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Performative Arts and Pedagogy: A Swiss Perspective [1]

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Abstract

This report offers an insight into aspects of performative arts and (theatre) pedagogical undertakings in Switzerland at public schools as well as in the university education sector. It resulted from a number of meetings in the context of *The Performative Arts and Pedagogy Project – Towards the Development of an International Glossary* (for further details click here). Representatives from five different countries (Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Switzerland) have contributed to the project, engaging in an interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange that aims at an increased awareness of (culture-)specific concepts and associated terminologies that are applied in Performative Arts and Pedagogy contexts.

1 Considerations

With this text, we would like to offer inroads insights into aspects of performative arts and pedagogy in Switzerland from three intersecting and connecting perspectives. Following a brief general introduction, we shall describe:

- how performative arts and pedagogy come into play in public schools
- what types of courses are on offer in Universities of Education, how these Universities of Education assist teachers in the realization of their theatre projects
- courses on offer by the three Theatre Academies in regard to Theatre Education
- provide detailed insight into the Theatre Education programmes at BA and MA levels at the Zurich University of the Arts

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We shall also include a summary view of organizations representing Theatre Educators in Switzerland.

Our challenges are the following:

1. The three major linguistic regions of Switzerland present three differing cultural contexts with their own particular reference and influence systems. Regarding the topic of performative arts and pedagogy, we need to acknowledge these particularities which operate at content level and at language level: For example, the term «Médiation du Théâtre» - most often used in French instead of "Pédagogie du Théâtre" - emerged during political movements in France in the 70's towards de-centralizing culture and as a signifier for an endeavour to render theatre more accessible. Whilst we are aware of these differing co-existing histories, we shall focus in this paper mainly on the German speaking area.

2. According to our state of knowledge, there is no comparative study made in Switzerland regarding the national histories, institutions and infrastructure of performative arts and pedagogies upon which we could rely to provide a thorough and definitive panorama.[2]

3. As theatre and performative arts operate mostly language based, networks and professional dialogues follow this same logic beyond the country borders. This means professionals in the field of performative arts and pedagogy from the French speaking region would be in close contact with colleagues from France, those from Ticino with their counterparts from Italy, and professionals from Swiss German region would systematically exchange with those from Austria and Germany.

Whilst we fully support the title *Performative Arts and Pedagogy* as a promising and opening wording to broaden the horizon beyond traditional forms of theatre (thus welcoming also the inclusion of performance arts as a genre), we shall use in this brief report the name "theatre education" , as we refer to centres, programmes and courses which are made visible as "Theaterpädagogik" in Swiss contexts.

As we have co-written this document we realize, that it is a first step towards a more substantial text which we would wish to draft at a later stage, notably also in regard to ongoing research in the field of theatre education in the French and Italian speaking regions and in regard to recent journal publications authored in Switzerland.

[2] «Studienbuch der Theaterpädagogik», a co-publication by three universities of teacher education in Northwestern Switzerland, Lucerne and Zurich names core trends and developments of the discipline without providing a systematic view. The pdf document can be accessed under: https://www.hep-verlag.ch/pub/media/import/public/7002/studienbuchtheaterpaedagogi_phzh.pdf – last accessed 24 Nov 2019

2 Theatre and Theatre Education in Swiss Schools

Although theatre or drama are not a school subject at Swiss Elementary Schools, a wide variety as well as a large number of theatre projects are on offer. In High Schools, theatre productions are more uniform. Whether or not theatre is part of a Swiss child's educational biography is largely a matter of chance. It depends on parents' place of residence, and therefore the assigned school, on availability of resources, on teachers' interests and a range of other intervening factors.

2.1 Swiss Education System

To understand the role of theatre in Swiss schools, a short outline of the Swiss education system is in order. In Switzerland, education is governed by cantonal law. As there are 26 cantons, we observe 26 distinct school systems within the country. However, through supra-cantonal agreements, joint committees and initiatives, these diverse systems are increasingly coordinated with one another. The latest effort in this regard is the so-called "Curriculum 21", which introduces a number of shared standards, which 21 partnering cantons wish to abide by. In addition to supra-cantonal harmonization, the new curriculum no longer lists knowledge transfer as primary education objective, but rather the development of competences. Such competences can be reached in a variety of ways – methods and principles from theatre are included as possible approaches in several disciplines but appear more as an extension of a given repertoire of methods. One element that has not changed with the introduction of the new curriculum: theatre is still not (explicitly) listed as a course in the academic programme. However, this does not imply that we do not encounter a substantial amount of theatre activities at Swiss schools.

2.2 Theatre in schools

Every teacher may offer or perform theatre with pupils in one form or another. To do so, he or she does not require any training in theatre pedagogy. Theatre can be offered as a free subject: the "curriculum 21" contains a segment „Local free subject "in the academic programme, which may be employed for theatre projects. Furthermore, in consultation with the school management, a committed teacher can offer theatre as an optional subject or integrated in any part of the curriculum (for example, as part of German lessons). It can also be the subject of project weeks which are also part of the curriculum.

In several cantons, school theatre festivals are organized in a yearly or bi-annual rhythm (most often in cooperation with a regional School of Education (Pädagogische Hochschule). These festivals act as a kind of catalyst to initiate a variety of projects in schools within a canton, which culminate in an impressive array of performances.[3]

[3] The "Luzerner Schultheater Tage" celebrated in 2018 its 30th anniversary,

It is not only through committed and resourceful teachers that students at Swiss elementary schools come into contact with theatre. In addition to (freelance) theatre educators (Theaterpädagog_innen), other theatre professionals and artists do offer theatre projects at schools. These freelancers are invited by the teachers into their classes. Cantonal mediation platforms – either contracted by or integrated in a Cantonal Department of Culture or Department of Education - offer a wide range of services, from art and architecture to literature, dance and theatre (see chapter below). Schools and teachers can draw on one of these offers. In addition to maintaining the platform, cantons also provide financial support for these services. Various arrangements exist specific to each canton, which range from unconditional free access to counselling and support within a set limit of coaching hours, to arrangements of shared contributions by schools and by the canton.

The providers of these formats are in principle not part of the teaching staff at the school. They are either part of the teaching and counselling staff of Schools of Education, and thus operate within the frameworks of cantonal mandates, or are temporarily employed for a specific project. On the various cantonal platforms present they present themselves as "Theaterpädagoge", actor, puppeteer, director or performance artist. Some of them apply their working methods from their performance activities to school projects. Thus, the process and the products reflect the multi-disciplinary and varied working forms of the theatre scene in Switzerland. There are offers in which the pupils can develop a character, as for example in "Das ist ja ein Stück!"[4], and the 'Theaterpädagogin' writes a play from this material and acts as a director (script writing and directing analogue to practices in the professional theater world). Working modes of other types of approaches remind one more of methods of devising theatre: their starting point is a question and the product at the end relies on the process. The offer called "Grenzmomente", for example, asks the students about all the different crossing moments in life[5]. In the process, they search for a form of the product, that involves the spectactors in a reflection about the same question. The outcome of this process could be a play as well as room installation with interactive elements.

The situation in Swiss High Schools (Gymnasium) is somewhat different. In contrast to music or the fine arts, theatre is not a school subject at grammar schools either. Nevertheless, most of the High Schools have a long tradition of large annual theatre performances. Mostly, this tradition is rooted in a humanist-bourgeois theatre tradition that informs school activities. Highschool productions are still strongly realized in modes of acting and directing analogue to traditional canons of theatre practice. The processes are strongly product-orientated, and the source material is mostly a classical or modern play by established authors.

https://www.zebis.ch/news/luzerner-schultheatertage-feiern-jubilaeum. The festival "Schultheatertreffen FHNW" has been organized for 17 years. For details see: https://www.fhnw.ch/de/weiterbildung/paedagogik/kurse/9263293 – last accessed 22 Nov 2019

In summary, a wide variety of theatrical works can be encountered in Swiss elementary schools: More oriented towards curricular educational assignments – multimedia projects based on content or an artistic research approach, as well as acting and directorial analog forms. They are offered and carried out by teachers (with or without expertise in theatre education) and by freelance theatre educators (Theaterpädagog_innen) or other theatre and art professionals. The range of theatrical processes and products instigated at elementary school level is probably wider than at grammar schools.

3 Programmes and additional offers concerning Theatre Education at Universities of Education (Pädagogische Hochschulen)

3.1 Universities of Education: General context in Switzerland

There are eighteen Universities of Education (Pädagogische Hochschulen) [6]which offer programmes for the training of teachers with various foci such as kindergarten, primary and secondary schools or specialized education (Sonderpädagogik). [7] Twelve of these institutions are situated in the German speaking area, four in the French speaking area, and one in the Italian speaking area. The Universities of Education were created at the beginning of 2000, replacing the teachers' training colleges which were called «seminars» in the German speaking region. Their former teaching modes and content had only been partially in tune with requirements of the university system. The reformed structures and formats of the University of Education are aligned with the Bologna system. The Universities of Education operate in a professional network, sharing evaluation and accreditation procedures at a national level. As a Swiss particularity, they are also tied to cantonal supervision and are obliged to negotiate specific agreements on an annual basis with the respective cantonal Departments of Education. These include financial contributions and negotiation of services to be rendered in the production of adequate learning material, the co-supervising of students in praxis modules in schools of the canton, the counselling and coaching of teachers and a targeted offer of further education programmes for teachers. Embedded in this logic, a range of theatre education programmes have been developed by Universities of Education for teachers who are motivated to learn more about ways of introducing theatrical strategies and theatre in the school curriculum.

[6] Data on student intake and further statistical details: https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/bildungsabschluesse/tertiaerstufe-hochschulen/paedagogische.html – last accessed 24 Nov 2019

[7] More details on: https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Kammern/Kamme_PH/17020_Merkmal_de_Hochschultyp_Def.pdf – last accessed 24 Nov 2019

3.2 Theatre Education at Universities of Education

Nine Universities of Education offer courses of Theatre Education to students at Bachelor and Master levels. These courses vary in their formats and foci. Most of these courses would emphasize ways of learning through doing, allowing students through collective play situations to reflect on approaches to process oriented and open-ended learning.

Objectives of such courses include the building of an awareness concerning aesthetic experiences of a body performing in space, of theatrical experiments followed by acts of translation, which would allow the development of scenarios adapted to schools. Visits of theatre performances are also systematically part of the courses as a standard minimum. All Universities of Education offer punctual theatre pedagogic interventions in the various parts of their programmes of general education. These include self-presentation skills (Auftrittskompetenz), performative reading, or play – directing. These interventions are most often included in the programmes for students specializing at entry level education (kindergarten and first year of schooling) usually taught by actors or professionals in theatre pedagogy.

The University of Education of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of North-Western Switzerland offers as sole pedagogical institution in Switzerland an elective programme which merge theatre and arts education, thus allowing the inclusion in its courses of various hybrid forms of contemporary art production. Rather than considering specific sectors of arts as reference, the programme addresses topics such as 'diversity' and 'play as research method' as unifying elements which are discussed from various angles and disciplinary perspectives throughout the three-semester programme.

3.3 Further Education and Counselling

Four Universities of Education offer certified further-education programmes in the field of Theatre Education which are tailored for teachers wishing to acquire new competences in the initiation, planning, realization and reflection of theatrical projects in schools. Besides working on their own communication skills, the participants are also introduced to exemplary play formats which can be integrated in the learning environments of schools. As these programmes have been on offer for a decade, a growing network of teachers with a passion for performative arts and pedagogy function as relay for school theatre festivals and as multipliers to support the arts in schools.[8]

Competence centres of theatre education (Theaterpädagogik) exist at five Universities of Education, offering assistance to teachers in the conceptualizing,

[8] See for example the certified programme CAS jointly offered by School of Education Zurich and School of Education North Western Switzerland: https://www.fhnw.ch/de/weiterbildung/paedagogik/spezialisierte-angebote-kader/2019/cas-theaterpaedagogik?wbph-tp=01&gclid=CjwKCAjw98rpBRAuEiwALmo-ygXVLYT-OkTnZJYgGvpfdRlp_y0ocvURC8-cNcneVAbD4TptyYXnBoCkXQQAv_BwE – last accessed 24 Nov 2019

planning and realizing phases of theatrical projects. These services - subject to cantonal agreements - provide teachers with a free access to coaching at any stage of a theatrical process or production. Three of these Competence Centres also support or organize regional school theatre festivals in dialogue with schools and teachers.[9] They also develop learning material for schools. The Competence Centres are seen as partners in the shaping of cantonal and regional policies concerning the support of theatre in schools.

Academic staff working in the fields of theatre education at Universities of Education are in the vast majority graduates from the former „Schauspiel Akademie Zürich“ (today: Bachelor and Master programmes in Theatre Education at Zurich University of the Arts). Graduates of the “Schauspiel Akademie Zürich” are distinguished by the fact that they were taught acting for two of their four-year studies. Thus, students of School of Education benefitting from courses in the field of “Theaterpädagogik” or teachers having participated in one of the described further education programmes would be strongly confronted with acting analogues of working methods in the field of body, self and space perception.

In the current context informed by the Bologna reform and by general societal trends towards measurable and efficient learning outcomes, the professionals involved in theatre education at the Universities of Education experience difficulties in meeting the challenge of keeping open spaces for the exploration towards (self) discoveries and for the creation of unconditioned aesthetic experiences. The standard format of courses of 45 min, and the pressure to provide tangible outcomes to all learning units on offer at the University, seriously hamper any kind of effort to create immersive learning situations.

In regard to schools, we note that the current reform “curriculum 21” offers new possibilities: Promoting competence-based teaching, it supports transdisciplinary teaching strategies. It names theatre education as a possible instrument in various learning settings. However, it does not explicitly provide a recognized space of its own for theatre education.

4 Performative Arts and Pedagogy : Studies of «Theaterpädagogik» at the Universty of Arts, Zurich (Zürich Hochschule der Künste ZHdK)

The academic programme *Theaterpädagogik* was initiated in 1973 by Felix Rellstab who created this new section as part of the former Academy of Acting Zürich (Schauspiel-Akademie Zürich). Over the past 20 years, the organization has undergone several major structural reforms and has been integrated into the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). The localization of Theatre Education (Theaterpädagogik) in the arts marks from the beginning the positioning and reference to artistic and aesthetic practices. A striking development in terms of

[9] Luzerner Schultheatertage (since 1989), Schultheatertreffen in Aarau (since 1987), Bündner Schultheaterfestival (since 2017).

an extended understanding of art has significantly shaped the study of theatre education in the last 15 years. The fixation on drama is gradually receding in favour of a broader understanding of performative and researching theatre practice.

4.1 Bachelor Theatre Education (Theaterpädagogik ZHdK)

This Bachelor programme is still closely linked through its curriculum with the neighbouring disciplines of the field of theatre (acting, directing, dramaturgy and stage design).

The principles in acting, the know-how for staging and the reflecting of contemporary theatre praxis are offered as a joint foundation programme. As of the second semester, students are encouraged to focus on specific topics. They can do so through individualized trajectories which are part of the university structure and brought together through project work.

Theatre Education focuses on work in differing institutional and social contexts (schools, theatres, specific life realities, particular expertise) and addresses the needs of participants through artistic practices which are understood as experimental settings. A process of searching is a central component. Scenic thinking, reflection about dramaturgy, and setting of a playing field towards education processes at the junction of an awareness of self and world are core to the ways of accompanying students during their project work. Through the thorough and critical reflection of praxis, the transmission of an implicit pedagogy can be revealed which we consider a defining moment for the Bachelor programme. During the academic trajectory the focus is on the educational potential of art and theatre reception, including the testing of analytical, artistic and art educational approaches.

Essential learning processes activated in the context of studies at the University of the Arts are characterized by research-based work in various narrative formats, and by a search for strategies of representation. Research spans from the inclusion of biographical material to the ethnographic exploration of milieu and the searching self-questioning in socially dense and tense spaces/places. It seeks differing transformative processes, which allow found material to be performed. Differing narrative forms dissolve the dialogical fixation of drama and join narrative moments with documentary material or technical narrative devices to allow form and content to come into an art inspired mutual relationship. Performative action understood as extension of the theatre praxis tests the borders of theatrical forms of expression which can include the refusal of conventions of audience and players.

Most of the professional theatre educators in the German speaking part of Switzerland (which includes academic staff, professionals employed at Counselling Centres or in Theatres) are graduates from this study programme at the University of the Arts.

4.2 MA Theatre Education University of Arts Zurich ZHdK

The Master programme targets students with a Bachelor degree in theatre education or neighbouring disciplines (theatre, art education, sciences of art and culture, education, teaching degrees) as well as applicants with a documented professional praxis in theatre education.

Building on the Bachelor programme in theatre education, the master programme reflects systematically on theatre educational praxis with the purpose to develop it further in a research-based manner. Degree holders will be in a position to undertake project work in complex contexts and to format, steer and accompany cooperation between differing partners. In this process, they understand theatre educational praxis as an endeavour which goes beyond the individual acting to connect through professional dialogue with societal trends and contemporary art currents.

Experimental modes of working and collective spaces of reflection are the point of departure for a critical identification towards an individual understanding of professional praxis. Through engagement with contemporary discourses pertaining to the field of knowledge of theatre education, the participants will sharpen their methodological and pedagogical perspectives, and become alert to specific constellations of work in regard to their contexts and situations. Social aspects within and between societies, groups, and institutions are negotiated through art-based mediation and translated into theatrical interactions.

At the end of the study, the Master project will allow the constitution of a body of material that has emerged from a research process, framed by an artistic and academic question. It is presented both as documentation as well as a performative act.

Degree holders of the Master in Theatre Education will work at the junction of society and art. They design and realize projects through which new knowledge is explored, and which facilitate new points of view on what is considered commonly known. They develop art-based strategies of work through interventions in social contexts. During the programme, they are active as multipliers, they communicate theatre educational reflection and praxis, and are qualified as collaborators at universities. Familiar with ways to access diverse praxis-based research and theoretical horizons of theatre education, they are capable to undertake solid and contextualized projects in the areas of art education, academia, and art- research and are thus qualified to pursue PhD studies.

4.3 Drama Education at other Universities in Switzerland

At the *Manufacture* in Lausanne (Theatre Academy associated to the University of South-Western Switzerland HES -SO), a certified further education programme has been on offer since 2012 for teachers, educators and actors. It does not include drama education in its regular Bachelor/Master programmes.

The Academia Theatro Dimitri - part of the University of Italian Switzerland – specialises in physical theatre. It is currently developing a clowning education programme for educators/practitioners working in hospitals and refugee camps. Through a research initiative, it also is also building a further education programme for actors and educators specialising in educational work with disabled persons. The Academia Theatro Dimitri organizes punctual collaborations with the School of Education regarding introductions to theatre education.

5 Specialist Associations of Theatre Education in Switzerland

The *Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für das Darstellende Spiel (sads)* (Association of the Swiss Working Group for performing arts) was founded in 1981 bringing together theatre educators and teachers interested in theatre education. *sads* supported theatre pedagogic activities, served as connecting platform for teachers wishing to realize theatre projects, and organised further education courses related to topics of theatre education. It initiated cantonal and regional play and theatre events, realized national theatre camps for children in four languages and organised the Swiss section of the Theatre Meeting for Children and Youth initiated by the European Council (from 1983 to 1996). The expert journal *spielpost* which was edited by *sads* appeared quarterly focusing on new impulses in theatre pedagogics. *sads* established privileged contacts with cantonal platforms for theatre education of several cantons. On March 10, 2004, it decided to dissolve the association.[10]

The *Fachverband Theaterpädagogik Schweiz* (*tps*) (Specialist association Theatre Education*)* was founded in 2005. It understood its role as a hub for theatre education in Switzerland, representing the interests of its members in the processes of national professional certification and organizing further education courses. It created and managed a web platform for the dissemination of events and courses related to theatre education realized by its members. It also offered counselling, services and networking. It carried out lobbying activities in the public realm and represented the voices of professional theatre educators in political fora at federal and cantonal levels. Following the merging with the association ACT, *tps* was dissolved in 2018.[11]

The *Berufsverband t* (Professional association) was founded in 2018 as a result of the merger of two specialist associations - *Berufsverband der freien Theaterschaffenden (ACT)* (Professional association of independent theatre professionals) und *tps*. A Swiss network representing independent theatre professionals ("Theaterschaffende der Schweiz / Professionnels du spectacle Suisse/ Professionisti dello spettacolo Svizzera") of the three language regions, the *Berufsverbandt* wishes to strengthen the voice of theatre in Switzerland. The associations support multifaceted theatre work, promotes the independence of artistic endeavour, furthers the visibility of the professional activities of its one

thousand eight hundred members, and is committed to improving the framing conditions for independent theatre production. The association continues to carry through all the activities formerly assumed by ACT and *tps and* organises the yearly Swiss artists exchange in Thun.[12]

[12] Details of the association *t*. see: https://a-c-t.ch/de/first-menu/ueber-act/berufsverband-t – last accessed 24 Nov 2019