

DEVISED

THEATRE

DRAMATURGY

A Practical Handbook

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1 INTRODUCTION

Dramaturgy is a structure of performance that unfolds in time to provide the audience with a specific experience. In this book, we will look at the construction of this experience in contemporary performance and the elements of its structure.

Contemporary theatre has many forms and formats: from documentary and immersive theatre that may resemble drama theatre to sound walks and performances without actors that often cannot be differentiated from visual arts projects. This richness of forms is a luxury because the artist can choose from a vast variety. At the same time, it can be a burden, because each form works a bit differently dramaturgically; it has a different logic that the artist needs to adapt their thinking to. Even when an artist works in the same form again and again – the dramaturgy is always different – it uses different theatrical language, has different focus, and unfolds in different ways. For contemporary dramaturgy, this is the greatest challenge: to understand how different dramaturgical systems work, how to ‘build them’, and what kind of experience they can give to the audience.

Dramaturgy of performance always works with specificity on many levels: specificity of the topic; specificity of the attitudes towards the topics; specificity of who the artist(s) is/are; specificity of the culture it is

made within (even if it works against it); specificity of the moment in time; specificity of the space(s) where the project is rehearsed and takes place; and many other specificities. These specificities one cannot always predict, and maybe one cannot even take all of them into account – but one has to be aware of them. One has to listen to them – what they need, what they want, how they operate. It always changes. And it always happens in the moment through listening and reacting to what exactly is happening in dialogues, rehearsals and with audiences.

I say ‘one’ and not ‘dramaturg’ because dramaturgy is not done solely by the dramaturg; dramaturgy is executed by the whole team (performers, directors, designers, musicians, dancers, etc.). Every performance has dramaturgy even if it doesn’t have a dramaturg. And if there is a dramaturg, their role can dramatically differ from project to project.

For all these reasons, it is impossible to write ‘a dramaturgy recipe book’ of ‘how to’ build a perfect contemporary theatre dramaturgy. But we can create a system of awareness, what to pay attention to, things to look for, a system of paradigms. Thus, the first chapter of the book will describe paradigms or patterns of awareness of dramaturgy by looking at dramaturgical stage elements and their relations to other elements, to provide the possibility for students to create an awareness of what could possibly be included in a specific dramaturgy and how it performs together (against and with each other) in a complex dramaturgical composition.

In the second chapter we will try to describe some principles of the often-unpredictable processes of devising a performance through the process of rehearsing (often without a pre-written play script). This chapter is accompanied by a few tasks for devising in the Appendix of the book intended as an illustration.

The third chapter will focus on the dramaturgy of the spectator. The spectator is a crucial part of contemporary dramaturgy because the focus of dramaturgy has moved from analysis and interpretation of a pre-written play to the construction of the experience of the spectator. Throughout the book we will follow Turner and Behrndt¹ in defining dramaturgy as unfolding the experience for the spectator, where we look at all the elements together happening in time to provide the spectator with a specific experience. An important change for dramaturgy in recent decades has been the change of focus from constructing meaning to constructing experience.

The dramaturgy of the last decades has changed also because theatre performances take place outside the theatre buildings and use time and space differently. In chapter four we will explore time and space not only as vessels for specific action and characters, as in drama theatre, but also as having more influence on the dynamics of the given dramaturgical system – even sometimes becoming the main ‘actors’.

¹ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

In chapter five we will look at the dramaturgical strategies of some of the new forms of visual arts that appeared in the 20th century and that have heavily influenced contemporary theatre: conceptual art, performance art, and installation art. And thanks to these influences, and I would even say a merging with visual art, we have many new forms and formats in contemporary performance, some of which I describe in the appendix.

In chapter six we will start summing up the previous chapters to explore the thinking behind contemporary theatre, how it researches, looks at things, how it plays with reality, what is the logic behind it.

In the final chapter we will focus on dialogue, which is traditionally one of the most important elements in dramaturgy. But while in classical theatre the focus is on dialogue between characters, in contemporary theatre the focus is on dialogue with material, with collaborators, with space, with time, with audiences, etc. And this dialogue happens both during the making – the rehearsing – and during the performing. This dialogue, together with the experience of the spectator, could be considered the core of contemporary dramaturgy.

But do not consider this book as a recipe book; consider it as a guide to what to look for, where to look, and when to look. A guidebook of strategies and attitudes. And, hopefully, mostly as an inspirational trigger to train your awareness of what material, structures, space, time, and audiences do and how to combine them into structures that ‘can work’. Because it is

the awareness of reality, the dialogue with reality and the (often soft) shift of the perception of reality that are the main ‘gestures’ of contemporary dramaturgy, as I will describe it in one of the chapters.

As I complete this text, I realise that every day I add something and that the book could be written and rewritten continuously for ever, or at least for a very long time. I will have to stop at some point and this point will be partly random, partly decided by the administrative process of publishing a book, but hopefully it will partially also be satisfactory for me. Anyway, this book has to be understood as a map or a guide that is incomplete also deliberately – as the journey can be finished only in the specific rehearsal process.

For now, I would like to thank my student Jakub Vaverka, my colleagues Linda Dušková, Jiří Havelka, Lucia Repašská, and my dramaturg mother, Jelica Čeranić-Zupanc, for their notes that helped me to formulate and refine the thoughts in this text and gave me emotional support. I also want to say that this text is a summing-up of a long process of thinking together with all of my students through the years, and that sometimes I am not sure if some words are ‘mine’ or ‘theirs’. It would be silly to thank them, as they are simply a defining part of the text. The same goes for the artists I work with: Cristina Maldonado, Wojtek Ziemilski, Julian Hetzel, Lotte van den Berg, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Jan Mocek, TAAT, Kristýna Lhotáková and Ladislav Soukup, Petra Tejnorová, and Viliám Dočolomanský – some thoughts came from them, or

rather came to me through them and goodness knows from where else. And, finally, I have to thank my teachers Lucie Bělohradská and Prof. Miloslav Klima for teaching me where to look.

2 CONTEMPORARY DRAMATURGY: THE ELEMENTS

In this chapter, we will map the main elements of the dramaturgical structure of contemporary performance and look at how the focus has moved from some elements to others, from drama theatre to postdramatic theatre and to contemporary performance. We will also follow how this shift in focus proposes very different dramaturgical structures, and very different experiences for the audience, while the main dramaturgical gestures are fairly similar.

This chapter is somewhat brief and dense but necessary, and I hope the reader will bear with me. I must also note that this chapter is closest to theatre theory, and I have tried to approach it from the point of view, and with the knowledge, of a practitioner and not a theorist (apologies to the theorists if you disagree with some points!).

Elements of performance To map the main elements of theatre we can follow Aristotle's division into plot, character, theme, language, rhythm, and spectacle. The plot is the sum of all action on and off stage depicted by the play. The characters are persons depicted through dialogue and the presence of

the actors. The theme is the subject behind the plot depicted by the dramatic conflict. The language is the understanding that the plot is expressed via dialogue and monologue, and that the language is somehow stylised or heightened. The rhythm is the unfolding of the plot, characters, theme, and stage elements in time – the composition of when things appear and how long they last in relation to other elements. The spectacle is the totality of stage elements: actors, set, lighting, sound, costume, etc.

Dramatic situation In drama theatre the main dramaturgical elements, the building blocks that the dramaturg focuses on, are characters and the dramatic conflict that is the basis for plot, story, and action. The characters have their characteristics and motivations (desires and needs) that move them towards and against other characters. The characters are not depicted through descriptions (like in epic forms such as the novel) but mainly through their actions and reactions to other characters, in addition to dialogue, the spoken words. The conflict with other characters is the basis for the dramaturgical dynamics that unfold in time. Aristotle describes the main character – the protagonist – and their enemy – the antagonist. We call this conflict also a dramatic situation. A dramatic situation is a constellation of characters, characters in relation to an environment, or to their own selves, where not everybody can achieve what they want at the same time. Sometimes it is individual characters and sometimes groups, of course. In classical Greek

tragedy, the drama was usually built through the conflict of human laws versus divine laws (see, for instance, *Antigone*).

The system of tensions and releases around the main conflict creates the basis of the dramaturgical rhythm of the play. We can say that classical drama-turgy is focused on the dramatic conflict of the characters, its expression on stage, and the rhythm with which it unfolds.

Dramatic structure The classical dramatic structure, or ‘complex plot’ according to Aristotle, includes: a) peripeteia or reversal (a sudden change of situation); b) anagnosis (knowing again) or recognition (anagnorisis or ‘knowing again’), a moment of understanding usually of the main character; and c) pathos (the suffering of a destructive or painful act). And these elements are there to provide ‘catharsis’, a specific experience of the audience – a purification of emotions via identification with characters and via an extreme change in emotions.

Ideas about the structure of the play have changed over time. For instance, in the 19th century, the German playwright Gustav Freytag developed a proposal for a variation of this structure: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and catastrophe. But the main understanding is that some kind of story/plot, depicted through action and the dramatic conflict between characters, prevailed. So, up to this point we can say that the dramaturg follows (analyses and helps interpret) the characters and the dramatic situation and

helps strengthen the basic structure of the unfolding of the plot of the play. And the series of scenes leading towards transformation, usually of the main character(s), forms the spine of the performance.

Genre Another important aspect of dramaturgy in drama theatre is the understanding of genre. The construction of the performance relied on the format. In ancient Greece it was comedy, tragedy, and satyr plays. Throughout history, theatre genres were variations of comedy, drama, tragedy, melodrama, etc. (And some theatre performances even take forms usual for literature or film, such as detective/crime genre or romantic love stories). Each genre has its own inner logic or rules of the genre, how it unfolds and what it focuses on. It also allows the audience to predict, at least in part, how things will unfold and where they will lead.

Shift The turn in the understanding of dramaturgy happened slowly, from the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century, and it is beyond the scope of this book to describe this. But in short, the understanding of plot, characters, and story changed radically over the course of this period. For instance, the plot changed to no action, as in Beckett's avant-garde play *Waiting for Godot* (premiered in 1953). Everyday language entered the stage, for instance in the work of British playwright Harold Pinter (1930–2008), who used colloquial language, unpolished grammar, and chaotic syntax that resembles everyday speech. Or the characters changed to parts of character within

one person, as in the play *4.48 Psychosis* by British playwright Sarah Kane (premiered in 2000). Most of these changes are directly connected to the change of understanding of what a story/plot is and how it is expressed. A story did not have to happen chronologically anymore; it did not have to happen within a 'cause and effect' logic; it could depict mainly feelings, for instance, and not actions, etc. Overall, it gained poetic and fragmentary features.

This is when the dramatic situation was redefined. The conflict between the divine and profane, the personal and the social, the individual and the family, the political and the psychological, etc., was not necessarily depicted by direct conflict between specific characters. The conflict could be enacted/depicted in non-narrative ways – with movement or inaction/passivity, by poetic language or by everyday language, or simply by stage images without language. The conflict could be depicted by different stage elements, and even within individual stage elements.

Postdramatic theatre This development influenced the rise of postdramatic theatre, defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his book *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999).² Postdramatic theatre is theatre that does not focus on plot and characters. It can tell fragments of stories, or even not tell stories at all. The focus here is on what Aristotle calls theme, language, rhythm, and spectacle.

² As defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

And the first two elements Aristotle describes become secondary. The stage composition of elements of the performance enacts the theme of the performance, and not necessarily the plot and characters.

Stage elements Dramaturgy in postdramatic theatre is not based on the analysis and interpretation of plot/action/characters of a pre-written play and its translation into stage actions and images. The dramaturgy of postdramatic theatre works with all stage elements equally to the text. The theatre/stage composition is a spatiotemporal composition and includes all stage elements: movement, voice, text, lighting, spacing, bodies, objects, etc. This four-dimensional composition (space and time) has elements of other compositions (from visual arts, music, and architecture for instance) such as: shape, balance, light, growth, dynamics, colour, volume, etc. And while in the dramaturgy of a pre-written play, the spectator follows mainly characters, their relations, and their actions in a format of a plot/story, in postdramatic theatre the focus is shifted from the play to other elements of the stage composition. Of course, in drama theatre the spectator also follows the whole of the stage composition, but to repeat: in postdramatic theatre the emphasis is on the relations of stage elements and the experiencing of this composition, and not on characters, plot, and dialogue.

Landscape dramaturgy So how is the dramatic situation of the performance built if there are no characters to 'quarrel' with each other in a plot? It is the

dynamics of the stage elements, the relations between them, that are the core of the theatrical situation here: the contrasts, the parallels, the simultaneity, the repetition. Because of this and the lack of story, postdramatic theatre is also called visual³ or landscape dramaturgy, though it also could be called musical dramaturgy since many postdramatic theatre performances are music performances or staged concerts. The performances of postdramatic theatre often have a very strong aesthetic element, used in minimalist and abstract ways like in the performances of Robert Wilson. The aesthetics of the performance often provides for an enactment or depiction of atmosphere or a stage. As Lehmann says: 'Postdramatic theatre is a theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations' (Lehmann 1999: 68).

Shared space communication The audience already has a very different role in this kind of theatre. Lehmann points to the fact that the space is shared in postdramatic theatre because there is no separate stage space-time (for instance, 19th-century Norway) and audience space-time (here, now). And, more importantly, in postdramatic theatre the understanding of communication is refocused, as Lehmann writes, to understanding that 'communication does not take place via understanding at all but through impulses for the recipient's own creativity' (Lehmann 1999: 67). So,

³ As defined by Norwegian theorist Knut Ove Arntzen, for instance, in the article 'Visual Performance and Project-Theatre in Scandinavia' (1990).

the audience's role is to 'fill the gaps' with their own creativity, and leaving these gaps in the right places is one of the main tasks of this dramaturgy.

Dynamic system The dramaturgy of postdramatic theatre and contemporary performance is a complex system that includes multiple layers of composition, meaning, and emotional (and other) experiencing. This system can be described best as a set of relations between elements (physical things, such as people on stage, and mental elements, such as topics, ideas etc.), where these relations are in constant movement/change. For this reason, dramaturgy can be understood as dynamic compositions/systems that change from moment to moment. It is a relational system unfolding in time.

This system is rather complex, and it is sometimes impossible to grasp it analytically/rationally. The dramaturg working on engineering the dynamics of the system also has to trust their intuition, since parts of the system can only be experienced and not rationally grasped. This is, of course, very similar to drama theatre. But a drama theatre dramaturg can 'rely' on actions and characters, the plot, while in postdramatic theatre the focus is on more abstract, visual, musical, spatial, or thematic composition.

Contemporary performance – one step further Postdramatic theatre is the basis of the dramaturgy of contemporary performance; the basic elements are the stage elements and not the pre-written play. The

dramaturgical system of contemporary performance is different every time. It uses different codes, different stage language, different logic, different composition, and even different compositional elements. Sometimes the core of the system (dramatic situation) is in the relationship of audience and stage, sometimes in the relationship of reality and fiction, sometimes about past and present (to name some of the simplest), sometimes it speaks mainly through objects, sometimes through movement, etc. And the dramaturgical system of the performances is chosen (or simply discovered) according to the material, the topic, or the desires of the creative team.

The role of the audience Contemporary performance takes Lehmann's idea of 'shared space' very seriously and takes it further: the audience sometimes enters the performance space, and sometimes the performance enters the everyday spaces of audiences. But since the space is shared (always mentally if not physically) it becomes obvious that the 'audience is present'. And their presence needs to be acknowledged. It needs to be framed. So audiences need to understand their role in the performance. Do they need to decipher? Or interact? Or simply feel? Let go of rational thinking? Or take physical action on stage? Are they purposely ignored? Their role and position in the performance – what is expected from them – can take many forms, and it can change throughout the performance, but it always needs to be articulated in one way or another (and not necessarily at the very beginning, of course).

This closer connection to the audience, the dialogue with the audience (that can be verbal, spatial or emotional for instance), is one of the main features of contemporary performance. And we can say that the focus of dramaturgy has shifted from stage elements to the relationship to the audience, their physical and mental involvement. In this way we can say that contemporary performance has shifted focus from being mainly aesthetic to a social element. And we can think of it as spectator-oriented theatre, where the spectator's involvement and experiences (physical or mental) are more important for constructing dramaturgy than the story or the stage images. This does not mean that all contemporary performance is or should be participatory. The spectator-oriented dramaturgy simply means that the main focus of constructing a performance, the engineering of it, is not on what is articulated, or how it is articulated, but on affect, what it does to the audience, how it is experienced. And the understanding that the structure of the performance's main goal is a specific experience on the part of the audience.

Artist's role But this is also artist-centred creation. The content, the thinking, the action, the ideology, the research has to come directly from the artist. It has to come from 'specific' and 'local', grounded in the maker, coming from their personal needs, desires, inspirations... confusions, their being. The artist does not ground the work in somebody else's work – the pre-written play – and their interpretation of it but in

their own thinking. This is why this kind of theatre is called 'authorial' in Czech. So, everything that happens on stage has to, in some way, come from the attitudes and needs of the artist(s) and who they are. The artist is also always present.

Formats Finally, it is important to repeat that this type of theatre comes in many forms and formats; some of the examples can be found in the Appendix to this text. And these forms and formats we can think of as what genre used to be in the past. Each format has its own characteristics, priorities, features, and needs; it is important to try to understand the logic of the format and its possibilities and choose them for the right topic and right way of relating to the audience.

But as postdramatic theatre and contemporary performance are not based on pre-written plays but are created through the rehearsal process, led by a director or collective, it is important to look at the process of making devised theatre.

3 DRAMATURGY OF DEVISED THEATRE: THE MAKING

Devised theatre performances are those performances that are made within the rehearsal process, often as a collective effort of the whole or parts of the team. It is a theatre made without a pre-existing play or script, starting with material or subject, a method often described as ‘from scratch’. Performances that are devised can be documentary, physical theatre, community theatre, immersive theatre, dance performances, found space performance, etc. They can even be, as is the case with many British theatre companies, especially of the 1980s and 1990s, such as Simon McBurney’s *Complicité*, drama theatre performances with a narrative, where the text of the play is written during the rehearsing process. Devised theatre can also take many different forms: stage performances, installations, participatory performances, performative walks, lecture/performances, etc. Devised theatre designates how the performance is made rather than what it looks like. It describes the process and not the form.

This movement of focus from product to process is the greatest difference between drama theatre and devised theatre. From product to process, from stability to movement, from truth to transformation – theatre has followed the overall cultural thinking of the second

half of the 20th century. But this movement is also, in a way, a movement deeper into the core of theatre – the ephemerality, the transformation, the movement itself. And no wonder that ‘performance’ and ‘performativity’ are among the keywords connected to contemporary theoretical thinking.

Devised theatre is primarily a British theatre term, although it is sometimes used in the US. The closest term in the Czech language has already been mentioned – ‘authorial’ theatre, where the playwright (or director) is not the main author, but the performance is ‘authored’ within the rehearsals. In other countries, very often this type of theatre is simply called performance or contemporary performance. In English, *performance* should not be confused with *performance art*, a term that designates primarily the performative practices of visual artists, originally working with the artist’s body as material and temporality and duration as some of the main tools and existing since the 1960s. Neither should it be confused with *performing arts*, which designates all the arts that include performing, such as music, and sometimes even that which is not performed live, for instance film. Performance usually simply stands for projects that do not start from the pre-written play or ‘drama theatre’ but for experimental, progressive, alternative, new theatre forms with many faces.

The devising of the performance, the developing or the making, is of course an important part of making any theatre. Any performance has to be developed through rehearsing, and it is always a group effort to

an extent. But the more extreme version of the practice can be found in European, and North and South American theatre since the 1950s. From the aesthetic point of view, the rise of postdramatic theatre has shown the possibility for artists to make performances that are not based on pre-written plays. These performances are based on visual elements, movement, language, or other aspects and have to be developed/devised during rehearsals.

On the other (ethical or political) hand, the reasons for the development of devising practices can be found in the socio-political need to work and create in more equal, decentralised ways, where the whole or majority of the theatre group is involved in the creation. It also provides the possibility to explore new topics that are interesting to less privileged groups, and it is for this reason that some of the most important representatives of devised theatre in the early years, since the 1950s, were independent smaller groups such as The Living Theatre (US), Joan Littlewood (UK), and Augusto Boal (Brazil) that came from workers', leftist, and anarchist movements. Later on, devising performances in real time within rehearsals become one of the main theatrical tools, for instance in the work of Forced Entertainment (UK), Goat Island (US), Motus (Italy), Superamas (France/Austria), Gob Squad (UK/Germany) and many other companies since the 1980s and 1990s.

It is important to mention that devising is a genuine part of theatre practice and that one finds aspects of devised practices also in the research practices of

Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and Grotowski, especially in the work with actors. At the time, these were considered part of the actors' training tools and tasks but today could serve as tools for devising material for performance. In contemporary performance, most companies use devising to some extent. Most of contemporary performance making has moved away from using pre-written text as the basis.

It has also moved away from meaning-making, and cause-and-effect storytelling, towards the post-dramatic creation of complex dramaturgical compositions in which text, plot, and story are not the main elements, but all stage elements (movement, sound, light, voice, objects, etc.) create the dramaturgical composition. This composition often seems fragmented compared to linear stories following cause and effect, but this is because they are built around a topic, an issue, or a phenomenon instead of a narrative. But it is also important to say that many devised theatre performances are in some way postdramatic (no plot and story but use different strategies), but not all postdramatic performances are devised theatre performances (for instance, one of the pioneers of post-dramatic theatre, American director Robert Wilson, is known to fully control/direct the stage images of his performances).

Devising is a practice of creating contemporary performance that covers a wide range of contemporary theatre practices from dance and object theatre to site-specific performance, participatory performance, sound performance, performative installation, etc. The

devised dramaturgy cannot be described aesthetically by what the end product looks like since it can take many different shapes, forms, and even genres. It can only be defined as dramaturgy of process. Different companies use very different methods, processes, and practices. Some performances are narrative, and some are completely visual; some companies work with plays and deconstruct them; some companies work with documentary material and reconstruct it. Some companies start with space, some with a philosophical text, some with an idea. Some companies work more physically, some more politically.... And it would be impossible to give a unified 'how to' recipe for devised theatre. The diversity of the forms and methods of the devising of contemporary theatre is so wide that it is impossible to describe it all here. So we will focus only on some main features.

Devised theatre is made via researching a topic or material and making a performance through exploring it. Often the performances have features of an essay on stage because they represent/perform the thinking around the topic/material that is often non-narrative. These performances represent thinking through performing, thinking through doing, thinking with your whole body/mind, and often cannot be 'understood' only as a set of signs, or a story.

'Understanding' in contemporary performance often happens on a different level, as a complex experience for and with an audience, not only on the level of meaning/language/rational understanding. We can think of experience as a more complex way

to understand things, understanding with the whole body (all senses), with the whole mind (memories, cultural prejudice, personal preferences, etc.). The goal of the devising processes is to create performance that provides specific experiences for the audience. The rehearsing of this can happen through experiencing, through trying it out again and again and experiencing what it does.

But at the beginning of the devising process there is always some kind of material, idea, urge/need, and this material is developed into performative material for the stage ('stage' is understood here in expanded version as any space for performance). We could also say that this performative material is developed through dialogue – dialogue with the material itself, dialogue between the group of makers, dialogue with space, etc. We can say that often one cannot predetermine what will work and what will not work in the performance until it is performed, until one can experience it. So, the material is 'understood' and devised only within the rehearsal process, while doing it. It is thinking through doing. And planning and executing and reflecting and trying things out is more merged than in other methods of making theatre.

Role of the Dramaturg This is of course a very different situation for the dramaturg, who in the more conventional drama theatre takes the role of the planner (plans the interpretation of the play with the director, but also plans rehearsals and priorities of the process) and the reflector (follows the work of the director),

interchangeably and sometimes at the same time. The dramaturg is also assisting, helping the director, and so has secondary influence on the performance, mainly through the director.

It is important here to quickly list all the levels of the involvement of the dramaturg in devised theatre in order to understand the scope of dramaturgy. The dramaturg can be part of the decision about the topic and the material. She can be part of the research of the topic and material within the rehearsals, through both field research and source research (googling and reading). She can be a part of the decision on the framing and formatting of the material/topic. She can be part of the development of the performative material out of the raw material, and subsequently the sequencing of the material. She can, of course, be part of all the other more traditional tasks of the dramaturg, such as writing the programme text and being part of writing grant applications and PR materials. The dramaturg can be a valuable moderator of the evaluation of the process and product at the end.

Many of these roles, of course, are similar to the dramaturgy of drama theatre. But in devised theatre the dramaturg is part of the making of the core of the performance, the script – part of the originating creative team. She is the midwife of the birth of the performance. And she works with the loose logic of abstraction and themes rather than story.

As mentioned earlier, the dramaturgy is not done only by a dramaturg. This activity is not inseparable from the figure of the dramaturg. Dramaturgy is and

can be done/built by the director, choreographer, the whole collective, part of the collective, the lighting designer or the costume designer, or any other member of the team. Most often it is done in part by everyone at least at a certain point. Every performance has a dramaturgy (no matter how bad) even if there is no dramaturgy involved. Dramaturgy is how the performance unfolds. And it always unfolds somehow.

So, to sum up: the dramaturgy of devised theatre is a dramaturgy of process; it is a process of making and the process of experiencing. It is different every time, to the degree that it varies from event to event of the same performance. The ingredients/elements of the performance change and the rules cannot be strictly reapplied. Each performance has different rules. Dramaturgy of devised theatre is situation-specific, meaning that it responds to the specific ingredients, elements, needs of the team, space, cultural situation, etc. Of course, this is much like the dramaturgy of drama theatre. But devised theatre does not have the logic of the plot/story, the basis that the makers and audiences can 'rely on'. There is nothing reliable about devised theatre.

Probably the most important role of the dramaturg, or whoever is doing the dramaturgy for the performance, is to designate the performative potential of material from inside the process and ways to continue working with it.

So, let's look at some of the most important aspects of devising and the dramaturgy connected to it, such as: making from scratch, material, listening to

material, potential of material, tasks, accidents, what works, vectors, and text.

Material Using the word ‘material’ can be rather confusing. There are many layers of material in the devising process.

Material can designate the starting material (events, problems, experiences, practices, etc.) or inspirational material (experiences, feelings, other people’s artwork...). This material can take the form of movements, gestures, images, objects, poems, documentary footage, photos, etc.

The starting material is the basis of devising and designates the direction that the performance takes. But the inspirational material is as important. This material inspires you to do things, but it also helps to orient you in what you want by understanding what you ‘like’. It is also a good communication tool with others in the devising process. You can show them material rather than talk about what you want. This way, you don’t have to describe but can already create performative ways of communicating. Communicating through doing, through images, through practices, tasks, failure, etc. This can be crucial in devising since a lot of work is looking for ways to communicate and think that are beyond spoken/written language (not describing and announcing but performing).

Material can be raw material (potatoes, flowers, wood, plastic, furniture), things that you would like to work with – make space, build objects, make it dance (see Appendix B, ‘Tasks’, for specific strategies). It is

very good to start the devising process by creating a sort of theatrical ‘mood boards’, where you start off by gathering inspirational and raw material to see the ‘moods’ – colours, dynamics, topics, repetitions, contradictions. Describing moods and atmospheres, again, can be helpful to create communication that is not based in describing but creates more open thinking/experiencing territories. The mood boards are very helpful, especially for the dramaturg, who can start understanding the textures and basic dynamic elements of the performance.

At the beginning, inspirational and raw materials are translated into stage material or performative material, individual scenes, or stage images/situations. This performative material is also still material that can change and will change and will need to be developed and finished and ‘polished’ depending on the spatial and temporal context it is put in.

In devised theatre, sometimes the performative material that does not seem to be working gains new importance depending on the spatiotemporal context of other situations. It is good to keep it in mind and not forget material. You never know when you could need it and in which situation it will come in handy.

Material has its own logic, needs, and character. It has its own way of demanding things or guiding you or posing resistance. One should not be afraid of this resistance. It is important to be in dialogue with the material. To bend it sometimes but also to follow it. Material can be a problem that shows this resistance, but it can also be the solution. Sometimes in the

rehearsal process when things don't work, or there is a moment of no inspiration, it is enough to go back to the material and to follow it again.

There are two strategies (and a whole spectrum in between) of working with performative material. You can pile it, multiply it, and let it speak in the context of each other, creating multiplicity and assemblages that can be chaotic (but beautiful). This type of radical piling and fragmentation is typical of a lot of contemporary performance of the 1990s and 2000s. Or you can painfully stick to what you are already doing, one piece of material, one idea, one gesture, and follow it 'until the bitter end': just do more of what you are already doing, doing it more and better and more until it gains the form you want. (These techniques can be seen in the Real Time Composition of Portuguese choreographer João Fiadeiro, and versions of it have been developed by the Polish director Wojtek Ziemilski in recent years.)

'Listening to material' is a crucial aspect of devised dramaturgy. Just as the dramaturg of drama theatre follows the play, dramaturgy in devised theatre follows the material. Playing with material, seeing what it is 'capable of', what it does, and what it 'says to you', is an important step. Spending time with the material and understanding it is the core of the research. In the beginning, one plays with the initial, inspirational, and raw material to see where it will lead. It is important to understand that raw material has its own potential, logic, and 'story' without our projecting onto it. It is important to try and access this logic – the physical

materiality, the history of the material, the way it moves, what it reflects, etc.

Later, the dramaturg follows the performative/developed material. But it is important to go back to the material every time there is a seeming 'blind alley' – when creation halts. Trusting the material and sticking to the material are important parts of this dramaturgy, as is letting go at the right time. Later, one has to listen to the performative material – the processed material that has become theatrical scenes and situations. Understanding these as still being material, something that can change and that will need to change in context of other performative material, is important for the open process of devising that works only if you don't get stuck with your ideas but let your ideas guide you.

Uncovering the potential of the material is the main goal of the dramaturg in the devising process. The dramaturg should be able to understand/feel what the possibilities of the material are (how it performs, how it orients, what it wants to do, what are the ingredients, what are the subtopics repeated below the surface, what is repeated, what is hidden, what is missing) and to map them. This happens on all levels. In the beginning, the material to be followed is the topic and the motivations and expectations of the makers. After it is the raw material, photos, documentary footage, objects, verbatim texts, etc., that are to be explored, analysed, and dissected. And finally, the individual scenes, parts of scenes, and performative images made throughout rehearsal still have their potential to be developed – sharpened, restructured, etc.

All the levels of material also have different potential in different contexts. A scene that is not working (for instance, it is boring) by itself can have an important function within the whole of the performance if put in the right place – where the performance needs to slow down, for instance. Some scenes/ideas/thoughts come from the makers and some from material and, in this situation, one has to be attentive both to the things one planned and wished for and the things that are actually happening. The dramaturg's role is very often to recognise these moments, to point to them and find ways to develop their relationship within the performance.

From Scratch Devising a performance, like any other art form, can be initiated with material – a historical event, a space, an object, a person, a photo – or with an experience – a thought, a feeling, an anecdote, an urge, a political conflict, a misunderstanding, a perceptual hallucination, an obsession, etc. And it is between the experience and the material that devising oscillates. Experiences are translated into material and material into experience.

We can define devising as thinking through material, exploring through performance, making theatre through experimenting/playing. And in this situation, there are of course many unknowns. Devising is a constant state of entering more of the unknown. So, one has to be very alert to look for the knowns – things that work, things that perform, things that are fun, things that produce experience. But one also needs to be ready

to be in the ‘unknown’. The key is to understand what one has and to work with it.

And it is important to understand that what you wanted to make is as important as what you actually made in rehearsals. The material is stubborn. It has its own ‘psychology’ and it will do what it needs to do in rehearsals. So, sometimes following the material will take you away from what you initially hoped for or envisioned. And it is important to oscillate between these ‘wishes’ and the reality that happens in the rehearsals. The role of the dramaturg can sometimes be to balance between the two: to remember the initial thoughts and ideas and to understand the potential of the things that come unexpectedly; working with both what was planned and desired and what is really happening/what the material brings – the wanted and the unwanted. Because sometimes the ‘unwanted’ turns out to be a better and more exciting performative material.

Some devising is about developing possibilities for specific existing scenes, while some devising is about discovering new material – writing texts or choreographies live in the rehearsal process. But a lot of devising is very directly playing with ‘things’ – the material. Checking what the material really is, what it can do, what it wants to do, how it ‘behaves’ in relation to other materials, bodies, and situations.

This ‘playing’ is like looking for ways to go beyond social constructions, beyond what we know it is and into what it could be or actually is, beyond meaning designated by language, culture, and habit. Simply

checking what is the real potential, the agency of the material, ‘what material wants to do’.

Finally, in theatre making there is no ‘from scratch’. There is never nothing. There are always some ingredients – the space, the people... the artist themselves is already a very specific ingredient for the performance. There is no point zero.

Tasks Devising happens through tasking. One can play with material and with the others (co-creators but also audiences) via simple tasks: ‘name all the smells that you remember from your home to your primary school’; ‘list all the things that you are afraid of’; ‘read a set of images as if they are music’; ‘find a story from three found objects’; ‘translate an object into a haiku poem’; ‘imitate how an object falls with your own body’; and so on. These tasks should be built in such a way to connect to the material/topic and to help uncover the potential of the material and the research topic. The clearer and simpler the task, the more it will open up to possibilities of creation. Tasks can be formulated by the director/facilitator but also by other co-creators (performers, dramaturg, etc.), depending on specific team dynamics.

Nothing is created out of nothing; having clear material and goals makes things simple. Let the material lead you; listen to it. It is also important to keep to one task for a long time; it takes time for things to start working. Patience is crucial here, as well as understanding that the task is just a key to something happening and that this thing that happens might not be

what you expected. Tasking can be based on extracting elements from the starting material and creating new constellations with the elements (take out voice, colour, and movement from a specific scene from a film, for instance, and reorder them). You can use translation as a tool (translate a photo into a movement, an object into a poem, etc.) You can use radicalisation as a strategy (take a piece of material and make more of what is most distinct about it – make more of a colour, movement, emotion). There are many, many, many ways to go. Some of them are purely formal: doing anything with the material just to shake it up and see where its potential lies. And some of it can be ‘material specific’: tasks made to make a specific material perform. But one should not be afraid to start with formal tasks – wait and listen to the material.

You will find more specific examples of tasks for devising later in this text.

Accidents are what one is looking for while devising. Accidents are all situations, details, and states that arise from the dialogue of devising, dialogue with material, self, and others, the unexpected that comes from the task. Accidents are important because they point to something that really happened, not something that was planned and manipulated. Through accidents we can hear what the material and ourselves are actually capable of, what we want to ‘speak’ of, the potential.

Failure is an important part of devising. First, devising is experimenting and, like all other experimenting, includes a lot of failure, things going wrong.

But the failure also stands for failure of everyday logic that contemporary performances often purposely abandon for new territories, new logic, different ways of thinking and looking at things. This looks like failure but only because we have to leave things behind that we are used to, including social constructions, everyday habits, etc., and exchange them for the ‘unknown’, where things are possible in a different way once again.

All accidents and failures have to be articulated. The audience has to be able to decipher them as something that is there deliberately, as something that the artists embraced and developed further, so they become accidents/failures on purpose and not random mistakes. Articulation – meaning well-formed, expressed, placed gestures, situations, and objects – is very important in postdramatic and contemporary performance. Things have to be developed with care and refined, placed well, and thought through. This is especially important because most contemporary performance balances outside the story/cause and effect logic. So, the audience needs to orient itself within the logic by understanding that although things seem to be chaotic, there is a new logic behind it. And good articulation helps with this.

What Works – What Doesn’t Work is the key to processing performative material. If devising – making through rehearsing – is about creating experience for the audience, then it has to be constantly ‘judged’ while rehearsing through experiencing it. And this is where ‘what works and what doesn’t work’ comes.

The dramaturg has to listen to things that ‘do things’, moments when one listens more carefully, when something happens, and moments when things simply don’t work, when they are ‘deaf’, when they don’t perform/do things.

The dramaturg or people doing dramaturgy, or the rehearsal audience, has to follow their own spectating in order to provide notes on what works and what does not work. You follow your own experience of the performances: when you are bored, when you are lost, when you are alert, etc. Good feedback is given by people who are able to trust their experience, note it, and understand it. Further, they have to be able to acknowledge that it is personal, meaning that it is influenced by who you are, what type of theatre you like, how your day was. They understand that notes on experiencing are not universal yet still worth sharing.

Also, the dramaturg has to be aware when she is too deep in the rehearsal process and when she loses freshness of experiencing. From then on, she needs to rely on other people’s experiences of the material, know which questions to ask, and be able to decipher why certain things were experienced in certain ways (and find ways to fix them if necessary).

The dramaturgical order of scenes, or sequence, is not predetermined like in drama theatre, where the play (most usually) determines the order. In contemporary performance, the dramaturgical order is designated while rehearsing. So, the script is made throughout the rehearsal process. The script in devised theatre is the set/sequence of scenes and everything that happens on

stage. Sometimes the text is written down into a script/document, but very often the texts are improvised or scattered, and the text exists only in the heads of the makers. But the performance script in contemporary performance is everything that happens on stage, and this script includes the text but also movements, voice, sounds, lighting, etc.

Very often, the dramaturgical order has to be tried out and cannot be designated just by thinking and talking. Contemporary performance dramaturgy is not based in cause-effect realistic logic. This logic is sometimes very essayistic, sometimes very sensual, sometimes based in deconstruction, but mostly it needs to be tried out in order to be experienced by the makers. Only via experiencing can one designate if it works, or it doesn't. This is because the dramaturgical composition is very complex and includes all the stage elements, in the context of time (what came before and what comes after) and space (space in a compositional sense but also as a cultural context and the context of a relationship to the audience), and a lot of things cannot be predicted.

And exactly this positioning and placing is an important part of contemporary dramaturgy. Tim Etchells describes this in his essay on the dramaturgy of Forced Entertainment: it is 'as if our dramaturgy were all positioning of information, not just temporal but also physical – a matter of where things are coming from'.⁴ This 'where things are coming from'

⁴ Tim Etchells, 'Doing Time', *Performance Research* 14, no. 3 (2009): 73.

stands for things that have happened before, the way we have experienced something previously, but also literally who is expressing/saying something. There is something conceptual, something curatorial, about this dramaturgy, where placing and context play an important role. We will develop this thought in the next sections.

But in the theatre this placing is never static – on the contrary. We can apply the dramaturgical idea of vectors, as thought by Professor Milan Klima in dramaturgy classes here at KALD DAMU. A vector is the trajectory of a character, from where they are to where they are going, in the sense of who they are and who they became, in the sense of what they desire and if they get it, etc. In dramaturgy with plot and characters, this is an important tool that lets the dramaturg see the character not as static but in time, in transformation: complexly. We can apply this idea of vectors to elements on stage or pieces of material in devised theatre – to follow them from where they are coming from to where they might go – in order to see their full potential. This takes a lot of imagination but is necessary to understand and predict the full dramaturgical composition.

The dramaturg also has to operate as a psychic, willing to be able to predict the potential of the work before it is really visible. This can only work if she understands the basic elements, the dynamics between them, and if she creates/understands the specific dramaturgical system only by the standards of that very system, its specificity, each time anew.

Text in Devising The text of a play in contemporary performance is not the primary element anymore, as in drama theatre. Text is *one of* the elements, which means that it is equal to the rest of the elements and that the other elements are not there to support or illustrate it. But text has traditionally been one of the crucial aspects of dramaturgy: the analysis, the interpretation, the translation, the writing, the cutting, and the rewriting. So, we will dedicate just a bit more space to that performance element (and not the sound, lighting, movement, and so on). We have to describe what happens to text and dramaturgy in devised/contemporary theatre.

Text (or language) for performance can be improvised, devised, written, or found. It can be the guiding element, for instance like in documentary theatre, where the text still provides a specific authentic ‘story’ to be told. But it can also have a more abstract, musical, or compositional function like in some of the work of Czech director Jiří Adámek. Text in contemporary performance can represent a story, but it can also provide the music/sound/composition of language. In between these there are many, many other possibilities for text: poetic, repetitive, sonic, dialogical, improvised, embodied, etc.

Sometimes text represents language itself and is an exploration of communication and human expression and thinking (for instance. in Wojtek Ziemilski’s *One Gesture*, 2016, exploring the sign languages of deaf people). Text can stand for specific languages: poetic language, philosophical language, language of

advertising, etc. Different forms of languages, speaking, and communicating can be represented, and text language is explored in its form and function. It can carry meaning, information, composition, emotion, etc. It can be explanation and ambiguity. Text can be also added for a specific atmosphere as a sound. A poetic text can be a carrier of emotion (of actors and/or the audience).

Very often, text in performance is improvised or partially improvised. Performers know approximately what needs to be said and use a different wording every time. This provides for a certain freshness of expression. This is important especially in situations in performance where the actor does not stand for a character but for a certain stage version of themselves and needs to appear as authentic.

Text can be improvised in rehearsal and later fixed, written down. Or it can come as an accident (things said that are not meant to be part of the performance) during the rehearsal and stay as part of the performance. Here the text is devised, distilled, during the rehearsal, and can be constructed from many ingredients: bits of existing text, improvised text, things said by the team in rehearsal, things heard on the street, or through the window... things read in books and magazines, memories of things heard, quotes from famous people, news, Twitter, science, etc., etc. Text and language come to the specific performance from many sides.

Using found text in performance is very common. This can be philosophical quotes (for instance

Superamas), or verbatim (word-by-word transcriptions of quotes of existing people in documentary theatre), or quotes from the natural or human sciences, or simply quotes of texts from everyday life (people speaking, advertising, news, etc.). Words are everywhere in different fields of human life and, as such, they can be transported to the stage to represent those worlds.

Text can, of course, also be written before or during the rehearsals. Many texts used by Forced Entertainment are written by Tim Etchells. Polish director Wojtek Ziemilski also writes his own texts. But some companies write texts together collectively or in smaller groups. In many of these cases, the text is written alongside the rehearsal and develops guided by what is found in rehearsal. This means specific concrete sentences to fit specific situations but also looking for the right attitudes and atmospheres to enhance or contradict the situations on stage.

It is also important to note that performance texts are not only texts that appear (are said, projected, or sung) in the performance. Text of the grant application for the specific performance, PR texts (descriptions, interviews) that appear in flyers, brochures, programmes, etc., are also texts connected to performances. These texts are also part of the performance: how they are written, what kind of expectations they raise in potential spectators, how the texts prepare the spectators. And sometimes writing down the description of the performance can help you gain clarity about what you are doing. These texts are an important part of the creative process and experience.

Traditionally these texts were the job of the dramaturg (in institutional theatres that is still the case), while in independent experimental productions the responsibility of writing these texts is sometimes also shared in the collaborative effort, especially if there is no dramaturg.

The Role of the Dramaturg in Devising I have already mentioned some of the strategies that the dramaturg should use during devising: looking for potential, thinking about what the artist wants and what they actually have, etc. But it is important here to try to write about the dramaturg's role in the process and to note that the dramaturg's role differs from team to team and from project to project. The role can be more creative and artistic – included in the creative process directly – or it can be more of an outside eye/critical position. In cases where there is no director and the artists/choreographers are on stage, the dramaturg even assumes the role of the director/facilitator at points. The dramaturg can also perform. (I find this 'insider' point of view extremely helpful in doing dramaturgy.)

The roles are usually blurry, and it is important to be open to different possibilities, depending on what the dynamics of the team, the material, and the project need. It is important to be adaptable and not strict with roles, as in traditional theatre teams. But it is good to articulate the roles in the specific process, if possible, for the sake of transparency, so that people understand what is expected from them. No matter what the

constellation of roles is, and even while changing, the awareness of who is doing what, what they are good at doing, and what they should be doing is crucial. In the end, it is important to articulate, if not the exact roles, then at least the responsibilities within, the creative process; this way, you will have your process ‘covered’. Understanding what your responsibility is and what you need to do gives you the possibility to do it in depth. Everybody doing everything often amounts to nobody doing anything well – if the responsibilities are not articulated. And having specific responsibilities does not mean that you cannot have dialogue about everything. It just means that individual collaborators are focused on specific things. The openness of dialogue is still the core of all devising, as I will explain in a later chapter.

4 DRAMATURGY OF THE SPECTATOR: THE EXPERIENCE

Spectator All dramaturgy is dramaturgy for the spectator because it takes care of the unfolding of the theatrical experience of the spectator.⁵ This is its main focus and role. The spectator enters and knows little about what will happen: dramaturgy is there to guide them through the experience. The spectator knows little but does enter with expectations. These expectations are formed by the title of the performance, the company performing, the venue they are entering, the poster and the text of the performance, and their knowledge of theatre or the specific performance field in the specific country. The mind of the spectator is further framed by the day they had, by their memories, etc.

But once the performance starts, most of the spectators are fully open to the experience. They come to experience something, they come open. The beginning of the performance ‘sets the stage’ for the whole event. This is when the performance connects with the spectator. It can happen through the way the spectator understands what is happening or feels/experiences it, or by understanding the code/language/logic of

⁵ As defined in Turner and Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*.

the performance. In contemporary performance, each event uses a slightly different theatrical language/logic/ the way it unfolds. There is no united code, as there is in drama theatre where you mainly follow the logic of the text. In contemporary performance, the spectator has to decode/understand not only what you are telling them but also the way you are telling it. And having it clear in the beginning is often very important. This means understanding that this will be interactive and is partially improvised, or that it is based in abstract movement, or that it is an ethical polemic, or that it is a documentary, etc. This logic or code can, of course, be broken later in the performance but only after the spectators have become used to following it. First the basic connection has to be established. One can of course decide to keep the spectators in the dark/ unaware and not help them orient. But this has to be done purposely, as a tool towards a specific experience.

So, the logic of dramaturgical unfolding can vary: you can work with information and the revelation of knowledge (this could apply, for instance, to some documentary performances where you find out how things actually happened); you can work on the level of emotional dramaturgy (how the performance feels, whether rushed, slow, intense, drippy, chewy, dissolving, etc. This is often the case with dance performances, where dramaturgy is directly connected to the composition of movement in time and space); there can be a dramaturgy of participation (where the involvement of the audience gains ethical or aesthetic developments); spatial logic (things developing/

unfolding in space – see previous chapter); distraction logic (where the logic that is set is constantly changed); etc. All of these can have one thing in common, and that is the composition of ‘knowns’ and ‘unknowns’ for the spectator. The spectator needs enough (ideas, events, signs, movements, words) to follow through recognition of something that she knows or has seen repeatedly and enough of the new (ideas, events, signs, etc.) that she does not ‘know’ and that give her an opportunity to ‘wake up’ and want to understand anew. This is the logic of dramaturgy – allowing spectators to follow and to be engaged. Spectators who cannot follow because they have no idea what is happening and cannot connect to the performance are like absent spectators. Spectators who can follow too much and can predict what will happen next are bored spectators, whose imagination and understanding and emotions are not engaged. There has to be a certain kind of well-balanced tension that holds the attention of the spectator.

Experience The dramaturgy of contemporary performance is best defined as an unfolding of an experience of the performance for the audience. Humans do not understand the world only through knowledge, meaning, information, and rational understanding. Human interaction with the world works also on emotional and sensual levels, and through reflexes, memory, and habits.

The theatre experience has many layers: the social (coming to the theatre and being in the specific

theatre and the specific place within the space, with specific people); semiotic (the understanding of the story or the unfolding of the topic); phenomenological (the embodied experience, including colour, movement, temperature, space, touch, and smell but also position, perspective, etc.); emotional (following the performance by being intrigued, bored, connected, and by identifying with or being repulsed, etc.); spatial (my spatial position – far/close, up/down – in relation to the performance), etc. Dramaturgy is the sum of all these experiences.

In building this experience/dramaturgy, we have to have a clear idea of what the journey could be for the audience and to understand the trajectory that the audience will undertake, as well as the many layers it is made of. But, at the same time, it cannot be fully controlled: we cannot manipulate people into thinking and feeling exact things; everybody perceives and reacts differently (depending on their identity, experience, mood, etc.). The dramaturgical journey of the performance consists of the expectations that the audience bring, the first impressions, the first understanding of the code/language/topic of the specific performance (each time different), and from there on it could be a journey based in one of the levels of experience described above (social, semiotic, phenomenological, emotional, or spatial). The trajectory can take the audience from knowing to not knowing, or the other way around, from being bored to being connected, or the other way around, from being entertained to being sad, from sad to participating ... etc. There is

an endless variation of possible experiences/journeys. And despite the fact that one cannot completely control the experience of anybody else, the basic form of it has to be built.

Dynamic System In his book *Art as Experience* (1934), psychologist John Dewey declares that all experience is aesthetic experience. This is a very useful book for dramaturgy defined as experience for the audience. Dewey says that all human experience is aesthetic experience because ‘in every integral experience there is form because there is dynamic organization’ (Dewey 2005: 57). And let us add: at least there is our reading of a dynamic organisation as a form, often also read as meaning. Within performance this ‘dynamic organisation’ is the dramaturgical system. Dramaturgical systems consist of elements (objects, bodies, lighting, audience space, topics, memories, urges, desires, rhythms, or, simply put, *everything*) and the relations between elements. This dynamic system exists in time, of course, and of course all the elements and the relations change and transform through time.

The dynamics happens as potential, as movement, as relations, but also as change. It is extremely complex, but these changes can be, at least provisionally, usually divided into parts/scenes/moments that constitute the totality of experience. And it is very hard to immaculately separate the individual scenes or moments in the performance. They all influence each other, they are partially merged, coming one from another in meaning, visuality, movement, experience.

What comes later is under the impression of what came before, and what came before changes in relation to what comes later. The same goes for individual stage elements on stage, stage personas of the performers, and material used on stage – it is all seen within the context of the other things. This context is crucial for understanding dramaturgy and one should never forget that, in the theatre, things, people, objects, texts, and other elements do not stand only for themselves but are always experienced in context.

Anyway, one should not be afraid to grasp and name and dissect fragments, although they are just fragments. One has to start somewhere. Fragments do have their beginning and end, their contours. And fragment is a good place to start seeing dramaturgy if one does not lose sight of the totality. Grasping one step at the time.

Dewey also writes that ‘the live being recurrently loses and reestablishes equilibrium with his surroundings’ (Dewey 2005: 16). With the appearance of each new piece of information, image, movement, or sensory trigger, the audience has to reestablish this equilibrium. There is a moment of readjusting. Dramaturgy can be understood as a series of moments that the audience recognises as ‘known’ and moments that are new/unknown. The ‘knowns’ help the audience connect, and the new moments give them new impulses to reconnect/re-understand/find new ways in.

Difference and repetition are one of the basic ways humans understand the world around them (see also, for instance, Gilles Deleuze’s book *Difference and*

Repetition, 1968). As Dewey also says, ‘the organism craves variety as well as order’ (Dewey 2005: 175). The composition of difference and repetition, or the known and the discovered, the graspable and the uncanny, the pleasant and the rejected, is the basic weaving of the dramaturgical experience:

Experiencing like breathing is a rhythm of intakings and outgivings. Their succession is punctuated and made a rhythm by the existence of intervals, periods in which one phase is ceasing and the other is inchoate and preparing. (Dewey 2005: 58)

Difference and repetition, the new and the recognisable, the experienced and the known, create a system of tension and release in the audience, or of listening carefully, of trying to understand, of letting go, of surfing with the performance. This rhythm/composition of tension and release is crucial for dramaturgy, the experience of performance. It has to be well structured.

Attention One of the most basic definitions of the theatre is as a place where things are placed to be seen, placed in such a way to be observed, brought to the audience’s attention. French philosopher Roland Barthes, in his essay ‘Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein’ (1973), defines theatre like this:

[T]he theatre is precisely that practice which calculates the place of things as they are observed: if I set the spectacle here, the spectator will see this; if I put

it elsewhere, he will not, and I can avail myself of this masking effect and play on the illusion it provides.
(Barthes 1977: 69)

What is shown and what is hidden (when and where) is one of the main gestures of dramaturgy. And all theatre is a system of appearing and disappearing, of presence and absence. American director Elizabeth LeCompte of The Wooster Group says that ‘theatre is entrances and exits’.

And this thought is part of the historical critique of theatricality (mainly in philosophy and the visual arts), the thought that theatre is masking and hiding things, making things invisible and hiding the truth, while making non-reality appear. The theatre is understood primarily as an illusion, spectacle, and entertainment. This is the origin of the common negative saying ‘It’s just theatre!’ But we know that many of the contemporary forms of theatre do exactly the opposite: make visible things that are invisible or barely visible in everyday life, bringing things from the periphery to the centre or finding the potential for utopia and making it real, at least for a short time.

But to go back to theatre as an experience for the audience: directing in the theatre at its core is making things visible or invisible, drawing the audience’s attention to this or that, bringing things to the fore and putting them in the background or hiding them behind the sightlines. Guiding/directing the attention/gaze of the audience is the definition of theatre directing. Paying attention to this or that is what constitutes the

experience of the spectator. Focus can be achieved by drawing attention with lighting or sound, or by putting everything else into the background. The directing helps the audience understand what is important to focus on at which moment.

In many contemporary performances the audience's attention is drawn also to their own perception. They are invited to 'see their own selves watch'. In participatory performances, where the audience can make choices about how to participate, they can watch their own choice and understand the specificity of that choice. In performances where there is a multiplicity of activities and we have to divide our attention, we are faced with the fragmentation of our view, and the understanding that we cannot see everything at once, just like in life. So, we again see our own perception and its limits.

Communication

[C]ommunication is not announcing things, even if they are said with the emphasis of great sonority. Communication is the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular; and part of the miracle it achieves is that, in being communicated, the conveyance of meaning gives body and definiteness to the experience of the one who utters as well as to that of those who listen. (Dewey 2005: 253)

Contemporary performance is exactly that communication that defines the experience not only of the one

that ‘receives’ but also of the one that ‘transmits’. In contemporary performance we understand that we cannot just announce facts or impose experiences. Each spectator will receive the information/emotion differently and there is no way to completely control the experience/reception. The reception will influence and form the performance. The interesting part, thus, is in the fact that this is a moment of sharing, in which something isolated and singular becomes shared. It becomes larger and fragmented at the same time. This moment of sharing is a moment of constitution/construction of something new, both on the part of the artist/performer and the spectators; the articulation and reception are two ends of a creative movement.

Common Experience What about group experience? In the theatre where each audience member ‘has the right’ to their own private, personalised experience, where does the group come in? If in contemporary performance we do not expect a completely unified experience of performance, do we just have a group of individuals in the auditorium, people not interested in each other?

In 2017, neuroscientists from University College London monitored the heart rates and skin response of selected audience members at a live theatre performance of a musical in London’s West End: ‘They found that as well as responding emotionally to the performance as individuals, the audience actually responded in unison through their heart beats, with

their pulses speeding up and slowing down at the same rate as each other.’⁶

Different people, no matter how different, perceive at least the basic compositional or contextual elements in the same way – slowness, fastness, depth, height, sadness... even more abstract situations are perceived by individuals in a group in similar ways. By being in the same space together, focusing on the same thing, the audience further gains their own ‘psychology’, and the same performance can be perceived as funny one evening (somebody starts laughing from the start and that sets off the atmosphere) or completely sombre the next (the audience for whatever reason is in a more macabre mood). Groups adjust to each other’s moods and expression of moods.

Dramaturgy of the Senses When one is talking about theatre dramaturgy as experience, one has to take into account the rise of the use of different senses in contemporary performance. More traditional forms of theatre are based on listening and watching, but contemporary theatre explores other human senses as communication and experiencing tools. In the performance *In Many Hands* (2016), by New Zealand artist Kate McIntosh, the audience is provided with a tactile experience of many natural and fabricated objects

⁶ Adam Sherwin, ‘Theatre thrills “synchronises heart beats of audience complete strangers”’, inews.co.uk, 16 November 2017, <https://inews.co.uk/essentials/theatre-thrills-synchronises-heart-beats-audience-complete-strangers-517695>.

and materials, which are passed from hand to hand, from one audience member to another, in order to give an experience of holding something in one's hand – fragile, escaping, disgusting, small, heavy things and materials. Food serving and food eating, gathering the audience around the table, is becoming a common practice too: food plays a role not only as a reason for gathering but also for its social background, in addition to its taste, shape, texture, and consistency.

The rise of music theatre (for instance in the work of the German director Heiner Goebbels) proposes new ways of exploring the listening aspect of the performance that go beyond more traditional opera or concert formats. Smell, although hard to grasp and tame, is also often at least added to the performance experience. It would take a whole other book to explore and start to understand how different sensual experiences can be the structuring element of performance, or at least influence dramaturgy: how senses operate; how they 'tell stories'; how they unfold... Every sense has a very different logic of experiencing behind it. But here it is important to mention that with the understanding of performance as experience (rather than story), the senses are explored as one of the tools.

This is one of the reasons that today we talk about performance as a concert, performance as an installation, performance as dinner, performance as exhibition, performance as a walk. The mixing of forms and genres plays an important part in this new expanded understanding of what theatre can be, but the senses/experiencing is also a crucial aspect.

Perception If we are mentioning the senses as part of dramaturgy, we must also mention that the performances working with different senses point to human perception. We know the world through our perception, but our perception is defined by our body, our spatial position, and our conditions of recognisability, and by our culture, our memory, the memory in our DNA, etc. Our perception is our main tool for interaction with the world, but it easily fails us.

Often in contemporary performance there is a play with sensory perceptions, where your own senses fail you and the audience can experience the fragility of senses/perceptions. The performance for senses can of course be spectacular, entertaining, but there is also something critical in the understanding/awareness that how we perceive the world is designated/formed by our perceptions/senses, which can be deceived.

Script for the Spectator There are certain formats in which the dramaturgy of the spectator must be constructed specifically, not only as the unfolding of experience but literally as the script of what the spectator needs to do. In theatre where the spectator enters the performance space or participates and has a specific role and instructions, the journey of the spectator is not only mental, following emotion, meaning, etc., but also includes being in specific places at the right times, having the right position to see from, and doing specific tasks at specific times. In this case, the spectator's script becomes an important part of the total script. Works that need a spectator's script include one-to-one

performances (where one actor performs for one spectator), sound walks (this can be with or without performers) and one-person installations (where the script is made for one spectator). But there are also performances where the audience performs and there are no actors, or where the audience performs for other audience members and there are no other performers (like, for instance, in Rotozaza's *Etiquette*, where two audience members sit around the table and are given instructions through headphones on how to perform for each other with an object on the table), or the audience performs for themselves, watching themselves do things (like in some performative installations for one person).

In some performances, the spectator's script includes whole groups of people, and it is important to time the performance life of these groups – how long it takes them to go from place to place, how long it takes them to decide things, how long it takes them to fulfil tasks, is there enough space for all of them to see well, etc. In all these cases, it is important to have clear written or verbal instructions that the audience can understand and remember and receive at the right moment.

The critique of the conventional theatre setting (where auditorium and stage are divided) is that the spectator is passive and stabilised in one place, watching from one position, often in the dark. On the other hand, the critique of participation is that the audience is sometimes too activated: by following tasks and activities physically, the audience is concentrating on

fulfilling things and doesn't have time to think, to feel, to experience critically. In many cases, the activation of the audience in this way only provides for a new form of spectacle, of entertainment. It is important to know and to balance. Activation should be used for specific dramaturgical needs (specific topics, exploration, material) and not as a means to its own end.

It is also important to be aware of how much freedom for creativity your instructions to the spectator allow. Maybe you want them to execute a very specific action, or you might want them to do what they want at the certain moment. It is all possible, but you have to be aware of what the performance (and the spectators) need.

Interaction One of the most important parts of the 'script for the spectator' is the *invitation*. The invitation can be written (as part of the poster or intro text in the entrance space) or spoken (by the ushers or performers, etc.), or it can simply be set (the space itself and how it is organised can be a form of invitation). The invitation is important because the spectator enters the space where there are new rules – not the normal everyday social rules that she is used to but new rules set by the artists. The spectator needs to understand, at least to a degree, what they are entering and what they are invited to take part in. Artists often make the mistake of thinking that they are offering something special by making a participatory performance and take the participation, the spectator, for granted; sometimes they are too afraid of whether spectators

will participate. The spectator needs to be treated with respect, with understanding that they come with an open mind but also a lot of baggage (of that day, memories, expectations, etc.) and need to adjust, have time and space and instructions to adjust (this can be by preparation or by shock). And a good invitation can be very helpful in creating a bond, an engagement bond, with the participatory performance. Further, the artists must provide the right conditions for the spectator to be able to be engaged. For instance, provide a chair if they are expected to stay for a long time, or provide the spectator with enough time to do things, etc. (Of course you can purposely create conditions that are uncomfortable, but there has to be awareness and goal to it.)

Instructions are crucial for a spectator's script. Instructions, like the invitation, can be written, spoken, or set. Some instructions can be very literal and provide the audience with a step-by-step guide. Other instructions can be just a framing of the basic instruction (for instance 'answer the questions', 'follow the performers', 'you can sit anywhere there is space', etc.). Clarity and simplicity of instruction is often the key to spectators' knowing what they are doing and being able to follow. If the instructions are said or read before the performance, it is important that they are minimised so the spectator can remember them. Too much instruction can, for instance, trigger the spectator into thinking too much about what they are doing, and whether they are doing it right, so they can miss all the other experiences ingrained in the participatory

performance. If the instructions are coming during the performance, it is important that they come at the right moment and that they are clear and unambiguous (except if ambiguity is the point; again, awareness). What people understand and how they understand the instructions is highly unpredictable, and it is important to try it out with different people during the rehearsal process.

Instructions can include direct instructions for the spectator – what to do when – but they can also include the rules of the performance, how it works. Clear, transparent rules afford the experience for the spectator that you want to provide.

Artists sometimes make the mistake of thinking that participatory performance is about the full creative autonomy of the spectator and set too few rules. When a spectator enters a space an artist has made, they are very aware that it was made by the artist: they don't know what they need to do. They will be more creative, and interaction more successful, if the rules are very clear, and they feel safe that they know what they are doing. Rules are sometimes key to creative freedom. They also provide for the possibility for spectators to break them, which can also be a creative act. (Again, except if confusion is the point of the project. But full-on confusion is one of the hardest things to construct in dramaturgy. One has to be very careful and skilled.)

Creating conditions for the audience to commit to the performance is crucial for performances with audience interaction/participation/presence. The conditions

for commitment could be physical, for instance a possibility to sit or stand comfortably, or an open door so the audience can feel that they can leave at any point and decide themselves how long they will stay. But the commitment is also mental. The audience needs to be intrigued enough to want to stay. This does not mean they need entertainment. Too much entertainment can also create a closed form, where the audience feels there is no more room for them to be part of the performance. Mental commitment is best secured by creating room for their thinking, in addition to ‘rewarding’ the audience at the right moment. This reward can be a beautiful image, or a moment of understanding, or any of the kinds of connections with the audience that a specific performance is going for. This ‘reward’ will keep the audience going and hoping for more of these moments. (One thinks of American director Robert Wilson saying: ‘Start strong and end big.’)

It is, of course, also possible to create a dramaturgical structure in which the audience is purposely bored and pushed away from the performance for a long time, only to be drawn in or surprised at a specific moment late in the performance. But in other cases, where there is no specific purposely negative relationship with the audience, it is important to create the possibility of the commitment.

Expectations So, to repeat, because it is really important to remember: the audience always comes with expectations. These expectations are created by the understanding of the venue where the performance

is taking place (if it is a venue for contemporary dance, or international work, or drama theatre, etc.). The name of the specific company or artist also brings its 'history' and the audiences coming to see it will keep in mind their previous works (topics, forms, aesthetics, etc.). Expectations are also created by the title of the performance, the description of the form/format (installation, dance performance, immersive performance, lecture performance, etc.), and the textual description of the performance that potential spectators can find in the programme of the theatre.

But expectations are constituted by other less tangible aspects: specific historical and cultural aspects of specific environments (expectations of specific theatrical forms, for instance, but also relationships to specific socio-political topics that are heavily culturally grounded). Historically, theatre is understood as a national language-based form that is closely connected to history, culture, language, and mentality. This aspect is visible in the case of drama theatre, which is based on customs, culture, and language. But the more contemporary forms of performance that seem to use global language are also influenced by the local and often 'don't work' outside their environment, as they speak to specific audiences.

Finally, there are hidden personal expectations. Each audience member comes with their feelings, their state of mind, and their problems, memories, and needs. These are very eclectic and cannot all be grasped. But it is important for the performance makers to understand that they want to work with an

audience that is a ‘many-headed monster’, with many wishes, preferences, and desires. One can unite them, one can make confrontations or dialogue among them, but one can also leave them to create their own journey silently.

5 SPACE/TIME DRAMATURGY: THE DIMENSIONS

With the emergence of postdramatic theatre, space gets to be fully acknowledged as a dramaturgical element equal to the other stage elements. Space performs. It performs, of course, as the context for the performance. Sometimes it even stands for a subject and the topic/content of the performance but also/or as a dramaturgical script itself, for instance in performances where the audience goes through a sequence of spaces. Space is not only the designator of the place where the story happens, or the vessel of things happening, but space itself performs.

Found Space / Site-Specific Performance We can see how space performs as a dramaturgical element most clearly in performances that take place in found space. The term ‘found space performance’ designates projects that happen in spaces that were not built for theatre purposes. ‘Site-specific’ is a term for a sub-form of ‘found space projects’ that stands for projects in which there is a strong dialogue with a specific space, and the project could not be carried out anywhere else.

Found space can be chosen for its history, character, or previous use. Space carries its old ghosts with

it and those ghosts can perform. If you perform in a space where Jews were gathered before being taken to a camp, or in a place where generations of workers spent their lives, this information will be part of the dramaturgical equation. We can think of this space as 'authentic' space, a space that is not made like a theatre space for a variety of performances, a space to contain 'any' performance, but a space where a performance takes place because of its specific characteristics, memory, or spatial dispositions.

Dramaturgically, using found space usually gives a sign to the audience that this will probably not be a conventional performance, and that the theatrical situation itself will be questioned. Since there is no predetermined stage and auditorium, new ways of placing, positioning, and allowing the audience to be in the performance space arise. Found space can also be chosen for size or placement of space/s that offer new possibilities for relating with the audience in space. This is often the case for performances that are not satisfied with conventional stage–auditorium division and are looking for different involvement of spectators. Questioning the conventional theatre setting questions the role of the audience in a way that keeps the spectator as a physical outsider watching from the dark auditorium, usually from a position that is fixed throughout the performance. The new settings where the division disappears, or is at least blurred, create the possibility for the spectator to watch from inside, to participate, to choose from when and how long they will watch, etc. All this points to the fact that

there is a whole new line in the dramaturgy, and that is the dramaturgy/script for the spectator.

So the space performs mainly through the physical attributes – the spacing – how the space unfolds, how its individual elements relate to each other and how bodies relate in space via dispositions of the space or a sequence of spaces (what is in/out; what is far/close; what is at the centre/periphery). It performs also via its ‘history’ or social background – the use and memory of use of the specific space.

Public/Private Space Spaces inhabited and constructed by humans are divided into public and private. While in the drama theatre that happens on stage, we often have a private situation (Hedda Gabler’s living room in Ibsen’s play, for instance) presented in a public stage space, in contemporary performance the situation is a bit different because of the shared space. In shared space, everything seems to be public and creating intimacy is somewhat of a challenge. But we could also say that the spaces built for theatre are semi-public spaces, where not everyone is allowed. So contemporary performance often goes back outside the theatre building into the public space to look for new dramaturgical forms, new ways of relating with audiences, and new audiences. From circus street performance to audio/headphone walks to public space performative installation, the new performances examine the public space or simply attract audiences that usually do not visit theatre venues for lack of money or simply aesthetic reasons but also out of habit, laziness,

and lack of information. Private spaces such as people's homes or semi-private spaces such as hospitals, abandoned buildings, public baths, etc., are also commonly turned into stages entered by spectators. Often these performances question ideas of public and private, and of the rules/power that govern those spaces or simply the poetics of public and private. The tension between public and private, exposing private in public or questioning public through private, provides for interesting dramaturgical tensions that can sometimes have a socio-political subtext.

Social Space But physical space is not everything; social space plays an important part too. Very often when we talk about space, we do not talk about physical space but the social aspect of it. When we say 'in the hospital' our concern with the architectural aspect is only secondary; what we are talking about is the rules and activities that happen in that space, a form of social script that is prescribed in that space. Social space is the set of social constructions – rules, habits, etc., constructed via power structures, habits of consensus, written and unspoken, that create the invisible level of the space. These aspects designate how we behave, how we behave towards each other, how we form visible/invisible hierarchies and what we are allowed/expected to do. Very often we take these rules for granted, we behave accordingly, without thinking. We enter a school during teaching, and we speak quietly. And the opposite: if somebody enters the football pitch during the match, people will think

they are crazy. There are simply things that you do and don't do in specific spaces. Questioning habits, rules, and who made them is one of the significant aspects of contemporary performance, especially the ones happening in non-traditional and public spaces that include critical understanding of space, who created it, who has the power over it. Because social space can be changed by practice, by the way 'we perform in it'.

Researched Space Because of their authentic qualities and their use for dramaturgical purposes (concept, theme, spacing, placing, lighting, etc.), found spaces always need to be researched to a degree at least. The exploration happens on four levels. One that we will call 'historical' is exploring the past of the building – why and how it was built, why and how was it used, by whom, etc. The other level that needs to be researched is the aesthetic level of visual architecture and the material, materials, colours, lights that are already there and the visual aspects that can be added. The third level is spatial/architectural – the physical relations between bodies/objects – where we must understand what kinds of spacing – relations of performers and bodies of spectators – the specific space calls for. The fourth is the already described level of social space, rules, and habits.

Shared Space Very often performances that take place in spaces not built for theatre purposes provide the possibility for the audience and performers not to be separated into two or more spaces but to inhabit

one space. This, of course, happens in contemporary theatre in theatre spaces (even with a seeming division of stage and auditorium) and are more a matter of how performers address the audience and not literally the spacing. But in site-specific or immersive performances this aspect of contemporary theatre is especially visible. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999), calls this theatre a shared space. Sharing of space points to an important shift in dramaturgy: while previously actors inhabited a then and there (for instance Denmark in the Middle Ages, as in *Hamlet*) and the audience the here and now. In a theatre performance, if the space is shared, the time is shared too. So we are in it together. We are here and now. This is enabled by the lack of a closed plot time/space.

Spacing is one of the main compositional dramaturgical strategies of the postdramatic theatre and contemporary performance. What is far, what is close, what is high, what is low... these are things that the human mind reads easily and have always been important compositional aspects in the theatre. Spatial relations include perform for relations among objects and people, space, light, etc. Spacing designates the relations between elements, the way we read them and experience them. It can create connections, separations, hierarchies, peripheries, alliances, groups, distance, and constellations but also a sense of intimacy, a sense of vastness, a sense of void, invisibility, presence, etc. A solo performance in a performance space of 2000 m² will for instance create a feeling of

the person existing in a sort of ‘desert’; the same performance done in a found toilet space, for instance, for an audience of one will create a dramatically different effect. Sometimes the spacing creates obvious effects such as those just described but more often the effects are more subtle; nevertheless, audiences perceive them even when rationally unaware.

A sequence of spaces, where the audience moves from one space to another and experiences it one by one as a sequence has become fairly common in contemporary theatre. This is often the case in immersive theatre, or in audio walks, etc. In these projects, sometimes the space literally stands for the script, the dramaturgical order of the unfolding of the performance for the audience, because the audience physically walks from one scene to the next.

Placing All theatre making is about what is shown and what is hidden and when. We can define dramaturgy as a set of decisions to make things visible or invisible, no matter whether this dramaturgy is done by a dramaturg, director, actors or collective (usually by all of them to a degree). Placing things/objects/events/gestures/acts on stage is one of the basic dramaturgical acts. Showing, uncovering, discovering things, information, and people at the right moment is the composition of dramaturgy. Recontextualisation (in time and space) gives a new view of the thing one experiences, we see it differently, it changes.

The exact spatial position of the thing (up, left, far, low, etc.) is important for our understanding of its

relations, how it performs in a specific context, what its position is in a specific situation. Things can be placed spatially in the centre or at the margin or be put away not to be seen; they can be close to us or very, very remote; they can be lost in space or room could be made for them... all of this designates our experience of the things, as things in context.

In spatial dramaturgy where the placing of elements and the positioning of the audience are such visible aspects, this relating of elements becomes a basic, obvious dramaturgical aspect. Placing-positioning-relating has ethical implications too; it produces hierarchies, priorities, and visibilities. Where we put things and how we relate to them creates or disrupts hierarchies. It potentially produces centre and margin, in addition to framing and focus. Decisions about where things will be and what will be seen is a question of power and of the creation of structures. Things/elements on stage are always part of a composition but also of change (function, meaning, experience of), depending on the set of relations they are in.

Points of Looking But the placing of the audience, their position in space, is important and greatly determines the experience. Spatial dramaturgy in which the spectator enters the performance space, or goes through a series of performance spaces, creates the possibility for the audience to get closer and choose from where they would be watching. Spectators can move in space, unlike in conventional theatre space, where the audience has a precisely designated seat for

the duration of the performance. This way, the spectator becomes an insider, spectating from inside, while the performance happens around them.

Since they can move, and see other spectators move and watch, they can follow the watching, how things change from different perspectives; they can understand that their position designates their watching, they watch their own watching. This is one of the most valuable aspects of the theatre that spectators can enter: providing the spectator with the possibility to see themselves seeing and understanding what that seeing can be determined by. This is very similar to understanding your own perception, as mentioned above.

Time and Dramaturgy Dramaturgy is tightly connected to time since dramaturgy is the unfolding of experience for the audience in and through time. Dramaturgy operates in both time and space, and this is why it is such a complex composition, a composition that often cannot be easily grasped. Dramaturgy is a series of temporal and spatial situations that can be primarily experienced (and often not really understood). Things and relationships between elements change from moment to moment. This is, of course, also the situation for contemporary forms of art such as installation, performance art, etc., that work both with space and time.

And, of course, this is true for more traditional forms of theatre such as drama theatre. In the drama theatre, there is the time of the plot (story time) and the time of the performance itself (event time). In contemporary

performance (and in postmodern drama theatre), time can be expressed in many ways, and it can play different dramaturgical roles. It does not stand mainly for the time (historical) and timing (unfolding) of the story/play.

In contemporary performance, there are many, many ways to work with time. Coming from modernist experiments in art, theatre, and literature at the beginning of the 20th century, time can become one of the main conceptual elements, even the core of the content – where time itself is explored. Just to name some of the strategies directly connected to time in contemporary performance: durational performances of authentic action; doing specific actions in real time; waiting for a large ice cube to melt or reading a whole book (*Gatz* [2010], a 6.5-hour performance by US company Elevator Repair Service); parallel time (series of micro-performances, or scenes happening in parallel); private time (one-to-one performances); condensed or fragmented time (instants, moments, bits of time) but also actions connected to researching human practices (the unfolding of practice, like some of the performances by US company Goat Island or Czech company Handa Gote); or the construction and deconstruction of events, things, practices, gestures, habits, etc. (strategies to see what ‘things’ consist of, dissection of events/things/practices). There is also remembered time, condensed time, retold time, stretched time, timed time, suffered time, drawn time, imposed time, rushed time, or stand-still time, etc. etc. etc. The possibilities for experiencing and performing time in contemporary performance are endless.

To borrow the expression from performance art, where durational performance stands for authentic action or practice taking its 'natural' time and not being compressed into aesthetic time, usually a long period of time (playing out an action the way it takes time in everyday life and not making it shorter or longer for the purposes of performance), these performances are also called 'endurance performances' because the artist (performer) takes on an action that is hard in order to explore their own body (limitations) as material. Endurance for the audience in these cases is often a challenge; to watch something unfolding very slowly, without much 'entertainment', here the audience has to understand that what they are following is, at least to a certain level, 'authentic'. Durational strategy is used in contemporary theatre performance also, most notably by Forced Entertainment: for instance, in the now historical *Quzoola!* (1996), actors exchange a series of partially improvised questions and answers over the course of 6 or 24 hours.

What is interesting for dramaturgy about time is the journey that the audience can go through and the construction of this passage of time. What contemporary performance is good at is 'giving time to the audience'. Being in the theatre here equals a form of meditation/thinking with performance, where the spectator can go through a series of changes in their thinking/experiencing. Because of time, we have the luxury to bore the audience before entertaining them; we have the luxury to switch moments of not understanding and being lost with moments of

understanding; of having them feel like they are on top of things with moments of complete confusion. Proposing a well-structured system of these often-contradictory experiences creates the possibility for the audience to feel they have been on a journey from somewhere to somewhere else and have time to follow the change in themselves.

Perception happens in time, it unfolds. It takes time for the audience to get used to ideas/atmospheres/thoughts, to be with them for a while, to accept them and to question them. Things take time. What's more, time sometimes becomes ready-made in itself, and the audience experiences time itself in durational performances, the passing, the duration. And again, they can experience their own experience in time, their own impatience, excitement, etc.

Rehearsing Time The experience of time is very important for the dramaturgy of performance. But in the later stages of rehearsing, it can be hard for the dramaturg to still experience/sense time and the timing of the performance in the same way as at the beginning of rehearsing, before she gets used to the performative action, she has now seen many times. And at these times it is really important to start rehearsing with audiences and to have fresh eyes to consult, because they can experience the time and timing of the performance anew. Also, the makers sometimes get bored with things that actually work or are too excited about things that don't work for the people who are seeing it for the first time. It is very important to keep the

rehearsals open to outside colleagues and audiences. Time on stage and time from an auditorium are often experienced differently.

There are no rules for time and timing in rehearsing. If you are rehearsing for a week, for six months or working on a project for two years, or if you are rehearsing every day or once a week, or only evenings – it all depends on the material that needs to be developed and how the team/collective operates. Some experiments just need to be set in motion – like the ‘happenings’ of the 1960s – where you designate the basic elements and the rest unfolds by itself (is improvised); some experiments need a lot of trying out in rehearsals in order to even find their core content (this is the case when what is explored is a wide field/idea that needs to be narrowed); some performances need to stay fresh and should not be over-rehearsed (some performances with non-professional actors), etc. The material with the creative team is something like a living organism that has to find the best way of operating in order to develop. The material and the team have their own time, and this time cannot be forced, it has to be respected.

6 DRAMATURGY AND STRATEGIES OF THE VISUAL ARTS: THE OTHER FORMS

Theatre has changed very much in recent decades. Some of the changes and the rise of performance at least to an extent has to do with new formats in the visual arts since the beginning of the 20th century. One of the main reasons for the need for performativity in the visual arts comes from the need to make something ephemeral, something that cannot be sold or bought, in order to avoid being part of the market. Since then, many different performative forms and formats came into existence in the visual arts, such as: the happening, performance art, installation art, relational aesthetics, living sculpture, staged photography, interactive media, video performance, video installation, durational performance, performance concert, body art, bio-technological rituals, food performance, public space intervention, action sculpture, wearable art, etc. (And for some of these forms one cannot really trace whether initially it was the visual arts inspiring theatre or theatre inspiring the visual arts.)

A lot of these forms take place in non-gallery spaces, leaving the institutional context and taking place in public space, abandoned spaces, homes, etc. Many of the strategies use the artist themselves and their

body as material for performance (see, for instance, Carolee Schneemann, Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Orlan, etc.). Many of the projects also use the audience and audience's body as material, tool, or even content (see Yoko Ono, Elmgreen and Dragset, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija, etc.). Most of these strategies are the children and grandchildren and grand-grand-children of the strategies of Dada, Futurism, and Surrealism.

And here we would like to examine some of the tools and aspects of conceptual art that have found their way into contemporary performance and have become an important part of dramaturgy. ('Conceptual' here does not stand for the concept of the performance, the intention, or the plan, which are an inseparable part of dramaturgy, but for specific strategies used to make a performance that come from conceptual art strategies.)

Later we will also look at the specifics of performance art, installation art, and relational aesthetics and their relation to contemporary performance, since it is the merging with these forms that inspired theatre also to look for new forms, formats, and, most importantly, new ways of relating to audiences. This merging is the reason for the richness of theatrical forms today.

Conceptual Art One of the first notable examples of the conceptual work is Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) – a pissoir exhibited as an artefact. The pissoir is considered a 'ready-made', a found object not made by the artist that is exhibited as an art object

in a new context – the art gallery space. What this situation provides is a possibility for the audience to consider the pissoir in a new light – as art, but also to think about what art really is. This strategy is called recontextualisation. Here it is not the crafting of the artefact by the artist that constitutes art but the act of recontextualising it into another space that designates the object as art. *Pissoir* is art because artists designate it as such by providing it with a new context. It says, ‘This is art.’ It is a performative action, where words create new reality. It happens in the minds of the artists and the spectators.

In a way, conceptual art is always rethinking what art is; it questions the artefact and the art space, and the gaze of the spectator. Art happens between artist, spectator, space, and object (and not primarily in the object, like in painting, sculpture, and older forms of art). It also provides for the audience a space to think and treats audiences as co-creators, in a sense that their thinking/experience is as important, if not more important, than the making of it. Of course, all good art provides space for the audience, but in conceptual art, and in the art of the 20th century more broadly, this becomes one of the main goals of many projects.

Conceptual art is not about craft, how things are made, how well are they painted or sculpted. The planning of the project, the thinking of the artists, and the experiencing, thinking of the audiences are the most important. Some conceptual art projects can be based on language/text, performance, photography, etc. Just like devising, it has many, many forms, and formats.

Often when there is a physical artefact in conceptual art, it is not made but is found or assembled from different found objects or images. Ready-made is a found object or image that is reused in a new context or constellation.

This type of operation, where thinking and experiencing are more important than the crafted artefact, where the 'artefact' is just a trigger for a dialogue, a proposition for the audience, gave way to completely new formats in the visual arts: installation art (where the audience enters the art, and space and experience are important); photography (first started being considered 'real art' with the rise of conceptual art); instructions (where the audience only gets directions on how to watch or things to do, like in Allan Kaprow projects); or assemblages of objects or images (collages), etc. Language was often a very crucial part of the work: sometimes the pieces were texts themselves and sometimes it was about how pieces were titled, the words added into collages, language games, instructions, etc. This is because of the focus on the *concept* and not the craft, on the *thinking* between the artists and the audiences and not the artefact.

One of the main ideas behind conceptual art is the questioning of, or attempt to escape, the consumerist situation. What was supposed to be made was something that cannot be sold or owned because it does not have the qualities of a traditional artefact that carries the mastery of the maker and is self-sufficient. What was made was the possibilities or triggers for thinking and experiences that cannot be sold or bought. This

gave way to the new forms: ‘happenings’, where the action of performers is improvised based on a plan/script without a narrative, where movement, text, sounds, and smells gain equal importance; and ‘performance art’, where the artist’s body, time, and action become the material for making art.

It is interesting to unfold some strategies in contemporary performance through the prism of conceptual art strategies as a way of understanding some of the contemporary dramaturgical tools. Strategies such as the ready-made, recontextualisation, and assemblages, and new performative forms such as installation, durational performance, etc., have found their way into the work of Forced Entertainment (UK), Rimini Protokoll (Germany) and Gob Squad (UK/Germany), for instance.

Ready-Made In contemporary performance, a ready-made can be a found object, physical material that is found, or found space or clothes. The idea is that something is taken from reality, everyday life, or history and put on stage in its original form. Not represented by something or someone else (like actors representing characters) but made present itself. This term – the ready-made – stands for a piece of ‘real’ reality within the theatrical equation. It is not changed/processed but moved to a new context in its entirety. And it is the context that changes it, not the artist’s hand, that remodels/changes it into something else.

In contemporary performance there are many forms of the ready-made. For instance, the text – in

its verbatim form – is ready-made, because somebody's words are repeated word for word, like in documentary theatre. Found space in site-specific works⁷ becomes a 'topic' or an entity to be explored and experienced by both artists and audiences. Movement can also be used as ready-made, for instance in Arkadi Zaides's *Archives* (2014), where the artist tries to embody the exact movements, step by step from videos, of Jewish Israelis attacking Palestinians.

People can also be ready-mades of sorts. When Rimini Protokoll introduces Bulgarian truck drivers in *Cargo Sofia-X* (2006), the truck drivers do not pretend they are actors or characters. They are used dramatically for who they are and what they do, and this is the major part of the content of the performance, in which you try to see the world through their eyes. We could say that the use of people, non-professional actors, or, as Rimini Protokoll calls them, 'experts of the everyday' in contemporary dramaturgy has been one of the most common ready-mades in recent decades.

Found objects are sometimes connected and come from specific people or specific places, and they have the added value of origin and previous ownership. But sometimes they are simply things that are not made specifically for the performance and are bought, found, or borrowed for this purpose. In traditional theatre, the found object helps the actor

⁷ Since the 1990s, the Czech version of the form has been developed by Tomáš Žižka and the 4 Days in Motion Festival.

access some kind of reality. Take the example of the use of the real skull of the deceased pianist André Tchaikowsky in the David Tennant *Hamlet* of 2008 (RSC). By holding the real skull of a real person during the famous monologue, Tennant was in a way grounded. But what interests us here is when the ready-made performs itself: it has influence not only on the actors acting, or the actor's character, but is a topic of the content and plays a role in the narrative. So, the difference between a prop and a ready-made object lies not so much in the fact that the prop is often an object made or purchased especially for the performance, often only representing the object and not activating the real functional aspects of the actual object. The difference is in our attitude towards it; it is not there only to be in the service of the performance but to be a constitutive part of the performance. It does not represent but it performs.

Ready-made space, objects, texts, or people can be the main character, or stand for context, or simply create a connection to the 'real' outside world (a bit like David Tennant). Use of the ready-made can produce different effects: it can be a sort of documentary realism, or documentary speculation, but it can also help question the reality/fiction of the performance. The ready-made in this type of dramaturgy is the content, or at least part of the content. It does not serve other content but plays itself in relation to other elements. It is not reshaped but is put into performance in its (more or less) raw form, which is changed by the context and the other elements on stage.

Mis-Placing If the ‘ready-made’ is an object, person, text, etc. that is taken from everyday reality and put into a performance space, then it is made by the basic strategy of conceptual art, which is recontextualisation or ‘mis-placing’. The *Pissoir* of Duchamp is moved from toilet to gallery, and for this reason it changes meaning; it becomes art. Recontextualisation works in such a way that by misplacing a thing, we can see it differently; we can see it ‘better’ because it is taken from its original context where we would take it for granted. We can see it in relation to something else in a new context, in a new light.

And theatre is exactly that place where we ‘mis-place’ things only to see them in a new and better way. American thinker Samuel Weber, in his book *Theatricality as Medium* (2004), describes this well:

[T]heater involves, [...] neither the constitution of order out of chaos nor the solving of problems. It does not communicate contents or produce positive knowledge. Nor is it ‘performative’ in the sense usually understood, which is to say, that of accomplishing an intention through an act. Rather, by isolating acts and gestures from their intentional context, it points to established frames of reference – and also to the conditions and contexts that those intentions suppose – but only in order to dislocate them. (Weber, 2004: 305)

What Weber proposes here is that theatre does not produce information or new meaning (knowledge); its end goal is not to do something (accomplishing an

intention through an act): he says that theatre is a place where we try to forget what we know (isolating acts and gestures from established frames of reference) and shift our perception to see things again (without the conventional conditions and contexts conditioned by specific rules, cultures, ideologies). The strategies of dislocation or recontextualisation help in building this experience. And this experience is a basic creative/critical thinking act: seeing things as if we have never seen them before – looking at what they actually are and how they work.

Dislocation/recontextualisation is an important strategy in deconstructing things, in seeing things better. Something that we are used to seeing and simply do not question in everyday life gets to be re-examined in a new light. John Dewey describes this in *Art as Experience* (1934): '[O]bjects of most of our ordinary perception lack completeness. They are cut short when there is a recognition' (Dewey 2005: 184). When we see an umbrella, we only see an umbrella; we think of its purpose and use it if it rains. We do not give it much more thought. We do not really look at it and explore it. This goes for ideas about things too. We get used to them and take them for granted. They start functioning as reflexes and not thoughts (see the work of American quantum physicist David Bohm for more on reflexes vs. thoughts). So we can think of the phase before recognition happens as a very fruitful one, a phase when thinking happens, a phase when true potentials are uncovered.

Some theatre performances, the majority of documentary performances, and performances about

(marginalised) individuals and/or communities put these marginalised events, people and things on stage (ready-mades of sorts). This gesture of putting the marginalised on stage says: 'This is important to see.' Or: 'This is our social reality, we should look at this.' The majority of work by Rimini Protokoll is based on this gesture, which is no doubt an important political gesture saying: 'Ordinary people are important to see. Truck drivers are important to see. Hairdressers and hotel service people are important to see, etc.' And often we realise how much true knowledge these 'experts of the everyday' have, all based on their own experience. One has to keep in mind that the simple gesture of 'exhibiting' a social group was maybe enough in the past, at the beginning of this type of theatre, but in today's performance this gesture has to be in some way radicalised, developed, and detailed to make sense and have effect.

But if a *pissoir* becomes art once placed in the gallery, in theatre dramaturgy recontextualisation works a bit differently. The ready-made in performance cannot become theatre, the way an object becomes art in conceptual art. It can, like all other elements, only become *part of* theatre; it becomes one fragment/element in the dramaturgical equation. So recontextualisation should be looked for not only in entering a new cultural-spatial context of the performance space but in entering the whole dramaturgical system of all stage elements. And this thing, whether it is an object, text, or person, gains the potential for meaning in the new context. This is where the thinking/experiencing of the

audience is activated, at the moment of surprise, insecurity, unpredictability. And this is where the potential for creating new realities, and for questioning reality, in the theatre really lies: this is its political potential. Things and people and events enter many new relations and can be seen in a complex new web of relations.

And the dis/placed things in theatre and performance are not just things-in-themselves; they are things coming from somewhere but also all the relationships they are in and might become part of. Their vectors.

In the complex dramaturgical constellation, readymades are constructed and deconstructed. They lose their initial function and meaning and gain new potential. They balance between everyday sense and function and potential other existences. In this way, they point to the relativity of our reality and our fictions. But also, this way they – things, people, events – can be shown in their full complexity, always shifting in relation to and in context of other things. They are relational. Not finished and closed but open and in movement, in transformation.

The performative (theatrical) situation enables things to be seen in movement and in time, to be seen from different sides and in different relations, and this of course allows for a complex composition of meaning and experiencing through time, through change.

The temporality of things and the transformability of things should not discourage us. This is especially important in devised theatre, where things change all the time. One should be capable of committing to the

moment, grasping the material thought knowing that in the next moment it might change and will change. We grasp only to let go. But we grasp and let go again and again. This does not mean that the material is not good or that we are not good; it only means that things change. Mis-placing and other strategies described in this chapter are built around the relationality of things. Relationality, things existing, changing, changing meaning, changing shape and function through their relations is not some kind of relativist nihilism but a way to understand the complexity. Just because things can change does not mean they have no worth or are not worth doing.

Assemblage in conceptual art consists of a mix of images or objects, or parts of images and objects, put together to form a certain composition. It exists as photography, collage, or a form of sculpture/installation, but it is a very important part of contemporary dramaturgy. All dramaturgy is a sort of collage; even drama theatre plays are collages of different events and situations, mixed and matched. Dramaturgy is about putting things into a sequence that will be experienced by the audience. This sequence happens both in time and in space.

But here we are interested in assemblages that have traces of conceptual art thinking, where things are not put into specific order to serve a specific emotion or story within a cause-and-effect system. Here they are put together, or next to each other, or next to different things one after another, in order to examine the

thing – for it to be seen in a different light. Put next to each other, often in their ‘raw’ form, and put into new contexts, elements start ‘performing’ differently: we see them differently, they move and behave differently, they change features. And these mis-placed elements and the processes between them produces thinking, just like in conceptual art. To a degree, the behaviour of the elements and the thinking/experiencing of the audience is controllable, but only to a degree.

Assemblage dramaturgy has existed in the theatre since the second half of the 20th century, with the rise in postdramatic theatre of the 1980s. We understand as an assemblage many performances that are simply not based on a story with cause and effect. Without the story, things seem fragmented to us. But fragmentation is one of the main strategies of poetry, essays, or even painting and photography, for instance.

On the one hand, this non-causal logic provides for a more poetic approach, linking things to each other poetically. But, on the other hand, it creates the possibility for essayistic thinking, for the possibility to research a topic not through a story but via different tools, approaches, and perspectives, combining the personal and the theoretical.

Reframing Another form of recontextualisation is reframing. An artist can invite the audience to look at a piece of reality – an event, an activity, a person – as a performance. Here the event or the activity does not have to be acted, staged, or rehearsed. The person (animal or plant) does not even have to know that they

are part of a theatre performance. They do not have to have the intention of ‘acting’. Here the invitation of the artist, the framing, designates the intention. And the intention is in looking at something ‘as if’ it was theatre – and this intention makes it theatre.

Performance Art and Installation Art At the end of this text we will describe individual contemporary forms and formats of performance. But here it is important to look at the two formats from the visual arts that have most influenced theatre performance in the long term: performance art and installation art.

Originally, performance art was a visual art form in which action/performance formed the core of the art piece and not a physical object. In this form, the artist’s body and the artist themselves were often the material for the art piece. This is easiest to see in the work of Marina Abramović, where she challenges her own body, its endurance, and its fragility. The time and timing of these projects is different from traditional theatrical performance; some have lasted for hours, days and months. They unfold for as long as the specific practice required. When performance art began, acting and representation were very rare. It was about the authenticity of the body, action, and time. Theatricality – costumes, scenography, characters – were extremely rare. Contemporary performance art (visual artists making performances) has many forms, some of them being closer to theatre forms, even using acting and reenactment (reenacting events that have taken place in their totality) as strategies. Some of

these projects are not scripted and some are scripted/directed to the last detail. Some of them are done live and some are recorded. Visual artists are more and more often working in teams on these projects, even employing entire crews.

Installation art is a visual art field initially of expanded sculpture. It stands for three-dimensional spatial works that can usually be experienced from inside and from different sides. These works cannot be grasped from one point of view but from many. Minimalist installation of the 1960s was one of the first forms to point to the spatial, phenomenological experience of the audience as the core of the art piece. Without the body of the spectator, their perception, and their presence, the work does not happen. It is the experience of space, spacing, and experience of their own changing perception that constitutes the work. Installation art is a performative form in which there are no performers – or rather where the spectator performs (is the performer) and at the same time watches their own experience/performance. So the spectator performs for themselves within a given ‘scenography’ (spatial installation) that triggers and guides their performance and is something like a ‘script’. Installations are not simply placements in space; they are complex environments – constellations of things, processes, and presences. These dynamic constellations are dramaturgies in which the audience performs.

The influence of performance art and installation art on contemporary forms of theatre comes mainly in

the inclusion of the 'raw' material (the ready-made), the body of the artist (artists being present on stage physically or in other forms), the presence of the body of the audience (interaction, perception, etc.), and a different understanding of time.

What is perhaps most interesting for dramaturgy is the different formatting of time. Unlike theatre performance that takes place in the evening for a few hours, durational performance can use the raw timing of the individual objects, practices, and actions, and can take many hours, days, or longer. Further, in the theatre we call something an installation if, for the sake of the length of the unfolding of an action (or its repetition), we do not want to restrain the audience's movement. We do not designate the time that they will spend with the piece – they can come and go as they please. Also, we do not designate the specific spatial position from which they will be watching, but they are often allowed to move in space and see the 'installation' from many points/perspectives.

In the theatre the audience arrives and the performance starts, and usually the audience stays until the performance is finished. The installation audience can come and go when they wish, they can come back, or they can stay for an extremely long time. This is possible because, in installation, very often all parts of the installation are available at all times. And if not, then it has to be conceived in such a way that the exact sequence of things is not the most important part of the composition.

Dramaturg/Curator The words dramaturg (theatre) and curator (visual arts) are often interchangeable since their roles are similar. A dramaturg working for a theatre company, venue, or festival is responsible for the programme and is the curator of the programme of the entity. Curators commissioning work for exhibitions or institutions operate as dramaturgs in the sense that they are responsible for the programme, they help artists develop the piece, and are consulted along the way with the research and development.

If we are putting existing things/people/events into new contexts, we can say that this type of dramaturgy is close to curatorial strategies of combining existing artwork into an exhibition. But we could also say that curatorial work is very similar to dramaturgy because it combines the artefact and events into spatiotemporal experiences. So, an exhibition can also have dramaturgy – a system of the unfolding of experience for the spectator.

To summarise: the ready-made, recontextualisation, and assemblage are strategies of contemporary dramaturgy that can be compared to strategies of conceptual art. Conceptual art was conceived in order to question consumerism in art and to avoid it. Initially, one of the important points of conceptual art was to create artworks that are not artefacts that can be bought, sold, and owned. Theatre was always ephemeral, and its temporality cannot be stabilised or bought. But it often belongs to the privileged classes. Just like galleries, it welcomes people with education and some economic status. This is why contemporary

performance brings marginalised people, events, and things to the stage. Exposing them on stage and recontextualising them provides for a new view of them. (Hopefully, if done right, exposing means ‘giving space’ and not ‘exploiting’.) In this, contemporary dramaturgy is similar to conceptual art practices. It provides a possibility for thinking or dialogue between the work and the spectator. Dislocation or recontextualisation is a new possibility for viewing or thinking. And we can say that the work does not happen on stage but between the stage and audience. In this sense, it cannot ever be fully controlled, and is usually a form of *open dramaturgy*, a proposal of experiencing and thinking with the performance, that the audience can experience in completely unexpected ways.

7 PERFORMANCE AS A WAY OF THINKING: THE LOGIC

Contemporary performance is often created around a topic and material rather than a story. Even when there is a story, often the story is one of the elements, or is 'ready-made', a documentary event. And we can say that a lot of contemporary performance is exploration of some ideas, events, phenomena, etc. In Czech, this move is known as movement from the theatre of story and cause and effect to the theatre of themes/topics. The material is developed, looked at throughout the rehearsals, and the final product – the performance – is usually also a moment to continue exploring the topic with the audience. The thinking does not stop when the performance is finished. (It is never really finished.)

And, as I have written in the devised theatre section, the authors are thinking with the material, seeing what it does, what it wants to do, how it works. This development of material includes a lot of 'thinking through doing', 'thinking with the material'. In the rehearsal we do not only think with our minds and rational selves but with the whole body in movement. We play with the material, we move it, we react to it, we let it surprise us, we try to break it to see what is inside. A lot of rehearsing is a form of improvisation, but improvisation that is not aimed only at creating

interesting stage images. This is explorative improvisation that gives us the opportunity to have a dialogue with the topic or material: to let the material speak to us beyond what we already know/assume/judge about it before really encountering it. This thinking through doing is a form of intuitive thinking that is neglected in our society where the rational and the scientific rule; at the same time, it is one of the basic ways that humans think and exist in the world. Thinking is more than thinking rationally with words. We think through experiencing, through doing, through dialogue, through failure, through senses, etc.

But not only are the rehearsals, the preparational research, a way of thinking: the performances themselves are a continuation of the thinking, and this thinking happens with the audience. This is because the research/rehearsal process is often not geared to provide clear, specific outcomes and conclusions, product, or story as much as to provide a system for thinking, a logic, an atmosphere, a texture in which the thinking happens. This is one of the reasons each individual contemporary performance has a completely different dramaturgical system, or way of unfolding, and this system somehow responds to the topic/material and provides a living logic in which performers/authors and the audiences can think together.

Again, this thinking is not only rational thinking where things can be mainly argued with words, or retold. But it doesn't mean that it's not logical, structured, and layered. Performance provides for complex thinking through experiencing and doing and

playing and being lost and being emotional. So, our whole selves (performers and audiences alike) can be included in this thinking.

Thinking by playing and being lost is crucial in forming critical/creative thinking. It is thinking outside everyday logic, adding ‘what if’ and ‘why not’ in front of things. Critical/creative thinking means not taking things for granted, seeing beyond the familiar, and looking at things as if for the first time (in artistic research, it also means deliberately looking outside theoretical discourses). There are many things in life that we do not question, that we take for granted, even as ‘natural’ and ‘unchangeable’, but if we looked at them again, we would see that they are constructed by people, by society, that they are a construction of somebody’s imagination and/or power and that they can be changed. And here ‘what if’ and ‘why not’ can even become a political tool: creative thinking questions whether things are the way they seem, as well as who decides, who creates, who has power over things, rules, spaces, and people.

Essay Performance Many contemporary performances that are built around a topic or exploration of a phenomenon, historical event, texture, notion, or urge function as a set of thoughts and form their own thinking around the topic rather than tell a story about it or interpret it in a specific way. In this sense, many contemporary performances can be considered research and take a form that resembles what is called an essay in literature. These performances aim to

provide a new perspective/experience of the topic, a form of critical/creative thinking.

In order to see things ‘anew’, things that we are used to and find common, to see them as if we have not seen them before, we have to use our imagination. And the quickest way to do this is through critical play. Critical play would be looking at things but removing the everyday or scientific logic or trying to avoid seeing it through any kind of accepted discourse, like in essays.

The essay is a form of critical thinking that mixes artistic and scientific, literature and philosophy, personal and tangible. When writing an essay, the writer picks a topic or a phenomenon or a practice and develops a series of thoughts around it. The writing does not follow established philosophical/scientific/rational discourse neither in content nor form. It does not follow the current understanding of the topic nor the rules for philosophical/academic writing. The essay is a free thought moving from personal experiences and social experiences to other forms of known knowledge, mixing art, ethics, and science, always between the imagination and the factual.

In his essay ‘The Essay as Form’ (1958), German philosopher Theodor Adorno says about the essay that ‘its concepts are neither deduced from any first principle nor do they come full circle and arrive at a final principle’ (Adorno 1984: 152). So, it doesn’t start in discourse (pre- established or ad hoc) nor end in discourse (does not create universal conclusions). It is open, free-floating thinking. The essay is not producing anything, nor trying for strict conclusions, nor creating

strict discursive knowledge. And this is where its real criticality and creativity lies. It is not bound to producing proofs, truths, and knowledge. It is not bound to any discourse, ideologies, or systems of thinking. It is the thinking itself.

Adorno also says that the essay has its own time, it starts when it starts, and it stops when it stops. It doesn't have a prescribed beginning, nor does it finish with a conclusion. It respects only the material/topic. And it tries to explore it outside existing discourse and attempts new ways of seeing. The respect for the topic/material means that the writer listens and follows the material, letting it show itself (this resembles material in devising) and seeing how 'it performs'. The essay is, Adorno says, 'methodically unmethodical', and this way of thinking outside existing systems is a crucial 'method' of critical thinking. Contemporary performance is similarly 'methodically unmethodical'. And this constant balancing on the verge of discourse is its greatest critical strength.

Contemporary performance as an essay, in which a topic (event, gesture, practice, social or other phenomenon) is explored, creates performative thinking about the topic that can work in different ways. It can play with existing material (documentary or ready-made), it can develop a dramaturgy tightly connected to the topic and follow its logic, but it can also put the existing knowledge about the topic in a context of similar, neighbouring, or different and contradictory topics and challenge it against new contexts of thought. These performances can be open performances

without a clear solution or conclusion to the topic, creating free performative thoughts, situations, images around it. The topic can be more or less articulated and clear, sometimes exposed, sometimes hidden, and the performance can be either more 'understood' or more 'experienced'.

The audience is invited to think/experience with the performance. Not to follow the exact thought (this is often completely impossible since the thought is poetic, fragmented, and distorted) but to create their own thinking with and around the performance. This performative thinking is rational and intuitive at the same time; it combines facts and triggers previous 'knowledge' (memories, experiences, habits) but also mixes it with immediate experience of things. It is the thinking through doing (moving, positioning, touching, watching, etc.) of artists but often also via the participation of spectators too. So, it is different to rational thinking that is often connected mainly to words and argumentation. This 'doing' does not argue, it doesn't follow argumentation, it follows the 'character' of the material and the maker's relations to it. Finally, this thinking is 'thinking with others'. In the process of creation, it is the thinking of the group of artists developing the performative thinking, but since the thinking is open it continues during the performance of the piece with the audience. This performative thinking questions the existing discourses, thinking through doing, thinking with others, thinking without aiming at clear conclusions, respecting material above all, and is the greatest strength of contemporary theatre.

Many essayistic performances stand for ‘a sense of’ something: a sense of money, a sense of loss, a sense of being lost, a sense of time, a sense of sound, etc. This ‘sense of’ cannot be described in words, but it can be performed, and it can be experienced.

One can say that these essayistic performances are too chaotic, have too much multiplicity, that anything is possible, that there is no rigour or coherence. But we must understand that rigour is validated not only by product and not only by how clearly something can be described in words. And one has to understand that, despite its multiplicity and overlapping discourses and unfinished thoughts, essayistic performance can be coherent, and all the good ones are. It has a core that might not be definable in words, but it can be experienced, and it is united and unified. This coherence is not predetermined and illustrated; it is found through playing with material during rehearsing. The making of devised performance can be defined as looking for this (maybe seemingly fragmented, maybe seemingly chaotic) coherence.

Mixing Realities Theatre is always about the creation of reality on stage. In drama theatre with plot and story, this reality is of some other space and time. To rephrase a thought from Samuel Weber’s *Theatricality as Medium* (2004), the theatre is a place where things that never happened, and could never happen, happen right in front of you. It is an uncanny form, where unreal reality is created, a ‘what if’ reality that happens right in front of us.

In contemporary performance, where usually there is no tight plot, and actors often do not represent characters but are stage versions of themselves, where a lot of material is ready-made, where material is real/raw material (people, words, objects, movements, spaces, etc.), the situation is surprisingly similar. There is still a new reality created. It is orchestrated and, to a large degree, pre-organised. The difference between everyday life and this stage reality is not that it is a different time and space (here and now vs. the time/space of the play) but that this stage reality is created. And the audience comes with the awareness that somebody has purposely constructed this reality. So, there is no doubt that this is, at least to a degree, a created reality. But it is not a non-reality either. What does happen with performances that are playing with authenticity one way or another (by using ready-mades or improvisation or including accidents and having performers 'be themselves') is that it creates a question of whether the performance, or at least parts of it, is real. This of course is dramatically interesting because it creates tension for the audience. But the other side of this is that these performances also question reality itself and point to the construction/fictionalisation of reality in everyday life. Understanding that stories, histories, personal identity are all part of the fictionalisation that humans do. And these performances often use very subtle and complex ways to question our human condition that is always on the verge of reality and fiction.

Also, this new reality also can propose an aspect of utopia, non-existent or unthinkable. The 'what if'

can stand for making things that are invisible or barely visible, visible. Or for finding a potential or possibility of change, transformation, or simply difference in something that already exists. In contemporary theatre we often experience a new possibility (a new possibility to see something, a new possibility to experience time, for instance). And the whole idea behind essayistic thinking, we could say, is to reach the new possibilities outside the set discourse, habits, and customs.

All theatre has at its core some kind of mixing or connecting of realities. In drama theatre it is the time and place of the play that mixes the time and place of the audience. Theatre is good at creating, enabling, imagining, and framing other, potential realities. In contemporary performance this tendency of mixing/connecting realities is one of the main dramaturgical features. Different realities are placed next to each other to create new terrains and modes of thinking and experiencing. By realities we mean differences in reality defined by the personal/psychological; differences in reality defined by cultural differences; differences in reality defined by sexual orientation; difference in reality defined by historical orientation; but also realities of social spaces, realities/spaces of different media, etc. Our reality is always determined by who we are, our orientation, and our experiences.

In contemporary performance we experience the meeting of realities on many levels: performing in public space where performance time/space meets the time/space of everyday life; in the work of Rimini Protokoll where the reality of one community (for

instance Bulgarian truck drivers) meets the reality of the spectators; in performances using different media such as virtual reality or simple projection or mobile phones or video games where the realities are mediated, overlapped, and woven into each other; in political performance realities of different social groups (men, women, gay, transgender, young, old) are placed next to the each other; in works that place different realities (work-out gym and philosophy, for instance) next to each other to create a multilayered dramaturgy of realities.

Since the postmodern period, we have become used to the idea of multiple perspectives and multiple truths and a multiplicity of realities. And performances are made with the idea that not all spectators will receive one message and understand it in a unified way. So it is also a multiplicity of spectators' realities that are at play. We make performances with specific textures, and atmospheres, performances that research, that open questions, and we know that it is up to the audience what they will do with it. But the multiplicity of realities also happens on stage, not only in the audiences' minds. And theatre is exactly that place where multiple realities can be enacted in one place/time: authentic next to virtual and mediated, realities of different minorities, public/private realities, constructed and made-up realities, neglected realities, forgotten realities, etc.

In this case, it is important to check on the actor/performer's reality: actors are very often asked not to perform but to be themselves when performing. But

what does this really mean? Who decides if something is authentic or not? And can one reach, let alone perform, one's own authenticity? First, asking performers to be 'their own selves' often means that the actor does not take on a specific pre-written character that will be part of a plot. But who are they? They are surely not their everyday self once on stage. The stage frames them and creates that other reality around them, no matter how much they struggle against it. Who are they? Their alternative stage self? And what is this need for self-authenticity on stage? Is it some new kind of realism? Theatre pretending to be pure reality?

In *The Edges of Fiction* Jacques Rancière, writing about literature, says that

[W]hat realism means is not the abduction of the rights of imagination in the face of prosaic reality. It is the loss of bearings that permitted one real to be separated from the other, and therefore also to treat their indistinction as a game. (2017: 90)

I think this very much applies to theatre. With the whole wave of documentary, community, and other theatre working with authenticity in recent decades, the point is not some kind of new realism, where everything is 100% real, but a questioning of all the realities. It is to see them critically against each other. And this is the politics of contemporary performance. It is a critical machine that places realities we do not doubt against each other just so we can see them and question them.

When working with mixed realities, it is important to think about the autonomy of individual realities – letting them play as they are for as long as possible and exploring them as they are without merging them too early. The audience has to be able to recognise the difference, the contours of different realities, at least at first. Further, we have to be aware of how and when the audience perceives which reality – when they are aware of them, which realities are closer to them, which need to be explained, which need to be hidden, etc. And this takes into account the cultural conditions (for instance, how often is virtual reality used in the theatre of the specific place, or how is a specific minority treated in this place, etc.). Finally, it is also important to let these realities work with and against each other so they can overlap, clash, crash and burn, and merge if needed.

This overlapping of realities is clearly visible, for instance, in Arkadi Zaidēs's *Archive*, which was mentioned above. In this performance the artist, himself an Israeli Jew, tries to embody movements of Israeli Jewish settlers who attack Palestinians. Behind him there is an endless projection of authentic footage of an archive of assaults. He literally tries on this other reality of being Jewish on his own body in order to check if he also belongs to this reality or not.

Contemporary Performance as Research Dramaturgy and research are tightly connected. In drama theatre the dramaturg is often responsible for exploring the historical and life facts around the playwright and the play, as well as the literary context and content of

the play. (In the US, a dramaturg is often called a literary manager.) This research often helps shape the translation of the play onto the contemporary stage.

But the playing with/exploring the material during the rehearsals is of course also a form of non-scientific artistic research: understanding through doing, exploring while playing, thinking with others, listening to the material. The devising is constructing new ways of thinking, performative thinking around things and topics. And the rehearsals are a very specific lab situation where this thinking is explored. We can say that devising is researching. It is a non-academic, non-scientific research that can have features of both but can also be fully independent, more or less chaotic or methodological research. Here the material (and of course the artists' relationship to it) and not the discourse has primacy, as we described in the section on performance as essay.

Artists often stick to one form or topic and somehow repeat the same issue or problem that is at the heart of their work and artistic orientation over long periods.

There are also some companies that focus on one issue/topic and create years of research and multiple projects around it. For instance, the performances of Italian company Fanny & Alexander come in series. Their *Lawrence Project* consists of: *TEL*, a performance for two actors in two distant and completely separate spaces; *338171 TEL*, a radio drama (2011); and *Revolt in the Desert*, a show for ten performers

and five writers (2013). The work of Fanny & Alexander, and of other Italian companies such as Motus, can be defined as research opuses rather than performances, a series of sub-events centred on one theme but exploring a multiplicity of different points of view. These series can include multiple forms and formats: performances, installations, video art, community workshops, exhibitions, interventions, etc. And it is a way to explore one thing via multiple formats and different systems and situations. Motus's *Syrma Antigones* (2009) explored the ancient Greek tragedy *Antigone* in relation to the 2008 street demonstrations in Greece, while questioning the possibility of a revolution in today's society. This consisted of four main performances, which later resolved into a live interview between Motus and Judith Malina of New York's The Living Theatre called *Plot is the Revolution* (2011). While Fanny & Alexander's project *O-Z* (2008–2010), explored the journey theme from *The Wizard of Oz*, and includes eight parts, including stage performance, opera, installations, and an art book.

Performance as a (more or less chaotic) research method is a performative method: it not only provides a live laboratory for exploration, it does things, it constructs new realities. So not only is it a different methodology, a different way of thinking outside the discourse; it is also close to engineering because it is not only analytical but also constructive. Finally, performance as research is collective research within the collective of creators and with the audience.

Dramaturgy as a Way of Thinking Until now, we have looked at the ways in which the performance is a way of thinking. But dramaturgy, and thinking dramaturgically, is its own system of thinking that needs to be described.

If we say that dramaturgy is a system of the unfolding of experience for the audience, it means that dramaturgical thinking is always systematic thinking. And, as Polish dramaturg Piotr Gruszczyński once said, dramaturgs see systems, or at least the potential for a system, even in seemingly the greatest chaos. Systematic thinking in dramaturgy means that the dramaturg is capable of seeing and foreseeing how individual elements perform together and how they will change in relation to each other. The dramaturg recognises repetitions and similarities and patterns, in order to strengthen them or break them depending on the needs of the specific material. The dramaturg is, like an engineer, making an engine, building the machinery of the performance. She understands how the different parts will work together.

She has to do this even if the logic or the way of thinking is not close to her own, or even comes from a field unknown to her, and here she has to use all of her curiosity to explore and research, but also to deploy the ‘what if’ very often. ‘What if’ this kind of thinking would work, ‘what if’ this material is worth exploring, etc.

It is very, very, very hard to describe the dramaturgical systems of contemporary theatre. Almost every performance works in a different dramaturgical

system. Some of them use the space as the core system (walking from one place to another); some use language as the core system (unfolding of understanding, misunderstanding, and not understanding, for instance); some use the emotional experience of the audience as the core of the dramaturgical system (from fear to release of fear, back to fear, for instance); some performances could deconstruct a famous painting, etc. etc. etc. And mostly, in reality, the systems are made out of more core elements and there are innumerable possible systems and ways of unfolding them. A system can unfold as a spiral, or as a labyrinth, or the watching of a football game, as the playing of a football game, as eating an ice cream, as a tree, as the sea, etc. etc. It is always a different flow, different dynamics, peaks, changes, moods, textures. But what is important is that one thing follows another, that things relate to each other and that no matter how chaotic it looks, there could be a system within that needs to be deciphered, protected, and developed.

What the dramaturg can follow to understand these systems, predict them, and grow them is the repetition of things (things that are already there, things that are strong, similarities); she can also follow the hierarchies (what is or should be more important, what has priority and when, what is neglected, what needs to be supported); she can follow the centre and margin to understand what is the core of the project and what should be at the centre. She has to understand the potential of the material and the possible relationship potential between the materials. She has

to see material with ‘where they are coming from’ and ‘where they are going’ – their whole ‘vectors’. Here she has to use her imagination a lot!

To sum up: as she tries to imagine and follow how this engine/system will work, the most important thing is to understand how this will work for the audience, of course. And here we have to understand the audience as a group of people who don’t know anything or very little about the performance and have to be led through the experience. As we said before, the audience’s experience cannot be fully controlled, and in contemporary performance it is expected that the audience will ‘do what they need to do’ and have their own experience depending on who and how they are. But this experience can be navigated. Each performance has little ‘triggers’ within it that direct the audience in a specific direction (mentally, physically, or emotionally). These triggers can be signs, gestures, or objects that in a specific context give the specific result. But how do we make sure that the whole audience sees something as slow or fast? We all know that speed is relative, and it is even more so on stage. So, in order for these ‘triggers’ to work, the audience often needs clear ‘points of reference’. If we want something to be taken as slow on stage, we can simply put it next to something fast (the fast thing here would be the ‘point of reference’).

Dramaturgies, as I wrote earlier, are very much based in repetition and surprise, identity, and difference. It is important to enable the audience to follow at first, to give it ‘points of reference’, and to give it

the possibility of understanding the language and the coding of the performance. To give it basic orientation to build connection with the audience. An audience disoriented from beginning to the end is a bored and lost audience. Of course, one orients the audience only in order for it to follow the performance into the unknown, into places where one cannot orient so easily. One can plant ‘jokers’ along the way. ‘Jokers’ are things that seemingly do not belong to the system, or that seemingly do not belong to a specific situation. These ‘jokers’⁸ confuse the audience but also awaken their curiosity and, hopefully, their thinking. Finally, the dramaturg has to take care that the performance gives moments of ‘reward’ to the audience. These can be a beautiful image or a moment of understanding or anything else that ‘rewards’ the audience for spending their time with the performance. Well-placed rewards, in space and time, can help even the most serious and hard performances to be followed more easily. An audience likes to think, likes to feel, likes to be shocked, and can go very far with very serious, even intellectual, or depressing performances. The audience comes for new experiences of things, seeks them, but also has to have moments of rest and relief and reward in order to endure and to follow.

⁸ The idea of the ‘joker’ and its name was formulated by Janet Prokešová, of the Czech theatre company D’Epog, during a devised theatre workshop in January 2019. In a rare moment of clarity of memory, I know exactly where a word is coming from, so it is important for me to note it.

Again, if we understand dramaturgy as the unfolding of an experience for the audience, we can apply this thinking to many other disciplines. The construction of an experience, or rather the construction of a specific sequence of experiences, is not a unique feature of theatre/performance.

In architecture, an apartment can be read dramaturgically. Each apartment has a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom, etc. The spatial combination and the access to these rooms, how they connect, how far they are from each other, how they open to the street, how they open into each other – all of this will provide for a very specific experience within the space that will also influence how one lives in it. Every exhibition in a museum or a gallery has a dramaturgy, a way of unfolding to the audience: the introduction text, the space, the ordering of artefacts, their connections, their placing in space – all of these influence how the exhibition is experienced, how it tells a ‘story’ to the spectator.

We can also look at the dramaturgy of sports. For instance, a football match has a ‘script’ – the rules of the game. These rules of the game are influenced by accident and by the participants’ abilities for a very specific dramaturgical flow. This flow can be counted in goals, but more importantly it is emotional dramaturgy depending on which team are you rooting for.

Food also has dramaturgy: cooks very often know which taste will come first, which taste, and texture need to be in contrast or in sync with which other taste. Perfumes are harder to organise owing to their ephemeral nature, but each perfume consists of many smells

and the perfumers also know which smell will come at which point, which one will stay longest, which one will disappear. Further, the perfumers always say that smell is only part of the perfume, and the name of the perfume and the story it carries are as important for its effect on the wearer.

In every city, a walk through the city is a story/dramaturgy. And while each walk in the same city can have a different dramaturgy, a walk in Warsaw will be different from a walk in New York or Delhi. The character of the city including architecture, social situation, language, citizens, political situation, will be part of the walk. Climbing a mountain has a very clear dramaturgical development: starting out, slowly getting tired, getting to the peak, and coming back. All the birds, animals, and landscapes that you encounter, and the dialogue with the people you are walking with, will influence the dramaturgy of the climb.

Teaching is one of the dramaturgical activities *par excellence*. It is about the construction of the experience of understanding, when and how you get to understand something, from which context, by which triggers, etc., that will influence the depth and width of the understanding created in the student.

Understanding how these dramaturgies work can help us understand how dramaturgies of new forms of performance work.

8 DIALOGUE AND DRAMATURGY: THE OTHERS

Dialogue in contemporary performance is not primarily a matter of communication between characters of the play like in drama theatre. For instance, consider the beautiful dialogue of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*:

Meg: Are they nice?

Petey: Very nice.

Meg: I thought they'd be nice.

In contemporary performance there is of course such dialogue between people (and things) on stage. It also happens on the level of dialogue of realities, dialogue with material, dialogue with audience, dialogue with environment, etc. But dialogue, more than anything, is a strategy for making the performance.

There are multiple levels of creative dialogue happening: between the co-creators, of course, but also between artists and the material and artists and their everyday realities; between who they are and with who they want to be; with what they want to provide for the audience and what they can provide to the audience; dialogue with institutions, with grant-givers,

with spaces, with the local culture, etc. Not taking these dialogues for granted and understanding how they influence and how they can enrich or hold up the creative process is very important. How we talk to each other in the creative process is one of the most important things one has to master: how to focus on the project itself and not on one's own ego (whose idea it was!); how to take inspiration from outside (others, life) but keep the work coherent and not get distracted; how to keep feeding the work and not constantly creating new possible paths; how to turn feedback and criticism of audiences and peers into tools that help the performance.

Working Collectively Dialogue within the team is crucial, and agreement on the common goal, at least on a certain level, is the key to making coherent performance. Relationships within the rehearsal process are often mirrored in the dramaturgy of the performance; the stiffness, the misunderstanding, the miscommunication that repeatedly happens in rehearsal is almost always reflected in the dramaturgy on stage, and it is further mirrored in the relationships with the audience.

Awareness of dynamic but productive, critical but open, dialogue within the team is very important. Rehearsing is thinking together, and it is important to stick to one's ideas, but it is also important to change them when a better one comes along – an idea more important and better for the project.

In working collectively, it is important not to be unnecessarily emotional but to be aware of your and

other people's emotions – because there is always something behind them. It is important to name a crisis or a problem when it happens and to map what causes it. Suppressing problems just delays them and creates an atmosphere of deception and lies. But dwelling too long upon problems also does not help. Being aware of things and communicating them to others without making too much fuss is the key.

One of the main characteristics of devised theatre is that it is often done collectively. While some collectives/teams can work in a fully de-hierarchised fashion, most of the time there is some division of roles/labour/responsibilities within the team. Often there is a director or facilitator (Goat Island, for instance) who moderates the rehearsals and helps steer the process in a coherent direction. De-hierarchisation does not mean chaos; it means an open/porous way of relating in the creative process where everybody can have ideas and execute them. It is a process based in dialogue, not only dialogue with the material but also within the team.

For the collective creation to work, the team has to agree that the material/project has primacy and not 'whose idea it was'. In this situation the most important thing is to prioritise the project/rehearsing/performance and not your own needs. Very often, teams get stuck because individual team members insist on 'their' idea without prioritising what is important for the performance. Thinking together with other people and things is ingrained in the devising process, but it can only work if there is trust among the artists, trust

strong enough to create the possibility of decentralising individual egos.

Again, this collective creation works very differently for very different teams. And it is up to the specific team to negotiate the rules and needs of how to work. Taking absolute pure 100% collectiveness in creation would be a purely political project with clear priorities. In the case of performance making, where the priority is to make a good performance, this is of course different. Sometimes it is the whole group deciding, sometimes it is part of the group, sometimes the director, etc. The same goes for offering material and possibilities: sometimes it is the group, sometimes individuals, etc. Anything is possible and anything can work. But what is important is to keep the transparency of rules – to verbalise who is in charge of what; and never to pretend somebody is allowed to make decisions but not act upon it. The rules can and do change over the course of rehearsing, but it is important to be aware of how they have changed, and to verbalise it, to be transparent about it. That way, everybody can be on the same page.

In devising, this idea that you are in it together, on the same page, is extremely important. Of course, this is essential for a smooth process, the ethics of it, etc., but it is even more important because you are creating a new reality together, even more than in the drama theatre, since you are collectively making a whole new dramaturgical system, a whole new system of thinking. So, you have to be in it together.

It is important to open this dialogue – the rehearsal process – to outsiders at a certain point in

order to get feedback on how things work for people who are not in the process and do not know what ‘should be happening’ (insiders sometimes lose sight of what is really happening and are focused on what they wish was happening). When taking feedback from outsiders, it is important to be proactive (to know what your main questions and problems are at that specific point in rehearsing). It is also important to be able to make a distinction between important notes and notes that come from personal preferences and tastes (one can never satisfy all tastes).

Crisis is a scary moment in rehearsals. But one has to be aware that, for contemporary performance, which is made through a process of dialogue with material, dialogue with other artists, and dialogue with the audience – a form that is exploring by venturing into the unknown, and trying to express the things that cannot be verbalised – crisis is a natural part of the process. The most important thing in the moment of crisis is to understand that it is a certain ‘moment of truth’, that the rehearsal process, the team, and the material are trying to tell you something. It is important not to suppress the crisis but to try to understand exactly what is happening. Crisis can be the moment of opportunity for the greatest creativity and finding some of the most important aspects of the work – but one has to be ready and aware.

Dynamics in the Team Different people have different abilities, talents, and timings. When working in a team, you should not focus on whether you are

worse or better than the others; you should not wish to be like somebody else. You have to focus on what you are good at and to utilise that. Some people are quiet but work hard and think through doing. Some people are quick at seeing and verbalising things. Some people see barely visible potential. Some people have no awareness of what they are doing but they do it well. Some people are quick but lack endurance. Some people are slow but enduring. Understanding that all these people have a specific place in the dynamics of the team is crucial.

Teams that work together for a long time are usually well aware of this. But it is important not to fall into team dynamics clichés, to fall into habits and stereotypes within the team. The dynamics has to be updated from time to time: people change over time, and their relationships have to change too.

Performance Consciousness Creating through dialogue with material and other people within the rehearsal process proposes open ground for creation in which unexpected things happen, things develop in new directions, and sometimes even the initial plan is abandoned completely. The process of devising through rehearsing, through doing, through dialogue with material, and communicating through atmospheres, urges, images, issues, movement allows the possibility for a new logic to arise among the makers. And this logic is slowly built over the rehearsal process.

There is a moment in rehearsals when the developed material and the thinking around it is at a certain

level and gains something like an independence to the makers. It is as if the performance gains its own consciousness/logic and, from then on, the makers need to respect it and be in dialogue with it. It is the sum of all collective memory and experiences. From then on, the performance 'tells' the makers what it wants and can do or rejects ideas that don't fit it.

This performance consciousness can be the sum of all the raw, inspirational, and starting material; of all the things that happen to the makers in the rehearsals and everyday reality. It is the sum of all the attitudes, preferences, and orientations towards the world that the makers bring, or all the conscious and unconscious ideas that they bring, yet it becomes an independent logic with its own autonomy.

The moment the performance starts speaking back at you, you might be onto something.

Dramaturgy as Relational To conclude, we can say that all dramaturgy is relational: it is primarily the relations of elements on stage, but also the relations between the makers; the relations of stage and auditorium, performance and audience; the relations inside the theatre and outside the theatre; the relations of the team and the venue; the relations of grant-givers and artists, and so on and so on.

Being in relational situations means being in flux, being in constant change, being in movement. Sometimes the change is so gradual and so slow that it is barely visible; sometimes the transformation is shockingly fast. Nevertheless, it is a very complex system in

which one has to ‘keep track’ of many aspects in order to construct the right experience.

But most importantly we should perhaps start to think about contemporary dramaturgy as being based not in dramaturgical elements but in attitudes. Attitudes towards topics, things, and other people, how we relate to them in dynamic ways, and how these attitudes unfold and change in time. These dynamic attitudes are the dramaturgy of the performance. So we should also stop thinking of dramaturgical structures and start thinking about dramaturgical dynamics.

And we should understand our own presence within performance not as fully autonomous but as ‘being with’: being with material, things, people. And this ‘being with’ does not mean a simple passive positive relationship. It includes being towards, being against, being for, being around – positions that are often undistinguishable from each other.

9 APPENDIX

A Performative Forms and Formats Glossary

There are many forms and formats of contemporary performance. Some of the formats are designated by the location (public space, site-specific) or the relationship to the audience (participatory, immersive), or the relationship to material (documentary, object theatre), but also by individual stage elements (sound walk, lighting installation).

I describe individual forms and formats below. The list is of course not exhaustive since there are too many possible forms, and I personally cannot even imagine them all. I have also focused on the forms that I have somehow touched upon in the above text; I have purposely left out new circus, for instance, as I have not covered it above. The glossary is in no way exhaustive. It should be accepted as a tool that provides an understanding of the vastness of possibilities, and hopefully it will inspire you to explore further both new possibilities but also the offered possibilities in more depth.

In traditional dramaturgy it is the genre of the play (comedy, tragedy, crime, Western) that designates the orientation for the dramaturgy, the rules, and the needs. In contemporary performance it is the format of

the performance that substitutes for the genre. Understanding the rules and possibilities of the format allows for constructing a good experience for the audience. When thinking about choice of format of the performance one has to think about what the material needs but also, more importantly, what kind of relationship with the audience/their involvement one wants to produce. Each of the formats produces very specific possibilities of experience: rhythmic (fashion show), spatial (walk, site-specific), participatory (food performance), inclusive/exclusive (community), etc. etc. The formats also designate what the core of your performance will be, and what to focus on: the documentary event; the objects; the community; the space; the experience of sound in space; the experience of the event in time; the experience of costumes within a story; etc. etc. They also designate your creative process: some formats will need more resource research, some material research, some experimenting, some building technologies; some you will rehearse for a year and some you will have to rehearse with the audience and some you will not rehearse at all, etc.

This glossary is organised alphabetically.

Task – when reading the glossary:

- a) try to imagine different possibilities for the experience of the audience for the specific form (spatial, interactive, emotional, etc.)
- b) try to think of a specific content that would fit the form.

Community Performance in English sometimes stands for amateur theatre, but in contemporary performance it can also designate performances focusing on specific communities as the content of the performance, in addition to the makers and performers. There are performances and even companies working long term with people with different disabilities or the socially disabled, for instance, or with homeless people or local minorities (Vietnamese, Roma etc.), or with children or old people, etc. For instance, in the Czech Republic, the company 'Divadelní spolek lidí bez domova Ježek a Čížek' works with homeless people and 'Bohnická divadelní společnost' works with psychiatric patients.

Documentary Theatre has a wide span of forms and formats, but it is always constructed around historical events or social phenomena. These performances can use verbatim texts (the exact re-enactment of words said by specific people). It can use 'experts of the everyday' – non-professional actors who are the original participants of the events or phenomena. But this type of theatre also includes drama theatre based on real events and phenomena, where the play was written based on historical or social (or scientific, artistic, geographic, etc.) research. Companies working with documentary elements include Rimini Protokoll and the Portuguese-Czech company Hotel Europa. Many works by the Czech director Jiří Havelka are also documentary-based.

Fashion Shows are a form used in the clothing industry. In recent decades, high-end fashion shows have become highly theatrical. From Viktor and Rolf and Alexander McQueen to Marina Abramović doing art direction for Givenchy, it is worth looking into this field since there is a lot of money and a lot of experimentation in this area. But theatre makers, especially costume designers, use the format to create not only performative ways to show their work but whole performances with topics and stories using the form of the fashion show. Fashion shows have a very specific spacing and rhythm of the performance (catwalk, music, models/performers walking one by one to show their clothes) that offers interesting variations.

Food Performance Preparing, cooking, and eating food, and events around food (dinners, lunches, parties), have become part of performances in recent decades too. Food gives a very specific experience – an experience that enters your mouth and your whole body and to an extent becomes part of you. Gathering around food is (just like theatre) one of the basic human ways to come together. Eating together in a way constructs the community of an audience; very quickly there is a possibility for interaction and participation. From edible installations to dinner parties and community cooking – food performance has many forms. See, for instance, the work of visual artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, representative of relational aesthetics, who makes spaces for eating together,

British visual artist Lucy Orta's dinners and food for homeless people, or American conceptual artist Jennifer Rubell.

The Happening is a form of visual art performance from the 1960s. In happenings, most often it was only the beginning, the basic elements, that were set, and the rest would 'happen' (be improvised). Sometimes happenings had strict scripts throughout, and could combine painting, poetry, music, dance, etc. Some of the key artists include Allan Kaprow, John Cage, and Carolee Schneemann.

Immersive theatre is a form of theatre happening in many spaces where the audience can be at the centre of the space in which it is performed. The audience is surrounded or immersed in theatre. Often this theatre is not participatory: the spectator takes part only by being there but otherwise does not influence the performance. Immersive performance can be any performance that surrounds the spectator. Very common are immersive installations – scenographies that spectators can see/experience/inhabit from inside. Immersion puts the spectator at the centre of what is happening and takes away his own space – the auditorium. This can be seen in the work of British company Punchdrunk, where the immersed spectator is an inside voyeur/unnoticed witness who cannot physically or verbally interact with what is happening around them.

Installation is a form from the visual arts. It is an artistic space that can be entered and experienced by spectators from inside. Some of them work on experiencing space, sound in space, body in/and space. They are performative spaces because they provide space for things to happen to the spectator. There are also more narrative installations that provide whole stories; these installations sometimes work with realistic settings (apartments, for instance): see the work of Ilya Kabakov or Elmgreen and Dragset, for instance. These installations are in a way theatre without actors.

Interactive performances/installations are works in which spectators can activate the performance. When they do something, there is an immediate response. Good examples are interactive media installations: if I press a button a light will change. The spectator becomes a collaborator in the artistic process by activating it. This activation can designate the composition and the rhythm of the performance, but sometimes also the content, of course.

Intervention is often a short performance act that intrudes/changes the situation for a certain time. Often, interventions happen in public space and have features of activist performance. The goal is to point to a problem and a possibility of something changing in public space/social space. See John Jordan's *The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA)* (2003) or *Liberate Tate* (2010).

Performative Sculpture is a performative form of sculpture. Sometimes it is performed. But more often the artist themselves are the sculpture. British visual arts duo Gilbert and George have been a living art piece since 1968, sometimes by exhibiting themselves but often by merely being present. Often, it is the spectators who perform the living sculptures in the *One Minute Sculptures* by Austrian artist Erwin Wurm, where the audience follows the instructions to take a specific position with given objects for one minute. Most of these pieces by Erwin Wurm do not exist without a spectator/performer.

Object Theatre is a performance in which objects play an important role. These performances can be in the tradition of puppet theatre, where individual objects stand for specific characters/people. But often the objects stand for themselves, not for characters, nor do they become props – they become object partners on stage or even the topic of the performance. In this type of theatre, it is important to look for the autonomy of objects, to listen to them, to see what they are capable of doing and what they want to do and not simply use them for already pre-envisioned images. Object performance can also be interactive/participatory. Objects are good at bridging communication – what Jacques Ranciere calls ‘the third thing’, the thing on which both the artist and the spectator can concentrate, which triggers their creativity.

One-on-One Performance is a performance where one performer performs for one spectator. This format provides for an intimate and personalised experience, most often participatory at least to a degree. In Rotozaza's *Etiquette* (2007), two spectators perform for each other based on instructions given via headphones.

Participatory Performances are performances that require spatial presence, interaction, or other forms of activation of the audience. The audience to a certain degree becomes a co-creator and, depending on a specific situation, has influence on the form and content of the performance. Some of the above-mentioned work of Erwin Wurm, Rotozaza and Ilya Kabakov are participatory performances/installations. In this type of performance and installation, the instructions given to the audience are very important: they designate how audiences understand what they are supposed to do/how to participate and, at the same time, designate the amount of freedom/room for creativity that they are given. Participatory dramaturgies assume a form of incompleteness that is completed by the audiences.

Performance Art is visual art performance in which often it is the artist's body that is the material and content. Some of these performances are done as what we in the theatre call installation – the audience can enter and exit in their own time. Originally, the point of performance art was some form of 'authenticity' of performers' bodies and actions. Newer forms of performance art, also called Live Art in Britain, can

have a more theatrical nature, with script, characters, costumes, and scenography of sorts. Performance art has many sub-forms: for instance, the bio-technological rituals of Stelarc or, as discussed above, endurance performances.

Public Space Performances are performances that take place in public space. They vary from the new-circus type of street theatre performance to public-space interventions that can have more political content and ambition. Performances enter public space to look for new audiences (people who normally do not go to the theatre or do not have money to pay for tickets) or to explore the functions and problems of public space (point to the dysfunctions of social space). These performances can be walks (audio or video), installations, interventions, etc. One of the key dramaturgical elements in these performances is space. It is always important to designate to what degree the space of the performance and the space of the spectators overlap and what that means to the sense of participation.

Sense Performances are performances that include some of the senses not usually activated in theatre. These include taste, smell, and touch, since sight and hearing are traditionally the main senses used. These performances are usually participatory since the audience needs to touch or eat parts of the performance. Some of these performances explore senses and use them as a topic, some use the senses to point to something else. But some of them use senses as additional

tools, sometimes hidden (smell can do this easily), that influence the performance. An artist who works well with the senses is the Brussels-based New Zealand artist Kate McIntosh.

Site-Specific Performances are performances in non-traditional theatre spaces that are conditioned by the site where they take place. This conditioning can happen by what the space was (or still is) used for (hospital, prison, etc.) or by its architectural layout (rooms, views, etc.). Many performances in non-traditional spaces do not connect to the history and layout of the space and could be moved from one space to another. Site-specific performances are bound to a specific space and cannot be performed in another space; otherwise, they would be considerably changed.

Solo Performances are performances with one performer. Often these performances are performed and made by the performer. These performances can be word-based (for instance, storytelling) or movement (dance) or participatory (where the performer is more of a guide for the audience) and can take place in a theatre or non-theatre space (for instance, public space).

Sound Installation is a performative installation in which sound is the main element. These installations can focus on the spatiality of the sound (where the sound come from, when and where the spectator encounters it), or they can be sound walks (where the sound comes from headphones and the spectator

carries it with them). Sound stands for music and words but also for different sound effects and everyday sounds, and the sounds of nature.

Staged Photography is a form of photography that has theatrical content. The scene depicted in the image includes actors, costumes and scenography (sometimes pre-existing, sometimes built). Often these photos look like stills from a film, theatre performance or even real life. See, for instance, the work of American photographer Gregory Crewdson.

Theatre Concerts have many forms. In contemporary music even pop concerts are highly theatrical (for instance, Pet Shop Boys, Madonna, Kylie Minogue, etc.). But contemporary classical music also has theatrical concerts – concerts with performance elements (see the work of Orchestre Berg in the Czech Republic, for instance). In the theatre we call something a concert if the dramaturgical basis is strongly based in musical composition (played by instruments or voices, or something else).

Virtual Reality All virtual reality is performative. It is always a newly created reality. Some virtual reality is used for training (pilots, for instance), but in artistic practice it can acquire more narrative, poetic, and critical forms.

Walks are one of my favourite performative forms nowadays. A walk can be an audio walk, in which the audience is given headphones and walks through a series of spaces (often public spaces) to experience the performance. Video walks work in a similar way: the spectator downloads an application to their phone so they can see the augmented reality on the device. So the spectator sees something else live and something else on their phone. See the work of Canadian artist Janet Cardiff, a pioneer in both forms. Performative walks do not have to include technology; they can take place based on instructions or be guided by a performer, and there can be performers in the visited spaces along the way.

Wearable Art in fashion is clothes and jewellery that have elements of art (depict famous art pieces) or are made by an artist. In the visual arts and performance, it also stands for clothes or objects that can be worn and that are the core of the work. Here the costume becomes the content and form of the performative work. See the work of British visual artist Lucy Orta (wearable tents for homeless people) or the *Soundsuits* by American sculptor Nick Cave.

For more examples, visit the Live Art Development Agency <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/> or On the Boards TV <https://www.ontheboards.tv/>.

B Tasks for Devising

Tasks and tasking are crucial for devising. A task is a formal assignment that allows you to be creative within the very specific limits of the task. The formal features and focus on the formal aspects of the task allow the creators to think through the form, through the material, through what is right there in front of them, instead of making things up. It is also a way to access your deeper (let's say subconscious) creativity and to try to trick the creativity connected to the conscious, rational self. Tasks gain value especially in moments when you are lost and do not know what to do with the material.

In this section, I will list some of the devising tasks I use while teaching. I have grouped them into batches of tasks with similar aims or strategies. Possibilities for tasks are endless and this list is not intended to be exhaustive in any way. These are only examples to inspire you to make your own tasks, and to illustrate some of the important strategies in devising.

None of these tasks have the 'right answer'; there is no right way to do it – only your way to do it. So do not be afraid to be intuitive. Just go for it. The tasks are often formal, sometimes well-built and creative, but sometimes simple or even dry. The creativity happens in the doing of the task. So you have to go all the way in doing it. Don't be careful. Don't think about what others think or expect. Just do what you need to do in the moment and go all the way. Be radical in the moment.

Mood Map Creating a mood map at the beginning (or other stages) of the project is a good way to start a dialogue with others – through something they can touch, listen to, or feel. This way, they can get a deeper idea about the textures and moods and ideas that you are talking about.

- Gather objects, images, pieces of music, fragments of films, etc., that inspire you or somehow remind you of what you want to do in the specific performance.
- Ask others to ‘read’ it for you without you telling them your ‘story’: tell you what is significant, what is repeated, what is strong, etc. You might discover new information about your own thinking through this.
- Explain your idea through the things you have brought.

Listening to material is one of the most important parts of devising. Listening means that you are looking at it as if you have never seen it before, exploring every detail, looking for reasons it draws you in or repulses you, and, most importantly, listening to how it performs. What does it do? How does it do it? How does it move? What is the movement inside it? How does it change?

- Take an object and look at it: What do we call it? Functional potential (what is it made to do?); functional potential (what else can it do, what do we not expect). Phenomenological potential: colour, sound, shape, soft/hard, touchable (functional

and non-functional); What does it look like? Metaphorically, does it have cultural references, or psychological/personal references? Does it have memory/scars? Where was it made? Where will it die? Is there a paradox ingrained?

- Look at a fragment of video or an image from your ‘mood board’: What are the dynamics of the video? What are the colours? What is repeated? What is its emotionality like? Watch it as if you are watching an alien thing, as if you do not know the original film.

Certain Aspects You can take a certain aspect of material and focus on it.

- Watch how an object falls and replicate it with your body. Copy it, embody it.
- Listen to the sound the object makes and replicate it.

Dissection is a strategy of taking a fragment or set of fragments from the whole. You can use only some aspects of your material: you can replicate the lighting; you can copy one gesture; you can dissect the only text, etc. This is a formal way to approach/use your material without copying it and feel its performative potential.

- Take a piece of video and dissect pieces of it – a word, tone of voice, movement, text appearing in the background, etc. Each performer can represent one fragment. Combine the fragments into a new whole, perform them next to each other in different combinations in time and space.

Translation To understand how material performs and what its potential is you can also use the strategy of translation. You translate one form into another form. This is a creative/intuitive action, so it needs to be done without hesitation or too much thinking.

- Translate an image into a tune.
- Translate an object into a haiku poem.
- Wear the object as if it were clothes.
- Translate the dynamics of a video into a gesture.

Text To devise texts, you need to set frames in which they can be improvised. Improvising for a long time is very important. Interesting accidents and subconscious material appear once one is tired. So go for as long as you can. If you need these texts for performance, you can try to either repeat them or record them and transcribe them. Something will always be lost in repeating the material. Do not be afraid of that – focus on what is new and how it can be renewed and not repeated. Here are some examples:

- List all the things you are afraid of without saying, ‘I am afraid of.’
- Describe a chair in such a way that we have no idea what you are talking about.
- Describe yourself as if you are telling us your dream.
- Make a dialogue: person A always begins each sentence ‘When you...’ and person B always replies by saying, ‘Then you...’
- Make a dialogue in which person A always talks about their dreams and person B always

talks about sports. One sentence/question each repeatedly.

Combination You can make combinations of these bits of material that you made from previous examples (movements, texts, sounds) into new compositions in space and time. This you can use to feel the material – to see what potential it has. But you can also start building scenes in this way:

- Each performer takes on different parts of material and you make combinations.
- Or you can get one performer to do all of them at the same time to see how that will perform.
- You can also have only two performers improvise a dialogue with two pieces (gestures vs. melody for instance).

What worked/what didn't work After each task/exercise you can talk with the group about what worked and what didn't work; what was interesting and what was less interesting. When commenting on other people's work, try not to be judgmental; try to help them make it better – look for positive potential. The best way to do this is to retell them how you watched – how your perception worked – what you noticed, what was less important to you, etc.

Keep in mind that something that does not work – does not hold your attention – might work in different circumstances next to other material. So, keep in mind the material that didn't really work, too. You might get to use it later.

Also, there are times when you need to talk about what worked and what didn't work, perhaps especially at the beginning of rehearsals, when the team needs to tune in to each other and understand how the group thinks. But later in the rehearsal process you can maybe go without commenting for a long time. And have one person record/note down things that work. Too much talking/discussing can kill the devising process. Words fail us easily; actions can tell us a lot. Find your own rhythm.

Re-perform Sometimes, instead of talking about performative material, you can use the technique of 're-performing'. Before speaking, you get a different performer or group of performers to replicate the material. You can give them the task to perform only what they remember, or only what they think is important, or to pick only one thing from the material that is essential and perform that, without planning and talking. By re-performing you see the material again, see it upgraded or downgraded, understand what it needs without talking.

Processing Re-performing is a form of processing. You can use different strategies to process the material:

- Take everything unnecessary from the material, 'kill your darlings', try to get to the essence of the material.
- Make the material more radical. Continue in the direction the material is already inclined to go and make more of it: if it's fast, make it faster; if it's

boring, make it more boring; if it's red, make it even more red, etc.

- Add what is missing to the material.
- Multiply the material – for instance, repeat it again and again and see what happens.

Mapping of the material (what you have, what is repeated, which topics, movements, colours, textures, feelings, etc., are important;) is crucial in devising. Devising is a lot about intuitive playing and trying things out (just throwing things out there), so it is necessary from time to time to stop and see what you are doing and which direction the material is taking.

Instead of long and chaotic discussions in the collective, one can use more formal ways of mapping, dialogue through placing individual words, objects, and images:

- Each participant writes one to three topics on individual pieces of paper. One by one, they place the paper on the floor. The next participant always puts their paper next to other words on the floor that it somehow relates to in such a way to create 'islands'. These groups of words can be built by similarity, association, or more loose connections. These islands stand for the thoughts/topics/feelings/textures within the current thinking of the group. Each member of the group can read the islands. You can do the reading by: what connects the island; what is missing on the island; which gesture could represent the island; which sound would represent the island; etc. This mapping can

also be done with images and objects or a mix of words, images, and objects. It can be repeated during the process many times – every time you need to create a picture of the current situation. And the map will change every time as the process evolves.

Ordering As described above, the final order of scenes needs to be tried out live. One can have certain ideas of sequence in theory, but one needs to try it out live to see if it works. Do not be disappointed if it does not work. Maybe it means you need to try a different order or different timing of scenes. This takes a lot of work. Many versions and timings need to be tried out until the composition is good.

When it's not going well, try and stop and try to be very honest about why things are not going well. Maybe it's the material, maybe it's the collaborators, maybe you are simply insisting on something that is not working. Instead of lamenting the things that are wrong and panicking, try to change them or work with them or avoid them. The awareness of what is wrong is crucial.

Also, when things are not going well, go back to the material, go back to your collaborators. Trust your material and trust your colleagues. See what is in the material and the colleagues. You are always rich: you have the material and the colleagues. You just need to find the way to use them in the right way.

For things to go right, first you need criticality. Be critical, question and play. Be critical to the material: is it telling you everything? Be critical to colleagues: are they telling you everything? Or are they afraid to open? Be critical to your own self: do you have to be the smartest? Are you seeing clearly? Always check if you are doing your best. Try not to save things for later.

Second, have awareness. Do not suppress things. You might notice that you are not good at something, or that your colleagues do not trust you, or that the material is not enough. Do not suppress these facts – eventually they will come to light. Be open about these things. If you cannot resolve them, admit that you cannot resolve them at this point. But still do not suppress them. Keep them in mind, keep them to be resolved later. Be transparent about them, share them with your colleagues. Awareness is a key thing in devising. Nothing is good or bad, everything can be included in the creative process, but you need to be aware of things in order to turn them into creativity.

Finally you need trust – trust your material, trust your colleagues, trust yourself, and trust your audiences. Trusting the material means going deep into the material. Trusting colleagues means challenging yourself and them together. But also trusting their creativity and their opinion. Trusting the audience means that they will use their imagination and follow you.

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