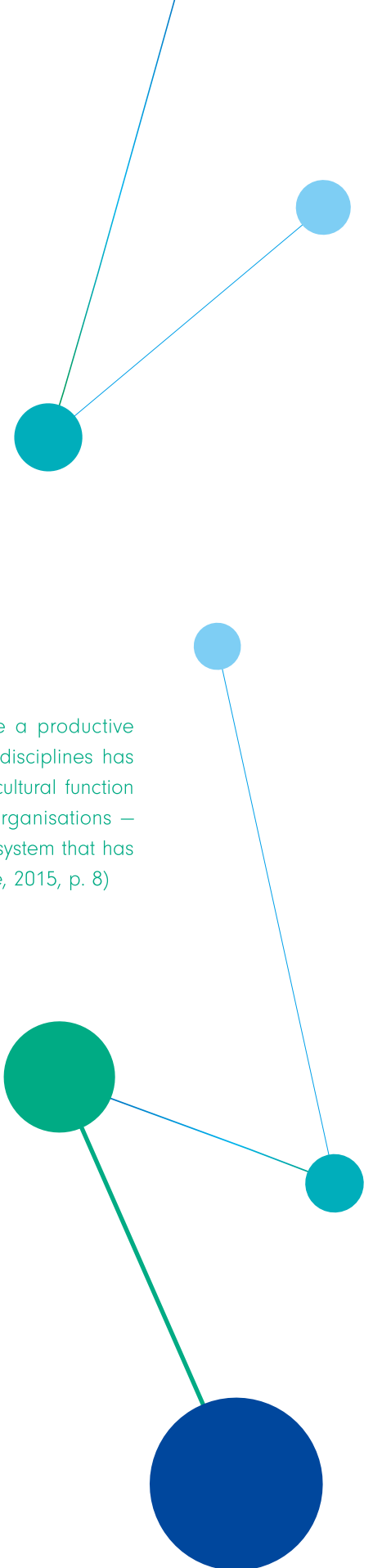
Describing the unfamiliar

In his introduction to *An Apartment on Uranus*: *Chronicles of the Crossing*, a collection of articles written for the French newspaper *Libération* "and for other European media outlets" (Preciado, 2020, p. 40) between 2008 and 2010, the philosopher and curator Paul B. Preciado described his book as a narration of a crossing that corresponds not only to his gender transition, but also to a way of thinking and living. He wrote:

> The decision to "change sex" is necessarily accompanied by what Édouard Glissant calls "a trembling" [un tremblement]. The crossing is a place of uncertainty, of the unobvious, of strangeness. It is not a weakness, but a power. (Preciado, 2020, p. 42)

Preciado's writing pays special attention to words and names, picking a "rudimentary critical vocabulary which was invented in the past few years by feminist, queer, trans, anti-colonial discourses", where he sees the "potential for transformation" (Preciado, 2020, p. 50). He is not interested in thinking in terms of identity, where he sees an expectation of classification and control exercised by "the experts of different disciplines" (Preciado, 2020, p. 50) — and he quotes Thomas Bernhard's pun, "when knowledge is dead, they call it the academy". This is why Preciado needs the new critical terms that act as "a solvent on normative languages, as an antidote to dominant categories" (Preciado, 2020, p. 50).

Preciado's view on disciplines as constraints or "limits to discovery" (Mittelstrass, 2011, p. 330) is a helpful tool in dealing with contemporary artworks and performances that are not conforming to a category and its disciplinary tradition. The refusal of stability is the search for trembling, because, as Glissant has put it, "we understand the world better when we tremble with it, for the world trembles in every direction" (as cited in Preciado, 2020, p. 43). By claiming the word theatre as an epistemological umbrella for their existence, this must not mean that we consider certain art objects to necessarily privilege a conformity to theatre's grammar and semantics nor that they are inevitably "measuring their distance from theatre's dramatic tradition" (Fuchs, 1996, p. 7). We may actually want to make them inhabit this word and space with imagination or, as Preciado puts it, we may want to keep such works unrecognisable (Preciado, 2020, p. 38) or look for an identification with the unknown (Preciado, 2020, p. 43) and the unfamiliar.

Familiarity is a helpful concept to approach Gertrude Stein's description of her relationship with theatre in "Plays", one of her *Lectures in America*. From early on, Stein got the impression that in theatre the development of familiarity was different because it was more difficult. She explains this difficulty by comparing ordinary life and theatre. In ordinary life, she wrote, there is time to "make acquaintance" (Stein, 1988, p. 108), whereas in theatre there was no such time: "It is not possible in the theatre to produce familiarity which is of the essence of acquaintance because, in the first place when the actors are there they are there and they are there right away" (Stein, 1988, p. 109). Stein mentions a growing sense of trouble because she couldn't deal with having to "see and hear and feel at the same time" (Stein, 1988, p. 115) in theatre. Until one day, when she was about sixteen years old, in San Francisco, she felt "relieved". The French actress Sarah Bernhardt came to town on tour and stayed for two months:

> I knew a little French of course but really it did not matter, it was all so foreign and her voice being so French I could rest in it untroubled. And I did. (...) It was better than the theatre because you did not have to get acquainted (Stein, 1988, p. 115).

Stein described an experience of liberation from the need for familiarity, which corresponded to a feeling of lightness (relief). She found appeasement in the strangeness that she then went on to seek in her writing and in the "complete actual present" which is the "business of Art" (Stein, 1988, p. 105). The confrontation with and in the present is not compatible with an acquisition of knowledge that requires a diachronic and progressive journey: from an earlier ignorance to a future prospect of enlightenment and erudition. This means that the "complete actual present" does not seek to overcome the unknown and the unfamiliar.

The landscape metaphor, which has been preserved in the expression "landscape plays" to describe Stein's dramas, helps to understand the epistemological alternative the writer is suggesting. What Stein privileged in landscape and in the relationship we establish with it is the fact that it is always in relation:

> the trees with the mountains the mountains with the fields the trees with the trees anything of the landscape with all the skies and any detail with another detail, so the story only matters if you want to tell or hear a story but the relations are always there (Stein, 1988, p. 125).

Stein's metaphor was mentioned more than once by the previously quoted Hans-Thies Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre*. In the chapter in which he described the work of the stage director and artist Robert Wilson, he highlighted the term "audio-landscape" used by Wilson and the influence that Gertrude Stein exerted on the stage director[2]. Lehmann also cited Elinor Fuchs' article "Another Version of the Pastoral", later made into a chapter in *The Death of Character*, in which Fuchs dwelled on the landscape metaphor. But what becomes evident in both Lehmann's and Fuchs's reading of the image of the landscape is that they revealed no interest in abandoning familiarity. Lehmann and Fuchs searched and identified in Stein, or in the idea of landscape, another essence for theatre, far from the mimetic and dramatic logic, but closer to a postmodern (Lehmann) or "ecological" and "post-anthropocentric" stage (Fuchs, 1996, p. 107). This is why Fuchs was able to establish a relationship between Maeterlink's static drama and Stein's aesthetics and language, and Lehmann between the idea of landscape and the postdramatic theatre he described. What died, according to Fuchs, was the character, but not the theatrical tradition or the idea of a specific theatrical family[3]. As for Lehmann, the theatre did not die because the word "drama" agonisingly endures, a memory that guarantees the familiarity, even if as a ruin of a past always present in the expression "postdramatic".

However, what I find to be most interesting in Gertrude Stein's landscape metaphor and her description of unfamiliarity, is what Linda Voris called, in *The Composition of Sense in Gertrude Stein's Landscape Writing*, a "radical epistemology" (Voris, 2016), i.e., an experience with strangeness that puts one in a different relation with memory, tradition and names, but also within a logic that is not trying to overcome strangeness but rather staying with it, or, as Donna Haraway would put it: "staying with the trouble" (Haraway, 2016). Lehmann and Fuchs have been apparently looking for a set of characteristics in Stein's "landscape" metaphor that are to be applicable to a theatrical practice in the years to come, whereas I am more concerned to understand what propels Stein's metaphor, what lies behind its formal understanding, namely its willingness to work within unfamiliarity, outside conventional cartesian knowledge and within a radical epistemology, where Cosmic Theatre takes place.

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2 "The elective affinity between Wilson's theatre and Gertrude Stein's texts, her notion of 'Landscape Play', is immediately evident" (Lehmann, 2006, p. 81).

3 This argument is used as a justification to incorporate the Wooster Group and the plays of Suzan-Lori Parks and exclude William Forsythe or Laurie Anderson.

Cosmic performances: two examples

Recently, Portuguese artist João Estevens created the project *C:\>how2become (data) & dissolve_into: 'tears'* (2021/22), which was divided into four moments that corresponded to a materialisation in four different media: the first, a book that was sent to the spectator's home (*Artes performativas e cultura digital* [*Performing Arts and Digital Culture*]); the second, a one-on-one meeting, in the street, between performer and spectator; the third, a performance at the Bairro Alto Theatre in Lisbon; and the fourth, a website (https://978i989s33b2669n5.xyz). In the description found in a short video accessible on the website of the Bairro Alto Theatre, co-producer of this (these) work(s), Estevens resorted to two names — transmedia and crossmedia — related to media theory and digital platforms. He compared his creative procedure with "transmedia narratives", which are storytelling techniques that are distributed across different platforms and formats. This multiplicity of platforms contributes to an "expansion" (expression also used by Estevens when describing the purposes of his work) of the narrative, replicating it with different points of view which, in the accumulation, give way to unknown relationships and a multiplicity of meanings. There is no causal relation in the passage from one media to the next, because there is no narrative structure that justifies each of the different materialisations of *C:\>how2become (data) & dissolve_into: 'tears'*.

The expansion extends to the disciplines themselves because what *C:\>how2become (data) & dissolve_into: "tears"* also tells us is that all media are transitory and none of them is the space of the work. A book may or may not contain the website, just as the performance may or may not establish a dialogue with the one-on-one meeting. There is no need to make the connections, no obligation to make acquaintance with a defined logic that would lead to the interpretation of the work as a whole. The "dissolution" referred to in the title, which also corresponds to a physical dissolution in one of the narratives (the performers in Bairro Alto theatre dissolved in the digital world, into avatars), corresponds to the above-mentioned feeling of lightness (relief) that carries with it the possibility of permanent movement, instability in naming and unpredictability in interpretation, thus escaping the incarceration of concepts and conceptual construction, of categories and disciplines.

As the performers become avatars in Estevens' work, they expand their bodies and embrace the cosmic stage provided not by the internet or the virtual space but by the different platforms and the fluidity of the crossing. There is no hierarchy between these different mediums, there is no binary opposition between the digital and the analogical, the online and the offline, just like there is no causality or teleological reasoning that justifies a conclusion or completion in the dissolution. The cosmic potential of this (these) work(s), that combine unfamiliarity with relief, lies in the possibility of getting lost within nominalism and the disciplinary system without abjuring it.

This feeling of lightness, the absence of weight or gravity, is literally explored by Dragan Zivadinov in 1999 with *Gravitation Zero — Noordung Biomechanics Theatre*[4], a performance by the Slovenian multidisciplinary artistic collective Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), staged in a Russian cosmonaut training aircraft
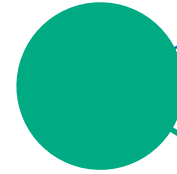
4 For a more detailed description of the performance, see: https://nskstate.com/article/noordung-zero-gravity-biomechanical-theater/

owned and operated by the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training facility, and that was executed in a set of two parabolic flights, with 16 audience members and seven participating actors that perform movements of Meyerhold's biomechanics in a zero-gravity environment. Michael Benson (1999), who experienced this performance as an audience member, started his description with the following words:

> How to write weightlessness? It's impossible. All the preconceived ideas and notions about the placement of the body in space — the orientation of the self and everyone else – are suddenly rendered moot. It's as if a magic wand is waved, and the most fundamental physical rules are suspended. What was up becomes something "over there". What was down becomes the place you once were (Benson, 1999).

The impossibility of the description comes with weightlessness. This may sound as an odd connection since "not understanding" usually weighs on our consciousness. In a certain sense this spectator was contaminated by his physical experience, just like the performers, who are forced to lose references and deal with strangeness in their own bodies. The zero-gravity environment, in which both spectators and performers took part, established a common ground based on the loss of common ground. There was no possible stability, no fixed knowledge and no familiarity for the movement of each of the individuals that took part in this performance, as well as for the relations that were established. In a review published in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Emil Hrvatin wrote: "we felt as if our bodies were alienated from us and we desperately wanted to control them" (Hrvatin, 2002, p. 103) and he went on comparing this to a process "opposite to the mirror stage", as if it provided an experience of des-identification. In *Gravitation Zero*, one does not get acquainted with Meyerhold's biomechanics (which symbolises theatre and a (hi)story), but one nevertheless takes hold of the name. It is an experience of expansion and a possible representation of a perilous freedom, the practice of a loss of control, of a theatre that conceives and embraces the unthinkable, the multiplicity of the cosmos, and that dissolves itself in its own name to conquer weightlessness.

This shift can be understood as the culmination of Gertrude Stein's conviviality with the unfamiliar or Preciado's identification with the unknown, which, however, and by virtue of the survival of the discipline ("theatre") is still pronounceable. In such context, which is the cosmic context, the word "theatre" implies a reference to a crossing (Preciado, 2020) that requires no recognition because it is a place of "uncertainty, of the unobvious, of strangeness" (Preciado, 2020, p. 42). Saying "theatre"is not knowing what is being said, it is listening to an unknown language and grammar that does not guarantee any understanding and simultaneously allows us to "rest in it untroubled", because we do not have "to get acquainted" with it (Stein, 1988). In Cosmic Theatre lies the possibility of Preciado's doing and self-description:

> I am not a man and I am not a woman and I am not heterosexual I am not homosexual I am not bisexual. I am a dissident of the sex-gender system. I am the multiplicity of the cosmos trapped in a binary political and epistemological system, shouting in front of you. (Stein, 1988, p. 37).

The prospect of combining the multiplicity of the cosmos with theatre is to bring a "piece of horizon" (Stein, 1988, p. 38) to this discipline, with a critical

perspective on the epistemological system. This perspective downsizes the importance of nominalism while simultaneously recognising its power, and expands theatre, making it "inconceivably vast" [5] .

The adjective "cosmic" applied to theatre delivers a sense of an unknown content and, at the same time, a constantly expanding space for the creation of meanings, relations, and inventions. The variety and broadness as well as the uncertainty, blurrinesss, and indetermination conveyed by the word may help us in rendering theatre the possibility of an instability and weightlessness that I believe to be more adequate to describe our contemporary relations with theatre, art, and its forms of indiscipline. Following Eve K. Sedgwick's approach towards reading, I am more interested in accounting how one *does* read than how one *should* read[6] , and it is within such an account that I am thinking of the expression "Cosmic Theatre" as a way to free ourselves from knowledge as a fixed category that proposes names according to a set of characteristics that define the objects.

The adjective "cosmic" does not propose a common ground, nor is it a description of characteristics that provide a reference to include or exclude certain objects from the category or discipline. It is rather a way of looking or reading and a way of creating or writing that is not interested in confirming its truthfulness or applicability but rather in providing vocabulary for a doing. It is about "making kin" or "becoming with" (Haraway, 2016) and not about providing knowledge, getting acquainted, overcoming strangeness, or seeking familiarity.

The lightness of Cosmic Theatre is what allows theatre to deal with the disciplinary system, since it does not discard nominalism while at the same time it does not discard movement (doing) either. In a certain sense, it is the possibility of transforming the noun "theatre" into a verb. If to make or deal with art is to make or deal with the unknown, then Cosmic Theatre is the place for such doing.

‘ This may sound as an odd connection since "not understanding" usually weighs on our consciousness. ,

5 I am quoting Legacy Russell's Glitch Feminism, that also uses the word "cosmic" in order to convey an idea of expansion for contemporary feminist theory (Cf. Russell, 2020, p. 41).

6 Sedgwick, 1997, p. 2

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Cosmic Theatre: In search of a verb

Intersections between studio and daily life practices in contemporary dance making

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Abstract

In the last decades, contemporary dance has been revealing a fertile ground for Practice-as-Research (PaR) in the academic and pedagogic realms. Beyond being recognised for its vast variety of choreographic forms, the creative processes that generate contemporary dance works are equally diverse, inviting enquiries about how performer training can feed into them. We are curious about the possibility of making dances that are not solely fed by codified dance techniques but by activities that are present outside the dance studio, in the daily life of the dance maker, and how they can support and trigger choreographic process. Even further, how they supply the performer with movement qualities, dynamics, psychophysical states, and inspiration that are later transferred to and negotiated in the composition of a dance spectacle. This paper intends to touch on the above matters using as an example a PaR research on devising a contemporary dance solo, investigating how the dance maker's daily routines and experiences outside the dance studio become compositional triggers in a choreographic process based on non-codified practices.

PA:PER
03

Perspectives
on performer training

In dance, activities undertaken to prepare the performer's body and inspire their dynamic motion are considered as education and groundwork of the movement artist. Bales and Nettl-Fiol (2008), when discussing the range of dance forms and styles, link the dancer's training to the studio space, and claim that the: "studio is where dance both preserves and discovers its language" (p. viii). The studio is the place where most of the dance classes, training, rehearsals and even performances happen. It is the space recognised by dancers and makers where performers explore movement, improvisation, and techniques, and weaves them into complex compositions.

Frédéric Pouillaud (2017) explained that in dance, "the term technique generally refers to a systematic collection of gestures, which are codified, repeatable, and transmissible," being exercised within a dance studio. For the author, a "technique is thus like a verbal language," as it "consists of a repertoire of identified gestural entities" that are selected according to particular aesthetics. Nevertheless, in the full range of movement possibilities, only a few are recognised as part of established dance techniques, which shapes the body to certain dynamic and spatial patterns. Bales and Nettl-Fiol's (2008) perspective, however, teases contemporary performers as they face performance styles and creative urges that surpasses the codes that are exhaustively repeated within the studio during dance/technique classes and embedded into choreographies. Considering that contemporary dance is expressed through a plurality of forms that are not exhausted by the styles and codes practised within the studio, we enquire about the training that feeds such diversity.

Throughout dance history, performer training has been associated with technique classes. These involve a gradation of efforts that prepares the body to perform complex movement sequences in a particular style. Very often, these sequences contain established codes or shapes and forms that are introduced and later organised and sequenced into a composition and performance. In fact, as Bales and Nettli-Flol (2008) explained, "every new generation since the advent of modern dance has tried in one way or another to connect the performative and choreographic aspects of the dance art with training practices" (p. 30). Historically, it is common to see choreographers creating their own technique so the dancers would be able to execute their poetic and stylistic ideas. A few iconic examples are the modern dancers Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, José Limon, and Alvin Nikolais, who all created techniques named after their surnames. Still today, contemporary choreographers continue to claim to having created unique techniques, for example, David Zambrano, who created the Flying Low, and Hiroaki Umeda who created the Kinetic Force Method[1]. In this sense, Bales and Nettli-Fiol (2008) agreed that there is a certain flow between "dance vocabulary" and dance making, where training shifts its role between being a "direct feeder" and a "repository for choreography" (pp. 30–31).

Considering the link between technique and choreography, we ask: what kind of choreography emerges from training that includes embodied knowledge acquired beyond the studio space? When proposing to broaden the understanding of training for dance, we teased out the practices that might be involved in the creative process, but are, predominantly, marginalised as practices of everyday life and not considered as part of the performer's education.

> 'We suggest how a selection of practices can be a valuable resource to authorial choreographic activity.'

The use of daily practices as groundwork for the performer is not new. The onset of postmodern dance (Banes, 1980) has shed light into practices and performances that decentralised dance from the studio and fed into the artist's creative process. However, our intention is not to discuss the aesthetic products generated through this proposal that introduces everyday movement into choreography (already exhausted by the Judson Dance postmodernists). Neither are we advocating for an exchange of studio training for other daily life activities, nor devaluating the disciplined practice conveyed by a number of dance techniques that build highly skilled performers. Instead, we focus on the articulation of how "other" techniques, not traditionally considered as dance training, can support a dance making process.

Following Emily Claid (2016) who advocated for the addition — and not substitution — of somatic practice to "conventional training", we support the recognition and validation of a range of embodied practices "as separate disciplines that serve each other, not one or the other, or some vague blandness" in a way that they can "spark each other as sparring – rather than confluent – partners to ignite an artist's presence" in and out of the stage (p. 149). Our aim is rather to include and expand the scope of training possibilities for the contemporary movement artist and demonstrate a possibility of working with practices beyond the ones traditionally welcomed in the dance studio. We suggest how a selection of practices can be a valuable resource to authorial choreographic activity. To discuss this proposal, we use the example of a contemporary dance solo — *one single act (uma cena só)* — composed by a young Brazilian choreographer.

Contemporary dance making and dramaturgy

Contemporary dance is a heterogeneous style that echoes cultural and philosophical experimentation in movement form. According to the dance scholar Thereza Rocha (2011), practice and theory in contemporary dance are constantly drawing from the diverse range of thinking and making, and choreographic styles that emerge from its practice and surrounding cultures. Similarly, Synne Behrndt (2016) suggested that dance making is a complex activity that goes beyond traditional understandings of choreography. Likewise, Laurance Louppe (2010) believed that contemporary dance resides in creative processes that unfold in a large range of performative styles, claiming that the borders that define the field are utterly blurred.

Louppe (2010) suggested that in contemporary dance, this thinking is layered by the understanding of the bodies as corporealities in motion. These are composed of a heterogeneous combination of forces and cultural influences

that goes beyond a single movement technique. This perspective frees us from a concept of an absolute body that is universal and standardised, typically seen in *corps de ballet* or choreographies that expose a choir of normalised bodies in/and motion on the stage. It allows the performer and their body not to be considered as a morphology endowed with physical abilities in certain techniques, but as a generator of poetics that are in a constant becoming. This perspective supports a focus on the performer's corporeality rather than their body.

Corporeality is a key concept and substance in the choreographic process we articulate in this paper. Michel Bernard (2019) advocated for the term to "radically subvert the traditional category of 'body'"(p. 4). For Bernard, corporeality proposes an "original vision, simultaneously plural, dynamic and random" that composes an intersecting point of "intensive forces or heterogeneous vectors". It includes artistic production that comprise sensitive materialities involving the totality of the artist's soma, which, in our perspective, involves the training or practices from which they develop embodied knowledge.

> ❛ Dramaturgical practice further articulates the information of the dancer's corporeality with the other elements of the production, such as space, sound, costume. ❜

To privilege corporeality in dance making is to reconsider the practices and spaces that are primarily seen as specific for dance making and training, entrusting a plurality of schemas and influences. Dislocating the training from the studio to everyday activities broadens the awareness and possibilities that a range of movement, sentient, and empathic practices can bring to the creative process. In this sense, Christine Greiner and Cláudia Amorim (2003) supported the modulation of the patterns established by disciplinary techniques through changes in how visual, tactile, kinesthetic, affective, imaginary, and auditory references influence the way movement emerges from, and is performed by, the dancer's body (p. 118). They claim that the change of the creative source of movement allows a broader modulation of data that comes from the sensations, kinesthetic and kinetic experiences, and that impacts on the choreographer's creative outcomes.

The changes in the sources of inspiration for the contemporary dance maker professes a decentring of the choreographic process from the studio. It is an effort to diversify the resources that inspire movement creation, as well as stretch the understanding of what training is and how it acts upon creative dance making. As we shed light into practices embedded in our daily lives — that happen outside the studio, but nevertheless influence our embodied knowledge — we question the possibility of remodulating the choreographer's perception and creative input, thus affecting the corporeality and the way they move and devise.

This perspective is enabled by including dance dramaturgy as part of the discussion of devising choreographies. Synne Behrndt (2016) stated that

dramaturgy in contemporary dance is a process that moves between experience and reflection, revealing compositional intention and a working narrative in a critical and reflective creative process (p. 244). According to Ana Pais (2016) these compositional and narrative impulses would be like a thread that weaves meanings in a moving discourse, that is materialised by the body on the stage (p. 42). Similarly, Scialom and Fabrini (2019) saw this procedure as a manipulation of energy that emerges from the corporeality of the dancer(s) during the choreographic process. In fact, the authors added that dramaturgy in dance emerges from the training practices or the corporeal routines of the dancer. The training builds unique corporealities or movement states, qualities, patterns, vocabulary, and energy that reflect on the scope of creative possibilities available to the maker. Since training usually precedes or merges with creative practices and rehearsals, it exerts a direct influence in the shaping of what will be performed on the stage. Therefore, training is in direct relationship with dramaturgy considering that it feeds the performer's corporeality and thinking soma.

Dramaturgical practice further articulates the information of the dancer's corporeality with the other elements of the production, such as space, sound, costume. The relations established amongst these elements creates tensions that, therefore, reveal the dramaturgical content of a work. Then, as a dramaturgical and choreographic experiment, *one single act* explored how training influenced and negotiated, narrativity, movement vocabulary, energy, and tension in a choreographic process.

One single act— from training to performance

The piece *one single act (uma cena só)* is a contemporary dance solo created by the dancer Isabela Berto Tescarollo in 2019/2020[2]. The creative process began by drawing the attention to the corporealities, shaped by practices of the choreographer's daily activities. The ones that became relevant to the choreography were: walking in the park, running, reading, dusk rituals, and asana yoga. Each of these activities led to a range of choreographic impulses that were taken to movement laboratories (following the method proposed by Scialom, 2021) where they were exercised and analysed according to Rudolf Laban's Effort theory (see Laban, 1980). The embodied research of each corporeality resulted in the creation of narratives composed with movement dynamics and forms. The combination of certain qualities was shaped into a character[3] that was represented by a name (as we will demonstrate below). Finally, they were choreographically organised to compose the final show.

Training activities

The selection of activities that had a direct input into the choreographic process were a source of discipline and methodological rigour to the creation. When using the word discipline in relation to dance practice, we are aware of the discussion around the conditioning of "docile bodies" that became paradigmatic through Michel Foucault's (1977) discourse. However, we suggest looking at discipline as a way of cultivating the soma[4] and asceticism as explained by the theatre scholar Cassiano

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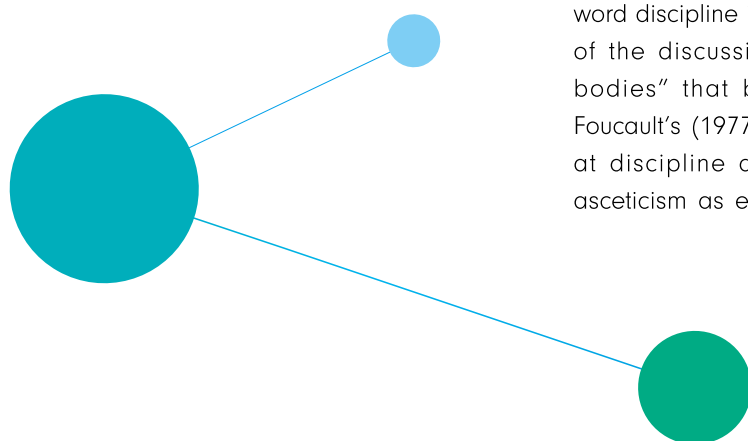
2 The creative process was archived as a website that can be accessed through this link: https://umacenasopesquisa.wordpress.com/ (access in 20/01/2023).

3 We will use the term character to describe the combination of embodied stages, dynamics, and qualities that compose with the dancer's soma to give form and shape movement.

4 Here soma is used to represent the non-dualistic perspective of a person, meaning that their body and mind are integrated. In addition, the use of the term soma also invites the acknowledgement of the person's experience from within or their first-person perspective of experience and the world that surrounds them. For an in-depth discussion of the term, see Hanna 1979.

Figure 1. Image of the creature. Credit: Ariane Almedia

Quilici (2012). The author remembered that both behaviours are essential in performing arts. From this perspective, the notion of training "pours out of the field of aesthetics and moves towards all areas of life"[5] (Quilici, 2012, p. 2). This allows us to consider that the training of the performing artist involves a series of transformations that, in addition to involving the subject, includes ethical, aesthetical, political, existential, corporeal, and even spiritual dimensions. It is from this perspective that the daily life practices, such as yoga, reading, running, walking, and meditating, including the ones that demand a great amount of physicality, did not limit themselves to a strictly corporeal training but expanded through different layers that constitute the soma and the performer's corporeality.

Yoga as a praxis was exercised through sequencing of asanas (postures) that modified the body's physical and energetic flows[6]. Despite knowing that Yoga practice is based on a specific set of postures — and thus it has a particular vocabulary of movement — it was an activity of self-analysis as the performer sequenced and transitioned through different postures, based on her physical and emotional needs. The dancer created daily asana sequences to operate intensities of her corporeality. It was not about reproducing and repeating the *asanas* but focusing on improving the corporeal and energetic awareness of the performer. This exercise allowed her to play with the energetic and physical shifts that the sequences of *asanas* provided. It also supported the

> They fuelled the poetic imagination of the dancer's choreographic research as well as the soundscape (that later became the soundtrack) of the piece.

Figure 2. Image-sensation. Author's personal archive

autonomy of the performer with her own bodily needs, generating discipline and independence.

On an intellectual note, the reading practices included books on dance, philosophy, and literature. These stimulated the corporeality of the dancer as well as her subject formation. The readings nourished the imaginary, poetic, creative, and sensitive realms of the soma, functioning as entryways into movement explorations. Words, images, and thoughts were transformed during the laboratories into movement and atmospheres that grounded the generation of choreographic material[7]. They fuelled the poetic imagination of the dancer's choreographic research as well as the soundscape (that later became the soundtrack) of the piece. For example, the readings influenced the materialisation of the first character named as "the creature". From the corporeality emerged a series of sensorial images that were sketched straight after each laboratory (see Figure 2). These images later supported the embodiment of other characters and the dramaturgy of the entire piece.

Running was an activity that facilitated deep reflections, linking together the states of the body, the images, and the soundtrack. In this sense, the playlist used during the running activities was a way of experiencing and experimenting with sound stimulus in a range of environments. A playlist was created for each character to feed into the images/imagination and inspire their movement qualities. The playlists were taken to the studio so the soundscape could support the movement improvisations. They facilitated a reconnection with the dynamics, images, and affective memories that emerged during the running. They became the key to access the characters or corporealities that were shaped during the creative process. Examples of the sonorities of the playlists were: electronic music genre (techno style); classical music; and Middle Eastern music with artists such as the Le Trio Jourbran.

Yoga, reading, and running generated a range of movement qualities that that were decoded into Effort Factors (Time, Space, Weight and Flow — see Laban, 1980). For example, running revealed a bound Flow, firm Weight, and direct Space with a rhythmic alternation between accelerated and decelerated quality of Time[8]. These Efforts were embodied in the studio and shaped a particular character that was called "the warrior".

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5 "Original extravasa o campo estético para se difundir por todas as áreas da vida",

6 To read about how yoga devotes embodied knowledge to the performing artist please revert to Spatz, 2015.

7 The literature that directly influenced the creative process was *Uma aprendizagem ou o Livro dos Prazeres*, by Clarice Lispector and *Mulheres que Correm com os Lobos*, by Clarissa Pinkola Estes.

8 For a more detailed understanding of the four motion factors and the Effort category of Rudolf Laban's theory, please refer to Laban, 1980

Figure 3. Image of Warrior and image of becoming corporeality. Credits: Ariane Almedia

When establishing a parallel between running and the warrior, there were a few subtle differences. While running revealed an intention of pouring out energy, the warrior exposed a variation in modes of contention of energy that resulted in movement that oscillated from accelerated to decelerated and pauses. Both the running and the laboratory exploration of the warrior fed back into each other, as, despite revealing different movement forms, they expressed similar energetic content.

Contrasting with the run, the walks in the park prompted a unique movement quality and state of presence. While running generated a rhythmic and accelerated motion that created a sensation of cutting through space, the walks rendered a sensation that the external space entered the inside of the performer. This quality also provoked a change in the sound atmosphere, having minimalist and classical music as accompaniment of the activities. The switch was associated with the way in which Space shifted between an expansive and explosive entity that caused impermanence and vertigo (when running) to a receptive and introspective material that brought a sensation of wellbeing and ecstasy (when waking).

In the same way that the character of the warrior emerged from the running practices, the walking nourished a "becoming" corporeality, composed of a free Flow with inner and outer exchanges with the environment. Interestingly, the ways that the performer chose to experiment with these qualities outside (running

Figure 4. Image of becoming corporeality. Credits: Ariane Almedia

and walking) and inside the studio (choreographically) revealed a dramaturgical exercise of modulating tensions (as described by Scialom and Fabrini, 2019) through experiments with different compositional patterns.

The *dusk ritual* was a meditative practice created by the performer, where she would turn off the lights and all electronics, light a lamp, drink tea, and sit in a cross-legged position or lay on the bed. It was a practice that roused calm, solitude and silence and opened space for assimilation of the happenings of the day. These periods were arranged for silencing the body-mind and recognition of the paths, and the sensations and emotions that emerged during the day. The assimilation of intensive daily life experience can be associated with asana yoga practice, which finishes with the posture of *savasana* or *shavasana* that has the function of allowing the soma to absorb the experience of the practice.

During this activity the performer was free to experience the flows and intensities in an intimate manner. They were registered in her journal as handwriting and sketches. One of these was the drawing of the "zones of corporealities" that illustrated the ways in which she perceived the trajectories of the corporealities in the space during the rehearsals. This image later became the structure of the composition as whole, helping the understanding of the performative architecture of the choreography. It also became a dramaturgical map for the composition.

Figure 5. Zones of corporealities. Author's personal archive

Choreographic research documentation

In this process, drawing and video recording became tools to document all stages of the choreographic research. They also supported the dramaturgical thinking and procedures that navigated the elaboration of the characters and corporealities. Sketching became a systematic practice performed after the laboratories and rehearsals. The drawings emerged from the vibration of the affects that were set in motion during the activities — outside and inside the studio. The videos not only documented, but became material that served the choreographic process. They were analysed following Fernandes (2015) who proposed a "moving analysis" of video documentation. The author described this as a dynamic procedure, where the observer's body is active and participates in the analysis. This means that the reasoning is not conceptual, exerting power through its visual caption, but is kinaesthetic and includes the body to fully perceive the images recorded. Fernandes (2015) explained that during the research the camera becomes a partner or a witness of the choreographic activity. According to Vieira (2019), this partnership grants the camera a dramaturgical role. This facilitated the dramaturgical activity allowing the combination of both an internal and an external perspective of the creative materials.

The examination of the material and the internal and external perspectives present in the documentation provided a distancing from the experience and facilitated an analysis that happened in a dynamic flow between the artist's life and their work. To discuss this, we follow alongside Ferracini (2003) who proposed that the performer's training includes two poles (extremities) that influence their creative process: the Life pole with its organic and dynamic intensities and the Form pole with its theatrical thinking. When devising work, performers slide between these poles, dwelling in one or the other, as well as converging amongst them. This means that the boundary between Life and Form are never a bold one.

The analysis of the documentation and the convergence between Life and Form was a fundamental procedure in the development of the dramaturgical thinking. As the performer identified in the video particular qualities, gestures, and intentions, she also re-embodied them in her laboratory, so she could experiment and experience the material once again, allowing it to acquire new corporeal forms.

From the continuous flow of experimentation-analysis-experimentation, the choreographic sequences as well as the transitions between one scene and the other began to emerge. Having started with exercises of generating different energetic fields and tensions, and following with the experiments of the flow between the organic lines that connect Life and Form, the choreographic phrases and scores were materialised. The continuous feedback between experiment and analysis supports the reverse relationship between life and studio where the transformations that emerge from the moving analysis modify not only the performative material, but also the performer's corporeality and her daily activities.

Conclusion

The creative process of *one single act* articulated a series of procedures led by the notion of corporeality and the performer's daily life activities. The acknowledgement of these activities as training practices fosters an understanding of the body as a place of intersections of energetic tensions, that established the choreographic research as a manipulation of energy in the making. The embodiment of dramaturgical thinking during choreographic practice — interlacing daily life with studio-based rehearsals — drew awareness to trainings that happen beyond studio-based dance techniques This invites multiple ways of thinking/doing in contemporary dance studies and practices.

Beyond being a physical and somatic training for the performer, her daily practices also became part of her dramaturgical activity of organising energies and tensions generated by the range of corporealities, expressions, sonorities, and lighting that came together in the final piece. Dramaturgical thinking is intrinsic not only to the subtleties of the maker's choices, but also in the different procedures carried out to compose the work. The analysis of the process through a dramaturgical lens fosters a change in its system of references that scattered training and devising through the experiences that forge corporealities in their varied range of intensities and meanings. The dramaturgical exercise that weaves corporealities and characters into a choreography operates a choreographic process that, according to Pais (2016, p. 43) [9] "weaves and (in)forms the visible, building the implicit mode from which the performance materialises in various options and relations". The resulting piece — *a single act* — weaved corporealities that intersected Life with Form and became interconnected by the dynamics of what happens inside and outside the studio. This represents a creative exercise that emerges from the performer's creative living and being in contemporary times.

' The analysis of the documentation and the convergence between Life and Form was a fundamental procedure in the development of the dramaturgical thinking. '

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[9] Original "tece e (in)forma o visível, construindo o modo implícito pelo qual o espetáculo se concretiza em opções e relações várias" (Pais, 2016, p. 43)

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Intersections between studio and daily life practices in contemporary dance making

Imprints:
Artistic / Positionality

The intersections of art and research – investigating the boundaries between art object and art analysis

James Else

Abstract

The concepts of art and research have metamorphosed dramatically throughout history. Modern attempts to define and evaluate them have, ironically, made their meanings increasingly intangible, making delineating "what is art" and "what is research" more and more difficult. For artists working in academia, finding the right way to position their work within research frameworks further complicates this relationship. The aim of this paper is to explore the intersection between art and research through three different lenses in order to better understand their relationship.

Introduction

Research in higher education is a BIG DEAL, with original research covering virtually any subject from "the propulsion of penguin poo" (Meyer-Rochow & Gal, 2003) to the "Role of Childhood Aerobic Fitness in Successful Street Crossing" (Chaddock, 2012).
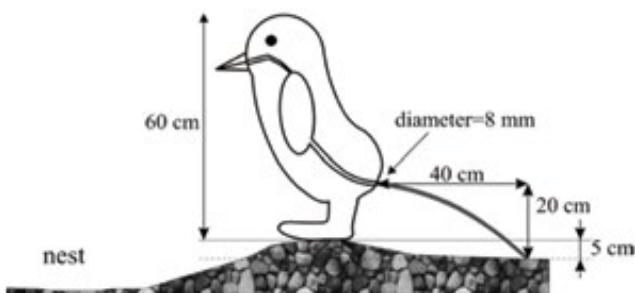
Figure 1.

Position of model penguin during defaecation (Meyer-Rochow & Gal, 2003)

The Research Excellence Framework, the UK's chief barometer for assessing scholarly activity, has defined academic research as "a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared" (Research Excellence Framework, 2019, p. 90). Within this framework, they

> define criteria and adopt assessment processes that enable them to ... treat on an equal footing excellence in research across the spectrum (Research Excellence Framework, p. 5)

In contrast, Stockinger traces the roots of research from, "the Latin 'circare' = to go around, to wander" (2013), suggesting that,

> the underlying metaphor here is that research (in modern sense) is a cognitive or intellectual "walking around", an "exploration" ... and not a straight ahead move to some mysterious target. (Stockinger, 2013)

So here you have the distinction between a cerebral meander and the desire to determine the value of research work in concrete metrics. These two approaches therefore hint at the opposition between subjectivist and objectivist approaches to understanding research, which, at their most reductive, offer contradictory views depending on whether you believe the universe is fundamentally knowable or unknowable (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

In order to examine the nature and validity of artistic research, this paper will explore three views on the relationship and intersection between art and that which seeks to understand art.

The first view, as proposed by Croft (2015) drawing upon Gadamer, is that there is a binary distinction between art and that which seeks to understand art, based on whether you are describing the world or adding to the world. The second view, as suggested by conceptual art, is that there is a blurring of the boundary between art object and intellectual comment, pointing to a continuum between creation and analysis. And the third view, as proposed by the likes of Arvo Pärt (as cited in Greenbaum, 1999), is that language — the *de facto* medium for discussing art — cannot in fact be used to understand art at all.

Part 1 - Art is NOT research

Let's consider the binary distinction first. Croft's bluntly titled article *Composition is not research* suggested that art as research consisted of little more than "made up 'research questions'" which potentially even undermined the artistic process (2015). He put forward the view that while music could have a "kind of truth ... [it] ... does not have the kind of truth that is discovered by research" (Croft, 2015, p. 3).

On the surface this would seem to offer two silos for seeking to categorise what is, and is not, research. J. S. Bach's *C Major Prelude* is art, whereas Schenker's analysis of this prelude would be research. However, almost immediately a blurring of these categories starts to occur. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Violin Fase* is seemingly first and foremost a piece of art, yet is it not also a study on the relationship of dance to music? Keersmaeker herself saw this piece as an investigation of the act of "writing movements", developing her own language and rigor from Steve Reich's Music (Keersmaeker, as cited in in Shim, 2018).

Figure 2.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaker rehearsing *Fase* at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul (Shim, 2018)

Even limiting yourself to the intended purpose of the work is problematic. Is Duchamp's *Fountain* first an art object or a commentary on art? What about John Cage's Lecture on *Nothing* or Yvonne Rainer's *No Manifesto*? Even going back to Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (a work notably unpublished in his lifetime), these works were originally intended as an educational tool to help his students understand composition and keyboard playing (Tomita, 1996). Thus, while it is most well-known now as a hugely significant contribution to the canon of Western music, its original intent was around the instruction of students in understanding the arts of music, combining the "pedagogical, theological, and emotional aims" (Lowrance, 2013, p. 28) of the composer.

The waters are muddied still further as you try to define where the edges of an artwork or piece of research reside. What level of understanding and background context is expected from the recipient? Is a programme note or preface an integral part of the work? The reality of some art is that without at least a basic understanding the work offers nothing or even incredulity. For example, Jed Curtis's *Music for Wise Men*, which simply instructs the performer to "Commit suicide" (Curtis, as cited in Friedman, 2002), is virtually incomprehensible without understanding the context of the work.

What we are therefore left with is a situation where these two hypothetical silos — art and research — serve to highlight rather than help resolve the paradoxes within that which they seek to define.
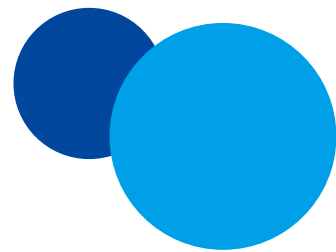
' What level of understanding and background context is expected from the recipient? Is a programme note or preface an integral part of the work? "

Part 2 – Art is both art AND research
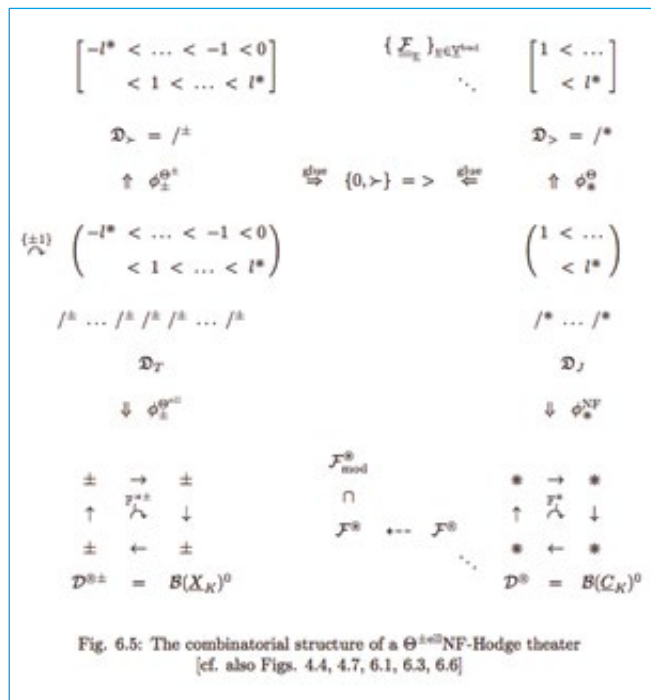
Figure 4.

Extract from *Inter-Universal Teichmüller Theory I:*

Construction of Hodge Theaters (Mochizuki, 2021, p. 182)

This brings us on to our second hypothesis — that there is a continuum where work can both add to the world and describe the world to varying degrees. Here the mode of the work inevitably has an impact on how and what it communicates. Works that use language function both as a form of communication between individuals and as a social phenomenon (Hickey, 2003). Thus, it is impossible to think of a novel that does not in some way comment on our society. Equally, works that intrinsically involve the human body, such as dance, cannot become purely theoretical (Fabius, 2012), such that any choreographic proposition presented in the context of dance unavoidably also issues a comment on dance (Cvejic, 2007).

Even pure mathematics, the quintessential poster child for certainty within research lends itself to a more complex reading. Maths, as with all traditionally framed research, normally starts with an abstract idea — a "thought apart from concrete realities" (Abstract, n. d.). It then seeks to find an absolute proof, yet how this proof is discovered is part intuition, part experience, part experiment and part inspiration. This process is surely familiar to most artists, highlighting that the retrospective identification of methodological aspects (Boeck & Tepe, 2021) is not unique to artistic research.

Further, mathematical philosophy is often as conceptually complex as modern art, with no clear consensus on whether 2+2=4 is actually true (Balaguer, 2018). Meanwhile, no one except the author can currently understand Mochizuki's proof of the ABC conjecture (Aron, 2015). These examples suggested something very different to "an exact, universally valid and nonexperimental science" (Borgdorff, 2007, p. 13). This suggested that if "inadvertent … contributions to knowledge and understanding cannot be regarded as research results" (Dallow, 2003, as cited in Borgdorff, 2007, p. 7), then there is little that can be categorically considered research. This itself draws into question the division first highlighted by Aristotle between intellectual knowledge and practical knowledge (Borgdorff, 2007) suggesting that the divide between traditional academic research and artistic research is, in fact, an artificial construct.

Part 3 – Art is ONLY art

This brings us onto the final hypothesis that things can only really exist in their original form. Arvo Pärt thinks music is "purely a musical language, and a musical sensitivity. Even if I explain it with words, the words mean nothing" (Pärt, as cited in Greenbaum, 1999), while Ad Reinhardt reduced this idea to its essence when he stated, "art is not what is not art" (Reinhardt, 1963 as cited in Kosuth, 1969, p. 134).

Figure 5.
Self-Defined Object (Orange) by Joseph Kosuth (Wimberley, 1966, reproduced in Convery, 2017)

What these quotes, and the earlier discussion around conceptual dance, allude to is Kosuth's assertion that, "A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, … [a] particular work of art is art, which means, [it] is a *definition* of art" (Kosuth, 1969, p. 136). This challenges Croft's earlier assertion that the truth in music is not research (2015),

[the] phenomena at work in the artistic domain are decidedly cognitive and rational, even if we cannot always directly access them via language and concepts. Part of the specificity of art research therefore lies in the distinctive manner in which the nonconceptual and nondiscursive contents are articulated and communicated (Borgdorff, 2007, p. 11)

And here we get to the central problem around artistic research, that it is frequently required to fit the abstract-investigation-proof model of more established academic research subjects. With a "characteristic of the arts … [being] their very ability to elude strict classifications and demarcations, and to actually generate the criteria" (Borgdorff, 2007, p. 6), the relationship of the abstract to the investigation in artistic research is arguably more complex and less hierarchical, with the *conclusions* being offered by an artwork often as complex as the questions they ask.

Knowledge does not consist solely of a set of denotative statements. It also comprises the ideas of knowing how to do, live, and listen. It therefore concerns a competence which goes beyond the determination and application of the sole criterion of truth to include those of efficiency … justice … happiness … beauty … and so on (Lyotard, as cited in Gherardi 2003, p. 354)

This ties in with Kellermeyer's (2022) assertion that it is the emancipatory methodological quality of artistic research that produces "new forms of knowledge that expand the range of what can be said and thought".

This serves to highlight that "we never look at just one thing" (Berger, 1972, p. 9). Art, science, and research cannot be clinically separated, and since "we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (Berger, 1972), the very drive for artistic research highlights the multiple planes of thought that art inhabits, perhaps presenting a "balancing act" between art and life (Haagensen, 2021). This interrelationship suggests that wherever the intersection lies between art and research, both must comment meaningfully on and towards a global body of knowledge.

Conclusion

Based on this discussion, I would view the intersection of art and science as "two dimensions [of a] common cultural space" (Klein, 2010, p. 3), where neither language nor practice can articulate all aspects the knowledge they present, "we are reaching the ends of our theorising limits using existing frameworks that are rooted in either/or thinking" (Smith et al., 2017, p. vi). If we challenge the illusion of a coherent framework of research, that is arguably as much of a straitjacket in science as in the arts, then we have the opportunity to further not only specific knowledge, but also redefine what we mean by knowledge itself.

In the same way that the 20th century has seen the very nature of art and the artist questioned, perhaps it is now time to challenge the need to resolve research in a hierarchical and linear manner. "Art [itself] ... [is] analogous to an analytic proposition" (Kosuth, 1969, p. 134) and to deny that works of art "increase the stock of knowledge" (OECD, 2015) is to misunderstand the very nature of art itself.

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Creating an immersive virtual reality experience as a platform for transmedia education

Mohit Kakkar

Abstract

Virtual Reality (VR) can provide an immersive aspect of a broader transmedia narrative. The inclusion of multiple modes of technologies and platforms enables viewers to engage in various aspects of the overall narrative through the medium they are most comfortable with. The varying forms in which the content is delivered creates different feelings and degrees of intimacy. By applying transmedia storytelling techniques, the content creators can disperse a preview via several media delivery modes which gives insights into the cinematic VR story world.

This paper argues that by adding other forms of media into the mix, we can reach more viewers through online and hard publications as well as methods and approaches of incorporating live performance, stimulation, and spatial embodiment in the real-world to help solidify audience immersivity into the VR world. And lastly, finding innovative ways for the artist-scholar to integrate VR as a pre-supposition for a multi-modal platform should be a part of film education.

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Immersion

Virtual Reality (VR) is a three-dimensional world experience, which goes beyond the realm of physical reality. It not only produces a simulated version of the world or reality that we know but also provides a sensorial viewer experience in which users are treated to a virtual reality, that stimulates the human senses. VR uses computer technology to create a 360-degree world and is viewed through a Head Mounted Display (HMD). This allows the audience to immerse themselves into a spectacle of visual and aural effects. Depending on the content displayed in the HMD, the viewer may have a tactile experience to add an additional layer of sense of touch in the virtual space. For example, Madison Wells Media company's immersive interactive theatre incorporates performers and objects to interact within the VR, granting viewers embodied experiences of the virtual realm. The blend of live and virtual realities constitutes what is referred to as Mix Modal, Mixed Reality Performances, and Transmedia Storytelling. As specified by Jellar and Serfin (2020): mixed reality performances connect multiple physical and virtual spaces and as such they generate hybrid realties that span physical environments and virtual worlds (p. 7). The combination of media of these pluri-modal experiences can present a strong case for a better immersive VR experience.

One of the key facets of VR creation is the narrative, or the story, in which the audience is invited to immerse themselves in. Viewers have the opportunity to look around the 360-degree space in a VR experience. However, content creators must drive and focus the viewers' attention to a certain part of the viewing zone, and keep them engaged and guided throughout their experiences in the story. This is mainly done using visual and aural cues[1]. Tricart (2017) has described the three fundamental elements — immersion, presence, and embodiment — to engage the viewer into the virtual story environment. Immersion allows viewers to be engrossed in the environment by visuals and sounds. They surround the viewer's senses in a realistic domain that is believable. Presence stimulates the viewers to feel as if they are part of the VR environment and exist within the VR world created. It provides a sense of connection or feeling of familiarity as in reality. Finally, embodiment raises the questions of "where am I in this virtual world?" Or "who am I supposed to be?" It is important that these questions are answered by the VR maker, so that the story experience created can be entirely accomplished.

In a VR experience, the elements of immersion, presence, and embodiment are not only used to enhance the narrative being articulated, but also used to convey information to the viewers prior to their embarking on the VR event. For example, having a story taking place at a party, and the audience might be one of the guests, although participating in an invisible, silent observation manner. Providing them with this insight prior to the experience might help increase the viewer's sense of embodiment. Williams et al. (2021) has described an experience where, before donning the headset, viewers were provided a verbal didactic explanation of the character that they will be playing. This information fast-tracked the viewers to quickly embody themselves into the story. The viewers were then provided information of the premise and their role in the story world they will participate in, helping to prepare the viewers for the experience they will partake.
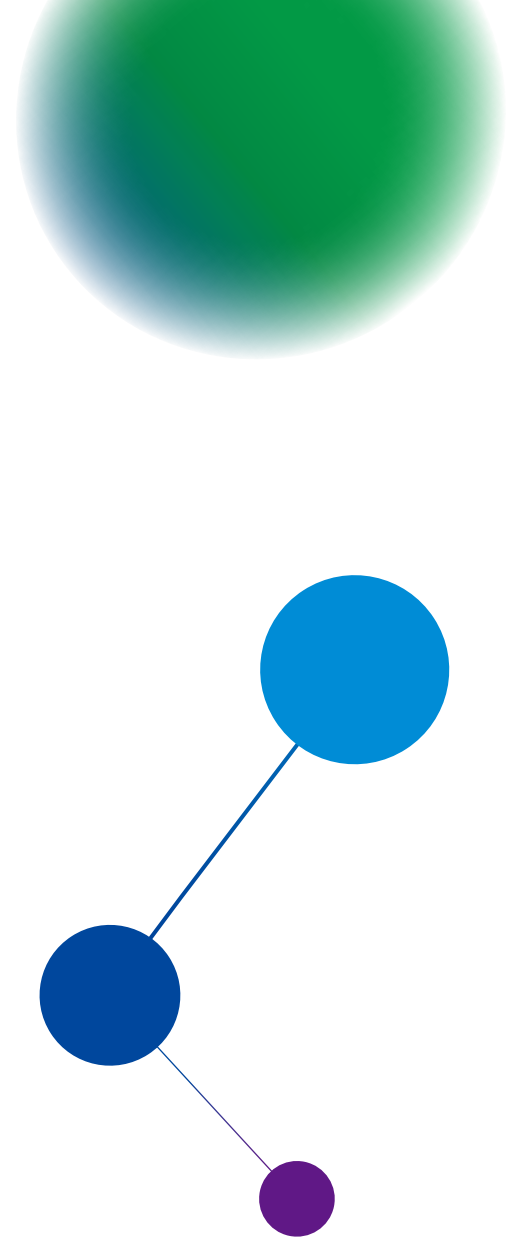
‘

The blend of live and virtual realities constitutes what is referred to as Mix Modal, Mixed Reality Performances, and Transmedia Storytelling. ’

1 Visual cues can be derived by characters in the VR story directing the viewer's attention or through aural cues such as sound effects received from a particular direction in the virtual space.

Transmedia

Another means of enhancing embodiment in a VR story world and increasing viewers' participation level is by introducing viewers to elements of the story content through what is known as transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is the process of disseminating key story points, As professed by Jenkins (2007)

> transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its unique contribution to the unfolding of the story (p. 1).

Dissemination through different online media platforms help reach a larger audience base. Most common delivery modes are YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook, available via mobile devices, computers, and HMD. These modes of technology help VR content creators introduce the viewers to the VR world by reaching people through multiple devices. This flexibility facilitates the engagement of more users to whichever platform they are most comfortable with.

Transmedia elements can be used to help acclimatise viewers from the non-virtual to the virtual space. One of the possibilities, and perhaps the one most commonly used, is to create a video trailer of the VR experience beforehand and upload it to online video platforms to get viewers prepared for what they will come in contact with during the VR event. Another possibility is to incorporate the elements of a board game, video game, or mobile game. We can create new games across these different platforms which provide insights into the cinematic VR story, as the audiences will partake in this experience prior to the event. The game content might be an insider's look into the backstory of the characters to better form the viewers' understanding of the immersive piece they will immerse in. As stated by Scolari (2013), we see this form of presentation in television shows such as Fox's series *24*, which is proven to be a great example of incorporating transmedia storytelling. It includes mobisodes, webisodes, video games for consoles, comics, novels, and board games. I believe setting the world for the audience is crucial in getting them to be involved. Beyond functioning as an enhancement of the VR experience and spectacle, the techniques for transmedia storytelling can be applied in educational settings as a teaching tool for cinema narrative VR productions.

' **the techniques for transmedia storytelling can be applied in educational settings as a teaching tool for cinema narrative VR productions.** '

Educational application

Transmedia techniques can be used to teach emerging filmmakers the pre-production process of filmmaking. This is the initial phase prior to principal photography[2] where concepts for the visual landscape are developed. Transmedia techniques can be used to conceptualise ideas driven from the script to create previsualisations to better grasp the story line and characters involved. Dudacek (2015) has explained how transmedia techniques help educational settings:

> Transmedia through various platforms such as comics, books, short videos, alternative video games and movies or documentaries should increase engagement of the studied topics, simplify process of memorising knowledge and skills and make the teaching process more effective and entertaining (p. 695).

The use of transmedia techniques can be an effective method to help students' research using various transmedia platforms to collect knowledge on a topic to assist them with the story's character development. Students can gain insight from the different transmedia platforms to make creative content decisions to provide authenticity to the visuals of the story world. By applying these techniques in pre-production, students can reinforce their understanding of the story and will be well equipped to create the content. After creating the cinematic VR content, it will be essential to devise ways to immerse the viewers into the story world by incorporating elements of presence and stimulation to assimilate the audience prior to embarking on the VR journey.

Performance

The use of performance venue and performative elements are effective ways to create presence and stimulation, as additional media outside the VR headset has been increasingly expanding the cinematic VR experience. Designing the physical venue aurally and visually to replicate the VR world increases audience immersivity. As stated by Jaller and Serfin (2020), different experiences grant the audience the possibility of immersion in the virtual space and its narrative content. The authors have expressed the use of designing additional media such as, scenography, spatial sound, and theatrical performance among others as elements to underpin the main attraction. These elements have been frequently used to transition the audience into the virtual realm. The combination of elements and media within a performance or a VR experience is called Mixed-Reality Performances (MRP). In these events, the content that is shown or performed takes several forms and styles. Jaller and Serfin (2020) have defined MRP as a space that encompasses a range of narrative-driven hybrid experiences which fuse live and interactive VR performances. In these events, the live narrative element is quite intriguing, for example, the performer can guide audiences into the physical space where the performer(s) assists

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2 Principal photography is the part of the filmmaking process where the film shooting takes place.

and prepares them to enter the VR world. This preparation may help to set the psychological state of the participants' mind to orient themselves to what they are about to experience. Grounding audiences in the real-world first can be beneficial as an additional layer to ease audiences into the VR world. Jaller and Serfin (2020) described this procedure

> as an audience, one is led into an enclosed room and greeted by a female performer dressed in white. A female voice-over is heard, supposedly by the character whom the performer is supposed to embody, through a Bluetooth speaker worn around the neck. The performer continuously keeps eye contact with the audience, showing around the room and then placing the Head Mounted Display (HMD) on the head (p. 1).

A complex orchestration of mixed reality is required to arrange and guide audience members from the ticket window to the immersive space. Jaller and Serfin (2020) explained that these MRP include four key aspects: space, time, interaction, and performance. The four criteria divide the experiment of virtual reality into several types of reality, from being in an actual physical space or environment which you can touch and feel, to moving viewers into interacting with performers before the actual performance on HMD.

The creative design of the physical environment can help set the tone, the feel, and possibly the emotional dimension required for a particular experience. If we immerse the audience members into the physical space first, we can get them comfortable enough to enjoy the virtual space. This virtual space can be a replica of the current physical space for the viewer to reduce anticipation of entering the VR experience unknowingly. They have an understanding and familiarity before being exposed to the virtual performance. The content creators should take into consideration the design of the physical surroundings as it is an opportunity for them to contribute a piece of the story to enchant audiences but leaving the full story experience to entice audience to transition from "spectators to participants" (Jaller & Serfin, 2020, p. 216). Engaging visitors is the key to a successful mixed modal presentation. For this reason, we have to make sure that the orchestration is set up well as they are guided throughout the physical space. The appropriate creation of trajectories and design of transitions can help spur inquisitiveness and captivate audience members. As explained by Yu (2019):

> It's this combination of a built installation; live performers; tracked props; sensory tricks like heat, wind, vibration, and smell; plus use of your voice, hands, and feet all combined with cutting-edge technology which allows participants to feel as if what they're seeing and feeling is real — ideally even forgetting they have a headset on in the first place (p. 3).

The incorporation of the five senses mentioned by Yu is a key interactive element to augment the virtual reality experience. This inclusion will help the audience feel that they are more involved in the story as they acquire a participatory role in the VR story world. The physical mapping of movements, touch and speech within the virtual world might be an ideal consideration to keep with the real world tactility. In addition, it is necessary to convince the participant by delivering an effective and intricately crafted virtual content, as the integration of each sensory element has to reflect reality.

Conclusion

To conclude, applying immersion, presence and embodiment are significant elements to VR storytelling. VR requires the setup of a proper prologue in the non-virtual world to prepare audiences for what they are about to encounter in the VR world. The immediate leap into VR will not be so comfortable for audiences. The pre-cursory events that are the "reality" element needs to be strong and well organised for our viewers to be gently immersed into the concept of a virtual space. Utilizing different mixed-modal forms such as scenography, spatial sound and live performance can help engross the audience into the story world prior to the virtual experience. In addition, preceding the event, we can consider engaging the audience by providing a preview of the VR content via social media platforms viewed through mobile and computer devices to reach a mass audience. These storytelling devices provide several possibilities to assist in creating a well-executed immersive VR event. We can see that creating a strong virtual world is crucial and reinforcing it with the integration of the real world can help audience members be immersed, have presence, and be embodied into the virtual space. The addition of other forms of media into the mix, may help the artist-scholar integrate VR as a pre-supposition for a multi-modal platform for teaching filmmaking. These mixed-modal elements can help VR storytellers grasp preparation techniques and devise the content for a full comprehensive narrative story in the virtual space. The end goal is to provide a complete integrated and consolidated VR entertainment experience in which each medium applied in both reality and non-reality expresses to create its sole offering to the unfolding of the story.

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In the eye of the beholder:
Creating an immersive life drawing event

Billy Sy

Abstract

This is a performative narrative documenting a creative process of intersecting theatrical elements and visual art in a process of creating an immersive experience during a life drawing event. As a director, I articulate how, within a non-theatrical setting, I used various elements of performance making to convey the performativity of a life-drawing event. To support the reflection, I will supplement my writing with the necessary literature from theatre and performance studies.

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Life drawing workshop

Life drawing, or drawing from life, is the practice of drawing a living, breathing human being, live, in person, and in real time. Generally, when a live model is drawn from life in an academic classroom or art studio setting, it is known as a life drawing session (Legaspi, 2020, p. 8).

A life-drawing event is configured as an event that lasts from one to a couple of hours. At the beginning of a life drawing workshop, there are usually warm-up poses that last for 2–5 minutes each for artists to practise their eyes on the form and space and the materials they use through quick sketching. As the session progresses, poses last longer, up to 20 minutes or more for one pose. At the end of the workshop, there will usually be a sharing session where everyone looks at each other's works, discussing them if they wish to. Most life drawing workshops welcome people with all levels of experience.
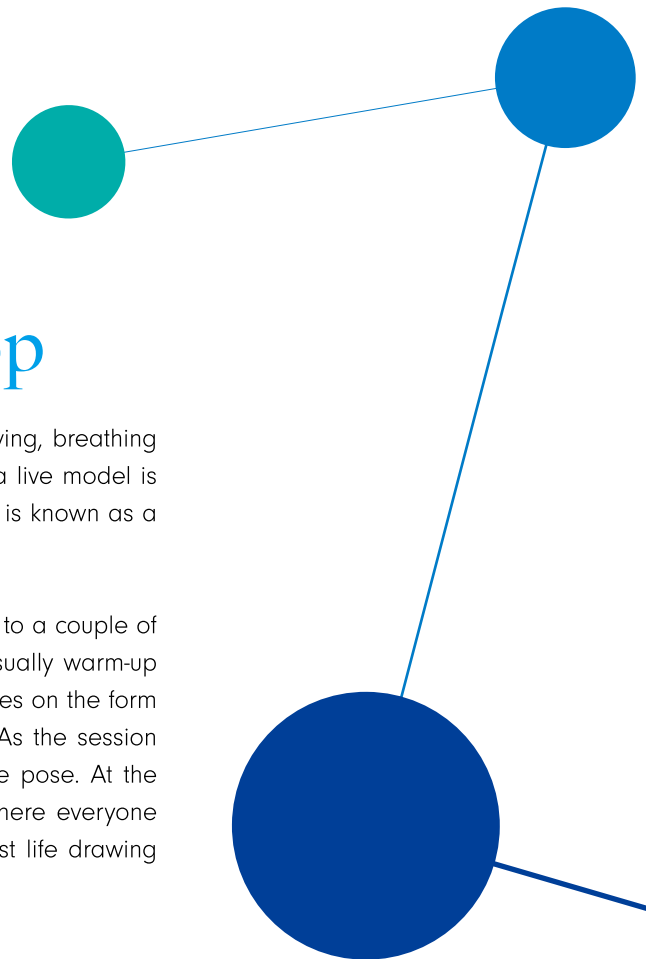
Can we try something new in life drawing?

The initial idea of creating a different life drawing experience came from a conversation I had with Ha Yat-Sing (referred to as Sing thereafter), an interior designer and painter with an architecture background who is the founder of NuDD (Nude, Drink & Draw), and organises regular life drawing events in Hong Kong. NuDD's events are unique because in addition to life-drawing, they also offer free-flow glasses of red and white wine.

Knowing about my theatre background with my experiences in movement and choreography, Sing invited me to brainstorm the possibility of choreographing poses for the models that could enhance the "exchange" between the models and drawers. He also told me about a possible collaboration with a local perfume brand, TOBBA. With wine already provided in the event, together with perfume and choreographed poses, the multi-sensorial and performative elements of the event would be enhanced. This led us to consider incorporating all five human senses in the event — sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch — to create an immersive experience. This conversation had led to me being the director of the event.

As a theatre practitioner, I am curious about how far the spectrum of theatre could go, and this project seemed to allow unique experimentation in this direction. Although this is not exactly a theatre performance, my theatrical experience would be a valuable resource. The ambiguity of the line distinguishing theatre and non-theatre, or whether a line exists at all, fascinates me. It raises the question — what is theatre? What does it entail?

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As a theatre practitioner, I am curious about how far the spectrum of theatre could go, and this project seemed to allow unique experimentation in this direction.
'

An immersive drawing experience

My collaboration in this life drawing event had blurred the boundaries between different artistic disciplines as they merged themselves in an immersive environment for both artists and participants. In this sense, the experiential and multi sensorial nature of the life-drawing event we envisioned was an immersive one. In theatre, the term immersive corresponds to a creation that not only includes a interdisciplinary approach to practice, but also has the participation of the audience as determinant of the event. According to Josephine Machon (2013), immersive theatre is an event that is composed of a plurality of practices and is not defined under a single genre that secures codes and conventions. She added that it:

> must establish a unique in-its-own-world-ness, which is created through a dexterous use of space, scenography, sound, duration within interdisciplinary (or hybridised) practice. Bodies are prioritised in this world; performing and perceiving bodies; the latter belonging to the individuals who make up the audience - a pivotal feature of this practice — whose direct insertion in and interaction with the world shapes the outcomes of the event (Machon, 2013, p. 278).

The event we envisioned matches the characteristics depicted by Machon where elements – space, scenography, sound, duration — merged with the presence and participation of the invitees (those who were drawing). Although we were not creating an immersive theatre project, the term is used to depict the space created to immerse the participants and make them feel they were in a "unique world", surrounded by a number of sensory stimulus.
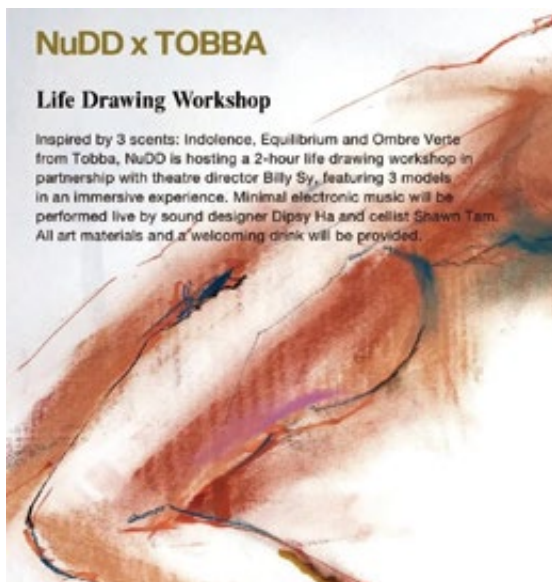
Below is the promotional image of our event:

Figure 1.

(source: NuDD Facebook page)[1]

Drawing references from performance art

The execution of this life drawing workshop echoes with what has been extensively known as "Performance Art". According to Roselee Golberg (2018), it is an art form that emerged in the early 20th century and flourished around the 1970s. Performance Art includes works that challenge artistic codes, viewing experiences, and audience participation, creating layers of codes and meanings, where the body is the medium or live action is involved. It "may be presented solo or within a group, with lighting, music or visuals made by the performance artist him or herself, or in collaboration, and performed in spaces ranging from art gallery or museum to an 'alternative space', a theatre, cafe, bar or street corner" (Goldberg, 2011, p. 8).

The artistic collaboration established by performance art artists was my main inspiration; in particular, the one by the visual arts. Robert Roshchenburg, the composer John Cage, and the dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham began their careers in the 1930s and 1940s and subsequently became prominent figures in the performance art and conceptual art scenes in the 20th century.

John Cage is best known for incorporating unconventional instrumentation and environmental music dictated by chance in his approach to composition (The Art Story, 2012). In contrast, Merce Cunningham also broke conventions and was inspired by nature, and in human body movements rather than formal dance, transforming pedestrian movements, like walking and kicking, into his choreography (The Art Story, 2019). Robert Rauschenberg later became their close collaborator designing costumes, lights, and sets for the productions of the Cunningham and Cage's works.

The partnerships among these three artists created many cross-media art practices, breaking down the divisions between the various realms of artistic disciplines such as music, performance, painting, and dance, strongly impacting the creative scene of that time. Sebaly (2011) highlighted that interdisciplinary practices as such provided a platform for artists to execute and experiment what they know in a new artistic setting and expanded their interest in other art forms through collaboration with others. The author added that collaboration such as the one of Cunningham and Rauschenberg (that resulted in more than 20 works) offer an important inspiration and starting point for future artists.

These three collaborating artists gave me valuable insights on what a "performance" could be. I extended my interest into the hybridisation of art forms executed in a live performative setting through the combination of my theatrical skills with the visual arts.

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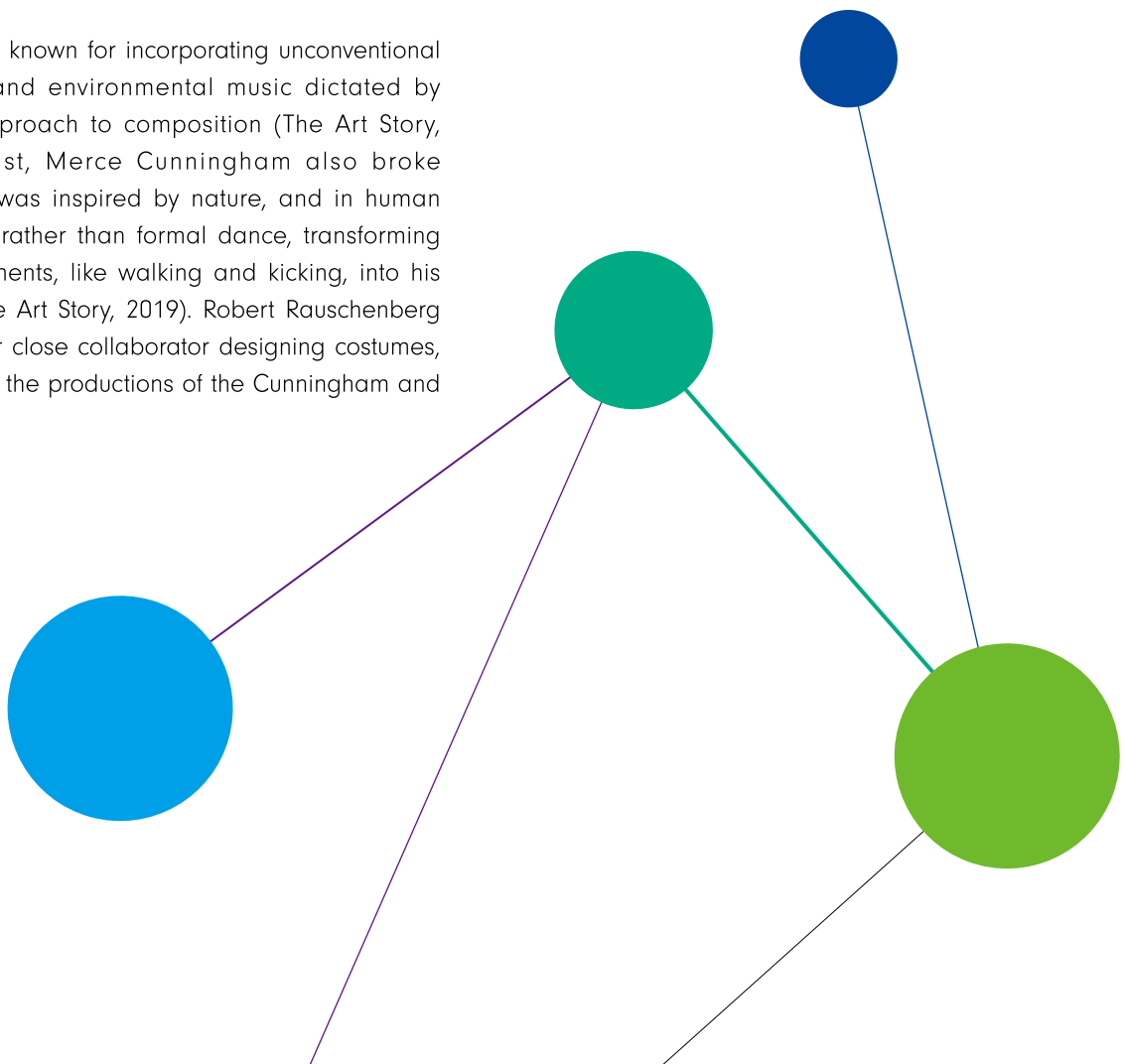
I extended my interest into the hybridisation of art forms executed in a live performative setting through the combination of my theatrical skills with the visual arts. ,,

They inspired me to consider how theatrical elements can be brought together in a life drawing event. Although we had an execution plan to lead our participants through a journey during our event, we also allowed space and chance for all the five senses to come together in the experience of each participant. Such combination of elements reminded me of how the works of Cage, Cunningham, and Rauschenberg, after working on their pieces, brought together different art disciplines in one space, as it is described by Goldberg (2011).

Our collaborators

To create the experiential life drawing event, apart from the collaboration established by myself, Sing, and Jasper Li (founder of TOBBA perfumes), we also collaborated with a sound designer, Dipsy Ha, a cellist, Shawn Tam, and six other performing artists who were modelling for our workshops (three models in each session).

Jasper Li brought samples of their fragrances from which we chose three — Indolence, Equilibrium, and Ombre Verte — serving as the starting point of our creation. Indolence embodies dusty, spicy, and sweet layers, which gave us a domestic feeling; the warmth and smoky scent in *Equilibrium* reminded us of memory, leather, and a vintage style; and the green and woody notes in *Ombre Verte* reminded us of the nature.

Figure 3. Tobba Parfumes (source: https://boonparis.com/tobba)[2]

To set up the life-drawing experience and the three thematic environments (or stations) for the participants, we brought together a range of elements that corresponded to each of the three fragrances from TOBBA. Inspired by the smell of the perfumes and the work of John Cage, our sound designer Dipsy decided to combine ambience sounds of the everyday's domestic elements with minimal electronic music and a cellist playing live. Sing was in charge of the layout of the space and the scenography. He designed three stations featuring different themes, with one model based on each station. I was responsible for the movement and choreography of the poses that echoed and interacted with the perfume and materials we found, and combining all the elements into the immersive experience.

> Inspired by the smell of the perfumes and the work of John Cage, our sound designer Dipsy decided to combine ambience sounds of the everyday's domestic elements with minimal electronic music and a cellist playing live.

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2 https://tobbaparfums.com/en-hk

Time frame

The event consisted of two sessions of two hours each, including a 10-minute break in the middle and a sharing session at the end. Sing, also being the time keeper, would announce the change of pose and how long the next pose would last. The most extended and final pose lasted for 20 minutes. It is essential to keep this time structure and progression of time in the poses as it dictates the technique for the drawings.

The table below shows the flow of the drawing process and how we allocated the time in relation to the performative elements:

Table 1. Outline of the Event:

Time	No. of Poses	Duration of each pose	Performing Content	Music	Remarks
1500-1510	N/A	N/A	N/A	Soho House Music	Announcement to kick off. Model standing by in cloakroom
1510-1525	6	2 mins with 30sec transition between poses	Interact with furniture and objects, focus on the sense of smell	Cello to play 30sec during transitions	Put the objects down for the end pose
1525-1540	3	5 mins	Poses without using objects, focus on the sense of touch. 2 body parts need to be in contact with high intensity	Cello will signal change of pose	Embodiment of the experience after the sense of smell
1540-1555	1	15 minutes	Use the furniture to support the body in the most comfortable position	Cello will start playing solo during the pose	Indulge in the music
1555-1605	N/A	N/A	N/A	Soho House Music	Reset the objects. Models in cloakroom
1605-1608	N/A	N/A	N/A	Cellist enters and go to the center for solo. When models are in place, he travels to the 2nd spot.	Models return to the stations at 16:07 while music is playing
1608-1620	2	5 mins	Interact with the new setting with quirky poses while cellist is playing	Cellist will travel to the 3rd spot between 2 poses	Models change to a different pose when music stops
1620-1640	1	20 mins	Use 1 min to move out of the current station in slow motion, and use a pose to show they are eager to connect with either an object or a model	Dipsy & Shawn interact	N/A

The space and setting

We held our event at the House Studio at Soho House Hong Kong. Situated in Sheung Wan, a 230 sq-metre open-plan space with a high ceiling featuring a shiny concrete floor, glass wall windows, white walls and conventional interior lighting. The space was a big rectangular hall with a "blank" yet stylish design. Since it did not suggest any specific characteristics nor historical information — like many sites chosen specifically for immersive theatre, it opened up many possibilities for us in terms of the content we wish put in it.

Figure 4. Layout of chairs and easels before the NuDD x TOBBA Life Drawing Workshop at House Studio, Soho House Hong Kong (source: NuDD Facebook page) (Image by Ha Yat-Sing)

We set up three stations at the various corners of the space based on the spatial dimensions of the room. Two tables were placed at different corners with a range of drawing materials, easels were pre-set in the room, and we set the free-flow red and white wines and water at another table for self-service. The way we set up the space invited our participants to sit around the three stations. Below is the draft of our floor plan where numbers to 3 are the locations for our three stations:
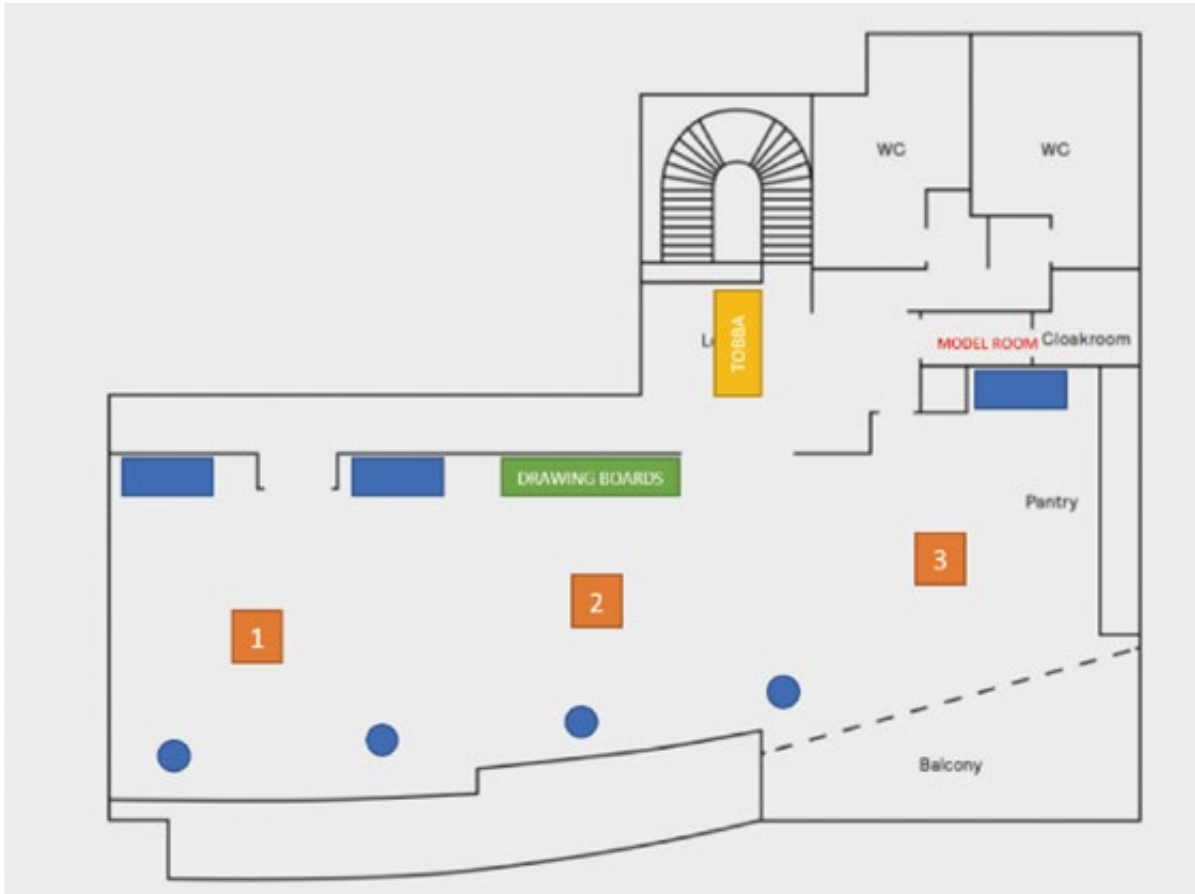
Figure 5. Draft Layout
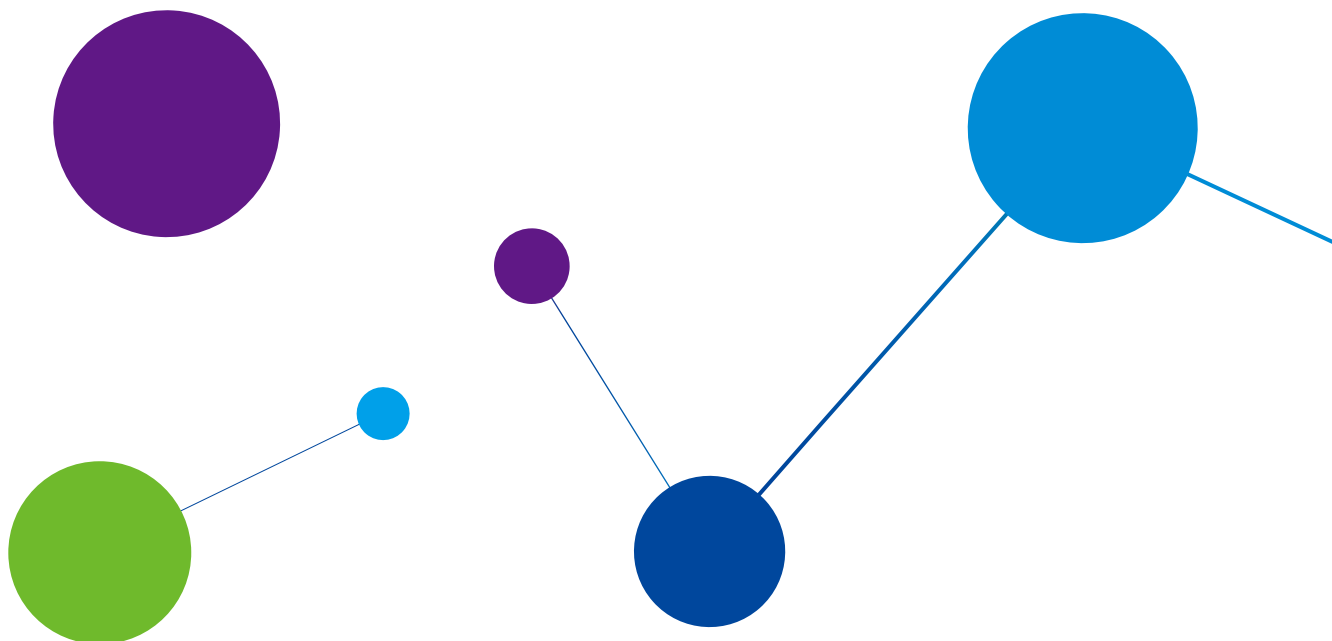
Stations, perfumes, and objects

Having set the theme and the related perfume for each station, we thought of a scenography for each one, composed of a selection of objects. (see table 2 below). To bring in the element of smell, we placed the related perfume bottle in each station as part of their scenography. The perfume was sprayed on the objects at the stations before each of the sessions.

The table below shows the content of each station:

Table 2. Each station with its perfume as its theme and the objects used for scenography

Station	Perfume	Objects
1	Indolence	White shirt, white hanger, simple wooden chair (domestic)
2	Equilibrium	Vintage luggage/briefcase, newspaper, Leather club chair
3	Ombre Verte	Big dried leaf, wooden branches, rattan chair

Figure 6.
Found objects for our stations (Images by Billy Sy)
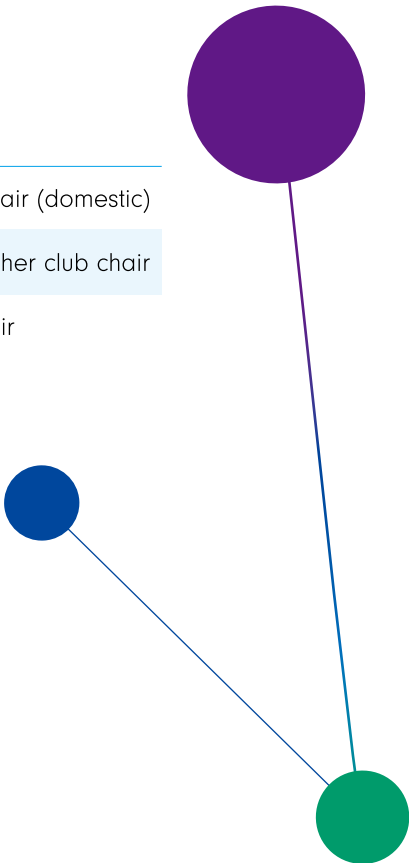
Sound and music

As shown in Table 1, Shawn Tam played the cello in different spots in the room at designated times. Our sound designer, Dipsy Ha, stayed at a designated station to play and mix with Tam's music. Apart from playing minimal electronic music through the sound system in the room, Ha also pre-recorded some ambient sound inspired by the characteristics of the perfumes; these were played through two different speakers placed at various spots in the room before the drawing experience began. We designated three spots in the room for Tam to play his cello whereas Ha stayed at his station throughout the whole experience, playing electronic music intermittently with various intensities. Sometimes the music from the cello or the electronic music were the only source of sound in the room, other times the two of them existed together, synchronising with each other. For example, during the last 20-minute pose, Ha and Tam would interact with each other through improvisation.

The reason we had Tam playing the cello at different spots and presented sound and music from different source and intensity was to let the participants to experience different aural sensation. For example, some might hear the pre-recorded ambient sound louder than others, and some might hear the cello playing louder near them at some point others might feel that the sound is further away.

Body, movement, and choreography

The movement and poses for the models were loosely choreographed, leaving room for them to improvise and interact with the objects they had. From my perspective, the nakedness of the human body and its five senses both represent a raw and primal nature of human beings, which embodies the notion of purity, unbiasedness and an openness to perceive. In my choreography, I focus on how the models use their body and their five senses to receive, perceive and explore the objects and environment around them and finally, connect with each other. As shown on Table 1 above, I gave an action guideline for each set of movements under the "Performing Content" column. I pointed out how to make poses related to the five senses so that the poses performed by the three models were coherent throughout the experience. All poses were performed within the "zone" of each station except for the last 20-minute pose which the models were asked to create a pose that signified a connection with the other two models and they could reach out of the "zone" of the station they were in.

On the day

On the day of the event, the preparation started three hours in advance. While briefing the models, we also arranged the easels, constructing the set for each station; finding the perfect spots to place our speakers for ambience and how we laid out the wine table and drawing materials. Every detail was important as it affected the interactivity, sensory exploration, and audience participation in the event.

Figure 7.

Cellist Shawn Tam playing *Benjamin Britten Cello Suite No. 3, Op. 87 (for solo cello)* in the life drawing workshop.

Above right: participants drawing in the event.

(source: NuDD Facebook page) (Images by Ha Yat-sing)

When the theatrical elements encountered each other — some by chance and some were more pre-determined — we created a sensory, experiential, focused, and yet relaxing atmosphere, and at some point, provocative. Without spoken words, there was a journey; a flow embodied in the experience. The following comment from one of our participants showed how the sensory elements and the environment we created worked together and made an impact on her experience:

"I think having theatrical elements in the event was an interesting concept. I fell into the mood very quickly. With the models' movements and transformation of their bodies, it was as if there was a story linking from one scenario to another. Things like smell and music, triggered me to think about some events that had happened, or they created an atmosphere that made me have certain feelings about it. Those feelings would manifest in our works."

Mary, a participant

Our producer and scenographer, who also participated in drawing, mentioned how the music affected his drawing in his experience:

"The music really affected my concentration. For example, the repetition and intensity in the music affected my level of concentration to observe the human beings whom I see."

Sing. Producer, scenographer, and painter

The setting we arranged and created, provided autonomy for the participants to experience the journey. Once they entered the room, they could choose a spot they would like to draw at, select the materials they wanted to use and, if they would like to drink. Throughout the drawing process, they were encouraged to move around the space to pick the best spots for their drawings. Their location would affect how they received the signs and stimuli on different sensory levels. After all the drawing parts were finished, we encouraged everyone to choose two to three of their favourite works to put on the floor for everyone to see. Participants could chat with each other and the models, sharing others' works over a glass of wine.

Beyond experiencing the multi-sensory environment provided by the immersive experience, the participants were also transforming what they saw into their drawings and sharing them with each other. This established a sense of "community" and "a platform for self-expression" that brought people together — art and community — in one place for creativity and self-expression. Sing had the following reflection after the event:

"I think the event also helped those participants who had less drawing experience. Many people would resist the idea of drawing because of the judgements they put on themselves that they don't draw the subjects as alike or as real as others. But when we shift the focus on emotions and expressions, the participants would have less concern about the skills they have, and they would feel that there are other layers to feel and think. It's become less about technical skills and more about how they express themselves."

Sing. Producer, scenographer, and painter

Figure 9.

Some of the works shared by the participants

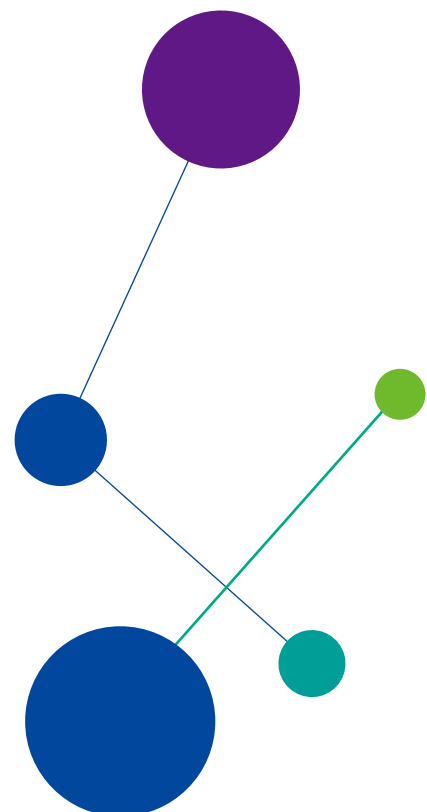(source: NuDD Facebook page. Image by Ha Yat-sing)

On audience

My experience in creating an immersive life drawing event revealed that a presentation of an artwork or performance is an "occasion" and a "social event" that can bring people together. Our life drawing events, for example, were collective experiences where the creative team and participants co-produced the event. The immersive environment created triggered our participants' imagination to transform what they experienced into another art form. This could bring awareness of the details in life that we might have taken for granted, making us see the life differently.

Also, an artwork cannot be completed without an audience. Olafur Eliasson, an acclaimed artist known for his sensory-rich immersive installation art, identified the viewer as indispensable for completing his art. (Beccaria, 2013) In the book *Olafur Eliasson* (2013), the author Marcella Beccaria wrote about Eliasson's work *Beauty* (1993) and explained how it exists as a work of art only when it is actively perceived: "In the installation, a fine shower of water, a projector and a viewer's eye create the optical phenomenon of an indoor rainbow. Beauty can be seen only from a certain position in the space. Otherwise, there is no artwork, just water falling from the ceiling" (Beccaria, 2013, p. 17).

Apart from the viewer's position that determines the perception of the rainbow in the artwork, "there is also the involvement of other senses, which make it possible to experience the work by inhaling the smell of the water, feeling its refreshing presence on one's skin, and listening to its soft sound" (Beccaria, 2013, p. 20). The above descriptions of the work clearly shows that Beauty as a piece of art was senses-focused, and it required physical action taken by the audience, leaving them choices on how actively they want to participate in the artwork.

Figure 11. *Beauty* (1993) by Olafur Eliasson. Tate Modern, London. Photo: Anders Sune Berg
(source: https://www.therisingspace.co.uk/blog/beauty-olafur-eliasson)

Eliasson's work is a fine example on incorporating "senses", "audience autonomy", "audience participation", "immersive-ness" and "perception" in an art work. Most importantly, it was "performative". Although different in nature, all the elements mentioned above were incorporated in our life drawing event. Eliasson's work inspired me on how the interactivity of the senses and creative elements would be purpose-less if the audience (in our case, our event's participants) does not actively participate in the work.

Conclusion

My journey in researching Performance Art and Visual Art expanded my curiosity on the domain of practice in theatrical arts. It increased my interest in cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary practice, especially in visual art. I learned from creating an immersive life-drawing event that theatre can happen in many places other than theatre venues. As the proverb says, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" – this proved true in the case of Eliasson's work and the way our participants transformed what they saw in their drawings. From this practice, however, beauty can also be seen from a different angle that, beyond its artistic value, theatre, as well as other art forms, has the potential to embody community-based social values.

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In the eye of the beholder:
Creating an immersive life drawing event

Student
Contributions
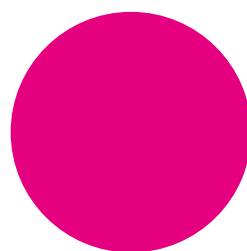
表演者的觀點與角度
如何影響角色演繹
The influence of the
performers' viewpoints
and perspectives on the
interpretation of the characters

Au Kai-faat

摘要

本文將以作者的自身學習經驗作反思，探討表演者的觀點與角度對最終在舞台上呈現的角色產生的影響。第一部分會集中研究演員在訓練過程中需要釐清的概念，第二部分會以作者的畢業作《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》為例，闡述在執行上演員的觀點所產生的影響。從這裡作者反思自身的成長與突破並非單靠技巧及理論，而是從表演者釐清自己對事物的看法。

Abstract

This article reflects on the author's own learning experience, and explores how the perspective of the performer will affect the role that is finally presented on the stage. The first part focuses on the concepts that actors need to clarify during the training process, and the second part employs the author's graduation work "Antigone on the beach" to illustrate the impact of actors' perspectives on his performance. From here, the author reflects on his own growth and breakthrough not relying solely on skills and theories, but clarifying his experience from the performer's perspective.

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前言

表演者的成長與突破並非單靠技巧及理論，而是靠表演者釐清自己對事物的看法。本文將以自身的學習經驗作反思，探討表演者的觀點與角度對最終在舞台上呈現的角色產生的影響。第一部分會集中研究演員在訓練過程中需要釐清的概念，第二部分會以畢業作《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》（以下簡稱《海》）為例子，闡述在執行上演員的觀點所產生的影響。

對演戲的概念

坦然承認自己

《表演力》一書中經常提及找出角色的動機，並透過戲劇行動呈現出來（伊萬娜．查伯克，2019）。但在一、二年級的學習中，發現自己會過分刻意地表現角色的動機及行動而時常碰壁。這個問題源於自己太在意別人對自己演技的看法，並不自覺地在表演中過分解釋自己的行動，希望證明自己有下苦功。然而，在演出的當下我所呈現的動機只是「證明自己表演的能力」，並非角色真正的動機。當表演者意識到自己的想法太自我，必須坦然承認才有機會向前行，否則會落入自欺欺人的困局。

資料蒐集

排練前首先需要的準備工作就是資料蒐集，這離不開劇本主題、時代背景、劇作家生平等等。在求學階段，自己常犯的毛病就是單純地記著這些硬性資料，卻對自己的演出毫無幫助。資料蒐集最重要的並非是資訊量，而是能深入地進入劇本的世界。當對劇本的了解去到一定深度後，我會叩問自己的生命課題、思考自己的存在意義，開始與作品對話，劇作家的想法、導演的想法與自己的想法不斷在碰撞。經過不斷反思及自我對話的演出，能反映出自己在那個人生階段的想法和選擇。

與觀眾的關係

《從貧窮劇場到藝乘：薪傳葛羅托斯基》所著重的是表演者進入某種狀態的研究（鍾明德，2007），閱讀過程中我不斷反思演戲是為了自己，還是為了觀眾。現階段我所享受的是在探索戲劇的過程中探索自己內在和外在的世界，但是當排練過程已能體驗這些自我探索，正式演出則彷彿顯得不重要。同時我發覺自己也有很強烈的慾望想與人分享、想被聆聽、想被理解、以及想與他人產生共鳴。正如有些人在經歷生活重大轉變後，想找朋友到酒吧喝酒訴苦，都是渴求著被聆聽、想其他人能肯定自己的感受。「為自己」或是「為觀眾」，似乎不是二元對立，兩者同樣重要，沒有一同喝酒的朋友，再多生活體驗也無對象可分享；沒有自身經歷，再多喝酒的朋友，也無話可說。當確立清楚自己與觀眾的關係，在表演時則能更開放地接收觀眾、對手與自己內在的能量。

> 經過不斷反思及自我對話的演出，能反映出自己在那個人生階段的想法和選擇。

形式與真實感

不同的戲劇形式所指的真實感也有所不同：在較為寫實的形式當中，演員與角色需要盡量走近才能找到真實感；而在較為抽象的形式當中，未必有故事情節、角色，自己作為演員所捕捉的真實感是來自當下的感受、覺察（圖 1）。如果只信奉某一種真實感為真理，那演員的藝術視野也會變得狹窄。演員必須打開自己去接觸不同形式的戲劇，豐富自己的戲劇知識，才能在適當的情景中以適當的語言與觀眾溝通。不論任何形式，演員在舞台上的表達方式都是透過身體及聲線 — 如果能自由地控制身體和聲線，就能配合不同的戲劇形式，亦有更大自由度去選擇如何呈現自己的感受。

對外在環境的看法

如何思考自身與世界的關係會影響一個演員如何看待事物，更會反映在演員的表演上。生命從何而來？一個平凡的都市人甚少會突然思考自己的生命是由甚麼組成，但我在思考的過程中突然醒悟，生命中許多事物並非理所當然，令我以抽離的角度回望身處的環境。在香港的教育制度下成長，自然會將社會所灌輸的一切當作是必然的定律。為何我會將這些價值觀當作是絕對的標準？疏理清楚自己的看法，在表演上自然不再追求標準答案，反而去思考更多背後的原因。透過由宏觀至微觀以不同的角度觀看自己，重新發現在社會中身處的位置、自己所擁護的價值、信念。確立自己三觀後，看劇本的時候不再是立即構思如何飾演角色，而是先去理解劇作家的想法、角色的想法，自己與角色的異同等等。

圖 1：《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》尾聲。

> "演員必須打開自己去接觸不同形式的戲劇，豐富自己的戲劇知識，才能在適當的情景中以適當的語言與觀眾溝通。"

從觀點角度到執行

陳淑儀老師經常教導學生「透過劇場去說故事」（HKAPA Official, 2021）。當演員充分掌握劇本的主題、觀點，找到自己與劇本的關係，則能在導演的方向下訂立一個立場，此立場可以決定每一場戲的重點，亦能分析到角色的立場及其在劇本中所發揮的作用。演員可以從最微少的單位去逐步建構、累積，以至能完成整個故事。以《海》為例，我的切入點是「克里昂作為國家的領導人，但他是虛偽、獨裁、好色、孩子氣、孤獨，而我們身處的世界也正正是由這樣的人所領導」。在排練時自然按著此角度不斷嘗試找最合適的方式去表達我想呈現的信息，選擇的空間可以大至每一場嘲諷克里昂的方式（圖2及圖3），亦可以微細至每一個身體動作和呼吸。

呼吸、聲線和身體控制是演員技藝（craft）的一部分，我會稱這些技藝是演員與觀眾之間的溝通橋樑。假如沒有足夠的表達能力，觀眾也無法理解我的經歷。相反，如果能表達得精準，觀眾可以想像到我經歷了甚麼，甚至可以令他們回想自己類似的經歷，那麼雙方就能產生共鳴。另外，運用身體的技巧也不單是為了觀眾，在排練《海》的過程中，我參考了《酒神的回歸》的訓練方法（狄奧多羅斯 • 特爾左布勒斯，2018），探索不同的形體動作給予演員的感受（圖4），如果在當下有足夠的敏感度，演員就能同時感受到對手、自己的身體和內心感受的能量在互相影響，從而達至身心合一。

在《海》的排練中，我的其中一個發現是演員意識和角色意識是可以同時存在的 — 以前總覺得兩者是二元對立的關係。最深刻是在安蒂岡妮步入墳墓的一幕，我察覺到自己同時存在演員和角色兩層意識去聆聽，當刻我容許它們並列前行同時又互相影響。在演員的層面，我感受到安蒂岡妮從內心發出的吶喊，她的一字一句彷彿替我道出自己面對的不公義，作為演員打從心底同情她。然而，作為克里昂，將她送入墳墓是我的決定，已經不可能讓步。在那個當下，演員層面很湧動，但我必須做好克里昂才能說好這個故事，所以我同時抗衡著這個湧動，而這個抗衡的能量就變成克里昂更強硬的打壓（圖5）。這種狀態並不如演員技藝般可以自行訓練，而是需要建立在與對手的契合度之上，亦反映著自己對舞台上每一位演員的信任和了解。

回望及展望

經過在香港演藝學院戲劇學院的四年學習後，我找到自己作為表演者喜愛表演的體會和心得，對於戲劇的感覺比以前更簡單直接。以前不太敢承認自己其實是很享受掌聲、讚美，因為這樣可能顯得很低俗。但當我願意承認自己後，我在戲劇中找到另一樣令我更享受的，就是可以表達的幸福，感受到觀眾的共鳴時，我就體驗到藝術的感染力。我期望在未來的路上，不再執著於證明自己的價值，而是持續認識不同的形式、美學，訓練自己的技藝，從而發展出自己的美學。

圖2：在《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》中，飾演克里昂。

圖3：在《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》中，飾演克里昂。
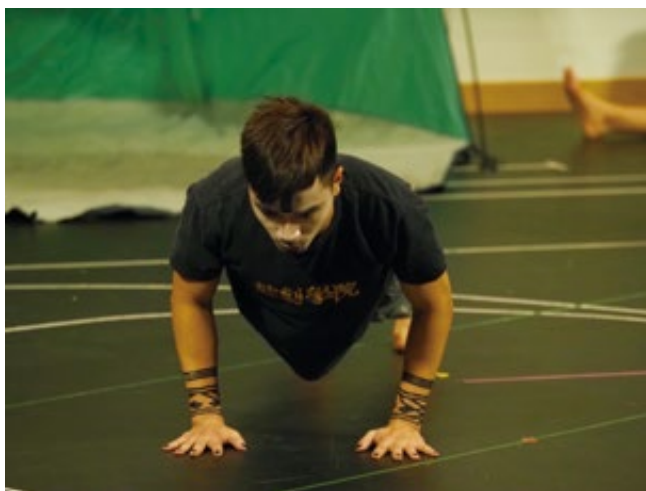
圖4：《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》開場前熱身。

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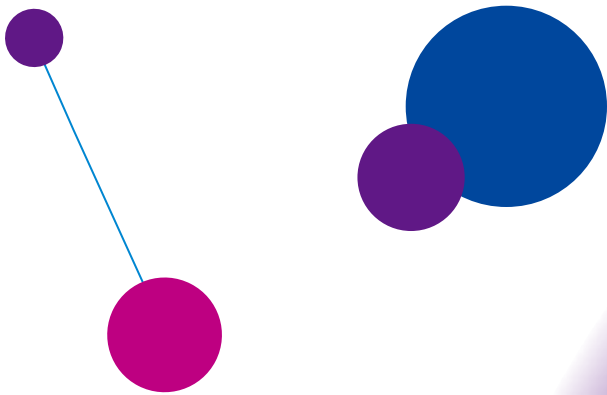
圖 5：在《海灘上的安蒂岡妮》中，飾演克里昂。

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表演者的觀點與角度如何影響角色演繹
The influence of the performers'
viewpoints and perspectives
on the interpretation of the characters

Company-Ready! A reflective essay on the Akram Khan internship experience

Jed Nhiko C Nagales & Natalie Ko Ka-man

Abstract

This reflective essay focuses on the Akram Khan Company internship experience of eight graduating students from the School of Dance of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts that took place in early 2022. The essay includes the pre-internship preparation, highlights of the experience, and learning outcomes. It will discuss how internship programmes benefit graduating students, especially in preparing them for their professional careers. It will elaborate on the impact of this experience on their artistry, determination, mind-sets, and other factors that will make them "company ready". The essay reflects on dancers' perspectives and how their career goals have been impacted by this internship experience.

Introduction

The Akram Khan Company (AKC) is a well-known dance company that has been touring around the United Kingdom and the world since 2002 (Akram Khan Company, 2021). It was founded by dancer-choreographer Akram Khan, whose productions have received tremendous acclaim and garnered numerous awards worldwide. The *Jungle Book Reimagined* is a new work of the Company, premiered in April 2022 (Jungle Book Reimagined, 2021).

AKC auditioned dancers across Europe and Asia for this production. Eight graduating students from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts were selected and participated as interns between 31 January 31 and 21 February, and 7–20 March, 2022. According to the agreement with the School of Dance, two of the selected interns would further engage in the production residency at Curve Leicester from 21 March to 9 April, 2022, and in possible upcoming projects of the AKC.

The professional internship activity in the School of Dance's curriculum is a part of the School's career prospectus (n.d.). The aim of this activity is to enable graduates to be employed by professional dance companies, and establish themselves as professional performers, dance teachers, or continue their education at master's level.

This essay documents how the AKC internship molded and inspired the students and will elaborate on other experiences of this programme.

The first phase

The journey to the internship began with auditions held at HKAPA via Zoom for all Year 4 students who were interested to be a part of this experience. The intensive 3-day process began with introductions, ballet and contemporary technique classes, and improvisations based on the Jungle Book repertoire. A few students were eliminated at the end of each day and eight dancers were selected after the 3-day process: Natalie Ko, Jennifer Tai, Jan Mika Villanueva, Yeung Sin Kiu, Jed Nagales, Felix Chun, Bryan Yam, and Yan Sung Hei. It was a nerve-wrecking and painful process especially for those who were not successful, but everyone has given it their best and has learnt a lot from the process.

Below is a comparison between the Company's rehearsal schedule and the timetable of Year 4 Dance BFA students. Although this was not terrifying in terms of hours of commitment, we knew the actual process was going to be intense!

Table 1. A comparison between HKAPA Year 4 BFA students' timetable and the Company's schedule.

Timetable of Year 4 BFA students at HKAPA

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

9:00–12:15	2 Technique classes
13:15–15:45	Mon: Rehearsal Wed: Improvisation Fri: Break
16:00–18:30	Mon: Off Wed & Fri: Rehearsal

Tuesday

10:45–12:15	1 Technique class
13:30–15:00	Contextual Studies

Thursday

13:15–15:15	Contextual Studies
15:45–17:15	1 Technique class

Company Schedule for Jungle Book Reimaged

Monday to Friday

11:00–12:15	Ballet / Contemporary Class
12:30–14:30	Rehearsal
15:30–18:00	Rehearsal

The internship began at HKAPA via Zoom, as travel was not feasible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The School of Dance reduced the regular school-based workload from 12 hours to 7.5 hours per week to facilitate the internship. It was challenging to learn movement material this way but thankfully, the experience of online learning at HKAPA has prepared us to a certain degree. Nevertheless, the movement vocabulary was unfamiliar at first and the process was long and arduous. At HKAPA, School of Dance productions are generally rehearsed for 7.5 hours a week, while the AKC rehearsal schedule stretches over 22.5 hours per week! Thus, we had to adapt to the more strenuous training schedule and the intensity; due to the time difference, this went on until the early hours of the morning. However, we soldiered on.

Table 2. Working hours of the two dance organisations.
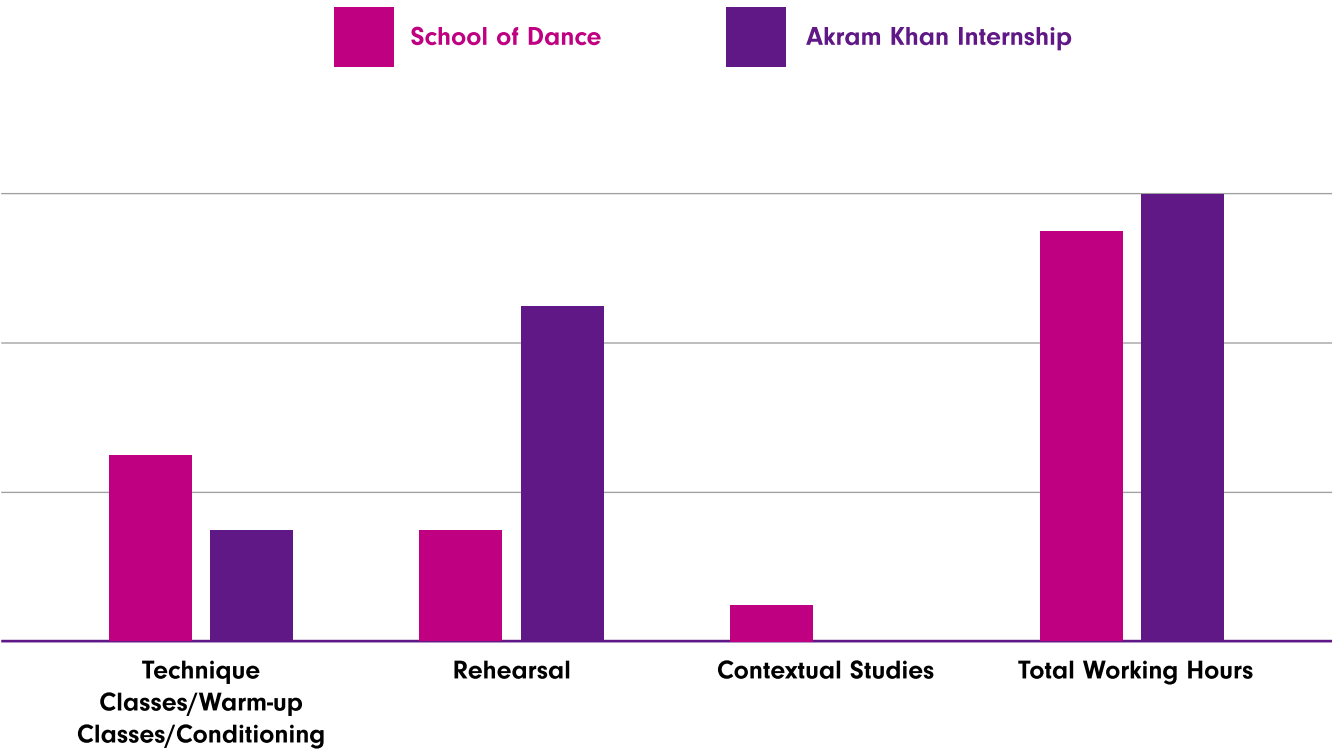
The internship experience

We were finally able to fly to London, UK on 13 February, 2022, and immediately proceeded to participate in the in-person programme. For many of us, it was the first experience of going on a long-haul flight and going to the UK. Upon arrival, we had to quickly adapt to the cold weather, language, travel, the taste of new dishes, and the spacious lodgings. It was very exciting!

We were there on a mission and threw ourselves headlong into the rehearsal process which was held at the English National Ballet studios. It was hard work because the focus was on the cast, and the interns were expected to learn the material quickly (The Making of Jungle Book, 2012). Instantly, we realised that there were stark differences in the way the interns and the AKC dancers communicated. When both groups were unclear about certain movements or choreography, the interns primarily relied on each other, while the company dancers approached the rehearsal director. AKC encourages the dancers to ask questions the moment they encounter problems during rehearsals. The rehearsal directors respond, understand, and try to solve these challenges promptly. The interns agreed that this habit had been cultivated from our years at HKAPA where we generally would not want to disrupt the choreographers and were self-conscious to publicly admit our weaknesses. It was difficult to overcome our fears, but it has been an important lesson to learn. We realised that asking questions showed great commitment and boosted everyone's confidence and trust in each other (Perlshtein, 2017). We learnt that in a dance company, it is vital to be proactive and work efficiently. Communication is essential to expedite the process and avoid misinterpretations. Openness and honesty cultivated efficiency and active learning, and motivated teamwork. We reflected that this could possibly be due to cultural differences and also a result of the different education systems. This was a great lesson to learn to build a healthy professional working environment.

Akram Khan and his rehearsal directors never failed to have reflection sessions before they began each rehearsal. As a result, every rehearsal has been productive and had clear directions. This taught the interns to articulate and analyse each day's work diligently. This assisted in improving their engagement in rehearsals. Eventually, from the eight interns, Mika and Bryan were chosen to continue to Leicester while the remaining six returned to Hong Kong. Mika was later offered a two-year contract with the company!

> ' Communication is essential to expedite the process and avoid misinterpretations. Openness and honesty cultivated efficiency and active learning, and motivated teamwork. '

Observations and reflections

This internship had a massive impact on our experience and career goals. Initially, some interns were not interested in working in a full-time dance company but would rather work as independent artists, or even move into other areas of work. The main reason was that they lacked confidence. However, once we experienced five weeks of face-to-face training, we were all inspired to work even harder. Our passion to become full-time professionals was fuelled by this internship experience.

The eight students who participated in the internship were from different dance specialisations of the Academy's School of Dance — five from the major in Contemporary Dance, two from Classical Ballet, and one from Chinese Dance. Several characteristics can be observed regarding our respective majors and training:

a. The AKC uses ballet and Cunningham technique as their regular warm-up. As the Contemporary Dance and Classical Ballet interns have regular ballet training at the School, most of the interns performed well and the Ballet intern excelled.

b. The Contemporary Dance interns were trained in Cunningham technique, as well as improvisation, choreography, basic popping technique, and floor work exercises and thus shined in these sections.

c. The Indian classical movement vocabulary at AKC held some similarities with Chinese Classical Dance such as the *Xiao Wu Hua* and *Feng Huo Lun* and thus, well adapted to by the Chinese Dance intern.

Here we understood the value and importance of diversity in training to prepare students for the demanding world of professional dance. However, we observed that our physical strength and stamina were inadequate in comparison to the Company's dancers. Some of us experienced severe leg cramps, shortage of breath, and difficulty in focusing. We realised the importance of hydration, proper nutrition, stretching during warm-ups, understanding individual body's needs, and most importantly to also keep the mind resilient (Angoi et al, 2009; Bonner et al, 2016).

Jewels of wisdom from the directors

The movement language and choreography of *Jungle Book Reimaged* relied on synchronicity accompanied by intricate musical structures. The counting patterns, rhythms, and speeds are designed meticulously unlike what we were used to at HKAPA, which were the usual steady "8 counts in dance" (two bars of 4/4 time). Everyone was expected to understand these structures fully and rehearse until they moved as one body. We were amazed how the directors indicated that dancers should not be too obsessed with counts that would make the dance robotic, losing the natural dynamics in the music and dance. Instead, we were advised to sing the counts along with the musical arrangement, merging the metronomic details with emotions and sensations present in the music.

We were mesmerised to hear Akram Khan, the Director and Mavin Khoo, the rehearsal director saying that the "theatre is a sacred place for both dancers and audience and the audience lends their time to receive the message on the stage" (Khan & Khoo, Studio rehearsal, 2022, March 4). For the performers, it can sometimes be mentally challenging to be constantly reminded of how things could be done better, such as attending to tiny details and meeting expectations. However, we understand that it is a part of being a professional in the field. All dancers were encouraged never to lose their authenticity as well as to remember the reason we began dancing. Dance felt like a spiritual experience and nurtured by not only teachers but our families and loved ones. Both Khan and Khoo emphasised that pain and tiredness were part of the process in pursuing dance — pushing our physical limits and surrendering ourselves in dance.

' For the performers, it can sometimes be mentally challenging to be constantly reminded of how things could be done better, such as attending to tiny details and meeting expectations. '

Conclusion

In conclusion, the internship experience at the AKC arouse important learnings. We interns discovered the importance of building a trustworthy and committed team as a vital foundation for a motivated and rewarding working ecology. Such team is built through professionalism, communication, constant reflection, and critical thinking that enhance and stimulate creativity and productivity both within and outside the studio. While being encouraged to analyse our strengths and shortcomings triggered by the new environment, we were stimulated to share our thoughts and feelings more openly, and to express ourselves honestly. We learned that it was important to believe in ourselves (Zar, 2014). We grew to trust and treasure each other as students from HKAPA. We constantly reminded ourselves that we would be conservatoire graduates by October 2022, and that made our daily rehearsals, and repertoire performances so precious and meaningful.

Other valuable outcomes from this experience were:

a. Good time management and discipline are vital in making the dancer's journey safe, more productive, and better prepared for any aspect of their career path.

b. Heightened accountability during the COVID-19 pandemic could save the entire team from the potential cancellations. This includes honesty with regard to rapid test results every other day. It was essential to be responsible and considerate with others' wellbeing.

c. Honesty about physical and mental conditions in every rehearsal helps save time for the directors and is also vital to build trust among the cast.

Undoubtedly, the AKC internship was not a normal additional training for the students of HKAPA but a huge opportunity, source of inspiration, connections, and a lifetime of learning. We are very grateful for the opportunity for having this professional experience and to all who contributed to make it happen.

Figure 1. Image courtesy of authors

' While being encouraged to analyse our strengths and shortcomings triggered by the new environment, we were stimulated to share our thoughts and feelings more openly, and to express ourselves honestly. '

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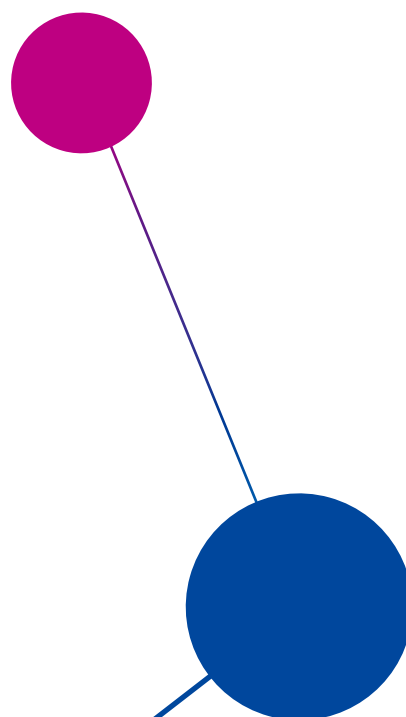
Company-Ready! A reflective essay
on the Akram Khan internship experience

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A retrospective reflection of a student dramaturg's encounter with practice in a play's production

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Abstract

This article aims to reveal the ways in which a student dramaturg practices his profession in a production of a short play, and the tacit knowledge he gained from this experience.

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09

Introduction

As a master's student of dramaturgy, I had the opportunity to practice dramaturgy in a production that entered the Emerging Theatre Artist's Competition at the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in mainland China. To enter the competition, the requirements were for the piece to be thirty minutes long and be based on three keywords provided by the organisers: bread, trees, and the past (Wuzhen Theatre Festival, 2021). In addition, the performances had to present using minimal set (i.e., a table and two chairs), simple props, and basic theatrical lighting and sound. Each group performed their work three times in front of the judges and public audience during the competition week in an indoor theatre in Wuzhen.

A student playwright from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts initiated this production by writing a short new play for the competition. She then invited other students from the Academy to join. Our team is comprised of a playwright, two directors, a dramaturg, and a stage manager. The two directors were also performers in this production. Our play, performed in Cantonese, was about a middle-aged wife coping with her dementia-suffering husband, who mistook her for another woman from his youth (Yu, 2021). I perceived that this was an excellent opportunity to gain practical experience as a production dramaturg.
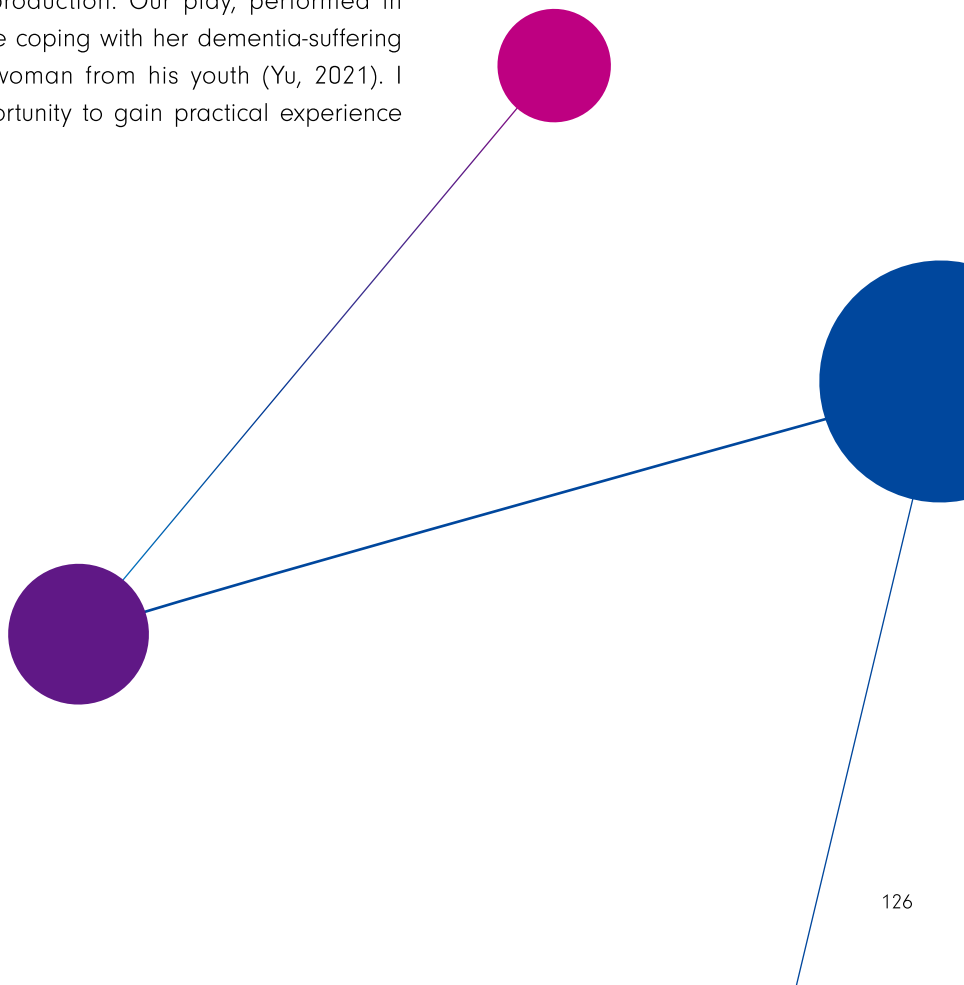
The role of a dramaturg varies in each production, in their skillset, and in the dynamics of the artistic team. Although there are depictions of the role as supporting directors or playwrights who structure the dramatic composition and shape the theatrical representations of a work, it is difficult to clearly define what a production dramaturg does. For example, Rafalowicz (1978) described her work as having "dialogues with the director and the writer", and "asking questions and finding doubts" (p. 27). Bly (1996) concluded that a dramaturg questions. Even though there are handbooks, such as the *Handbook for Student Dramaturgs* (Romanska, 2015), that offer a step-by-step guide, these are unable to cover the range of activities that a production dramaturg does. Whilst these guides may be applicable to some productions, often they do not cover all range of performances. As a student of dramaturgy with limited experience in theatre-making, I could only combine the knowledge available in the literature with my own practice and devise an authorial way of applying dramaturgical practices.

To uncover the knowledge gained through this opportunity, I adopted Donald Schön's (1983) model of reflection. Throughout the production, I kept a record of the problems encountered, my dramaturgical interventions and the results of these actions. After the competition, I reviewed the recording as well as my notes and performed a retrospective reflection on what had I learnt and how my dramaturgical involvement in the process contributed to the production at large. In this paper, I attempt to verbalise the "knowing-in-action" gained from practising dramaturgy in the play's production and give some insights of what a performer dramaturg does in one's early career in Hong Kong.

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The dramaturg as advisor

During the rehearsal phase of the performance development, I served as an advisor to the directors/actors. Rafalowicz (1978) acknowledged this phase as the evaluation of the stage representation and the reshaping of the performance text. Dramaturgs are often described as the "outside eye" or the "third eye" that observe the creative process from a distance and provide artists within the process fresh observations and advice. Bart Van den Eynde, a long-term dramaturg working with the acclaimed director Ivo van Hove, described that his role was "to disrupt the sometimes 'monomaniac' thinking of the director, and be the 'yes, BUT . . .' person in the process, showing alternatives, asking questions" (Trencsényi, 2015, p. 133). As an advisor, I evaluated the directors' plan, learnt their design and conception through in-depth discussions, commented on whether we had deviated from the intention of the organiser, and hypothesised solutions to the creative problems of the production. In short, I supported the development of the mise-en-scène.

The rehearsal phase of this production was quite chaotic. This was because the team chose to establish a non-hierarchical and horizontal collaborative process. This meant that every member performed multiple roles: the directors were the performers, the dramaturg took the responsibility for cuing the lights and sound, and the playwright oversaw the bilingual surtitles. Hence, the directors relied on me and the playwright, who were the onlookers, to provide them with immediate feedback after rehearsals. After rehearsing each scene, we pooled and tested ideas. If we found that an idea worked, it was to be adopted and refined, otherwise it was dropped. In this phase, my main contributions as the dramaturg were to assist and advise in shaping the performance and to instil the idea of creation through reduction.

Clarifying and adding

My job in the production also involved supporting the clarity of the message to be conveyed by each scene of the play. The development of scene 7, the last scene of the play, is an example of my dramaturgical intervention that shaped the scene through clarification of the directors' intention and adding on their idea. In this scene, Mr Cheung realises his dementia is worsening, yet his wife is taking great care of him with love and patience. When creating this situation, the directors struggled over whether to situate the last scene in the living room or on a beach. The directors believed that setting the scene outside, when he should be at home, could highlight the fracturing of Mr Cheung's reality. This enabled the performers to carry out non-spoken, physical activities, such as swimming and drying themselves with a towel. The initial results of this scene were unsatisfactory, as the physical activities performed by the actors were awkward. Remembering the key theme of the play — the fluidity of reality for suffers of dementia — I suggested an alternative presentation. The beach would be conveyed at the beginning of scene 7 but the façade would be gradually lifted revealing the reality represented by the living room. The directors approved the idea and decided to develop scene 7 in this direction.
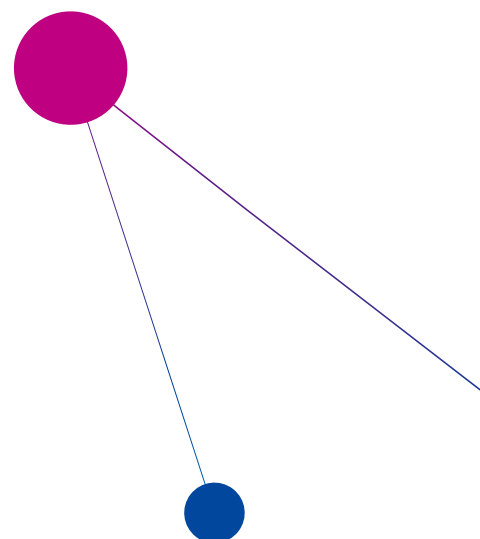
After several rehearsals, the action of Mr Cheung awakening from his fantasy was conveyed by the actor through an investigation of the space and flipping of his chair to the normal position. The end of the fantasy was established by the lights slowly returning to white and all sounds fading to silence. To highlight the reality and the silence, I insisted that the sound of the umbrella hitting the bucket be made before Mr Cheung uttered "Where are we?" (Yu, 2021, p. 21). Interestingly, we had not imagined that this scene could be enacted in such a way. The idea of fading from fantasy to reality became the cornerstone in which the scene was developed, feeding ideas into the staging. Every creative decision that was made during the staging enhanced this concept.

My dramaturgical intervention for scene 7 was particularly successful because I built on top of the directors' original idea. I supported their design and did not ask them to forsake their idea to embark on a different path. This could be attributed to my clear understanding of their creative intention. My logic for the scene fitted the narrative proposed by the directors who embraced my intervention and continued to refine my suggestions. In the future, I will adopt a similar approach in first supporting and fleshing out the directors' original idea, even when their ideas are not initially working, before suggesting a completely new direction.

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Creating through reduction

In the same way that it is important to flag out the successful actions, it is also necessary to recognise the unfavourable ones. For example, the introduction of the idea of creation through reduction in colleagues' minds. Creating through reduction is a method that aims to remove redundant elements from the mise-en-scène, ensuring every element on stage has a purpose or meaning. In the beginning, the directors drafted a plan for the lights, sound, and props used in the performance. More than thirty light cues, over thirty sound cues and two dozen props were utilised in their plan. On three separate occasions, I tried to convince the directors that their plan had become too bulky and impractical, and we should push the mise-en-scene towards minimalistic instead. My criticisms were confirmed during the debriefing with our teachers Paul Poon and Roy Szeto. They too remarked that the directors were heavily relying on the sound and lighting in the performance. However, my dramaturgical intervention had limited influence in this phase. The directors did not reduce the number

of elements employed but they became hesitant in adding new elements to resolve problems on stage. Observing mixed results from my advice, I struggled between allowing the exploration of ideas and offering critical comments once again. Scanlan (2019) stressed that production dramaturgs should "suppress the negative critical mode in favour of the creative one" (p. 11). Half-way through this phase, I reserved my judgement and did not force them to alter their plan because I felt that my criticisms were negative and restricting their creativity. Looking back and realising that my judgement was correct, I should have been more confident and firmer in my stance. Yet, the situation is complex and tricky for dramaturgs when directors and dramaturgs have different visions for the mis-en-scene; a dramaturg could be wrong in their judgement. I found that the alternative to backing out of a disagreement, is to confront the directors politely and find out the reasons behind the director's reluctance for changes. Another solution would be to allow adequate time for the director's ideas to materialise before raising concerns again. There are other alternatives to approach the situation, but the key question remains whether to stand firm or to abandon the dramaturg's intuition. Good judgement comes from more experiences in the role.

Compiling feedback

I took on the responsibility of gathering and compiling feedback when we entered the performance phase at Wuzhen. We had one 3-hour technical rehearsal session before our first performance. In between the performances, we had one rehearsal session to make small adjustments. We noted down our mistakes and our critical observations after each of the performances. We also gathered the audience's opinions by talking to people and looking at online comments. The audience's perspective is particularly valuable because they are the intended recipients of the theatrical experience. Trencsényi (2015) noted that an example of how Paul Walsh, a professor in dramaturgy, utilised the audience's feedback and reactions to gain fresh insights for improving the performance further.

When compiling the feedback, I categorised the feedback from both performers and the audience to identify the areas we could improve. For instance, some of the feedback received indicated that: Ah Ching, the character who was only mentioned in the dialogue, required some sort of presence on stage; the play was reported to have a pacing issue which required adjustment (too quick in the first half but "dragging" itself on the second); and the penetrating sound effect of a water dripping on the audience in one of the scenes needed to be magnified. I proposed to the directors to work on these three issues during the rehearsals before the next performance.

The agenda-setter

Another duty I performed as a production dramaturg was to set the agendas before rehearsals and in the performance phase. My role involved summarising technical difficulties, audience criticisms, and our critical observations, identifying issues that required adjustment, and arranging them into an ordered list beginning with the most important issues. Trencsényi (2015) gave an example of how Júlia Ungár, an experienced dramaturg, handed her written notes and annotation of problems in the script over to her director, Sándor Zsótér, in rehearsal. The team followed the list and worked on the items during the rehearsal. I was confident and noticed that the directors and actors trusted my ideas. My involvement gave them a direction to focus upon and launched them immediately into a creative mode. Unlike the initial phases of the creative process, they have now been more open to making changes. The audience feedback provided useful, and fresh observations helped build my credibility by reinforcing my criticisms. The limited time (one rehearsal session between the performances) forced us to be extremely efficient in deciding on whether to adopt or abandon changes before moving to the next item of the list.

In this phase my contribution matched the expectations. Rafalowics (1978) suggested that when modifying the piece on its final stages, the goal was to "keep a piece alive, about maintaining or deepening intentions" by making small adjustments (p. 28). We achieved this in the competition by making tiny incremental changes at every rehearsal. For example, an audience member, after watching our third performance, remarked that our play lacked a "punch" just before the end to leave an impression. Concurring with the observation, we developed an impactful ending in the last performance, identifying

and addressing the punch point (see Yu, 2021, p. 21). We also rectified the feeling of dragging on in the last section of the performance by tightening the transition between scenes.

For each rehearsal, I compiled a list of three issues that needed to be addressed. This practice was adopted from Walsh who provided "five notes maximum, mentioning only the most salient issues" after previews (Trencsényi, 2015, p. 160). For instance, I suggested the inclusion of a simple interaction between the husband and the wife in the prologue, because it was the only place to include her without significant alteration to the performance. We tried it out, and the result was good. Through this process, we made small adjustments that improved the play gradually as we performed it.

This experience suggests that agenda-setting is a fruitful method to decide areas for further development in rehearsals. This method effectively enables fine-tuning without significantly affecting other elements in the performance. Due to the clear intention and the specificity of the change, swift creative decisions can be made; this way, rehearsal time is used efficiently. As a result, when rehearsals are not making progress, I can assist directors in formulating what they are trying to achieve or fix at that moment. Directors can then try achieving the goal in various ways with the deadline accelerating the progress. The best perceived solution can then be adopted before advancing to the next issue. This is a solution-oriented approach to fixing what is not working. This is particularly useful at the later stage of the creative process.

The "outside eye"

The audience feedback we received after the performance reminded us of the importance of an outsider's perspective. By informing us of what was done well, and what was not working, the audience gave us directions for improvements. As I was utterly immersed in the production, I lost my perspective as the "outside eye". If a dramaturg is to retain their function as the first audience, they need to reduce their involvement in rehearsals,

maintaining distance from the work. It is a tricky balance for a dramaturg, between attending every rehearsal and attending none. However, to acquire an outsider's view, the creative team can invite audience members to watch and give feedback whilst the work is still in progress. The dramaturg's role is then to weed out unimportant feedback and summarise points for the creative team to work on.

Summary

In conclusion, as a production dramaturg, I adopted various ways of approaching the production from page to stage, such as adding after clarifying, creating through reduction, and compiling feedback. I observed that being an advisor had subtle influence on the rehearsals phase. In comparison, I discovered that setting an agenda was a viable way to guide rehearsals. This article has shed some light on how a less experienced dramaturg can work with more experienced directors in practice. The "outside eye" perspective is already valuable on its own. Dramaturgy learners can try similar approaches to discover which approaches best suit them. A short performance is suggested for such exploration because a 30-minute performance has enough complexity for a beginner to handle. On a broader perspective, this paper has illustrated how a production dramaturg can help shape a performance. Hopefully, this paper can encourage other theatre practitioners in Hong Kong to involve dramaturgs in their productions.

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A retrospective reflection of a student dramaturg's encounter with practice in a play's production

Arts Pedagogy, Community, and Social Media

#Scamilton:
Intersectionality's between social media, imitation and performance

James Woodhams

Abstract

TikTok has affected how people engage culture on a daily basis. It has also altered how culture is generated and imitated. TikTok's use of overlays and challenges has engendered a culture of imitation. In August 2022, a live-streamed production of Hamilton performed by the Door Christian Fellowship Ministries was released. This production was quickly ridiculed online and condemned by guilds as an illegal staging of the production. The internet named this production #scamilton. #scamilton was an attempt to be an exact replica of the original Broadway cast recorded production that is available to stream on Disney+. This paper examines the intersectionality that has developed between digital recording, social media, and cultural reverence of pieces of art. It will argue that the culture of imitation developed on TikTok has intersected with live performance, which is potentially negating individualistic creativity.

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Introduction

On 5 August 2022, the Door Christian Fellowship Ministries (DCFM) in McAllen, Texas, USA, presented a fully staged version of *Hamilton: An American Musical*. This production was live-streamed on YouTube, publicly available for the world to watch. Encountering the production at first, everything looked and felt distinctly familiar. It seemed to be a recording of the *Hamilton* production. This is similar to the recording that is available on Disney+, albeit a bootleg recording of it. This facade continued until the actor playing Aaron Burr entered the stage. You expect to hear the now famous refrain "How Does A Bastard/Orphan/Son of Whore and a Scotsman" (Miranda & McCarter, 2016, p. 17). Instead, the actor started with "How Does a Scoundrel/Orphan/Son of a Harlot and a Scotsman", which instantly changed your expectations of how the production will progress. As the production progressed, the changes became more jarring with their attempts to squeeze in extra syllables into lines, and changes to refocus lyrics on Christian ideology. They even added a whole new scene to the production. Hamilton is morphed in front of you, becoming an evangelical Christian preaching tool. This culminated with the director's homophobic speech after the performance.

During the first viewing, I started to notice another trend that defined this production beyond the awkward Christian messaging. Everything was an attempt to directly copy the original Broadway production of *Hamilton*. Every performance, from the blocking, dancing, set design, lighting design, and singing intonation seemed to be an attempt by creatives to imitate the original production, to varying degrees of success. I was not the only person spotting these similarities. These slightly misguided attempts to perfectly imitate *Hamilton* provoked mockery across the internet, especially the social media platform TikTok which branded the production #scamilton (Gerber, 2020). Soon after, the *Hamilton* producers realised a statement condemning the production and its changes to the production and DCFM had to pay damages for their production (Gularte, 2022). For me, #scamilton spoke to an increased intersectionality between online culture and live performance.

This article aims to analyse how wide access to recorded production intersects with the online culture, culture of imitation and the impacts on the DCFM theatre's creative response to the material. The #scamilton incident poses an interesting question around the culture of imitation. Does the persistent culture of online engagement start to affect how we view creativity? Does the growing prevalence and accessibility of prominent productions limit our ability to reinterpret or reimagine them? This article will argue that the prominence of imitation within the online space have started to bleed through into live theatre performance.
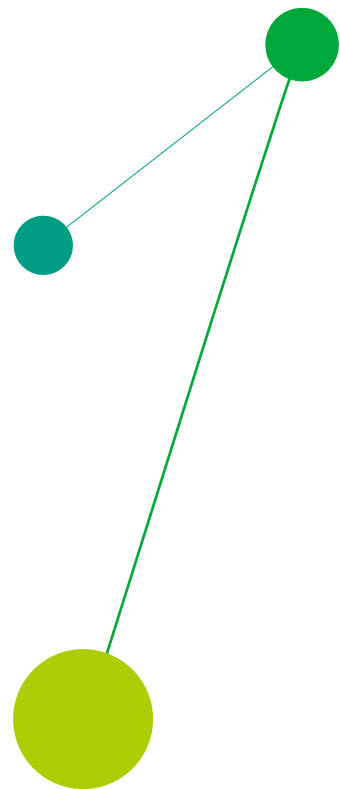
Context —
Hamilton & the Internet
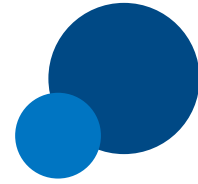
Since its first performance in 2015, *Hamilton: An American Musical* has been a dominant force within the musical theatre landscape. As Lodge and Laird noted "the musical serves as a rich site of intersection where varied elements meet, come into conflict, and either blend or morph into something new" (Lodge & Laird, 2021, p.1). Cassie Tongue even noted that *Hamilton* can count itself amongst a few musicals that breaks "the form open that leads to others following suit, like the musical SIX" (Tongue, 2020). *Hamilton's* success intersected with the continued growth of the online social media generating it as a globalised cultural phenomenon. This has been noted from commentators with Rohini Nair suggesting "*Hamilton* is an unparalleled cultural phenomenon; its sizeable and exceedingly devoted following even has a name: 'Hamilfans'" (Nair, 2020). Many content creators on platforms such as TikTok perform covers, parodies, and imitations of the production. This success led to the original production being recorded for a filmed adaptation, which was released on the digital streaming service Disney+ in July 2020. Variety noted upon its release that the recorded production was viewed about two times more than the second widest-reaching title of that month (Tran, 2020), illustrating how the production reached beyond the theatre community. It harnessed the accessibility of the internet to engage a wider community than the stage production could ever do simultaneously. This followed a growing trend within theatre to use recorded productions and live broadcasts to promote access for remote and international audiences at a fraction of the cost (Sullivan, 2020). Streaming *Hamilton* on Disney+ capitalised on the internet's ability to generate an audience across large geographic distances.

Hamilton's intersectionality goes beyond the play itself. It speaks to the ever-growing ways of how spectators consume, engage and comment on culture within an online environment. Lodge and Laird commented on how the "internet had itself become a liminal space Hamilton could engage with" as the original creators of the show performed sections of the songs for YouTube and then released their recorded production online (Lodge & Laird, 2021). However, in this transition of the original production and cast into the liminal digital space, it inventively opened the production to be part of the internet community that had grown around the production. This intersection, in my view, exposed the original production to the growing trend of imitation that is actively encouraged online. TikTok is a social media company that calls itself "creative platform" which "is designed so its key features to users are playfulness and performativity" with the vast majority of this performativity focusing on imitation (Edwards-FitzSimons, 2020). This has generated a psychological phenomenon that generates a 'pro-social boost', a positive feeling that encourages "altruistic effects are targeted at synchronously moving partners and their positive affiliate" (Trainor, & Cirelli, 2015, p. 49). TikTok has started to engender a culture of creative mirroring within society.

'Despite its late launch it "has done the unthinkable in passing Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube in monthly downloads in the Apple Store", gaining roughly "2.6 billion downloads since its creation" .'

Imitation & TikTok

Imitation has always been a part of theatre practice. As Janet Clare (2014) has already argued all art is imitation (p. 3). Theatre artists have witnessed, embodied, and then reproduced elements to help form their own productions. Within this embodiment process however, artists generate their own interpretation, adding a different approach and response to the same source material. Mark Ravenhill (2009), in his foreword to *Theatre and Globlization* noted that he was fascinated by the way work mutates and is reborn through translation" (p. xiii). The simple way of moving a production away from its original production allows different perspectives and creativity to alter the performance. Moving a production between countries, cultures, places and even people alter a production in which it's "liveness tends to commit it to particular places of performance" (Rebellato, 2009, p.52). Simply the process of imitation is itself a creative process that can generate a new creative product. However, the increasing globalisation combined with digital communications has slowly allowed for theatre from different cultures to directly reach varied communities more quickly and easily than ever before. Presenting productions online has severed the usual mutation's that occurred when a play is translated and moved between different communities. These elements of change that occur when local artists start to work and respond to material from their own experience, the element enjoyed by Mark Ravenhill, disappears as it becomes cheaper, more efficient, and cost effective to broadcast the production across the globe. Digital recordings of theatre have fundamentally changed theatre into a globalised event.

The rise of digital communication in the late 20th century led directly to the creation of social media in the 21st century. Even the hardest critics of social media have to acknowledge the fundamental change it has had on the global community (Boffone, 2021; Tan, 2021). Social media has become the foundation of many people's daily cultural landscape. Trevor Boffone noted "it is quite literally impossible to fully understand Zoomers today without first understanding the role that social media plays in their identity formation and their day-to-day lives" (Boffone, 2021, p. 21). The integration of social media has now permeated through society so that young people cannot imagine a world without it, and I would argue that it has come to dominate a large portion of the population's daily lives.

TikTok is just one of the many social media platforms that has been developed since the turn of the 21st century. "The platform itself consists of an app that allows users to create 15–60-second videos in-app with music, sounds, filters, effects, stickers and all kinds of other overlays" (Anderson, 2020, p.7). However, it was launched relatively late in comparison with the main competitors, launching in 2016 in China and 2018 in the UK (Waterworth, 2020). Despite its late launch it "has done the unthinkable in passing Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube in monthly downloads in the Apple Store" (Boffone, 2021, p.27), gaining roughly "2.6 billion downloads since its creation" (Huebner, 2022, p.210). With 500 million people using TikTok daily, its cultural reach can already be felt. During the COVID-19 pandemic, "TikTok became an integral place for entertainment" (Boffone, 2021, p.27). TikTok enabled creative communities to form whilst sharing and reproducing what others had generated — it was generating communities over geographical distance through joint expression.
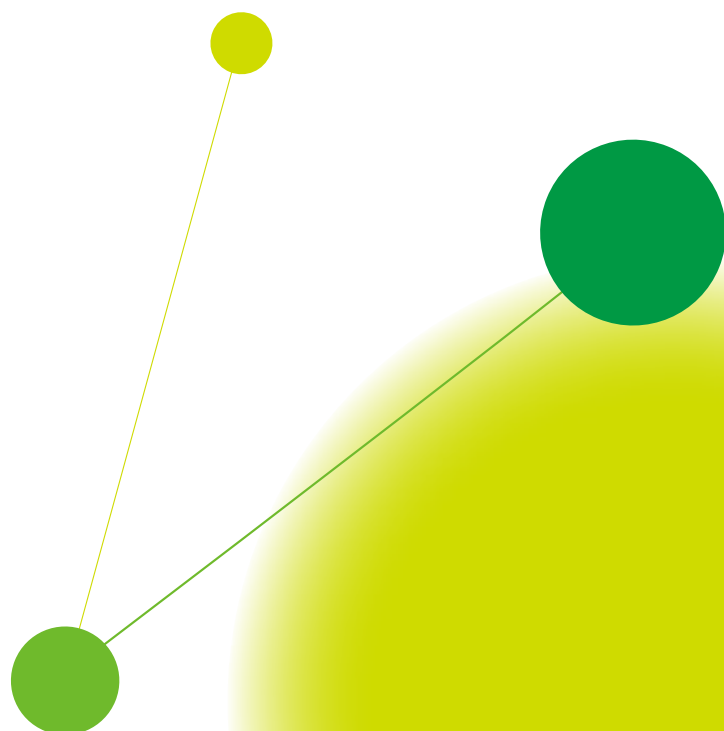
Encouraging fellow users to perfect a reproduction of a creative expression is the key component to the user culture on TikTok. TikTok challenges encourage viewers to perfect and reproduce similar dances, lip synching and other artistic art forms that are perfect copies of the original dance. Mirroring and imitation are a vital element to the success of the platform, as recreating other people's actions has been found to produce a positive psychological response (Edwards-FitzSimons, 2020). Mirroring produces a positive psychological response that goes beyond an individual experience. Niall Edwards-FitzSimons (2020) noted imitation itself generated a shared space online, a common ground for users that were bound through the reproduction of the same creative act. He continued:

> On TikTok, the mass grouping of people together in space is replaced by a more subtle form of togetherness through imitation and synchronised movement. These dancers are separated through time and space, but they create solidarity and positive feeling by moving together, mediated by the structure of the platform.

By encouraging a mass demographic to work on and replicate the same piece of art, TikTok facilitates a shared performance space that can generate creative communities beyond geographical location. Intersecting traditional expression with digital communication has allowed for a greater amount of people exploring expression online, similar to live broadcasts (Nesta, 2010, p. 10) and recorded productions and livestreams that can reach those unable to get to the theatre themselves (Sullivan, 2020).

Online communities break traditional geographical locations to generate a sense of togetherness that is focused on culture. As traditional institutions within the western world are in decline, be that religion or other community groups (Altemeyer, 2004), culture has become increasingly potent as a way to bind communities together. Online communities have come together to share within their joy and interest in different cultural trends like *Hamilton*. Culture in one way has become sanctified, with some members of each community responding negatively to any criticism or commentary on their favourite production. With the sanctity of art, imitating thus becomes the hymn in the church, the shared prayer, and the national anthem of online communities. However, with the increased availability of recording of arts I believe a concerning trend is approaching with pieces of art are then viewed as fixed items, not living organisms. Production becomes a replication of the original show, but fundamentally lacks the same embodiment and ownership that occurs in the creative act of shaping a performance as an ensemble.
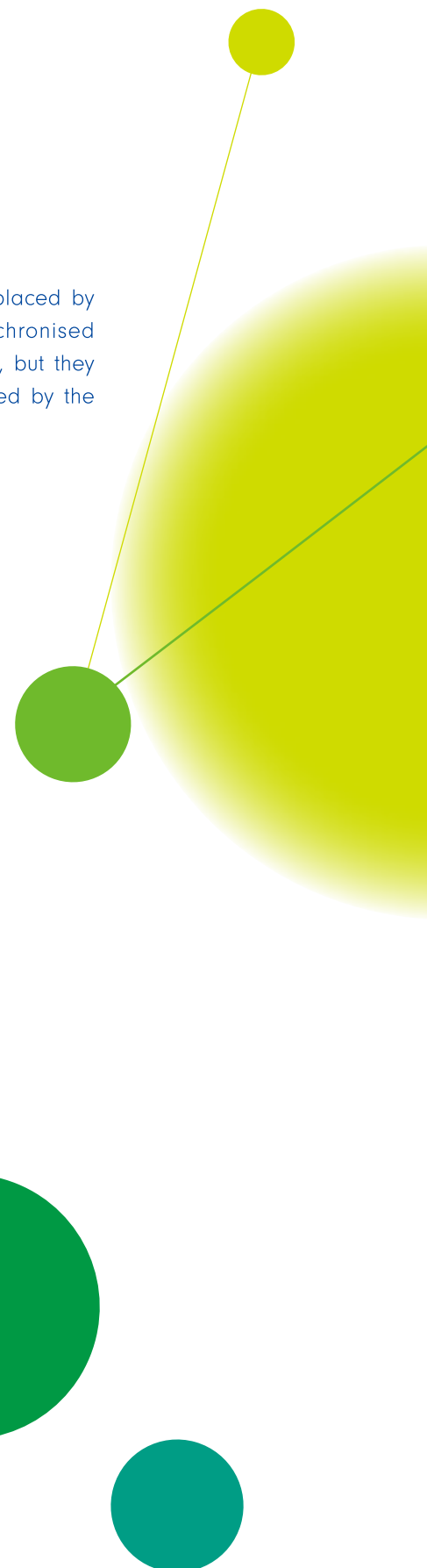
Analysing *Satisfied*

The DCFM productions indicates this potential trend is caused by this intersection of imitation, digital recording and sacred-like revelry of how people view certain theatre productions. Whilst there are countless examples of this behaviour throughout the production, *"Satisfied"* (a song halfway the first act) indicates how DCFM performers try to replicate each movement and element they have witnessed from the digital recording of *Hamilton*. Furthermore, the production shows how Disney+ recording of the production, specifically the camera angles that director Thomas Kail has chosen, affect their ability to stage this number accurately.

"Satisfied" re-imagines the previous scene from a different perspective (Miranda & McCarter, 2016). The audience have just watched *"Helpless"*, a love song around the title character Alexander Hamilton and his future wife Eliza Schyler-Hamilton. The song retells the previous song from the perspective of Angelica Schyler, Eliza's sister. The staging starts from where *"Helpless"* left off with the wedding of Eliza and Alexander. We are introduced to a speech given by the maid of honour Angelica. After some brief toasts, she wishes for the couple to "always be satisfied". Through complex staging, movement, changes in lighting states and musicality, we end up right back at the start of the song *"Helpless"*. In the song, as Miranda and McCarter (2016) noted, "time itself seems to wind backwards" with the lyric rewind being repeated for emphasis, "giving the show another chance to suggest history looks very different depending on who's telling it" (p. 78). Over the next five minutes, we relive key elements of the previous song, Alexander and Eliza meeting, sending letters to each other, with Angelica providing commentary that hints of her love for Alexander Hamilton (Miranda & McCarter, 2016). As the song progresses, the ensemble literally recreates dances done throughout *"Helpless"* in a more staccato style. Finally, the song circles back to where it began with Angelica still giving her toast, repeating the words started at the beginning of the song, establishing the loss of love she could have gained. It is a densely packed scene and movement sequence. Lin-Manuel Miranda has even acknowledged that Angelica "gets to spit THE HARDEST BAR'S IN THE SHOW" (Miranda & McCarter, 2016, p. 79). To aid the upcoming discussion, the Disney+ version of *Satisfied* can be found here[1], with the DCFM version on this link[2] at 4:50.

For the recorded production, the direction chosen by Thomas Kail chooses to emphasise the soliloquy nature of the song. Camera shots focus on Angelica via close-ups, occasionally interspersed with wide-angled shots. This can be seen within the first minute of the song, which can be accessed on Disney +. Close up shots chosen by Thomas Kail mainly focused on Angelica, with a couple of wide angles to give a wider context of the stage. This choice highlights a monologue where we explore the emotional throughline of Angelica. It draws spectators to the similarities between the current and previous song, whilst illuminating the re-examination of how a different perspective changes how the previous number could be perceived. These directorial choices however, had unintended consequences for DCFM as they looked to recreate the production.

1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wD2LdRGyhwY

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCNbE2GZMaE

Editorial decisions led to direct impact on the staging of Satisfied within the DCFM production. There is a direct correlation between movement reproduced in the production and those that can be clearly seen on screen. The first indication of the precise nature of the imitation occurs as soon as the song starts to "rewind". In the Disney+ recording, the actor playing Peggy slowly collapses her spin into a stationary position as the rest of the cast rewind choreographic elements from the previous number. As the movement builds in intensity, Peggy slowly peels off with another cast member to leave the actor playing Angelica alone in the centre of the stage, under a single spotlight. To build intensity, and to highlight the detailed visual generated by the choreography, the camera/lens cuts quickly between wide and close-up shots, thus representing the frantic nature being depicted on stage.

Edits led to imitated sequence within the DCFM production to be significantly hampered and incomplete. These cuts do not provide viewers with a clear step-by-step view of what is occurring on stage. It purposely never gives you a full view of the action taking place on screen, instead it chooses to focus on Angelica depictions of which have similar camera shots as the recorded production. As the DCFM could easily access the Disney+ version of *Hamilton*, the reaction staged is of the Disney+ *Hamilton* rather the production itself. For example, the actor playing Peggy collapses exactly as the cast member in the recorded production by leaning forward collapsing their spine.

However, this is not accompanied with choreographic elements which are full of variation and energy. Instead, the ensemble simply walks backwards to the back of the stage, with the occasional flourish of a spin.

Comparing both productions, the start and end point are identical. Both production end in a near blackout with Angelica in a soft spotlight and one other character visible to the left of the stage. The methods in which they are achieved, however, are completely different. Seeking to accurately recreate production intersected with the limitation of the recorded productions. Quick cuts that help capture and portray the sense of intensity of the scene within the Disney+ production actively denies a true imitation of this moment to produce. As the performers from the DCFM production aimed for accurately recreating the mise-en-scène, they were denied the opportunity as the production only showed snapshots of the movement, rather than the full sequence of one movement to another. To accurately recreate this moment, they needed a step-to-step picture of what every ensemble member was performing. Tutorials are a common part of the TikTok imitation culture. However, instead they got disjointed snapshots of the production. This could indicate that the DCFM decided to take the creative decision to just get actors into place for the next sequence they could easily recreate rather than take risk diverging from the original production. Digital imitation culture intersected at this moment to encourage imitation rather than help actors embody their individualistic creativity and expression.

The above was not the only occasion when the limitation caused by reproduction of digital recording deny individualistic creativity. When Angelica first lists out the reason why she could not marry Alexander Hamilton, the ensemble hits a striking pose, where they lean down towards the stage, but their arms are stuck up in an agile line towards the sky. Predictably, the cast from DCFM perform it in exactly the same way just not articulating the crip liner line as in the recorded production. What is strange is that the recorded production did show the ensemble in different positions, albeit briefly. However, the DCFM held the original pose for 22 seconds. After 22 seconds, they started imitating the original production imitating a hand movement across the face which is conducted by the ensemble. Cuts between wide angles and close-ups of Angelica in this section again impeded the attempt to imitate the production. Without a clear overview of how to imitate these movement sequences,

the DCFM performers chose to hold the same pose for 22 seconds. It was safer to wait for the next movement which could be clearly imitated, which they did after these 22 seconds. In the DCFM production they imitate this movement, but more block like then the professional production, seemingly indicating being clear on some movements but not all. Seeking the exact replica rather than take creative risk further limits their own creativity. The above scenario indicates a complex intersectionality between reverence of a creative product, digital communication and the growing online cultural trend of imitation. The prominence of access to recorded production are "designed with the principle of promoting global access to theatrical performance" (Borsuk, 2020, p. 27). This access has prompted wider access to theatre (Snow, 2020) but has also led to the exposure of theatre to the growing trends prominent within internet culture.

Digital recordings are not perfect reflections

It is interesting that the desire to recreate *Hamilton* by the DCFM ignores the fact that the recorded production itself embodies a theatrical liveness. *Hamilton* has two media productions of the full performance. One is the recorded production in Disney+, the other being the Original Cast Recording. Comparing the two different recorded versions of the work indicates the active state the performers were embodying within the digital recorded production. There are many subtle differences in how actors deliver songs, how they react to other actors and thus change their inflection, tone, and performance to respond. Even within the strict confinement of a musical structure, there is playfulness embodied by the performers. It acknowledges theatre as a live art form.

This embodiment of liveness seems to be missing for the majority of the #scamilton version. In its desire to imitate and to present what they have witnessed on the recorded production, it ignored that the actor's role is to engage spectators live and in the moment. Cormac Power (2008) stated in his book *Presence In Play* that an actor's "presence can be constructed through his manipulation of space and materials, including his own body and posture, as well as the way in which an actor confronts his audience and engages their attention" (p. 49). Actors must be present in the moment; they have to be active in their pursuit of the truth within the piece and scene. They need the ability to work with the audience to help them enter the "wilful act of imagination" that is required for full absorption within a theatre piece (Power, 2008, p. 24). Seeking to perfectly imitate moments, to look for the same performance as one that has been embodied by someone else denies any sense of liveness that makes theatre a unique art form. It disassociates you from the most powerful tool in theatre creation, your own unique vision and embodiment of the play. In the seeking of perfection through imitation, you might perfect the performance technically, but you fail to live it and thus kill any connectivity with audience members. By denying this key interplay, the intersection that can make or break theatre, you deny the connectivity that makes theatre a vibrant art form.

There is one sequence in the play that has a sense of responsiveness and embodiment from the performers. It is the scene they have added in. For me, it is not a coincidence that the scene that has the most passion and most connection that is presented on stage is the conversion scene they add into the production between "*Blow Us All Away*" and "*It's Quiet Uptown*". The inserted scene depicts Alexander Hamilton, who has just lost his son, converting to Christianity. The actors performing the scene seem, for the first time, to be connected to what they are performing. You can tell that this moment is *why* they wanted to stage the production. In generating something new, with no reference point in the previous production, a greater embodiment occurs. As an audience you can sense the connectivity with the source material that has been missing up until this point. Allowing this singular moment of creativity led by the performers thus unlocked their own individualistic potential. But instead of seeking creativity for the whole production, the DCFM performers seemed to have made a very deliberate choice to recreate the original production, or at least to the best of their ability. Encouraging individuals' creativity is vital to make a good performance. Without this, the benefits of group creation and live performance space are significantly muted. Intersectionality between digital communication and in-person performance needs to be understood and measures should be put in place to allow individualistic readings of prominent cultural pieces of work to occur.

Conclusion

It is important to note that digital recordings themselves are a vital way for people to access theatre productions especially in the conditions of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic cemented this new trend as social media became one of the only forms of creative outlets available (Boffone, 2021). Theatres maximised on this and uploaded productions onto YouTube and other streaming services to engage their communities. Providing production streaming services or broadcast has not only increased accessibility, but it has also proven to increase ticket sales, sometimes to a 20% increase for the same production (Boffone, 2021). Furthermore, the art of translating a show to digital format in itself is a creative process. With involvement of editors, directors and other creatives the choices of what shots are used at each moment have a direct impact on the engagement with the audience. Yangzi Zhou noted the use of close up and medium shots can help to heighten the emotional nuances that are being performed on stage (Zhou, 2021). However, recorded productions should be used as a resource to inspire rather than a manual to copy. They are a creative piece in their own right, and when others approach the work they should view them in this vein rather than a manual to repeat.

The #scamilton incident highlights how the increased prevalence of imitation within social media culture has started to intersect with live performance. A cultural capital has been unleashed where imitation is one of the main creative outlets for many. TikTok's success has led to other social media's reconfiguring their offerings to encourage the same combination of imitation, music, and overlays to varying success which has increased the societal acceptance of imitation. The #scamilton incident does indicate that the ability to imitate, or even the social capital to do this, has now intersected with live performance. Imitation is no longer a trend limited to the realms of digital communication. Imitation is now a cultural practice widely used in society. Creatives need to find methods to encourage individual creativity to express when performing their work under licence. They may encourage groups to approach a play as a performance text, one that they embody and morph through their individuality, rather than a recipe book. It is vital to the empowerment of creativity.
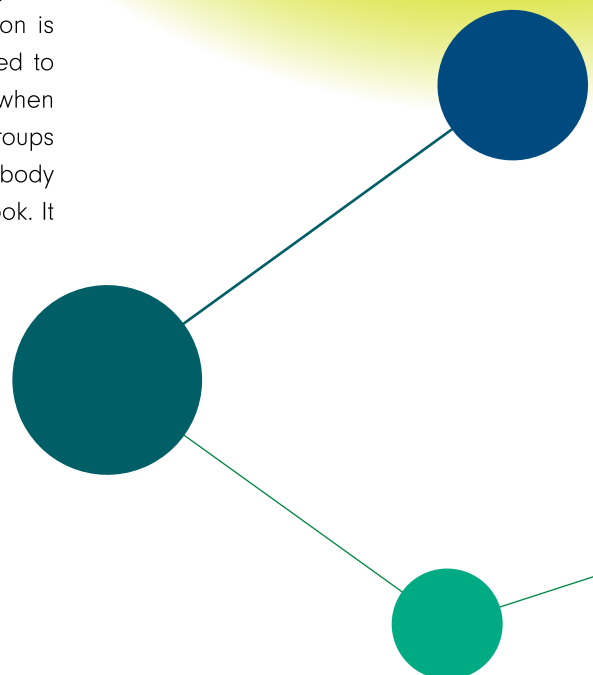
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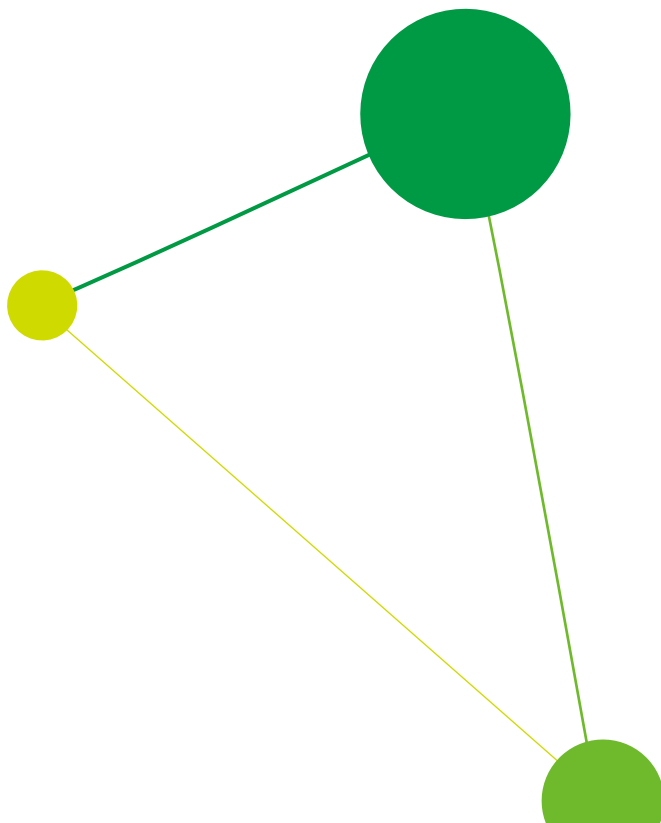
The intersection in performing arts education:
Engagement and empowerment in teaching, learning, and performance

Michael Li

Abstract

With fast-paced technology advancements, performing arts education (PAE) has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused even more disruptions to PAE. Once relying heavily on the face-to-face model, PAE has to innovate and continue in the changing landscape, offering courses via an online/hybrid mode. This article focuses on how interdisciplinary, student-centred, and outcome-based pedagogies lead to successful learning experiences. To scaffold that theory, the researcher has conducted four case studies at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA). Findings share insights on pedagogies and strategies, which not only support teaching and learning but also benefit performing arts education in general.

PA:PER 11

Introduction

Currently, performing arts educators are facing an unavoidable question — what do they teach today so that students are able to survive in the future performing arts industry? It sounds like an overloaded question, and it has become a pressing issue, particularly after/under the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic impact. This study is guided by three research questions.

1. How can performing arts education institutions, like The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), model the integration of interdisciplinary and emerging technologies into their curriculum design to prepare students for the ever-changing performing arts industry?

This question has been addressed in several studies. Augsburg (2017) found that incorporating interdisciplinary elements, such as technology and multimedia, into the curriculum helped students to increase creative abilities and prepare them for the ever-changing market demands in the performing arts industry. The authors emphasised the importance of balancing technical skills with creativity to produce well-rounded graduates. Another study by Zhang et al. (2022) explored how artificial intelligence can be integrated into arts education and found that it provides students with more opportunities to experience different perspectives and ways of expression, which can broaden their understanding of the performing arts in general. Studies have also suggested that the utilisation of technology in performing arts education has proven to have a profound impact, facilitating engaging and interactive learning experiences for students and leading to improved learning outcomes (Levi et al., 2016; Li, 2011, 2022a, 2022b, 2023).
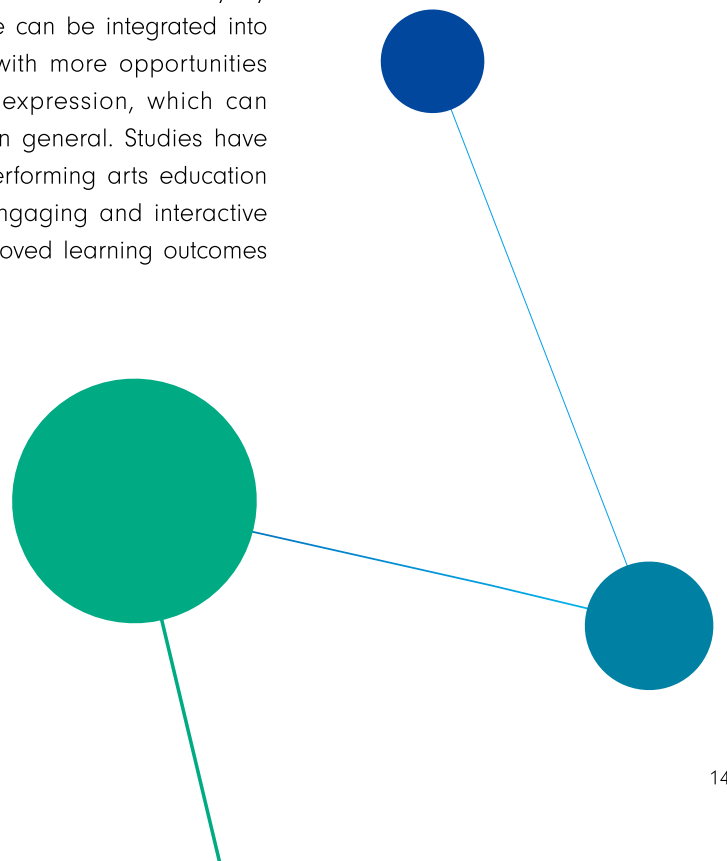
2. How can senior management in performing arts education institutions cultivate student-centred and interdisciplinary initiatives, through the implementation of the new curriculum, to foster the development of 21st century skills and mindsets in students?

Research on leadership in education has emphasised the importance of student-centred and interdisciplinary learning. Dada et al. (2023) found that a student-centred approach energises students' learning and development, leading to improved engagement and outcomes. Li et al. (2018) investigated the impact of interdisciplinary initiatives on students' 21st century skills and found that such initiatives can enhance students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. Li et al. (2022a) found that 21st century skills (i.e., creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking) and self-efficacy can be significantly increased through student-centred projects, even when they took place on Zoom.

3. How effective are student-centred and outcome-based initiatives, like HKAPA's *Sunset Concert* and *Cello Festival*, in promoting critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration among students in the performing arts and how can these be adapted in other performing arts education institutions?

Chan and Lee (2020) investigated the impact of student-centred initiatives on students' critical thinking and communication skills and found that such initiatives can enhance students' ability to think critically and communicate effectively. Similar findings were also found in Li et al.'s (2022) study on how technologies helped student develop 4C skills. In Futurology in Education and Learning, Naveed and Khan (2023) suggested a clear set of criteria for outcome-based education with specific learning goals would positively impact learning experiences. Wong and Li (2022) further suggested that when students were put in the driver's seat, they were likely to put more effort into what they did. Hence, the learning outcome is enhanced, and so were the outcomes.

'Research on leadership in education has emphasised the importance of student-centred and interdisciplinary learning. '

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Exploration of the three research questions above indicate that performing arts educators are at an intersection where an important decision must be made. Performing arts institutes must take bold initiatives to promote critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration among their students so that they can thrive in the future. Technologies are evolving, and they are impacting teaching and learning tremendously. In this respect, HKAPA is undergoing a number of major changes, including the new curriculum implementation, pedagogical transformation, and changes to the way that a performance is designed, organised, promoted, and staged.

In a recent conversation with Dr Iñaki Sandoval, Dean of Music at HKAPA, he stated: "music students must equip themselves with diverse skills, in addition to what they have learned or majored in. That list of skills includes stage design, light arrangement, sound, video editing, and more." Mr Jim McGowan, Acting Dean of the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts (TEA), echoed similar messages. He asserted: "students should not be limited in what they study at the Academy. They should expand their interests into other art forms." He cited the *Sunset Concert* as an example to explain how TEA students pushed their boundaries in making the concert an interdisciplinary and collaborative triumph.

The present performing arts landscape is filled with emerging technologies and new ways of thinking, doing, and making arts. Performing arts educators should work along with the senior management to establish a nurturing ground for students to obtain skills beyond their subject area. The intersections are present at the institutional level, demanding senior management reconsiders curriculum design, academic calendars, and pedagogical remodelling, so that students are equipped with relevant skills and the mindsets to face future challenges. The implementation of the new *Curriculum C* at HKAPA demonstrates one of the ways in which tertiary performing arts institutes are changing to help students become 21st century artists. Initiatives such as *Sunset Concert* (TEA), *Cello Festival* (Music), and *G1 Lab* (CER) provide additional evidence on how student-centred and outcome-based education support students' to develop critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration skills (4Cs).

Literature review

In recent years, a growing body of scholarship has identified that technology significantly impacts education as it supports classroom activities, motivates students, engages them in learning activities, and enhances learning outcomes. On the other hand, Crawford (2016), Draper and Hitchcock (2008), Li (2020), Li et al. (2022b), Li et al. (2018), Ostashewski et al. (2016), and Ruthmann and Hebert (2012), and point out that hybrid or online learning for performing arts students is lacking promising evidence due to inadequate tools and case studies. This study aims to fill the research gap by providing evidence in four case studies.

In performing arts education, technology plays an increasingly important role. Technology applications are used to provide support to the learning community (Ayres et al., 2016), promote active learning (Levl et al., 2016; Li, 2011, 2022a, 2022b, 2023; Wong & Li, 2022), and enhance learning efficiency (Serrano et al., 2019). Studies have found that young people are confident about finishing online learning activities when they feel comfortable with technologies (Li et al., 2018, 2022a, 2022b; Robinson, 2011; Warden et al., 2020). Nonetheless, studies on technology utilisation in performing arts areas still largely focus on some subjects, including visual arts, media arts, music, and drama, with little attention on others, such as dance (Li, 2020, 2021a; Li et al., 2018; Richard et al., 2012).

Scholarship on the use of technology in performing arts education has been growing steadily in recent years. Mobile learning (m-learning) has been adopted in theatre art (drama and dance), and it provides flexibility and efficiency to both teachers and learners (Crawford, 2016; Li et al., 2018; Li, 2011, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 Wong & Li, 2022; Zhou & Li, 2019). Performing arts students have changed their habits from using desktop computers to mobile devices to complete various learning activities (Kaliisa et al., 2019; Li et. al., 2018,

2022a, 2022b). Montgomery et al. (2019) reported that self-regulated learning (SRL) behaviours, including the amount of quality time spent online learning and browsing patterns in music education, were associated with academic achievement. Crawford (2016), Draper and Hitchcock (2008), Li et al. (2021a, 2022a, 2022b, and Ostashewski et al. (2016), Robinson (2011) have been advocating that teachers in the performing arts sector must keep up with changes and adopt a new pedagogy to enrich teaching and learning experiences. In many developed and developing countries, students are familiar with the latest digital technologies (Li et al., 2021a, 2022a, 2022b). Learners are capable of using them for educational purposes, such as attending Zoom lectures, registering for courses, and completing assignments (Li, 2019, 2020, 2022). Teachers can monitor the learning process through various technologies to help learners develop creativity and critical thinking skills (Li et al., 2021b, 2022a; Robinson, 2011).

Baker (2020) asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic could be an opportunity to reimagine the education landscape and build a new future. During the pandemic, most of the performing arts subjects switched to online or hybrid mode. The learning outcome was not as dismal as expected (Baker, 2020; Li, 2021, 2023; Wong & Li, 2022). Students were able to self-regulate and achieve learning goals during the pandemic (Li, 2021, 2022, 2023; Li et al., 2022a, 2022b; Wong & Li, 2022). Looking forward, performing arts educators must help students develop the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, innovate, and problem-solve through negotiation and collaboration (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). Technology is at the intersection of performing arts education, and good utilisation of it, alongside meaningful activities, will help students achieve learning engagement, outcome enrichment, and learner empowerment.

> ' Nonetheless, studies on technology utilisation in performing arts areas still largely focus on some subjects, including visual arts, media arts, music, and drama, with little attention on others, such as dance '

Methodology

This qualitative study has applied multiple sources of data from performing arts educators and students to explore their learning behaviour, motivations, and perspectives in student-centred and outcome-based education context. By doing so, the researcher has gathered various forms of data from different participants (Lim et al., 2014) to provide integrity to the qualitative research process (Cohen et al., 2017). Participants in this study are academic staff, students, and alumni, who are all associated with HKAPA. They are directly involved in guiding students (academic staff), participating in projects (students), or reflecting on previous events (alumni). In mid-2022, an invitation email about the study was sent out to teachers and students involved and interviews took place during the summer break. In August and September, the researcher conducted several rounds of semi-structured interviews both online and in person over times arranged at the convenience of participants. These interview discussions between the researcher and participants break the "theory-practice gap" and therefore, has made the study more meaningful (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 9). This study provides participants a platform to share their thoughts on various topics in curriculum design, learning behaviour, pedagogy, and 21st century skills.

> " This qualitative study has applied multiple sources of data from performing arts educators and students to explore their learning behaviour, motivations, and perspectives in student-centred and outcome-based education context. "

Findings

The findings of this study are presented through four case studies: 1) the intersection of pedagogy and technology, covering the Learning Pyramid and the implementation of the *Curriculum C*; 2) *Sunset Concert*, an annual event hosted by the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts for more than thirty years; 3) *Cello Festival*, an innovative approach that the School of Music takes to showcase Cello talents at HKAPA and elsewhere; and 4) *G1 Lab*, a student-centred/driven project that champions a constructivist approach to teaching and learning.

Four case studies are different in focus and context, but they all tightly associated with performing arts pedagogy, outcome-based, and student-centred education models. The first case study explores the intersection of pedagogy and technology, focusing on how technology can be used to enhance learning experiences. It explores how the Academy's revised, *Curriculum C*, leads to effective teaching. The second case study discusses the *Sunset Concert*, which is a signature production of the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts, and how it helps students obtain 21st century skills. The third case study investigates how through the *Cello Festival*, the School of Music nurtures a collaborative environment for interdisciplinary works among students and teachers. Some comments shed light on future performing arts education in terms of how much and what to teach. The fourth study centres on a student-driven group — *G1 Lab* and looks at the interaction between performing arts and business, examining how students can leverage multimedia to benefit what they normally do — performance. In return, such an approach could help them survive in an increasingly commercialised and challenging world. These case studies highlight the importance of technology in fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, creativity, critical thinking, and the development of 21st century skills in the performing arts education.

Case 1 - The intersection of pedagogy and technology

About 2,500 years ago, Chinese philosopher Confucius remarked, "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". While in the West, the American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey (1938) popularised the theory of "learning by doing". At an intersection of practice and theory, Dewey claimed that practical problem-solving and theoretical concepts should go hand in hand. In his 1938's work — *Experience and Education*, Dewey explained, "Learning is an active process. We learn by doing, and only when the knowledge is used in a situation will stick in your mind". Later, another American educator Edgar Dale (1969) explained a similar theory through his "Cone of Learning," also regarded as the Learning Pyramid (Figure 1).
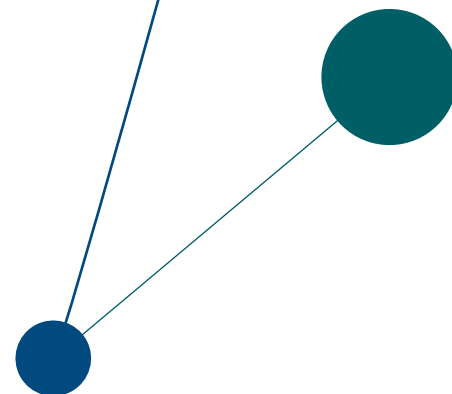
> I hear and I forget,
> I see and I remember,
> I do and I understand

The learning pyramid

The *Cone of Learning* (Dale & Nyland, 1960) promoted a pedagogy in which participants can see, taste, touch, feel, smell, and handle the learning. Unlike traditional lectures, such as using words, speech, or auditory assistance, *Cone of Learning* focuses on the interrelationships of the various kinds of media and the unique roles they play in the learning process. Technology enhances the role the *Cone of Learning* plays in the teaching and learning context. A considered utilisation of technology empowers teachers and learners to develop to their fullest potential. It also encourages the application of diverse resources and mediums in enriching teaching and learning experiences.

In 2016, The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) conducted an academic review of the Academy's academic programmes and procedures, a Programme Area Accreditation. This review process identified two key recommendations on Practice-as-Research and Interdisciplinarity. These areas in the Academy needed to be further developed within the existing academic programme.
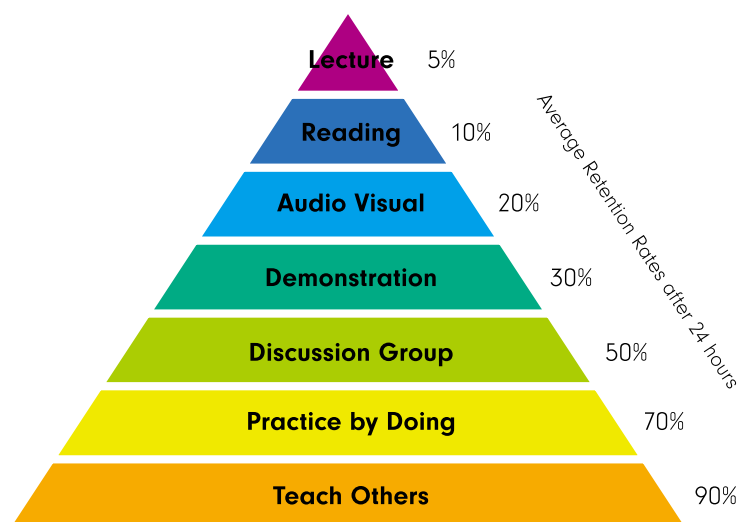
Cone of Learning-Edgar Dale

Figure 1. Cone of Learning (Image adapted by Alfred Li from IQBAL, T., HAMMERMULLER, K., & TJOA, A. M. (2010, November). Second life for illiterates: a 3D virtual world platform for adult basic education. In Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Information Integration and Web-based Applications & Services (pp. 373-380))

Curriculum C

Curriculum C aims to equip learners with 21st centruy skills by focusing on interdisciplinarity, which promotes collaboration, creativity, communication, critical thinking, and the use of technology in performing arts. This new curriculum differs from the previous one by implementing two 2-week of production periods each semester for all students at the Academy. They are between regular teaching weeks within the academic calendar. The goal is to encourage students from different Schools to work cohesively on various interdisciplinary projects. These 2-week production periods provide students with a diverse set of course options, time, space, resources in multiple subject areas and a flexible academic calendar. It aims to develop an environment for interdisciplinary works and outcome-based education approach. *Curriculum C* helps students with knowledge and skills in both academic advancement and artistic exploration. It encourages learners to express thoughts and ideas as reflective individuals and performing arts practitioners. It helps students obtain 21st century skills (4Cs) and equip them with basic literacies, competencies, creativity, and character qualities, as well as their artistic development (Li et al., 2022a; Warden et al., 2020). Within the framework of *Curriculum C*, students embark on outcome-based or project-based initiatives during production weeks. For example, several dance students could collaborate with a Film/TV student on a site-specific dance work; or several music, drama, and sound design students work on multimedia-based storytelling show or setting up a podcast. To support these potential collaborations among students, faculties and liberal arts programmes readjust their teaching schedule for the maximum benefit of learners.

Curriculum C is scheduled for 2022/2023 academic year and for the year one Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree students and gradually to all Bachelors' degree programmes in the following years. Based on an interdisciplinary approach, the new curriculum encourages students from different school to work together and helps them become lifelong learners who can adapt to rapidly changing work environments. In other words, *Curriculum C* positions students in the driver's seat and lets them handle unpredicted situations in real-case scenarios. Students may not grasp the concept instantly and in the beginning it could be chaotic as figure 2 indicates. As time goes by, student mindsets will change from uncertainty to clarity (Figure 2) while they work with each other from different Schools/backgrounds to problem-solve collaboratively on various projects.

Interdisciplinary approach

- Ability to handle a problem that cannot be precisely defined
- Ability to define a practical problem with social impact
- Train student from different backgrounds to collaboratively solve a problem

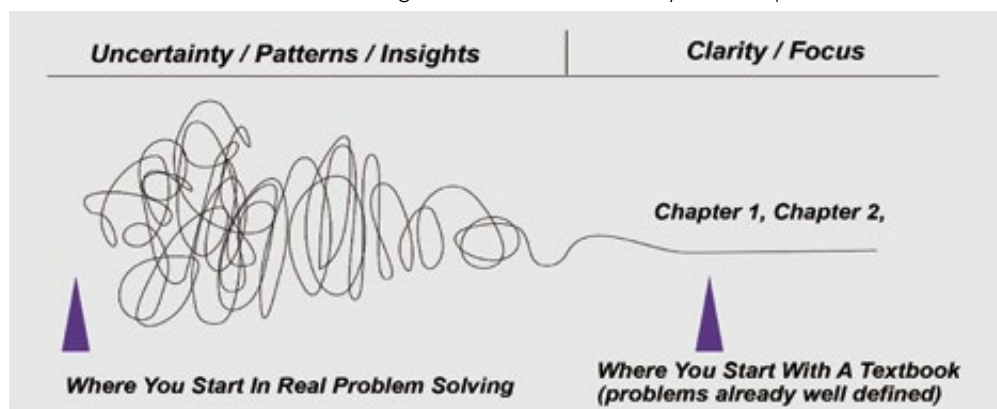**Figure 2.** Curriculum C– interdisciplinary approach (Image inspired from Singhal, S. (Sep 28, 2018). The changing design process. NYC Design, https://medium.com/nyc-design/the-changing-design-process-f8d44abb1420)

In addition to *Curriculum C*, the researcher has conducted three more case studies to showcase how HKAPA cultivates outcome-based education and interdisciplinary in teaching, learning, and performance.

Case 2 — *Sunset Concert* — School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts

Change takes place where desire meets action, at the intersection of want and do.
~ Ken Streater (https://www.pinterest.com/pin/372532200405725739/)

A typical concert, in addition to stage performers, requires several key elements: stage design, costume and lighting, sound, visual image, among others. At HKAPA, all these works are done by the students at the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts (TEA). HKAPA students are considered "academic" to other established performing artists in Hong Kong. These experienced artists believe that the key difference between academics and practitioners is the way of thinking, which leads to what actions they take and the outcomes. "Skills" can be learnt through different channels and from different people, but mindsets are not formed simply by throwing yourself into the industry or the job. Repetitive works limit your imagination and leave artists with nothing but accepting the "status quo" as Stephen Mok explained in the Academic News (2022). During the audio recording of the *Sunset Concert* in 2013, Stephen met a guest lecturer from Australia, which led to his first job after graduation. Starting with the *Sunset Concert* provided him with the opportunity to build his network, which later helped him form his own team. This decision proved to be one of the most important ones he made while juggling studying, working, and figuring out his post-graduation plans.
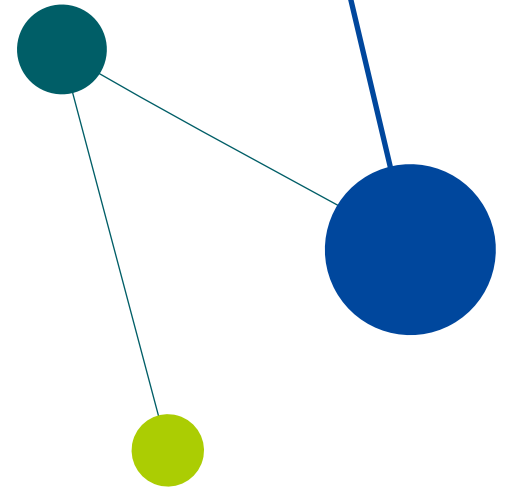
Sunset Concert 2022

Sunset Concert (SC) is one of the signature productions of the School of TEA and it has been running for the past three decades. *Sunset Concert* is a student-centred and student-driven event that aims at nurturing creative minds and helping them obtain 21st century skills. Each year, the School sends out a call for proposals to all TEA students for organising *Sunset Concert* that year. Unlike *Interstage*, which is a credit-bearing project, students do not get study credits from participating in the *Sunset Concert*. Nonetheless, every year, many students still apply to organise the event, even though they are aware that they have to spend hundreds of hours working on it. In 2020, when the pandemic shut down all theatres, Ah B, a 2nd year lighting design student, and a few other TEA classmates won the competition. They organised a popular live-streamed *Sunset Concert* during a dark period when almost all events in Hong Kong were shut down due to the pandemic. In 2022, Ah B worked with fellow TEA students Alison and MM, who are majoring in Sound Design and Stage Design respectively. They submitted an application with "Diversity" as the concert theme and it was selected. Ah B accepted the interview invitation shortly after the *Sunset Concert* 2022 and in that conversation, he shared:

> I am a 4th year student and about to leave APA. There's nothing to lose. I had so much fun doing it [*Sunset Concert*] two years ago but it was only online, due to the pandemic. I proposed this year because I want to host a hybrid show, which means having audiences in the theatre and live-stream it at the same time. It's challenging and it is the challenge I am looking forward to.

Ah B further added that he and his fellow students considered *Sunset Concert* as an unshakable tradition, the biggest and longest-lasting event in the School's history. "It's almost like a ritual," he jokingly said. McGowan shared, "the show is so popular, and all the tickets are usually gone within hours from ticket being on sale. Students do all the heavy lifting, by doing all the groundwork, including arranging all the ticket distribution." For students, *Sunset Concert* is an invaluable opportunity to test out what they have learnt in the classroom and put it into actions. They also look forward to meeting new people from different Schools within the Academy and also people from outside the Academy. They problem-solve and collaborate with others, including start-up musicians performing on the stage. "Some of those start-up Bands went on become much bigger and popular teams later on," McGowan added. Together, they go through all kinds of challenges during the entire production process (Figure 3). Ah B particularly mentioned one incident that changed this year's concert drastically.

A few days before the show took place, an accident happened in Mirror's Concert (a popular idol boy band in Hong Kong), when a giant LED screen crashed onto a dancer's head. Another dancer was also hit on the back. It was a huge blow to our plan because we originally designed a large LED screen hanging above the stage. We had to make drastic changes, working till early morning for a few days to figure out solutions. Eventually, there was nothing hanging up because nobody wanted to take the risk.

Figure 3. *Sunset Concert* 2022 (Photo: Jetlag and Tszshanleung. Image courtesy of Jetlag, Tszshanleung, and School of Theatre & Entertainment Arts)

Ah B and his production team arrived at a crossroads where the path diverged into a safe route by removing the hanging LED screens, and a risky one, which will lead to an unknown outcome, his team picked the former. "Many viewers are traumatised because of what happened to Mirror's performance, and they probably don't want to be reminded…," Ah B added. Meanwhile, they enhanced other elements, especially in terms of live streaming. The team reached out and worked with other students on its YouTube streaming. The then Dean of the School of Film and Television, Professor Geoffrey Stitt accepted the invitation and subsequently sent students and equipment to support the production. He also worked with other Schools and organisations on a variety of projects to better prepare students for future challenges and benefit from these collaborative experiences. Multiple BlackMagic audio and video systems were set up for the concert and a central controller selected various angles to be streamed online. Hundreds of people watched the concert both online and in the theatre and it was a tremendous success. There were twice as many online viewers than actual viewers sitting in the theatre. "Everyone is good at something and when we work together, amazing things happen," said a participating student.

Sunset Concert provided a nurturing ground and safe space for students to explore, create, and push boundaries. Teachers acted as guides on the side by offering necessary administrative support. Students, on the other hand, played leading roles by organising, designing, and running the entire show. The event allowed students to explore different approaches and meet people from different backgrounds to achieve the desired outcome. The show offered no grade, credit, or any payment. However, a sense of team spirit and accomplishments were shared among all participants.

Case 3 — *Cello Festival* — School of Music

Spring and Summer are busy performing seasons for HKAPA's School of Music. It organises many concerts, performances, and events. For cello alone, there are graduating students' recital projects, junior programme shows, and staff and alumni joint-performances. The pandemic forced some concerts in early 2022 to be cancelled. Professor Raymond Wang at the School of Music initiated a week-long project — a *Cello Festival*, at which all cello performances were combined into one big event. Similar to the TEA students behind the *Sunset Concert*, cello students played a critical role in making the festival possible. They were behind poster design, programme editing, technical arrangement, reception, among other activities. During the performance, they moved furniture and equipment, and they even made Festival-themed cookies that were packed in giftbags and are distributed at the opening ceremony (Figure 4).

Figure 4. *Cello Festival* (Image courtesy of the School of Music)

Cello students promoted the festival on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and other social media channels. In the week-long event, HKAPA's first hybrid *Cello Festival* featured seven cello performances both online and in theatres. Professor Wang and Professor Poon expressed their gratitude to the students' contributions in making this festival possible. Professor Wang opened *Cello Festival* with this remark "thank you all the hardworking cello students who made this festival possible"(Wang, R. Cello Festival Opening Concert, July 30, 2022). Professor Poon accepted the interview invitation and shared her perspectives regarding this hybrid approach to cello performance on Monday September 5th, 2022. She received her Bachelor of Music at the HKAPA, a Masters' Degree at Stony Brook University in New York, and later a Doctoral Degree of Philosophy in Musicology at the University of Hong Kong. As an alumnus, she is extremely happy to see how involved students has become — not only in the performance, but also for all the administration work before, during, and after the event. Professor Poon currently works with junior music students while teaching strings at HKAPA. She is still actively engaged in practical works and teaching, and occasionally performs with the Hong Kong Philharmonic.

The Intersection of teaching and learning

Learning occurs at intersections when teaching and learning are mixed. During the same interview, Professor Poon elaborated on an experience that she had in the past. When she taught a cello piece that she did not know, she had to learn it first before teaching it to students. Sometimes students would show her a cello piece that she was not aware of. Again, she had to learn it first and familiarise herself with the music, including its history, style, and technique. Later on, when she was asked to perform that piece, it took her a much shorter period of time to prepare. In such a process, Professor Poon was in three roles, a teacher, a student, and a performer. She admitted that she had benefited from the intersection between different roles. In each role, she learnt something new. With this approach, she had a deeper understanding of the same piece, and it helped her become a better teacher and performer.

Like other performing artists, musicians are usually judged by their skills and stage presence. Cellists are the same and they spend countless hours practicing and trying to master what they do. Professor Poon thought about it differently. She pointed out:

> Many cello performers are really good, and they are reaching as best as they could become, skill-wise. They [students] need something new, perhaps an ability to renew themselves. A character or a skill that others cannot copy. Or some additional stimuli to the performance, interdisciplinary approach, animation, sound, or even dancers to make the performance more interesting.

To Professor Poon, the role between teacher and student constantly shifts. At times, teachers become learners, such as picking up a new electronic device to be used for performances. For the *Cello Festival*, all the digital promotion, technology integration, and social media hashtags were done by students. At this event, some cello players started using tablets rather than paper-based scores. They tapped on a pedal connected to the tablets for flipping through the scores. Students, on the other hand, took on much more responsibility than just performing the cello well. Professor Poon summarised:

> Students have become much more responsible and motivated when they feel that they are in charge. They have taken up additional jobs, learned new skills, and supported each other throughout the week-long festival. Educators, on the other hand, initiated this project with which, students are enabled, empowered, and found their hidden potential.

Case 4 — *G1 Lab* — Centre for Education and Research (CER)

G1 stands for No. One Gloucester road, where HKAPA is located. Lab, by its default meaning, refers to a safe space for individuals to explore and experiment. *G1 Lab* helps students develop their interests and collaborate with others from different disciplines in Art X Tech exploration. *G1 Lab* is a student-centred initiative and relies on an outcome-based education approach. Provided with the latest research and technologies, *G1 Lab* is a place where students brainstorm ideas, reference scholarship, share resources, make mistakes, and correct them by problem-solving together. Students lead and develop projects with the assistance of the Centre for Education and Research (CER) staff who are equipped with research, academic, and technological backgrounds. Students in *G1 Lab* are entrusted in their capacity to become experts in areas they are interested in and passionate about. *G1 Lab*'s logo is collaboratively designed by its funding members (Figure 5).
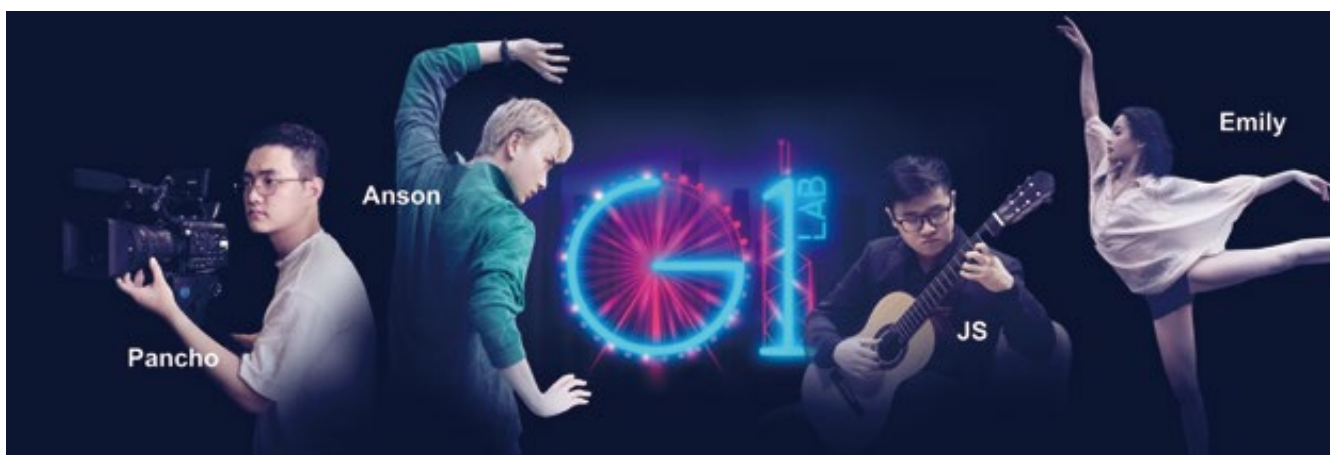
Figure 5. *G1 Lab* Logo and founding members (Image courtesy of EDuIT and G1Lab)

The Intersection of students and the creation of the *G1 Lab*

G1 Lab promotes interdisciplinarity and collaboration among all participants. It invites all performing arts students and practitioners to pitch their original ideas for projects and initiatives. This constructivist approach motivates participants to take on more challenging tasks and spend more time on work than they normally would. The founding group comprises students from different Schools at HKAPA but it is not limited to the Academy. Apart from the academic curriculum, *G1 Lab* plays an additional role in cultivating creativity and innovation skills among HKAPA students and its membership extends to the local performing arts community and beyond.

Structure

As a creative space for emerging performing artists, *G1 Lab* has four levels. Level one refers to an Interest Group (IG). Anyone who is interested in it could participate. Members will regularly be updated with the latest performance, research articles, the news on Art X Tech, and other creative project invitations. Participants can communicate with each other, set up meetings for potential collaborations and they are not obligated to make any contributions. Level two is the Production Group (PG). A prerequisite to joining this group is being asked to contribute. It could be a series of creative images, a user-friendly App, an interactive website, a Vlog, or a dynamic advertisement. The theme has to be related to performing arts. Level three is the Elite Group (EG). Once a work is submitted to the PG group, members in the management group will vote on whether the work is qualified to be featured on *G1 Lab's* social media channels: Instagram, TikTok, and Little Red Book, one of the largest and fastest growing social media platforms in the world. Level four is the Management Group (MG), comprising student representatives from the different Schools at HKAPA. They are the key players behind the scene. They spend a great amount of time and energy on various tasks, including maintaining social media accounts, uploading/ updating artworks, and liaising with different people and parties. Regardless of different group levels, *G1 Lab* places students at the centre of the collaborative learning experience. Students are encouraged to have their interests drive the content (outcome-based) that teaches skills and concepts in the process of creating the final product. CRE supports its initiatives by providing necessary support in guidance, technology, and space.

Conclusion

Many performing arts students hesitate at the intersection between being ready and taking action. Readiness combined with interest leads to engagement, however putting it into action results in meaningful outcomes. Learners' interest in a topic can hold so much power that it creates learning engagement. When a topic or a subject matter connects to what students are passionate about, engagement deepens because learners would intentionally spend time thinking, discussing, and creating ideas in efficient ways. In most cases, core concepts and actions take place outside the classroom — in ways that educators and students cannot witness.

The implementation of *Curriculum C* shows how tertiary performing arts institutes can help students become 21st century artists. Its unique structure provides students with the necessary time and space to explore and create artwork. Its blended approach, including interdisciplinary and outcome-based education, makes sure that students obtain 4C (critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration) skills during those production weeks. Cases presented in this study, *Sunset Concert*, *Cello Festival*, and *G1 Lab* provide further evidence that students are ready with self-regulated, explorative, and outcome-based pedagogy. Students take more autonomy, and demonstrate increased participation and motivation to do well, even where projects are not credit-bearing.

The findings of this research recommend that performing arts students need to be exposed more frequently to the 4Cs learning environment, under which they begin to master the given content and achieve the desired learning outcome. The performing arts industry continues to evolve rapidly, as Art X Tech, NFT, VR, XR, and Metaverse are frequently seen and heard. The author of this study hopes that educators take an innovative approach in teaching, learning and research for a changing world of performing arts education.

> ' The findings of this research recommend that performing arts students need to be exposed more frequently to the 4Cs learning environment, under which they begin to master the given content and achieve the desired learning outcome. ,

Acknowledgement

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Creative Arts Youth Work:
Enhancing creativity, participation and inclusion in community and youth settings

Caleb Lee

Abstract

This article investigates the principles, practices, and possibilities of Creative Arts Youth Work, a hybrid approach that brings together creative art forms — such as theatre, music, dance, visual arts, photography, film — and professional youth work practices. Drawing on action research with young people, artists, creative producers, and youth workers, as well as sensory ethnography, it aims to illuminate how, and to what extent, such a method can enhance creativity, participation and inclusion, affording young people the necessary skills and resources to negotiate their own identities, forge social networks, and imagine alternatives for the future. The work builds on and extends critical youth studies and applied arts scholarship concerned with strategies for engaging young people as active agents of change. More significantly, it illuminates how Creative Arts Youth Work can generate possibilities at three intersections: (1) sustained participation, (2) moments of encounter, and (3) creative agency. In doing so, it suggests Creative Arts Youth Work has the potential to take on new significance in community and youth settings in the twenty-first century context.
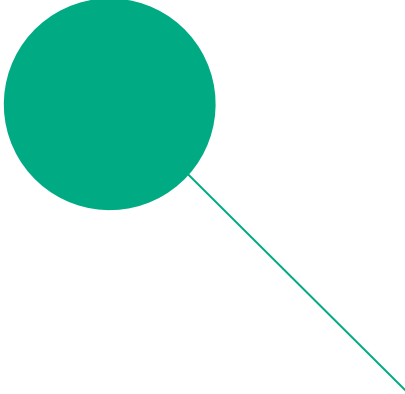
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Introduction:
Creative youth work in
context

This study took place in the context where there has been a revitalised engagement with the arts and young people in recent years. It drew on a research project I undertook in the spring of 2022 which examined how the arts and cultural provisions in youth settings could be made more inclusive and relevant to young people. Led by *Spotlight*, a creative youth service, in partnership with Queen Mary Arts and Culture and Arts Council England, this project aimed to identify and address the specific and complex issues faced by young people participating and progressing in arts and culture in youth settings.

As a youth service for Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association, *Spotlight* opened in 2014 in a brand-new purpose-built creative youth space in Langdon Park, and is designed to support and inspire young people (11–19 years old, or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities) across East London. Located away from the glamour and buzz of the city centre, *Spotlight* is situated in an area traditionally underserved by cultural provisions. The majority of the young people that utilise the centre's services tend not to have a background in the arts nor possess knowledge of being involved in the arts. Rather, they are young people that are routinely labelled as disenfranchised, marginalised, or excluded from such activities. On a wider level, funding cuts have also forced local schools in the area to reduce their arts and humanities offerings, with subjects such as drama, music, dance and visual arts removed from the curriculum. As a result, these barriers have limited young people's access to arts and cultural activities, especially within these communities.

The impulse of the project emerged from this lack as well as wider concerns of the youth and cultural sectors being placed under immense pressure as they struggle to respond to increasingly pervasive issues that have threatened the health, social, and personal development of young people (Churchill, 2021; Cowie & Myers, 2021). Additionally, issues such as serious violence, declining mental health, as well as the negative consequences of social isolation and limited employment opportunities have also left young people vulnerable. To cope with these challenges, *Spotlight* works with grassroots and cultural organisations to bring creative art forms — such as theatre, music, dance, visual arts, photography, film — and professional youth work practices closer together; an approach they term, "Creative Arts Youth Work". This intersection involves a dialogic process in which artists and youth workers build relationships with young people through the arts, supporting them at their own pace and ensuring that their voices are heard and responded to. By integrating artistic practice and principles of youth work, it provides young people opportunities for discovery, growth, and inspiration, empowering them to pursue their ambitions and future pathways.

Harnessing the arts to engage young people is not a new phenomenon. Numerous studies of community performances (Kershaw, 1992), applied theatre (Nicholson, 2005; Thompson, 2009), and socially engaged arts (Wexler & Sabbaghi, 2019) have illustrated the benefits of creative interventions, where young people are encouraged to participate in different modes of activism, performance and artistic activities. On the level of policy, there is talk about the role of creative activities in helping young people deal with anxiety, stress, and social isolation, as well as a wider commitment by the authorities to develop 'creative skills and critical thinking' more effectively as they prepare to enter the workforce (Arts Council England, 2020). However, as youth scholar Frances Howard (2007) has observed, the emphasis on measurable outputs, structured activities, and justifying value for money for youth and arts projects are situating them in risky terrain. Firstly, where the primary interest lies in utilising the arts as a tool for intervention or to produce a fixed outcome, it leaves little scope for the individual's imagination and creative participation. Secondly, instrumental shifts in policies have positioned young people as "problems" to be solved, or victims to be "saved" through targeted approaches, echoing neo-Victorian rhetoric. Inevitably, and not unjustly, where funding for the arts comes with the proviso that there is proof of educational and social benefits, youth programmes might shift to a "product approach" (Ord, 2014), losing sight of the unaccountable complexities within young people's lives.

Focusing on the creative arts programmes and practices of *Spotlight*, this article discusses how — and to what extent — Creative Arts Youth Work can enhance creativity, inclusion and participation in community and youth settings, thereby encouraging ways of working that are democratic and empowering. Based on our findings, it also proposes that Creative Arts Youth Work can generate possibilities at three intersections: (1) sustained participation, (2) creative agency, and (3) moments of encounter. In doing so, it presses us to rethink how this blended approach can meet and support the needs of young people moving forward. This paper provides conceptual and methodological advances that could be applied by other youth practitioners and researchers to strengthen the collective capacity for generating equal opportunities and access in the arts. It is also in part a response to Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln's (2018) call to show how qualitative research as a form of "radical democratic practice" can help create a more just and equitable world (p. x).

Methods

Methods and styles of working with young people are instrumental in facilitating their engagement and inclusion in opportunities that aim to promote social development and personal well-being. It is first important to acknowledge that Creative Arts Youth Work is multidimensional, intersectional and by that nature, complex and unpredictable. Methodologically, the project adapted and amalgamated different approaches — an ever-evolving and creative process that was open to trial and error. This way of researching is advocated by performance ethnographer D. Soyini Madison (2005), who argued that probing "other possibilities" allows the researcher to challenge institutions and social practices, which can contribute to new forms of knowledge (p. 11). Following Madison, this study drew on two contrasting but mutually reliant modes of enquiry — action research and sensory ethnography — to offer a diverse view of Creative Arts Youth Work.

The first part of the research process was organised as a critical praxis of action, centring on a space of "dialogic co-inquiry" (Banks et al., 2014). This turn to co-production draws on a number of approaches — including various forms of participatory action research as well as democratic and emancipatory practices — which privilege the collective production of knowledge in the midst of "action" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Practically, it involved working with a group of five young people (19–25 years old) as peer researchers alongside creative producers and youth workers who collectively informed the research design and process. Through focus groups, fieldwork, facilitated workshops, and roundtable discussions, ideas, and creative practices were grounded in critical pedagogies, enabling us to identify, examine, and take action on matters we believe needed change. The process of re/imagining with them drew upon their experiences to support the understanding of their position, environment, and socio-political context. Together, we engaged in ongoing dialogue about their goals, experiences and social change aims for the project.

Centring action research at the core of the study also enabled us to create agency amongst the young people, address needs for independence, establish a sense of accountability, give voice, and empower them accordingly in the process. It is important to note that young people are both valuable holders of knowledge and experts on their own lives and experiences and reflect epistemological and ontological commitments of the participatory research paradigm (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). This approach therefore not only chimed well with the wider use of collaborative frameworks for critical youth research, but crucially facilitated an understanding of multiple truths, thereby co-creating knowledge that was inclusive and relevant which we could ethically put into action. For our study, these values and commitments of democracy encouraged an openness to moments of pedagogical possibility, recognising young people's ability to contribute to real world impacts.

To extend these ideas, the second part of the process intended to invite young people, artists, and youth workers to reflect on their relationship with creative arts activities in youth settings, and articulate some of their challenges, approaches and limitations. To understand the perspectives of those being studied, there was a need to look beyond the mode of observation that is often used in "conventional" ethnography, and actively sense, experience and participate. It was also vital to experience Creative Arts Youth Work at first hand, and we attended to the experiences of witnessing rehearsals, panel discussions, participating in workshops and other encounters. This form of ethnography research as "sensory participation" has been theorised by cultural anthropologists; an approach eloquently summarised by Sarah Pink:

The sensory ethnographer is trying to access areas of embodied, emplaced knowing and to use these as a basis from which to understand human perception, experience, action and meaning and to situate this culturally and biographically (Pink, 2009, p. 47).

Rather than simply watching, "being" with research participants places ways of knowing at the core of the experience, acknowledging the material and political contexts in which the ethnographer is situated. Following Pink, recognising our positions, biases, and emotional responses, alongside "what was said" and "how they were said" was a crucial part of the research in seeking to understand how Creative Arts Youth Work operates in different contexts. Being with young people and participating in activities together also meant that I had to simultaneously navigate the role of researcher, creative facilitator, and youth worker. This reflexivity enabled me to respond to the range of practices and emotions felt by young people, while also remaining alert to new questions and modes of analysis. At each stage of the research, we developed research methods that aimed to capture the layers and richness of Creative Arts Youth Work *in situ*. We invited participants to share their stories, images and recordings of performances, personal blogs, social media posts and TikTok videos to evoke memories and particular encounters of youth work. This became an active process of retelling that embraced the variations, gaps, and silences in youth work, revealing the tensions, richness, and layers of its practice.

Drawing on these two modes of enquiry allowed the study to engage with the messiness and richness of Creative Youth Work, with a lens through which to consider the social, emotional, and political role of the arts for young people. In her research, drama educator Kathleen Gallagher (2008) used an arts-based approach to discuss the implications of the researcher's involvement in the production of knowledge in unpredictable and fluid situations. In keeping a balance between active participation and observation, she argues that being "fully involved" is crucial as it attends to moments of engagement that "betray our interpretive lenses" (p. 72). Following Gallagher, it is this idea of responding to the unknown and shifts in the research that we embraced. As with such study, it is not my aim to provide an exhaustive list of activities or best practices. Instead, I focus mainly on two programmes — *Youth Theatre* and *Creative Cafe* — as they, in my opinion, best encapsulate the positive impact of Creative Arts Youth Work.

The following sections in this article aim to illuminate the three thematic intersections — "sustained participation", "creative agency", "moments of encounter" — that emerged from our study, and highlight the artistic and social potentials of Creative Arts Youth Work in these specific contexts. In doing so, it argues that Creative Arts Youth Work has the potential to encourage civic participation, mental health promotion, and enhance educational outcomes amongst young people.
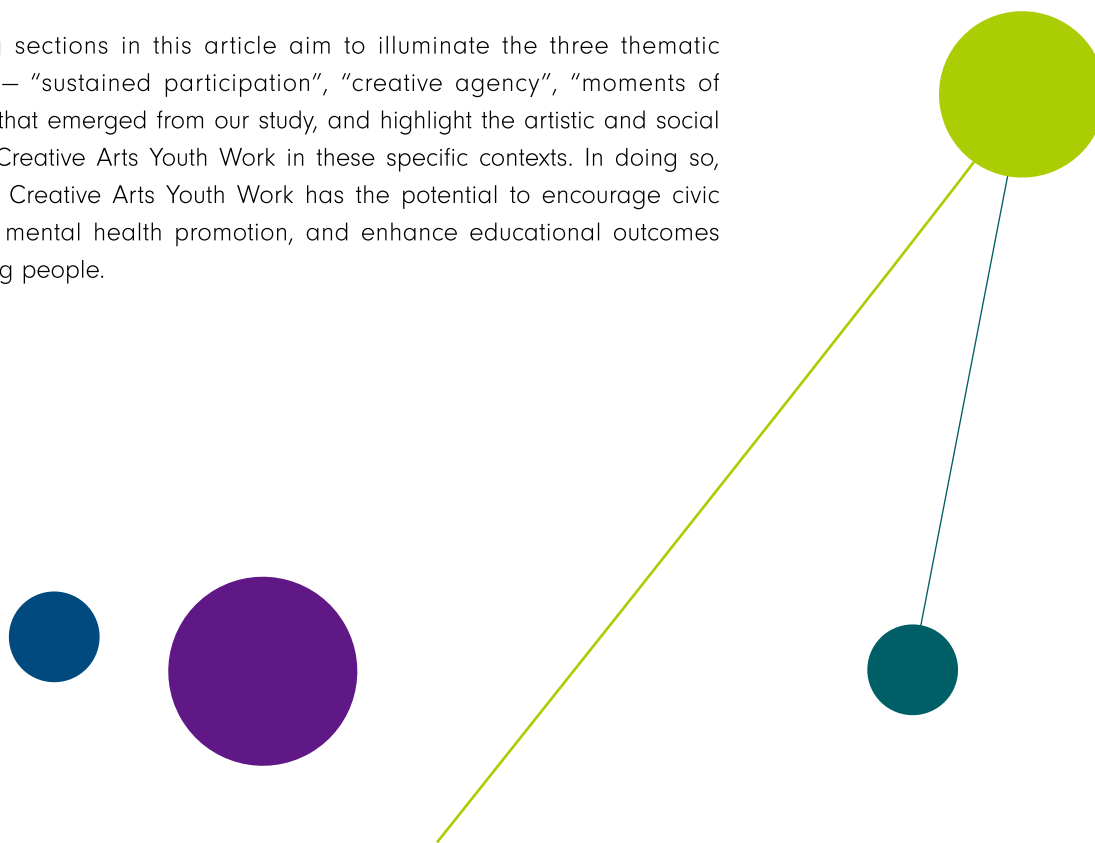
Sustained participation: *Youth Theatre*

As a concept, participation in community and youth settings is widely debated and lacks a shared definition or understanding. Nonetheless, it has become accepted and celebrated as a positive practice and ideology by governments, educational institutions, communities, and youth centres. For some, participation can mean "attending" or "taking part" in an event, while others might view it as a concept that addresses issues of social inequality, decision-making processes, and citizenship (Nicholson, 2005). Recent happenings such as the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements have also invited new ways of thinking about young people's participation in political activism (Campbell, 2018). Roger Hart provided a useful definition:

> Participation is... the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship (Hart, 1992, p. 5).

Traditionally, community development and youth work have focused on active participation as a way of empowering young people, a practice that both individual and youth workers engage in (Lansdown as cited in Tisdall et al., 2006). This often employs a number of methods for involving young people in dialogue and in building their confidence and self-esteem. The assumption is that the individual is then able to choose and make informed decisions (Smith, 1994). However, in practice, this is a complex and time-consuming process, something that does not always fit well when resources are limited or where evaluation is linked to a set of objectives or policy outcomes. Resultantly, forms of participation might be temporal and superficial, disenfranchising young people and those working with them.

This theme draws on and extends psychologists Nancy Cantor and Catherine A. Sanderson's (1999) idea that "sustained participation" in meaningful, culturally valued activities lends order and gives purpose to everyday life. They argue that a commitment to regular activities matters because it provides social well-being for individuals and their communities. In this study, we defined "sustained participation" through attendance over a period of time and active involvement. Here, I would like to draw on the *Youth Theatre* programme as an example to illustrate this idea of "sustained participation" in Creative Arts Youth Work.

The *Youth Theatre* programme, like all of the creative activities at *Spotlight*, gives young people the opportunity to be involved in the arts and learn about themselves in relation to others and their environments. Rather than focusing on training (e.g., acting, movement, singing, and so on) or developing a final production, drama and theatre is used to connect with young people, offering them a safe space for conversation and creative expression. These weekly sessions are flexible where young people have agency over this space and to a very large extent, the subject matter, and devised contents of the theatrical work they produce. In these sessions, youth worker Carlos Ossa Valencia and creative producer Elinor Whittle support the young people in designing and developing their creative ideas by leading brainstorming activities, dialogues,
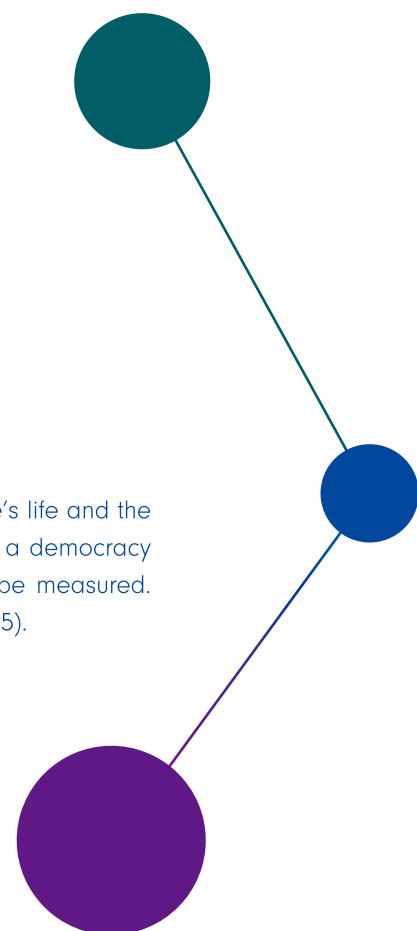
and one-on-one meetings, while simultaneously attending to their pastoral needs. Through stories, games and various creative activities, this process generates rich shared experiences that involve ongoing reciprocal learning where both young people and facilitator continuously reflect upon and negotiate their political agendas, dynamics, and creative commitments.

In discussions with the participants, it revealed positive connections between theatre and their development, alongside benefits of inclusion, emotional well-being, and social connectedness. One participant described the friendship that she developed with another participant who had been with her since she was 11, noting that "having someone you trust there at every session really makes the experience more enjoyable". Another said that she liked simply being around people, and even found it "enjoyable to just be in the room and watch people run around and play games". One participant also revealed that he felt safe in these sessions and could "speak honestly and openly" with the facilitator and the rest of the group. Several appreciated being part of a diverse environment in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and background, and enjoyed the conversations, as well as seeing and hearing different stories.

The young people also spoke fondly of a sense of community within the group. Discussions about sustained participation included comments about the connections developed, the sense of being a part of a team and of supporting a valued youth theatre community. One spoke about feeling "safe" that the friends she made felt like "family". Personal connections appeared to be important in developing this sense of belonging: many shared salient memories of interactions with other youth workers and facilitators in these sessions, which has helped them gain confidence and useful skills that they can apply in life. Most significantly, one participant pointed to the importance of long-term engagement, saying "we will be here till we're nineteen; And this will be a place for us to learn and grow together; with no pressure, unlike in school".

Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013) has persistently argued that creativity should be read "forward" rather than in reverse, and to "follow the paths along which it leads" (p. 7). This emphasis on the ongoing processes involved in the practice relates with "the movement of growth or becoming" (2013, p. 7). This idea of "becoming" is well reflected in the practices of the *Youth Theatre* programme in that it places an emphasis on the creative and personal development of the young people, adopting a flexible and open method that allows them to improvise, experiment and engage with ideas and practices that might not necessarily lead to any outcome; prioritising the "doing", rather than the "done". Creative Arts Youth Work in this context reveals how the integration of dramatic and youth work practices can enhance young people's artistic experience, leading to a sense of immersion, shared identity, and social connections through a greater understanding of the perspectives of others. Whether through free play, writing new stories, or dramatising challenging issues faced in school or at home, the unshackled freedom of self and creative expressions not only invites them to engage in an open-ended experience, but also empowers them to explore and discover new ways of being with each other and in the world. This suggests how a slower and sustained way of working can give time for ideas to mature, encouraging young people to imagine, dream, learn, and evolve as they go along.
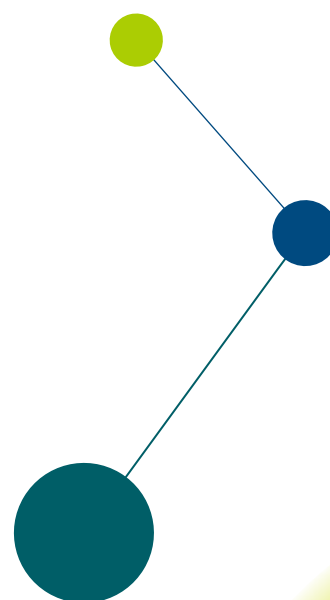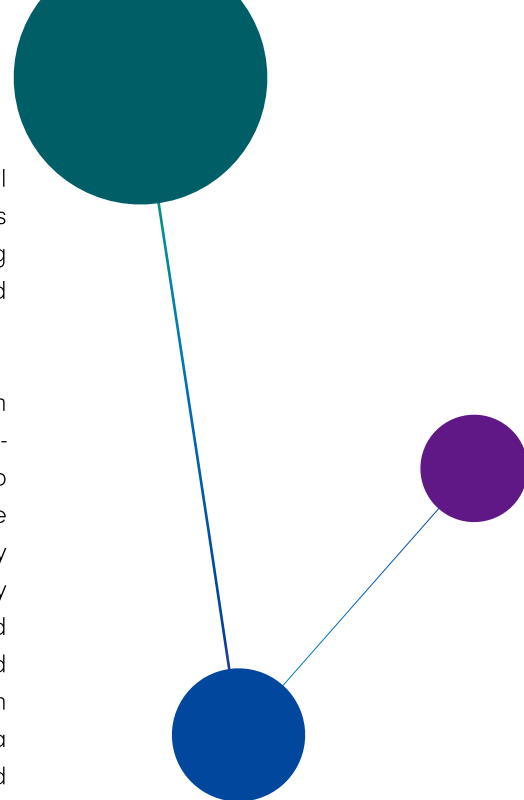
Moments of encounter

The second theme in this study also emerged from our time being involved with the *Youth Theatre* programme. This theme builds on Anna Hickey-Moody's (2013) argument that art can be a form of resistance to the rules imposed upon young people by schools and systems. She claimed "when a young person makes a work of art they effect a political statement, call the public to attention and invest in particular ideas about identity, community, and belonging" (p. 1). Upon reflection, we understood "moments of encounter" as an intersection that reflects the messy process of engaging young people in creative activities with transformational aims. We discovered that these spontaneous happenings were moving, embodied, comforting, challenging, continuous, playful, frustrating, changing, and liberating in terms of locating and analysing learning and social change.

In many ways, drama and theatre-making offers a good place to represent and unpack these complex ideas. There is often an emancipatory quality to this work, and many youth workers and applied drama practitioners have a particular commitment to disrupt hegemonic socio-political narratives (Nicholson, 2005). Theatre provides a powerful opportunity to explore and ask questions about the participants' lived experiences and can seek to redress that balance by telling alternative stories from different perspectives. There were many unexpected turns in our study that coalesced around the young people's narratives and social identification, as well as circumstances where young people openly resisted, challenged, and rejected our pedagogical attempts. Here, I would like to use an analogy to illustrate how "moments of encounter" can generate new insights and move beyond one-dimensional and talk-based approaches in youth work.

In a *Youth Theatre* session, the participants were tasked to develop characters that they had been working on for a devised piece of work. The facilitator had offered a range of provocations to guide their thinking: What is your character's name? How many siblings does he/she have? What is your character feeling? What is his/her favourite food? (and so on). Participants were then invited to take part in a short hot-seating exercise — a common theatrical activity in which a character, played by a participant, is interviewed by the rest of the group. It was Paul's turn to be in the hot-seat and he seemed uneasy and agitated. He had created a fictional character and had mapped his personal history and story onto it, turning this into an opportunity to narrate an account of how his father left when he was a child. This was not his first time sharing this story with us and it was evident that he was getting increasingly upset. What we had not anticipated was how closely the imaginary character and the fictional narrative would reflect reality, and how closely some of the participants, who had never experienced this, would identify with the situation. Instead of ending the exercise, Ossa Valencia empathetically and sensitively used this moment to engage in conversation, guiding him into an activity in which he could turn this memory creatively into a positive fictional scenario and express his emotions in a safe manner. Other participants were also invited to contribute to the scene and to shift and change the circumstance. As a group, they enacted some of the struggles of abandonment and explored possibilities of acceptance and self-worth. The most heartening moment was when a participant turned to us and declared: "by changing yourself, you can change others around you".

1 Name has been changed to protect the identities of the young people.

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A young person's body is a site of struggle and as Terry Eagleton (1990) has argued, the aesthetic is always a discourse of the body (p. 13). Narratives that are embodied, therefore, involve a complex understanding of how ideas of the self are culturally and socially constructed and experienced by different members of the group, and how discourses of the body might be enacted and re/interpreted in the creative process. This example revealed how a moment of encounter, through dramatic exploration, can actively interrogate and contest boundaries of self and others, reality and fiction, past and present. The participants' engagement with Paul's story was spontaneous, embodied, and their reflections showed that they had generated new insights and skills through the interplay of intellectual, emotional, and artistic sensibilities. Drawing on their lived experience to offer practical solutions, they invited the individual to find metaphors and stories that make connections with life as it is or life as it might be. This process illustrates well an essential element of youth work, that:

> Youth work starts where young people are — with their own view of their lives, the world and their interests. But it does not end there — youth work is about encouraging young people to think critically about their lives and values. (National Youth Agency, 2007, p. 11).

This theme has illuminated how moments of messiness, tension, and resistance can offer possibilities through creative interventions. While moments of encounter are spontaneous, we identified practices that support these vital opportunities for personal and social change: young people have the ability to make decisions and adults must be willing to listen and respect that. Through our critical discussions, we discovered that these encounters — although messy and unclear at the time — also led to moments of comfort and intensified the young people's engagement, independence, critical thinking, and actions. As researchers, we entered these spaces with inherent power, but it is equally important to recognise that these moments have the potential to reframe our ways of thinking into a collective and shared practice. In many ways, the dialectic of theatre fits well with Creative Arts Youth Work because the process invites participants to give shape to the ambiguities and complexities inherent in different dramatic situations and to explore the challenges and possibilities of everyday life. Perhaps, part of the role and value of Creative Arts Youth Work lies in uncovering stories that are invisible and maintaining a dialogue with young people, especially those who might be perceived by others as "broken", "problematic", or "unruly".

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Creative agency:
Creative Cafe

The notion of developing "voice" is a prominent theme of youth work, underpinning many initiatives for young people and creative practices around the world. The *Youth Theatre* programme is an excellent example of how respect and reciprocity form a crucial part of Creative Arts Youth Work. Without a willingness to learn and engage in dialogue, all cultural activities can become unstimulating, artistically lifeless, and emotionally empty, and successful youth programmes have learnt to listen to the voices of young people both as participants and as fellow artists. As youth studies scholar James Penton Leighton (1972) argued, one of the fundamental guiding principles in youth work is that it needs to start where young people are at (p. 99). In many ways, Creative Arts Youth Work recognises that young people have the capacity to act and shape their own lives — to have agency — rather than treating them simply as "adults in training" (Bell, 2007). Conceptualising young people as agents (i.e., competent social beings) therefore positions them as 'thinkers' and "doers", recognising their abilities to navigate their own realities, while fulfilling various duties and roles and expectations of everyday life.

Part of the challenge at *Spotlight* is to build a centre that is genuinely inclusive, and offering a variety of programmes for different abilities has helped to loosen the idea that the work serves only specific privilege groups. But although this helps, and the aesthetic space can encourage creative flow within the building, one of the barriers to young people's participation is that the architecture can be daunting, particularly to those who feel that such activities are outside their cultural experience. As *Spotlight*'s Service Manager Thom Palser has observed, "sometimes big and shiny buildings can be an obstacle, which is ironic, because we have all these wonderful people and equipment to help young people" (Palser, 2022; interview). Theatre educator Helen Nicholson (2011), who examined the relationship between theatre and spaces of learning, argues that a large part of participation is dependent on young people's "ability to generate their own spatial meanings within the building" (p. 209). Bringing young people into creative spaces can enliven these buildings, but it relies on cultivating a positive ethos towards everyone who enters the building and making them feel welcome and safe. Here, I would like to use the *Creative Cafe* programme, as an example, to illustrate this idea of creative agency and how young people can produce their own spaces in which to learn.

The *Creative Cafe* is a weekly event that hosts different "taster sessions" — ranging from performing to visual arts — and changes every week. It is open access and is structured around two activities — one that takes place in the main hall (e.g., music jam, podcasting) and another that happens outside the building and/or in the foyer (e.g., painting, arts, and craft). There is also a cafe space on the same level of the main hall and foyer where young people meet and gather. To encourage young people to stay on, food and drinks are served here at the end of the programme. Similar to the *Youth Theatre* programme, young people are free to come and go as they wish. These hands-on activities do not require participants to have any prior experience, thus allowing them to experiment with different forms of creativity at their own pace, regardless of their abilities. Young people who are interested in a particular art form

can later choose to attend other targeted and professional development programmes within the centre that can help them progress their interests and skills — a refreshing change from formal learning and fixed timetables of school.

Those familiar with *Spotlight's* work readily participate in the *Creative Cafe* programme, but others who do not, approach it with caution, often preferring to "hang out" in the nearby park or outside the building. To encourage participation, the *Creative Cafe* adopts a unique engagement approach: Youth workers and artists strategically position themselves outside the building and use simple creative activities as a starting point (e.g., demonstrating how to spray paint on a canvas) to invite young people into a conversation; and gradually, over time, into the building. Inside, youth workers would also enthusiastically engage and converse with young people, placing their curiosity at the heart of discovery and learning. Although the focus is on the creative experience, the exchanges often lead to discussions about family relationships, friends, hobbies, achievements and can sometimes spark larger debates on politics and heritage. For example, in one of the podcasting sessions, a facilitator initiated a conversation with a male participant who seemed hesitant at first. However, after some encouragement, he started to warm up and began to share his personal interests, slowly moving into a more serious dialogue about race, ethnicity, and his vision for Black History Month. This is very much in line with what Kerry Young (2006) called the youth worker's artistry, which draws on constructions of the informal educator as a reflective practitioner. In this, the aspects of the work are cogitated and shaped by the facilitator and young people to create an aesthetic process that is inclusive and imaginative. This way of establishing dialogue as an embodied pedagogy requires considerable sensitivity, awareness of physical space and personal boundaries.

When I interviewed two young people, Tom and Ellie, who had benefited from the programme, it was noticeable that they had developed strong emotional ties to *Spotlight* as well as the youth workers and artists with whom they had worked. Neither had been particularly successful at school and Tom revealed that before he had joined *Spotlight*, he was always "getting into trouble", cheekily adding that "if you had nothing to do after school, trouble will come looking for you". He was always seeking creative things to do but did not know where to start. And even when he did, they were "way too expensive". He recalled having a two hour-long conversation on a sunny afternoon with a youth worker outside *Spotlight* who encouraged him to get involved with some of the activities. Feeling sceptical at that time, he thought that it would be "another boring place". Once he had taken the first step to join a *Creative Cafe* activity, he described that the positive atmosphere generated by the creative facilitators and youth workers had made him value himself more, and that he was guided on taking constructive steps to develop his artistic career. Tom also commented that he had a more "positive outlook on life" after joining *Spotlight* and Ellie added that "there was always someone that you could talk to", which meant that neither of them "felt looked down upon". Ellie, who shares a similar interest in following a career path in music, focused on the personal and social benefits of the programme. She particularly valued the relationship she forged with friends, as well the creative facilitators and artists who were her "source of encouragement and strength". What was
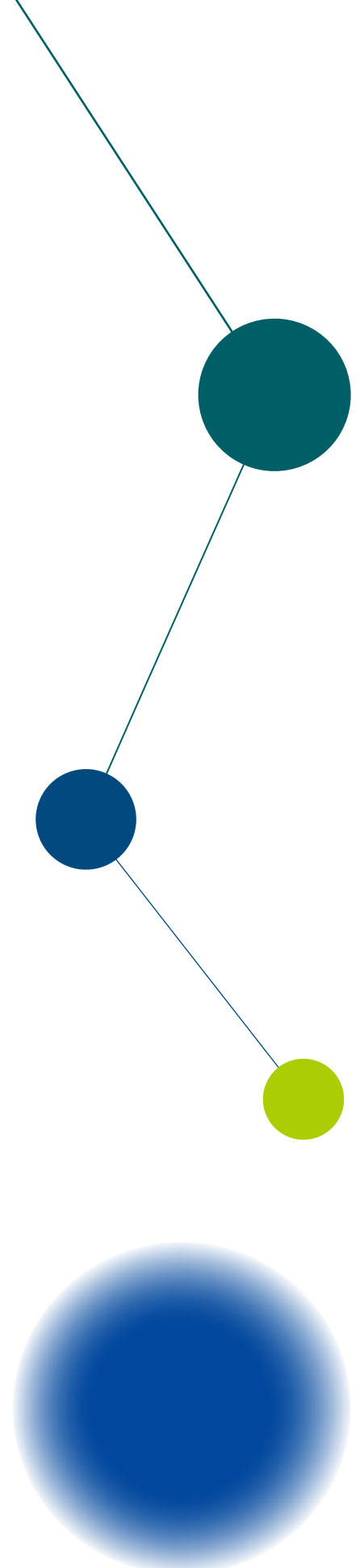
most interesting in the conversion was that both Tom and Ellie were keen to stress the freedom they had, and how the environment had provided them with a safe space in which they could take risks, both personal and artistic.

This process of development which involves asking questions, reflecting, discovering, playing, and risk-taking, as educationalist Anna Craft (2001) stated, places an emphasis on the "quality of personal agency" (p. 82), an aspect that youth work advocates. This is important not least because of the joy that comes from creating interactions with individuals and groups through which they share aspects of their lives, but importantly, illuminates how they view the world. The *Creative Cafe* illustrates well how local community and youth services can offer creative opportunities and a point of stability for young people to tap into their creative potential. It also reveals how such a programme can grant agency to young people who have found formal education difficult and empower them to pursue alternative routes to learning.

Conclusion: towards an approach for enhancing creativity, participation, and inclusion

This paper has illustrated the benefits of Creative Arts Youth Work and how it can enable young people and their communities to explore issues of self, disempowerment and voice in ways that are inclusive, imaginative, and non-hierarchical, thereby shifting the focus from working "on" to working "with" young people. Our findings underline the richness, diversity, and possibilities of Creative Arts Youth Work as an evolving practice and the ways it can connect individual development to community well-being. At the heart of Creative Arts Youth Work is a belief in the transformative power of the arts to provoke the imagination and encourage new ways of living in and seeing the world, influencing attitudes, and nurturing young people. This approach provides creative opportunities for young people to participate in the kind of art-making they value, recognising that creativity is not "knocked out of us", but as anthropologists Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007) argued, is expressed in how we move, connect, and improvise with the materials around us (pp. 2–8). As with any approach that aims to be inclusive, they sometimes miss the mark. But when successful, these encounters become intense personal interactions that can lead to self-development, better well-being, trust building and social cohesion. For Creative Arts Youth Work to be genuinely inclusive, artists and youth workers need to continue to find ways that can encourage the exchange of skills, stories, and ideas across different communities and young people, regardless of their cultural background or abilities. There is no universal approach to youth work that seeks to address social justice, and this insight to Creative Arts Youth Work has contributed to a line of inquiry focused on enhancing creativity, participation, and inclusion for young people accessing the arts.
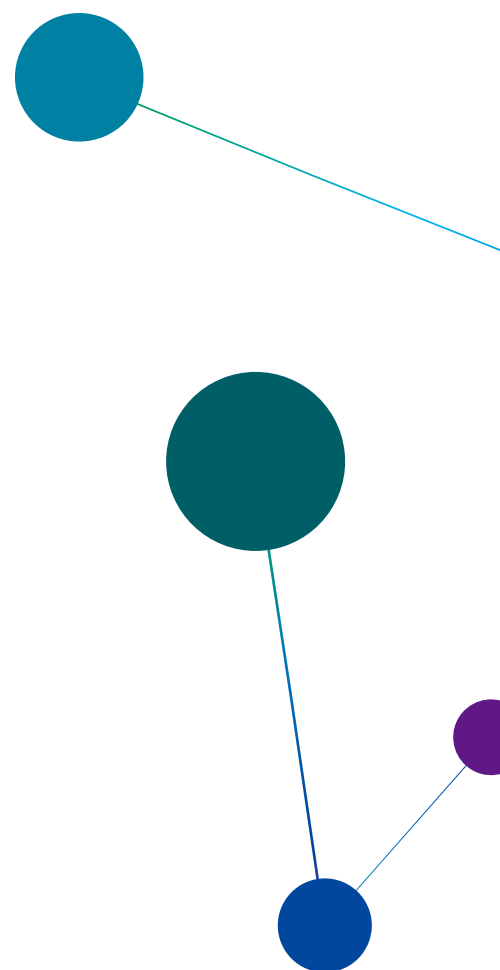
2 Name has been changed to protect the identities of the young people.

A final note on a unique challenge about working with young people in youth settings is the fluid and transient nature of their involvement and participation. It is important to acknowledge that some of the participants had other commitments and many expressed regrets about not being more actively involved throughout the process. Like most young people, they were working, attending school, volunteering, engaging in self-improvement projects on top of their social commitments. Additionally, some were managing domestic crises, mental health issues, relationship challenges, and vulnerable housing. Being sensitive to and compassionate about the range of challenges young people face in their daily lives is an ethical imperative for those working in these settings. These encounters between art and context mean that ethical boundaries are likely to be constantly challenged.

In summary, this paper has illuminated the ways in which Creative Arts Youth Work can create encounters that are creative, dialogical, and aspirational. I argue that Creative Arts Youth Work can provide an ethical and creative methodology for working alongside young people as co-creators of an alternate world grounded in equity and justice. My hope is that these three thematic intersections in Creative Arts Youth Work have generated new insights and provocations for educators, youth workers, artists, and researchers who wish to engage with young people to effect change in an increasingly fractured and complex world.

Figure 1.
Sustained Participantion:
Youth Theatre
(Image courtesy of *Spotlight* 2022)

' My hope is that these three thematic intersections in Creative Youth Work have generated new insights and provocations for educators, youth workers, artists, and researchers who wish to engage with young people to effect change in an increasingly fractured and complex world. '

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