MOVEMENT FIRST

Directing for Movement-Based Performative Arts

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Translation: Jan Salomonsson

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INTRODUCTION

Ugly movements, beautiful movements; movements that express emotions or tell stories; movements that agitate, comfort, or explain.

This book is about working with theatrical movement. It describes how a choreographing director and a group of performers can work together to create a production that is fundamentally based on movement. This book was written for any performing artists who would like to use movement in their expression, or who long to see more movement onstage.

I am a trained mime actor, and assistant professor of mime figuration at SKH, the Stockholm University of the Arts. I have choreographed and directed productions at regional theatres and with free companies, including Teater Tre, which I co-founded myself. I teach scenic portrayal, production creation, and dramaturgy/direction of movement-based performative arts.

This book is based on my own first-hand experiences, and includes examples taken from my own productions and teaching, as well as other peoples'. I have used the working journals I've kept from my various productions as an aid in writing this. Another aid was the literature I have found on the subject.

Many of the reflections in this book are strongly influenced by my own background in mime. This work is also intended to be useful for individuals who work in dance, circus, or other movement-based art forms. It was written for anybody who is, or wants to become, a choreographing director or performer in movement-based performative arts, or would like to add more physical aspects to their theatrical work. I hope the reader will become as fascinated as I am with how theatrical movement can be created and the things it can express.

WHY MOVEMENT?

When I was a child, I liked to spend time outdoors on my own. I would go walking in the woods or wander along the ditch that ran along the railway embankment, looking for places that humans weren't using. I would jump in snowbanks, and scale icy rocks. I imagined that the

rocks in the woods were enormous friends of mine. My cousin asked me: “Why do we always have to go out? All our toys and books are in the house, can’t we stay inside?” But all I wanted was to be outside. Move around.

When I got a little older, I joined a riding school. It was three miles from our house. I would cycle there after school, be home in time for dinner, and then head back out to the stables afterwards. I took my last ride home at ten o’clock at night. The bike path wound its way between the woodlands and golf courses. No cars or other people anywhere to be seen. I was alone with the streetlights, and the sound of the bottle dynamo spinning against the front tire. There was plenty of time to let my thoughts wander, daydream, and imagine things.

I became a teenager, and I developed asthma. Because of my condition, I wasn’t supposed to cycle alone. I did anyway. I mastered the art of concealing an asthma attack. If I came home unable to breathe, I hid in my room, and gave monosyllabic responses if anybody asked how I was feeling. I didn’t want to give up my bike rides.

Being ill much of the time, I did a lot of reading. The books exposed me to other realities. Fantasies were triggered. In general, my family had a rather complicated relationship to words. When somebody said something, they would occasionally mean something entirely different. It could be confusing for a child. There were no words for volatile emotions. If somebody lost their temper, they would rather bite their tongue than speak out of anger. Personally, it made me frugal with words. I was a reader, and a listener, somebody who tried to understand what people were actually trying to say.

But the daydreams, all the stuff that went on inside my mind, stayed with me. The woods, my bike, and the dark autumn nights. Thoughts forming patterns, colours, and narratives. Oc-casionally, an illuminated place, an electrical enclosure, somewhere to stop and catch your breath. The sound of cars in the distance, peering into the woods, thinking about the things I’m seeing. Not caring that it’s getting late. Eventually, pedalling on. The most primal parts of me came about through movement.

When I was very young, two or three or so, I began taking eurythmics lessons. I went along when my older sister went to her class. According to my mother, I refused to leave the

room when the class began. There was simply no getting me out of there. I wanted to join in: clap the beat, run around the place, and relax my arms and legs so that when the teacher walked around the class lifting them, she'd say, "woah, that's heavy!" In the end, they enrolled me in the eurythmics class along with my sister. This ended up having a huge impact on my life and my eventual choice of occupation. The building my eurythmics classes were held in was called Konstfack, and stood at the far end of Valhallavägen in Stockholm. Today, it is the home of the Stockholm University of the Arts–my current workplace!

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This book gives reflections on a variety of methods available to choreographing directors. It begins with a discussion on the art form of mime, along with an account of my own educational and professional background. After this, I move on to discussing my own thoughts on the working method of collaborative creation. After this, the chapters follow the general chro-nology or order that I find the most useful for organising my own work on a production: the idea process, preparations, a first period of rehearsals, script writing, and a second period of rehearsals. The book ends on a collection of theatrical exercises and a closing chapter in which I give an account of what I have learned from writing this.

The text itself focuses on choreographing directors' work with performers. It almost entirely refrains from touching on any of the other necessary elements of a production, such as production planning, set design, light design, costume design, masks, and music. These subjects were simply too extensive to be included within the scope of this work.

The productions mentioned here book all originated in ideas of various kinds. These, then, are not texts to be interpreted. I won't be describing the processes of text-based theatre here. Naturally, text can be incorporated in a performance, but movement always serves as the foundation for the work. I believe that movement-based productions are created according to a unique set of premises. I want to communicate the abundance of riches that this work can yield.

Not everything that's discussed in this book can be practiced at once, however. There's just no way anyone could explore every area touched on here in any single working process. Production requirements and personal situations impose restrictions. Instead, the text might be usefully regarded as a collection of reflections from which the reader can choose freely.

SOME OF THE CONCEPTS DISCUSSED IN THIS BOOK

In this context, the word *movement* can be assumed to refer to any form of theatrical movement. From the elevated movements of mime, dance, and circus productions to the actions a speech actor executes in relation to a text or a situation. However, here, we'll be focusing particularly on movement that isn't intended to give an accurate account of reality.

Movement-based performative arts is a cluster concept applied to any production that is creatively based in movement and uses it as its main form of expression. Text can be used, but is seldom the point. These are performance arts that are often referred to as mime, dance, circus, or physical theatre. I feel that movement-based performative art is a beautiful and functional term, which emphases both the theatrical expression and the processes involved in creating the production.

The expressions *choreographer/director* and *choreographing director* denote the person who would otherwise be referred to as either choreographer or director. When it comes to leading a movement-based production project, I take these two roles to be identical. It also happens to be the case that it's not uncommon for both roles to be held by the same individual.

The term *performers* will be used to refer to the individuals who are onstage during a movement-based production. I don't pigeon-hole them into categories like mime actors, circus performers, dancers, or actors–but this should not be taken to suggest I have anything but the utmost respect for the skills of these different groups. A book needs to be legible, and for my purposes, this broader concept seems more than sufficient.

In the closing chapter, *Writing this Book*, I write more about what these various terms have come to mean to me.

This book project has proven to be a long-lasting endeavor for me. While I've been writing it, some things have become clear to me, while a great deal of new mysteries have entered the picture, and complicated it even more. My practical work has been influenced by the writing, and vice versa. Wise readers have given me feedback, and the text has existed in a prolonged state of constant revision. The task I've set myself has seemed impossible at times, but I have remained inspired by the pursuit of this goal nonetheless: to describe the methods and the creative work that goes into a movement-based production.

Just as I accessed my imagination through movement as a child, I'd like it if this book would go on to inspire more people to explore the theatrical potential of movement.

1. ON MIME, THE MIME PROGRAMME AT SKH, AND MY OWN PROFESSIONAL BACK-GROUND

Mime is a shortened form of the Greek word *mimesis*, which means something close to "mimicking with your whole body."

The roots of mime go all the way back to antiquity, and the form's origins can be traced to Greek, Roman, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese theatre. The mystery plays of Medieval Europe, Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and French 19th century boulevard theatre are other important background components.[1]

The disciplines and schools of mime that most performers relate to today were all founded during the 20th century. Etienne Decroux attended French actor Jacques Copeau's acting school as a young man. He went on to found his own *mime corporel*, which can be thought of as a corporeal language and alphabet that the performer can use for a wide range of expressions. One of Decroux's students was Marcel Marceau, who developed his own mime character, founded his own troupe, and opened his own school. Another student of Decroux was Swedish mime and director Ika Nord. Jacques Lecoq, also a French educator and director, whose teaching came to have a huge impact on the evolution of physical theatre and mime, is another notable example. In Eastern Europe, Henryk Tomaszewski[2] (Poland) and Ladislav Fialka (Czechoslovakia) led their own troupes and theatres.

At present, there are mime schools in various parts of the world, some of them independent, and others affiliated with larger educational organisations and contexts. Each school has

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1 In *From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond*, Annette Lust gives an account of the historical roots of mime.

2 Henryk Tomaszewski, Polish mime actor and choreographer/director. Managed the state-funded Wroclaw Pantomime Theatre from 1956. Described in Lust, A (2000), *From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond*, p. 124–5.

developed its own educational approach, which is often based on one or other of the techniques above. Schools exist in Amsterdam, Kiev, Barcelona, Tbilisi, London, and other places. A large portion of the performative arts that are being performed in Europe today are created by performers who have trained at one or other of these schools.

In the 1970s, the only mime acting education programme in Scandinavia was founded by Polish-Swedish mime and educator Stanislav Brosowski, who is currently professor of mime figuration at SKH. When I attended this programme, it was taught at the Stockholm Dance Academy, and was referred to as *Mimlinjen* ("the mime programme"). Today, the programme is referred to as the bachelor's programme in mime-acting. As I write this, the programme is run by myself and mime figuration teacher Alejandro Bonnet. The school cooperates with a set of recurring guest tutors that includes Ika Nord. Stanislav Brosowski was the lead performer at Henryk Tomaszewski's theatre at one point. Polish mime placed a heavy emphasis on the troupe and on naturalistic representations of weight and physical resistance. In Stanislaw Brosowski's teachings, this technique was mixed in with actor training, which emphasizes physical, visible expression of each thought and emotion. Alongside these, the students prac-tice dance of various kinds, acrobatics/movement, and theatrical expression/ dramaturgy. The students are trained to work independently when developing material. Voice and text perfor-mances, including projects and classes that involve the whole school, have been incorporated into the programme.

There are many competing definitions of mime, as can be immediately confirmed by a minimum of research. Mime can be thought of as an opportunity to work with elevated expressions (movements which elevate or otherwise alter the expressions of everyday life). A trained mime actor, regardless of which basic technique they favor, can vary their movements from large to small, slow to quick, or staccato to legato. For example, elevated movements can shine an entirely new light on the psychological development between two characters. New possible interpretations are opened up, and understanding deepens. This is

the case even when the performance is an abstract one, in the sense that it defies verbal interpretation. Even when working with non-interpretable material, a mime actor's physical lan-guage will be the result of deliberate choices and physical precision.

Mime can also be defined in terms of visible or portrayed energy in the nexus of an actor's thoughts and movements. What performers feel and think will be visible in their entire bod-ies – when they so choose. This revolves around bringing about a physical charge in the balance between movement and stillness.

According to Stanislav Brosowski, this charge originates with the core of the body. The energy of the movements is visible, because the core of the body is active. This technique has many similarities with the way small children are present in the centers of their own bodies. What happens near the child is revealed by their reaction, a kind of tension in the stomach area. Next, the child's action causes a kind of muscular contraction at the center of the body. A mime actor practices using this impulse center like a pianist practices playing scales. Con-traction in reaction or action, relaxation in pauses and moments of stillness. Eventually, the training will allow you to do this without deliberate effort on your part, and this will free you up for other expressive work. My Areskoug, who is a mime actor, director, and past head of the programme, wrote the following: "Eventually, after dedicated practice, it has become sim-ple, and you no longer need to think about it. Even the smallest motion, such as a turn of the head, begins with tension in the stomach."[3] Their training in the active use of the centres of their bodies gives mime performers a particular energy–which could also be referred to as mime.

[3] Areskoug, M (2007), *Den kroppsligt tänkande skådespelaren*, [Physical Thinking for Actors] p. 79–80.

The Overcoat (Gogol), choreographer/director Henryk Tomaszewski, performed at the Wroclaw Pantomime Theatre. The second performer from the right is Stanislav Brosowski. Photograph: Stefan Arczyński.

Mime can also be regarded as a creative tool for gaining insight into the structure of a scene or some aspect of characterisation. What a performer learns from studying various mime techniques is an attitude to their body, to the work of their co-performers, and to the rhythm and tempo of a production. This is probably why so many mime actors/physical actors go on to be directors and choreographers.

Mime can also be thought of as a craft that originates to varying degrees in the various different historical techniques. This craft can be applied to fully modern forms of performative arts, or to the individual work of an actor. A single performer's work within a production can be mime.

The relationships between mime and text is a wide-open matter, as I see it. There can be sounds, and there can be words. Or, there can be silence. I take a particular interest in the way movement relates to texts and narratives, and this particular subject will be covered in

some detail in this book. This is motivated both by my own personal fascination with the subject and by my opinion that we need to know more about it. However, I've never really understood why performative art is so often based on text, and why productions are so often essentially interpretations of a text. In my own productions, influences might just as well be emotions, images, music, or non-verbal states. It also happens to be my firm belief that life is a lot less exciting when we insist on prioritizing text over other forms of expression. What fascinates me is the work that goes into creating the physical expressions and forms.

One technique that many would consider fundamental to the very concept of mime is presenting imaginary objects and spaces. The mime picks up an illusory bag and walks off with it. The protagonist climbs invisible stairs, is locked inside a non-existing room, and so on. This interaction with the imaginary has become the very cliché of mime, one that is often derided in popular culture, and is most commonly presented by less expressive street mimes. I myself occasionally find this imaginary style of mime difficult to follow–particularly if the performer isn't too skilled. Now, "skilled" should not be taken to refer to technical skills in this context, but to the degree to which the performer's actions express emotions and intentions. To my mind, simply presenting the act of drinking from an invisible cup of coffee the way it might appear in real life holds no appeal at all–all this will achieve is to draw attention away from the things that other, more interesting bodily expressions might be communicating.

However, many of the components of this imaginary technique remain essential elements of a mime actor's daily training. It supports the performer's physical development and expression. Working with isolating various body parts and contrapuntal, oppositional movements is important if you're trying to achieve a multi-layered, rich expression. Add to this the ability to charge each movement with intention and emotion, and you'll soon see why the skill set of a mime actor is suited to so many forms of performative art.

In the 1970s, I saw Marcel Marceau perform at The Stockholm City Theatre. He moved with great skill, and made objects that didn't actually exist seem very real to the audience. The best part of the show was a more abstract piece about the course of life. I remember really liking that.

What I didn't know while I was training to be a mime actor was the extent to which Marcel Marceau would influence my own professional life, or, rather, the views other people hold of my professional life. He was a Mime, after all, and what he did was Mime. So, if I was a trained mime, that made me like him, right? "Oh, you talk, too?" is just one example of the kind of thing I've had people say to me in my role as a mime actor. "It's amazing, at times it felt as though the mimes in the performance were REAL actors," is another.

Not to mention all the gestures. People I meet act like statues, ironically pat about for invisible walls, and do their best impressions of Michael Jackson's moonwalk. Occasionally, people's reactions can be quite painful to hear or see.

Although I happened to be fortunate enough to get to experience the wave of popularity that Swedish mime enjoyed in the 1980s, I've still heard things said that took some getting over. It's a bit of a chore to have to keep saying the same thing over and over: "Yes, it's probably a bit more like dance, if you see what I mean, and no, we work with our whole bodies, not just with our faces, and text is certainly a part of it sometimes. But more than anything, we're all DIFFERENT. And we DO speak!"

As I see it, the issue of the status of mime and mime actors is one that each of us must address constantly. It's clear, in any case, that mime actors have been inspiring and expanding Swedish performative arts for many years by now. Mime actors from SKH and schools in other countries are basing their work on the techniques they've learned, all of them moving in their own, unique direction. We work in both movement- and text-based performative arts. We tend to be actors, but many of us are also choreographers, directors, educators, and producers.

In the programme at SKH, we focus on teaching a comprehensive and deep skill set for mime acting and similar forms, as well as voice and text. We strive to strengthen our connections to the rest of the performative arts by engaging in many and frequent collaborations within and beyond the school. At the same time, we seek to achieve particular excellence in mime, in part by cultivating international contacts.

ABOUT MY PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

After finishing my training, I founded the free group Mimensemblen with my classmates, in 1979. Before us, Pantomimteatern had followed this same route. After us, later classes have produced similar groups such as Panopticon, Projektor (which works with director Lars Rudolfsson), Svenska Mim, and Klassen. During our first year, Mimensemblen performed the productions we had worked on while we were at school. Eventually, the group divided into several different constellations, and myself and the people I worked with took the name Nya Mimensemblen before settling on Teater Tre.[4] Teater Tre has been a vital child and youth theatre stage in Stockholm for many years, and has also produced national and international tours. Mimensemblen sprouted other successful groups, such as Teater Pero, Teater Bouffons, and Boulevardteatern.

In those first few years, Mimensemblen made several large productions which took a form we would probably have called dance theatre today. Our idiom, which combined mime techniques with modern dance and acrobatics, was perhaps most successfully applied in my classmate Per Eric Asplund's choreographies. We made a point of not merely "illustrating" a story. Instead, we tried to identify compressed images of whatever it was we wanted to depict. Like Pantomimteatern and the other groups that followed, we found success and an audience. At the time, Mime was a fairly new and unexplored form in Sweden, and the possibilities seemed endless.

At first, Nya Mimensemblen's target audience was adults. The specialization we ended up with, and which came to define us in taking the name Teater Tre, was child and youth theatre. Teater Tre used corporeal ideas and expressions as the starting points for their productions–and still does today! Text can be involved, but more often than not, its role will be subservient to that of movement.

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[4] Theatre in Stockholm, run by artistic director Sara Myrberg.

In 1980, I began my professional career as an actor, and took pleasure in expressing myself onstage. But after just a couple of years, I made the decision to transition into directing and choreographing.

My reason for this was my desire to develop a creative process of my own, something I didn't feel free to do as a performer. I also felt a need to be in control of my own work life. At the time, it was uncommon for a performer to lead a project. However, a choreographer/director was free to do that. Since I'm not the kind to sit around and wait for someone to ask me to dance, I found the role of director appealing.

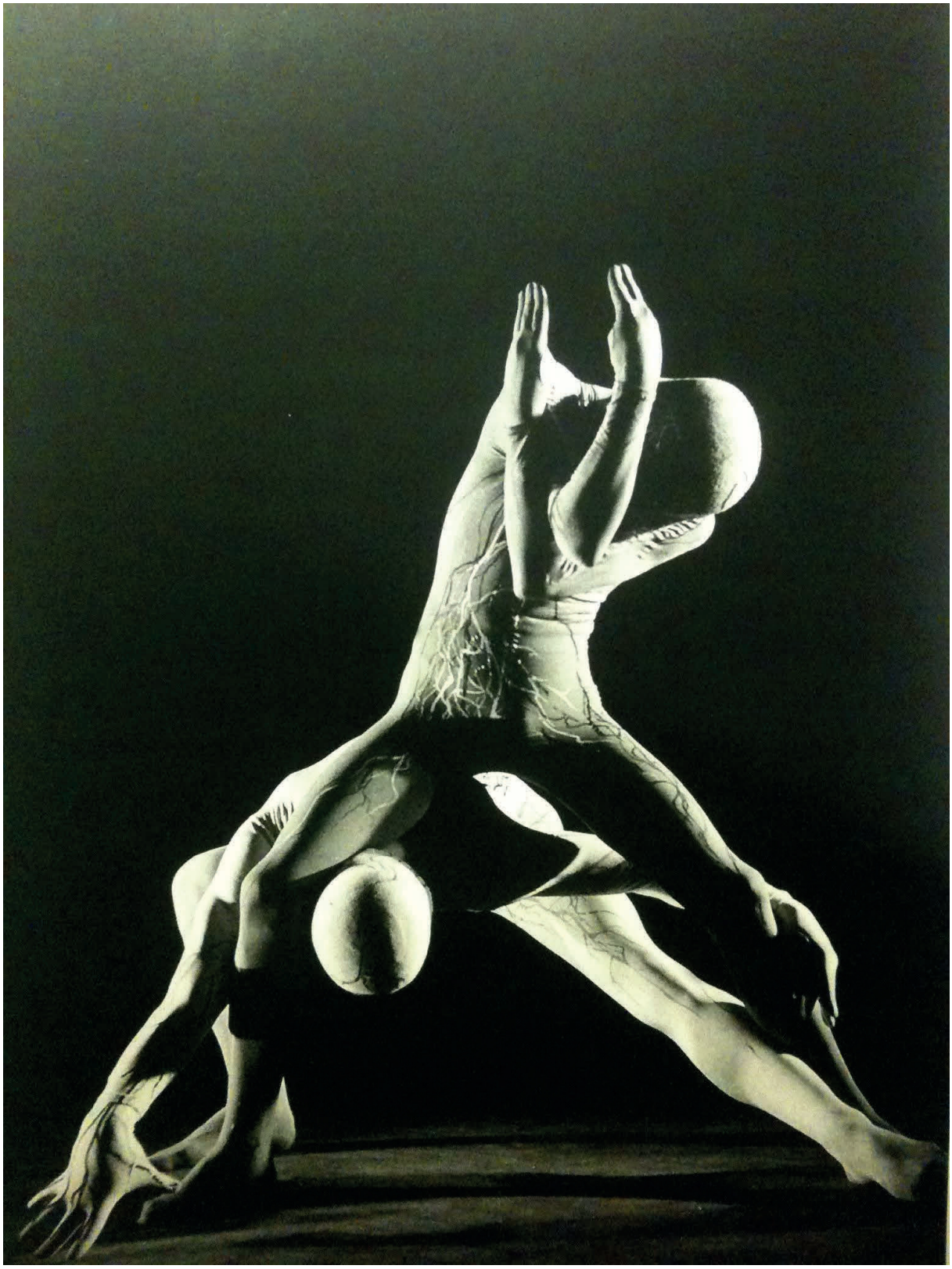
My first productions as a choreographing director were executed in a breezy, mime/dance style. Eventually, opportunities to direct for theatres outside of the mime world came my way. In these productions, I encountered working with text. As a result, my own process changed, and turned into a hybrid expression that can take a great variety of forms. I've made productions, usually for children and young adults, for regional theatres like Byteatern in Kalmar, Dalateatern in Falun, and Regionteatern in Kronoberg and Blekinge. In these theatres, my own idiom of movement has adapted to each troupe of performers and set of ideas I've encountered. At Mimensemblen/Teater Tre, however, I have continued to work with performers who are trained in movement-based art forms.

I had many influences early on. The Italian giant of theatre, Dario Fo, who visited Stockholms Stadsteater. Such energy, such physical precision! Swedish actor Björn Granath was so expressive in Fo's stories. French director Ariane Mnouchkine's *Richard II*, and the English Peter Brook's *Cherry Orchard*, performed in strange theatre buildings in Paris. *Medeas Barn* by Suzanne Osten/Per Lysander at Unga Klara in Stockholm. Carlotta Ikeda's Japanese Butoh dance theatre. Later, German Pina Bausch's visit to Stockholm, and the English Theatre de Complicité company. The French Cirque Invisible, with Victoria Chaplin, Jean-Baptiste Thierré, and James Thierré. All of these were powerful experiences, which have each come to have a great significance for my own creative work.

When I started out in my career, those of us who had a background in movement were in a minority in Swedish performative arts. The mime we created in the 1980s certainly attracted

an audience, and often received good reviews; dance was on the rise, too, with the likes of Margareta Åsberg and Birgitta Egerbladh in ascendance. Eventually, contemporary circus appeared on the scene. But throughout all this, it was conventional, spoken theatre that was the dominant form. I never felt that there was any dialogue across the boundary, or that people outside were seeking knowledge of our more physical form of performative art. In hindsight, I feel that those of us who worked with movement back then were actually quite isolated. Things have improved in this regard, but I would still say that Swedish performative art as a whole would do well to be far more receptive to influences from, say, the rest of Europe, where theatre is more physically expressive.

In many ways, this book is the book that I wish I had been able to read when I was a young choreographing director. It represents my best attempt to compile over 40 years of experience as a choreographing director, performer, and educator, and make it available to others.



Core and Peel, choreography/direction Henryk Tomaszewski, the Wroclaw Pantomime Theatre. Pawel Rouba and Jerzy Kozlowski. Photograph: Mozer.

2. COLLABORATIVE CREATION

In movement-based performative arts, most of the creative work that goes into a production happens in the rehearsal room. That's where the performance is created. This is true regardless of whether a choreographer has planned the choreography out in advance, or has sketched out a provisional script. What is created in rehearsal, on the floor, becomes the "text" and content of the performance. This means, then, that the choice of methodology will be intimately connected to the content and expression of the production.

A movement begins the very moment a performer executes it, and ends when the performer ceases. The movement is inseparable from the performer–who could be a dancer, mime actor, or circus performer. The performers' bodies, breathing, thoughts, emotions, expressions, and technique are the elements that make up a production. The ideas of a choreographer or director can never be realised without the individuals who are to be performing them. A movement-based production presents things that a choreographer/director and a group of performers have envisioned and tried out.

How a group works has a great impact on the final form of their production. The choreographer/director is aware of this, and will thus have developed a methodology of their own intended to elicit the greatest possible creative output from everybody involved. Most who work in the field of movement-based performative arts in Sweden refer to their approach to work as one of *collaborative creation*.

The concept of collaborative creation means that whatever is created is in one way or another produced through a collaborative sharing of ideas between all the involved artists. In other words, collaborative creation is a cluster concept. It includes processes in which an idea that originated with a choreographer/director is further refined within a group setting. It also includes processes in which the ideas are produced during the work. The role of the choreographer/director can vary from being one of initiating and originating to one of compiling ideas within a much less hierarchical structure.

Many performers use the term *devising* to denote similar processes. This term mainly comes from American and British theatre, and notable past proponents include the Wooster Group in the USA, English companies such as Forced Entertainment, and the whole British movement known as Theatre in Education.[5] In *Devising Theatre*, British director and educator Alison Oddey points out that there is a great variety of methods within the overall concept of devising.[6] They all have in common that they are not pre-determined, written plays, but rather original works that in some way or other are created in collaboration with the participating artists. The Swedish book *Samtal om Devising* puts forth similar perspectives on the concept.[7]

The concepts of devising and collaborative creation are similar in many ways. However, they differ in that devising applies to all performative arts, while collaborative creation is mainly used to describe the work involved in movement-based performative arts productions. The term collaborative creation also has a long history of use in the context of this form of performative art. For these reasons, I've chosen to use it here.

The methods I describe in this book are all more or less obvious examples of collaborative processes. Movement-based performative arts depend on processes, and there is almost always some new way ahead to find in relation to them.

WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE CREATION?

Productions that are developed using methods of collaborative creation tend to be original works. They've never been performed before, and are based on new ideas or impulses. The most significant aspect common to the methods that fit within this framework is the fact that ideas are produced by several artists in collaboration. Many feels that an idea that harnesses

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5 Theatre in Education began in 1965, and their productions use theatre and drama for educational purposes. Their performances are often the result of processes of collaborative creation. A detailed account of this movement is given in Redington, C (1983), *Can Theatre Teach*.

6 Oddey, A (1994), *Devising Theatre, a practical and theoretical handbook*.

7 *Samtal om Devising – en antologi från Barnteaterakademin* [Conversations on Devising: an anthology from the Children's Theatre Academy] (2013).

the creative power of several individuals has more impact than anything a single person could create. Ideas that would otherwise never have existed can be produced in a working context that encourages creative contributions from several people.

Most artists who work in the movement-based field are also trained creators. They are skilled co-creators in different stages of the work. They are able to exercise their expressive abilities and produce ideas at the drop of a hat. Because of this, any choreographer/director seeking to develop their idiom of movement would be wise to utilize their performers' own creative abilities. Anything less represents a waste of creativity.

Working methods vary. Every group consists of individuals who all have their own unique experiences and personalities. External conditions can differ.

Here are some examples of different processes of collaborative creation:

- A choreographer/director has an original idea that they would like to develop in collaboration with performers. The specific methodologies may vary, but the director/choreographer has the final say on any artistic decisions.
- A single performer or a group has developed some ideas, and a choreographer/director is recruited to guide them through the rehearsal period. The choreographer/director might take a leading role, or simply act as a directorial presence or gaze during rehearsals. In the latter case, the originator of the idea/the group will have the final say on any artistic decisions.
- A group of performers gathers to work on an idea they share. The group selects a working method, defines functions, and determines points in time for the functions to be triggered. This is what is referred to as an "open" process.

These three examples are just a few of the many methods that fit within the concept of collaborative creation.

Any group or project must find its own forms of collaboration. This form of collaboration will ideally be communicated to all, early on in the process. Whatever you communicate at the start will be the thing everybody relates to later on.

My own personal approach to being a choreographing director has often been to take the role as initiator, the person whose ideas form the basis for the production. At times, I've been hired to guide a group through entirely open processes, or serve as a directorial gaze or production dramaturg. However, it is in the role of originator that I am the most comfortable.

My own approach to my work can vary, though. Sometimes, all I bring to the first rehearsal is a set of undefined, theatrical ideas. As the work progresses, I write a script based on the ideas and impulses that emerge. For other productions, I might work from a more developed script. In either case, the work will involve a great deal of collaborative creation on behalf of the performers. What we end up creating on the floor is just as often something a performer suggested as something I did.

However the details of the process are arranged, I think of myself as the team leader. As such, it falls on me to ensure that the work will progress. I'm the "director".

What images does the word "director" conjure up for you? When I started out as a choreographing director back in the mid-80s, it was difficult for me to let the performers into the process. I was under the impression that my ideas, most of which were produced in solitary moments of "genius", would be somehow diminished by my allowing others to add their impulses to them. Ideas and questions from performers were a hindrance that could potentially slow the process down. I wanted to control everything, all the time.

While working on my first production, *Blues for a hip king* with Mimensemblen, I decided that performers would have permission to ask questions on Tuesdays, between four and five pm, and at no other time. I was too newly hatched as a director to see how pretentious and inhibited this approach was.[8]

As I experienced them, the eighties were a period when the idea of the omnipotent (male) director was absolutely predominant. I felt that the world of theatre was full of these demonic,

[8] *Blues for a hip king* (1985), Mimensemblen. Writing and directing: Lena Stefenson. Co-creators and performers: Bengt Andersson, Jurgen Andersson, Per Eric Asplund, Michaela Granit, Åsa Kalmér, and Charlotte Lewenhaupt.

male director figures. This image of the all-knowing director was something anybody who wanted to direct would have to confront, one way or another. A director might be good, or bad. But they (he) would always be a dictator. What exactly was the big secret that Ingmar Bergman used to whisper into his (female) actors' ears while acting all fatherly and putting his arm around them.

As a woman and director, I found a role model in Susanne Osten and her energetic curiosity. Her enthusiasm for the materials she explored and the performers she worked with was highly contagious. It was in a class she taught in the late 80s that I first discovered that there were other ways of being a director besides becoming a stereotypical (male) directorial genius. I began to see the potential in actively encouraging the whole troupe to take part in the procedure. During this same time, I also became aware of how other choreographing directors approached their work. Methods based on collaborative creation turned out to yield far more interesting results than calling all the shots myself. They also made the work a lot more enjoyable. I discovered that the creativity that can be sparked within a group that treats everybody's ideas as relevant was much more fruitful than anything a solitary despot, as I had previously viewed myself, could ever achieve. It fed me energy, and allowed me to feed energy back into the group.

For a time, I decided only to collaborate with women. It was necessary for me then, to escape the structures and competitive situations that I had previously had no choice but to relate to. In Blues for a hip king, I tried to take on the "male" directorial role, and be the person who had all the answers. It would have felt difficult–silly, even–to put my own arm around an actor's shoulders and explain my vision to them (if that *is* what Bergman told them). Instead, I began to look for some method that would emphasise the subject of the production, and involved seeking answers together. At the time, I was only able to find this kind of permissive working environment in collaborations with other female performers.

While I was learning about how collaboration could produce such levels of creativity, I was also discovering my own role as a leader. This was an area in which I had a plenty of room for improvement.

COLLABORATIVE CREATION IN PRACTICE

In my experience, it is an essential step in all collaborative idea production to try ideas out in practice before analysing them. Act first, talk later. If a group spends all its time discussing ideas, the members will often get stuck in various opinions or beliefs. The enjoyment they take from their work, and their ability to visualise, will both be diminished. Whoever has the most verbal fortitude will be the one whose visions end up being tried out in practice.

When you step onto the floor to work on an idea, you tend to get a good idea of how much promise it really has. Wildly different ideas can be combined, as long as they've been tested first.

It can be unnerving for inexperienced troupe members to proceed so rapidly to trying an idea on the floor, but this is something they will become accustomed to in time, and they usually come to see the benefits, too.

As I see it, a choreographing director should be good at handing out well-defined assignments. If these assignments are given over a short period, this will maximize the group's creativity, and nobody will have time for any anxiety over the quality of their performance or input. If the group is smaller, this working method will often be adopted more or less spontaneously. However, even a larger group can be divided into smaller units in order to work on different tasks.

It's also essential that the choreographer/director have their own theatrical ideas to try out. They are often the ones who initiated the entire production, and who have had the most time to think and plan for it. This is not to say that the choreographer's/director's ideas are the ones that will remain when the production is finished. Other people might have come up with better suggestions in the course of working on the production. When collaborative creation is at its best, it won't always be too easy to tell who came up with a particular idea, either. The work might have been carried out on several layers at once, and it might be difficult to figure out who first suggested some particular thing or other.

Play is a method that I find to be highly suitable for the creation of movement-based performative art. If the members of the group don't already know each other, or haven't worked

together in a long while, they need to share their first few laughs. And even if they do know each other, they'll need to rinse their everyday existences out of their bodies before they can go on to create something new.

Play can generate ideas. In play, the troupe's members open up to one another and to the production they are creating. Collaboration can emerge from play, and the group can take this with them to the later, more difficult stages of the work.

Having fun together, however, is no guarantee that you'll get good results. Good art can be born from anxiety and suffering, too. Play might rather be seen as a vaccination against the part of the work that we can never escape completely: the creative sufferings. If a group can resort to a playful perspective whenever performance anxiety rears its ugly head, they will be finding new inroads to the work instead of having to stop and regroup.

As a leader, the choreographer/director is responsible for clarifying which stage of the process is currently underway. They should plan the work out, and be able to communicate to everybody when it's time to share ideas and when it's time to focus on the choreographer's/director's own visions. The more clearly you can express the premises for collaborative creation in a given context, the easier a time you'll have leading the work. In the initial stage of a production, when there are still choices left to be made, ideas tend to flow freely. Most performers will be feeling invulnerable, and strong. Later on, in the process, other attributes will be required of them–attributes that while no less important are nonetheless different. In this case, too, a choreographer/director will be expected to lead the work.

CHALLENGES

In collaborative creation, the question of who is actually in charge can be the source of some rather negative conflicts. Whose ideas get to be included in the final results?

The work started out with an agreed method for collaborative creation: everybody is to be free to add ideas during the early stage, and later on, they'll move on to more conventional work roles, and the choreographer/director will have final say. Somewhere close to the middle of the working period, things start to get difficult. The performers no longer find the work that

interesting. The choreographer/director feels like nobody is listening to them. Dissatisfaction spreads, and their leadership will be challenged.

Even when you're aware of the conditions you're working under, it's not always easy to act accordingly. Clarity isn't always enough.

The performers are probably unhappy because of problems they're experiencing in the transition between being creators and working more in the context of their roles as practitioners. Even if this is something you knew you would be doing all along, switching your focus like this can cause discomfort. The leader's main responsibility in this situation is to help them regain their sense of purpose. To do this, they must formulate interesting theatrical exercises that will put the enjoyment back in the work and help the production along on its path towards opening night. Sometimes, they fail to do this, and the production carries on without anybody feeling that they are truly part of a team. Having to carry on leading a project after it takes this kind of turn involves a degree of pain and anxiety.

Another challenge that's unique to processes involving collaborative creation is when the choreographer/director feels that they are about to lose touch with their own vision. This will often happen near the mid-point of the rehearsal period. It feels as though the well of ideas has run dry. The choreographer/director can't catch sight of the thoughts they had at the start. They feel more like debate moderators than artists. Despair is close at hand here.

When this happens, it can be a good idea to put work aside for a while. Pause for a moment, before accepting that you don't have all the answers. Listen inwards, and try to figure out what's happening. What was the basis of the work, and what has been created along the way? Identify images and themes, try to grasp how people's initial ideas match up with what currently exists. Think about it, and take your time.

As an artist, you can't always know what kinds of turns a project might take. It also happens to be a matter of good leadership to be able to lead your own artistic work.

A further challenge resides with the implicit hierarchies that often exist in groups. Some of the performers might feel more important than others, while said others might feel that they are at the bottom of the social order of the group. What the participants think they know

about each other before the production process begins will have a great impact on the social roles they adopt in the context of the new collaboration. This applies particularly to how the choreographer/director is viewed. There is an old saying in show business: “You’re only as big as your latest hit.” This means that the troupe will have a much more positive outlook from the beginning if the choreographer’s/director’s most recent production was a “success”. If, on the other hand, it was less successful, the choreographer/director will be far more likely to encounter doubts and cautious responses.

One way of facing these challenges is to quickly shift everyone’s focus over to the results that are yet to come. Curiosity over the new production, and artistic sensitivity to the as-yet-uncreated work need to be cultivated. The choreographer/director can achieve this by having the troupe members do research, tackle difficult assignments, and take the floor early on. This can help social roles, old triumphs, and previous flops fade into the merciful haze of the past. What used to be has to give way to a fascination with the new creation.

To a leader who has no specific psychological expertise, it can sometimes feel almost incomprehensibly difficult to arrange for a creative working environment. I’ve been involved in projects in the past where I felt very strongly that the only reasonable option for me was to put my hat on, say my goodbyes, and walk away. However, I think that while being a choreographing director in collaborative creation contexts does admittedly take time to learn, it is fully achievable, nonetheless. Mistakes breed knowledge. We learn from our practical experiences and our reflections.

CONVERSATION IN COLLABORATIVE CREATION

In any kind of collaborative creation, conversation will be a vital tool. The main purpose of a troupe’s organised and structured conversations in the context of a production is to generate ideas for the performance. If a choreographer/director can keep this in mind, the conversa-tions can become most fruitful.

In an explicitly idea-generating conversation, everyone can take turns speaking freely and offering their reflections on previous exercises or ideas that might be tried out. Sometimes, it

can be useful to do “rounds”, i.e., have all the group’s members voice their thoughts, one after another. It’s worth remembering, though, that “rounds” can feel forced, too. Participants might only be speaking because they feel that it is required of them. This kind of thing can waste time that could be better spent doing the work. On the other hand, if the leader has demonstrated their readiness to listen, there will be no need for “rounds,” and the conversation will flow more freely.

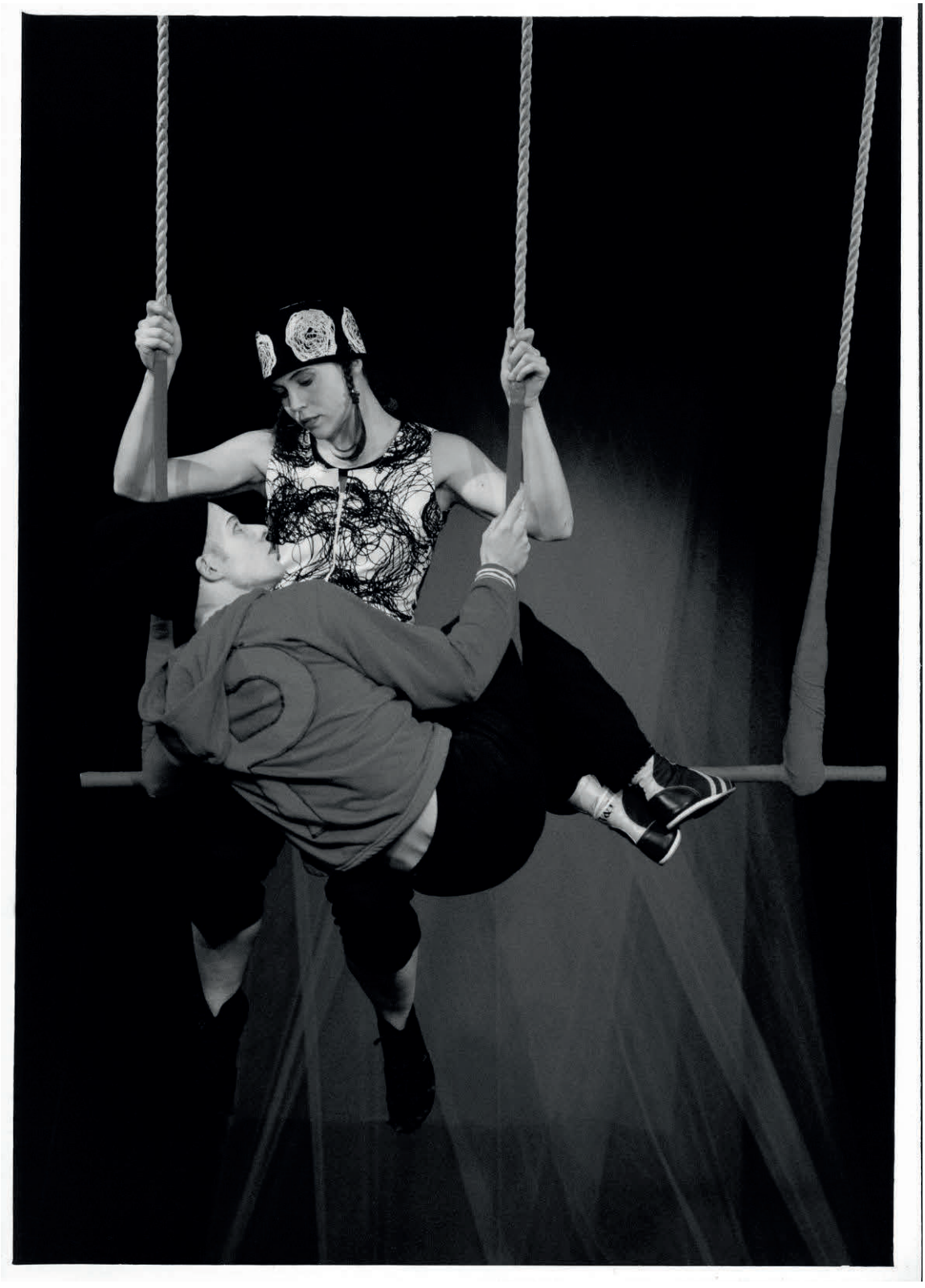
Use the time. If you’ve set aside fifteen minutes for discussions, that’s it. If the conversation has to go on longer than that, you would be wise to bear in mind that most people can’t concentrate for very long. Take frequent breaks, and insert practical elements as interludes. Performers want to ACT, and so does the choreographer/director. If the conversation is an important one, you can always return to it later on.

When consensus arises on a certain topic, I strive to be the leader who makes sure to ask the group if anybody has a disagreement to voice, or anything else to add. For some reason, a lot of people seem to feel that it’s important to reach consensus. I can’t understand that. To me, consensus punctures creativity, at least when it comes to idea generation. I try to let the group hold on to their various opinions, to see if this might generate new ideas.

Sometimes, a group will need to talk about something that has no obvious relevance to the work. Serious subjects will often need to be counterbalanced by giggles and light-hearted fun. More uplifting subject matters might benefit from the weight they can be lent when addressed alongside more existential matters. I am fine with letting these conversations flow, but I always keep in mind that what we’re doing is working on a production. This helps me move on from these conversations before they begin to drag on.

Participants in a group will sometimes need more time to get to know each another and experience urgency in their encounters. In an age where project-based and freelance engagements have become the norm, it can simply be important to get a chance to tell others about yourself. A leader can make room for these conversations.

To encourage a good working mood within the troupe, some directors use *logins*, i.e., starting the workday by having each member of the group say a few words about their personal state that day. This is a method you might try to see if it energizes the day's work. Otherwise, choosing to begin the day with the question, "does anybody have any thoughts to share about our work yesterday?" is always a good option. It gives the performers a chance to reflect on the working process as well as on their own personal experiences. This question will often end up adding fuel to the work on the day it is asked.



Powder, Ylva Magnusson and Patrik Freij. Photograph: Magnus Thelin.

3. WORKING ON IDEAS

I am standing in a bookshop, running my fingers along the spines of the books. One of the titles catches my eye. I take the book off the shelf. Some lines in it trigger a specific feeling, a hunch that this is something significant. I read. After a while, I reach for my wallet to see if I have enough money. As I exit the bookshop, I experience a sudden weight within my body.

Another day, I'm standing in a rehearsal room. talking to a colleague. Suddenly, my attention is snatched away by an internal image: I see a woman, standing, hammering nails. I don't know where this image came from, but I immediately connect it to the conversation I'm engaged in. Something about all of this feels very important.

Another time, another day, I'm working on a choreography for a production. The movements are proving hard to get right. Suddenly, it occurs to me that it might be interesting if it was three performers instead, working on the same movement, like a chain reaction? What new meanings would this produce?

These experiences have in common that they have all been used as the starting point for movement-based performances. The sense of suddenly being in the presence of something new and important was the same in all three cases. A door had suddenly been opened. Images and sequences of events appeared before my mind's eye. Arrangements of ideas and narratives began to take form. The results were finished movement-based productions.

PREMONITIONS

Work on a performance piece often begins with what dramatist, dramaturg, and professor of artistic skills and knowledge Barbro Smeds refers to as *premonitions*.[9] These involve experiencing something as highly urgent. Significance is attached to a subject, an image, a text, a theme, or a personal experience. It is a state of alertness and a spiritual awakening.

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[9] A concept I first heard of during a lecture given by Barbro Smeds at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts in 2012.

Barbro Smeds describes a premonition as a very special sensation. It's as though there were a new landscape laid out before you, an unexplored world of colours and meanings. You want to enter it, at any cost.

Perhaps the concepts of *premonition* and *intuition* are actually equivalent. Intuition can be said to be a matter of knowing something without being able to explain how or why you know it. This state has a powerful effect on our thoughts and actions. It tends to be experienced for very brief moments, if at all. Philosopher and author Hans Larsson write: "This state can last for longer or shorter times, but it seems reasonable to presume that it is never more than momentary, and that the oracle's mysteries will remain as impenetrable as ever to me…"[10]

Somebody who has a premonition or experiences something intuitively will usually not know where the phenomenon came from or how it appeared. But this feeling will get in the way of everything else. It will grow almost tangible, and exert a physical weight on the body, slowing the breathing. This can be experienced as entering a state of tunnel vision. You focus inwards, and can only carry out other actions mechanistically, like an automaton.

Barbro Smeds suggests that this is a sign that it is time to pause. Let your attention move about freely, and establish a bodily presence. Find the courage to reside in the unknown, the non-verbal. Exist in this sensation, let it colour the world around you. See what it reminds you of. It's not time for too much reflection yet–don't analyze, don't rush things. Let the idea splash about in the deep end of your imagination. Interrupt yourself sometimes to do other things, ideally everyday chores and errands, and then return to your thoughts and your imag-ination. Respect the slow processes that the brain has to go through in order to create some-thing new.

If you ask me, these kinds of vegetative states are essential for all forms of creative work. I believe that this is a skill you can train. It will develop, and be necessary, whoever you are

[10] Larsson, H (1892/ 1997), *Intuition*, p. 52.

and whatever art form you work with. Premonitions can come to you when you least expect them.

We've just finished the opening night performance of *Powder*, a production for young audiences that addresses the subject of first loves.[11] I am disassembling the set with members of the team. We're all happy, buzzing almost. The audience's response to the performance was phenomenal. People laughed a lot, and after the performance ended, some of them walked up to us to relate memories of their own first loves. Suddenly, as I walk around, tidying up, a thought hits me–a reaction of sorts to all the happy voices I'm hearing: we've dealt with love now, so the next production is going to be about death.

I don't know where this idea comes from, but it immediately takes on a great significance for me. colours begin to appear in my mind. Love, which we just told the audience about, was red, black, and white. Death is yellow. The yellow presence of death is just around the corner, waiting to tell its story.

The realisation that this is going to be a new production fills me, from head to toe. Much later, this production is given the title *Punchline*.[12]

WHERE DO IDEAS COME FROM?

In classes at SKH, I have asked different groups of students where their ideas come from, and what origins a movement-based performance piece can have. I have received many answers to this by now. Here are some quotes from my work journal entry from one of these lessons:

Start out in the movement and explore from there. Internal images. A subject matter.

A theme from your own life, or something historical or current. Dreams or memories.

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11 *Puder* [Powder], production at Teater Tre, 2001. Writing and directing: Lena Stefenson. Co-creators and performers: Patrik Freij/Björn Olsson, Ylva Magnusson, and Nike Markelius/Magnus Larsson (music). Set design: Annika Thore.

12 *Punchline*, production at Teater Tre, 2006. Writing and directing: Lena Stefenson. Choreography: Jimmy Meurling. Co-creators and performers: Alejandro Bonnet, Lise Edman/Linn Bergstam och Lena Mossegård/ Maria Selander. Set design: Annika Thore. Music: Felipe Gonzalez.

A piece of music. A text, a play, a novel. Myths, stories, and narratives. Personal fates. Contemporary life stories. Working interactively with the audience to identify the theme. Visual art, paintings, different oeuvres that inspire you. Contemporary discourse on art and society. Contemporary theories. Improvisation.

TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL

These are the ideas that are usually mentioned right away. After some more discussion, we tend to get:

Allowing yourself to be inspired by and want to work with certain performers.
Wanting to learn a specific movement technique in depth. Wanting to further develop a previous project.
Wanting to "steal" something you've seen and do it your own way.
TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL

There are countless entry points to the creation of movement-based productions. In this way, the idea work that goes into a movement-based performance is reminiscent of other artistic processes. Inspiration can strike you from many different directions. No single way is "better" than any other. We all possess different personalities, and different life experiences. Our tastes differ, as do our views of the world. A relatively large portion of ideas for movement-based productions originate in the works of other performing artists. You've seen something that you liked, and you want to "steal" it, rework it, and refine it. Viewing the works of other artists is one of many ways you can find ideas.

It seems to me that some ideas come about because of an individual's existing knowledge and interest in issues related to the idea. Perhaps, you've been working on a certain issue for a long time, maybe because the subject has great personal importance to you. When you have an idea that relates to this, something very strange will occur. It's as though a flame were ignited in this encounter between sudden inclination and deliberate will. The ground was prepared, and what was previously dormant there in the form of opinions and experiences suddenly took on colours and shapes within an artistic idea.

An example of this would be when I found a book titled *Je suis complètement' battue (I've Been Beaten All Over)* by the French writer Éléonore Mercier. She spent more than twenty years working as a social worker at domestic abuse helpline. The text consists of 1,678 individual sentences. Each phrase is the first sentence uttered by a caller seeking help. Almost intolerably simple, this work gives voice to an enormous choir–the most vulnerable among us are expressing their anguish here.

I've long held a desire to make a production that would address the causes of violence in close relationships, and the effects it can have on the victims. I've tried to acquire the rights to a novel, and I've done some writing on a dance and text monologue on the subject. I have some personal experience of the subject, too. Reading Éléonore Mercier's text, I see my own experiences in a whole new light. My premonition that I could turn this book into a production grows stronger. It's as though my whole body had already settled on this subject. I "know" this material. It also seems to me that the text is already a movement-based performance, or physical choral piece, in a way–a production with a form that is simultaneously entirely novel and in perfect harmony with the content. The voices in this book blend together into one, like the chorus in an Ancient Greek tragedy. It's as though the victims were speaking together, in a single voice, and this voice produces spatial and choreographic patterns in my mind.

I read, I'm silent, and I wait.

The production ends up being titled *Catch Breath*.[13]

MOVEMENT IMAGES

Somewhere in connection with this first premonition, impressions of sequences of events appear. Barbro Smeds mentions *recognizable figures*. Images begin to penetrate the mind.

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[13] *Hämta Andan* [Catch Breath], graduation production for the mime actor class of 2013 at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts. Writing and directing: Lena Stefenson. Co-creators and performers: Nathalie Álvarez Mesén, Hanna Bylund, Julia Gumpert, Rickard Hasslinger, Alice Hillbom- Rudfeldt, Py Huss-Wallin, Alexander Lindman, Daniel Lindman Agorander, Hilda Rydman, Joséphine Wistedt. The role of the Listener was performed alternately by Stina Gunnarsson, Andreas T Olsson, and Isabel Reboia. Set design: Sigyn Stenqvist. Music: Magnus Larsson.

They occupy space, and engage in dialogue with one another. These images, like the first premoni-tion, seem more important, heavier, than other ideas and inclinations. They can be move-ment-oriented, or more narrative in kind. I call these first ideas for scenes *movement images*. Movement images can come from a variety of sources. It all depends on who you are and what your existing knowledge, interests, and experiences are like.

When it comes to *Powder*, my production about young love, the first movement image had an external source. For a long time, I've been thinking about what young love can be like. Then, I see a circus act on the television. A woman is performing an aerial dance on a trapeze, accompanied by a musician playing guitar. The act reminds me of how it felt to fall in love for the very first time: Am I brave enough? Am I really getting up on that trapeze? I'm not really brave enough–but maybe I should do it anyway? And then, the intoxicating sense of freedom when you finally take the plunge. This movement image which came to me from an outside source matches up with my own inner thoughts. I experience a first, significant premonition. The production ends up being structured around a couple on a trapeze.

The first movement image for my production *Punchline* came to me soon after I had the idea to create a production on the subject of death. I suddenly visualise one of the people onstage suddenly disappearing. They become invisible to the audience, like in a magic trick. In the performance, this turns into an illusion where the character Moa is "magicked away" using a large piece of fabric. We end up using this scene as an opener, to foreshadow what is to come.

Barbro Smeds says that you need to slow down during this phase of the work, too. She mentions how an automatic searchlight seems to be lit in anybody "afflicted". They begin to notice that many other artists have had similar thoughts and expressions. This can even cause some confusion; suddenly, "everybody" seems to be addressing the same subject matter. Even in one's own everyday life, there can seem to be a sudden abundance of events associated with the subject in question. Barbro Smeds maintains that this phenomenon occurs when the attention you invest into a subject brings about a special kind of sensitivity in you, one that can only enhance your creativity.

My own movement images tend to come before any story. Movement images appear, one after another, and I only pick up on their collective dramaturgy much later. I too feel that it is important not to rush things. To ensure that the foundational materials for a production will be as rich as possible, I think it's better to dwell on this early phase for some time, rather than quickly move on to constructing a narrative. It is these internal images of movement that will become the building blocks of the performance. They lay the groundwork for the choreographic work that is to come later on in the process. I often say, not entirely in jest, that I want to have at least ten movement images for an idea before I'm prepared to move on to actual production work.

During the idea stage of Punchline, I visualise rooftops, heights, and danger. I "see" some kids on a bridge. Beneath them, a rushing train. The kids are daring each other to jump down onto the roof of the train. They're playing games with death. I think of an article I read re-cently, which was about exactly this kind of dangerous game. I start researching the subject. My research produces more movement images, of the same kind. I begin to consider what form of movement to use for the production's expression. Rooftops and trains–what do that bring to mind? Maybe these kids/characters practice the street sport of parkour, where you traverse obstacles in the street and conquer the heights of the city. Might this provide a corpus of movement that we can use onstage? What physical skills will the performers need to have?

The actual narrative doesn't appear until much later. It becomes a story about three young adults, their friendship, and their constant quest for new thrills. But at this early stage, it's not yet time to be a storyteller. Now is the time to explore your own internal imagery, seek inspiration, and maybe try things out in practice. Give your movement images all the space they need.

The idea work for *Catch Breath* is a little different, as I have already addressed the subject in a couple of earlier attempted productions. I have a list of movement images for the subject, written down on a napkin during a long coffee break with a colleague. I bring this napkin out now, to take a look at the images and sequences we imagined when we were talking about

what the experience of violence in close relationships is like for the victims. Some quotes from our list:

> *Walking en pointe, everything falls away, like walking on ice. Trying to stay upright, falling, getting back up again. Seeing "it" come over your partner's eyes. Stiffening, freezing, moving slowly, as if on thin ice. Pain, exploding, in a dance in which the body suddenly flies away? Love, first encounter, feeling weak at the knees, legs literally folding. Reacting physically to the slightest sound. Covering up injuries, concealing your body, covering yourself up with clothes. Trying to hold on to the everyday things, but feeling them all slip away. The "look at me, I'm happy and normal" dance.*
>
> *TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL*

I return to these ideas to explore how they relate to Mercier's text. I know that the images mean something to me, but how do they work alongside the text? Is there a good match between text and movement image, are interesting contrasts produced? I add pieces to the puzzle, gradually forming what is to become the theatrical foundation of the production.

I suggest that movement images, i.e., sequences of movements and events seen before the mind's eye, play a huge role in how a production turns out. *If* it turns out, even. Creating movement-based performative art is a major undertaking. The various practicalities of making a production take time. Improvisation and choreography take time. Writing a script takes time. Movement images are the body from which a production sprout. The more visualisation a choreographer/director is able to do before a rehearsal period begins, the more confident they can be that the work will start out well. Paradoxically enough, these preparations will also make it easier to incorporate new ideas from others into the piece.

COLLABORATIVE IDEA WORK FROM THE WORD GO

In cases where everybody in a group begins to work on something at the same time, the idea processing stage will resemble what I just described, only in a much more condensed form. Lots of stuff will happen at once, and you will also have to accommodate individual processing

of ideas. Movement images need to be able to arise in this stage, too. The assignments a choreographing director hands out need to be hands-on, and should occasionally be designed to home in on personal experiences. The choreographing director needs to make it clear to everyone what stage of the process is currently underway, and how long each stage is to take. Although the pace can be high, and time can feel short, it's essential to be just as respectful of the group's creative process as you would be of an individual artist's working practice. If you can manage that, these processes will yield great rewards in terms of depth and meaning.

CHALLENGES

One challenge that comes with indulging in premonitions and movement images is that while you're having the ideas, there's no way of telling whether they will be worth building a production around or not. What might seem urgent and interesting during the initial creative phase might seem uninteresting, ethically dubious, or just silly after closer scrutiny. The flow of ideas could also cease, and you might discover as a result that the premonition in question didn't really have legs. In these situations, you need to find the courage to set your idea aside, and acknowledge that it actually has no value to you.

I test my ideas by telling people who I trust about them. I do this both to get their opinion and to hear myself explaining it. Is this important, today, or tomorrow? Does the idea touch on both form and content? I need to relate and discuss an idea many times before I can grasp what it is actually about.

The same is true if I'm working within a non-hierarchical structure of ideas. I encourage myself and others to explore the first ideas, the ones that are full of premonitions and seem so important. After trying the ideas out in practice, we move on to conversations and analysis. This is where we discover what is worth keeping. Sometimes, it can feel difficult to share an idea. As an artist, you often waver between wanting to preserve the fragile thing of beauty that has appeared within you and wanting to share it with others. If you're fortunate enough to have trusted colleagues and friends, sharing will always be worthwhile. The conversations that result can produce new ideas, new roads ahead, or evidence that something or other

really is viable. They can also reveal to you that your best next move would be to leave it be and not pursue it further. There's always the next idea.

*Catch Breath. F*rom the left: Julia Gumpert, Daniel Lindman Agorander, Richard Hasslinger, Nathalie Álvarez Mesén, Hilda Rydman, Py Huss-Wallin.
Photograph: Martin Skoog.

Catch Breath. Hanna Bylund and Daniel Lindman Agorander.
Photograph: Martin Skoog.

Punchline. Lise Edman and Alejandro Bonnet.
Photograph: Martin Skoog.

4. PREPARATIONS

The road from idea to production is a long one. After the initial idea stage, it's time to figure out how the production can be realised. Funding is sought for the project, and team members are recruited. Theatres and other venues that might be interested in hosting the performance are contacted. Perhaps you already have an existing creative context in which to work on the ideas with others. Either way, the road is long, and can seem hard to travel at times.

No matter how work begins on a production, at some point, the day will come when more people need to get involved. A group has formed.

Everybody is probably quite nervous. The choreographer/director has their ideas and movement images prepared, and the next priority will be to give the group the best possible start on the coming work.

So, how to begin? In my experience, a group should head for the floor early on. They need to get to know each other. Bodies and minds need to be opened up to the creativity that's going to be generating the production.

I have a set of exercises that I usually choose from when starting work on a project. All of them are intended in some way or other to spark a group's creative flow and get the group collaborating. Most of these exercises can also be used to create movement materials for the performance, see page 103. Besides group exercises, there are plenty of other things you can do during the initial stage of the production work.

NEW AND FAMILIAR FORMS OF MOVEMENT

Movement-based productions are often based on a specific form of movement, sometimes one that is unfamiliar to the performers. Perhaps they want to explore a particular style of dance, a specific form of mime, or a pre-determined acrobatic technique. Bollywood dancing, say, or slapstick or knife throwing. The first few days are an excellent time to introduce the new form of movement.

Introducing a new form of movement will need to be done differently in the context of movement-based productions, as opposed to more conventional forms of theatre. The choreographer/director and performers in a movement-based production know that they will be expressing events, thoughts, and theatrical images *through* the form of movement they are working with. They don't think of it as a few steps to learn so that the director can insert them into the action as appropriate, as is sometimes the case in dialogue-based theatre productions. The troupe members in a movement-based production know that they need to receive an introduction to the form of movement (assuming it is unfamiliar to them), and that they will come to understand how it can be used theatrically through practice. New ideas will arise as they encounter the new form of movement.

In those first few days, during the introduction to the chosen form of movement, the performers will get the opportunity to get to know one another, and begin to envision the possibilities this production presents: What happens in my body when I try these steps? Who can I direct this physical sequence at? How does this form of movement relate to our subject/our story?

As I mentioned above, we choose parkour, the art of using agility to traverse and pass through all the obstacles that exist in an urban environment, as the form of movement for *Punchline*. Intricate work begins. The performers watch parkour films, looking for inspiration for scenes and training exercises. Set designer Annika Thore transforms the limited stage space we have at our disposal, creating an environment that offers both different levels of elevation and opportunities to disappear from the stage and reappear somewhere else.

In the case of Powder, the image of a trapeze kicked off the whole production process. There are two performers: Patrik Freij, a trained trapeze artist who is also a trained clown and mime, and mime actor Ylva Magnusson, who has less experience with trapeze technique. We soon discover the potential for expressing beauty up in the air. This is something we bring along to the next phase, after many training sessions, when choreographer and SKH circus performance professor John-Paul Zaccarini comes to help us create the defining encounter between the two characters on the trapeze.

In *Catch Breath*, mime actor, mime educator, and tango dancer Alejandro Bonnet introduces Argentinian Tango to the troupe. Practising this dance gives the performers the ability to portray the vicious cycle of violence that we want to address. Tango finds its way into other scenes, too. In one scene, which portrays the jubilance of first love, the performers form a whirling circle of dancing couples. The movement form of the tango ends up serving as a foundation for the whole production.

Sometimes, disciplines the performers have already mastered will be chosen as the basis of the work. In these situations, the choreographer/director will use these expressions as the starting points for the production process. The first few days are a good time to discuss what to include in the performance, and what needs more work.

A group should also address how the performers are to maintain their training regimens. Dancers and mime actors need to train floor work and body isolations, a method that develops the expressiveness of various parts of the body. Circus performers need to practice their disciplines. The time this training will require must be determined and communicated. The first few days are also the time when group exercises will be the most useful. For the later stages of the work, it might make sense to define how much time will be available for solitary training. Any training elements that everyone is to take part in, such as morning warmups, will also need to be defined.

RESEARCH

Research work involves exploring the idea behind the production, e.g., by reading texts or meeting with specialists within the chosen subject. Often, the choreographer/director will already have some advance knowledge. But simply relating to the group what you've learned won't be enough. It's often better to have the group perform a part of the research together. A team will have formed as soon as several of the group's members happen to find the same issue urgent and exciting. Energy will be replenished, and motivation will increase. The group will acquire a set of shared references that they can return to later.

Research also has a fascinating way of generating theatrical ideas. A single human life story could form the basis for an entire production. Statistics can be presented through sequences of movements. Whether the intention be to adopt a documentary approach or repaint "reality" as fiction, meticulous research can serve as a foundation for a production project.

In *Catch Breath*, the research we do ends up causing us to change our planned ending for the piece. The subject of the production is domestic violence. Through our research, we learn that a very dangerous moment for a victim of this kind of abuse is the one where they tell their violent partners that they're leaving. As a result of this, one of our characters ends up being killed when they try to leave their partner, instead of making the escape and reclaiming their life, as we originally intended. This decision was entirely informed by the knowledge we gained during our research efforts.

TARGET AUDIENCE RESEARCH

A variation on facts-based research is learning about the target audience of the production. This can be a decisive step in the work, especially when it comes to children's and youth theatre. This applies equally to any kind of performative art, whether it be text-based or movement-based. It's not enough just to envision the audience that the production is intended to reach. The feedback and insight a group can gain from meeting with people of the right age, or who have experiences related to the subject of the production, can be invaluable. It is any stage performer's responsibility to try to get to know their audience.

There is a lot to consider in these meetings. One is being clear about the purpose of the meeting. If a group meets with a school class in order to learn about the target audience's age group, this should be stated up front. The troupe is responsible for ensuring that the meetings will be interesting for the kids, too. They can't simply walk around "observing". Children and young adults tend to be extremely sensitive to who comes and goes in their everyday lives. It would be a serious error for a theatre company to mistake themselves for sociologists performing a field study. Much better in that case would be to offer something from the world of

performative arts, something everyone can work on together while they get to know one another–perhaps theatrical exercises, or some other fun activity.

The troupe is always responsible for making sure conversations and exercises are carried out in a way that respects the needs of the kids. Any questions need to be phrased to suit the target audience. This is particularly true if the meeting with the audience group is taking place because the troupe wants to hear what the children or young adults think about the production. It's important here that something be GIVEN before the conversation takes place. For example, you could present a scene you're working on, and ask questions related to it.

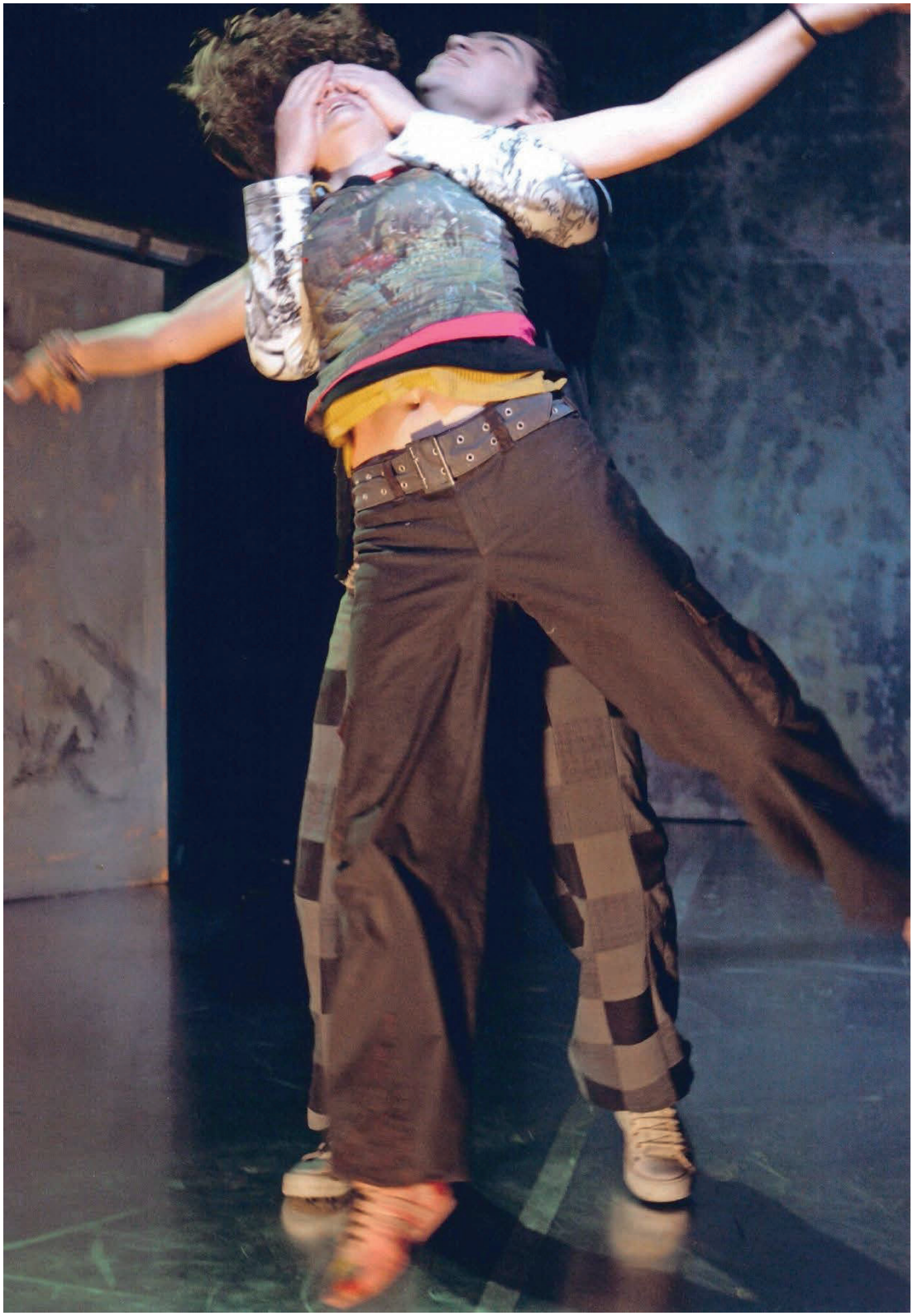
Drama pedagogy has exercises in active evaluation that can be a good way of engaging a whole group with a subject. My production *Punchline* largely came about as a result of meetings with the target audience. Choreographer Jimmy Meurling and myself meet several times with a secondary school class. We do exercises together. We discuss the subject of the production, and share a preliminary narrative with the kids, and then we receive their feedback on our scenarios and characters. Our meeting with the kids gives us ideas we can use in the production, and helps us find the courage to continue working on our chosen subject, see page 103.

INSPIRATION

Apart from working on new forms of movement, research, and target audience research, a group might need to seek artistic inspiration. Inspiration-seeking can be performed collectively, just as some parts of the research work can. It's all a matter of acquiring shared references.

Many production processes begin with a group taking inspiration from another performance, film, or piece of visual art. Being inspired by other people's work can be exciting and motivating. In the early stages, even imitating other peoples' work can provide energy and bring to mind interesting questions about the coming production's form and content. What a group needs to ask itself when it comes to inspiration and imitation is how these aspects will be used in the process further on down the line.

While it may be fun to begin your rehearsal period doing what other people have already done, it's distinctly unfun to feel that what you're bringing to opening night is plagiarism, or a mere derivative of something else. Later on in the process, the group will need to evaluate which stolen ideas still remains in the production, and how these aspects can be converted into their own expression and idea content. It's likely that what began as imitation will since have found a form of its own. The trick is to acknowledge this when it happens.



Punchline, Lise Edman and Alejandro Bonnet. Photograph: Martin Skoog.

5. CREATING A MOVEMENT BANK

In the initial stages of rehearsal work, a choreographing director will often spend their time creating movement material for the production. I call this creating a *movement bank*. What it involves is using elements from the production's core idea or subject to create choreographies and potential scenes. The director will sometimes have a working script to aid them in this work, or perhaps they elect to respond freely to ideas as they arise or come up. Some choreographing directors continue creating movement materials throughout the rehearsal period. Others make a point of concentrating on this work in the initial stage.

There are many ways to create a movement bank. One is to try out any existing movement ideas/images. Another is to use different theatrical exercises or some specific form of movement as a source of material. Improvisations, research, and tasks related to the subject or story can all yield material, too. Movements can be based on the set design, on objects, and on music. In order for a group to work creatively, all of its members need to be able to immerse themselves in the thematic landscape, in both mind and in body. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the movement material that is used for the production is as rich as possible.

Rehearsals are ideally divided into two or more periods. A script can be written after the first period, and will thus be based on the work that has actually been done on the floor. When you're not working in separate, specified rehearsal periods, you'll write either a working script or a final script ahead of time. After this, the group will be working with a single, cohesive time frame, and develop the script as they go. These processes require different kinds of planning, and different attitudes from the participating artists. The only constant is that the work will always begin with the creation of movements.

Next, I'll be describing aspects of some of the approaches one can take to creating a movement bank. I'll also be reflecting on different concepts that might come up in relation to each method.

5.1. Creating Movement Material Out of Your Early Movement Images and Subject

I have met with performers Patrik Freij and Ylva Magnusson to create movement material for our production *Powder*. The subject we've chosen is first loves, with all the joy and challenges they involve. We have some early movement images/ideas, and a vague outline of a story about two young people who become each other's first love. What follows is quoted from the work journal I kept while preparing for *Powder*, where I listed some of our very first movement ideas:

> *The physical mimicry of love – whatever one party does, the other will do as well. The mistakes you can make when you have your first kiss. Physically melting with love– what would that look like? Throwing words like throwing knives–knife thrower choreography. Objects causing problems. One of the characters is shy, and starts dropping stuff. One of the characters is shy, and their body takes on a life of its own, and flies off in all directions.*
>
> *TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL*

We try things out, and see where we can find movements we like that are good matches for the chosen subject. We still don't know where any of these elements will end up in the performance we're envisioning, nor how they relate to our outline of the plot. We follow our inclinations, and document anything that seems fun or looks good. The bank for a production can fits most things. We're not culling ideas too strictly at this point.

The idea about melting with love becomes an exciting choreography, and we end up keeping that in the performance. Ylva and Patrik are standing back-to-back. One of them slumps forward, and the other follows, falling backward. Once they reach the floor, they switch positions, and the dominant one becomes dominated, and vice versa. The movement carries on like this. They keep their backs to each other the whole time. They move across the floor, keeping low, walking in a square.

Mistakes from your first kiss becomes physical and acrobatic comedy, as the two attempts to kiss: their noses collide, and they both fall back. This movement idea spawns a whole series of comical mishaps and misunderstandings. We'll create a kind of meta layer of the production based on this later on. Ylva and Patrik become presenters, delivering a funny list of all the things that can go wrong in the game of love.

During these first rehearsals, Ylva approaches me with an idea that's new to me. It's about a movement act she's long wanted to perform. The following is quoted from my work journal entries from the rehearsals:

> *Ylva puts on a pair of men's slacks, and over them, a long skirt. She puts shoes on her hands and on her feet. Then, she bends over. The skirt falls down over her arms, turning inside out as it does so. The top half of her body is now portraying a woman, and the lower part is portraying a man. The two meets, and take an interest in each other. They dance, warily. Whenever one of them gets too close, the other withdraws. A new order is established, and they dance happily.*
>
> *TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL*

We try this idea out, and realise that we very much want to include it in the production. We end up using it as our closing scene; an epilogue of sorts, or a commentary on what love can be.

Patrik and Ylva start practising the trapeze, too. I know ahead of time that a trapeze duo act is going to serve as a core form of movement for the production. This marks the beginning of a long-lasting project in which we choose the kind of trapeze we want to use, and figure out how to install it. We also need to determine which skills we'll need to acquire, and what technical level to go for. At this point, an intense phase of training begins.

Work gets done with surprising ease during these first few weeks of rehearsal. There are lots of early movement images to try out, and this has a positive effect on the mood. Taking in the performer's ideas is uncomplicated, too. This is probably because I trust that my own

ideas will work, and this makes me confident and open. Does the ease of the work also have to do with the chosen subject?

After working on *Powder*, I begin to reflect on which subjects are "appropriate" for movement-based performative arts. I also begin to consider how one might go about working on a seemingly "impossible" subject:

In *Powder*, the subject matter is highly corporeal. This trigger personal recollections of how the body behaves when you're in love. In most people, the question, "what is it like to be in love for the first time?" will trigger a wealth of emotional and physical sensations. The legs give way, butterflies in the stomach, hands trembling, etc. These memories lend themselves quite readily to being developed into choreographic materials. The subject can be associated with bodily experiences. A movement performer's expression utilizes the domain of the body, which makes this kind of subject particularly suitable.

If the subject is simple, and can be described in a few words, this will also help you get started. Our subject for *Powder* is love at a very young age. We find useful theatrical approaches with relative ease, and eventually, we decide on a narrative, too. Two people fall in love, but are a little too afraid to get genuinely close. This story is one that can be portrayed using an unlimited variety of forms of movement. We settle on mime and acrobatics combined with text. An uncomplicated subject can be used as the basis for a whole world.

I am of the impression that when a subject is more theoretical or complex, a different kind of preparation is needed. Subjects that are based on thoughts or theories need to be translated into bodily expressions. Movement images that correspond to the subject have to be found. Research has to be carried out into theory, images, and physical aspects. The subject needs to be broken down into tiny components, in order to make it translatable into movement-based performative arts. A personal attitude to the subject needs to take form. This approach is more laborious, but the results it can yield are every bit as interesting as what you get in productions that take simpler or more physically oriented subject matters. The only difference is the working methods.

5.2. Creating Movement Material from Exercises. Qualities of Movement

Many choreographers/directors use a variety of theatrical experiences and games to kick off their work with a group. I describe several of the exercises I use in chapter 9, p. 103. Creativity and cooperation will be strengthened as a result of this work, but the exercises also serve a more general purpose.

A group can adopt a thematic mindset in their approach to the exercises. This involves researching what an exercise can be used to portray, and how it relates to the subject or narrative (if applicable) that you're working with. A trust exercise might portray tenderness. A tag game might be about looking for a connection. A start/stop exercise, in which only one person moves while everyone else stands still, might tell a story about loneliness or social isolation.

The choreographer/director chooses one or two exercises that relate particularly well to what they are working on. The group performs the basic version of the exercise first. After this, they reflect on the exercise, and how well they feel that it aligns with the core idea if the production.

When the exercise has been tried out, I often introduce the concept of quality of movement. This term refers to the various qualities of a movement, i.e., how it might look or be executed. For example, movements can be slow or fast, varied, or steady in tempo, or heavy or light. They can be performed on various levels, serve as counterpoints to one another, and be adapted to different spaces and architectures.

I suggest that the performers do the exercise just like before, but focus on different qualities of movement while they work this time. I encourage them to apply different aspects to the execution of the movement while they play the game we've chosen. This way, we can soon produce an exciting choreographic material to work with.

The following is quoted from my work journal, and is related to a teaching project I did with a class of mime actors.

We do a simple, basic exercise, a game of tag. I ask the students to play the game wholeheartedly. Then, I add some concepts related to quality of movement, counterpoint, and levels. Any movements the game generates are supposed to be performed in opposition to one another, on as many levels as possible. The participants are creating entirely new patterns at this point. They position themselves in new locations within the space, on constantly shifting levels, at varied, new distances from one another. Choreography is being created.

I have an improvisation exercise, The Chair*, in which two performers want to sit on the same chair. I ask the students to try, playfully, to get their way. I introduce the aspect of each movement originating in a distinct point within the body, and reverberating through the body, into the room. Now, the improvisation develops, and we're seeing new patterns and strong dynamics emerge.*

I have a theatrical plot that I want to include in the presentation we're working on. It's about a woman entering a room and coming across a pair of shoes. She makes her way to the shoes, puts them on, and exits. I suggest that the student emphasise the tempo in this exercise, i.e., experiment with the pacing in different ways. I don't ask any questions about who the woman is, what she's doing, or why. When producing movement material, we strive more than anything to achieve varied and interesting sequences of movements.

TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL

The exercises have the initial purpose of fostering cohesion and creativity within the group. However, as the exercises increasingly involve defining or practising various aspects of the qualities of the movements, they can expand them into an interesting choreographic material.

QUALITIES OF MOVEMENTS

Any movement can be performed in many different ways. It can exhibit an infinite variety of qualities. The term *counterpoint* is a musical concept, but in this context, I have taken it from

the mime actor training programme and Stanislav Brosowski, professor of mime figuration. Here, it denotes the individual performer's potential to amplify a movement and produce an inverted relationship, both within the movement itself and in relation to other performers.

In her book, My Areskoug writes the following: "The counterpoint revolves around a tension in the movement. In purely technical terms, this means finding a countermovement for a movement, finding the opposite direction of the first movement. A movement can have two simultaneous directions. This clarifies and reinforces the movement, and defines its direction more precisely."[14] When it comes to composing movement material, the contrapuntal approach is an efficient one. The active use of opposed movements lends great clarity to both the intentions of the performers and the spatial aspects.

French mimes and choreographers Claire Heggen and Yves Marc of Théâtre du Mouvement also use musical terms to describe qualities of movement.[15] Heggen/Marc visited Stockholm in the 1990s to gave a one-week workshop which I participated in. In an *accelerando*, tempo increases gradually, and in a *ritardando*, the opposite occurs. *Legato* means that the movements, or notes, rather, flow unceasingly. *Staccato* means that each movement has its own distinct end.

Apart from musical terminology, Heggen/Marc also use concepts like *levels*, *tempo*, and the *continuation of the movement* in the body. The concepts used by Heggen/Marcs are useful in several of the stages a production undergoes as the work progresses. While a group is gathering movement materials, one or more aspects of a movement can be applied to an exercise. The exercise will reveal entirely new choreographic qualities. In later stages of the work, these aspects can be useful for refining and improving the production's movement materials and theatrical scenarios.

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[14] Areskoug, M (2007), Den kroppsligt tänkande skådespelare [Physical Thinking for Actors] p. 81.

[15] Théâtre du Mouvement is described in Lust, A (2000), *From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond, p. 114–115.*

The *View Points* method, which counts American choreographers/directors Mary Overlie and Anne Bogart among its creators, also largely revolves around qualities of movement.[16] Here, the basic concepts are *tempo*, *duration*, *kinesthetic response*, *spatial relationship*, *repetition*, *topography*, *shape*, *gesture*, and *architecture*.

Tempo is about how fast or slow a movement is. Duration defines the temporal duration of the movement. Kinesthetic response is a term used to denote the impulsive responses of the body in the presence of external stimuli. Spatial relationship is about relationships in space, and repetition is about repeating movements. Topography denotes the patterns that are formed within the space. Shape represents the movement's own form. Gesture concerns human gestures, and architecture is about the way you relate to a space.

By applying these different aspects to your movement materials and theatrical situations, whether they be existing ones or ones that you're creating as you do this, you can achieve great variety, dynamics, and imaginativeness.

5.3. Some Words on Improvisation

Perhaps improvisation of some kind is the first thing a troupe will want to try when they begin looking for interesting movements to use in a production. Most choreographing directors relate to the concept of improvisation in some way or other. Personally, I practice many different improvisational methods in my various roles as choreographing director, performer, and educator (see page 103).

My experiences with improvisation have helped me grow as an artist. I have learned to take chances, to try new ideas, and to collaborate well with others. I've had my most rewarding experiences as a performer when working with methods for theatrical improvisation derived from Canadian director and educator Keith Johnstone's work, which he described in his

[16] Anne Bogart and Tina Landau describe this method in *The View Points Book. A Practical Guide to View Points and Composition*, 2005.

book *Impro*. In Sweden, my most significant encounter was with the improvisation educator and director Marvin Yxner, who inspired and taught me a great deal about the true terms of creative work, even though the actual topics discussed were more related to finding scenarios to play with, creating characters, and writing text than to creating movements.

As a choreographing director, I can see that improvisation as an approach has very close ties to the tradition of collaborative creation that exists within movement-based performative arts. In a way, one could think of the work that goes into a production as a process of planned improvisation. For this reason, it's difficult to cover all the benefits and methods of improvisation in a single chapter.

However, there is one concept related to improvisation that I find to be particularly important: I give the performers *assignments*. They could be tasked with anything from looking for a specific idiom of movement to creating a whole scene. I hand out individual assignments, paired assignments, or assignments for the whole group. I try to be specific, and I only hand out assignments that I genuinely want to see the results of – I don't do fake exercises. Also, I give them a specific time frame to carry out the task in.

During the material-gathering phase, these assignments will most commonly revolve around trying out ideas that were generated during the early idea process. Some examples: Give me examples of children's games! How do you move when you play? What happens if you repeat that four times? It is a liberation, in a way, for a performer to be given a concrete task to perform. Once they have clearly defined boundaries to relate to, they will be free to apply their full imagination and professional skill to the work. Also, giving them assignments that will actually benefit the project defines me in my role as a choreographing director.

5.4. On Creating Moving Materials From Text, and the Relationship Between Movement and Text

Let's say a particular movement-based production is inspired by a text. It could be a short story, poems, or a play. The group hasn't yet decided what or how many aspects of the text

they will be incorporating in their performance. At this point, the group might begin creating based on one or a few of the following questions:

- What happens to your body when you read?
- What part of the text, or which of its themes first caught your interest?
- Which movement images exist within the text, and which situations seem to lend themselves immediately to being expressed through movement?
- What is the rhythm of the text like?

An important question that will always come up when movement and text are used together in performative arts is what the movement and the text can each express. For any movement, there is a text that is both in opposition with and aligned with it. For any text, there is an opposed and an aligned potential movement.

The movement might serve to depict events, inspire contemplation or poetic impulses, exemplify oppositions, or deepen characterization. Its shifting qualities and rhythms can con-trast or harmonise with the various qualities and rhythms of the text.

The text might be intended to convey information, portray oppositions, clarify, or offer a deeper analysis. The qualities and rhythms of the text might contrast with or harmonise with those of the movement.

The combination of movement and text is a field that is worthy of exploration.
One early winter, I travel to Tromsø in Norway to teach a class in text and movement for *SEANSE*, the knowledge production center in Norway. One of the other teachers working on the course is English choreographer and dancer Wendy Houston, who has worked with dance companies like DV8 and Forced Entertainment in the past. We teach one day of classes each, and participate in each other's sessions. It's Wendy's day, and the following is quoted from my work journal:

> *We write notes and sort them into two piles. In one pile, we place suggested ACTIONS (choreography), and in the other, we place suggested TEXT.*

An action might be: You get up off the floor and walk in a circle. Or: You try to hide.

A text might be: You read a weather report for northern Norway. You tell a story about when you were a kid and ran away from home.

Wendy puts on some music. We participants enter, one at a time initially, and then several at once. We're free to enter or exit the stage as we like. However, Wendy has stipulated that there must be a minimum of two performers onstage at any given moment.

I read a note from the text pile. It says I will be expected to share a personal memory. At the same time, another participant reads an action note. He's supposed to jump. I relate my memory, and he jumps. Sometimes we interact, and sometimes we don't. More participants join us. We get more slips of paper. New actions and new texts are being created.

Energies are flowing. Wendy switches between different music tracks, and they all have different effects on us. Our heartbeats quicken, and the air is thick with flow. There's no time to stop and reflect on what the different parts are expressing, and whether they complement one another. We're doing it all on gut instinct.

We almost find exiting the stage to take a look at the work we're creating the most fun of all.

Two piles of notes and music… out of this, a potential production emerges.

TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL

This experiment shows me that rhythm is a vital component whenever movement and text are used together. A sensitivity to rhythm and tempo will allow you to bring things out from the text and the movements that will add depth to both expressions. It's a bit like the art form *Spoken word*, where the rhythm clarifies, amplifies, and moves the narrative along.

I also experience the power of a well-defined method. I see an approach here that can be used to produce incredible performance materials. The fact that the exercise is based on improvisation, and that the messages on the notes impose some limitations, brings the group

energy and a sense of physical exuberance. The exercise is also part of a longer, cohesive whole, which helps the participants work more efficiently when exploring the boundaries of form than they could have done if the exercise had been divided into separate sections, with frequent pauses for reflection. What is happening in the space feels remarkably interesting, and full of potential for interpretation.

STORYTELLING

Another way of exploring the relationship between movement and text is to engage in narration, or, as it is more commonly referred to, *storytelling*. This concept involves one or more actors presenting a narrative through a combination of movements and text. Usually, the performers will take turns being the narrator, and play several other parts as well. Long scenes based on dialogue are less common than in conventional, text-based performances, and the expression used alternates between movement and text.

A story can be told in many ways. It can be presented entirely verbally, with no physical expression at all. In this situation, the storyteller will use their verbal presentation to relate the narrative in a sufficiently dynamic way for images to form in the mind of the listener. Early storytellers, who would gather around a fire, are historic precursors of this kind of storytelling.

However, storytelling incorporates movement. There are historical traditions to consider here, too. In Indian performative arts, movement and voice are used to relate myths and stories in long, night-time performances. In Europe, popular storytellers used to travel from town to town, using their physical and verbal abilities to the fullest to tell stories about current events, or pure fabrications. Italian playwright and director Dario Fo is an example of an artist who has worked to further develop this physical form of storytelling. In Sweden, actor Björn Granath used to perform Fo's plays for one actor with enormous presence and skill. In Swedish mime, storytelling is a strong genre in its own right. At the mime actor programme where I teach, we spend most of a full semester on storytelling.

One year, I use the Sumerian/Babylonian myth of *Gilgamesh*. This story was recorded on clay tablets more than 5,000 years ago. It's the earliest written narrative we know of. The story

is about king Gilgamesh, who befriends the savage Enkidu. When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh finds himself stricken with grief, and sets off on a long journey to seek the secret of eternal life.

I will be telling the story as a monologue.[17] Mime actor and director Roger Westberg is directing. We decide to run a trial of the story with the intended audience, which is children aged 9–12. We do this to identify the parts of the story we should use, and figure out how to relate to the subject of the story. The following is quoted from my working journal:

> *We visit a school. I tell them about Gilgamesh, without a script, and without any pre-determined actions. The story about the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu gets through to the kids, who are obviously able to relate to something in it. When I reach the point where Enkidu dies, the children have fallen completely silent. I'm worried that the whole thing about Enkidu actually dying being a bit too direct. But that doesn't seem to be the case. When I describe how Gilgamesh seeks the secret to eternal life, I notice that the kids are paying a great deal of interest. We have empirical evidence that the story works. We'll be able to address the more existential ideas in our production. It feels good.*
>
> *TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL*

After making some decisions about which themes from the story we'll be focusing on, we get to work finding scenes with theatrical potential. What's suited for movement, and what works better as text? Naturally, we suspect that scenes with a lot of action will be suitable sources of movements. But we want to go easy on purely illustrative expressions, in favour of more complex ones. What might make for a poetic interlude, or a rhythmic sequence? How can we portray the characters' emotions?

When it comes to the text, we determine which parts convey important information, and which ones contain important turning points. We also look for text that has poetic, rhythmical,

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[17] Eventually, this work becomes a production that tours for Teater Tre in 2002–2003.

and musical qualities. We explore the narrative by every means known to us. We collect movement images, and look for movements both in what's said and in what isn't.

It dawns on us that an important part of making storytelling interesting is to almost always have the movement occur before the text. This gives the audience time to interpret things their own way, before the text "reveals all." It also makes you freer to choose a text that doesn't conform too closely to the movement, i.e., which doesn't illustrate what you're already seeing. This will encourage the audience to invest more in the story, as they will feel free to make their own interpretations.

The epic of Gilgamesh contains a scene in which Gilgamesh walks through a mountain. In the performance, I take a step into the darkness, and then another. I depict the huge mountain with my body. Only when I take the third step do I utter a few words. These words aren't about the character walking through the mountain. The audience can already see that, after all. Instead, the words are about the passage of time. The words have their own meaning, which lends complexity to the story.

Why describe something that's already visible to the audience in words? Why express something you've already said through a movement? When the movement precedes the text, this will raise the audience's alertness, and make them more likely to immerse themselves in the story. This has the added benefit of making you free to choose a text that's more advanced, rich in associations, or poetic.

In comedy, the principle of "movement first, text later" is a goldmine: A character slips on a banana peel, and tries to get up in countless ways. After a while, the character says: "I usually meet all kinds of interesting people on the way to work." Then, they slip again. The audience's minds paint a picture of an individual who's struggling to maintain a facade despite repeated public failures. And that's funny.

It's also interesting to do one thing, and then label what you've done as something completely different. This causes a kind of hiccup in the viewer's brain. Many dance productions use this trick. A performer points at their elbow, and says, "foot." This increases the audience's

alertness, and puts them in a state in which nothing is safe, or "as usual". This kind of performative art establishes a universe of its own. It doesn't seek to emulate reality; instead, it becomes its own language.

FROM DIALOGUE-BASED PLAY TO MOVEMENT

Sometimes, you will want to base the movement-based production you'll be creating on a dialogue-based play.[18]

"Conventional" work with a dialogue-based play begins when a director or group begins to explore different interpretations of the various scenes. Sometimes, the director will have made their own analysis, which they bring to the discussion with the artistic team. Other times, the whole group will work together to arrive at a shared interpretation. However, starting out with the analysis, before you begin working on the theatrical aspects, can create very high expectations. This might not be too suitable for the creative atmosphere you will need when you're gathering movement material.

When working to translate a dialogue-based play into a movement-based production (with no or few words), you need to set interpretation aside for a while, and start out by focusing on the movements that exist in the play. A director/choreographer will seek inspiration from particularly interesting passages in the text, and consider the sequences and images they involve. They will ask questions like the following:

- Is there an underlying mood in the text, and can it be expressed through movement?
- How do the characters move, what challenges do they face, and how can these be visualised?

[18] When you're basing a professional production on a written play, it will also be important to address the matter of copyright.

- Is there a place, a room, where these events might take place? A place that can itself cause movement?

Based on these and other questions, sequences and events are created and turned into movement materials.

Analysis and interpretation will inevitably enter the process sooner or later, regardless. Somewhere around the half-way mark of the practical work process, you start to see what it is you're creating. The group is often surprised at how well they have done at "reading" and interpreting the play. A text of sufficient quality will carry through any ideas a creative group might introduce. But the movement material will be far more varied and enjoyable than it would have been if the work had started at the other end, with analysis.

One spring, I and a class of mime actors are working with actor and assistant professor of voice and speech Catherine Hansson. The play we've chosen is *Closer*, by the British playwright and comedian Patrick Marber. The text is written in a realistic style, and features four characters: A, who falls in love with B, who falls in love with C, who falls in love with D. The text consists almost exclusively of dialogue scenes between two people–an unusual situation for me in terms of movement-based work.

As a background, what I try to do in my lessons in scenic portrayal is to give my students tools they can use to create performances. We're studying dramaturgy on this day, and I introduce a couple of dramaturgical models. It soon becomes evident that we will need some kind of practical practice material. When we seize an opportunity to bring Catherine Hansson in to join us in our work, she suggests that *Closer* might be a suitable play. The following is quoted from my work journal:

> *We read the play out loud together. The students switch parts with each other as we go. We have a brief discussion after each scene, mostly to determine if there's anything anyone is having trouble understanding, or if anybody has had any interesting associations. No extensive analysis. The reading is time consuming, and serves the purpose of familiarising us all with the play. Seeing what actually happens.*

Each student is given an assignment: imagine a set of movement ideas or movement scenes based on the text of the play. I ask them to look for phenomena and events that they sense are occurring underneath the surface of the dialogues, or of the play as a whole? No restrictions. They should follow their inclinations.

The students are paired up, and each pair tries out their ideas on each other. At first, they work with an unlimited number of ideas for scenes, but later, I ask them to limit the number of scenes. The ideas are presented, both verbally and practically, to the whole group.

The students make their selection from the large bank of material they've created. Each student is to direct at least one scene. After a while, we have nine scenes taking shape. The students all found inspiration in completely different elements of the play. Some scenes lean towards dance–non-verbal portrayals of moods or subjects. In a few dialogue scenes, movement and text are combined. One clown scene is created, and another few scenes portray the entire contents of the drama in a movement-based exposé.

TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL

Working on *Closer* teaches me how much fun it can be to work with realistic drama. There is a wealth of potential for movement buried in all that dense dialogue. The characters' different wills and subtexts are given physical expressions, and the performers' interactions are given a choreography. The idea of making a clown scene highlights the absurd aspects of the written dialogue. The more holistic scenes express a kind of beauty. In the end, we produce our own version of *Closer*, a story about love that keeps going wrong.

5.5. Creating Movement Material from Objects and Scenographic Elements

When the scenographic elements, objects, costumes, or masks for a production are made available early on in the rehearsal process, the group will have another source of movement materials besides those we've already covered.

Movement can be created using broomsticks, cubes, chairs, ladders, tables, drinking glasses, egg cups, revolving stages, caravans, tight costumes, voluminous costumes, leaning walls, low entrances, pens that break, movable light sources, sleighs, shopping carts, large sheets of fabric, red noses, audio cables, and so on.

This process is often an adventure of discovery, and so beneficial to creativity that a choreographer/director has everything to gain from encouraging it.

Any object has movements hiding within it for you to discover. The lines, volume, and shape of an object can produce movement material. These all need to be explored. It's a good idea to apply different qualities of movement in this work (see the preceding section). A broomstick can move at different speeds, on different levels, with different rhythms, and so on. The function the object serves in everyday life won't always be the one it serves within the universe of the production. A creative group can invent thousands of new uses for any given object.

An object can also possess an inherent drama of its own, and have its own story to tell. For *Lost and Found*, idea generator and artist Magnus Lönn has written a monologue in which an old Windsor chair tells the story of its life.[19] We learn who has sat on it, and how abandoned it has felt at times. This scene conjures up a great tenderness for this seemingly humble chair.

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[19] *Tillvaratagna effekter* [Lost and Found], production at Byteatern Kalmar Länsteater, 1996. Writing and scenography: Magnus Lönn. Directing: Lena Stefenson. Performers: Martin Ellborg, Karin Kickan Holmberg, Peder Nabo (also music), Lena Nilsen, and Ulla Tylén.

An improvisation exercise for a performer might involve asking them to place their hand on an object and listen to its story. The object speaks through the performer. Its stories can generate ideas for whole scenes.

When a group is working with a scenographic space, other things will happen. In *Powder*, we don't relate simply to the trapeze, but also to the scaffolding the trapeze hangs from. This structure comprises the actual stage space, and gives rise to movements as the performers have to crawl, jump, and bounce to get around it. In *Punchline*, scenographer Annika Thore creates equivalent obstacles by constructing separate planes on the stage. In *Catch Breath*, scenographer Sigyn Stenqvist places large glass plates on the floor, which constrains the performers' movements. I try to make time for the performers to explore the space and discover all the movement-related possibilities it has to offer.

6. MOVEMENT AND NARRATIVE

A group might be inspired by a story, or wish to relate it, or parts of it. In this situation, it might be essential to consider what a story really is.

In theatre and film dramaturgy, it's often claimed that there are only a small number of basic plots that all stories are based on. These basic plots are part of our shared human cultural heritage, and originated in our myths and folktales. The number of basic plots is debated– perhaps it is seven, or nine, or ten, or more.

Barbro Smeds composed this list of nine "conventional narrative designs":

1. **The Life Journey** We follow an extraordinary life, from beginning to end. A major complication involves somebody being born under a prophecy, for example, like Snow White, and then we follow the twists and turns of her life in the light of the prophecy.
2. **Somebody ventures into the world**, whether out of necessity or lust for exploration, like Blockhead Hans, and along the way, they encounter all sorts of adventures that eventually bring them to their goal.
3. **Somebody comes to visit**. A stranger enters a strictly defined situation and triggers a sequence of events.
4. **Somebody returns home**. After a prolonged absence, somebody returns, and triggers a sequence of events.
5. **Love thwarted**. A couple meets, but there are obstacles to their love, either in themselves or in the outside world, which might be overcome eventually, although there is no certainty on that point.
6. **Somebody gets a big problem on their hands**.
7. **Conflict**. There is a deep disagreement, power struggle, or some other form of enmity between two parties.
8. **Somebody is deceived**, or takes the wrong path for some other reason, but ends up learning a lesson.

9. **Somebody receives an important message**–illness, infidelity, or something along those lines.[20]

This list doesn't include the story of mankind's struggles with their gods, and the more explicit creation myths. Stories of revenge, or of weaker individuals or groups striking back at stronger enemies, could probably fit under entry seven. Many stories consist of a mixture of these different basic plots.

Here are some examples of plays, stories, and films that are based on these basic plots: The folk tale Red Riding Hood (narrative design 2). The film *The Seven Samurai* by Akira Kurosawa (3). The epic *The Odyssey* by Homer and the film *The Party* by Thomas Vinterberg (4). The play *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (5 and 7). The plays *Medea* by Euripides and *Medea's Children* by Suzanne Osten/Per Lysander (7).

Using one of the basic plots as the foundation for movement-based work can lend support to the imagination. Being inspired by its deceptive simplicity. A story told that succinctly, "Somebody returns home after a prolonged absence", is bound to spark the imagination, and create internal images that can be used as a starting point for a production. Stories have the benefit of moving our thoughts along, on to new challenges and twists.

In any story, there are moments of tension between characters, or within individuals. Those are the decisive moments; when choices are made, emotions are expressed, and everything is on the line. These are the climaxes, when everything changes.

Examples of moments like this include the scene where Odysseus, the hero of Homer's epic *The Odyssey*, finally steps ashore on his island home of Ithaca, only to discover that his wife's suitors have taken over his home. What will he do now? Another example is in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, when Juliet awakens to find Romeo lying dead at her side.

[20] Smeds, B (2005), *Dramaturgi. Om strukturer och sceniska verk. Formens innehåll och innehållets former,* [Dramaturgy. On Structures and Scenic Works. The Contents of Form and the Form of Contents.] p. 18-19.

Another climax would be the scene in the folktale Red Riding Hood, when Red Riding Hood realises that it's really the wolf lying there in the bed, instead of her grandmother.

In these moments, the characters' thoughts and emotions explode. The skies are rent asunder, and new landscapes are formed. There's no complicated plot waiting to be explained. These moments were made to be expressed through movement. They can provide meaning-generating choreographies, into which the story's whole contents can be distilled.

In the same way, the smallest of details in a story might become a source of movement material. Something small, like a description of a character's demeanour, can produce movement. Perhaps the only part of the story Snow White (in the Disney version) you end up presenting could be the one where the queen gazes at her reflection in the mirror?

CHALLENGES

There is a point where creators of movement-based productions need to tread carefully. This is when all the different nooks and crannies of a certain story appear equally interesting to you, and you want to fit as much as possible of the story in. You find yourself envisioning an outrageous number of scenes, and you want to keep every twist and turn of the plot, at any cost.

I think what author, playwright, and former professor of storytelling at SKH Niklas Rådström had to say about this seems fitting here: "It's important to be able to separate Narrative from Narration."[21] A production can be based on a story, take its starting point from it, or be inspired by it. After this, you choose what part of the story to tell, and how to tell it. This is true regardless of the form of performative art you're working with, but it is perhaps particularly true of movement-based work. Narration needs to be its own thing, something with its own artistic force and impact. It's a matter of choreography and form, of theatrical situation

[21] From a lecture given at the SKH in 2016.

and musicality–the timbre and expression of a production. If you don't separate narrative and narration, you'll always run the risk of ending up simply illustrating the plot of the story.

DRAMATIC SITUATIONS

Any story is composed of different dramatic situations, of varying scope and intensity. Anybody who wants to mine a story for movement material will need to reflect on what a dramatic situation is, and how it can be portrayed without words, or with a minimum of words.

A dramatic situation is a situation within a person, or between several people, in which wills collide, choices are made, and progress is achieved. A climax would be an example of this. However, a story or drama also consists of a larger number of minor dramatic situations. An everyday example of this might go as follows: A writer is working at a desk. They hear a noise in another room. Their concentration is broken, and they have to decide whether to get up or remain seated. They walk over to the next room, and find a family member sitting there, weeping. They approach gently, intending to give comfort, but are suddenly met with a laugh and a "gotcha!" Dramatic escalation of tension, followed by comic release.

Playwright and author Mats Ödéen wrote: "Change, the transition from one state to another, is the very foundation of and a necessary condition for dramatic storytelling."[22] That's a pretty clear description of what we're dealing with here. A dramatic situation is a situation in which choices are made and developments unfold. This is true of the climaxes as well as of the less dramatic situations that are parts of the story.

If you're going to be looking for movement materials in a story, you need to reflect on whether the story contains dramatic situations that don't require words, in that movement alone can express the content. Self-propelled situations and events, in which the audience grasps the context fully enough that no words are necessary.

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[22] Ödeen, M (2005), *Dramatiskt berättande, om konsten att strukturera ett drama*, p. 9

Examples from real life might include the following: Hunts, flirtations, escapes, physical failures and triumphs, treatment of children and the elderly, physical learning, play, impersonations, objects that refuse to do what we want them to, building, social adjustment, situations in which people know each other very well, situations in which people don't know one another at all, everyday life, traditions, breaking with traditions, routines and norms, social embarrassment, social competition, the triggering of powerful emotions such as shame or hatred, interactions with cash machines, ageing, growth, work, decorating, searching, navigating, loving, dancing with somebody else, travel, daydreaming, remembering, digging, losing stuff, standing in a meadow on a summer's day with the wind in your hair, running a race, inner conflict, external conflict, competition, psychological and physical abuse, playing soccer, hiding secret things, shoplifting, cutting each other's hair, going to a party, nightmares, taking on physical challenges, fighting, warring ... All of these are well suited to being portrayed without words.

What will actually require words, both in life and on stage, is the communication of new information. It's hard to realise that it's twelve o'clock if nobody is there to tell you.

One early winter, I watch choreographer and director Mats Ek's incredible ballet *Juliet and Romeo* at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm.[23] This production is an interpretation of William Shakespeare's play. I'm struck by how Ek has chosen to restructure the final act. In the original play, the plot of the final scenes is very convoluted.

Poison is taken, death is feigned, a monk rides to deliver an important message, but arrives too late. In Shakespeare's play, this is all explained in great detail. The dramatic tension increases gradually, with each mishap and misunderstanding. In Ek's production, these events have been completely overhauled, and instead, we see a movement-based depiction of the struggles between love and hate, and between youth and old age. My own interpretation is that Mats Ek decided to prioritise dance's potential for depicting moods, emotions, and states,

[23] *Julia och Romeo* [Juliet and Romeo], dance work by Mats Ek, with music by Tchaikovsky. First performed in 2013 at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm.

rather than basing the piece on dramatic considerations that would have required words. The following quote is taken from an interview Mats Ek gave to the website of the Royal Swedish Opera before the opening night of *Juliet and Romeo*.

- Shakespeare's plays may be amazing, but they do often become a little hard to follow towards the end, when the time comes to tie up all the loose ends that his unrivalled imagination inspired him to introduce. In *Romeo and Juliet*, too, the last act gets rather messy, he says, and moves on to discussing the immediacy of dance:
- In dance, everything exists in the here and now–there is no tomorrow, and no yesterday! That's why I had to find my own solution to the failed feigned death scene towards the end of the drama.[24]

Ek sides with the immediacy of dance, with the here and now. He accepts that movement won't have the same capacity for communicating information that language does, and decides to interpret the conclusion of the play in his own way.

SCENIC ACTIONS

Yet another aspect of working with inspiration from or interpretations of existing stories has to do with the concept of *scenic actions*. Working with performative arts is to express yourself through scenic actions. This is particularly important to bear in mind when you're doing movement-based work. The things the performers DO hold up the structure of the performance's contents.

In order for a dramatic situation to be portrayed, a set of scenic actions will need to be performed. If the dramatic situation is, say, that a young person is leaving their childhood home, you'll need actions that can express this individual's thoughts and emotions. They

[24] Interview with Mats Ek by Eva Clementi, editor at the Royal Swedish Opera. The interview was published on the website of the Royal Opera in 2013.

might be packing a bag, and the way they pack the bag, and the things they are packing, will give the story its physical form. A family member might try to unpack the bag again. Their goodbyes are said through this struggle over the suitcase. The actions convey the story, and no words are necessary.

In order for physical actions to become truly interesting, you also need to introduce something novel. Instead of an action ceasing, and the energy dropping to zero, the action suddenly takes a new turn. The performer is doing one thing, and suddenly (!), something else happens. A new thought arrives, something new happens. The character is surprised, over and over. Thoughts take unexpected leaps, and new sequences of events are created. This way, you can hold not just the character's interest, but that of the audience, too.

I am working with mime actor Katarina Krogh on her movement-based monologue, *Larger Than Yourself*.[25] Katarina wants to rework the scene where she, in the role of the protagonist, Frans, enters the most sacred space of a motorcycle club, and learns about the rules and laws that apply there. Katarina feels that the scene runs too slow, and drags on. She wants to keep the whole piece of music in, however, so she'll have to fill the time with new material. The following is quoted from my work journal entries from these rehearsals:

> *In the scene, the character Frans "absorbs" the frightening atmosphere in the room, allowing it to enter his body. However, this emotional state isn't enough; it's too static to be watchable for long. So, we create some smaller physical actions, instead–actions that remain unfinished due to constant interruptions. Frans walks across the room, accidentally steps in an oil slick, tries to rub the oil off on a crate, suddenly hears an engine, tries to run away, slips on the oil slick again, grabs hold of the crate.*
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> *Now, the scene consists of concrete actions. Also, Katarina/Frans is interrupting each action with a new one, before the preceding one is finished. New events and*

[25] Swedish title: *Större än du själv*. This work was part of the "Own Project" class when Katarina Krogh was a student. The play was performed at the Departure Festival at SKH, in October of 2014.

actions occur in such quick succession that the sense of drama is maintained throughout.

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Creating actions and physical situations can make the scenic form interesting, and help keep your characters from slipping into emotional states that might be dull for the audience to look at. When these actions are interrupted by the introduction of a novel element, interest will only grow as a result.

STATES

In the Swedish spoken theatre world, there used to be a concept called *tillståndsteater* [”theatre of states”]. The consensus was that this was something that was best avoided. I agree with this sentiment, even though I was never really clear on what exactly the term meant. I thought it meant that there was something wrong with trying to depict states onstage in general.

This seemed odd to me, as so many performances, particularly in movement-based theatre, have done such excellent jobs depicting states. These could be states that are deeply human, or more existential ones.

Catch Breath consists in large part of different phases in a violent relationship. The narrative is very simple. What we want to get at are the various states involved. In rehearsal, I’m given plenty of opportunities to consider how states can be portrayed. The following is quoted from my work journal entries from the rehearsals:

We want to portray the awkward ennui of the couple, which will eventually erupt in violence. We translate the state into bodily events. An arm falls, a body can’t stay upright. The person is lifted by their partner, then dropped, and stumbles forwards, falls again. The partner tries to help, but ends up getting caught in it, too. They both fall, get up, and fall again. New directions, new levels, finding the right tempo and rhythm for it all. Lots of working on different qualities of movement. Eventually, one

member of the couple has had enough, and finds their own body no longer to be "falling"… instead, they long to be filled with… energy?

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The emotions are expressed through the actions of the performers. What might appear to be static is actually composed of scenic situations and actions. Together, these present the image of a state. This state tells a story.

I was mistaken about the meaning of the term theatre of inaction. I know now that what they were referring to was when an actor played out their emotions without being anchored in scenic situations. Their emotions hover about freely, if you will, unattached to any scenic actions. One could say that it prioritises the individual actor's ability to feel over the audience's. It all becomes a bit like an athletic achievement, then. This kind of theatre is best avoided, both then and now, I'd say. The word inaction, however, does have some positive connotations, if you ask me.

And then... Och sen. Choreography/directing: Claire Parsons. André Kaliff, Victor Gyllenberg, Emelie Garmén, Mira Björkman. See page 98. Photograph: Mats Åsman.

7. WRITING SCRIPTS

The time has come to write a script.

Some choreographers/directors might write an initial script when they do their preparatory work on the floor. Others write their scripts alongside the creation of the movement materials. As many ideas will have been tried out in practice at this point, the choreographer/director and a group will be able to begin to take a serious look at what kind of dramaturgy the production requires. An active script document can be an invaluable aid in this work.

Having the support of a script, which will exist in different draft versions at different points of the process, the choreographer/director will be able to listen to other people's ideas during the collaborative creation stage. This will facilitate their communication with the rest of the team–and this is true regardless of their chosen working methods and aesthetics.

One question is how to organise the various scenes and events in sequence. Another is which climaxes there are. Yet another question is whether the story that is emerging needs some kind of temporal or spatial framing, Even if there are already ideas in place for this, it can be fruitful to challenge your basic presumptions about the production.

I write down my ideas on notes. Each note holds one suggested scene. I spread the notes out on a big table, or pin them to the wall. I want to be able to see them from a distance, so that I can relate physically and musically to a potential dramaturgy. Rhythm, tempo, climaxes, presentations, conflicts, rising tension, stillness, circles, contrasts, regression, attack, and sustain, are the concepts I'm dealing with here. If the production is based on a story, I will also want to explore my own feelings about it.

7.1. Dramaturgies

Dramaturgy is, generally, the study of the structure of stories. It is the art of composing a story to fit a purpose. Dramaturgy is, in every way, its own field of knowledge, and fully worthy of

independent study. Here, I will discuss some dramaturgic concepts that seem to me to have special significance in the context of working with movement-based performative arts.

THE "CLASSIC" WESTERN DRAMATURGY

Most westerners have a basic grasp of "classic" Western dramaturgy. We've all grown up watching American movies and British crime series. We might not know the academic jargon we'd need to describe what we know. But nonetheless, we have a rich bank of emotional experiences of how stories usually begin with something that grabs your interest, how the audience needs to identify with the (usually) male protagonist, and how a few inner conflicts will often make stories more interesting. These are things we "know". When we go to the cinema, we often have a sense of how events are going to unfold ahead of time. We know the codes.

The first person to interpret and codify the classic Western dramaturgy was Aristotle. In the 4th century B.C., he wrote his *Poetics*, in which he puts forth the idea that the plot of a drama must display unity. The various events must interlock in such a way that no single part could be removed without disrupting the whole. Events mustn't merely follow one another temporally, as they do in epic storytelling, they must also follow one another causally.[26]

Barbro Smeds describes the Aristotelian dramaturgy as follows:

> *A story begins with an introductory exposition, continues with the development of a main conflict, the culmination of which brings recognition, and then moves on to catharsis and the denouement that follows.*[27]

We don't experience the "classic" Western dramaturgy exclusively through film and theatre, for that matter. Anybody who listens to a lot of music will have had similar experiences. There

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[26] Aristotle's theories are described in Henrik Dyfverman's book *Dramats teknik* (1969), p. 24–28.
[27] Smeds, B (2005) *Dramaturgi*, p. 17.

are many parallels to be drawn to rock music, for instance, to the simple melodic progression of guitarist Eric Clapton's *Tears in Heaven*. Here, the escalation of the first phrase is followed by a release in part two, only to transition into an escalating final phrase. A "classic" structure of intensifying conflict and resolution.

The same is true of the structure of the movements of a symphony written according to the dictates of the First Viennese School. The main theme is introduced, often in a lively tempo. A slower movement follows. The third movement is an intermezzo of sorts, and the fourth is as lively as the opening movement. Presentation, development, escalation, and catharsis.[28]

The "classic" Western dramaturgy can even be experienced in situations as diverse as playing a game of soccer, or having an argument. In the soccer match, the teams are introduced before kick-off. The match billows back and forth until one team comes out the victors. An argument often begins with some insignificant issue. As the argument progresses, the conflict will often intensify. Catharsis is more of an open question.

Personally, as an artist, I find it important to identify your previous experiences and references. If you do that, you'll be able to use this knowledge to achieve the result you want, and you'll know when you need to seek new knowledge, too. You see, there are other, competing dramaturgic models to take inspiration from, besides the "classic" Western one.

CIRCULAR DRAMATURGY

Just as most of us have an internalised sense for the "classic" Western dramaturgy, we also have experiences of entirely different dramaturgies. For example, the dramaturgy of repetition. In everyday life, there are phenomena that seem to never change. Your neighbour's cat is always in the same spot, enjoying the morning sun. Winter always arrives in November.

[28] Aage Hansen describes the structure of the symphony in the First Viennese school in *Det handlar om musik* (1964), p. 88.

We're all going to die. A few of these phenomena undergo small changes, while the rest are just undeniable facts. As we grow older, and our sense of time changes, we begin to feel that these phenomena are repeating themselves more and more frequently.

These experiences can be converted into a scenic dramaturgy, a state of affairs that moves in a circle, a sequence of constantly recurring events. A circular dramaturgy.

Another word for a circular dramaturgy is *catastasis*, the description of a state. Norwegian film producer Helga Fjordholm, describes an alternative, "feminine" dramaturgy, which was introduced by Danish playwright Ulla Ryum:

> *Time is not linear, but circular; it doesn't move in the standard reading direction at some given speed; it is multi-faceted, simultaneous, and probable–a space.*[29]

Fjordholm and Ryum speak of circular dramaturgy/catastasis as a dramaturgy that one might associate with female experiences, such as housework/everyday experiences, or biological aspects like menstruation. They speak of the artistic impact of a dramaturgy that doesn't emphasise actions, but rather portrays states, shifts in time, emotional dualities, and shifting spatial conditions. It is from these points of view that circular dramaturgy/catastasis is able to offer performative arts a useful alternative to "classic" dramaturgy. Movement-based performative arts lend themselves particularly well to basing a whole work on a single detail, event, dream, or ambiguity. In a movement-based production, the movement and image-based storytelling will be in focus, not simply what "happens" and lends itself to more immediate interpretation.

I feel that there is a magical beauty to things that recur constantly, to things that don't change. They remind me of the basic terms of life, and the dream of a permanent, unchangeable nature. A western theatre audience might sit there, waiting for something to break with the predictable nature of the circular dramaturgy. A change of some kind will be expected.

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[29] Fjordholm, H (1985): *Filmhäftet 1985*, issue 50, the article "Tillstånd/handling"

This longing for change can be put to good use by a choreographer/director. The production can play with the fact that nothing really changes, but that some progress is nonetheless made. Maybe a tiny detail changes. This will take on an enormous significance to an audience that is thirsting for change.

RHIZOME

A chance occurrence might simply mean that something unexpected happens. Unexpectedly, the terms are switched up, new things come about, and we never get to see how it all began. What happens seems entirely random. But is it, really? Might there not be some inner structure, or meaning?

There is a philosophical term, *rhizome*, which has been adopted for use in dramaturgy.[30] It refers to the phenomena when a sequence of events that seems random still has some underlying "web" of meaning, themes, and contexts. Phenomena and events bubble up to the surface, without any obvious connections. However, the viewer can still sense that they are linked by shared, almost invisible, threads.

One association we might make is to the way the mood can be altered in a town where there has just been a traumatic event. Examples of this in Sweden would be the assassination of prime minister Olof Palme in 1986, and the Tsunami disaster of 2004. The inhabitants of the city carry on using public transport and meeting each other in the streets. Life goes on. The difference is the feeling that you're connected to others by a deep understanding. The feeling that the other passengers, all of them, are having the same thoughts as you are. Strangers sometimes begin speaking to each other. There is a tense atmosphere in the city.

[30] This concept was developed by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the late 1970s, and has its origin in the eponymous biological term.

The dramaturgy of many dance productions is a kind of rhizome. One example of this is the German choreographer Sasha Waltz's production *Körper*.[31] I see it at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm in 2016. In this visually impactful production, events seem to occur only to fade away, without any apparent logical connections. Even so, the audience is able to pick up on contexts, and identify inner similarities. There is an agreement between the spatial and the choreographic expressions. Much is left to the audience to interpret. The emphasis is on the images, on the qualities of the movements themselves, and on the expression. It's as though the whole piece were held together by an underlying, meaning-generating web, or rhizome.

CHALLENGES

For me, the dramaturgy that a choreographer/director is able to relate to physically, with their own body, is the one that will have the most potential for fuelling work on a production. As a westerner, I have the "classic" Western dramaturgy stored deep inside of me. However, I feel that this dramaturgy, at least in its basic form, is not always a particularly interesting one for movement-based performative arts. If you base your work on it, and also happen to be working with a story, you will always be in danger of beginning to illustrate the story rather than portraying it. My challenge is to use my understanding of the classic curve to produce other, unexpected dramaturgic combinations. I want to challenge my own tradition. I find it exciting to see how the classic dramaturgy can be bent, twisted around, and expanded on.

For my work on *Catch Breath*, I start out with a very "classical" dramatic sequence, adding as a special detail that all the characters will be taking part in the events collectively. The dramaturgic whole becomes like a funnel, a funnel of violence, which all the various couples are forced through. It begins with the initial infatuation, when the couples first fall in love.

[31] The work was first performed by the Sasha Waltz and Guests company in the year 2000, and has been performed internationally ever since. The production at the opera was the first one to feature other dancers than Waltz's own.

After this, the power dynamic gradually changes. One party begins to subject the other to psychological abuses. The noose tightens. The different characters are jointly and individually inserted into the same dramaturgical sequence. Everything spirals towards disaster.

The dramaturgy of *Catch Breath* is informed by the "classic" Western dramaturgy, but is rather a kind of collective storytelling, which involves very few individual fates. The drama lies with the theatrical choices made, which all depend on the audience already having a grasp of the basic issues being addressed.

7.2. Writing Scripts: an Example

When I'm about to write a script, I begin by arranging my notes with suggestions for scenes. I piece images and video footage together, draw lines and curves, name scenes, and try to figure out what order I want to put the scenes in, and what kind of dramaturgy I am creating. I walk, dance, and sing my way through an envisioned sequence of scenes.

I translate what I see before me into musical and rhythmic ideas and concepts. After a slower section, we'll need something faster. Acceleration of movement produces a sense of increasing density. Subjects are presented, disappear, and return to be woven together. Rhythm was my first artistic expression. Rhythm and music have remained important to me in creating my productions.

I consider the time and space of the upcoming production. I ask myself if the performance will observe a unity of time and space, i.e., whether what happens onstage will be taking place within one continuous time, within a single space. Or, will some other sequence of time, or some other division of space, work better for this particular production?

If I'm using text, I weigh it against the movements. If I want more ideas to fuel my script-writing, I might "write the short story". What this involves is writing the story that I'm able to make out underneath the surface of the performance piece. I usually do this just for myself, because it brings me enjoyment. However, it can also help me catch sight of things that might happen in the theatrical work, any complications that might exist, and the places where the

boundaries between the characters are drawn. The "short story" usually ends up as an unfinished piece of text that never leaves my computer. However, I feel that creating it still lends me insight into the upcoming production's characters and turning points.

I will give an example of a script here, the performance script for *Catch Breath*.[32] The style of writing is quite bare-boned. The performance lasts for about one hour and twenty minutes, which is hard to tell from a four-page script. A short sentence might be a description of a choreographic sequence that lasts several minutes in performance.

The script is created in part during the preparatory work, which involves early movement images produced by myself and scenographer Sigyn Stenqvist, and in part during the two rehearsal periods, during which we try the movement images out, and the performers/students contribute their own ideas. One of the things that I ask the performers to do is choose sentences from Éléonore Mercier's book, and create choreographies based on them. The troupe also practices the tango, a form of movement that we will use as a choreographic building block for several of the scenes. The performance takes place in a large, empty space, with a small "balcony" overhanging the stage, and a small window over to one side. The music, which was composed by Magnus Larsson, underlines the basic dramaturgical shape–the spiral or funnel. The script undergoes several different editions as work on the project progresses, and this version is the final one that was used for the production:

[32] The performance can be watched in its entirety online: https://www.uniartsplay.se/hamta- andan-valdet-hande- i-sondags

CATCH BREATH

The violence happened last Sunday

Performance script

PROLOGUE

(Recorded voices, text): *Sorry, I just want to catch my breath − I never used to feel hatred when he beat me − I'm calling now, but my husband is outside the door − I would have moved out today, but I can't − I'm one case among so many others − My husband thinks that the violence he commits against me is evidence that he desires me − Is it important for somebody to realise for themselves that they've been raped? − I'd like to know what the consequences might be if somebody were to witness an assault? − I want to know how to keep a relationship together − I'm a man who's becoming aggressive − I'm not behaving too well to my wife − I'm exhausted, my wife has been abusing me for twenty years − Yes, this is a man calling − My husband has never called me by my name − He's turned off the lights at home − Last night, he made me get out of the car and eat grass − I have very little time to explain it all to you − For sixteen years, all I've done is endure, and endure, and endure.*

While the voices are being heard, the stage lights are lit.

People are standing in several places within the scenographic space. All of them alone. Still, at first.

Then, they begin falling, only to grow back to an upright position again. Slow movements, energy in the growth.

The **Listener** enters, listening to the voices, makes a note in their notebook. Exits.

The voices blend into a chorus. The last sound heard is a deep inhalation.

Lights on the people on the stage.

Lights on the **Listener**, in their room on the balcony.

A woman is seen inside a window, to the side of the stage. Is she locked in?

SCENE 1. COURTSHIP, LOVE, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Lights on onstage.

People are walking/dancing across the stage, to a tango beat. Tempo! Flirtatiousness! Happiness!

Emerging from the crowd, individuals come into view.

Eye contact, they catch sight of each other: a thousand ways to fall in love.

Couples unconsciously mimicking one another.

Couples forming good rituals together.

Couples meeting, splitting up, finding someone new.

Somebody has to look for someone for a long time.

Somebody is alone, and likes that just fine, but then, unexpectedly, meets someone, all the same.

Chairs and a table are brought in.

The couples move in with each other, make themselves homes, decorate, nest, form everyday routines.

The scene closes on an increasingly frantic formation of couples (which moves around the table).

Choreographic images, snapshots.

The Listener is visible throughout the scene, in their room on the balcony, by their phone.

Eventually, all the couples gather around the table, and strike a happy pose, with their gazes fixed on the audience.

SCENE 2. ENTER VIOLENCE

Friction arises within the couples. Tremors. The different couples, one at a time:

Couple 1: One imposes themselves on the other. The love is physically intimidating. The other tries to adapt. Their adaptation goes too far. The other flees.

Couple 2: A man is afraid of his woman. The woman threatens to harm herself by falling from a table. The man tries to get away, but the woman stops him by harming herself.

Couple 3: One wants the other to sit on a chair. The other keeps falling, over and over, and is dragged back up and made to sit again every time. A perpetuum mobile.

Couple 4: Love gone wrong. One scares the other, by handling a table in a violent way. Expresses regret, but then repeats the threat.

Couple 5: One lays the table while the other makes sufficiently frightening noises to push the table-layer into a manic state, making them exaggerate their gestures. Other people enter, join in the table-laying, underlining the movements, then become frightened, just like the table-layer.

A happy person enters, and is threatened and pursued by another person in heavy boots.

The happy one: *I have a man who possesses many good qualities*.

The happy one is kissed and cared for, repeatedly, by the other. Excessively cared for. Invasively kissed, tossed about, the acrobatics of tossing somebody about.

The happy one ends up on the floor, tossed aside.

The Listener turns outwards in their seat up the balcony.

SCENE 3. DARKNESS

All: Love dancing, with cruelty. The "walking dance" from scene 1 has become a couple's dance with evil twists. Tempo! New couples, new fates.

A person, while threatening their partner: *I'm not a bad person. I have trouble relating to my kids, and, especially, to my wife. I could use some group therapy.*

The partner steps out of themselves (this is mimed), and watches the place where they just lay: *I suppose my husband is ill, but I'm the one who is slowly dying. The violence in our home started out as slaps. My husband isn't exactly a violent person, but he can be quick to anger. I feel a little lost. Yesterday, the violence started again. My husband won't let me work. My family doesn't know that I'm in a violent relationship. My husband beats me, but the worst*

part is the way he's always telling me I'm worthless. Yesterday, he rammed his elbow into my mouth to shut me up. In short, I'm very tired.

The threatening individual: *I could use some group therapy*.

Another person runs across the floor, is pushed up against a wall and fucked by an invisible assailant. Somebody picks her up, comforts her.

In one couple, an assault occurs "in reverse"–their movements are jerky, like in a silent movie.

The plexiglass plates on the floor are pushed apart as a result of this reversed fight.

Somebody tries to put them back together, fix them. Another individual, who sings in a shrill tone, is forcing them to do it.

Two people enter in pointe shoes. They try to keep their balance, on top of the sheets of plexiglass. Or are they fighting? They stumble…

A person enters, and paints bruises on themselves with makeup. *I've been married to a man for two years, and the situation has suddenly spiralled out of control. I've lived under a terrible dictatorship for twelve years. It's been going on for forty years now, I sleep away every night. I'm fifty, I just want a normal life. I'm sixty-five, there's nothing left of me.*

A person enters with a chair, which is falling apart. Tries in vain to mend it.

Everyone is in their own bubble.

A person: *My sister won't get help, because she wants an amicable separation*.

The sister: *But he's so fragile…*

The first person:*… and violent.*

The two siblings begin to bicker.

The Listener's light goes out.

The two who were arguing turn into clowns, and the scene takes an absurd and comical turn, and addresses the audience directly.

In the end, the first person says: *I'd like to know what the consequences might be, and what kind of intervention would be in order, if somebody where to witness an assault?*

SCENE 4. MAKING THE CALL AND FINDING THE WAY OUT

The Listener is standing now, listening to the telephone.

Chaotic movement and voices onstage, people are trying to run away but are stopped. They call out their lines:

I'm trying to leave my husband – I need a fellow human to help me out – I have an article in front of me, and I feel like it's about me – This is a cry for help – I'm begging you to listen to me for a while – I can't bring myself to tell you everything – I'm sure you understand why I'm calling, without my having to tell you – How do I put this – I want absolute anonymity – I'd like to get out of my marriage – How do I put this – I'd like to get out of my marriage.

Two people try to escape.

They are both threatened by their partners.

One of them gets away.

The other is held back by everybody else, who have now turned into abusers.

The set changes, and the space opens up.

The person who got away steps out onto the balcony, free.

The person who was held back tries to scale the wall, but is "killed" by the horde.

SCENE 5. EPILOGUE

Open space, lots of headroom, infinity.

The one who got away is standing on the balcony, free.

The other is on the floor, killed.

The rest are back in the positions they occupied in the prologue, falling in place as they did then.

The Listener crosses the stage, going "home" after a day's work. Writes in their journal.

THE END

8. THE SECOND REHEARSAL PERIOD

It's time for rehearsals to resume. The work continues as opening night creeps closer. After having led the work during the collaborative creation phase, the choreographer/director will now take on more of a conventional director's role. They will still be leading the work, but their efforts will be focused on making selections from the scenic materials that are produced and supporting the rest of the team in their deeper explorations of the material. In referring to the individual who leads the work, I will alternate between using the terms choreographer/director and director.

- How do directors work to bring out the full potential of theatrical situations and sequences?
- How do they keep everyone interested in the work?
- What challenges does this stage involve?

CHOICES

I think of the creation of a movement-based production as a pyramid of choices.

At the base, when the work begins, the pyramid is wide. There are countless choices to be made. Subjects and stories need to be settled on. A group needs to be brought together and working methods must be agreed on. Other considerations include what form of movement to work with, how to design the set and costumes, and what the music will add to the performance. A bunch of processes are set into motion. In all of these, there are choices for the choreographer/director to make.

As time passes, the pyramid grows narrower. There are fewer choices to be made. Efforts turn increasingly to refining and developing existing ideas. New ideas will still appear, but most choices occur on a different level than before. Issues related to portrayal will be more critical in this stage. Scenic events and sequences need to find their new forms.

As opening night approaches, the production work approaches the tip of the pyramid. At this point, what the performers need, more than anything, is a director who can support them

in their further explorations. The choices that the director has to make are fewer, but they are still important. They concern the way the production addresses the audience, its tempo, and its framing in terms of things like lighting and sound design.

What, then, is it like to face so many choices in which you get to call the shots? American director Anne Bogart calls the process of making choices in production work "the necessary cruelty of decision".[33] As she describes it, directors who have a decision to make need to exert a kind of force against themselves and the performers. An aspect of this force involves the awareness that one's future options will be restricted as a result of any decision. The work seems to be coming along nicely as things are. You don't want to interrupt everyone's flow. However, you might have to make a decision if you're going to get any deeper work done. The performers will need time to work on their expressions. The production will need time to find its deeper form. Besides, once a decision is made, new, unexpected ideas will often appear.

If you know that you have a hard time making your mind up, you can use everyday situations to get some practice. Just as a child can learn to say "no" by turning down offered treats, a director can practise making artistic choices. For example, you could make decisions about how long the working day will be, or who will lead the morning warmup.

During a rehearsal, in mid-activity, there won't always be time for reflection and analysis. Sometimes, a director will need to make decisions on very short notice. When this happens, it can feel as though they were making these choices intuitively. This kind of intuition is something a choreographer/director can improve through training. At the end of a day's work, think about the decisions you made. It will usually be apparent what went "right" and what went "wrong", or what helped the work progress and what hindered it.

Decision-making also involves knowing WHEN to make a decision. This is far from a trivial matter. There is no objective truth about when the best time for a decision really is. In one situation, you might be rewarded for making your mind up quickly. In another, you might be

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[33] Bogart, A (2001), *A Director Prepares*, p. 44.

wiser to leave things be, and focus on something else for now. It's also important to see what will help and what will hinder your efforts. If you can tell that a certain decision might infuse new energy into the work, you might go with that option. If not, you can wait for now, and focus on something else. This is also a decision, albeit a kind of active non-decision, and it can be communicated to the team.

You have to be able to explain your decisions, or non-decisions, to the rest of the group. In my work as a performer, I've come across a few directors who simply refuse to communicate the first thing about their decisions. This has always made me feel insecure. Therefore, I always make a point of explaining my decisions to the group. I believe that it helps the performers feel secure. If I didn't say anything, that would simply make them feel anxious.

Some choreographing directors prefer to leave a lot of matters unresolved until late in the process, for other reasons than indecision on their part. Perhaps they want the actors to take part in the idea work throughout the whole process. Or perhaps their approach is based on working with improvisations almost up until opening night. When you work like that, you need to remember that the performers will have less time for their individual explorations. In this situation, they'll end up doing this work during the performance period, in front of the audience.

There are also some directors who, out of some desire to provoke the performers to achieve great results, tend to wait until the last moment before they make any decisions. I don't think this approach is very useful at all.

Sometimes, towards the end of the process, a director will notice that they need to rework something more extensively. In this case, they'll need to be able to motivate their decision in concrete terms. Many performers prefer to be left alone to work as the rehearsal period comes to an end. Having to take time away from what you consider important work to go back and rework something can be quite a mental challenge. At this point, the director needs to be able to explain the reasons for the change, while also ensuring that there will be time for all the other priorities.

The director will also need to explore their own reasons. Is the rework really necessary? When working as a performer, I have been in several situations where the director has continued making decisions right up until the end, often for no obvious reason. On those occasions, I've thought to myself that they seem to be having trouble maintaining a healthy distance to their work. In those cases, the director should abandon their idea, of course. There's no need to establish your authority by adding last-minute changes just because you can. The support you could be giving the performers instead, as they work on their portrayals, would have brought more value to the production.

THE DIRECTOR'S ATTENTION

Anne Bogart writes: "As a director, my biggest contribution to a production, and the only real gift I can offer to an actor, is my attention."[34] Paying attention is a matter of taking a genuine interest in what is actually happening before you. Being able to reset your mind, over and over, and take in the performers' work with fresh curiosity. Handing out assignments that stimulate the performers, and watching the production gradually take shape with love and a childlike capacity for wonder.

It's essential that the choreographer/director ask themselves what kind of attention they are giving the group. Not all attention is alike, you see. Anne Bogart writes: "What counts most is the quality of my attention. From what part of myself am I attending? Am I attending with desire for success, or am I attending with interest in the present moment? Am I hopeful for the best in an actor or do I want to approve my superiority?"[35]

Every director wants their production to be successful. However, they should base their attention on respect and love for the core idea of the production, rather than on considerations related to its potential success.

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34 Bogart, A (2001), *A Director Prepares*, p. 74.
35 Ibid, p. 74.

The performers will need time to explore their scenes. Scenes that were created almost entirely intuitively during the early rehearsals have to be explored in greater depth. To do this, one might explore what the premise of a given scene or sequence is, ask oneself what is at stake, in dramatic terms, and what is actually happening. This will give the work a clear direction. Another approach would be to give the performers an opportunity to relate the events of the scene to their own personal experiences. This will lend depth to the portrayal and bring it closer to its form.

A choreographer/director shouldn't be dictating what performers are to think or feel onstage. Most performers want to create their own subtext, their own internal meaning for the movements. However, the director can still be helpful in other ways. Within movement-based performative arts, as well as in opera, for example, "showing first" seems to be a fairly common working method used by choreographers and directors. The choreographer/director enters the stage to demonstrate how a scene could be done. Movements are proposed. This is all part of the job, essentially.

In text-based theatre, on the other hand, this approach is a bit of a taboo. It would make many performers feel that the director was interfering with their work. Anything the director shows the performer ends up committing them to a certain interpretation before the role has been fully developed.

What should a choreographer/director who is looking for a functional working method be thinking about all this? As in so many other cases, the trick here is to stop and reflect. If you think there are issues with getting too close to the performers–performers differ immensely in this respect, too, and some will express their discomfort at being shown what to do with admirable clarity–it's time to withdraw and think over how you've been approaching your work.

Early on in the process, "showing first" seems to work very well, and it is one of the standard ways that choreography is made, after all. In the later stages of the work, however, it's better to play a less active a role in deciding what the performers will do. You have to try to translate your own bodily sensations into words, metaphors, and verbal suggestions.

Sometimes, words won't be enough. You can't think of a good way to explain something. If this happens, perhaps heading for the stage is the right thing to do after all. Not to "show", but to "feel" the theatrical situation that the performer is struggling with. I often say, "Don't mind me, I just want to feel something out," and then proceed to adopt the onstage position that was just occupied by the performer. This allows me to experience the situation the performer is facing through my own body–I get to see what the possible directions are, what opportunities exist. Afterwards, I can communicate this to the performer.

THE EXTERNAL PROVIDES THE INTERNAL

When performers encounter external stimuli like costumes, masks, and finished sets, this will often bring about an immediate connection with their creativity and the mysteries of their inner worlds. The external brings out the internal. A defined boundary can free the imagination and the inventive spirit. In cases where the production depends on the performers creating their own roles, the impact of external factors is something you can put to great use. I remember when, as a newly graduated mime actor, I performed in an information film. The subject is ergonomics. I am to portray an airline hostess who does all her work tasks the "right" way. I am supposed to be "perfect" in aesthetic terms, too. The following is quoted from my work journal entries from the shoot:

> *I arrive at the shoot in my ordinary, messy clothes. I'm not wearing any make up, and I have quite a bad rash in my face. On my way to make up, I meet different members of the production team. Nobody takes any notice of me. I feel new, like nobody sees me. I'm nervous about what to expect.*
>
> *In make-up, a lot of time and energy is spent giving me airline hostess presentability. My hair is done up meticulously. My rash is covered up with foundation and blush. My eyes are drawn huge, and my lips are red. When I receive my costume, the transformation continues. The narrow skirt is tight, my stockings are shiny, and to top it all off, they give me a pair of high-heeled shoes to wear. I turn into somebody else.*

This other person moves with confidence as she walks back to the set. She sits down, a little coquettishly, on the edge of a chair, and announces… no, demands to be given tea and sandwiches. Around her, a group of technicians gathers. She cracks a joke, and everybody laughs. A character has formed. A highly self-aware airline hostess has made her entrance. Where there used to be nothing but a newly graduated, nervous performer, we now have this apparition. The external transformation has brought about an inner change. It lasts for the whole day of shooting.

TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL

Many performers manage to find their role once they get their costumes or masks. This role uses the performer's body, experiences, and emotional range to come into being. A whole character can emerge from a simple pair of shoes. The appearance and shape of the costume can generate movement materials and help form the character.

Established scenarios can facilitate character creation in a similar way. This can be a useful approach when you're working with realistic scenarios and want to do character work. As a scene's fixed features become established, the performer begins to practise. Through practise, a character can come alive. In time, this character will gain definition and depth.

It's important, then, for a choreographer/director to be prepared to commit to scenery early on. This is more or less the direct opposite of the norm within text-based theatre. The methods used there rely on the performers knowing their thoughts and directions before cre-ating actions. However, doing it the other way around can produce interesting results. Once the performers can sense a pattern of movement through their bodies, a unique creative force will be unleashed. This isn't true of all performers, but it is true of most. The external provides the internal. A character emerges.

ELEVATION

One method that you might use when working on a scene is *elevation of expression*. This includes all the things performers do when they're working on the HOW: How do the characters

move? How does the production relate to realistic gestures? How are events portrayed, and how are the various forms of movement that make up the material being used?

One January, I visit London to see some performances at the London Mime Festival. One of these offers an exceptionally clear example of elevation. I see the Man Drake[36] company perform their piece *Anatomia Publica*[37]. The plot is deceptively simple, yet peculiar. It is explained to us verbally before the performance begins. A woman and a man are married. He goes off to fight in a war. She waits. When the war is over, and other soldiers begin to return home, the husband is still missing. The woman meets another man, who moves in with her. Suddenly, her former husband comes home. The play presents the portion of the narrative that begins when the woman enters into the relationship with the new man, and concludes when the husband returns home and they all decide to go on living together as a triad.

The following is quoted from my work journal:

> *And the way this is done! The way! The constant freezing of the action and the staccato movements make sequences that would have lasted just ten seconds if presented naturalistically take two, four, or even ten minutes to finish. A magazine is read, a hand rests on a shoulder. A foot in a doorway, and suddenly, the long-lost husband materialises. A glance, the tilt of a head, a collapse, a welcome. Horrified looks, and a body in a doorway that wants nothing more than to disappear. Slowly, a narrative is presented to us through carefully arranged tremors, fragmented movements, and retakes. It becomes a kind of play with time itself, with the time that has to pass before the characters can grasp the new situation. Form and content are in alignment.*
>
> *TAKEN FROM MY WORK JOURNAL*

[36] French dance company founded in 1992 by choreographer and dancer Tomeo Vergés.

[37] (2012, *Anatomia Publica*). Choreography/directing: Tomeo Vergés.

What sets the use of elevation in *Anatomia Publica* apart is how varied and physically interesting the movements are–so much so that the audience ends up taking in the dramatic situations in a unique way. Events are enlarged, distorted, reduced, and altered. They're under the loupe, if you will. The expressions of the movements carry both the content and its portrayal.

A good approach to achieving elevation can be to apply the quality of movement concept to your material, see p. 52. You can set out with a realistic gesture, and see how it can be changed. For example, varying the tempo, or bringing two different qualities of movement together, can produce entirely new expressions. Similarly, comedy can be inserted into more dramatic scenes. By trying out a new quality of movement in a given event, you can add a more comedic tone to a scene that felt too serious.

If you're having doubts about how to portray a scene, you can always try rehearsing the scene in a certain genre. You perform the scene as though it were a horror film, piece of modern experimental theatre, or musical. Exaggeration is encouraged. The performers' character work can really benefit from this. If, later on, you end up deciding to stick with the scene as it was, the individual performers will still have been inspired by the experiment. Having the performers occasionally trade characters, or switch up the status relations between their characters, can also provide new and interesting points of entry into the scenes.

Just as play was a part of the generation of ideas, a playful atmosphere is also a valuable asset in the later rehearsal period. This atmosphere isn't to be taken to suggest that the possibilities are still unlimited. In this stage, a playful atmosphere is more about daring to try the material out from unexpected angles, changing up the conditions, and looking for new interpretations.

Yet another way of approaching elevation involves looking to the performers' training and experience; the physical technique used impacts both the expression of movement and the approach taken to the work. The choreographer/director should know each individual expression of movement well enough to choose the ones that the production requires. Alongside

this, the performers will each have individual strengths and personal qualities. A choreographer/director essentially makes a selection from a smorgasbord of available expressions. This is particularly obvious in troupes that bring together performers with backgrounds in different movement-based disciplines.

Suppose a group consists of a street dancer, a juggler, and a mime actor. How does the choreographer/director make the best use of all the various strengths that exist within this group? Should their expressions be the same, or different?

One summer evening, I see choreographer Claire Parson's beautiful production *And then… Och sen*.[38] Four performers wonder at the state of things. They create actions using geometric objects and each other. I notice that two of the performers have a background in dance. The third is a circus performer, and the fourth is a mime actor. I see how their skill sets complement each other. They each provide their own specialised movements, deliberately, sensitively, joyously. They are not in competition.

When it comes to acting, the difference is more striking. One of the dancers comes close to a comical clownery. The mime actor presents as clear in terms of both intentions and gaze. The circus performer, and the other dancer, explore their universes in more introverted fashions. I consider what would have happened if the actors had attempted some more homogenous expression, say, if they had all leaned more towards clowning? Would that have made it any better? Or would the uniformity have made it less exciting?

The variation of expression within this production was inspiring to experience. Claire Parson's decision to work with performers with diverse backgrounds gives my whole experience a powerful sense of scenic presence. Regardless of the technique/training/education a movement-based performer has, the concept of elevation is something a group will be able to use together.

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[38] *And then... Och sen* (2015). Choreography/Directing Claire Parsons, Claire Parsons Co.

RUN-THROUGHS

A run-through is a rehearsal in which the performers perform the whole production in its current state, from beginning to end. In the case of movement-based productions, early run-throughs can be particularly valuable, even in the very first stages of the rehearsal period. As the script is usually still quite unfinished at this point, early run-throughs can be valuable sources of understanding for the whole group. The possibilities that exist will be made visible and available to everybody involved. Discussions will be about visible, existing stuff, not just thoughts our intentions. It adds a lot to the conversations.

During rehearsals for *Punchline*, we do a run-through on the third day. I ask the performers to present their own versions of the story we're working with. We end up with a kind of spur-of-the-moment performance, which feeds us lots of ideas for the production we're working on.

In the later portions of the rehearsal period, run-throughs are needed for other reasons. Getting to play through the whole material can benefit the performers' character work. It helps them discover the dramatic structures that exist in the material. It reveals where something is missing, or something is superfluous.

However, some performers can find it demoralising to run through the whole performance at this point. Choreography that isn't yet fully learned has to be run through by a group that has been given no time to rehearse or make any changes since the last time. Even choreographer/directors can find it difficult to watch an unpolished run-through. It reminds them of everything that remains to be done or created.

In this situation, the choreographer/director will have to assess whether the run-through will be worthwhile. One solution might be to divide the performance into smaller parts, which can be used for shorter run-throughs at the start of each day. The performers have concrete assignments, and are free to work creatively. The director has their agenda, the things they need to see. After the run-through is finished, you can immediately move on to focusing on the areas that need work. This way, short run-throughs will be valuable as well.

A concept that can have interesting applications in the later stages of rehearsal is *tighten and intensify*[39]. *Tighten* means to remove pointless and uninteresting transitions. *Intensify* means to raise the degree of urgency in the scenes. During run-throughs, directors will be able to see what needs to be tightened and what needs to be intensified.

Directors should apply every bit of musical sense they have when they are tightening the gaps between their scenes. Transitions should happen sooner rather than later. The director should sense when it's time to replace one sequence with another. They also need to become aware of how the urgency of the various scenes can be cranked up. A walk across the stage, an entrance, the way somebody raises a glass. It may have seemed expressive and appropriate in every way during the early rehearsal stage, but in the light of recent discoveries made about the production, the sequence seems to need to be elevated, in terms of both content and form. Do the performers need their conditions of play shaken up? Do more conflicts need to be introduced? Can actions occur in parallel onstage? This is often the stage in which the performers commit one hundred per-cent to the production. They will be working to produce the greatest urgency they possibly can.

In the very last stage of rehearsals, work will often begin on lighting and sound. The last bits of scenography fall into place, and the costumes are finished. This all places a lot of expectations on the group.

If a group has a lot of technical issues to resolve, a choreographer/director will need to find a strategy for addressing the new demands that are suddenly being made. A technical run-through can actually be a way of giving the performers a creative break. Focusing exclusively on technical aspects can bring an infusion of new energy to the next few rehearsals. The boundaries that are suddenly in place can also give the performers new knowledge and understanding. Sometimes, it can be wise to do different kinds of run-throughs. Some of them

[39] I learned this concept from actor, director, and dramaturge Lena Nylén Tyrstrup, whom I have had the privilege of working with on several productions.

might focus exclusively on the work of the performers, and some might be exclusively technical. This is all especially true the first time you perform before an audience. If the technical details aren't in place, it's better to do the run-through without them, so that the performers' experience of the audience won't be distorted by other considerations. After this first encounter with the audience, you can focus on solving the technical issues, so that you can try them out as well when you have your next audience.

The director is always in danger of getting caught up in all kinds of production-related discussions during the last weeks of rehearsals. The time that remains to work with the performers will seem dreadfully short. When this happens, you'd better have faith in the work you've already done. You need to give the performers the confidence to keep improving on what you've done together. The director will also, to the best of their ability, need to protect the performers from having to take on extra work. It's the director's job to coordinate everybody's efforts.

LETTING THE BIRD FLY

And so, finally, the time comes for the dress rehearsal, the opening night, and the whole run. Months, maybe even years, will have passed. Many individuals will have contributed to the work. The production that was just a pie in the sky at first has been brought down to earth and found its form.

As I see it, the final challenge a choreographer/director must face in their work on a production is letting go. Some choose to let go during the dress rehearsal, and insist that after that point, the production "belongs" to the performers. Others continue to be present after that point. They are there for most of the performances, and might even introduce changes after the run has begun. However, you approach this, your attitudes towards the production will change over time.

In the performers' minds, you will always be the choreographer and director of the production. You need to respect this fact, and offer any advice that you feel might be helpful to

them. You should be ready to intervene in case of a crisis, or if something needs to be re-worked. You should have a say in the future of the production when it comes to performances, the use of alternates, and so on. You need to be able to help the performers deal with negative reviews or ensure that they remain grounded if an abundance of praise starts to have an impact on the tone of the performances.

Whatever you end up having to do to ensure the future life of the production, something inside you will change as a result. You'll no longer wake up in the middle of the night with a new idea for how you could use the stage space for a certain scene. You'll no longer feel that everything in existence depends entirely on how well you and the group manage to resolve your emergencies and differences of opinion. You're no longer the central player in a team, no longer a sun for planets to orbit. The production is its own universe now, in which you are just one planet among many.

You're about to go back to being your own more private self.

You might need a rest.

You should feel satisfied with the work you've done.

9. EXERCISES

In this chapter, I'll be giving you a set of basic exercises that I use in my teaching. I also usually make a selection of these during the early stages of working on a production. These are simple exercises, which all offer a different approach to triggering the creative flow of a group and getting the performers to start collaborating. Most of these exercises can also be used for generating movement material.

I've "borrowed" several of them from other directors and educators, and I have adapted them to suit my own needs as required. In most cases, I don't have a very specific idea of where they came from. I have taken some of the exercises from Stanislaw Brosowski's teaching, both from when I studied under him and later. Others are taken from the methods of Keith Johnstone, who wrote about them in his book *Impro*, and first reached me in a form developed by Swedish improvisation educator Marvin Yxner. I also found inspiration in British director and playwright John Wright's book *Why is that so funny*.[40] I've compiled the drama pedagogy exercises from my encounters with various drama pedagogues, particularly Jeanette Roos of Dalateatern and Södertörns Högskola, whom I have worked with on several productions. She writes about her work in her book *In the Borderlands Between Stage and Audience*.[41]

It might seem far-fetched that you could find the time for these kinds of foundational exercises when production work is already in full swing. However, the exercises can help establish the camaraderie and trust that are so essential for collaborative creation. This is especially important when the group's members don't already know each other. Since the exercises are all practical and scenic in kind, they will also help clarify what the performers' work consists in. They emphasise important concepts like presence and spatiality. Several of these

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40 Wright, J, (2006), *Why is That So Funny*.

41 Roos Sjöberg, J, (2000), *I gränslandet mellan scen och publik* [In the Borderlands Between Stage and Audience].

exercises can also be readily translated into expressive choreographies. They can portray the subject or narrative that the performance will address.

BREATHING/RELAXATION

Breathing and relaxation exercises are vital for achieving the presence of mind and energetic calm that performers need to prepare themselves for action. The performer is made ready for livelier scenes. Practising these exercises will bring about a particularly strong sense of presence. The individuals that belong to a group become attuned to one another. It can also be nice to get to be a little introverted when you start out on some scenic work. The big expressions will come in time.

***Breathing exercise 1**: The participants stand in a circle. They look for a neutral position for their feet and legs. The feet are a hip-width apart. If a performer is in a wheelchair, they can simply find a comfortable posture that obstructs their airways as little as possible.*

The participants remain standing (sitting) in this position for a while. They stretch their backs out and try to imagine that somebody is gently picking their bodies up. Take in the room, with a relaxed gaze.

A few deep breaths: fill the stomach, and then the chest. Exhale. Repeat this 3–4 times, either everyone at their own pace or everyone in time together.

The movement is enlarged. Stretch the whole body (including the arms) out on inhalation, and collapse slowly to a crouch on exhalation. Stay in that crouch for a moment, while a few breaths pass by. Then, inhale again, and roll the back up to a standing position. Repeat 3–4 times.

***Breathing exercise 2:** The participants lie face-up on the floor, each with some free space around them. A leader leads the exercise:*

A large inhalation is made while stretching the whole body. On exhalation, the body curls up into a ball. Repeat 3 times.

The exercise changes: this time, the participants inhale on their backs, then roll over on their sides, contract, and exhale. Back onto their backs, stretch out, and inhale. Switch sides for each exhalation and contraction. Repeat 3 times on each side.

After the breathing exercises, the performers get to spend a few minutes stretching their bodies any way they like–as long as they do it softly, like cats.

***Breathing exercise – relaxation**: The participants lie face-up on the floor, each with some free space around them.*

They allow their impressions to wash over them. They gaze up at the ceiling, registering what it looks like. Then, they close their eyes, and concentrate on how heavy their bodies are as they lie on the floor. Feel how the floor supports every part of the body. The breath is part of the weight.

If you want to attain a truly relaxed state, and have somebody to prompt you, you can go over every part of your body, starting with your feet:

Add tension to one body part at a time (the foot, the calf, the muscles around the knee, etc.), and then release. Focus on how the body part falls back down, becoming heavy and warm against the floor. Focus on how the body part looks, go through all its details mentally. Next, go over your whole body this way. It can take 5 minutes, or 20 minutes, depending on how long you have. If you fall asleep, that's OK, too. Once you've gone through the whole body, everybody will spend a few minutes just existing in this state of deep relaxation. You might focus on inhalation and exhalation, and on openly taking in sounds from the room, from others, etc. The participants can also explore mental images of their own. Once the time is up, the leader will ask the participants to open their eyes and slowly return to the room, lie down on their sides, curl in towards their cores, and then rise at their own pace.

This exercise can be expanded into an exercise on moving with minimal effort:

maintaining a relaxed body, you rise slowly. Feel your way through it, only using your muscles as and when it becomes necessary. Exert the minimum force required to move the weight in the exercises. Rise to a standing position. From there, try taking

a step. Then another. Pay careful attention to which muscles you need to use to make the movement. Walk, try stopping. Turn around. Sit down on a chair. Get up again. This is individual work, and it is intended to further awareness of one's own body and uncover any unnecessary tensions.

SPACE/PRESENCE/PLAY/COLLABORATION

Now the group, whatever its size, needs to face and conquer the space. Exercises that will train their spatial presence and mutual listening will be necessary. Playing and finding a shared state of concentration. I'll be describing a few exercises that are fundamental to my practice. I use them whenever I meet a new group in a teaching setting, as well as in the preparatory stage of working on a production:

***Start/stop**: The participants move around the room individually. They start out walking and try to all find a common tempo. They move all around the room, with an open focus on the other participants. They don't seek eye contact, but they are present with each other. They do this to determine when they can stop together. Stand still. Look for a shared starting point. Work to make the group's decisions as collective as possible. Nobody leads. An outsider should take it to be a common impulse.*

Can be developed by varying the tempo: Slow, faster, very slow, light run, faster run, etc. The whole group tries to set a common pace. Focus on finding starts/stops.

Can be developed by seeking other ways of moving around the room: crawl, roll, spin, etc. Still with shared starts/stops.

Can be developed by having one person stop and stand at a time, while the rest move about. If several people end up standing still, that's fine. Several of them can stand still while the rest move about.

Can be developed by having a single person move while the rest stand still–rapid rotations. If several people end up moving about while the rest stand still, that's fine.

Can be developed with emphasis on play: the group works together to explore different styles of movement, actions to perform, objects to play with, etc. Shared impulses are prioritised to the fullest extent possible. Start and stop actions/movements at the same time. The leader encourages the group to develop the movements/actions as much as they want to. Better to seek the continuations that are embedded in each action/movement than to invent "new" things.

***Walk through the room in different directions**: The participants walk about in the room individually. They set their sights on an object, or a certain point on the wall, and head for it.*

When they arrive, they turn, and take aim at a new point. Defined turns: at all times, the straightest possible lines are followed. The room is full of other people who are doing the same thing. Everybody is in a state of calm, open focus, and nobody is deliberately seeking eye contact. If you meet anybody, just swerve to the side. Take the space in with your whole body. Listen and be present. Focus your entire body, not just your gaze, on the point you're heading for.

The participants determine whether they are relaxed. If they discover any tension, they continue walking, breathing, lightly moving the part of the body where the tension lies, and then relax.

This exercise can be developed in many ways:

- *The participants try to find a common tempo when walking. They vary the tempo.*
- *They walk with varying energy levels (given on, say, a scale from 1 to 10). Maintain the same tempo, but with varied energy levels.*
- *Continue walking around the room. If eye contact occurs, take it, and fix your gaze on the other person while continuing to walk, and rounding each other.*
- *If eye contact occurs, take it, fall towards one another, and let your combined weight bring you both to the floor.*
- *If eye contact occurs, jump when you feel a shared impulse to.*

- *If eye contact occurs, one party leaps into the arms of the other party. The participants choose their actions without words or gestures; everything is done through eye contact.*

***Playing "catch"**: The participants move about the room in different directions. They have some object, perhaps a ball or stick, that they can throw to each other. One participant calls out a name and then throws the stick to that person. The person catches it, calls out a new name, and throws it on to the next participant. Attention, concentration, and teamwork are trained.*

The exercise can be developed by allowing just a noise when the stick is thrown, or requiring silence. The participant will make eye contact with the person they want to throw to. Everybody needs to pay attention. The idea is to hold the object in your hand for the shortest time possible. Follow the object's movements, and make sure that there are as few interruptions as possible. Follow the arcs of its flight with your whole body.

Can be developed by increasing the tempo, throwing more objects, and so on. Emphasis is on following the direction of the movement that occurs.

If the object falls to the ground, which happens quite often, everybody pauses, and counts to three. After this, they continue walking/moving. Whoever dropped it picks it up and throws it on.

A classic children's game that can be used as a theatrical exercise is tag, Tag games can be used to get a group's energy going. Some variants are more suitable for smaller groups, and others are better for larger ones. Besides playing the game, the exercises can be developed more along the lines of an exploration of form. But sometimes, a group will do these exercises just for the sake of it.

***Standard tag**: Somebody is "it" and chases the others. Tags another, who becomes "it", and takes over the chasing. The whole room is used, or you deliberately limit the work to a small space.*

- *The exercise can be developed by having the participants call out the name of some other member of the group whenever "it" comes near. "It" will then be expected to try to catch the person they named.*
- *The exercise can be developed into an exploration of various qualities of movement.*[42] *The leader suggests that the participants move in slow motion, legato, staccato, in various genres, as animals, etc. The group tries to strike a balance between continuing to play and exploring the HOW of the movements.*

***Statue tag**: One or more individuals, depending on the overall size of the group, are "it", and chase the others. When a participant is tagged, they are to stand completely still, in whatever pose they were in when tagged. The objective for "it" is to tag everyone and leave them all standing. The participants can rescue each other by standing in front of somebody who has been tagged and copying their pose. Both participants count to three out loud, and then they're free. "It" isn't allowed to tag people who are counting.*

***Tunnel tag**: One or more people are "it" and chase the rest. If somebody is tagged, they stand in place with their legs spread wide. A "free" participant can rescue somebody who has been tagged by crawling between their legs. "It" isn't allowed to tag people who are performing the crawl rescue.*

A group needs to find a shared focus and presence in the moment and in each other. That's what the concentration and collaboration exercises are for. These exercises will work the best if the group has more than six members.

***The Name Game**: a concentration exercise for larger groups. The participants move as a group. They stop to greet each other with a handshake. They say their first names and learn each other's. Next, everybody will answer to the name of the person they*

[42] For more on the concept of qualities of movement, see p. 52.

just met. In the next meeting, they will give their new name, and learn the next person's name. Now, they will answer to this new name. The game continues this way until everybody has been given their own names back, at which point it's finished. Or you can start it over.

This exercise can be developed by adding last names. The participants "place" their first names in their right hands, and their last names in their left hands. Each round, they alternate between greeting each other with their right and left hands. The game is finished when everybody has their own first and last names back. If the game doesn't resolve neatly at the end, you can repeat it. You could also choose to put it aside for now and try it again another day.

***Count to 25**: a concentration exercise for groups of any size. The group stands in a circle. One participant says the number 1, another says 2, and so on. The group tries to count to 25 like this. If two or more people begin to say a number at the same time, the group must start over from the beginning. If the group can't reach 25, they can give the exercise a rest after a few attempts, and revisit it later. This exercise can be developed by having the group move about the room freely while the participants count.*

***Unravelling a Mess** – a collaboration exercise:*

The participants stand close together, with their eyes shut. They look for other participants' hands, it doesn't matter who they find in the mess. They grab any hands they can find. Then, they open their eyes and try to unravel the mess without letting go of the hands they've grabbed hold of. The position of the hands can be twisted around, but letting go is not allowed. The objective is to form one or more circles. The mess can be successfully unravelled to various degrees, but either way, the group will begin working together. The participants are free to speak during this exercise.

TRUST/BODILY COLLABORATION

The following exercises will introduce the performers to working with one another's bodies. It will allow them to generate a large collection of movement material. These exercises are similar to contact improvisation, a form of dance that involves a lot of work with weight and balance and is done in pairs. It's particularly important to take it slow when you start working with these exercises, and to ensure that the surrounding atmosphere will be peaceful throughout. The participants are supposed to maintain a relaxed, open, and present focus, even when the energy and tempo ramp up again later. The difficulty is determined by whatever degree of technical expertise the individual performers possess. Nobody should be injuring themselves. Each performer sets their own limits for how physically challenging they want their work to be. It will be fall to the work leader to make sure the mood is calm and permissive.

Lend your weight*: The participants work in pairs. Each pair experiments to see what happens if one of them leans on the other and lends that person some of their weight. The pair follows and develops the movement that this produces. They begin by lending 10 per-cent of their weight, and this amount increases gradually to 25, 50, and so on. The whole body is used, apart from the hands, and the participants move as the weight causes them to. Take turns being the "lender". This exercise can be developed by lending weight back and forth without verbally agreeing whose turn it is. Start using the whole room. Sometimes, look for a shared centre of gravity, other times, don't.*

Can be developed by introducing partner acrobatics practise.

Handling Another Person's Body*: Work in pairs. One member of each pair wears a blindfold. The other takes on the role of a guide. The pair walks around the room. Potentially, they could leave the room and head for staircases, lifts, outdoor environments, etc. The person who was guided can share their experiences afterwards, and the whole thing can become a relaxing reflection. The members of each pair take turns being led and leading.*

Can be developed by exploring how at least two people can handle a third person's body. With or without a blindfold. Roll, lift, pass on. The person who is handled is supposed to find an active state of relaxation, a way to remain calm in their own bodies without being in control of their movements. Look for variation by exploring new movements. Take turns being handled by the other.

This exercise can be developed by having a larger group lift, roll, etc. a single person at a time. With or without blindfolds.

The group could also try out some different ***Falling Exercises****:*

The person who will be taking the fall stands in an active, erect posture, without excessive tension. The leader demonstrates how to catch somebody, with your palms securely placed at the top of their back, near their shoulder blades. The catchers need to bend their knees slightly, to provide a soft landing. The person who will be falling can close their eyes. At first, they might fall just a short distance.

Can be developed, if the participants like, by having the catcher stand next to the person who will be falling, rather than behind them. Once the fall begins, the catcher steps towards the other and catches them, working down low, light, and easy, with bent knees and a strong core. The distance can be increased. Communication is vital. The person who will be falling decides how the exercise will be developed.

Can be developed by having the catcher follow the movement and gently lay the faller down on the floor. It's important to hold the faller's head for the last bit of the way.

Can be developed, if the participants like, by having the group move around in the room. The person who will be falling says their name, and everybody else rushes over to catch them. Great care is taken to hold the faller's head throughout the last bit of the fall.

Can be developed, if the group wants to, by having a participant fall without making a sound, and have everybody else be in a sufficiently attentive state to notice and run over to catch them. Note that several people could be falling at the same

time. This is an advanced exercise, which is suitable only for groups where the participants have worked together for some time. There's no point in forcing this exercise on a new group in the hope this will somehow allow you to break the record for rapidly establishing trust. Trust can only be won slowly. Individual participants might well feel quite uncomfortable about this exercise. It's better to end it sooner rather than later. The group can always revisit the exercise some other time.

IMPROVISATION EXERCISES

Improvisation exercises can be important in different stages of the work. They might be used to energise a group, create movement material, and explore or develop any existing scenic material the group has already produced.

***Give and take**: Two performers "converse" through movements. Together, they create a mutable dialogue of movement. One performer makes a movement, until they stop. Initially, this is done with a strong and clear direction towards or away from the other. The other performer will "respond" with the first thing that comes to mind. This becomes a "statement", which the first performer will in turn respond to. And so on. The leader's role is to emphasise that the performers should respond spontaneously, physically, and without too much thought. Let the body* do*. At first, before the performers have familiarised themselves with one another or with the exercise, the rule of not "speaking over each other" by moving when somebody else moves will be in effect. Later, one of them will be able to start following the other's initiatives, and any rough edges will soon be smoothed out.*

In time, different qualities of movement can be introduced. While they are creating this "dialogue", the leader instructs the pairs to focus on something, like constructing opposites, varying the tempo, the duration, the levels, the spatial aspects, the rhythm, etc. It will be important for the leader to remember to only introduce one

new concept at a time. If the participants have too much to keep track of, their spontaneity and scenic volition will suffer as a result.

This exercise can also be used for creating movement material. The pairs can be asked to repeat some parts of their improvisations and expand on them. To help everybody remember what was done, it can be worth shooting video of the work.

***The Chair**: Two performers has the same desire. They both want to sit down on the same chair. Their challenge is to come up with different non-verbal means of expressing their preferences. Naturally, the physically stronger party can "win" by simply picking the other up and moving them. But if the leader emphasises that the exercise is to be done in a playful spirit, it can usually generate a lot of movement materials.*

Here, too, the performers can be given different aspects of movement to work with while exerting their will: varying the tempo, working with staccato rhythms, varying positions in space, etc. Entire scenes can be constructed this way, and it makes sense to film this work, too, to make sure you'll remember what you do.

***Give Open Suggestions**: A classic improvisation exercise, in which a simple gesture can produce literally any event you can imagine. A performer "gives" a gesture, and one or more other performers respond with a physical sequence that the pair or group can go on to develop in an improvisation. This exercise can both spark creativity generally and generate movement material, and it can be used at any point in the process.*

EXERCISES FROM DRAMA PEDAGOGY

Various exercises related to values can be used to get everybody in a group engaged with a certain issue. These are particularly useful during the preparatory phase of a production.

Drama pedagogue Jeanette Roos writes: “This is a structured way of starting a conversation in which there are no obvious solutions, and which is intended to deconstruct the prevailing hierarchy within the group and ensure everybody gets to have their say.”[43]

The following exercises are ones that I use a lot. They involve having every member of the group react to some idea or other, present their reasoning about it, and then reconsider if they should wish to. The idea isn’t for everybody to come to the same conclusion, but rather for everyone to get an opportunity to listen to themselves and to each other. This way, an issue can be made relevant to everybody.

The Four Corners Exercise*: The room is divided into four corners. The leader makes a statement or poses a question. The four corners represent different opinions on the issue. The participants move to the corner that represents their own opinion. The leader asks them to explain their choices. Participants are free to switch places when they hear the arguments raised by individuals in other “corners”.*

All in agreement*: The leader makes a statement. Anybody who agrees stands up, and maybe spins around. Then, they sit back down. Those who stood up are encouraged to share their reasoning. The people who remained seated are also invited to explain why they chose to sit.*

[43] Roos Sjöberg, J (2000), *I gränslandet mellan scen och publik* [In the Borderlands Between Stage and Audience], p. 32.

Allt som finns [All There Is]. Julia Gumpert and Stina Gunnarsson.
See pages 129-30. Photograph: Martin Skoog.

10. WRITING THIS BOOK

This chapter is an abridged version of an essay I wrote for a 20-credit class in practical knowledge, which I took at SKH during the spring of 2017. Title: What have I learned from writing about creating movement? *Supervisor: professor of practical knowledge Ingela Josefson.*

I've not always felt too confident about creating movements. At times, I've been unable to either create interesting movements or assist others in their work. I've gone through years of creative failure, when I've been able to translate the sequences, I've visualised into concrete scenic movements.

The first productions I worked on at what was Mimensemblen at the time were full of movement. They were performed in a style we might refer to as dance theatre today. My first production as a choreographing director was *Blues for a hip king*. This was a wordless story about a group of people who lose their father, husband, or friend. *Blues for a hip king* was followed, about a year later, by *Bridal Waltz*, a non-verbal narrative about two young people in love, and some events in their lives.[44]

I didn't find creating the choreography for these two first productions particularly difficult. While I had struggled somewhat with my ideas of what a director ought to be while working on *Blues for a hip king*, we still produced a production that managed to tell the story we wanted through a restrained form of dance. In *Bridal Waltz*, performers Bengt Andersson and Sara Myrberg and myself set off on a joint exploration of mime technique and ballroom dancing that brought us to the world of the waltz. We used these specific movement forms to present the narrative. In terms of movement, working on these productions presented me with ample opportunities and many successes.

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[44] *Brudvalsen* [Bridal Waltz], Mimensemblen 1987. Writing and directing: Lena Stefenson. Co-creators and performers: Bengt Andersson and Sara Myrberg.

But then, something happened. As I began to receive offers to work as a director, particularly in regional theatres, my own movement creation changed. The productions came about as a result of a manager or artistic board choosing a text and recruiting a team, in which I would be suggested as director. Often, I would be selected in the hope that my background as a mime actor would allow me to combine the text with something physical, like helping the performers emphasise their bodies more than usual when acting. I tackled this task enthusiastically, and I'm still proud, in many ways, of the work that the performers and I did on all those productions. While this was all helping me grow as a director, I was finding it increasingly challenging to advocate for movement-based work and draw attention to its unique nature and requirements. Creating movement takes knowledge and specific working processes that can make room for it alongside, or in front of, the text. There were exceptions, of course, but at most theatres, the hegemony of text was unchallenged. At the time, there were also very few mime actors, dancers, and circus performers working at the regional theatres. There weren't many peers for me to share my experiences with. My confidence in making choreography began to suffer.

This was the state in which I arrived at the school to teach; I had a lot of directorial experience, but I was feeling a bit rusty when it came to choreography work.

Teaching proved to be good for me. I found it inspiring to meet the students and the other teachers. Once the focus shifted from myself, I found it easier to begin to observe the creative process. I was free to focus on the various details of the artistic creative process. I discovered that this was something I had been missing. The pedagogical conversations and the composition of student assignments I suddenly found myself engaging in revealed skills that I never knew I had. This, in turn, produced a whole new set of experiences and insights. When, after a few years as a teacher, the time came for me to choreograph/direct again, for the graduation production *Catch Breath*, I noticed to my surprise that certain aspects of the choreography I was creating with the students bore resemblances to the Mimensemblen's first productions, including my own *Blues for a hip king* and *Bridal Waltz*.

However, the real confidence boost when it comes to movement creation came about as a result of writing this book. Every single aspect of the writing process has been a struggle for me. Writing is difficult. It takes time, and effort. Phrases can take forever to come to you. You need to mull things over, switch them up, and then scrap it all and start over. However, doing it has also given me a sense of freedom, and gradually increasing confidence. I'm coming to notice that writing has added depth to my old methods, and taught me a bunch of new ones.

It's actually rather odd. Just as my professional life was kicking into gear, I developed a kind of fear of choreography. And now, after WRITING about creating movement, choreographing again seems a lot less daunting to me. How is this possible?

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS THAT CAN HAVE THIS EFFECT?

Norwegian journalist, writer, and educator Jo Bech-Karlsen writes: "To write is to explore. Writing is not just a matter of relating your discoveries; it's just as much about the discovery itself. You often won't know what you've been thinking before you've written it down." Anders Johansen, Norwegian social anthropologist and professor, writes: "My thoughts come to me along the way, as a result of my efforts to find the right words to use. What I end up having written, as a rule, is something entirely different from whatever I had in mind when I first set out to write."

These quotes reflect my own experiences of working on this text. Over the years, the very act of putting things into words has brought me insights I never even knew I was capable of. Attempting to describe different methods in writing has revealed a greater depth in scenic work to me. Exercises I used to simply "know" were good, because they "work", have gained clearer definitions and deeper meaning as a result of my writing. You could say, as the quotes above imply, that I have been writing my own thoughts and practices into being. When I started working on some of the chapters, all I really had to begin with was a vague sense of the different processes I wanted to describe. As I've worked on the writing, my thoughts have become clearer to me, as have the purposes of the methods in question.

Examples of this are the chapters *Collaborative Creation*, see p. 17, and *Creating a Movement Bank*, see p. 48. When I began writing these chapters, all I had was the idea that I was going to be describing how different productions came about. I wanted to say: "You could do so-and-so. Or so-and-so." However, I didn't perceive any immediate connections between the various production processes. As I wrote, many similarities began to reveal themselves to me. The productions seemed to share a common base of knowledge and experience. Certain phenomena were always present: play and improvisation, the need to take to the floor early on, handing out assignments to the performers. As I was discovering that there was a way to express the things that used to just be "what worked", I began to perceive a method. Writing produced new insights, and new knowledge. My thoughts grew clearer as I wrote. Writing really was exploring.

WRITING IS LIKE IMPROVISING ON STAGE

In scenic improvisation, the best results are always achieved by doing or saying whatever first comes to mind. This applies even if your idea, to use the words of Canadian director and theatre educator Keith Johnstone, happens to be "unoriginal". Simplicity can be unique, or at least offer something that can be worked on to be made unique. Johnstone writes: "An artist who is inspired is being *obvious*. He's not making any decisions, he's not weighing one idea against another. He's accepting *his first thoughts*."

My own writing process has been a bit like that. I have written down the most unoriginal memories or thoughts, the ones that have occurred to me first. Then, I have scrutinised my written words to see what might be hiding behind them, and what I might communicate to a reader. Sometimes, I've stuck with my original idea, and developed it. More commonly, though, one idea followed from another, and produced countless mutual associations and new meanings.

Improvisation can help you discover entirely new sides of yourself. Suddenly, you might be moving in a way you've never moved before, or saying things you can't explain how you came up with. It's a creative process in which external aspects bring internal ones to light.

You'll feel remarkably free, but also remain aware that your fellow performers are letting you do all those strange things because that's the whole point of improvisation: to bring the unknown into view. Writing is just the same.

Some days, I've been amazed at the number of memories and thoughts that have come to the surface when I've sat down to write. My thoughts have flowed quicker than my fingers could write. This was a very powerful experience for me.

In improvisation, you have assignments to carry out and an overall framework to respect. The assignment might be a situation you'll be exploring. The framework determines how your performance will occur, and which rules it will obey. It could be a matter of having a limited amount of time to work with, or some physical or linguistic restriction you need to observe. Having a framework in place helps you do unexpected things, which you could never prepare or plan out in advance. Your imagination is set free when it receives something to respond to, and you'll find yourself feeling strangely liberated and carefree.

The assignment I gave myself in working on this book was to describe different directing methods for movement-based performative arts. The framework I created was a description of an imagined production process, from seed to loaf. From the very first ideas in the first troupe meeting to script writing and rehearsals. Most of the writing ideas came about in the context of this framework. Memories came to me, situations I had experienced at various points along the temporal axis wanted to be described. But it was also the framework itself that encouraged me to decide to break with it. With my mentor's help, I discovered several ideas that needed their own, separate chapters. Once the assignment is given and the framework is in place, the improvisation begins. As does the writing.

DOING FIRST AND THINKING LATER IS A METHOD THAT WORKS FOR ME IN WRITING, IN CREATING MOVEMENT, AND IN EVERYDAY LIFE

I'd like to confess that I find theoretical texts difficult to read. I also tend to be a rather bad listener when people explain complicated stuff. In the past, I thought that these traits were evidence that I was lazy, but working on this book has caused me to re-evaluate this. I've come

to realise that what works for me is to gain practical experience first, and only then move on to learning from what other people have done or thought. Things have been much the same with my writing. I've tried things out first, and thought about them later.

I began writing down whatever came to mind in relation to the time frame I had invented. This creative flow yielded many pages of drafted text before I began to connect my own writings to things other people have written or said. I found my reference literature while I was doing the work. Reading these books fed me even more ideas.

With movement, too, I prefer to have the practical work precede any thought or analysis. I enter the floor early on, to devise a world of situations and movements. I try out the ideas that come to me in practice before moving on to the evaluative and analysis stage.

One summer, I had to paint a house. There was nothing remarkable about this, really, save for the fact that I had never painted a house before. I had deliberately avoided that kind of work, as I knew nothing about it, and didn't believe that I had the patience it would require. The little I did know about painting was that it was important to do a good job preparing the surface, and even a child could tell you that sanding walls is less fun than painting them. Besides, it seemed difficult to keep track of what kind of paint the house had been painted with, and what kind I should use now.

But be that as it may, the house still needed painting. How did I do it? Did I get a manual of the art of painting and study up on how to do it? No, I just started.

I looked at the facade and saw that the paint was peeling off in lots of places. I took hold of some peeled paint and pulled it, and lo and behold, it came off easily. I grabbed another, and another, and yet another piece of paint. Soon, the ground was covered with flakes. Beneath the paint, the wood was dark, a little rotten, and quite damp. "My house was painted with paint that didn't let it breathe, or wasn't properly prepared before being painted," I thought to myself, as I stood there with my hand pressed against the damp of the wood. I didn't know too much about wood, or paint, or anything, really. It struck me that it was probably important that I sand all the paint off, at least all the loose paint. So, I did that. Then, I thought that the wood should probably dry before I painted it again. I left it to dry for several

days. Also, to make sure I don't use the wrong kind of paint, perhaps it would be a good idea to treat the wood with some kind of oil before repainting it? Or perhaps the new paint should be oil-based…?

At this point, and no sooner, I began to read up and Google stuff. I studied different painting methods, and different kinds of paint. I asked people I met what they thought of when they painted. Eventually, I began to get the hang of things, and I took a chance and painted the house based on the practical and theoretical experience I had already gained. The sensation of holding my hand against the damp wood had guided me.

The foundation for my work was, first, the inclination to paint, and second, the discoveries and physical sensations that followed once I began doing the work. Later, I was able to apply the knowledge I had gained by asking others and reading. These are the very same methods I use to create movement, and used to write this text. Do first, analyze later.

Discovering this existing similarity between writing, creating movement, and everyday activities has given me a deeper understanding of myself and my approach to work. I realise that a creative process begins long before it formally begins, in the gaining of experience and execution of research. I get a clearer idea of who I am and what my strengths and weaknesses are. I realise that this method, too, is fallible. But at least I know that it's a method!

WRITING SEEMS TO LARGELY BE A MATTER OF FINDING A LANGUAGE FOR YOUR EXPERIENCES

As a choreographing director, I've come to appreciate the significance of owning your language in your dealings with performers and the artistic team. For example, I've noticed that it works well for me to use concrete, non-evaluative language. When giving feedback, it's better to say, "I didn't catch your intention there," than to say, "I don't think you did very well." Over the years, I've also come to realise that it's not the end of the world if I don't have all the answers. It's far better to say, "I'm not sure yet, let's think about it some more," than to come up with some lie I'm not sure about.

Even so, I've felt that much has been missing from my working language. I've found it difficult to define various terms. This has impacted my creativity, hindered my work, and caused trouble in other ways. Performers and students have wanted to discuss things with me, but I have evaded their questions and tried to just get back to work. As I've worked on this book, I've sensed that my language has changed. I've found descriptions of phenomena that I never had words for before. Using these terms has come to mean a lot for my own professional identity and self-esteem.

Swedish writing teacher Maria Hammarén writes:

> *Writing, then, can be to enter a knowledge process in which the logical structure of language is imposed upon one's own experiences. The encounter that occurs then, between being inside language and outside of it, between dipping your fishhook into the ocean of experience and later analysing and integrating it into your professional role, will strengthen your identity and creativity.*[45]

I've become most familiar with this imposition of the logic of language on experience, especially in the context of creating the concepts needed to make a text readable.

I knew, before I began writing, that I would need to use consistent terminology. I wanted these concepts to be free from all hierarchies, so I had to scrutinise every word with care.

Most importantly, the concept of *mime*, my own background, and a word that is so often subject to ironic comments or questions. As a result of this writing process, I have come to apply this term to several different phenomena. First, the art form that is executed by performers whose acting work is based in the body. A production might take mime as its form, or mime could be the method an individual performer works with. I also use mime to denote scenic and physical energy. That's how things seem to me, after having them stew in my mind while I was writing.

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[45] Hammarén, M (2008), *Skriva – en metod för reflektion* [Writing for Reflection], p. 54.

There's also the term *performer*. I first began to use this word as a way of including everybody who appears onstage in a production, without having to go into whether the performer in question has a background in mime, dance, circus, or text-based theatre. It seemed wise to use a broader, unified term. But what started out as just a functional way of communicating soon became a wonderful image of somebody who can do anything, does anything, and is free to move quickly and boldly from one genre to another. Just like that, hierarchies were tossed out the window, and actors were no longer singled out and treated as somehow superior to mimes, dancers, or circus performers. I discovered that I enjoyed having access to a term that didn't diminish anybody.

When I first began to use the concept of *choreographer/director*, things happened in more or less the same way. I chose the term because I wanted to equate the work of choreographers and directors in a purely practical sense. When you work with movement-based art, the line between choreography and direction is often very fine indeed. The roles will often overlap, and are commonly held by the same individual. Initially, I wrote the word director before the word choreographer just as often as the other way, choreographer/director. But then, I discovered that there was a hierarchy in place here as well–one that I saw an opportunity to change. I went back to the text and consistently wrote choreographer before director, so that the term eventually became choreographer/director. This had a powerful impact on me. I began to think of the work a choreographer does as involving both formal aspects and the creation of meaning. By doing something as simple as changing the order of two words, I produced a conviction deep within myself that it is the creation of choreography that must take precedence in movement-based performative arts.

Out of this concept of a choreographer/director, another concept that I had never heard of emerged: the *choreographing director*. I use this concept to define what it actually is we do. The concept was produced entirely within the writing process. I think it describes the professional role well. The direction a choreographer gives might not necessarily be different from other direction, but it will always contain an element of movement creation as well, often one that involves collaborating with the performers.

My last example is the concept of *movement-based performative arts*. This concept was in place before I even began writing, as a collective term used to denote any theatrical production in which movement is the main form of expression. I feel that this concept covers all kinds of mime, dance, circus, and performance art. As it is such an inclusive concept, I was able to include descriptions of very diverse processes, and this was a source of inspiration for me in my writing. I also found strength in experiencing that all these different scenic expressions actually existed. I visualised all the different movement-based productions I've seen over the years, and I felt connected to them.

The concept of movement-based performative art also defined a kind of boundary to other, more text-based theatre. This boundary was needed to make room for reflections on movement creation and keep the influence of text-based work at bay, as it so often enjoys a stronger position within the various hierarchies.

Simply defining and changing a few concepts helped me improve my own appreciation for the profession I share with so many others.

WRITING A MOVEMENT-BASED PRODUCTION IS LIKE WRITING POETRY

While I've worked on this book, I've had what dramaturg and playwright Barbro Smeds calls a "search light"[46] locked onto several different kinds of creative processes. A creative artist has "set a search light" when they feel that they keep encountering the subjects they've chosen to work with wherever they look. They develop a kind of sensitivity that stems from the attention they invest in the matter. My search light is directed at writing and creative processes.

I've already mentioned that for me, writing this book has had a lot in common with theatrical improvisation. Another similarity I've noticed is the one between movement creation

[46] Concepts Barbro Smeds explained in a lecture given in 2012 for the mime acting class of 2013 at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts.

and writing poetry. It seems to me that there are many commonalities between the creation of a movement-based production and the creation of a poem.

In the brief hour of midnight
when the light is at rest
I wander silent streets
recalling a moment with you
That moment never was
and will never come to be
and yet the light sleeps soundly
to dream of us as "we".

This was the first poem I wrote in what proved to be a fairly intense poetry phase I went through a few years ago. The fact that the poem rhymes (in Swedish) is unusual for me, but the way it came about follows a pattern that I would have to say applies both to writing poetry and to working with movement-based productions.

It was a bright night in spring. I was out taking a walk. First, a feeling came over me–a mood, or a sensation. This was a powerful presence, one that was somehow related to this unusually beautiful night and me in the middle of it. I was already preoccupied with feelings of loneliness and the aftermath of a recently failed relationship. In the words of Barbro Smeds, I had been hit with a premonition, a sensation of something that seems terribly important.

And then, some simple words came to me. They burrowed their way into my mind and summed up everything I was experiencing in the moment. They described what I was actually seeing around me. The words were "the light is at rest". I wanted to write them down; I knew that they might form the core of something bigger.

I compare this to the movement images I use when I work on productions. They are images or sequences that I visualise early on in the process. I bring these ideas to the floor, where I try them out with the performers.

I wrote down the words, and this action in turn brought more words, which continued to describe the night around me. Simple words for what I was experiencing right then. However, the new words also began to take on a life of their own. The light “resting” led on nicely to “sleeping soundly”, but with “dream”, more questions seem to be raised. What is the light dreaming of? What am I dreaming of?

This work can be compared to the first rehearsals, when trying movement images out doesn’t just produce results, but also further ideas and actions that can be expanded and turned into something unique.

Writing produced even more words, like an “us” that was no longer there. These words probably described the lost relationship that I had subconsciously been thinking of. Writing about it was something I never planned to do. I thought I would only be writing down the things I saw around me. But the relationship was there, nonetheless. The words of the poem arose from the physical situation at first, from the silence and the light, but in time, they began to tell the story of my own loss, too.

There are similarities with working on a production here, as well. It’s all about finding the narrative, the message that is conveyed by the production’s content and meaning. This is often hidden within the images that the performers and I try out in early rehearsals. It can only be found by keenly peeled eyes and ears.

In the light of this spring night, all that remained in the end was working on the rhythm of the poem. I cut this and switched that out, considered the meaning of every single word in isolation, moved things around, and edited things out. To me, this is analogous to the last few weeks of rehearsals, when you need to establish the rhythm of the performance, tighten up all the important bits, and eliminate any excess.

After that, the poem was finished.

WRITING HAS HAD A CONCRETE IMPACT ON MUCH OF MY WORK

Writing this book has taken me quite a long time, and during this time, I have alternated periods of writing with periods of teaching. I've asked students from various educational programmes to read, experiment with, and comment on this text. It has felt a bit embarrassing to bring your own book manuscript along, especially while it was still unfinished. However, the students' thoughts and comments came to play an important role in my writing process. They added depth to the text, in every way, and found a way forward when I couldn't. I'm very grateful for that.

My teaching has changed. Now, I concentrate more on composition and choreography creation than I used to. Where I would once use methods from text-based theatre, I now employ other exercises that place a greater emphasis on movement.

I feel that it's easier for me to take in other peoples' opinions and ideas than it used to be. I feel more grounded in my statements, but also more inclined to decide to turn everything on its head. Relying on my intuition has become an increasingly natural thing to me. I'm quicker to pick up on whatever is going on in a rehearsal or teaching studio, and it's easier for me to ask questions or propose solutions. This has probably happened as a result of the realisation the writing process has helped me arrive at: there are thousands of viable methods out there, most of which can actually produce results. It could be said that writing has both tight-ened up my working language and liberated me as an educator and a human being.

In the later phases of the writing work, I had an opportunity to test myself in a creative context. During the Winter of 2018 I choreograph/direct the production *All There Is* at Teater Tre in Stockholm.[47] Characteristic of this work is the directness with which I and the performers, Julia Gumpert and Stina Gunnarson, tackle the story we're going to be portraying. After a four-day preparatory workshop, in which we experiment with the movement images I brought

[47] *Allt som finns* [All There Is], production for children aged 4 to 9, performed at Teater Tre in 2018. Writing and choreography/directing: Lena Stefenson. Performers: Julia Gumpert/Katarina Krogh and Stina Gunnarsson. Scenography: Sigyn Stenqvist. Music: Safoura Safavi.

along to the production work, we begin a rehearsal period in which we simply start out at the beginning of the story and slowly make our way to the end. Most of the ideas for research, exercises, and so on that I've touched on in this book pale in significance in relation to the floor work, which simultaneously addresses issues of figuration, form, and dramaturgy. The way the working process unfolds surprises me. The exercises and methods I've described appear to have turned into some kind of bank of unconscious experiences. They live on, hidden within the inventive body, lodged within the glory of movement.

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My teacher colleagues at the department of acting, who have extended great support and kindness to me.

Thanks also to my sons, Andreas and Lukas Rimondini. This time, guys, I won't be paying you 10 SEK for every line I borrow from you. This time, the words are my own, and there are a lot more of them than in most of my plays.

I dedicate this book to the memory of two people:

The talented performer Patrik Freij, who I had the privilege of getting to know when we worked on the production Powder. You were a great performer Patrik, and we all miss you.

My father, Bror Stefenson, who read an early version of the book.

As blunt as ever, you told me that it was unusually easy to read, and that you thought it would work well for most readers.

Your love was my world.

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Smeds, Barbro: Lecture given in 2012 for the mime acting class of 2013 at Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Rådström, Niklas, lecture given during the SKH research day in 2016.

LINKS

Compiled 11 Nov 2018

Chapter 6

Interview with Mats Ek:

https://www.operan.se/repertoarsida/julia-romeo/intervju-mats-ek/

Chapter 7

Sasha Waltz *Körper* at the Royal Swedish Opera, trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rj6Pfu2kJaA

Hämta Andan, production:

https://www.uniartsplay.se/hamta-andan-valdet-hande-i-sondags

Chapter 8

The Man Drake company, *Anatomia Publica*, trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8RnEkZeWvQ

Claire Parsons co., *And then... Och sen*, trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Az-3pxqlRE4

Lena Stefenson, mime actor, choreographing director and assistant professor of mime figuration at the Stockholm University of the Arts. Photograph: Anna Ukkonen

Making theatrical productions that are based on movement is, in many ways, to set off on an expedition through uncharted territory. What you present onstage usually starts out as an idea of some kind, rather than something you find in an existing text. How might we approach this work? What challenges will we face, and which methods are available to us?

In writing this book, Lena Stefenson has drawn on her own experience as a choreographing director, and has included many examples from real-life productions, her own teaching, and the teaching of others. The text explains how elevated movements can be created for a production. How can you work with a chosen subject matter? With a story? With the relationship between movement and text? What does being the choreographer/director of a movement-based production actually involve? What happens during the last few weeks of rehearsals?

This book is intended for anybody who is, or wants to become, a choreographing director or performer in movement-based performative arts, which includes forms like dance, mime, and circus. It is also intended for readers who wish to give their scenic work a stronger physical dimension.

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