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Conference Report

The Performative Arts and Pedagogy Project – Towards the Development of an International Glossary [1]

International Conference, 1st & 2nd March 2019, University College Cork

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1. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.13.1.8

On the morning of 1st March 2019 a group of 22 people representing 5 different countries (Austria, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, & the U.K.), gathered in the lively surroundings of the Creative Zone in Boole Library, University College Cork, with the express aim of developing a deeper understanding of the discipline-specific knowledge bases, ideas, and operational concepts associated with Performative Arts and Pedagogy. Through a range of working methods including discussion, group work, guest lecture and workshop the conference facilitated a systematic interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange working towards an increased awareness of (culture-)specific concepts and associated terminologies. Over the course of the 2 days these activities led to an heightened appreciation of variants, differences and similarities and paved the way towards the development of **transcultural performative practices**.

This conference is a result of a number of meetings, initiated by the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Spiel & Theater e.V., which took place in Berlin focusing on the need to engage with historical, current and future developments in the broad area of 'Performative Arts and Pedagogy'. Also a panel discussion entitled 'What Exactly is an Apple Pie?' as part of the 4th Scenario Forum Symposium 'Towards a Teaching, Learning, and Research Culture' further highlighted the range of questions and challenges facing transcultural terms and concepts in the developing field of Performative Arts and Pedagogy.

The first activity of the day involved on your feet, get to know you exercises that allowed participants to voice a word or concept that they use in their daily practice – the range across the 22 participants was inspiring (and daunting!) in its breadth.

Following on from this, each grouping presented a report outlining the historical and current state of 'Performative Arts and Pedagogy' in the respective countries allowing insight into the different traditions and current practices in the area. The Irish group of Róisín O'Gorman, Manfred Schewe and Fionn

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Figure 1: Large group discussions in the Creative Zone, Boole Library

Woodhouse were joined by Emelie FitzGibbon, founding Artistic Director of Graffiti Theatre Company and a key player in the development of the use of drama and theatre in educational contexts in Ireland. Group members initially outlined current practices across community, primary, secondary and tertiary education with Emelie giving additional detail on historical developments nationally and further insight into current practices.

The UK group of Meretta Elliot, Mike Fleming and Katja Frimberger presented across three sectors: school, higher education and community, giving detailed insight into the development, and impact, of current practice in a range of settings with Frimberger's evocation of Hickey-Moody's created 'fabulations' reverberating across the two days in many contexts.

The Austrian group of Ulrike Hatzer, Dagmar Höfferer and Sieglinde Roth (having met in person for the first time the night previously!) detailed the range of current practice across second and third level with discussions on similarities across the country reports so far bringing the morning session to a close.



Figure 2: Descriptions, details, terms and words discussed!

After a lunchtime trip to the Glucksman art gallery for a concert celebrating the talents of UCC Department of Music students, the extended German group of Ute Handwerg, Urike Hentschel, Ole Hruschka, Friedhelm Roth

Lange, Wolfgang Sting and Florian Vassen presented their report. Giving a comprehensive overview of the German context, the report also introduced performative practice in other cultural settings facilitated through BAG Spiel & Theater e.V., for example in Ghana, Africa.

This was followed by a change of orientation with the Swiss contingent of Andreas Bürgisser, Georges Pfründer and Mira Sack inviting participants to sit in a circle surrounding them. The ensuing performative discussion between the Swiss group felt at times like an overheard conversation, giving both views into current Swiss practice and space to reflect on what these practices mean in context.

The final three sessions of the afternoon, though diverse in nature, allowed the need for, and the potential of, the work under discussion to be highlighted. A presentation from Allen White, UCC CACSSS Research Officer, introduced potential funding opportunities for the project to move forward. Dr. Kate McCarthy from Waterford Institute of Technology explored her recent research around the term 'Applied Theatre' bringing the focus back to the words and terms that practitioners and academics use and the range of meanings that we can attribute to them. The research delved into the adoption (or not!) of the term 'Applied Theatre' as an umbrella term, the relationships between terminology and practice and the impact of ideology. Finally an open discussion on the make-up and functions of the intercultural working groups for the following day allowed time to voice the concepts and themes that had struck a chord or emerged during the earlier sessions.

On day two of the conference a series of parallel intercultural working groups met to begin discussions of the terms, concepts and potential pathways forward with the project. For this section of the conference report we will turn to the words of some of the participants who reflect on, and highlight, important moments of discussion and discovery.

> I found one of the group discussions particularly important because of the sense of depth surrounding the conclusion that 'concepts around key words are more important than lists'. Anyone would have agreed to that sentiment before the conference, but it was the sense of discovery through dialogue, through trying out understandings of different terms that brought a deeper sense of the impact of the words. This process was itself an exemplification of the substantial point - that words in themselves, outside of their context of use, do not carry more than superficial meanings. I think this sense of deep realisation was a feature threaded through the whole conference and was enhanced by its multicultural nature that encouraged a strong element of de-centring and seeing things from others' perspectives. (Mike Fleming, UK)

> I was particularly enlightened by the views beyond the German-speaking horizon. The special terms from the English-speaking areas - Theatre in Education, Drama in Education or Community Theatre – I had a fairly rudimentary understanding of (prior to the meeting). The conference made the critical discourses in these areas accessible to me. And thus, showed a surprisingly close neighborhood. (Mira Sack, Switzerland)



Figure 3: Potential forms and contexts explored.

The impossibility of translation! This was a point we discussed before in the meetings we had in Berlin, but I was glad to see that there was a common consent in regard to this point. In the discussion during the conference we went a few steps further: [1] it is more interesting to contextualize terms than to merely translate them, [2] we are interested in the discourses behind the terms, [3]we are interested in the co-working of discourses and practices in the different traditions of our countries. One aim [in the project] should be to model a critical reflection on the main terms. And the crucial question for this approach could be not only to ask, 'how do we name a certain practice?' but also 'why do we name it in this way?' and 'what is the reason and the impact of naming it like this'. (Ulrike Hentschel, Germany)



Figure 4: Discussion of Terms and Concepts

To me it was quite surprising that in English speaking countries the term 'Applied Theatre' isn't necessarily a key term, However in Germany the term has been increasing used and often in competition with the term 'Theatrepeädagogik'. Theatre in Education and Drama in Education seem to be the preferred terms in English speaking countries which, from the perspective of the German 'Theaterpädagogik' is rather good news! (Florian Vaßen, Germany)

> I found the German term 'theaterpadagogik' interesting. It was not new to me but its resonance was explored more than previous encounters with the term. It did seem to function as a useful inclusive concept, particularly as it foregrounds the concept of theatre. But I still do not have a clear sense of what is included, and perhaps more importantly, what is excluded from the use of the concept. In a future discussion it would be useful to explore directly the relationship between 'theaterpadagogik' and 'process drama'. We are used to cutting up a swiss roll in one particular way and we are used to seeing the shapes that come out as result. But we can get a very different result if (somewhat eccentrically in the case of the cake) we cut the swiss roll length ways. I think there were enlightening moments in the conference when we started to see different possibilities from what we are used to. (Mike Fleming, UK)

> The first term that comes into my mind (when reflecting on the conference) is FABULATION. For me it is crucial to the field of Theaterpädagogik/ theatrepedagogy because it marks the difference between every day experience and aesthetic experience. And this mark can be very important for many terms /discourses that could be of interest in the glossary. We discussed this on the example of the term 'performance'. This term can be understood as technological performance or self-performance in everyday life (that is: self-optimization). But we should be focussed on performance practice in artistic fields and of course on the discourse of performance as Jon McKenzie pointed it out (see: Jon McKenzie: Perform or else. From Discipline to Performance). (Ulrike Hentschel, Germany)

> Thinking about different words and meanings in an international context is not a trivial matter, its vivid and full of life – and I like Mikes statement, that the item "Theaterpädagogik" to him means much more than "theatre pedagogy". (Dagmar Höfferer-Brunthaler, Austria)

These comments reflect that the potential for the realization of the wider project became apparent within the positive, committed working atmosphere in the Creative Zone. Intercultural groups discussed and presented a range of potential frames within which the final project could sit with Róisín O'Gorman's 'Trashary', a place to keep the idea and concepts that might otherwise be lost, striking a chord.

The final Plenary session at the end of the day lead to a range of discussions, decisions and commitments for further development of the project with future symposia and conferences planned for Austria in 2019 and Switzerland in 2020. Plans for the Austria conference would consider the potential of new partners from other EU countries joining the group.

Colleagues from Graz, Austria will potentially take the lead in application for major research funding to allow the project to develop concrete forms in digital spaces.

The support locally in the form the warm working environment of UCC, aid from a range of different departments from German to Theatre and the Research office made the conference possible as did the generous support from the Austrian and Swiss embassies in Dublin.



Figure 5: 5: Conference delegates from left to right: F. Woodhouse; M. Elliot; D. Höfferer-Brunthaler; S. Roth; M. Sack; K. Frimberger; O. Hruschka; U. Handwerg; A. Bürgisser; U. Hatzer; R. O'Gorman; U. Hentschel; F. Vaßen; M. Schewe; F. Roth-Lange; W. Sting; M. Fleming; G. Pfründer.

Austria
Prof. Ulrike Hatzer, Mozarteum, Salzburg
Dagmar Höfferer-Brunthaler, BAG TiS/IDEA Austria, Vienna
Dr. Sieglinde Roth, University of Arts, Graz
Germany
Ute Handwerg, BAG Spiel & Theater e.V., Hanover
Prof. Ulrike Hentschel, University of Arts, Berlin
Dr. Ole Hruschka, Leibniz University, Hanover
Friedhelm Roth-Lange, Bundesverband Theaterpädagogik e.V., Cologne
Prof. Wolfgang Sting, University of Hamburg
Prof. Florian Vaßen, Leibniz University, Hanover
Ireland

Dr. Róisín O'Gorman, University College Cork
Prof. Manfred Schewe, University College Cork
Fionn Woodhouse, University College Cork
Switzerland
Andreas Bürgisser, University of Arts, Zurich
Prof. Georges Pfründer, University of Education,Windisch
Prof. Mira Sack, University of Arts, Zurich
United Kingdom
Meretta Elliott, Brunel University, London
Prof. Mike Fleming, University of Durham, Durham
Dr. Katja Frimberger, Independent Researcher, Glasgow
Conference Organisation:
Prof. Manfred Schewe, University College Cork
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- Embassy of Austria, Dublin - https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-embassy-dublin/
- Embassy of Switzerland, Dublin - www.eda.admin.ch/countries/ireland/en/home/representations/embassy.html
- Goethe Institute, Dublin - https://www.goethe.de/ins/ie/en/index.html
- Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Spiel & Theater e.V., Hanover - https://www.bag-online.de/
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Photographs by Fionn Woodhouse and Jenna Lunsford

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