

The Rhythm of Thinking
Immanence and Ethics in Theater Performance

The Rhythm of Thinking

Immanence and Ethics in Theater Performance

Johan Petri

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Arts in Performance in Theatre and Music Drama at the Academy of Music and Drama, Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg. Sweden

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ABSTRACT

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The dissertation exists as a book and as a multimedia platform, accessible at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/45808>

The dissertation *The Rhythm of Thinking: Immanence and Ethics in Theater Performance* is an artistic research project in the field of theater, with directing and theatrical composition and dramaturgy as its main points of focus. The critical exploration is based on the experience of conceptualizing and directing three different theater performances. The project is an attempt to explore the implications of the concept of immanence in the collective creative process of theater making. In particular, it is an effort to illuminate what might be called “processes of immanence” or “theater of immanence”. The research is built around a net of questions, observations, and thoughts ranging from the experiences of collective creative processes and collaborative work with the performers, to academic criticism on discourses related to the fields of performance studies, philosophy and performance philosophy, perception theory, and musicology. The unfurling of this net is intended to contribute to the ideas and theories surrounding the relationship between the structural specifics of theater – dramaturgically and compositionally – and the aspects of meaning and affect. This formulation encapsulates a number of sub-areas to which the investigation aims to contribute with problematizing insertions, areas broadly defined as: transforming theories into concrete compositional and processual measures; developing dramaturgical discourses beyond semantic language;

problematizing a binary relation between composition/conceptualization and an intuitive, emotional creative force; discussing how to enhance a readiness for variation in the performers; problematizing hierarchical structures, both in regards to the hierarchy of expressions, as well as creative influence; mapping out a thought process for a directorial practice; and finally, searching for a possible reciprocity between compositional structures and ethics.

The investigated materials are theater performances but in the critical treatment the research mainly activates philosophical discourses rather than what could be considered performance studies perspectives. This philosophical approach is predominately represented by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), but also by the Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi (b.1956), and the Italian/Australian philosopher Rosi Braidotti (b.1954).

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THE PERFORMANCES

JOHN AND THE MUSHROOMS

Credits and Production Information

Script and concept: Johan Petri **Music by:** John Cage, Erik Satie, The ensemble

Actors: Staffan Göthe, Jessica Liedberg, Mauritz Elvingsson

Musicians/actors: Kristine Scholz–keyboards, Eva Lindal–violin,

Anna Lindal–violin **Set and costume design:** Daniel Åkerström-Steen

Choreographer: Nathalie Ruiz **Dramaturge:** Tora von Platen

Lighting design: Mikael Karlsson **Pedagogue:** Ebba Theorell

Photographer: Roger Stenberg **Film photographer:** Dan Lepp

Producer: Felicia Moritz Malmcrona **Direction:** Johan Petri

Produced by Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm, Sweden, 2010/11

VORSCHLÄGE

Credits and Production Information

Composer: Mathias Spahlinger **Musicians:** Anna Lindal – violin, Eva Lindal – violin, Torbjörn Helander – viola, Åsa Åkerberg – cello, David Stackenäs –

guitar, Torbjörn Svedberg – percussion **German voice:** Matthias Spahlinger

Swedish voice: Clara Norman **Recording engineer:** Niklas Billström

Photography: Gunnar Nehls **Producer, Tensta Art Center:** William Easton

Concept, direction and editing: Johan Petri

Produced by Alice Collective for Sound&Stage Art, 2009

RYOANJI — A MEETING

Credits and Production Information

Composer: John Cage **Dancers:** Anna Pehrsson, Love Källman, Pontus Pettersson, Tove Brunberg **Musicians:** Ivo Nilsson – trombone, Jonny Axelsson – percussion **Set design:** Alice Collective for Sound&Stage Art
Lighting Design: Jenny André **Sound Design:** Niklas Billström
Costume Design: Filippa Hansson **Mask Design:** Susanne von Platen
Dramaturge: Tora von Platen **Set Construction:** Anders L Lindholm
Film photographer: Dan Lepp **Producer:** Suzi Ersahin
Concept and direction: Johan Petri
Produced by Alice Collective for Sound&Stage Art, 2012

IT IS ALL IN THE PASSING

Introducing the discursive setting

Prologue

Like most research, this investigation moves down to intricate levels of its subject. Its communicative potential is, for the most part, accessible only through a close, detailed attentiveness to all its micro-movements. It becomes, inevitably so, dependent on its own system of reasoning; it has to revolve around itself so that it can exit at a different point from where it entered. The intention is, however, to make that exit point broad, and fully open for contact. And that is one of the main things I want these introductory words to convey, that the initial impetus for this exploration acknowledges the wide perspective of navigating through the multiple, complex and potentially contradictory sets of experiences that life forces us to encounter. As an artist, I want to be sensitive to that inevitability. I want to let go of the idea of my self as a stable subject, and search for an alternative subjectivity. This is not about one specific repositioning but a constantly changing alternative, a venture away from the fixed and secure. I feel a real urgency to elaborate alternative accounts, to learn to think differently about myself in the world, as well as in collaborative creative situations and it is through the encounter with other voices that this motion can be sustained. These voices transpire from a variety of times and sources that vary in quality; they materialize as texts, as sounds, as speech and movements. Sometimes they just happen to be there, but there is also a constant intuitive search at work. In that search I have detected different patterns in regards to themes and structures. It is as if certain voices emerge from some deep place and pull me in, hence not there as a result of immediate conscious decisions, but still they expose related fields of problems: a mistrust of language; a troublesome relation to the idea of communication; an inclination to be in flux, to be surprised, to let go of control; the longing for a togetherness. Over the years this has resulted in an engagement with a variety of writers, composers and artists who I have drawn into the tangled process of theater making. Shaped by their influence, and by all the accumulated

intuitive decisions and esthetic choices that go into the making of performances, lies what I have come to see and understand as a strong ethical undertow. This is not an uncommon or rare outcome of an art practice, rather it can be seen as what represents the impetus for many artists if the meaning of the concept is widened to include outlooks on life's conditions and human relations. But the question for me, and which this work is intended to reflect upon, is in what way the aspect of ethics plays out in relation to how I shape my way of working, in relation to the nature of the materials that I set in motion, and to the specifics of the collaborative creative processes – all within the realm of theater making. In short, the present work is about the relation between esthetics and ethics.

I move into this exploration as a theater director, which means that the study has its roots both in collective creative work, as well as in those very personal energies, experiences, and convictions that constitute the incentive for creating what I do. These two strands are parallel but represent quite different impetuses. In the collective creative processes, sharing and collaborative building is central, and it has a rather concrete quality. Space, time, social dynamics and dialogue, and practicalities of all kinds influence such a process. It is the type of creative work that oftentimes needs a pragmatic approach. And that approach hovers, at least to a certain degree, over this critical undertaking as it aims to problematize rather expansive questions from a limited material. The personal aspect, on the other hand, infuses something that is more elusive and yet quite stern. Let me see if I can make this clear. As I have my roots in the tactile and sensual experiences of music making, there is an inclination to assign experiential importance to that which exists outside language, to the abstract power of rhythm, and sound and embodied relations. That level is elusive, it is sensual, but it underlies my esthetics, as well as my reasoning. It is the transparent texture that I hope can, to some degree, fill the gaps of language.

With an urgency, akin to that abstract momentum, I place my tendency to think about art making in a rather specific political sense. The result might be, in places, that my extrapolations radiate a generality of sorts. It would be misleading to say that it is unintentional, as I am convinced that my own thinking can only find its validity – as well as open itself up for criticism – if such a risk is embraced. With that said, it is important to keep in mind that this critical attempt is intuitive and personal. It is not an exploration where the investigative gaze is undefined,

critically hovering over an array of examples and references. My work as a theater director demands that I offer something for people to engage in, to react to. Such a stance is only concerned with how it relates to phenomena *outside* its own means of production. This is a challenge I also try to meet in this critical undertaking: even if the investigation probes specific and intricate levels of theater making, it also aims to evoke some fundamental questions about the relationship between theater and the world in which it is placed. One could say that the overarching intent is to contribute to discussions on how linkages can be made between the most intricate inner workings of theatrical expression and an outlook on human life. In the following introduction I will outline my investigative focus and the path of reasoning I follow to integrate and transform these rather abstract formulations into the concreteness of making – and experiencing – theater.

The search and the material

The present research project, with its assemblage of materials, is an attempt to explore the implications of the concept of immanence in the collective creative process of theater making. In particular, it is an effort to illuminate what we might call “processes of immanence,” or “theater of immanence.”¹ My aim is to present a net of questions, observations, and thoughts ranging from the experiences of collective creative processes and collaborative work with the performers, to academic criticism on discourses related to the fields of performance studies, philosophy and performance philosophy, perception theory, and musicology. By unfurling this net I hope to contribute to the theories around the relationship between the structural specifics of theater – dramaturgically and compositionally – and the aspects of meaning and affect. Though, that formulation encapsulates a number of investigative sub-areas that can be broadly defined as: transforming theories into concrete compositional and processual measures; developing dramaturgical discourses beyond semantic language; problematizing a binary relation between composition/conceptualization and an intuitive, emotional creative force; discussing how to enhance a readiness for variation in the performers; problematizing hierarchical structures, both in regards to the hierarchy of expressions, as well as creative influence; mapping out a thought

¹ The term “theater of immanence” comes from the book *Theatres of Immanence* (2012) by Laura Cull, a reference that I will often return to.

process for a directorial practice; and finally, searching for a possible reciprocity between compositional structures and ethics.

The scope of this work is, therefore, relatively large, and it is fair to prepare the reader that not only does this multitude of critical angles produce a number of relevant but somewhat subordinate discursive extensions, *but also* that the unfolding of the reasoning is rather slow. Ideas, terms and concepts that are encountered early on might not be explained and fleshed out until further into the reading. The main reason for such a progression is that the subject matter consists of many layers that are thoroughly intertwined. Therefore, it might be constructive to return – and I will do my best to do the same – to what the critical investigation is mainly about: a search for the relationship between structural specifics of theater and the aspects of meaning and affect.²

The investigation will be based on my experience of conceptualizing and directing three different theater performances, all built around material that in one way or another originated from the American composer and artist John Cage (1912-1992). These performances will function as my main reference. They were constructed with different components, made under different kinds of production conditions, they incorporate quite different dramaturgical structures, and different groups of performers collaborated for each performance. There are however three important aspects that the performances share, and that illuminate the questions and areas that are being problematized. The first and most crucial aspect is what I alternately will talk about as multiplicities, individual expressive trajectories, superimpositions, expressive polyphony, and overload. These are terms and phenomena descriptive of an expressive instability and convergent with the idea that the expression consolidates through the indeterminate unfolding of multiple expressive relations and not through thorough composition.³ The second aspect is that they are dependent on a strong creative investment by the performers – on their capacity to improvise and invent – since the conceptual setups place, at the center, the creative responsibility onto the individual performer. The third aspect shared

² The, by now, rather large and influential critical discourse that goes under the name of Affect Theory, is not incorporated and used in this exploration. It could certainly be regarded as related to some of the theoretical levels that I problematize, but it would also be a move away from compositional and dramaturgical questions.

³ *Thorough composition* is a musical term descriptive of a compositional structure in which the material is precisely defined and set (all relations between the parameters), organized, and brought to consolidation according to internal, autonomous premises. The term will be used at some points in this reasoning as contrary to an immanent “logic.”

by the performances, in different ways, is that they are all formed around musical compositions, and embedded in musical movements. This is not only crucial to the structure and intensity of the performances, but it also influences the critical gaze and the concepts and terms that are used in the investigation. The titles of the performances are *John and the Mushrooms*, *vorschläge* and *Ryaonji – A Meeting*.

The performances move through time and nothing that is experienced within that time will be, or can be recaptured; they bring forth their “materiality exclusively in the present and immediately destroy it again the moment it is created, setting in motion a continuous cycle of generating materiality” (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 76). Fortunately, my attempt here is not about trying to recapture something that has past. If the critical processing is to have a positive and direct relation with things, it is only to the extent that it claims to grasp the thing itself, what it is: its way of finding consistency. In other words, the creative doings are not critically looked at with the intent to lock them in some kind of conclusiveness, but rather to search for possible extensions. What those possible extensions might be is something that I will discuss throughout. For now I will just briefly outline the esthetic foundation from which the investigative explications will be drawn, and what will constitute its main focus. Initially, it has to be understood that the critical gaze is placed precisely in the center of creative performative processes inhabited by actors, dancers, musicians and audience members; all surrounded by improvised bodily movements, words, and sounds. The performers, setting all this in motion, are engaged in a collaborative collective creation in which indeterminacy and improvisation steer the progression rather than a predetermined and rehearsed script/score of some kind. This means that the expressions are dominated by a non-narrative multiplicity, in which individually improvised expressive forms co-exist in a polyphonic togetherness. It is the unfolding of this creative and perceptive dynamic that the investigation is all about, and which I will look at from four different angles. The first of those angles could be seen as the substrate for the others: how the exchange of stimuli and expressions move and grow within a group of performers when chance and improvisation is the base for the creative inventions. Secondly, in such a creative situation the aspect of hierarchy – creative/ artistic, as well as social – is charged and I will try to examine how it plays out and effects the collaboration. The third angle is about meaning. I will look at how it can be defined and how it is produced in a polyphonic and non-narrative expressive

structure. The fourth critical approach is an attempt to carve out and discuss a possible correlation between the expressive structures that the performances represent and a notion of ethics delineated by the concept of potentiality.

The investigated materials are theater performances and the questions that I look at stem from creative and perceptive situations during the making and perceiving of theater. Though, in the critical treatment of the investigated material I have chosen to activate philosophical discourses rather than applying critical perspectives that more obviously belong to performance studies. This philosophical approach will be mainly represented by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), but also by Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi (b.1956), and the Italian/Australian philosopher Rosi Braidotti (b.1954). A number of secondary sources and critical extensions that utilize Deleuze's theories in discussions on art and theater will be used, as well as some within the field of performance studies. Among these are philosopher and performance studies scholar Laura Cull, philosopher and Deleuze scholar Claire Colebrook, art theoretician and Deleuze scholar Simon O'Sullivan, performance studies scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, and philosopher and Deleuze scholar Manuel Delanda.

Before explaining in more depth the critical foundation, I will outline the disposition of the work and the central themes and concepts that will be used.

Disposition and critical themes

Three different types of texts are presented in the project: descriptive texts, essays, and interviews. They intentionally unfold in somewhat different modes, hence, are meant to create a juxtapositional dynamic. The descriptive texts describe the making of the three theater performances, and go into detail, regarding: material, dramaturgical organization and conceptualization, rehearsal processes and the performance situations. These texts are linked to filmed documentations, still pictures, side texts of an explanatory quality, sound/music recordings/documentations, interviews with the performers, and to musical scores and manuscripts. The underlying aim of these descriptions is to give an account of how the performances were conceptualized and created, thus to enable an understanding of how the critical discourse connects to the different conceptual levels and to the specifics of the material. Together with the

documentations, the descriptive texts are also meant to offer a sense of the tactile aspects of the making of the performances, a corporeal substrate for the reflexive augmentations. The descriptions sometimes deviate from the descriptive mode. I would like those deviations to be understood as telling of my artistic practice, i.e. of how my thoughts move and develop in order to take on the task of directing, rather than understood as critical extensions detached from my practice. This comment is maybe most important to keep in mind when approaching the text *Cage Interpreted and Performed*, which includes an extensive description of John Cage's esthetics.

If the descriptive texts emerge out of the corporeality of the performances, the essays on the other hand pull the experiences into a more taut, reflective apparatus. They are developed to elevate the tactile experiences and the structural observations into an esthetic-philosophical reasoning, by investigating the connections between the performances and a broader existential/philosophical outlook on life. As such they enclose the practice by revealing what reverberates underneath the esthetics of the performances, as well as by indicating what hovers above them, as possible prolongations (what I earlier talked about as extensions). The three essays are titled: *Who is the creator?*, *Meeting – Meaning* and *The Rhythm of Thinking*.

In the process of creating a critical dialogue pertaining to the questions that my project revolves around, I have formed an institute called *The Institute for Unpredictable Processes*.⁴ This institute has over time conducted a number of interviews with me, and five of those are included in the presentation. The questions taken up in these interviews emanate from the engagement and involvement with a large number of colleagues and the themes and aspects that transpire sometimes go into areas that are not treated elsewhere in this thesis. The interviews are placed in conjunction with the themes reflected on in the texts surrounding them and should be seen as critical expansions, but in a different mode.

Interview 20, which follows this introductory chapter, approaches some critical questions about the overall structure of the work. It attempts to accommodate

⁴ *The Institute for Unpredictable Processes* was founded in San Francisco, USA, in 2013. The institute is a center for art and research exploring collective and individual artistic processes where improvisation and indeterminacy are major factors, and it is organized around shorter or longer projects in which different artists and researchers participate. The institute is devoted to promote, publish and present art and research that examines the circumstances and conditions specific to processes where varied types of unpredictability are in play. The work of the institute is guided by the idea that the investigation into these processes can enhance the readiness to include unpredictable factors in processes outside the discrete realm of art making, and by doing so allow for more freedom of thought among people.

the demands that the reader might experience from the multitude of themes and aspects presented. The question of how the research aspect can be thought about is addressed, and it discusses who the receiver of a work like this could be.

In the text *Cage Interpreted and Performed*, the process and thinking behind creating the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* is rendered. Since John Cage's art is so central to the project as a whole, the text also looks at his influences, his artistic development and what was central in his esthetics and compositional methods, and therefore decisive in the different decisions when making the performance. The text goes on to describe how Cage's esthetic principles steered the construction of the performative concept, how they effected the rehearsal process, the building of the performance space and how they colored the relationship between the performance and its audience. The structure of the script is described, as well as how the music was incorporated. When we made the performance we collaborated with a reference group. That collaboration, its development and how it influenced the creative process, is also explained. The last part of the text introduces, in three separate sections, a discussion on how the material and the conceptual setup somewhat forced the different roles – the performer, director, and audience member – to shift. These are shifts that to a large degree have to do with the allocation of responsibility for how the expression is formed and how it finds meaning. All these aspects considered, the main concern of this text is to render the process of transferring and transposing the esthetics and thinking of Cage, into the theatrical performance.

In *Interview 3* the relation between theory and practice is discussed. It treats the friction between my critical activity and practice as a director, and introduces some core problems by appropriating critical thinking from outside the field of the actual practice. It discusses if/how theory can be more partial, if it can operate on and relate to limited fields, thus it considers the ambition to merge a theoretical/philosophical reasoning with compositional and dramaturgical thinking.

The second descriptive text, *Hierarchy in Creation*, describes how the sound art piece *vorschläge*, based on a composition (with the same title), by the German composer Mathias Spahlinger, was made. It starts by outlining the work and esthetics of Spahlinger, and goes on to untangle his composition in detail, as well as the concept and the structure of the performance. The text then tells about the process of preparing the performance and selecting which material to include,

the translation process and production preparations. Following the process of the recordings, it then describes the communication dynamic within the ensemble. The composition, and consequently the critical explication, pulls into focus the issue of creative hierarchy. It problematizes the relations between the authority of the author, the demands of the material (that is intended to be set in motion as an esthetic expression), and the creative investment of the musician(s). Spahlinger implicitly makes the assumption that the individual musician carries a double picture of him/her self; partly as an autonomous creative individual and partly as a worker who is the means to the production of an object that does not belong to him or her, and which he/she has no role in designing. The suggested radicality – which certainly becomes a contradiction – lies in the implication that to infuse vitality in creation/interpretation (therefore in society), a dissolving of the author is necessary. Just as Spahlinger, in his composition, illuminates and questions his authoritative position, I try to problematize my own role as initiator and director. This strain is one of the most important esthetic aspects in the construction of all three performances, as well as a central theme in the critical investigation. Following that focus, I introduce the idea of *directing as participation*, which is a conceptual attempt to encapsulate how directing can be not only about initiating, but also about moving along the unfolding of the event with a sense of participating in it, even though not concretely contributing. The text goes on to develop, in line with the problematization that Spahlinger's composition brings to light, the idea that the interpretation of the composition involves the forming of sociometric patterns.

The conversation in *Interview 7* revolves around aspects of a personal nature and my reasons for initiating immanent creative processes. It brings up questions around the situation of being in the contradictory position of initiator and director, and at the same time relinquishing the use of my own judgment to shape the end result. From there it moves into the question of whether or not working with unpredictable forms is a way of forfeiting the individual mark or statement. This leads into a discussion about esthetic/expressive intent. The interview also addresses the aspect of the director's involvement in expressions that are in continuous variation.

The third descriptive text, *Differentiated Presence*, which tells about the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, takes on a slightly different quality. In

the rendering of the two other performances, the descriptive gaze is positioned in the middle of the creative process. In this text, the critical dynamic is instead generated through a juxtaposition of the directorial intent with the experience of being a viewer. This position shifts the focus away from the creative process, towards possible ways that the performance can be perceived; its potentiality. The question then becomes: how does the aim of the concept relate to the experience of viewing it? The text starts with a detailed description of Cage's composition *Ryoanji*, and explains how the structure of the performance was conceptualized. Interviews with the musicians, who share their view of the composition and the challenges to perform it within the realm of the performative collaboration, are intertwined. The directorial/choreographic methodology that I applied when I created the performance were different performative tasks to be used for investigating and developing individual bodily expressions, and this methodology is described in detail. In conjunction with the concepts of expressive multiplicities, superimpositions and multi-vocality, the term *relation-of-nonrelation* is introduced. It is a term that is central to my reasoning as a whole and is appropriated from the thinking of philosopher Brian Massumi. It refers to the unfolding of perceptive processes and reoccurs at different places in this investigation as it closely relates to the discourse of *process philosophy* and to the dynamics and workings of *co-composition*. The text then goes on to discuss how the convergence of the individual expressive trajectories – created by the dancers – might influence their initial intention, and the possibility of contaminating each other. In order to deepen the exposition of how I imagined the individual audience member would/could experience the performance, the text continues with a longer “note” on my reaction to viewing the documentations. As a conclusion, of sorts, it ends with a comment on the important fact that the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* does not performatively expose its investigative intention, and how this circumstance implies a perceptive difference, in comparison with the other two performances.

Who is the Creator? is the first of the three essays that descriptively attempts to translate the tactile experiences into a theoretical and philosophical reasoning. The critical gaze is mainly positioned within the ensemble, and examines the complex flow of energies among the performers when chance and unpredictability are at play. The text makes use of the concept of immanence, to illuminate the difference between transcendent processes and immanent processes and the relationship

thereof regarding the demands on the director and on the performers. This is further developed into the question of how immanent processes occur and can be sustained in collective creative situations. The two concepts *consistency* and *consolidation* are introduced to delineate and describe how expressive matter, produced within the immanent creative process, takes form and transforms. And then they are utilized to investigate how all the “separate” parts of the performances relate and hold together. The text then moves into the question of creative responsibility in collaborative theater work where the concepts of chance, indeterminacy and improvisation are in play. It looks at the creativity of the individual and its dependence on and consideration of the group, asking questions like: what is the relation between the individual desire to express and the expression of the whole? What is the relation between individual creative responsibility and collective creative responsibility? The term *shifting of roles* is developed to further describe the individual responsibility in the collective creation, which in turn demands that the term *collective creation* is put aside in favor of the term *instant collective composition*. The discussion about instant collective composition instigates a closer look at the question of what the performers really experience they are a part of. What does the immanent process make them feel that they are creatively participating in? In connection to these questions, the last part of the essay extends the discussion around creative hierarchy, and problematizes my own position as instigator and leader of the collaboration.

In *Interview 5*, the discussion around the notion of appropriation of critical and philosophical discourses into creative activity is deepened. And it problematizes the question of thinking in relation to creative doings.

The reasoning in the essay *Meeting – Meaning* expands the question of an immanent process to include the exchange between the expression of the performance and its audience, i.e. descriptive of a mode of sharing amongst *everybody simultaneously present in space and time*, as participants in the theatrical presentation. It attempts to unravel how different formal structures can be created to enhance the possibility for the audience to be co-creative when experiencing the performance. This, in turn, extends into questions around the production of meaning: is meaning inherent in the experience of co-composition? And if so, can the experience of co-composition be thought of as a process of becoming? The communicative interplay that these questions

indicate inevitably elicit other concepts and ways of looking at the performance situation, as preconceptions of what theater “is,” of what a theater space should look like, and of how a story “should” unfold, and must be confronted. So, taking off from this idea of an extended immanent process, the reasoning will problematize three aspects that, in their combined dynamic, encapsulate the complex question of meaning: The notion of communality in the shared experience of the performance; the workings of a representational coding, and the unfolding a co-compositional activity. The idea that a group of people sharing space and time form a social community has, for a very long time, functioned as something of a dramaturgical substrate, an unavoidable condition, when critical investigations on the impact of theater have been developed. In contemporary theater, as well as in performance studies, this notion is however challenged on both dramaturgical and generalizing grounds, but the view that this dynamic consists of just two components – the performance and the audience – still, to a large degree, prevails as a precondition for the different critical attempts. In expressive structures dominated by superimpositions and multiple expressive trajectories this has to be problematized beyond the idea of a meeting between these two components, because just as the merging of the expressive material is elusive and in flux, the communality of the audience is fully differentiated, and is examined with that in mind.

When reflecting on the production of meaning, it is crucial to problematize the function of representation: representation as a system where the codification of signs, symbols, semantic and semiotic language are established. This is the system in which the performances that we are looking at operate: They are part of a world built on a representational coding. But as representation purports definitions as fixed, as operating with defined measures, and thus can be seen as exerting a transcendent force, it is essential for the immanent creative process, as well as for the over all esthetic intention, to not only problematize its workings in the moment of perception but to look at how it can be counteracted and replaced by the notion of presence. The critique of representational esthetics moves like an eddy, round and round and round, and it produces overlapping reflections on the phenomena, its constitution, power, importance, unavoidability and crisis. This work will not draw on that apparatus and the many strains of thought connected to it. Instead I will view representation as an obstruction

that enhances the goal of the performances, and as an unavoidable precondition in the creative processes, as well as in the dramaturgical thinking, *and* in the making of the compositional structure. Those are structures characterized by multiple expressions simultaneously set in motion to create superimpositions in which not one single narrative trajectory or expressive focus can be delineated and the audience therefore are “forced to independently prioritize their sensorial impressions” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 33). The emergence of meaning in such a perceptual environment generates a need to exchange/transform/extend the concept of an immanent process towards the concepts of co-composition and co-creation, in diverse ways and combinations. As those terms can be said to connote a certain degree of active structuring/restructuring in the perceptive moment, the reasoning aims to explore how this activity unfolds, what it is dependent on, and its potential.

Interview14 starts with a discussion about *expressive instability*. This is a term that I introduce in the context of experiencing expressions dominated by multiple expressive trajectories and superimpositions. It is used to describe a performative structure that is not only in continuous variation, but also in continuous contemplation. The realm of perception and the esthetic/perceptive reasoning for allowing chance, indeterminacy and unpredictability to have an important role in the performances, is discussed, as well as, the relation between such structures and the possibility of self-creation. The aspect of ethics is touched upon in relation to Cage and his view on experimentation, and the idea of encountering something never before experienced as crucial in determining if a theater performance can be referred to as more or less ethical. Embedded in this thought lies the question of how the vitality and self-enjoyment, that is hopefully/possibly gained from experiencing the expressional force of the performance, can have an affect on the relationships that the individual in the audience engages in outside the theater. The notion that a reciprocity exists between the movement of thought and ethics, is also discussed.

This ethico-esthetic perspective is the main theme in the essay *The Rhythm of Thinking*. In the directorial and dramaturgical approach, in the nature of the creative processes, in the quality of the performed material, there is an overarching esthetic principle which I claim is an *embodied vision of the subject*; an ethics. Later in this introduction I will outline the meaning of this

term, but it encapsulates an idea, actually a conviction, of how an outlook on the potentiality of the human subject constitutes a foundation for an ethics. The artistic attempt has been to transform this vision into performative structures and these research reflections, taken together, are then in turn an attempt to illuminate how this vision relates to the constitution of the different compositional aspects of the performances. To explain – and scrutinize – this claim of a reciprocal relation between a vision of the subject and the esthetics of the performances, the text tries to explicate how the dramaturgical and compositional construct of the performances correlates to my outlook on the world. It starts out with circumscribing how ethics is defined and used in the apparatus, and connects it to the activity of *figuring-out*. In explaining the use of that activity/concept I make something of a detour, in examining some related dramaturgical reflections made by Berthold Brecht. The text then goes back to looking at how an onto-ethics can be formulated and this is done through the thinking of Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze and Brian Massumi. The text experiments with connecting the experiences of co-composing and becoming with the movement of thinking and its relation to the purely sensed. In doing so, and by placing it in the directorial practice, the concept of “forming the circumstances” as a directorial approach is explained, and this is done in close connection to the concept of *univocity*. Reconnecting to the reasoning in the essay *Meeting-Meaning*, the last part looks at the relation between the forces of a representational and a non-representational coding in relation to ethics, thus exploring ways to approach some questions that run throughout this work: Can the occurrence of immanent processes in the exchange between the performance and its audience be ascribed specific values? If so, what kind of values are they and how can they be described? Are different values to be gained, depending on the structure of the performance and how the immanent process evolves? Can theater performances that lack the possibility to create an immanent process in the exchange between the performance and its audience, be given a general value, and those performances that do encourage it, be given another? Should performances with a multilayered structure that build on superimpositions, be given a higher value, for that reason alone? Can a performance, where immanence occurs in the exchange between performance and audience, thereby enabling an experience of becoming, be described as more ethical?

Interview 19 can actually be seen as a continuation of the essay *The Rhythm of Thinking*. It continues and deepens the reasoning around esthetics and ethics by connecting it to the notion of participation, and to a political outlook. The interview ends in a somewhat conclusive mode, but also introduces some themes that have *not* been discussed elsewhere, like for example, the aspect of making theater for young audiences.

As previously mentioned, there are, at certain points in the text, and mainly in connection to the more detailed descriptions, links to examples from the documentations of the performances.⁵ They are edited and positioned to illustrate what is being talked about. But the documentations are also accessible in full, and in different versions. The reason for including more than one version is because the performances are all different. Their materiality and expression are dependent on chance procedures and improvisation and since this aspect is central to the reasoning, it is important to have the possibility to compare. There are four documentations of performances of *John and the Mushrooms*, four documentations of performances of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, and four different movements that together make up the performance of *vorschläge*.⁶

Defining the fields of tension – Methodology

The image that could function as a backdrop for this whole work is the image of the individual subject within the collective. It is an image of many singulars and the contours of each and every subject, although traceable, is clearly a coming together of the creative collective, the audience, and their combined formation. However, even if this image is constructive to keep in mind throughout, it does not generate the necessary impetus for the reasoning to move forward. Instead, it is essential to locate what I think of as the *fields of tension* that emerge between things. And in order to locate and define these fields, we need to start by looking at how the things are constituted.

⁵ As the questions and thought lines running through these different materials are, to say the least, very much related I encourage the reader to move between the different layers, especially between the reflexive apparatus and the documentations.

⁶ The performance of *vorschläge* does not exist in different versions.

To call them “things” is not really sufficient, and to think of them as poles, even if it makes sense as it implies that there is a tension, might indicate that they are solid, which they are not. They are *compounds of energies; of diverse intensions and desires*. I suggest that there are five of them. In the reasoning they are thoroughly intertwined and codependent and it would be disconfirmatory to the critical mode to put them in some kind of hierarchical order, but in the following I will describe how they are formed and how their interrelatedness constitutes the critical methodology.

The performer - and subsequently their togetherness – is filled with different energies and desires; to create, to collaborate, to use her skills, to develop his insights, and many other ones. To see the performers as one compound should only be understood as confirmative of their common position as creators and presenters of the expression, and as working under the same circumstances. In the reasoning, they constitute one highly dynamic coherent unit, but the ineffable diversity of energies inherent in this group is important to keep in mind.

Another compound is the material itself. Not the bodies or voices of the performers, but instead what could be seen as the hardware: the conceptual grid, the musical compositions, the texts and the scenography, that is used in the performances. This group of materials exerts a force of its own that has to be complied with. It has its own expressive intent which, when put together, forms the circumstances – rules, restrictions, possibilities – for how the expression is shaped and for how the different components relate.

The third compound is the full performative event, the meeting between the expression of the performance and the audience. To see this meeting as a compound is to emphasize perception as a central issue. It creates a focus on the individual in the activity of sensing and creating meaning, and highlights if her sense is one of belonging to a community. In other words, this compound assembles all the experiential aspects.

The fourth compound is made up of the diverse and divergent energies within myself. It encapsulates my esthetics, my convictions and initiative (to choose and set in motion the material), my skills and inabilities, my history and my longings. Yes, all the reasons for doing what I am doing.

The fifth compound is also steered by me, formed by the conglomerate of critical tools used in the analysis. This compound encapsulates the decision

of how to position the critical gaze, and the choice of the transdisciplinary connections to be made. Hence, it defines the critical domain and its relation to existing critique. In its limitations, this compound is firmly attached to the overall esthetics, even if it is installed somewhat to provoke.

So, the five “things” are: The energies of the performer(s); the force of the material; the perceptive dynamic of the full event; the injection of my own personal energy, esthetic intent and conviction; and the choices and activation of the critical discourses. It is not necessary, or even possible, to illuminate all the different layers of energies that these things represent. *What is necessary is to locate and acknowledge them and to activate the tension that ensues when they are critically merged.* Then the fields of tension occur, and it is these fields that constitute the core grid of the reasoning. They generate the necessary impetus for the critical activity, and as such they constitute the methodology for the investigation. An example of a reoccurring field of tension – just to give a clearer picture – is what is generated inbetween the restrictions of the concepts on which the performances are based, and the feelings and opinions within the performer when complying with those limits/restrictions. Another, crucial field of tension throughout the reasoning, is the tension that occurs between the notion of a directorial practice as decisive for the expressive output, and the presence of chance and indeterminacy.

To delineate the compounds of energies and to locate the fields of tension might imply that they are occurrences and phenomena that are somewhat stable which, of course, they are not. Not only are they in constant flux – the compounds as well as the fields – but they also operate outside the unavoidable limitations of my gaze. In this complexity, can anything be considered stable? Is stability necessary for a critique to find its vigor? Yes, I think so. And my suggestion – which is the proposed axis around which the critical operations rotate – is that the only thing that can be stable is an ethics. Even if the definition of ethics, that I will propose, is processual, i.e. continuously moving forward, it carries the modality of conviction; experimentally searching for what life can be, not judging or selecting.

In order to move into the exploration and heat up the fields of tension we need to examine how the critical gaze is positioned, which analytical perspectives are chosen, and which terms and concepts are used and expanded upon.

Processing process – Analytical perspectives

How, from its just-beginnings in bare activity, can an experience modulate its own self-formative tendency's going beyond itself, toward a potentializing of other events? Since foundational clearness and distinctness are (fortunately for creativity) out of the question, it is a given that no event can lay down the law in a way that essentially predefines its succession.

Brian Massumi

The fields of tension encapsulate and cause processes of differing nature. This is clear and significant. Processes of creation, processes of preparation, processes of thinking, of self-organizing, processes of collaboration, processes of perception, processes of creating meaning, of problematizing, processes of interaction and of relations unfolding, processes of co-composing, and processes of becoming. Some of these processes are more solid since they include human relations, others more concealed, evolving in an inner world. Some of them belong to the creative situation and some to a perception process, *and* they are reciprocal. Even more important, in regards to in which dynamic milieu these processes unfold, is that some are *consciously enhanced and exposed as an expressive part of the performance*. Consequently, the analytical perspectives are not chosen solely for their coherency when problematizing and untangling all these different types of processes, but also because they are rooted in and affirmative of a *process ontology*. This is a term that cannot be disconnected from the philosophical discourse of *process philosophy* (the two terms will occur interchangeably in this reasoning, but there is a point to staying with the former as it ties the reasoning, more concretely, to the corporeality of the performances). And as process philosophy, in different ways, influences the thinking of my main theoretical references - Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi, Rosi Braidotti – it is reasonable to say that it is *a broadened definition of process philosophy* that will be used in the investigation. The choice of analytical perspective is, more or less entirely, influenced and inspired by the nature of the material and the

structures of the concepts that were used when creating the performances. This correlation is multilayered, but it can simply be said that the analytical perspective is chosen because it is confirmative and – more importantly – thoroughly critically aware of an esthetic that places processes as the main objective for both creation and perception.

A more precise definition of process philosophy and coherency as an analytical discourse will evolve concurrently with its application in my reasoning, but I will preliminarily outline its most important and relevant characteristics.

Contrary to an epistemology that starts with a knowing subject observing and describing the world, process philosophy places being – ontology – as the foundational premise for the analysis.⁷ A subject-object polarity is then less relevant and instead process philosophy formulates an ontology whereby relations continually and constantly emerge anew. Everything is in a perpetual becoming, difference and the singular is acknowledged, and multiplicity is set free. There is no real beginning; life – and thinking – must be seen as always and continuously in the middle (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). It is useful, in this investigative context, to think of how a process ontology effaces the idea that relations can be disjunctive; they are always in transition. It then follows that the general condition of activity in the world is *not* one of chaos. Consequently all binary relations are eliminated, all opposites erased, and change is seen as continuous transformations saturated with potentiality. This turns chaos into the quasi-chaotic (Massumi 2011).

Process philosophy, especially how it is explicated in the reasoning of Brian Massumi (carving out what he defines as an activist philosophy), holds concepts and terms that will be quite concretely attached to the creative and perceptive situations the performances present – like potentiality, co-composition, relation-of-nonrelation, and becoming. But a concept that, for both Massumi and Deleuze, functions as a dynamic unit, like an arc that frames the unfolding inherent in a process ontology, is the concept of the event. Even if that concept is not going to

⁷ Process philosophy is primarily associated with the American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), but also with philosophers like Samuel Alexander (1859-1938), CS Pierce (1839-1883), John Dewey (1859-1952), William James (1842-1910), and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000), which firmly places it in 20th century North America. Both Brian Massumi and Gilles Deleuze mainly connect to the theories of Alfred North Whitehead (though Massumi quite extensively also relies on/ refers to William James). What is interesting in this framework is that Brian Massumi, through the thinking of William James, connects Whitehead to the philosophical school of American Pragmatism and in the text *Cage Interpreted and Performed*, I try to clarify the relationship between John Cage and American Pragmatism (Massumi 2011).

play a central role in the continued reasoning it is worth looking at as it exposes how process philosophy takes off from the idea of the unformed (expression/experience) – which is something of an esthetic-perceptive condition in the performances, as well as in my critical exposition.

In his book *Semblance and Event, Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Art* (2011) – a rich and extensive work on merging philosophical discourses with theories on perception and aesthetics – Brian Massumi enters into his reasoning and definition of activist philosophy through Alfred North Whitehead’s definition of process philosophy.⁸ In dialogue with Whitehead, and certainly also with Gilles Deleuze, Massumi formulates, or maybe one could say traces, a kind of three-dimensional map of the unfolding of all occurrences. The precondition is that everything in the world is in a continuous becoming and the nucleus of this movement is the unfolding of the event. Massumi (2011) takes off from the idea of a state that is encapsulated in the principle of *unrest*. I understand this state as the unruly movement of the world’s general activity, and in that movement Massumi locates a kind of starting point (for the forming of the expression/experience), that he calls *bare activity*. This is an “inaugural moment of indecision between the already-going-on-around and the taking-in-to-new-effect, before the culmination of this occurrence has sorted out just what occasion it will have been” (Massumi 2011, 2). This, in turn, is the initial stage of the event, of the process; the “just-beginning-to-stir of the event coming into its newness out of the soon to be prior background activity it will have left creatively behind” (Massumi 2011, 3). Here we can see the arc of the event that “carries it through its phases to a culmination all its own: a dynamic unity no other event can have in just this way” (Massumi 2011, 3). Conceived by Gilles Deleuze (and Felix Guattari) the complexity of the event is shown in the tangled treatment it is put through in their last book together *What is Philosophy?* (1994) At one point, moving from the notion of the virtual and how it, through a process of immanence, rises from chaos and finds its consistency, Deleuze and Guattari say that an event is formed as an entity “on a plane of immanence that sections the chaos. This is what we call the Event, or the part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens. The event is not

⁸“That how an actual entity becomes continues what that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its “being” is constituted by its ‘becoming’. This is the principle of process” (Whitehead, 1929, 23).

the state of affairs. It is actualized in a state of affairs, in a body, in a lived, but it has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 156).

The event should be understood as a micro sequence, an unfolding happening in the shortest moment, but Massumi’s different formulations and gaze on the concept hold different perspectives too, which allows for understanding the dynamic of the unfolding as transferable to sequences on another scale, *and* to how it relates; both regarding event to event and to what can be understood as a perceiving mind: “The unfolding of the event cannot but be felt. Each phase of the event must in some way perceive the pertinence of the phase before it, in order to gather the prior phase’s momentum into its own unfolding. Even as it does this, it is already anticipating a subsequent phase, to which it will in turn relay the momentum of the event’s occurrence. The phases of occurrence overlap as they relay each other following an arc of felt becoming” (Massumi, 2011, 3). This feeling of the events unfolding is always in the now, it cannot be otherwise, but it is an experience of the “internal totalities of an always variable past” (Deleuze 1994, 287).⁹ Which also can be described as though the event, that is about to unfold, takes a dose of the world’s surrounding general activity and makes it into its own special activity (Massumi 2011). The movement of the event and the phenomena of becoming are present – unfolding, emerging – without any attention paid to it. However, the treatment, or rather activation, they are given in the thinking of Massumi is as active parts of human experience. They are acknowledged as central in perceptive sequences and – which is more apparent in some instances than in others – closely tied to the experience of art, or maybe one should say, distinguished and problematized within the tension between ongoing life and art experience.

Understandably, this can seem like an ungraspable cascade of concepts and terms, but for the moment it only needs to be understood as signifying two important aspects. First, that a process ontology illuminates the intricacy of

⁹ The concept of time, within critique, is not often a time of coexistence, since its impetus is analysis. Should that be considered a fact? Or, is it possible to pose the question of how (and if) the act of critical rendering can strive towards a time of coexistence, a time that does not exclude the before and after, but superimposes the two? Deleuze would probably say that it is a question of composition.

perception, and secondly that process philosophy is “at no remove from life’s immediacy” (Massumi 2011, 1). Implicitly, this means that process philosophy cannot breathe without an ongoing reevaluation and reinvention of its relation to lived experience. If this is clear in Deleuze’s thinking, it comes across even more so in Massumi’s extensions.

Immanence and adjunctive terms

If a process ontology is the tacit foundation for this exploration, it is through the concept of immanence and “processes of immanence” that the creative activities will be looked at and function as the critical instigator. It is certainly not only in process philosophy that the concept of immanence is central, but since this is not the place to give an overview of its use and implications for philosophy in general, I will outline its meaning more or less exclusively by following Gilles Deleuze, whose thinking permeates this work as a whole. I will also sketch out how it will be inserted in the analysis of the creative and perceptive situations, but the more specific meaning of the concept of immanence – i.e. its force and function in this particular context – will be explicated in the description of the performances and in the essays.

The concept of immanence – or the plane of immanence – is central and reoccurring in the thinking of Gilles Deleuze. It is the condition, the actual criteria for what constitutes philosophy, as the plane of immanence is the foundation for thinking as such: “it is a plane of immanence that constitute the absolute ground of philosophy, its earth or deterritorialization, the foundation on which it creates its concepts” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 41). This can also be understood as philosophy “operates on the plane of immanence and through ‘forms’ that are themselves immanent to the plane (they do not ‘arrive’ from ‘elsewhere’)” (O’Sullivan 2006, 111). For Deleuze immanence constitutes being as such, therefore immanence can be said to begin with the certainty that there is just one stream of life or one plane of being. It is not a plane of perception enclosed inside the human mind, but a perpetual movement, a dynamic and open flow of becoming. It is through the lens of immanence that Deleuze reads and establishes connection with other thinkers and discourses within the field of

philosophy, as well as, within the field of art.¹⁰ As such, it could be described as a gaze that functions as an incursive strategy when entering into philosophical analysis, its conditions, terms and concepts. However, the concept of immanence does not only operate on multiple levels but could also be said to have a double purpose: on the one hand, it functions as an ontologically grounding term, and on the other hand, it constitutes a resistance against philosophical discourses that are not rooted in perpetually moving lived experiences, thus it opposes the idea that “the world is simply there, or transcendent, only to be viewed by the human knower” (Colebrook 2002, 69). In the book *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari 1994), the description of the plane of immanence goes through an in-depth examination of what constitutes a concept, as such. This is a necessary progression since concepts are created out of language and immanence is not. Hence, a description, of a concept like immanence, must precede the (any) critical treatment. So, since immanence is thinking *before* conceptualization – which is the reason it cannot be a method – we are faced with an unavoidable contradiction manifested already in the use of the term, since it would not occur without thinking.

Deleuze sees the creation of concepts as an activity specific to philosophy. Though, the concepts that philosophy creates should not be understood as abstract terms or representations, or even less so, as general units referring to universal entities. Rather, in order to activate a vital thinking they need to be grounded in experience, in what Deleuze calls intensities, and they need to be constantly reevaluated and reconfigured. The inner condition of thinking as such - and life itself – is, according to Deleuze, a perpetual and infinite movement. It is not something that starts from an immobile point. Instead, Deleuze “insists that we need to begin from a mobility, flux, becoming or change that has no underlying foundation, which he refers to as the ‘plane of immanence’” (Colebrook 2002, 52). This is why it is important not to confuse the plane of immanence with the concept, i.e. not to make it a concept that lies behind other concepts but instead understand it as an infinite and absolute substrate necessary for thinking to ensue: “The plane of immanence is neither a concept nor the concept of all concepts. If one were to be confused with the other there would be nothing to stop concepts from forming a

¹⁰ It is also relevant to note that the concept of immanence is important for Deleuze when his thinking enters into the fields of sociology, psychology and politics.

single one or becoming universals and losing their singularity, and the plane would also lose its openness” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 35). Even if Deleuze claims that “the plane of immanence must be regarded as prephilosophical” it has to be “laid out” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 40). And how this instituting – of the plane of immanence – is done, mirrors the history of philosophy. We could, therefore, say that it is the choices that are made, when formulating how to make critical use of the infinite movement of the plane of immanence, that constitute a philosophical discourse. But such an image inevitably generates the question: *what* is the plane of immanence instituted to? The answer given by Deleuze (and Guattari) is chaos; a movement “characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 42). In chaos there are no connections, chaos generates chaos and infinitely undoes every consistency. On that plane of infinite speed, of disconnection, disappearance and inconsistency, it is the concepts that create consistency, a bind and dependency: “By making a section of chaos, the plane of immanence requires a creation of concepts” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 42).

It is impossible to disentangle the concept of transcendence from this dynamic. If immanence works like a sieve, giving, through its concepts, consistency to chaos, a transcendent force, in turn, obstructs the fluidity of immanence by placing something that immanence is immanent to. This “something” has changed over history but has always been a term outside life itself, a higher force, such as the foundation of God, Subjectivity or Matter. This constructs a two-world view, a duality where a world beyond the world is created. Deleuze see this polarity as the major error of Western philosophy, and in his last text *Immanence: A Life* he calmly states that immanence “is not related to Some Thing as a unity superior to all things or to a Subject as an act that brings about a synthesis of things: it is only when immanence is no longer immanence to anything other than itself that we can speak of a plane of immanence” (Deleuze 2001, 27). Eliminating this duality between immanence and transcendence eradicates the idea of a two-world view, of life coming from somewhere other than from the movement of life itself, and in this modern moment, even if the obstruction caused by transcendent rulers will never vanish, Deleuze insists that we are no longer satisfied with thinking immanence as immanent to transcendence, instead “we want to think transcendence within

the immanent, and it is from immanence that a breach is expected” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 47). But as transcendence is an outcome of thinking – the creation of concepts – it can be said to be, continuously, a product of immanence. Produced by human thought, transcendence cannot stop itself from interpreting immanence as immanent to something, like the great object of contemplation, or a reflecting, deconstructing subject. Conclusively, Deleuze’s notion of the plane of immanence, cannot be understood as specifically defined as an opposition to its traditional opposite; transcendence.

If this outlook on the concept of immanence is placed outside thinking, as such, we arrive at an understanding of the term that is descriptive of a process that grows from within and becomes, as it is made. It is inherent within the physical world of things, of animals and humans, in social interaction and communication, as well as, in nature. It is a plane not related to divine energies. Immanence is everywhere: within each discrete being, as well as on the plane of the whole, in which they participate. But now, approaching the question of how the concept of immanence – as developed by Deleuze – can be transferred and used in an investigation and analysis of theater, we need to start linking the concept of immanence with relational qualities and collective expressional activity. This will (as we shall see more concretely when moving into the analysis of the performances) entail a partial reinstatement of the polarity between immanence and transcendence, not as opposites, but as two contradictory yet communicating planes.

The reinstatement of this polarity stems both from how the collective creation is instigated, as well as from the conceptual construct of the performances.¹¹ Activities are set in motion through a transcendent force and different levels of hierarchy are prevalent. How to understand this will be discussed throughout, but initially it can be said that the attempt to performatively activate the concept of immanence is trapped within a reality steered by energies that oppose its presence.

¹¹ It would also be possible to say that the system of production, understood as the structural restraints that the institutions in which the performances are produced and presented – hence dependent on – exerts a transcendent force. The production situations for the performances were different, in many aspects, but in regards to the transcendent influence of an institutional production apparatus, the production of *John and the Mushrooms* was made in quite conservative and hierarchical circumstances, and the other two were produced in a more free group situation, hence the nature of the transcendent influence – production wise – varied and the hindrances for a truly immanent process therefore took on different dynamics. However, the cultural production system that all three were a part of – and which the performances partly intended to question – neither had an interest in, nor the capacity to allow a truly immanent force to guide the process, since their existence is all about implementing an economical-political ordering. This type of cultural-political analytical gaze will not be applied in this work.

Immanence, or the immanent energy, is in these reflections therefore, defined in relation ‘to’ something (that is not), and this notion – or rather instrumentalist way of inserting the concept – is dubious and pointed out by Deleuze when he says that whenever “immanence is interpreted as immanent ‘to’ something a confusion of plane and concept results, so that the concept becomes a transcendent universal and the plane becomes an attribute in the concept. When misunderstood this way, the plane of immanence revives the transcendent again: it is a simple field of phenomena that now only possess in a secondary way that which first of all is attributed to the transcendent unity” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 44). Instead of letting this observation stymie the critique, we just need to carry it with us – as an underlying critical substrate – when instituting and utilizing the dynamics of immanence in the limited and specific way, as intended here: as a critical tool examining the creative flow in a collective creative situation. In their ongoing work to explore the conditions for artistic practices to engage in philosophical thinking, Erin Manning and Brian Massumi delineate and activate the concept of immanence. They find its usefulness in the fact that an “immanent critique engages with new processes more than new products, from a constructivist angle. It seeks to energize new modes of activity, already in gem, that seem to offer a potential to escape or overspill ready-made channelings into the dominant value system. The strategy of immanent critique is to inhabit one’s complicity and make it turn – in the sense in which butter ‘turns’ to curd” (Manning, Massumi, 2014, 87).

The specific meaning of the concept of immanence in this particular framework will be explicated throughout, but an initial understanding of its force and function should commence with the observation that what all three performances have in common is that the expressive outcome of the collective creation grows from within, and is determined by intuitive creative inventions made by each individual performer.¹² The concept of immanence – an immanent energy – is thus meant to signify that the creative expression is set in motion through the judgment of the individual performer, and that each expressional

¹² In/when/by exchanging the word invention with improvisation, it should be noted that creative processes, where improvisation is used as an important part, are not in any way rare. Different modes of improvisation are continually present in the making of theater: as a method in the developmental stages of a piece, or as a discrete part of a performance, or simply as a necessary flexibility to accommodate all those small shifts every performance entails. One could actually claim that, to a greater or lesser degree, unprepared decisions are demanded from performers in all performative situations, even in strictly formatted ones. The concept of improvisation will not be used much or thoroughly problematized in this work, even if its presence is undeniable.

form emanates from a personal initiative/action, which in turn is influenced by the stimuli that is perceived. An immanent creative process is not necessarily set in motion with a specific intention but becomes through making. It is open and indeterminate within the restraints of its different parts (participants), and space, but not in time. The immanent process is a generative energy that could be tacit but never petrified, therefore in perpetual variation. It is immanent because the development of the collective expression – over and through time – is not decided or rehearsed: it emanates from within the collective process and gets its momentum from each performer’s initiative (impulse, reaction, answer, judgment). In other words, an immanent creative energy is a term that describes a process of instantaneous and indeterminate building of an expressive form within a group of performers.

Even if the relational aspects of being on a plane of immanence must be regarded as crucial, since all life develops (creates itself) from and in relation to an immanent force, the immanent force is not *dependent* on any kind of exchange between beings. Processes of immanence are continually happening. Though, in this framework, the concept of immanence is constituted by a mode of exchange between expressions and humans simultaneously present in space and time, hence corresponding to how relations emerge. This allows for activating the concept of immanence as a critical/philosophical discourse in the analysis of the performance situation *as a whole*, i.e. in the critical treatment of processes and energies that evolve in and between everybody present: the performers involved in the collective creative process and the audience; all encapsulated in the duration of the performative event. An immanent process, as I intend to define and use it, is a process both of an emerging creation, happening as an exchange between the performers, as well as an exchange between the expression of the performance and its audience.

In order to make critical use of such a definition, it is necessary, as I have indicated above, to employ quite a few adjunctive concepts and terms. Three of these – *univocity*, *co-composition* and *relation-of-nonrelation* – are central to this thesis, and need to be outlined. They are not only generated by and contingent on the concept of immanence, but are interlinked and, in my reasoning, dependent on each other. As an indication of their use they should be seen as connected to multiple individual expressive trajectories, superimpositions, expressive

polyphony, and overload, as well as to the idea that the expression consolidates through the indeterminate unfolding of multiple expressive relations and not through thorough composition.

The definition of the concept of univocity is very closely connected to Deleuze's explication of the plane of immanence.¹³ The complexity of this concept develops out of a discourse on difference, real difference – non-binary difference – and subsequently a non-hierarchical outlook on being (a univocal Being). A compressed understanding of univocity can be gained by placing it opposite to representation. In a representative mode difference is inherent in concepts of a numerically distinct nature. But according to Deleuze, difference lies in the intensities of singularities and representation, even when it introduces concepts of infinite variability (into numerical distinctions) it offers no distinction of substances because there is no possibility of breaking through the limitations of the concept, to reach univocity. Concepts functioning as universal definitions crush the differences of infinite singularities but “the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, *of* all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities.” (Deleuze, 1968, 36) In this work, univocity is introduced in the essay *The Rhythm of Thinking* and describes the overload (of impressions) which is placed upon the perceptive mind.

¹³ The concept of the rhizome is also closely connected to the concept of immanence and univocity. In innumerable ways, it has been appropriated into contemporary esthetic criticism. I will not use it in this work even if it infuses, on certain levels, interesting ways of looking at the expressive movements. However, it can be kept in mind as an inspirational figuration in conjunction with my reasoning around multiple and simultaneous expressive trajectories and the production of meaning. Deleuze's exposition of the concept of the rhizome comes mainly from the book *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004/1987), written together with Felix Guattari, where it is extrapolated on and inserted as a critical tool into fields like language, politics and psychology. A ‘full’ understanding of the concept is only accessible when understood as a part of Deleuze's thinking as a whole. However, briefly, a rhizomatic structure is a structure that branches out in multiple (infinite) directions. In a rhizome there is no hierarchy of root, trunk and branch - it is not like a staircase, where you have to take the first step before you move onto and reach the next. The rhizome shoots in all directions, its transversal, with no beginning and no end. It is always inbetween, with openings in other directions and places. Applied to thinking, the rhizome is a nomadic thought process. It is neither innate nor stirred by the reassuring familiarity of encounters with the known. Thinking rhizomatically is a process that overrides all known categories; it is not the application of a method, but rather an involuntary activity that takes place when the mind is provoked by an encounter with the unknown and the unpredictable. The concept of the rhizome used in discourses like perception psychology provokes prevailing ideas on how our society looks at education and the notion of experience, growing and learning as a process of accumulation. “The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. . . . In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, non-signifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 23).

In the same essay I quite extensively use the term *vision of the subject* to investigate the relationship between dramaturgy and ethics. This term is retrieved from Rosi Braidotti, and the specific meaning and range of definition that I give it will emerge through the reasoning in the essay, but for an initial understanding it should be seen as tied to an immanent ontological approach. The subject in an immanent ontology is a nonunitary, constantly evolving subject. It is a subject coming into – and experiencing – being through relations unfolding through time. Combining this notion of the subject with the notion of a vision, is, as I choose to see it, to envision the inherent *possibilities* for (life-) movements when no transcendent force is acknowledged. Within this mode of existence there is nothing that separates the subject from its power to act, and ethics becomes, following Braidotti, an ethical pragmatism that rejects the idea that the object of ethical inquiry is a subjective individualistic core that represents a moral intention or rational consciousness, but instead assigns it to the effects each individual's actions have upon others in the world. The vision of the subject, so to speak, signifies the affirmation of the potential in a constantly evolving subject and all the relations that emerge. It is “a kind of ethical pragmatism, which defines ethics as a practice that cultivates affirmative modes of relation, active forces, and values” (Braidotti 2011, 300). The ethico-esthetic application of the term is, simply put, when the compositional and dramaturgical structure confirms and relates to each individual involved – in the making and sharing the performance – as being in a constant becoming. This elusive relationship will, as said, be further explicated when placed in the concreteness of the performative situations.

A way to describe the term co-composition is to start from its main component – composition. The term is first and foremost descriptive of the assembling of materials into three-dimensional time-based performances. As such, it can be seen as relating to established compositional methodologies. In light of my different esthetic decisions, and in view of a process oriented ontology one would assume that the concept of composition should be abandoned, and exchanged with a concept that exudes less stability. There are two reasons why this is not done. The theater performances that function as references, even if the concepts on which they are built aim at undermining its means of production, do not succeed in deconstructing them into non-performances. Rather, the conceptual setups exert a strong compositional thinking that to a certain extent sustains the notion of the performance as an

artifact. The second reason is a direct outcome of this observation since, as we shall see, all modes of creation presented through the collective processes become stable, clearly delineated compositions. However, the notion of composition takes on a far more fluent and elusive character when activated within the perceptive dynamic and expanded into the concept of co-composition. Co-composition is the perceptive activity of linking impressions (of all kinds and in all situations). It is experience inventing, experience “always invents. Every perception is a creative activity culminating in the production of an event of change. A perception is its own event. Its ‘content’ is one with the dynamic form of its coming to fulfillment. What a perception invents is essentially itself. It is self-creative. There is nothing ‘outside’ to which it corresponds or that it reflects or represents. All perception is immanent – in the case of animal life, to the bodily milieu of its own becoming” (Massumi 2011, 27). To acknowledge this force of invention – which I will refer to as co-composition, and sometimes co-creation – is to regard the task of directing as the creation of the circumstances in which this can happen. What this really means is that the performances find their value through the investment of the perceiver: they become an experience through co-composition. Along with the directorial idea/decision that it is the circumstances for an experience of co-composition that should be created, there is an awareness that a “foundational clearness and distinctness are (fortunately for creativity) out of the equation” and it is a given that the performative event “can lay down the law in a way that essentially predefines its succession. But are there still ways in which an experience can *orient* what comes? In what way can an event constructively include formative potential for what lies beyond in its own constitution?” (Massumi 2011, 14). This is the core question, in its many possible extensions, that is under investigation in this work. A creative initiative is taken. It is based on the idea of process, and process through all aspects of creation, as well as perception and when placing the concept of process as a foundational condition, the notion of meaning – clear and distinct – is left open. But since the performances are made as contributions with a specific intent (actually clear and distinct) the dramaturgical challenge, which is what ties it to the question Brian Massumi poses, is how these processes can be shaped in a way that “*orient*” the experience, or more acutely: How were they shaped to “include formative potential for what lies beyond in its own constitution?” An aesthetics aligned with process ontology and co-composition should be understood

as aligned with its idea of *being as becoming*. This is a universal outlook where individual beings exist but only as the outcome of becomings, that is, irreversible processes of individuation (Delanda 2013). Being is the process of becoming and the “co-composing of formative forces constitutes in each exercise of experience a novel *power of existence*: a power to become” (Massumi 2011, 12). The complex idea, or process, of being as becoming will be investigated at different points in this work: in connection to the production of meaning, the movement of thinking, and to vitality affect (Stern 2004).

The term *relation-of-nonrelation* is utilized as a kind of esthetic condition and perceptive circumstance important both for understanding the dramaturgical construct of the performances, as well as for the critical reasoning. This is a term that, in this reasoning, is firmly attached to the concept of univocity, as well as to co-composition, and should be understood as reverberating throughout. The term is central to the thinking of Brian Massumi and it refers to the unfolding of the event and its perceptive effect. He extracts and develops it through the discourse of activist philosophy (which, as said, he explores mainly through the thinking of Alfred North Whitehead). Massumi’s reasoning is complicated, but a shortcut into its relevance to the dramaturgical construct of the performance, and to what Massumi carves out as his main point, is that the elements contributing to an occurrence are in themselves disparate. If they are in tension “it is precisely as a function of the differential between their positions. ... The factors do not actually connect” (Massumi 2011, 20). There is a paradox embedded in the term *relation-of-nonrelation* as it excludes what is commonly called interaction or interactivity from qualifying as relational, and instead regards relations as *not connective*. This non-connectiveness does not, obviously, equal the effacement of relations but instead it is what produces the concept of *relation-of-nonrelation*, which should then be understood as, all “techniques of existence operate through relations-of-nonrelations” (Massumi, 2011, 144). Connecting this to the above exposition of the concept of the event, Massumi says that the phrase *relation-of-nonrelation* is a way “of holding together, in the concept of the event, the differential status of its conditioning elements and the dynamic unity of their sheer occurrence as a little absolute” (Massumi 2011, 21).

If we apply this concept to what occurs between occasions of experience, there is no fusion of a homogeneous kind. Instead there is always a disjunction,

and simply nothing is non-relational. The consequence is that occasions of experience “*cannot be said to actually connect to each other*” (Massumi 2011, 21). This is a paradox since we experience, and claim, that occurrences do coalesce. However, only in the sense of being mutually enveloped in a sequence in which change and differentials are held together through a creative perceptive process. That situates this term in the dramaturgical and perceptive thinking, and exemplifies its operational intent: it will be made use of as descriptive – and affirmative – of how a multitude of disparate expressive trajectories are thought of as the fertile ground for co-composition. To further an understanding of how I use the term relation-of-nonrelation – as well as explicate its political potential – is to acknowledge that it enables a reevaluation of relations that rely on established cultural codifications of what relations “are,” and how they are constituted (socially, esthetically, politically).

Conclusively, we arrive at a point where the prerequisites for the critical exploration are: a process oriented ontology; immanence as a creative circumstance/energy; univocity as a non-hierarchical view of being; co-composition as an experience of becoming; relation-of-nonrelation as the grounding for the re-evaluation of compositional (and social) relations; and a vision of the subject as outlining an ethics. With the help of these, undoubtedly reconfigured definitions, I will look at the creative and perceptive processes, attach them to concrete experiences, and hopefully deepen the understanding of their critical function and relevance.

Philosophy in practice and Representation

The extensive philosophical references and particularly to the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, should not be regarded as a philosophical endeavour. The philosophical theories made use of here, are not really scrutinized or placed in a harsh critical light, or extensively illuminated through the thinking of other philosophers and critics. This is not a work that deals with philosophical queries, but rather questions concerning composition, dramaturgy and affect, *within the confinements of a theatrical experience*, and the appropriations are of an instrumental nature. This of course creates friction, and what might be seen as a misconstruction, since process ontology aims at covering “the

whole” of life and the attempted transformations into a compositional thinking diminish its scope. But the philosophical grounding is intended to establish an ontological reference, to increase the existential stakes and relevance. It enables a broader and more vibrant contact between the sharp demarcation of the performances and the world in which they are placed, and I see it as a precondition for the inquiry into how the perceptive dynamic, beyond semantic language, can evolve. Consequently, we need to understand that the thinking should, in an overall sense, be mainly seen as a structural critique, and as an attempt to extract observations that can be used to extend it beyond the specificities of the performances.

What all this means is that the references to philosophical discourses are less concerned with “getting it right” but more an attempt to create alliances and finding points of compatibility. For example, Deleuzian theories are used as a tool for furthering the dramaturgical investigation, and a more intense probing into the performances. Therefore the reasoning suffers from the fallacy of consolidation: expressive phenomena, perceptive sequences, relational dynamics, everything that makes up the performances is placed in an adjunctive position to the philosophical discourse, and searches for possible ways of engaging with its inner reasoning. To insert and activate only parts of the Deluzian (and Deluzian/ Guattarian) complex thought structure is, and maybe rightly so, sometimes criticized by philosophers and philosophical thinkers as a distortion, because “no single discourse, indeed no single component of their work, may be pulled out and used as an optic through which to view the whole” (Buchanan Swiboda 2004, 2). I choose to not see this as a weakness, but instead as something to stay attuned to, and keep in the back of my mind throughout the reasoning. I say this only to emphasize that the appropriations are done without exposing many of the very important threads of thoughts that lead them – thus increasing their stability and complexity – back into the history of thinking. So, an important and useful precondition is, that even if the different philosophical concepts that are used in the critical operations throughout – like the concept of immanence – are grounded in specific philosophical discourses, the undertaking cannot be said to aim at furthering an understanding of Deleuze’s philosophical thinking. Rather the opposite: to make use of his philosophical outlook to examine and describe

intricate processes firmly grounded in lived experience. This observation derives first and foremost from the fact that the thinking in this work emerges out of an artistic practice, not a philosophical one. Though, interesting enough, this shift - away from a teleological use towards a perceptual - corresponds, as we shall see, to the philosophical thinking of Deleuze.¹⁴

One of the reoccurring references in this exploration is the writing of philosopher and performance studies scholar Laura Cull. Her work has contributed to how the practice of theater can be viewed through Deleuzian thinking, and in her book *Theatres of Immanence, Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (2012) she thoroughly examines the possibility to problematize and analyze theater through the notion of immanence, and immanent processes. This book is one of many examples of how the thinking of Deleuze has greatly influenced not only contemporary philosophy, but also, to an almost incomprehensible extent, infused energy into academic discourses outside philosophy. We might even say that the writings of Deleuze are one of the main influences behind what we today designate as interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity, which has produced critical branches in many directions. (The production of secondary literature on Deleuze seems to be perpetual, and the sense that something interesting and relevant might be missing, is almost impossible to avoid.) The appropriations of Deleuze's (and Guattari's) thinking have also expanded well outside academic criticism, and been pulled into the field of art and art practices. In trying to explain why this is, an initial assumption would be that the multiple and divergent directions in which Deleuze's philosophical project lays hold of, offer such a large number of ways to enter and connect to his thinking, that in turn requires finding entrance points that are adequate for the specific art practice. But the reason for the numerous appropriations is most likely also due to the fact that Deleuze's work is filled with references to literature, art, music and theater. So, it is not far-fetched to relate his thinking - on an overall level - to the three dimensional, bodily and durational reality of theater. In his book *The Drama of Ideas*, Martin Puchner even goes so far as to say that "Deleuze is the twentieth-century philosopher who comes closest to recognizing a specifically theatrical strain within modern

¹⁴ This cannot be seen as unique to Deleuze, but rather part of many philosophers' alignment with phenomenology. This work will not attempt to treat/describe those different strands.

philosophy” (Puchner 2010, 166). In the opening chapter of Deleuze’s book *Difference and Repetition* (1994), regarded as the first major text where he develops a truly original and freestanding philosophical thinking, he aligns Friedrich Nietzsche with Søren Kierkegaard (even though their differences are insurmountable in other aspects). They are conjoined in their emphasis on movement as central to mediation and in this, Deleuze recognizes theater as a means to move beyond language: “They want to put metaphysics in motion, in action. They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. Rather, it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interpositions; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. This is the idea of a man of the theatre, the idea of a director before his time.” (Deleuze 1968, 8) It is more than reasonable to think that Deleuze allies himself with the above observation, as the quote points towards the inescapable question of mimesis and to how the idea of representation is almost like a curse, infecting not only artistic expressions but also thinking, depriving us of the sensual. This could be interpreted as if Deleuze’s interest in theater revolves around the question – and problems – of representational esthetics, rather than around theater as such.¹⁵ And if one dares to comprise one possible over-all motive for the reoccurring appropriations of Deleuze’s thinking into the field of art and art making, it should probably be molded on the fact that the core of his critique is the phenomena of representation and the repression of fixity.

The workings and problems of representation are therefore continuously present in my reasoning. At certain points, I discuss it rather explicitly and in relation to the performances, like in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, but it is lurking, more or less, beneath all the aspects that are treated here. The reason for this is, that to accept a process ontology – confirmative of the ongoing, never stopping processes of thinking and living – is to adhere

¹⁵ The main reference used in this work for looking at how Deleuze related to theater, is his text *One Less Manifesto* (Murray 1997).

to a refutation of a representational esthetics. To integrate concepts that are part of this philosophical movement, (in themselves, to some extent in flux) into an analysis of artistic practices that strive toward creating artifacts with a certain degree of fixity, could be seen as disconfirmatory to their inherent dynamic. In this tension lies then the core problem with a representational coding. On the one hand, it is easy to agree that it is “strange that aesthetics (as a science of the sensible) could be founded on what *can* be represented in the sensible.” On the other hand, the unavoidable representational coding of the performer’s bodies (as well as the numerous realistic objects brought into the theatrical expressions) is an important part of the dramaturgical interplay. This double bind is also taken up by Deleuze when he says that maybe “the inverse procedure is not much better, consisting of the attempt to withdraw the pure sensible from representation and to determine it as that which remains once representation is removed (a contradictory flux, for example, or a rhapsody of sensations)” (Deleuze 1994, 56). This is a friction that colors the performances: the workings of a representational coding are consciously counteracted, at the same time as the dramaturgy depends on its perceptive impact.

Of all the critical tools/concepts that are utilized in this work, representation is maybe one of the more concrete, and it makes sense to pull it into the practice of theater and claim its relevance for a discussion around dramaturgy and composition. It somehow belongs there, and is often given a central place in the analysis, with or without its long and winding treatment throughout the history of theater and esthetic criticism. But many of the other terms and concepts that I make use of don’t have such an obvious place within the domain of theater or performance studies, and that aspect should be understood as a need to actually disengage from that domain: It comes from the desire to *not* talk about theater as something that *is*, but as something that can *be* something (else).

Forerunners

When placing this work in relation to what has been done and what is being done, and so define its field of references and possible contributions, what becomes clear is that the questions reflected on can be connected to a variety of critical fields. This makes it somewhat difficult to construe how it relates to the

status of present research. But the multidisciplinary gaze and transdisciplinary methodology is not in any way unusual, instead unavoidable in much of contemporary esthetic criticism (and art practices). In this academic fluidity – combined as it is here with the unruly nature of art making – it is constructive I believe, to treat the esthetics and methods of the actual performances and the thought lines in the critical questions and reflections, somewhat separately: the first aspect, traditionally (exclusively) belonging to artistic practices, and the second, to the activity of academic critical practices. This could be seen as a separation between the artistic/esthetic heritage of the performances – an outlook that offers, both historically and from a contemporary point of view, a large number of references – and the sprawling development of esthetic theory surrounding the arts during the last decade. Though, I suggest that my intention is rather the opposite and that this approach – to separate the esthetics and creative methods from the analysis and thinking – aims at bridging the two activities. How is that so? Well, I hope I will be able to show that if the critical approach focuses on structural analysis, the possibility of an increased understanding of the potential inherent in the expression – as a perceptive extension outside the corporeal concreteness – can be enhanced. And such an attempt needs a certain critical leeway (separation) in order to make way for finding those experiential extensions/openings: They can only be found if the discursive extrapolations are elevated above the circumstances (which is the material, the preconception of what art should be, what happens in perception) and allowed to operate in a speculative mode. In that domain the reflections are stabilized through the chosen discourse – process ontology – and cannot be too concerned with the circumstances until it is brought down and confronted with the question of how it effects the structure of the composition. Then the bridge is created.

There are influential theater practitioners who have surrounded their practice with similar thoughts and produced critical reflections and therefore can be taken as examples of artists who concretely reject a separation between a tactile practice and critical reflections. To mention a few who have been inspiring to this work (not all included explicitly) are: Jerzy Grotowsky, Eugenio Barba, Adrienne Mnouchkine, Berthold Brecht and from Sweden Per Verner Carlsson, Susanne Osten and Ingemar Lindh. They all bring, in

different ways, an investigative and research intention to their practice, by striving to apply a complex view of the performative situation, often through a combination of looking at its historical roots and its contemporary validity. As theater artists with a parallel interest in esthetic criticism, they exert an impact on my own work, both generally, as well as in discrete ways.

The performances search for their own way of doing things, and their own type of expression, but they are tied in so many ways, to developments in western theater, music and literature so, of course, they grow from things already made. They are new continuations. The music, art and thinking of American composer John Cage are at the center of this investigative endeavor, both as source material and as an inspirational force. In the chapter *Cage Interpreted and Performed*, I will describe more exactly what that means. However, even though I have felt some connection to his music and esthetic thinking, as a musician and composer, it was not before delving into his texts, interviews with him and critical material written on his art, that it became obvious that many aspects of his esthetic thinking are, deeply, related to my own. What occurred to me was a picture of an artist whose main focus is communication. I came to see the question of how (art-based) communication is created as central to his work; its quality and form, both implicitly and explicitly. But communication is problematic and for Cage it was essential to acknowledge and emphasize the problematic aspects of communication and by doing so criticize the way we communicate. The relationship between life and art, between esthetics and politics is essential in his art-making – or doings, as he would say. Even in his formulations about the circumstances under which he is doing his doings, he emphasizes the relationship between art, the artist and the world outside. One could therefore say that it is the communicative potential of art that he investigates and develops through his inventions. Cage's writings on art, art theory and philosophy are quite extensive and an essential part of his oeuvre. His often multifaceted and sometimes contradictory standpoints repeatedly express:

- a strong will to demystify the artist and his/her creative activities
- a clear ambition to make art useful as a tool to heighten life experiences
- a will to let questions lead the way

From this I get a picture of an artist who resists both social and artistic hierarchies, who thinks that social change begins with individual change, and who wanted art to create an effect and that this effect should increase human awareness. In addition to the stance described above, I was attracted to how Cage eloquently combined an avant-garde attitude with a strong engagement in social and political questions. In his alignment with an anarchic political stance and his encouragement of individual interpretations, his objection to all types of hierarchies, I see Cage as representing an anti-fundamentalist position that opposed all types of generalizations.

All three performances depend, in different ways, on the work and thinking of Cage. His compositions and text – and methods – are activated. But a further, truly interesting and inspiring aspect of his influence, not connected to the actual making of the performances but instead to the making of these reflections, is that his investigative and open approach to art making has effected the over all mode of this research project, and how it has been conducted. However, to direct the works of Cage contradicts, in part, his philosophies. Collective creation grows strongest from within, with no transcendent force (conductor, director). The perspective of looking at the dynamics of immanence in collective creations could therefore be said to emanate directly from Cage's own direction.

The common denominators in the performances are methods of chance and improvisation. Music and texts are equal parts of the expressional material, presented through multilayered structures. They are performed in non-proscenium spaces (black boxes), dominated by a non-narrative dramaturgy, and there is a strong presence of a deconstruction – reconstruction sequence.¹⁶ From a historical perspective, these different qualities and methods have been part of theatrical expressions – separately or together – for a long time, and can mostly be traced back to *Untitled Event* at Black Mountain in 1952, the very famous first Happening that Cage initiated together with artist Robert Rauschenberg, choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham, pianist David Tudor, critic and architect Buckminster Fuller, the poets M C Richards and Charles Olson and the painters Elaine and Willem de Kooning.

¹⁶ In the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, I abandon the term non-narrative in favor of what I call the pre-narrative.

Not many descriptions of this event can be found, but Cage says himself, a few years later:

At one end of the rectangular hall, the long end, was a movie, and at the other end were slides. I was on a ladder delivering a lecture which included slides, and there was another ladder which M.C. Richards and Charles Olson went up at different times... Robert Rauschenberg was playing an old-fashioned phonograph that had a horn..., and David Tudor was playing piano, and Merce Cunningham and other dancers were moving through the audience. Rauschenberg's pictures (the White Paintings) were suspended above the audience... They were suspended at various angles, a canopy of painting above the audience. I don't recall anything else except the ritual with the coffee cup (Fetterman 1996, 35).

The unstructured structure of this event, with independent artistic expressions going on simultaneously without any prepared coordination, could neither be described as a visual collage combining different media into one form, nor could it be described as creating a *tableaux vivant*, but instead all this was set in motion over time. The *Untitled Event* at Black Mountain soon had a strong influence on compositional thinking among composers, choreographers and other groups of artists working with time-based art. Some examples of artists and theater makers who have been influenced by this esthetic approach, in different ways over the years are: Allan Kaprow, Lygia Clark, Öyvind Fahlström, The Living Theater and Goat Island.¹⁷ Certainly, Merce Cunningham's own artistic development, independent of his collaboration with Cage, has to be thought of as strongly influenced. And even if the aspects of chance and indeterminacy have not been in the forefront of contemporary choreography, it is hard to imagine its development without the influence of Cage's multilayered esthetics. Trisha Brown would be a good example of this. In the development of modern music composition, the compositional strategy of *Untitled Event* with superimpositions,

¹⁷ Attempting to make an overview of the influence of *Untitled Event* is an almost ridiculous endeavor, as it carries into so many different directions, and directly into the esthetic development of late modernism. And the list of artists could, of course, be extended. The ones mentioned are only taken up as representing clear known examples, also later referred to in this work.

improvisations, and a questioning of a hierarchy of expressions, took off in many different directions.¹⁸ One of the more influential directions - and also related to this work - was the emergence of different compositional tactics that shifted the control away from the composer to the performer, which can be exemplified with the invention of graphic scores (graphic notation).¹⁹ Composers like Earl Brown, Mauricio Kagel and Cornelius Cardew created scores that were open for interpretation, and by doing so persisted in Cage's attempt to reformulate the creative relationship between the composer and the performer, between the instruction and the result. To widen the gap even further, between the composer's instruction and the sounding result, some composers started to use textual instructions: semantic language to be transformed into musical expression. The piece *vorschlage* by Mathias Spahlinger, included in this work, should be seen as an extension of this development.

The different esthetic choices that were made when creating the performances that we will be looking at can be traced back – both from a conceptual aspect, as well as a more intricate and detailed perspective – to this period and development in art history. As such it can be seen as a reference of sorts, even if I don't include specific artists and their practice – with the exception of Cage – into the reasoning. The critical treatment of Cage's esthetics is mainly done through the work of Joan Retallack (1996), Richard Kostelanetz (1987), and Bernstein and Hatch (2001).

The modality of the critique

It is characteristic of academic writing that it must continually confront the question of how to position itself. This is what most clearly differentiates its nature from an artistic practice, irrespective of its esthetic abode. The structural confinement of the norms of academic writing is also on a collision course with the inherent oppositional mode of an artistic undertaking, since a central value of art must be to oppose its means of production. The esoteric qualities, the unstableness of the exchange happening in the encounter between an artistic

¹⁸ It should be noted that the compositional strategy of superimpositions had already been turned into a strong expressive esthetic by Charles Ives (1874-1954), another American composer.

¹⁹ A way to notate music that is still used by many composers. See Sauer 2008 for an overview of graphic scores.

expression and its audience should therefore be calmly left alone. Though, the nature of artistic research – to which field this project belongs – sometimes represents an attempt to formulate and contribute to knowledge around this encounter, at the same time as it reveals its renunciation of that area of truth towards which language is directed. It seems like a contradiction, and so it is. What about this work? Does it belong to the category of contradictory critical undertakings? Yes, it does. However, this contradiction, which hopefully the above introduction has clarified, is not the dialectical field that represents the main area of investigation. Instead, it implies two sub-problems, from which all the other problems can be said to gain their momentum and, therefore, they need to be looked at and continually referred back to as a guiding matrix throughout.

The first of these problems is enveloped in the relation between the thinking and the doing, and the different kind of thinking going on, hence related to the question of positioning. Most of the thinking that took place when making the performances happened through doings. That means that the thinking, to a large extent, was of an internal, concealed kind which we have no insight into. But we do know that some of the thinking resulted in expressions; doings through space, in time. These expressions grew out of and were dependent on a large number of factors that all played their part in the collective creation. The different choices made in that endeavor were certainly based on a thorough esthetic reasoning but nevertheless intuitive in their nature. Hence, the important thing to consider is the relation between that kind of doing-thinking and the thinking that these reflections represent: thinking through problematized reflection. The latter then, does not refer to stable phenomena but to activities that are not only, to a significant extent, concealed but evolve in a relational mode, outside the confinement of the rendering and, which is the point I want to get to, ensued through a process geared towards composition. There is nothing in the following that resembles the energy of such a process, instead it is speculative and geared towards an open-endedness.²⁰

²⁰ An interesting – and on some levels relevant – reasoning around the relation between the notion of critique and composition, can be found in Bruno Latour's essay *An Attempt at a "Componist Manifesto,"* in which the notion of composition is extended, almost reinvented, and transferred into a political analysis. This text is brought up and briefly discussed in *Interview 19*. Latour initially asserts that "what performs a critique can not also compose," which indicates the basis of his criticism that critique, in a modernist (and post-modern) sense, is so focused on progress through deconstruction and demarcation of forces, that the immanent movements, and constitution, of phenomena (in the world, in nature) are disregarded and not allowed to guide the formation – a composed – vision of a future world (Latour 2010, 475).

The second problem is related to the method of transferring and activating terms and concepts outside their original abode, outside the complexity they are most often dependent on. There is nothing unusual in such an attempt, but the problem becomes more accentuated when a process ontological discourse is utilized and the ambition is to analyze artistic creations framed in formats that cannot escape being seen as more or less fixed, with terms and concepts that *in themselves* should be fluid, continually questioned and re-worked. It generates a friction between the openness of the philosophical thinking and the fluid *yet* artifactual performativity of the performances. But the contradiction also occurs on the actual level of reasoning as it undeniably relies on a level of fixity, at the same time as it has to concur with the fact that the use and meaning of concepts in process philosophy are in flux, and every attempt to demarcate their movement and function is a distortion of sorts. A stern comment on the undesirable effect of this is given by Deleuze when he says that when “difference is subordinated by the thinking subject to the identity of the concept (even where this identity is synthetic) difference in thought disappears” (Deleuze 1994, 266). This friction must be used as an impetus for suspicion: The idea of a convergence of all the infinite movements of life into a delimited performative event only holds up on a conceptual level, not on the level of experience.

Just as the positioning of the critique is a major concern in academic writing, so is the question of knowledge. Does the critical attempt contribute to existing knowledge, and if so, how? Can artistic research refute that question on the basis that the object of research and its inherent energy, truly and in so many ways, relies on personal, intuitive, thus ineffable, choices? The right to endorse an esoteric mode in academic criticism is reflected on by Georg Steiner in his foreword to Walter Benjamin’s treatise *The Origin of German Drama*, where he says that Benjamin propagated for “the rights of the esoteric” within a critical academic discourse. This esoteric level can be said to rely on the unuttered, and this reliance, in turn needs to be solid, hence similar to the prime energy in devotion. Steiner pulls this thought further into Benjamin’s critical undertaking as a whole, as well as down to a more personal (Benjamin) level when he says: “It is not only his material – the neglected plays and emblem-collections of German seventeenth century – that is esoteric; it is his critical task. How could it be otherwise? How could the empathic decipherment of many-layered texts

in an idiom long-forgot, pretend a perfect clarity? In this context opaqueness and inwardness of semantic arrangement are a manifest of honesty” (Benjamin 1928, 22). The intellectual impetus of Walter Benjamin is untamable and driven by devotion, and this devotion, that runs throughout his work, is insistent and demanding in the sense that it is a writing in pursuit of a poetics that provokes and expands the forms and norms of academia. But Benjamin’s devotion is also demanding because it is driven by a desire for change. If anything can be clearly claimed, which is dubious, it might be that this desire is not primarily aimed at a materialistic change but at an expansive shift in position: A shift in the position of the critical gaze and an expansion of its receptiveness. This is why it is reasonable to let Benjamin and his spirit follow this work (even if his voice is quite sparsely present). But it is also reasonable because the field of artistic research has, since its inauguration, struggled with this question of the status of the ineffable and esoteric levels inherent in the spirit of art and its relation to the production of knowledge. From my perspective however, that struggle is not about refuting the idea of knowledge but about reconfiguring its appearance. It is about aligning it with process ontology and with the potential, in an experimental and speculative practice. Such an alignment means the rejection of a subject-object divide, and of the notion that knowledge is fact based. Following Brian Massumi, this means to disconnect the idea of knowledge from cognition and “its Cartesian stovepipe dream of foundational clearness and distinctness,” and instead place it in the “messy middling goings-on of pure experience in all its potential and complexity” (Massumi 2011, 11). To do so has far-reaching consequences because the cognitive subject-object dichotomy itself has far-reaching consequences, as it

extends itself into a division between ways of knowing, and from there into a hierarchy between modes of practice. This is especially evident in the division between disciplines of knowledge that are in a position to make a claim to ‘objectivity’ and those that are not. The traditional form this bifurcation of knowledge practices takes is the chasm between the ‘two cultures,’ scientific and humanistic. The same division recurs within the disciplines on each side of that massive divide,

between empirical methods (in a decidedly nonradical sense) and speculative or theoretical approaches (dismissed by the other side as ‘merely’ subjective). This divide repeats as a distinction between modes of practices, even practices that do not define themselves primarily as knowledge practices, such as political practices. Here, the dichotomy recurs as an opposition between ‘fact-based’ or ‘commonsense’ approaches and ‘experimental,’ idealistic,’ or ‘utopian’ approaches, with a clear implication of the superiority of the former (Massumi 2011, 11).

I think Massumi’s observation conjures up the question if this work needs to be put in relation to the specific academic field of artistic research? Is it necessary to relate to it at all? What would happen if that were not done? Would there be misunderstandings? Probably. My outline above, of the critical path(s) that I will follow, might be deceptive as it radiates a systematization of sorts, but it is speculative. Questions are asked and fields of tension located. A high level of clarity is not always apparent, and no problems are solved. Suggestively, such a critical dynamic has to be met with an understanding that whatever could be of interest, whatever insights and contribution this work possibly makes, are to be found through an act of interpretation. So for that reason only, it is constructive to make clear that this work is practice based art research. It oscillates between a subjective stance – mainly constituted in the works of art that it treats – and a critical attempt.

It is interesting to place the activities of the composer John Cage and his approach to his art practice in the light of artistic research. It seems that for him to do what he did, he had to nourish a reflective and critical side. It is therefore possible to play with the idea that he is not only the originator of the material that is set in motion – in the performances, as well as this critical work – but also a forerunner of artistic research.

INTERVIEW 20

In dialogue with The Institute for Unpredictable Processes

IUP: First I want to say that I am glad that we have gotten this opportunity to meet again. I have spent some time reading your text more closely and quite a few questions have come up, especially regarding the structure of the text, which I was hoping we could discuss.

JP: And which text are you talking about?

IUP: Your work *The Rhythm of Thinking: Immanence and Ethics in Theater Performance*. Don't misunderstand me, but it seems like the work generates a kind of airlessness. It is not a question of the absence of distinctive assertions or a lack of thorough and interesting thoughts, but instead that there are so many of them. Of course, one can say that this is concurrent with the theme of multiplicity and overload, two terms that are central in your reasoning, but I wasn't really satisfied with that answer as it didn't eliminate the very simple fact that the many different critical focuses you present make it difficult to navigate, and to follow you to some kind of conclusion.

JP: I can certainly understand where that criticism comes from, and while I was working with the project I too felt, at times, that it was a challenge to make constructive demarcations and find concentration in the reasoning. When I sensed that, I had to go back and ask myself: What kind of work is this? What is its relationship to my art practice? What do I want that relationship to be? What can it be? My artistic work is like a cluster of thoughts and investigative strands, and it is combined with the dynamics of working collectively, so it really is a mixture of aspects. In the playing out of this mixture the connections are sometimes hidden and understanding pops up unexpectedly. Early on, I understood that if I did not let this multitude color the critical research it would become an attempt to render and organize a process in such a way that it loses its processuality.

IUP: Hearing you say that, I wonder if it could be that the structure of your research investigation is an outcome of the more or less intuitive type of thought processes that you engage in when making theater?

JP: Yes, initially I guess it's possible to put it that way. But then, getting deeper into the research, it became clear to me that there is a correlation between the critical outlook in the references I have chosen to work with and the structure of my research exploration. And also, that there is a correspondence between the esthetics of the performances that I critically treat, and the dispersed and multifaceted critique that I present.

IUP: But is it necessarily so that a multitude of critical approaches must create a sense of lack of order?

JP: It's unfortunate if you feel confused by what I present, a disorder that prevents you from reaching an understanding of what I am trying to convey. Could it be that it mirrors your expectations of what order is? The only way that I can meet such a criticism is to try to clarify how I see it.

IUP: And how is that?

JP: Well, the question of order, or *reason in the reasoning*, should be approached and problematized in relation to the process ontology in which I place my reasoning, or that I use as a foundation, you might say. If that is done I think it's possible to see this question of navigating and understanding in a different light.

IUP: Meaning, that you see a process ontology not as a purely philosophical discourse but extended into the realms of comprehension and understanding?

JP: Yes I do, because adhering to a process ontology effects and alters accepted and established methodologies, methodologies that are delineated by the idea of a rational individual consciousness moving along a linear and progressive temporal line. Following a contemporary discussion and exploration of nomadism, a process ontological outlook on knowledge production means the rejection of the idea of the subject as a self-regulating rationalist entity and of the traditional image of thought and the scientific practices that it rests upon. That traditional image of a rational reasoning, like a sequence of steady accumulation of insights, is neither concurrent with the overarching perceptive intention of the performances or with how my investigative critique is structured. Both these levels have to be met with a co-compositional approach.

IUP: If I want to be provocative I would say that it sounds like you are trying to fit your reasoning into an interpretative matrix just to cover up its insufficiency.

JP: If that's a question I'll answer it by trying to explain how I see the correspondence between my critical outlook and what I am problematizing, how it derives from the nature of the objects studied and also of the objectives of the investigation, and how these different layers, separately, relate to the question of order. That will hopefully clarify that the link between the nature of the critique and the nature of my artistic practice is quite intimate.

IUP: My initial question had to do with the aspect of navigating through the reasoning. It had to do with the actual comprehension of the line of thinking that you present, and not about the artistic expression. I can certainly understand that the relation between the objects of investigation and the critical treatment inevitably becomes very tight, but are you not, in an unnecessary way, confusing the borders of the creative processes that you are looking at and the critical extrapolations by trying to transfer structural specifics that initially have an esthetic purpose into a form that's about critique and not about a sensual experience, which your art obviously aims at?

JP: I hear what you are saying, but I don't see how those two aspects can be separated. The relation between the practice and the production of critique within artistic research has to be seen as reaching down to structural levels. Let me try to explain why by looking at the different layers I mentioned. The structure of the performances is one of multiplicity, of superimpositions, and I talk about the collective creation as emerging in a mode of immanence. When that creative mode is transferred, which is what I try to explicate in my reasoning, to the exchange between the expression and the spectator I insert the concept of co-composition to indicate that the meaning is dependent on an active co-creative investment of the spectator. These are the areas I look at – the objects studied – and they are open and process oriented situations, and in neither of those areas does understanding or comprehension, as you named it, grow along a mono-linear timeline.

IUP: And if you try to make that a bit more concrete, what can you say about the actual relation between the co-compositional investment that you talk about, and the creative and performative situation?

JP: Imagine that there is a group of performers. Through experimentation, improvisation and invention they create an expression that they present. The individual, among the performers as well as in the audience, moves through

this with her own thoughts and his own understanding of what's going on. In a performative situation dominated by multiple expressive trajectories and superimpositions, it cannot be in any other way. It is inevitable that understanding and insights will come not only when you expect it, but in unexpected spurs, unexpected moments, and also slowly. The shared unfolding of the event means that the consciousness is collectively distributed, but understanding is diversified and dispersed. The next layer is my critical attempt, the actual making of the critique, in which I try to carve out possibilities for thinking around the relationship between these processes and some specific aspect, like creative hierarchy, the production of meaning and ethics. So my investigative attempt is also an experiment of sorts, it's filled with questions and the aspects that I problematize interfere with and sometimes contradict each other. This means that my own understanding evolves through a creative thinking-writing process that moves in different directions producing folds of thoughts. What I want to suggest, in answer to your criticism, is that the need to activate a co-creative approach for reaching an understanding is grounded already in the structure of the material that is performed, that it is affirmative of the open and unregulated process in which the performative expression is shaped and it is concurrent with the objectives of the investigation.

IUP: How do you see that your investigative procedure relates to the notion of epistemology as the elucidation of answers to the questions that are treated? Now you indicate that navigating through your work should be seen as a process similar to the processes of the creative doings that are looked at, and that the knowledge, if that's what we want to call it, is dependent on some kind of reader strategy. What I really wonder, how do you describe the epistemological conditions for extracting knowledge out of such a multifocused and open reasoning?

JP: I don't see my writing as a puzzle, and I haven't thought about it as some kind of riddle that I hand over. I aim at developing understandable connections, but I *also* allow strands of thoughts and questions to exist even if they're not thoroughly developed. I see them as an outcome of submitting to the process ontology in which I ground my reasoning, and therefore they should not be contained. What I am trying to say is that the notion of epistemology, as we usually understand that concept, has to be reconfigured. I want to exemplify this by referring to my introduction in which I outline that the momentum behind

my critical extrapolations are those fields of tension that occur when delineating, and critically merging, different compounds of energy. These compounds – intentions, expectations, desires – are defined by me in order to create a structure of reasoning, but then when this is met by you, by the reader, there are additional expectations and desires which, roughly speaking, can be said to create new fields of tension that occur between what I present and your understanding of it. So these fields move and change, they cannot just be dealt with and then its done, they never stop exuding interesting problems. I mean, like now, you present to me some criticism that directly relates to a troublesome experience that can be used in the thinking. The methodology produces, which is what you experience as problematic, a conceptual apparatus that indicates many complex critical areas. Some of those get more attention, others less, but they are all necessary for the reasoning to flow. To place this complexity at the center of epistemic structure is, as you said, to confirm and assign importance to strategies of the subject, strategies I see as individualized and creative.

IUP: Does that mean that you are downplaying the need for stability, or effacing the demand that the investigative questions should be followed through?

JP: I would say the opposite. I try to get very deep into the intricacy of a creative and perceptive dynamic: I problematize it in many different ways and with different approaches, and as the problematizations are searching for an openness and formed in an investigative-speculative mode, I actually think there is a need for multidimensional approaches and multiple entrance points. The consistency, what you call stability, in the reasoning can be found in accepting and using this multiplicity. The multitude only becomes insufficient if met with reaction and not action. To make this clearer it's possible to connect it to the claim I make that the dramaturgical structures of the performances carry a vision of the subject. This vision is not spelled out as a proclamation but inherent in an idea about how the individual perceiving subject can move and co-compose. The way Rosi Braidotti sees the subject within such a process oriented movement – and in search of an understanding – is that she needs to “enlist the creative resources of the imagination to the task of enacting transformative relations and actions in the present” (Braidotti 2011, 210). When we allow ourselves to place importance on the notion of imagination, a word that strangely enough very rarely appears in critical discussions around the relationship between

esthetics and perceptive potentiality, there is an opening for an epistemological reconfiguration. Imagination is what enables us to reach beyond the known and there is no hesitation to assign importance to its capacity when talking about creative doings, but what is crucial is to place it in a discussion on knowledge production so that it merges the experience of a complex multiplicity with epistemology.

IUP: So, are you suggesting that if the reader experiences difficulties with grasping your main focus it's because he or she isn't imaginative enough?

JP: What I am saying is that the identity of my work cannot be found in existing categories – which of course is a contradiction, since on some formal levels it can – but putting it like that has to be understood as an encouragement to view and use it on its own terms, and to engage in the task of enacting transformative relations. The imagination creates connections and those connections exclude other connections, which means that our imagination creates what it creates through a self-directed attention, and in that dynamic the multitude of critical approaches is a resource, an opening.

IUP: What do you say to somebody who claims that you, by formulating it the way you do, make it quite impossible to find ways to criticize your work? That you kind of encapsulate it by suggesting that any disagreement or difficulty should be assigned to the reader's incapability.

JP: I don't agree. There are gaps and instabilities in what I do, both because I want it to be so but probably also because thought lines are extrapolated in a way that can be criticized for a kind of distortion. You can also criticize, and maybe dismiss, my reasoning on more general grounds, like for example not aligning yourself with a process ontological outlook on things. I want to listen to that and try to use it, but when I turn back to the nature of my practice and to the questions that I have placed in the midst of it, I choose to see criticism as new material for critical extensions that I haven't made room for. I have to rest in the belief that what could be experienced as critical insufficiency actually has to be there, and that it can be seen as a catalyst, for the reader as well as for myself.

IUP: Another question that came up during my reading, was about how the performances that you refer to and the research relate in time. You don't really clarify if the performances were created within the research, like an outcome of what

you want to investigate or, if it's the other way around, that you're applying your critique to phenomena that would have been the same regardless of the research.

JP: The short answer would be that none of the performances would have been radically different if they weren't objects of my research. My interest in experimenting with the type of structures that they rely on and to performatively problematize collective creative processes has been present in my work for a long time. But, and this is important, since both the performances of *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting* were made during a time when I was intensely engaged in developing the questions that I wanted my research to evolve around, there is a reciprocity between my investigative focus and different structural aspects as to how they were conceptualized. Then, of course, there is the obvious fact that the voices of the performers are present in my text. The performance of *vorschläge* on the other hand was made before I entered into academically formalized research, but I think the fact that that performance connects so strongly to, almost prepares for the themes and questions that I treat, points directly to how my research grows from my practice.

IUP: Who, in this multitude of critical approaches, do you envision as a reader? Who do you see as the recipient of this work?

JP: I think that question can be approached from the perspective of artistic research in general and what we should expect it to contribute, as well as from a more personal point of view. Efva Lilja points out, in her overview of artistic research, how written reflections must be seen as the necessary process of documentation within the research activity. To document is to further the development of the project, of the thinking, and that is to implicitly place the researcher as the recipient (Lilja 2015). For me such a sequence directly relates to what I talk about as the writing-thinking process and as such it is kind of closed and contained, though very important. Then Lilja talks about the aspect of sharing and exchanging information with colleagues and I read that as being about contributing to the field of artistic research and to the discussions on methodologies and research strategies. My personal view and expectations, in answer to your question, is that what I write can be shared with other theater artists. It is not so much about connecting to artistic research but about giving something back to the field of theater art and to suggest how different critical approaches might create openings for how to compose.

CAGE INTERPRETED AND PERFORMED

A description of the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*

Entrance

Probably the most inspiring point of entry into what lies ahead would be to first view one of the four documentations of the theater production *John and the Mushrooms*, which this text is going to be about. The experience of doing so will be both slightly confusing and somewhat lackluster since your senses are inevitably disconnected from the live expressive energy of all the many movements and sounds and things that actually took place in the theater space: What can you make from seeing threads being strung like telegraph lines throughout the room, criss-crossing and attached with thoughts, ideas, and mushroom, like messages only just received? Can you possibly make sense of why people in the audience suddenly start to listen to each other's stomachs? Still, this is what I suggest. Not because I presume that the images and sounds will conjure up anything close to an esthetic experience. But conjoined with this explanatory and critical text it will enable an understanding of an esthetic undertaking. It will put meat on the critical bones and it will hopefully create an effective tension between the unruly development of the performance and the misleading certainty inherent in carefully prepared formulations.



Introduction One

The intention of this text is to describe how the theater performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, which was produced by and performed at The Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm Sweden, 2011, was created. The text is one of three performance descriptions included in this work. However, since the thoughts, methods and esthetics of John Cage are central to this project as a whole, the

text expands at certain points into thought lines and areas connected to the questions and points of focus that run throughout the project. Some of those reflective expansions will reoccur in other places, thus taking on the quality of unavoidable critical themes. This is an aspect that needs to be underscored, since it is important to understand that the rendition of Cage's esthetics that I expose in the following became the substrata for almost every artistic decision made in the processes of creating the performances. In other words, my exposition of the esthetics of John Cage intends to clarify which parts, aspects and thought-lines in Cage's esthetics that I let myself be influenced by, and how they came to be decisive in formulating the concepts and the structures of all three performances. There is a perpetual oscillating movement that ensues from this, swinging between my personal gaze on Cage's esthetics and the collective, practical theater work. In these reflections, just as it was in the concrete work of creating the performances, this movement constitutes the main critical force.

What should also be kept in mind is that the in-depth view into the artistic practice of Cage is there, not only to allow for an understanding of the grounds on which different esthetic decisions were made, but – as noted as an overall ambition of this work – it tells about an important aspect in my practice as a director, since it displays how thought processes are built as a core grid for stabilizing the unpredictable and unruly collective process of making theater. Still, would it not be more constructive to begin by telling how the ensemble of *John and the Mushrooms* began to work through all the different questions raised by the encounter with Cage's esthetics and the different pieces of material? After all, no concept, no theory can hold together in a collective creative process if an understanding of "What are we doing?" and "Why are we doing this?" is not achieved. Why not just try to untangle – and thus illuminate – how different performer problems and esthetic decisions were tackled and made? Let me put it like this. There are certainly theater projects being produced that relate both in method and material to the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, but even if the collective creative process of the performance is not unique, the specifics around how it was conceptualized, how it was built and performed cannot be understood as a theater practice in general terms. The construction of the concept, the working methods, its deep relation to the thinking and esthetics of Cage, could not be approached without a certain level of explanation. The unconventional

demands on the performers had to be introduced slowly, with an emphasis on the force and intention of the concepts. The young, but nevertheless well trained and quite experienced actor Mauritz Elvingsson, commented on this when he said: “The big difference I guess was that we just didn’t know how to do this, how to work, how to come up with what to do. How are we going to rehearse chance? How is that possible? That was probably the biggest problem.” I chose, therefore, to try to mirror the process of creating the concept, as well as the rehearsal process, by laying out the seeds from which it grew. This is done with the hope that the correlation between the esthetic stance of Cage and all the numerous decisions made on the way to creating the performance can be enjoyed.

Followed by an overview of Cage’s artistic practice, esthetic and philosophical thinking, the text goes on to describe how the material for the script was selected, as well as an explication of its structure. Connected to this is a rendering of how we chose and created the material for the different chance- operated parts in the performance. Following a description of the rehearsal process, the text then recounts how the shaping of the performance came about and also how the ensemble collaborated with a reference group. The last part of the text makes an attempt to reflect on how, and to what degree, the work with the performance encouraged a shift in the way we view our different roles in the collective process of making and performing theater.

Introduction Two

In the fall of 2009 I was invited by the theater department for young audiences at The Royal Dramatic Theater to come up with a suggestion for an original theater production that would work for an audience of all ages, from five years and up. After a series of discussions with the dramaturge at the theater, Irena Krauss, and with my long time collaborator dramaturge Tora von Platen, we decided to create a performance based on music and texts by John Cage. The creative process started, as I remember, with the music. In my habit of surrounding myself with music when working in my studio, I had just been listening intensely to a new recording of Cage’s piece *Thirteen Harmonies* (Cage 1986). Its oneiric atmosphere and broken, but still stable structure stayed with me like an emotional opening, you might say, and led me to listen to some

early Cage pieces for prepared piano, totally different in expression, particularly the composition *The Perilous Night* (Cage 1944). Apart from my immediate emotional response to the music, I observed that both of these compositions placed themselves outside historic time. They signaled an artistry that was both old and new: an audacious stance towards history and at the same time feeding off an understanding – and love – for what has passed. It might be that it was this quality that made me think of the music as accessible, in the best sense, and thereby a constructive and playful way to create curiosity for the complexity of the art and thinking of John Cage. Together with an interest in investigating how Cage’s methods and esthetics could be activated in the theater, these two compositions, *Thirteen Harmonies* and *The Perilous Night*, became what could be described as the expressive foundation in the process of creating the performance; when juxtaposed, they revealed a wide and mature emotional landscape, offering structural and compositional stability, as well as flexibility.

Listening closely to the music of John Cage and working with it intricately was not new to me. I first encountered his music at the music conservatory, and I remember experiencing it as sharp, confusing and emotional all at the same time. As my interest and insights into his music grew, I incorporated it into my work as a record producer and also into my work as a music director for different theater productions. In my innumerable encounters with artists, writers, actors, and even composers, I realized that Cage was a familiar name; however, few had experiences of his music, and even fewer of his writings. So, when I was asked to write and direct a music theater piece for an audience of all ages, I felt intuitively that it was a great opportunity to counteract the uninformed myth and seemingly stubborn picture of John Cage as a “silent” and difficult composer. I saw it as a chance to offer an audience an intimate and playful experience of an artist who many have heard about but few really know. So this was my starting point, to create an opportunity for people to experience the vitality and richness of John Cage’s wide range of musical expression. This initial anticipation was soon going to develop.

When I entered into a deeper reading of the art of John Cage, I found aspects of his thinking and esthetics that, as a theatre director, I felt a strong affiliation with. I will try to describe those connections and begin by making an observation that I think reverberates throughout the performances as well

as in these reflections. When studying Cage's texts, interviews with him and different critical material written about his art, a picture emerges of an artist whose main focus is communication. The question of how art-based communication is created, its quality and form, seems to be absolutely central to his work, both implicitly and explicitly. But communication is complicated, and for Cage it was essential to acknowledge and emphasize the problematic aspects of communication and by doing so to criticize the way we communicate in the culture we live in. He did this both by creating compositions that inspired shifts in the way we listen, but also through applying compositional techniques and compositional forms – scores of instructions engaging the creativity and judgment of the performer in new ways – new to the idiom of contemporary music. These two activities, or tactics, undermine our preconceptions about two things: first, about how music should sound; secondly, how music (i.e. art) should be made. Some of the ideas that John Cage fostered, and with which he was allied, like superimpositions in musical compositions, had been around a long time. Others, he might have thought were “new,” were not. I do not think it was important to him to be the originator of specific ideas. He wanted to make things that were unfamiliar to him, and in comparison with what was going on around him – things that had not been done.²¹ I mention this because it shows that, even though Cage was focused on inventing new compositional tools and new musical forms, his aim was to reshape the role of the composer, the role of the performer and the role of the listener. This shifting, reshaping, re-formulating of the role of the artist in relation to the making of art and to its listener and viewer is, in today's post-postmodern times, a discourse both central (i.e. important) and dulled by over-use. Art that has provoked and questioned the modernist idea of the solid and admirable artifact made by a “genius,” is an energy that has been around for almost a hundred years. Cage was certainly not the first, but the vital and enduring impact that his art has made in this respect, can hardly be disputed. In the world of theater, its impact has been alternately acknowledged, and ignored. A number of theater practitioners, like

²¹ “I am devoted to the principle of originality - not originality in the egoistic sense, but originality in the sense of doing something that it is necessary to do. Now, obviously, the things that it is necessary to do are not the things that have been done, but the ones that have not yet been done. This applies not only to other peoples work, but seriously to my own work. That is to say if I have done something, then I consider it my business not to do that, but to find what must be done next” (Kostelanetz 1987, 207).

those mentioned in the introductory chapter, have created forms and methods for making theater that resemble those of Cage, but dramaturgical thinking and the role and practice of the director have, to only a limited extent, been effected by this development. This of course applies mainly to what we regard as the mainstream, but even among fringe theater groups the impact of Cage's sharp reconfiguration of hierarchical structures and authorship are few.²² When conceptualizing the production of *John and the Mushrooms*, a central concern was therefore, how to problematize and reshape the different roles involved.

Another concern was to let Cage's alignment with an anarchic political stance and his encouragement of individual interpretations, influence the dramaturgical thinking. In this I saw a direct link to my interest to formulate my own activities and esthetics in relation to their affect on their surroundings, and to activate this aspect, which I choose to call the political discourse of the performance, was relevant within the framework of *John and the Mushrooms*. It meant connecting the different esthetic choices and formal solutions to discussions about their communicative capacity, to discussions about their effect on the audience and to their inherent political intentions. Since the performance was geared to a young audience, this aspect of relating esthetic choices to a political view took on a specific dynamic and the concept of politics underwent a transformation towards definitions related to questions of a social and ethical nature.

These two aspects: first, the shifting and reconfiguration of the different roles we take on in a theater performance - as audience, as performer, dramatist or director - and, secondly, the merging of an avant-garde esthetics with a social and political engagement, are what the making of *John and the Mushrooms*, as well as this reflective project as a whole, intend to investigate.

²² As I mention, there are of course theater practitioners, both within larger institutions and among fringe theater groups, that have assimilated certain aspects of Cage's esthetics, but the reconfiguration of hierarchical structures and authorship most often is about a redistribution of power, for example moving the authorship from the writer to the actor, making directorial decisions in a collective mode, and so on. Though, what is important to keep in mind, both in the framework of Cage and the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, is that the multilayered structure of the expression eliminates the role of the narrative, and it reshapes the power relationship between the performance and the audience, as the juxtaposition of every expressional part is made individually by each person and the expressional imprint is radically less in the hands of the performer/performance. The fact that the performers in *John and the Mushrooms* had to make artistic choices while performing, eliminating the directorial influence of the director, is done in a lot of improvisational theater but, as I mentioned, that idiom tightly draws on representational narrative structures and does not aim to reshape the relation between the performance and audience when it comes to creative responsibility.



On Cage, his esthetics interpreted

Today, one hundred years after the birth of John Cage and twenty years after his death, the amount of literature and criticism on his art, and its position and influence, is rich and multi-disciplined. Most of it can be referred to as academic literature, in a variety of fields, such as musicology, music theory and history, art theory and history, performance studies, and poetics.²³ The literature on Cage also extends into areas like theories around the nature of creativity and the relationship between art and spirituality. Sometimes the name Cage turns up within a context one would never have guessed, and I choose to see this as a sign that his doings reverberate far beyond the circles of (contemporary) music and that his thoughts and methods can be transferred and used in many different practices and thought processes. But my view of Cage, his esthetics and methods, is not intended to give an overview of the current status of Cagean criticism. First of all, that would not be possible and second, it would not help us to better understand how the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* was created.

²³ Included examples are Fetterman 1996 (musicology), Kostelanetz 1987 and 1996, Retallack 1996, Bernstein and Hatch 2001 (music theory and history), Perloff and Junkerman 1994, Ekbohm 2009 (art theory and history), Fisher-Lichte 2008, Perloff and Dworkin 2009 (performance studies and poetics).

The directorial process of this project can best be described as an undertaking to interpret the whole esthetic world of an artist, rather than staging one specific piece of material.²⁴ I make this observation partly to differentiate from the more common process for a theater director working in the European theater tradition which since the late nineteenth century has most often been about interpreting and staging a play, opera or specific material.²⁵ Another reason for making this comment initially, is to clarify that a certain aspect of directing can be described as the building of a methodology, a tool constructed to be used both for the preparatory part of the process of creating a performance as well as for the collective work during the rehearsals. This may sound like it is possible to create a method *before* encountering the material – the material in the case of Cage being music compositions, texts, different types of documentations, written interviews as well as audio and visual art pieces – which I do not think is doable. The direct, intuitive and unshielded encounter with the material has to be allowed extensive unstructured time. (I dwell on it, I try to dream it, I move to it, I listen to it, I read it again and again and I play with the idea that I made it myself.)

If interpretation, in the framework of theater directing, is understood as an act of renewal of one specific piece of material, it is necessary in this case to invent another term that encompasses the pursuit of creating a performance based on the whole oeuvre of a writer or composer. The reason for this is that there is a distinct difference between the two endeavors. That difference is a shift towards practice, a shift that means being sensitive not only to the expression of the art, but to the judgment and quality exposed in the act of making it. This can also be seen as a move away from the particular towards the whole, and understood as an ambition to create a performance where the

²⁴ David Revill's approach in his book *The Roaring Silence: John Cage a Life*, from 1992, is very much akin to this wide perspective. In his preface he says: "the life, work and thought of John Cage form not an assembly of facts but a story with a unifying theme: Cage making himself through ever more adequate ways of transforming internal tendencies into external actions, which clarify the internal in turn. He develops through his activities a self-clarifying line which is almost exclusively ascetic and, emotionally but epistemologically, transcendental." In the critique of Cage, the importance of a broad perspective is common but the psychodynamic angle indicated by Revill in this quotation, in conjunction with the concept of emotional transcendence, is special and takes on a specific dynamic when put into the framework of the discourse of immanence, purported in this work.

²⁵ As I mention in the foreword, when framing the different esthetic discourses this work relates to, a large number of theater practitioners and groups base their performances on other types of material, such as themes or questions that are researched. This comment should be seen broadly and relating mainly to western institutionalized theaters.

esthetic, ethical and political engagement is reflected more in the structural level than in the explicit semantic level of the performance. It should not be understood as an interpretation but as an *alignment with and an adaptation of a practice*. When applying this kind of view to the art of John Cage, the step towards building a “methodology of the project,” becomes unobstructed. I attribute this consequence to the fact that Cage’s compositional process and modes of thought provide resources for structuring unstructured time and that, in his doings, he includes expressions and techniques that guide the affect. More specifically, this can be exemplified in his compositions that are based on text instructions in combination with durational instructions, often with an explanatory text as an introduction. But also in the many different texts in which Cage exposes a concern about the relation between the expression and the perception, i.e. a focus on the affect.

I think that modern art has turned life into art, and now I think it’s time for life (by life I mean such things as government, the social rules and all those things) to turn the environment and everything into art. In other words, to take care of it, and to change it from being just a mess into being something which facilitates our living, instead of making us all miserable (Kostelanetz 1987, 212).

The intention behind creating a “methodology of the project” is to identify what constitutes Cage’s esthetic world, in order to better understand the reasoning leading to the different steps in his compositional practice. This, in turn, creates a picture of a structure – a map – to be used for navigating, in alignment with his practice and artistic intention. In the case of *John and the Mushrooms*, this methodology, or map, was clearly in place when we created the concept for the performance, and even if it partly changed through the collective creative process, its importance was crucial for the work of the performers. Since major parts of the performance included improvisation and the demand on the performers to take artistic responsibilities was taxing, this methodology became an indispensable stabilizing factor. As we shall see, the meaning and essence of “the methodology of the project,” expanded far beyond the performative situation into an understanding of the intent and affect of the expression.

Interpretation of esthetics I

A deeper understanding of the esthetic world of Cage – along side with my already extensive contact with his music - came through reading. Since the literature and criticism on Cage and his art is extensive and diverse, I decided, before turning to secondary literature, to stay with his own voice. Cage wrote continuously throughout his life: reviews, essays, poetry, short stories, short-short stories and lectures. He also generously expressed himself on the role of the artist and the function of art, in interviews and different public forums. In conjunction with his own writing, which consequently serves as the core reference both in the shaping of the performance, as well as in these reflections, I have mainly referred to two references. Joan Retallack, American writer, poet and scholar gives us important insights in her exposition *Musicage, Cage muses on Words Art Music* (1996), a book constructed around interviews made with Cage during the last two years of his life. After an insightful and condensed foreword, that introduces the reader to Cage, Retallack inserts, as an overture to the interviews, Cage's own text *Art is Either a Complaint or Do Something Else* (1989). In one of the passages in her foreword, she manages to encompass both the large setting in which Cage wanted to place his art, as well as to position it in a context beyond contemporary music, when she says that this “work brings material and experiences together in a mode of enactment rather than ‘aboutness’. Patterns of sound and silence, chance and design startlingly reveal their utterly intermingled contingency, not as idea, but as initiating experience to be undergone by composer and audience equally involved in the making of meaning” (Retallack 1996, xxvii). The first interview in the book is conducted in September 1990 and the last interview, or conversations as Retallack chose to call them, takes place on July 30, 1992, only twelve days before Cage died. Retallack steers the conversations in such a way that they encompass both in-depth details about specific compositions and compositional problems as well as reflections on past political events, and thoughts and reflections about the future. These interviews radiate an intimacy which partly emanates from evenly placed reminders of small details in the room where they sit and talk - all five take place in Cage's kitchen - or sounds coming from the street through an open window, or the purring of the cat. There is also an intimate rhythm to the conversations

and a willingness to pull the issues into an emotional dynamic, which might sound strange, since Cage rarely spoke about emotions or his inner private life. But I think it signals a sense of urgency, that both Cage and Retallack exude in their totally fluent and playful yet serious way of talking about art as something important for humans, in the world. The other source, central to this project, is a book with interviews that Richard Kostelanetz made with Cage in the 1980s (Kostelanetz, 1987). Included are not only interviews that Kostelanetz himself conducted, but also interviews done by other people. The book is divided and organized into sections dealing with various themes like Cage's influences, his music, his writing, esthetics, pedagogy, and social philosophy. To group the material in such a way is maybe obvious, but even so it clearly shows how Cage's activities had many different focuses.

Both these books portray Cage in an open, not overly reflective way, presenting him rather than analyzing his work. This makes room for other references and critique with more interpretive approaches. Yet, even if this latter group is necessary as a resource for gaining a more complex picture, the handling of these references is tricky. What I mean by that is that many of the critics producing secondary literature on Cage and his oeuvre, emphasize the same aspects and make similar interpretations of his work. This can be taken as a sign that Cage's activities carry a certain one dimensionality in regards to their intention, but the tricky part of this phenomena is that it can become normative and as such stand in the way for both a deeper understanding and for more eccentric interpretations. Dwelling on this dynamic, what we might call "the myth of Cage" and its negative consequences, is confined to these reflections; it never became disproportionate in the process of making the performance.

Interpretation of esthetics II

To approach the esthetic world of Cage does not entail any hidden keys or access to some advanced knowledge. It is actually the opposite; the dominant energy and ambition communicated through his texts and the different interviews, is an attempt by Cage to express his ideas and intentions in a way that functions well outside the language and references of contemporary music. I encountered this communicative quality early on in my readings,

even before the decision to produce the performance was made, and I came to understand that the basis for Cage's activities – or doings, as he would say – was to engage in the world. The relationship between life and art, between aesthetics and politics, was essential to him. Even in his formulations about the circumstances under which he is doing his doings, he emphasizes the relationship between art, the artist and the world outside. One could therefore say, as I outlined in the introduction, that it is the communicative potential of art that, through his inventions, he investigates and develops.

I think one of the things that distinguishes music from other arts is that music often requires other people. The performance of music is a public occasion or a social occasion. This brings it about that the performance of a piece of music can be a metaphor of society, of how we want society to be. Though we are not now living in a society which we consider good, we could make a piece of music in which we would be willing to live. I don't mean that literary, I mean it metaphorically. You can think of the piece of music as a representation of a society in which you would be willing to live (Retallack 1996, xxx).

In its illustration of how the performance situation offers a model for the relationship between the individual and society, this quotation strongly relates to my own thinking about the theater as a place where unexpected possibilities can be found and experienced. A thinking that, among other things, revolved around the challenge to stage language structures of a broken and non-narrative kind.²⁶ Implicitly, Cage's words criticize the idea of the theater as a place where already known structures of power, relations or emotions are displayed, instead of being a place where unknown capabilities are illuminated. As the choice of which material to perform must be considered the main factor in such an ambition – to vitalize the theater by seeing it as a place for possibilities – it strengthened my idea of creating a piece, at a mainstream theater, based on his music. This short

²⁶ This can be exemplified with theater productions based on texts by for example Gertrude Stein, Öyvind Fahlström, Erik Beckman and texts by other poets. The aspect of "unexpected possibilities" is treated extensively in the essay *Meeting-Meaning*.

quotation is also a good example of the playful sharpness Cage often used when talking about his views on art and the role of the artist, and as such it set the tone for the working process and the performance as a whole.

Cage's writings on art, art theory and philosophy are quite extensive, and it is reasonable to say that it is an essential part of his oeuvre. He was often asked about this multidisciplinary practice, moving between composing and writing and visual art, and one can sense a certain impatience when he says: "Some people consider me a poor musician whereas they think some of my ideas are interesting. So they say, he's not a musician, but he's a philosopher, whereas most philosophers say he's not a philosopher but he's a good musician. And they ask me sometimes which I think are more important – my compositions or my texts, and the answers are the ones we've been giving all through this conversation – when we're writing music, that's what important, and when we're writing ideas, that's what's interesting" (Kostelanetz 1987, 19). In his often multifaceted and sometimes contradictory views, exposed in his writings and in interviews, an ambition to demystify the role and practice of the artist repeatedly emerges; he proposes that the meaning of art lies in how it can be used. He says: "Everything I do is available for use in the society" (Retallack 1996, xxvii). Cage, inspired by his engagement in Zen Buddhism, asserts the idea of art as a tool for heightened life experience in the concreteness of the present moment and as a place where questions rather than answers should lead the way. It is the effect of the art that is interesting, and this effect should be steered towards increasing the sensitivity of the human mind.²⁷

Looking at the early encounters Cage had with music and juxtaposing those with my own experiences of different temperaments and talents within the field of music making, I would describe Cage's musical capability as dominated by curiosity and creativity rather than conventional musicality. This impression is fueled by his own reflections on his musical studies as a child, when he describes that he was very early on was more interested in making his own pieces than playing the etudes on the piano. It seems clear that his talent was not weighed down by being a musical *wunderkind* with perfect pitch and fast fingers. Later, when studying with Arnold Schönberg, he was brutally confronted with his lack of a musical ear when told by his teacher that "without a feeling for harmony I would

²⁷ To emphasize that the heightened life experience is connected to the concreteness of the present moment is to clarify that it is not about transcending life.

always encounter an obstacle, a wall through which I wouldn't be able to pass." And Cage answered: "in that case I would devote my life to beating my head against that wall" (Kostelanetz 1987, 5). A strong self-confidence combined with the gift of playfulness ensured that this lack of a conventional musicality never became an issue for Cage. He was a builder and an inventor who made use of the means he had access to. In his youth, Cage was close to his father who was an inventor and it is tempting to deduce that his father, being an inventor, influenced Cage's own practice.²⁸ A temptation that is fueled by the fact that he so clearly acknowledged his closeness to his father, but even more so by the sprawling number of examples, both from his early practice as a student, artist and composer up to his later mature years as an artist, that show a very tactile and pragmatic attitude towards art making. When Cage describes the circumstances leading up to experimenting with the prepared piano – maybe the most well known of his musical "inventions" – you sense an energy to find a practical and functioning solution to a problem: "In 1938 Syvilla Fort ... asked me to make music for her *Bacchanale*. The space was small, and there was no room for percussion, only room enough for a grand piano. So I had to do something suitable for her on that piano. And that's what happened. ... I went to the kitchen and got a pie plate and put it and a book on the strings and saw that I was going in the right direction. The only problem with the pie plate was that it bounced. So then I got a nail, put it in, and the trouble was it slipped. So it dawned on me to put a wood screw between the strings, and that was just right. Then weather-stripping and so on. Little nuts around the screws, all sorts of things" (Kostelanetz 1987, 58). To a greater or lesser degree this inquisitive attitude can be found in many of Cage's compositions and combined with his interest in creating close relationships with musicians and other performers, it exposes a strong interest in the technical and hands on aspect of music making.²⁹ He developed many in depth dialogues with musicians both in order to understand in detail the specific

²⁸ Cage seem to have a real love for telling short stories about his father's different inventions, that almost all failed in one way or the other. "My father invented a submarine just before the First World War which had the world's record for staying under water, and he dramatized this by making an experimental trip on Friday the thirteenth, with a crew of thirteen, staying under water for thirteen hours. But it never entered his mind that the value of staying underneath water lay in being invisible to people above. Because his engine ran on gasoline it left bubbles on the surface of the water. So his sub wasn't in the war, and Dad went bankrupt" (Kostelanetz 1987, 23).

²⁹ An example of this could be the piece *Fontana Mix* from 1958, which consists of 6 drawings in conjunction with 10 transparencies. This piece, deriving from notations used in *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957/58), was developed into a tape music composition that Cage used in different transformations in a number of pieces, like *Water Walk*, which was part of the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*.

instruments but also to guide and support their understanding and interpretation of his music. The musician who was perhaps closest to him over the years was the piano player David Tudor, whom Cage repeatedly refers to when reflecting on his own development as a composer.³⁰ Commenting on Tudor's artistic judgment and capacity as a piano player, in the framework of creating more open scores, he says: "This giving of freedom to the individual performer began to interest me more and more. And given to a musician like David Tudor, of course, it provided results that were extraordinarily beautiful" (Kostelanetz 1987, 67).

Yet another observation by Cage on the practicalities of music making, can serve as a vehicle for further insight into his interest and focus on the tactile aspect of art making, and when approached with a detailed analysis, we can learn a lot - in general - from the following quotation about Cage's art practice.

What is to be done is quite marvelous. It's what we call 'truckera,' which is the playing of a record with a hundred pieces of recorded operatic music all superimposed. So that it is like a huge truck of operatic music that passages through the environment. Sometimes going from right to left, sometimes going from left to right, but it has the same effect that a truck would have passing across the rest of the sound. We found that a way of turning the loudspeakers upside down over something like a forty-foot vent that goes into the ground. You know, a grating. And the sound is marvelous. It sounds as though it comes from somewhere else, which it does. But what's wanted is that as it goes from left to right, that it start from nothing and come into the present and then go back to nothing. Poor Mr. W. can't do that. But Andy can do it with ease. It means, apparently, starting one speaker and then one more ... in other words doing a kind of glissando of speakers, slipping from one to the next, and then letting them slip out at the end. Then you really get the feeling that you want - of starting low, getting very loud, and disappearing. I'm at the point of asking Andy to do it. Just in order to ... taste success! (Retallack 1996, 300)

³⁰ Cage says: "Everything I have composed since 1952 was written for David Tudor" (1980, 120).

Cage is almost 80 years old when he related this story to Joan Retallack, about working with Andrew Carver on a version of *Europea 5* that was being rehearsed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.³¹ Expressions like “marvelous” were not rare in Cage’s language. A sensuality is often present in the linguistic dynamics of his judgments, and it is not uncommon for him to refer to joy and pleasure. To talk about, for example, the entertaining aspect of art and music came easy to him. He starts out telling this little story with the anticipation that something has not yet transpired will be “marvelous.” This typifies what Merce Cunningham calls Cage’s “sunny disposition.”³² The next sentence exemplifies two reoccurring techniques in Cage’s compositional practice, the combination of acoustic instruments/voices with recorded or transmitted sound sources, and superimpositions. The main reason for noting this is that it points to an esthetic choice where the expressive force is obtained through synchronicity and multiplicity (synergetic effects). The sentence also includes the invented term “truckera” which Cage explains as descriptive of a sound that sounds like a “huge truck of operatic music.” This made up term reveals Cage’s playful side, but also shows how he turns an audible impression into language: this truck “passes through the environment” which describes the quality of a moving sound. In different pieces and in different ways the transformation of sound, in timbre or in space, was a quality prevalent in the music of Cage. In his description of the process of moving the sound around, Cage goes into detail, and you can sense how interested and careful he is about this aspect of the performance. Once again, we see the desire to invent something and tangibly investigate in order to achieve a certain effect. The sound accomplished has a quality of coming “from somewhere else,” which is regarded as something positive. This “somewhere else” is a place outside the performance space; the sound – the art – becoming a vehicle for contact with the world outside the performance. The account then returns to describing a movement, but here it is the movement between “the present and then back to nothing.” Cage’s choice

³¹ Retallack’s interview was made on July 30, 1992, the last interview she did with Cage. Andrew Carver was a long time collaborator with Cage, who specialized in what we today would call sound design and computer programming, but also a composer and music director. Cage wrote five operas at the end of his career, *Europea 1-5*, (Cage, 1987-92).

³² A characterization Cage himself might be the originator of.

of language is not specific to this case. Seeking this oscillation between “the present” and “nothing,” as a part of the piece (many of his pieces), can be read as a yearning to insert a symbol of the continuous process of becoming as Cage came to view it, inspired by Zen-Buddhism: “But, what is marvelous is that the opposites are not opposite. And that’s part of what we might call spirituality” (Retallack 1996, 172). The quotation then turns back to some technical details regarding how to operate the sound amplification, before ending with exposing the desire to “taste success!” How should that be understood? John Cage is 80 years old, and one of the most honored and influential artists in the world, and he still has a taste for success? My guess is that it works two ways; the desire to make an impact and be acknowledged for it, is a predicament for artists on all levels, at all times in their carrier; and the joy of making something that works, i.e. the joy of successfully transforming an idea into realization.

Interpretation of esthetics III

Understood and adapted, Cage’s tactile and inventive attitude to his practice came to be very important as a mode of inspiration in our work with *John and the Mushrooms*. Building, making new, finding solutions to unexpected situations, were the actors main activities from which relationships and connections grew. If the word adapt is exchanged with apply, or test, or just “to do,” we are more or less looking at something akin to the expression “learning by doing.” To understand through doing was an idea strongly purported by Cage, and even if he studied composition, first with Adolph Weiss and then later with Arnold Schoenberg, it is not totally incorrect to describe Cage as somewhat of an autodidact as a composer.³³ This is emphasized by his open curiosity and the fact that he was constantly putting himself in a position to learn new things, and ask new questions. But more concretely the learning by doing attitude is exemplified through his search for and experimentation with new sound sources, with new compositional forms and with media that was new to him. Descriptions of how he started to work with electroacoustic music in the forties, or with visual art,

³³ Cage had explicit ideas about education, strongly inspired by Buckminster Fuller. One of my favorite quotations is said in connection with a discussion around the prevailing competitiveness in the educational system and its negative influence on developing independent minds: “Our whole education has been to stop singing and to inspire cheating” (Kostelanetz 1987, 240).

particularly printmaking, in the seventies, explains how he came into these creative situations with plenty of ideas and methods but no specific knowledge about the techniques, and it was in collaboration with technicians, assistants and colleagues that he developed an understanding which enabled him to create. The learning by doing is of course also applicable to Cage's interest and knowledge in mycology. The story goes that he was living with some other people in a small house upstate New York, and in order to find some time and space for himself he started to take walks in the surrounding woods.

And since it was August, the fungi are the flora of the forest at that time. The brightest colors (we are all children), they took my eye. I remember that during the Depression I had sustained myself for a week on nothing but mushrooms and I decided to spend enough time to learn something about them. Furthermore, I was involved with chance operations in music, and I thought it would just be a very good thing if I get involved in something where I could not take chances. However, I've learned to experiment, and the way you do that is, if you don't know if a mushroom is edible or not, you cook it all up, and you take a little bit and then you leave it until next day and watch to see if there are any bad effects. If there aren't any, you eat a little more, and presently you know something (Kostelanetz 1987, 15).

On a more serious note, it is possible to view Cage's experimental and tactile approach to his artistic practice as a consequence of his aversion to programmatic esthetics and to the notion of applying strategies or ideology on a purely intellectual basis, without trying, testing and sensing. In a letter from 1949 he writes to French composer Pierre Boulez: "Any attempt to exclude the 'irrational' is irrational. Any composing strategy which is wholly 'rational' is irrational in extreme" (Nattiez 1993, 38). Here, as in many other places when looking at Cage's practice and his formulations on esthetics, contradictions occur. However, these contradictions become most interesting when viewed as conscious, from Cage's standpoint, and thus interpreted as attempts not only to break through norms and conventions, but also as consciously formulated

frictions aimed at increasing the awareness around the fact that conflicts are unavoidable and have to be seen as a part of a rich multiplicity. The immediate experience of the inherent irrationality in rationally formulated concepts was continuously felt throughout the creative process when making the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*: The individual freedom of expression was disturbed by a need for contact and interactivity; the hierarchical dynamic of an instruction to be carried out confused the aspect of power; the intention to break through the conventional expectations met resistance from preconceptions of what theater is and should be.³⁴ The Cagean aim is to perceive such contradictions as unavoidable – and necessary – parts of a larger dynamic that exert specific demands on each individual human being. This stance stems from Cage's engagement in the theories of Zen, and the idea of non-obstructiveness, and is inherent in the idea of anarchic harmony where contradictions and conflicts are not recognized as such (Krishnamurti 1975).

Interpretation of esthetics IV

The function and role of the arts, for the individual as well as for society, was repeatedly, in different ways and in different contexts, reflected on by Cage. When juxtaposed with an analysis of his practice I would like to suggest that this inclination to theoretically activate the field of perception shows that Cage was an artist truly devoted to the relational qualities of art, thus separating himself from the modernist idea of a strong and autonomous artist subject. A significant number of the choices that Cage made in his art practice can instead be defined as representing a discrete shift towards what we today interpret as postmodern signifiers: a clear effort to develop methods that reduced the impact of his subjective stance and taste; the transference of certain parts of the artistic responsibility away from the composer to the performers; giving equal attention to the process of listening as to the process of composing; encouraging divergent interpretations through the technique of superimposing and emphasizing multiplicity.³⁵

³⁴ I look more thoroughly at this performer dynamic in the essay *Who is the Creator?*

³⁵ By examining Cage's compositional practice in more detail, the examples can be extended and an attempt to deepen this reasoning is made in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, to which I refer.

Focusing on and nourishing the relational qualities of art, corresponds to the question of communication, which I have suggested is the core of Cage's investigations, and which reoccurs in his own formulations about the intentions behind his practice. But before we look at his thoughts on this aspect, we need to problematize the concept of communication in the framework of theater and art perception. Firstly, communication in the Cagean context should be understood as a sequence of exchange beyond semantic language, but also as a questioning of mimesis as the core dramaturgical tactic. Mediation purported by recognized and established signs enables only an illusion of communication and art should attempt to illuminate this through creating expressions that enable an increased awareness and a reconfiguring of esthetic – and communicative – norms.³⁶ In Cage's own words this intent takes on a slightly more concrete dynamic:

It's not that I intend to express one particular thing, but to make something that can be used by the person who finds it expressive. But that expression grows up, so to speak, in the observer.

(Kostelanetz 1987, 215)

Music is about changing the mind – not to understand, but to be aware.

(Kostelanetz 1987, 215)

When merging these quotations, the idea that the quality of art is immanent in the kind of reaction it causes in the listener/viewer, becomes clear. Together, they indicate the idea that art can – Cage would probably say “should” - take on the function to inspire change, or growth, and they indicate that the quality of art is defined through the relational qualities created during the event of perception.³⁷

³⁶ This discussion is closely linked to the discussion on representational and presentational esthetics and expanded on in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, as well as in other places.

³⁷ This is an observation easily extended and interpreted in conjunction with the theories of affect, and as such, one could claim, unavoidable in a reflective apparatus designated to highlight the relationship between artistic expression and its viewer/listener. But because the theories around affect, both historically and as contemporary discourse, harbor such divergent branches, this project must stay with the observations that are based on the practice and judgment taking place in the different processes. Though, with that said, as the philosopher Gilles Deleuze is a central reference in this work as well as crucial to the contemporary critical discussion on affect theory, I expand and explain my own understanding of his contribution, and my own thoughts on that discourse, in the text essay *Meeting – Meaning*.

The interpretation is, therefore, that Cage intentionally wanted to create an affect rather than an object (to be judged, liked or disliked). This is accentuated, when he says: “And if one is making a work, which I often do, that is not an object, but a process, then that concern doesn’t enter in and the question of whether it is better or not better, is not to the point” (Kostelanetz 1987, 217). The term *process*, as it is used here, should be understood as energy with divergent directions. The compositional practice as developed by Cage was a process of setting a specific sequence of activities in motion rather than applying a subjective sensitivity/judgment when deciding what choices to make. The conceptualization of this process resulted in a score, in a composition. In the hands of the performer this, in turn, sets off a process of interpretation, which in most compositions by Cage presents challenges of a kind quite different from other musical interpretation processes. The reason for this is that they demand that the interpreter not “only” shape what is there, but invest his/her own material. The composition is thus dependent on the creativity of the performer, which makes his/her practice somewhat equal to the practice of the composer. In light of Cage’s statements on affect, the term can also be easily extended to describe his intention to instigate the actual perceiving of a piece of music as an experience of a process. This notion of processes constitutes a shift that transforms the concept of communication into a concept of activity: The making of the art, as well as the perception of it, is a doing rather than an expression and a perception.³⁸ The composer is nothing more than the instance composing, or as in many of Cage’s compositions, the inventor of the structure to be filled and set in motion. And the multilayered structure of the composition is the instance to be co-composed by the listener/perceiver. The relational quality is thus enhanced, or rather called for. Letting a similar esthetic stance guide the process of creating a theater performance does not only demand the expansion – shifting – of our different roles in the theater ensemble, but, as I explain in more detail later on, it pulls into question, in some instances even disconnects, many of those tools and types of thinking that are most often used in the practice of acting, in the practice of playing music, and in the practice of directing. Most apparent among those

³⁸ The interconnection between these two aspects – the relational qualities and the quality of doing – is clear, and complex at the same time. It creates a realm of questions related to affect but also ethics, which I talk about in the essay *The Rhythm of Thinking*.

aspects are shifts in how we think about relations and how we view the hierarchy of expressional forms. However, the apparent relational demands, indicated both in the structure of the compositions as well as in the surrounding formulations, was the incentive for adapting the methodology of *role-shifting* and making it one of the core dramaturgical ambitions when working with this project. In the process of creating our performance, when following and applying this gaze of problematizing the relational qualities of art, it was helpful, almost essential, to define the relevant grounds for doing so, and one way to do that was to try to understand the theories and thought lines that fused Cage to refine his stance on this issue.³⁹

Influences, predecessors and mentors – Pragmatism and Spirituality

Searching into the art of Cage entails getting to know the people and movements that he was inspired and influenced by. He was connected to a large group of artists and thinkers that he engaged in dialogue with, a group spanning from early encounters with teachers like Adolf Weitz and Arnold Schoenberg, artist friends and contemporary colleagues like Marcel Duchamp, Robert Rauschenberg, Buckminster Fuller, Morton Feldman and of course Merce Cunningham, and many, many more.⁴⁰ But if that group of people was extensive, there was another, smaller group of personalities, mentors and voices that Cage repeatedly mentions as influential and important his to artistic development. In his essay *The Intent of the Musical Moment: Cage and the Transpersonal*, Austin Clarkson suggests a starting point for understanding the artistic heritage of Cage. He says: “Cage’s project is indeed planted deep in the seedbed of a spiritually informed American pragmatism” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 63). When setting out to describe the development of this “spiritually informed American pragmatism” Clarkson begins his reasoning by looking at the American philosopher and psychologist William James. James is often talked about as the first important American psychologist, but his work and

³⁹ It might be useful to remind us, as I do in other places throughout this work, that in the 1940’s the questions Cage pulled into his practice and in his thinking about art, were in many ways groundbreaking.

⁴⁰ Accounts of Cage’s relationships to his contemporary artist colleagues are abundant. For example see Revill 1992; Haskins 2012; and Kostelanetz 1996.

theories had many trajectories since he had studied philosophy and medicine as well as psychology. Working at the end of the nineteenth century, publishing some of his most important writing around the turn of the century, he was a contemporary of social philosopher John Dewey and philosopher and scientist Charles Sanders Peirce, both of whom also had a significant influence on the emergence of pragmatism as a philosophical discourse.⁴¹ James' thinking strove to illuminate lived experience as the main source for understanding the complexities of life. Truth and true beliefs emerge from the actual experience of things and from that which proves useful to the believer. Truth is verified through its correspondence with the actual experience of the world, but also dependent upon its use to the person who holds it. His formulations were shaped around the idea that ordinary lived consciousness was an empirical phenomena in its own right and the pragmatic aspects of his thoughts on the growth of human consciousness can be defined as an engagement in our direct physical reality; the specific qualities of all that is around us in the present moment. Therefore, its emphasis lay on the non-theoretical, pointing out that the experience of life does not come through submitting to specific ideas and engaging in the activity of thinking, but through opening up to the wonders of the world, again and again, new every day.

You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed. Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest. We don't lie back upon them, we move forward, and, on occasion, make nature over again by their aid (James 1995, 77).

But James' definition of the pragmatic discourse, as well as harboring the possibility of transforming a lived experience into a spiritual one, also aimed at bringing to attention what lay beyond consciousness in the subliminal realms.

⁴¹ Dewey, maybe more so than William James, became known as a public intellectual as he was deeply engaged in discussions and developments of progressive education.

In his work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* he writes:

The important fact which this “field” formula commemorates is the indetermination of the margin. Inattentively realized as is the matter which the margin contains, it is nevertheless there, and helps both to guide our behavior and to determine the next movement of our attention. It lies around us as a “magnetic field,” inside of which our centre of energy turns like a compass-needle, as the present phase of consciousness alters into its successor. Our whole past store of memories floats beyond this margin, ready at a touch to come in; and the entire mass of residual powers, impulses, and knowledge that constitute our empirical self stretches continuously beyond it. So vaguely drawn are the outlines between what is actual and what is only potential at any moment of our conscious life, that it is always hard to say of certain mental elements whether we are conscious of them or not (James 1917, 232).

This opened up a field where the experience of dreams, chance encounters, archetypes and collective unconscious could be regarded as a source for understanding life. Clarkson suggests in his essay that this oneiric aspect fascinated many artists, including Cage, and fused their interest in the philosophy of pragmatism: “What marked their pragmatism as non-ironic, non-naïve, and complex is the premise that the unconscious has a noetic function in supplying the conscious mind with creative portents” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 65).⁴² But to approach the concept of the unconscious was somewhat complicated for Cage as he persistently worked towards demystifying his practice as an artist, and even if he did not dismiss the unconscious as a force, he perceived it as a contradiction to his tactile inventiveness. Though, as exposed in the quotation above, the emphasis is placed at the other end; the unconscious becomes a force in the perception of the beholder. The potential inherent in this observation came into play as Cage found a way to merge the philosophical discourse of pragmatism with his engagement

⁴² The concept of the noetic function is of seminal importance to the thoughts and theories I try to reflect on throughout this work, as a whole, especially in the essay *Meeting – Meaning* where it is juxtaposed with the question of the production of meaning.

in Zen Buddhism. This was instigated by and evolved through his involvement and studies with the Japanese Zen master Daisetz T. Suzuki, but also through the psychologist CG Jung whose influence became an important link between Cage's interest in Zen Buddhism and Western psychology and philosophy, as Jung was a devoted follower of James. When merging Cage's interest and engagement in the philosophy of Zen Buddhism with the discourse of pragmatism, it is clearly the inherent spiritual potential within the notion that everything is connected to "a whole" that captures his interest. In other words, in order to understand the impact of the philosophical discourse of pragmatism on Cage, it is necessary to embrace his interpretation of "the spirituality of engaging in the whole" as vital both on a macro level – the world and all within – and on the subjective micro level where the noetic function is at work. Even if Cage did not place the notion of difference as a substrate for thinking "the whole" but connected it to a non-hierarchical outlook on being, and even if the spiritual aspect in Cage's understanding/perception/use of the idea of the whole cannot be found in the Deleuzian discourse, it should in this reflective context be seen as related to a univocal being and the Deleuzian definition of univocity, which is outlined in the introduction and expanded on in the essay *The Rhythm of Thinking*.

Cage's involvement in more conventionally defined academic discourses did not come about in an orderly way, like studies that moved from one insight to the next. I would rather describe it as understandings and intellectual relationships that grew from his sprawling creative curiosity, moving freely parallel to his art practice. Consequently his interest included art and voices that were established outside academic circles but within the same mode and view of the world as James and the philosophy of pragmatism. Two writers who became very important to Cage were Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, both of whom lived and worked during the first part of the nineteenth century. Thoreau, a poet and a philosopher, is probably best known for his book *Walden*, first published in 1854, a book that followed Cage throughout his life, and with its sensual language made a deep imprint on his own. *Walden* is an account of Thoreau's observations of nature and life, from when he lived by himself in the woods. The text describes in detail his daily chores and impressions and it exposes a devotion to "a free and simple living." It is filled with descriptions of the movements and sounds that continuously happen in nature; sometimes Thoreau applies a wide perspective, sometimes a

more narrow and meticulous one. Another text by Thoreau that influenced Cage and consolidated their connection was *Civil Disobedience*. Here Thoreau makes an argument for disobedience to the state, fueling the anarchic tendency in the thinking of Cage. After his first encounters with Thoreau, Cage writes:

I am amazed that in reading Thoreau I discover just about every idea I've ever had worth its salt. I find Thoreau very lively, and continually invigorating. Take, for instance, something that I came across this last year: 'If, when I am in the woods, the woods are not in me, what right have I to be in the woods?' It's what I have been saying in my books all along (Kostelanetz 1987, 44).

Since the overall dramaturgical ambition when creating *John and the Mushrooms* was to incorporate not only Cage's own words, but also those voices that he was influenced by, Thoreau (and his sensibilities) was, an unavoidable element. The script starts with the character John saying:

Here is where I sleep. At evening, the distant lowing of some cow in the horizon beyond the woods sounded sweet and melodious, and at first I would mistake it for the voices of certain minstrels by whom I was sometimes serenaded, who might be straying over hill and dale; but soon I was not unpleasantly disappointed when it was prolonged into the cheap and natural music of the cow (Petri 2011 and Thoreau 2008).

This line comes from *Walden*, and it is an excellent example of the life-affirming mode that Thoreau puts forward in his writing, clearly akin to Cage's approach, both in his fluent relationship to nature and the sounds of the world, and to his belief in the positive impact of an open and generous mind.⁴³ Thoreau's writing also became an integral part of some of Cage's pieces, using his words

⁴³ For example: Cage in a taxi cab in New York City, resisting to fall into the cab driver's whining and complaining about the traffic situation, "One day I got into one [taxi] and the driver began talking a blue streak, accusing absolutely everyone of being wrong. You know he was full of irritation about everything, and I simply remained quiet. I did not answer his questions, I did not enter into a conversation, and very shortly the driver began changing his ideas and simply through my being silent he began, before I got out of the car, saying rather nice things about the world around him" (Kostelanetz 1987, 265).

and sketches as material for both music composition and visual art.⁴⁴ Thoreau's contemporary, the poet Walt Whitman, whose poetry was also incorporated into our performance, was a literary voice almost as dear to Cage as Thoreau's.⁴⁵ Whitman developed a lyrical style different in form but thematically closely related, as it reached out with observations and impressions that expressed a fascination with a changing and growing world. Although, their views of the world were explicitly vast, they both convey a vocation for detail, aiming to give the smallest systems in nature, and each and every stratum of craftsmanship in different human activities, their literary contemplation. By doing so both Thoreau and Whitman paid tribute to tactile craftsmanship as well as to every day doings. I think it is reasonable to regard – in mode and outlook – Thoreau and Whitman as forerunners to the philosophical discourse of Pragmatism, as their writing and thinking nourished the thoughts and theories that William James, John Dewey, Charles Sanders Pierce and others placed in an academic philosophical framework. Cage's strong connection to these influences, or voices, or whatever we want to call them, constitutes his deep American heritage, but also his desire to find a philosophical and spiritual reason for his artistic activities. Though, it was not really until he embraced Zen Buddhism that he was able to conflate these different voices into the ballast that gave his experimentations their expressional force and tremendous influence.

Cage's relationship to Asian philosophy and esthetics

His calling was to heal the mind with music grounded in Eastern principles of spirituality.

Austin Clarkson

The influence and impact of Asian philosophical thinking and Zen Buddhism on Cage's creative mind and artistic practice is complex. One has to see it as a slow process, evolving out of the many different references of a philosophical

⁴⁴ In the composition *Score without Parts: Twelve Haiku* (1974), Cage uses drawings by Thoreau as notations for the musicians to interpret. This score was also made into an etching by Cage (1978), and printed by Pamela Paulson, Crown Point Press.

⁴⁵ The year Cage died, 1992, was the centenary of Walt Whitman's death in 1892. Cage makes a comment about this when talking to Joan Retallack saying that he was delighted by the attention Whitman was given and the way it was so much "in the air" (Retallack 1996, xliiii).

nature that he engaged in, out of the political and social observations and impressions he let himself be exposed to, and in relation to his compositional practice. However, his exploration into ways of thinking somewhat foreign to his native culture, can be understood as a search for a spiritual core, but also as an investigation into questions related to the position of the artist – and art’s expression – in the world. In 1946 Cage wrote an article called *The East in the West* that, already in its title, directs a course in his esthetic and philosophical thinking that can hardly be underestimated. In this article he, for the first time, briefly mentions the Indian philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy, whose book *The Transformation of Nature in Art* was going to have a strong impact on Cage. Coomaraswamy’s text offered Cage formulations and guidance in his search for ways of thinking beyond the subjective expression and around concepts like agency and affect.⁴⁶ In his book Coomaraswamy writes about Indian theater and the relationship between the performer and the expression:

As to the Indian drama, the theme is exhibited by means of gesture, speech, costume, and natural adaption of the actor for the part; and of those four, the first three are highly conventional in any case, while with regard to the forth not only is the appearance of the actor formally modified by make-up or even a mask, but Indian treatises constantly emphasize that the actor should not be carried away by the emotions he represents, but should rather be the ever-conscious master of the puppet show performed by his own body on stage. The exhibition of his own emotions would not be art (Coomaraswamy 1974, 14).

Cage’s unwavering ambition to remove his own subjectivity and emotions as incentive for making his art can possibly be derived from this formulation and its emphasis on the importance of stylization. The anthropologist Joseph Campell introduced Cage to Coomaraswamy’s text already in 1934, and even if Cage did not explicitly confirm its influence on him, the importance and permanence of

⁴⁶ Cage’s first encounter with this text was 1934 but it did not really “hit” him until around 1948 and it is relevant to ponder whether the experiences of World War II and the impact of facing the human atrocities made it more important for artists, including Cage, to find ways to work that did not engage the modernist idea of an emotional subject taking center stage.

this esthetic stance was asserted by him throughout his career, writing as late as 1988 in his text composition *Art Is Either a Complaint or Do Something Else* that he does not want his work to expose his feelings (Cage 1988), and when asked how emotions fit into his art Cage answered: “It doesn’t fit into my work. It exists in each person, in his own way; but I’m not involved in that” (Kostelnetz 1987, 213).⁴⁷ Another view that Coomaraswamy puts forward in his text, and that was appropriated by Cage, has to do with the relationship between life as a subjective emotional experience in the world, on an everyday level, and the expression of art. At different instances Coomaraswamy talks about the merging of life and art suggesting that “the artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist,” or “embrace every kind of skilled activity, from music, painting and weaving to horsemanship, cookery, and the practice of magic, without distinction of rank, all being equally of angelic origin” (Coomaraswamy 1974, 9). In his essay *Cage and Asia: History and Sources*, David W. Patterson has interesting insights into how different Eastern philosophical thought lines conflate within Cage’s thinking and esthetics, and commenting on this specific aspect of the relation between life and art Patterson says: “Cage’s adoption of Coomaraswamy’s attitudes towards art as life and of all persons as ‘artists’ is nothing short of categorical, and the reader already somewhat familiar with Cage can acknowledge readily the status of these concepts as mainstays in his aesthetic for the rest of his life” (Patterson 1996, 55). He then explicitly points this out by quoting Cage saying: “Art is a way of life. It is for all the world like taking a bus, picking flowers, making love, sweeping the floor, getting bitten by a monkey, reading a book, etc., ad infinitum... Art when it is art as Satie lived it and made it is not separate from life (nor is dishwashing when it is done in this spirit).”

If Cage was reluctant to confirm the influence of Coomaraswamy, it was the opposite with his relationship and dependence on the teachings of the Japanese Zen master Daisetz T. Suzuki. In his initial involvement and studies of the theories of Zen Buddhism Cage enrolled in a series of courses that Suzuki held at Colombia

⁴⁷ In the context of contemporary Western theater actor tradition it is quite foreign to exclude the subjective emotional resource of the performer. Certain exceptions should be noted and most clear among them is the tradition of *Commedia del Arte* but also in the theories of Berthold Brecht and to a certain extent even Stanislavskij. In the framework of dance performance, both historic and contemporary, and in contemporary performance this is a deeply problematized and contested view as well. The actors who were involved in our project are no exception, so the transformational process of infusing this stance into the esthetics of the performance was a challenge that I try to describe and reflect on in the section *The performer – Shifting role* as a consequence below.

University in New York City in the early 1950s.⁴⁸ Suzuki was also influenced by William James, and Cage forged through his engagement in the teaching of Suzuki, a vital and useful relation between Zen Buddhism and the thinking embedded in the philosophical discourse of America Pragmatism. There are numerous places where Cage describes the ways in which Zen philosophy has influenced him:

The doctrine which he [Daisetz T. Suzuki] was expressing was that every thing and every body, that is to say every nonsentient being and every sentient being, is the Buddha. These Buddhas are all, every single one of them, at the center of the Universe. And they are in interpenetration, and they are not obstructing one another. This doctrine, which I truly adhere to, is what has made me tick in the way that I ticked. And it has made the agreement and the disagreements, and it has made it possible for me to use some people's work in ways that they didn't intend it to be used. And then this doctrine of nonobstruction means that I don't wish to impose my feelings on other people. Therefore, the use of chance operations, indeterminacy, etc., the nonerection of patterns, of either ideas or feelings on my part, in order to leave those other centers free to be the centers (Kostelanetz 1987, 211).

Cage attended Suzuki's lectures for almost three years and the insights and understanding gained from that time combined with the network of Cage's appropriations of other Asian philosophies makes up an elaborate – and sometimes contradictory – system of thoughts. It is possible however, to hone in on a few specific areas. Since he did not practice Zazen or the religious rites of Buddhist prayer, Cage's engagement can be described as philosophical, but also political and social-political.⁴⁹ If the questioning of the position of the subject as a source for the expression can be said to come from Coomaraswamy's influence, the main influence that the Zen studies had on him was very much about the quality of relations; each living being and their position in relation to each other in a

⁴⁸ Cage himself says that he attended Suzuki's lectures in the late 1940s but Suzuki did not move to New York until 1950 (Jaeger 2013).

⁴⁹ Zazen is the regular meditation practice that is part of a Zen Buddhist routine.

non-hierarchic structure. Cage's unconditional appropriation of this stance actually steered how he shaped his esthetics and structured the material in his compositions. This can be exemplified by his extensive use of multilayered expressions, but also by his intention to equalize the position of the composer, the interpreter and the listener. The way Cage moved into and used the life-affirming, non-violent and non-hierarchical philosophy of Buddhism should be seen as a process to deepen understanding, but also as a process towards play and lightness. In this mode he came to embrace the Question, which is an important tool and rhetorical concept in the teaching of Zen. The function of the question is central in the practice of Zen philosophy, most distinctly present in what is called a *Koan*, which is a kind of guiding statement given by the master to the pupil. The Koan often takes the form of a short scene or dialogue starting with a sincere question about life, or about the world, which is met with another question that seems almost totally irrelevant, but maybe not. The Koan, as a rhetorical figure, as well as the question, were used by Cage extensively both as material in compositions and as tools when creating concepts and defining what material to include in his different pieces. He says: "My choices consists in choosing what questions to ask. I have a great supply of answers to questions which I have not yet asked" (Kostelanetz 1987, 18). Cage even goes so far as to say that his "compositions arises out of asking questions" (Kostelanetz 1987, 215). The question as a dramaturgical figure and driving force in a theater play was an attractive idea for many reasons and we made it central to the momentum of the performance. Consequently, the subtitle I gave the play was *A Conversation consisting mainly of Questions*.

Chance and indeterminacy and the role of the Subject

I am on the side of keeping things mysterious, and I have never enjoyed understanding things. If I understand something, I have no further use for it. So I try to make music which I don't understand and which will be difficult for other people to understand, too.

John Cage

It is not difficult to see the above quotation as a contradiction to the transparency that pervaded Cage's artistic practice; openly and abundantly

sharing both his way of thinking and compositional techniques.⁵⁰ One aspect that is quite well known, even among people who do not know much about Cage and his art, is that for the absolute major part of his artistic practice, he used chance operations as a compositional tool. He talked about this technique in almost every instance and with an intensity that can only be understood if it is interpreted as harboring – as well as a compositional technique – a social-political vocation. With this I mean that for Cage, the choice to reduce the impact of his “likes and dislikes” extended beyond esthetics and was grounded in the opinion that the artist can never claim that his or her choices should be relevant to others, nor should his or her expression be imposed on somebody else. Such an outlook is paralleled with an anarchic view of social organization that Cage was a true believer of. Almost disturbed by the subjective aspect of decision making, he started to use chance operations as a technique around 1949.⁵¹ He talks about this development as a shift towards “ways of writing music where the sounds are free of my intentions”(Kostelanetz 1987, 216). This stance is amplified through statements like: “I would say that the highest discipline is the discipline of chance operations, because chance operations have absolutely nothing to do with one’s likes or dislikes. The person is being disciplined, not the work” (Kostelanetz 1987, 219).

As implied above, I tend to interpret the Cagean energy invested in this topic and practice as social-politically infused, as it so clearly explains his aversion to structures of control and the implementation of overarching ideologies. An alternative, or rather complement, to such a gaze is offered by Austin Clarkson when he formulates a connection between the use of chance operations and a psycho dynamic level, suggesting that Cage’s reasoning was “to introduce chance as the means of breaking down the ‘ignorance’ of the ego in order to let in the ‘divine unconscious’.” Clarkson quotes Cage saying: “Chance comes in here to give us the unknown” and then Clarkson comments by saying that “in other words, chance served to break down the ego’s resistance to the unconscious. Chance is here for Cage the agent for releasing musical ‘form’

⁵⁰ It is enticing, therefore, to ponder over what it is that Cage thinks he is keeping mysterious, and for whom?

⁵¹ When Cage developed his way of using chance operated methods in his compositional practice, he used the Chinese classic book of oracle *I Ching*, also known as the *Book of Changes*. The interpretation of that book is multiple and complex and the use of oracular statements represented by 64 so called hexagrams can take many different forms and be handled in many different ways.

from the unconscious 'heart' into the conscious 'mind'" (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 84). In light of Cage's spiritual interest and intent, Clarkson's observation is interesting as it ties Cage's interest in Asian philosophical thinking – and its tradition – to the spirituality and philosophy of American Pragmatism. Though it seems that a stronger reason for the emergence of the "chance-technique" comes from his desire to create a shift in the role of the composer as an artist-subject exposing his inner world. Cage says:

When I first made the transition from a continuity that I was directing, as it were, to one that I wasn't directing, I still had a certain knowledge of the possibilities. And so, seeing that there were some that would be pleasing, I did, at first, wish that they would come up, rather than the ones I didn't know were pleasing; I discovered that they altered my awareness. That is to say, I saw that things I didn't think would be pleasing were in fact pleasing, and so my views gradually changed from particular ideas as to what would be pleasing, toward no ideas as to what would be pleasing. Therefore, when you ask, do I "have difficulty in implementing" my philosophical positions, I don't try to have any of those things. In other words, I try, rather, to keep my curiosity and my awareness with regard to what's happening open, and I try to arrange my composing means so that I won't have any knowledge of what might happen. And that, by the way, is what you might call the technical difference between indeterminacy and chance operations. In the case of chance operations, one knows more or less the elements of the universe with which one is dealing, whereas in indeterminacy, I like to think (and perhaps I fool myself and pull the wool over my eyes) that I'm outside the circle of a known universe, and dealing with things that I literally don't know anything about (Kostelanetz 1987, 218).

An analysis of this differentiation between chance and indeterminacy could claim that Cage was using chance operations rather than operations where indeterminacy was in play, since he actually chose what material to let the

chance operations effect. Though, in some compositions he created concepts where the choice of what material to use had to be made by the performer, and those concepts can be regarded as allowing for indeterminacy rather than chance. These distinctions and their implications on our work with the performance were important and influential, as they delineate the different dynamics occurring when faced with a set material (to be performed) or a call for not only performing but also inventing the material.

The practice of using chance was for Cage also closely linked to his aim to exclude the idea of purpose as an artistic expressional energy. Encapsulated in that ambition is an incipient contradiction, a contradiction that Cage undeniably was aware of when he said: “I frequently say that I don’t have any purposes, and that I am dealing with sounds, but that’s obviously not the case. On the other hand it is. That is to say, I believe that by eliminating purpose, what I call *awareness* increases. Therefore my purpose is to remove purpose” (Kostelanetz 1987, 216). How should this be understood? If we do not regard this dynamic as a contradiction, I suggest that it can only be understood if *purpose*, as used by Cage, is a term inevitably intertwined with self-expression, and as such distinctly differentiated from an esthetic-political ambition. Cage places *awareness* as the affect of eliminating purpose, which can be read as descriptive of a state of sensitivity to what is outside the composition. It conjures up a picture of the composer as someone who listens to his music from a position that allows for hearing something unexpected. Or, as Cage puts it: “You see, I don’t hear music when I write it. I write in order to hear something I haven’t heard. My writing is almost characterized by having something unusual in the notation. The notation is about something that is not familiar” (Kostelanetz 1987, 63).

Consequently, the implications and reasons that Cage applies a chance operated methodology to his art practice are multiple. It constitutes not only one thing, or one idea, but instead creates a substrate that undeniably provokes all intentions to define art as a subjective emotional expression and as an activity through which quality can be defined without weighing its affect. At the same time, if seen through his own explanations, we can regard Cage’s use of chance operations as uncomplicated: A process used to separate artistic practice from “artistic judgment,” i.e. a shift away from the impact of the composer,

towards the potential of the unknown; as well as a way to exclude the idea of purpose within the core of the artistic expression. Therefore, Cage's use of chance was not uncontested or necessarily accepted by other composers. In his article *John Cage, or Liberated Music*, written already 1959, Heinz-Klaus Metzger comments candidly when he says: "It is a slap in the face of every traditional European aesthetic concept that the performance of Cage's work is a procedure largely constituted by accidents that are, strictly speaking, accidents of performance that cannot be related conclusively to notation. It is a further slap that during the performance the notations themselves refuse to generate a correlative sensuous appearance that would communicate meaning, since these notations are the results of mere chance operations in the technique of writing and in no way the formulations of a composing subject" (Metzger 2011, 1).⁵² Cage is slightly more humble when he notices that most "people who believe that I am interested in chance don't realize that I use chance as a discipline. They think I use it – I don't know – as a way of giving up making choices. But my choices consist in choosing what questions to ask" (Kostelanetz 1987, 17). The observation that Cage and his compositional methods met suspicion, even resistance, can be used as a springboard to the experiences that we made during our work with the performance, exposing the actors, the musicians, and the theater as a traditional institution, to the impetus of chance. Theater as constructed in a contemporary – and historical – context, does not, to any great extent, allow for a conceptual understanding. It is dominated by the sender – receiver set-up and expectations as to what type of expressional dynamic there should be, are quite fixed. Hence, the sharpness of Cage's esthetics presented a friction to this situation and to the artists that were involved and engaged in the projects, a friction that sometimes functioned as an inspiration, sometimes as a hindrance (as I will discuss in the essay *Who is the Creator?*). Either way, the implications of using chance, should be regarded as a central mode, both in the concrete work with the performance as well as in the reflective process of investigating immanence as a creative force.

⁵² Metzger's article is mainly about the correlation between music notation, interpretation and expressional force. There is an interesting quality of prediction in his article, which ends by connecting Cage's artistic activity to the phenomena of theater. He says, when commenting on Cage's piece *Water Walk* (which was also part of our performance): "Here – after the downfall of opera, the failure of the epic music theater, and the necessary end of realism in theater itself – is the beginning of a new music theater, tentatively evident, responsible only to not betraying its own possibilities" (Metzger 2011, 15).

Interpretation of esthetics V

John Cage was teaching at The New School in New York City during 1962 and one of the first things he said to his students was to warn them that “if they didn’t want to change their ways of doing things, they ought to leave the class, that it would be my function, if I had any, to stimulate change” (Kostelanetz 1987, 20). Cage’s unremitting aim to make something new, and the devotion with which he does this, could be described as the incentive for everything he does. He wants to invent and you cannot invent something that is already invented.⁵³ Fearlessly he embraced the concept of experimentation, and was undaunted by the possibility that his music would be rejected as not fully realized creations. He says: “Experimentation is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown” (Cage 1968, 13). The outcome of a fully structured piece – music or text – is, in the eyes of Cage, predictable and, therefore, undesirable. A considerable number of critics have approached and analyzed this stance using the definitions and dynamics of representational and presentational esthetics, terms that have had a long and varied history with roots back to Plato and Aristotle and the theory of mimesis and diegesis. In later esthetic theory there have been varied definitions, often differentiated by ascribing one quality to certain art forms and the other to other art forms. Perhaps the most general distinction - and the predominant one in esthetic theory of the post-World War II years - is formulated by Susanne Langer who draws the line between the representational symbolism of language and the presentational symbolism of an art object (Langer 1951).⁵⁴ In his comment on the relation between Langer and Cage, Richard Kostelanetz writes: “The function of art, she wrote, is ‘the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling’. The artist thus endeavors to create structures that present ‘semblances’ of familiar emotions” (Kostelanetz 1996, 27). Cage was greatly opposed to this way of defining the function and possibilities of art and from a contemporary, post

⁵³ It is interesting to connect this to Cage’s engagement in pragmatic philosophy and its emphasis on the non-theoretical, and the understanding that life cannot come through submitting to specific ideas or engaging in the activity of thinking, but through opening up to the (unique, new) experience of the wonders of the world, again and again, new every day. This connects to the presentational mode of creativity, turning its focus to perception by claiming that there is no language of (experience from) yesterday that should guide us in the experiences of today.

⁵⁴ Bringing Langer into this discussion adds a specific dynamic since Cage was seriously opposed to her definitions.

modern viewpoint and the emergence of interrelated forms of art, it obviously gets much more complex. The definition, maybe most useful in the framework of the theatre, is that a representational esthetic relies on established systems of symbols put together, i.e. relating to each other, in recognizable patterns. A presentational esthetic, on the other hand, aims to create new and unknown expressions by using symbols in an experimental and extended way, put together in patterns not recognizable in the world outside the performance. The two states are complementary. A representational esthetic - like spoken language - is filled with intonations, gestures and emphasis as its presentational aspect. In a presentational esthetic, even when using material very different from established symbolic discourses, representational symbolization is at work. In the theatre this latter observation is most evident in the body of the performer as a mute carrier (as an inevitable symbol) of all human experiences. In one of many reflections on this condition made by Austin Clarkson, he describes the music of Cage by saying that “meaning does not arise from a rhetoric of expressive devices, a grammar of signs, or implications that depend on being realized. There is no need for interpretation, as there is no space between the listener and the sound for translating symbols into discursive meanings. Hermeneutic windows cannot be opened, as they have no handles” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 77). These definitions were not useful to Cage. From the start, he was interested in the effect of his art, and when the representational esthetics - i.e. certain musical expressions expected to create a specific affect - did not accomplish what he was after, a questioning occurred and he had to, without any overarching formulation, turn to a different esthetic language. Cage commented on this condition and the process that ensued, by saying: “The need to change my music was evident to me earlier in my life. I had been taught, as most people are, that music is in effect the expression of an individual’s ego - ‘self-expression’ is what I had been taught. But then, when I saw that everyone was expressing himself differently and using a different way of composing, I deduced that we were in a Tower of Babel situation because no one was understanding anybody else; for instance, I wrote a sad piece and people hearing it laughed. It was clearly pointless to continue in that way, so I determined to stop writing music until I found a better reason than ‘self-expression’ for doing it” (Kostelanetz 1987, 215). In other words, Cage reasoned that there is a certain disobedience to the effect of the artistic expression that is inherent in the intent

of self-expression, and to move beyond self-expression is to invent forms and expressions that are new – also to the artist. Clarkson says that for Cage “the musical piece was merely the agent or conduit for evoking an act of listening that advances the individual’s spiritual development. When his compositions of the thirties and forties did not produce the effects he hoped for, he was ready to make the radical move (at least for a composer) from a representational to a presentational esthetic” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 72).

A presentational esthetic for Cage opened up possibilities within the never before experienced and provided a way to move beyond the known: “From what we already know, comes no change. From what we for example know as beauty comes nothing new, comes no change” (Retallack 1996, 69). But the complexity of the concept “new” cannot be underestimated and can only be dealt with if put in relation to a specific framework or situation, i.e. reflected on in reference to that which can be described as “not new” (known, established, normative).⁵⁵ Cage acknowledged and disarmed the ineffability inherent in the term by bringing it back to the activity of his own doings: “The business of the great things from the past is a question of preservation and the use of things that have been preserved. I don’t quarrel with that activity, and I know that it will continue. But there is another activity, one to which I am devoted, and it is the bringing of new things into being. ... That is to say, if I have done something, then I consider it my business not to do that, but to find what must be done next” (Kostelanetz 1987, 207). If we define the concept of the “new” as something that “I have never done before” (as a performer), and link it to the observation that “this what we are doing now together, simultaneously, has never as an expressional configuration, existed before,” we can connect the question of a presentational quality to the concrete doings of the performers. Seen like this, a presentational ambition dodges the claim that to make something new has to be seen through some grand perspective, and instead it illuminates the energy of a present moment, in the theater. This connects the concept of the “new” to “the unpredictable,” which is a relation commented on by Clarkson when he says, “he [Cage] conceived of a piece of music of actions that do not have predictable outcomes. If the musical

⁵⁵ It could be argued that such a formulation reinstalls a binary relationship between the new and the not-new which is contrary to Deleuze’s attempt to think difference beyond negation. In the essay *Meeting-Meaning* I approach this problem by discussing the concept of the new in relation to the experience of the present moment.

content was reduced to a minimum and the outcome stripped of expectations, the performer would be open to the spontaneous flow of the musical imagination, and performing music would be a creative rather than a re-creative act” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 66). Here Clarkson suggests that presentational esthetics are not only a question of the experience of the listener/viewer but also for the performer, i.e. it underscores that a presentational esthetic makes new and discrete demands on the performer. From this perspective, a presentational quality can also be described as an engagement in the doings as if the doings have never been done before, applying a presentational state of awareness. The conviction behind this approach, which Cage exposed in a large number of discussions and talks with musicians, is that the energy of discovery - the presentational awareness within the performative activity - is transmitted to the perceiver: “The questioning, playful, and devoted attitude of the performer invites the listeners to be present openly in the abundance of their own imaginations” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 77).⁵⁶ This way of expanding the use of the two concepts *representational* and *presentational* shifts significantly away from the definition presented by Langer, since it pulls them into the actual making of art, into the performative quality, hence defines the presentational awareness as a tapping into an energy of genuine discovery and by doing so avoids a habitual and unreflective use of established and recognizable patterns. One might guess that it is this quality of performative awareness that explains Cage’s opposition to Langer’s definition, in which the representational and presentational refer only to the quality of the sign itself and not to its performative quality. Since the presentational esthetics, as Cage saw it, was the only expressional mode that encapsulated the possibility of change, it relates closely to his implicit political stance that society will change only when the individual changes (Kostelanetz 1987).

The need for a deeper discussion on a representational esthetics within the framework of theater, in general, and specifically in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* becomes more evident when seen through the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, and is elaborated on in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, where it is placed within a discussion on the production of meaning, and next to the concepts of multiplicity, relation of non-relation, and co-composition.

⁵⁶ In the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, I try to illuminate the relationship between the inventive attitude of the performer with the activity of co-composition and a sense of becoming in the audience.

Cage and politics (I See Myself as an Anarchist – Anarchic Harmony)

To apply a political gaze to the activities of Cage when working with his art in a theatrical framework is obvious for two reasons: firstly, because he consciously placed his work in relation to the socio-political circumstances in the society around him; and secondly, because the ambition in Western theatre tradition has been, to a large extent, to incite and contribute to a political dialogue. When placing this latter observation next to the esthetics of Cage, the dynamic that emerges creates the core friction, not only in the work with the production *John and the Mushrooms*, but also in the other productions (and to a certain extent to this reflective work as a whole). So, what we are talking about here is the relationship between artistic expression and its relation to the broad term “political.” But related to this term lies the question of intent. Even if the concept of intent in the framework of artistic expression is somewhat complex, it is impossible to refrain from claiming that Cage – with calm certainty – based his artistic practice on an interest and awareness of its affect. Cage gives us many clues to his thoughts around this and in one of his assertions he says that he wants “to give up the traditional view that art is a means of self-expression for the view that art is a means of self-alteration, and what it alters is mind, and mind is in the world and is a social fact ... We will change beautifully if we accept uncertainties of change; and this should affect any planning. This is a value” (Kostelanetz 1987, 216). One could claim that the connection Cage so abundantly makes between form and affect indicates an interest in vitalizing the political discourse by letting formal and interactive aspects exert a force in that endeavor. This view is expressed by Retallack when she says: “Cage worked in service of principles and values derived from what in lifelong study he took to be the best, the most practically and spiritually relevant, of Eastern and Western thought, hoping that someday global humanity might live with pleasure in anarchic harmony – in mutually consensual, non-hierarchical enterprise” (Retallack 1996, xxix). Retallack borrows the term anarchic harmony from Cage who sometimes used it when talking about his views on how our society could be organized. An understanding of this term – in a Cagean framework – can be accessed both by looking at his compositional practice as well as through his thoughts on a

possible future society. In his compositions, even those for a larger ensemble, he envisioned that they should be played without a conductor, without any concept of a soloist, hence without a hierarchy between the musicians. Parallel to these concrete compositional choices, which imply a connection between esthetic structures and ideas about thinking and living, Cage used the term anarchic harmony when envisioning a harmony of diversity outside the context of art. In our work with the performance the term was a metaphor we used to signify the intention to make the theater a place where unpredictable and personal expressions could be played out without overarching rules or judgments. Early in the performance the character John introduces this stance when he says:

You can always start wherever. I don't think that what I decide is better than what you decide and I don't think that what you decide is better than what Yoko decides and I don't think that what Yoko decides is better than what David decides and I don't think that what David decides is better than what Rose decides. I think that everything can be there at the same time and I think that everything can be silent (Petri 2011, 5).

Cage's work exposes a social consciousness that, at its core, promotes an anarchic and inclusive view of humans. He rejects all generalizations, even those formulated around politically just causes, as they constitute a risk for involuntary inclusion. He says: "I don't really support minority groups. I don't like the notion of the power or weakness of a group. I consider that a form of politics, and I think we've passed that" (Retallack, 1996, 51). In other words, Cage clearly wants to engage politically but outside, or beneath, systems of political institutions and formulations, and by doing so disregards the circumstances and views that the political establishment represents. As a substitute for politics he suggests the uniqueness of the individual (Kostelanetz 1987). This in turn points to the importance of the Meeting, i.e. to the qualities of a close and active relationship between art and its receiver. In defining his listener he makes no effort to seek exclusion. On the contrary, he makes an effort to ideologically include all types of receiver and by doing this, in the

framework of creating new artistic avant-garde forms, he rejects the notion that there is a division between a political consciousness and experimental art. Rather, he claims that it is the opposite:

When I really began making music, I mean composing “seriously,” it was to involve myself in noise, because noises escape power, that is, the laws of counterpoint and harmony. When I spoke about [Pierre] Shaeffer [founder of “musique concrete,” which used recorded natural sound as basis of music] I said that noise had not been liberated but had been reintegrated into a new kind of harmony and counterpoint. If that were the case, that would mean that we had only changed prisons. Take another example: Black Power. If blacks free themselves from the laws whites invented to protect themselves from the blacks, that’s well and good. But if they in turn want to invent laws, that is, to wield power in exactly the same way as whites, what will the difference be? There are only a few blacks who understand that with laws that will protect them from the whites, they will just be new whites. They will have come to power over the whites, but nothing will change . . . Today, we must identify ourselves with noises instead, and not seek laws for the noises, as if we were blacks seeking power! Music demonstrates what an ecologically balanced situation could be – one in which whites would not have more power than blacks, and blacks no more than whites. A situation in which each thing and each sound is in its place, because each one is what it is. Moreover, I’m not the one who’s inventing that situation. Music was already carrying it within itself despite everything people forced it to endure (Kostelanetz 1987, 284).

There is a readiness in Cage to make reflections on large political issues, on events and developments of power structures in the world. But his observations and opinions are sometimes overarching, and tend to suggest views and solutions that do not concretely connect to current political discussion. Instead

he inserts them into a larger perspective that conflates his philosophical outlook with the perspective of a future world. Asked about his relationship to political activism Cage says: “Well, I think that my strongest action, in terms of either immediate time or long-term time, hmm? Is what I’m doing. ... I don’t think if we made it directed more to the person in the street, hmm? that it would be our work. What’s involved is the people in the street changing their focus of attention, and we can’t force them to change it, something else has to do that. Circumstances have to do that” (Retallack 1996, 49). In this instance it is possible to ask whether Cage consciously contradicts himself in order to expose the polarity between a deep concern for a non-dogmatic and open-ended esthetics and thoughts and opinions of a distinct political nature.

Cage’s esthetics transferred into the theater

During the initial stages in the process of directing a play, the director needs to engage in a thorough research of the text, as well as into other work made by the artist/writer. This is done with the ambition to understand the writer’s incentive to write at all. Researching the world of the writer enables the director to make choices in the staging that correspond to, rather than dislocate, the performance from the aesthetic matrix of the writer. This is, in my view, especially important to apply when dealing with texts that abandon narrative structures in favor of more poetic ones.⁵⁷

Presenting the observations above is done with the intention to gain an insight into what, in Cage’s esthetic - and our understanding of it – influenced and determined how the material in the performance was arranged, and how the creative process was conceptualized. Implicitly, it also serves as a description of my own directorial process of moving into the world of Cage; the necessity to dwell in the world of the “material” in order to find fluency in relation to its esthetic denominators. The intent of the directorial undertaking is thus, to transform the insights gained from reading and contemplating the esthetics of Cage and then allowing them to steer

⁵⁷ A quotation from my private notebook. An earlier observation made after merging different types of material of the same writer/composer/artist into one performance.



in the fullest way possible the directorial practice as well as the collective process. My understanding of Cage's art should, therefore, be viewed as molded by an ambition to make use of it, putting it to work within a framework of theater, *and* with an awareness of its affect. In the following description of how the performance was conceived, rehearsed and performed, my aim is to illustrate how we used and transformed, or one could say, activated his esthetics. However some aspects could be seen as a sublevel in the work process, and as such mainly decisive for choices and decisions made in the preparatory stages of the process. I will try to render those aspects, right here, as a way into describing the more practical and concrete facets of the performance work.

The questioning of the hierarchical structures that prevail in social life, in cultural institutions and in collective creative work, seemed like an unavoidable dimension to integrate into the project. Certainly, any such intention can only seem reasonable if it is understood as confined by the systematic repression of institutions as well as the different types of repression inherent in all social structures, which means that it must be seen as an intentional force rather than fully applicable.⁵⁸ The strictly institutional circumstances under which the performance was produced

⁵⁸ Accepting the commission to create/direct the performance in the first place is of course already a submission to the institutional hierarchical structure.

were not in any way open to a deconstruction of its hierarchical structure, hence our initial understanding of how this critical undertaking could concretely be inserted and exposed in the performance, was limited to an awareness of its impact on creative relations, on the relation between the performance and also on how different expressions are valued.

An attempt to set a Cagean esthetic in motion could not be done, as we saw it, without submitting to the consequences of a chance operated process. However, the ramifications of this submission were not limited to the discrete parts to which the chance operation was allocated in the actual performance, but the impetus of indeterminacy made an imprint on almost all levels of the work process as it inserted a mode of uncontrollability. This in turn had divergent consequences: it emphasized the importance of conceptual clarity, it increased the awareness of the specific qualities of each piece of material that was chosen to be part of the concept, it became like a substrate for a directorial approach (which could be described as listening rather than incursive), and – maybe most importantly - the influence of the indeterminate mode created an acceptance that the expression of the performance could not be steered and the effect of its being could not be preconceived.

In conjunction with the aspects of hierarchy and chance, there was an undercurrent throughout the whole process of a true alliance to the notion that the production of meaning lies in the hands of each individual, not exerted by specific semantic or semiotic occurrences, but instead hidden in the abundance of expressions thus escaping the control of all the different creators involved in the making. During both the preparations and the rehearsals our work can, therefore, be said to be influenced by Jacques Rancière, who noted that meaning does not lie in “the transmission of the artist’s knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (Rancière 2009, 15).

The last aspect, though not the least important, that was central to our thinking when building the performance was that even if it was going to be played for an all-age audience, no esthetic adjustments should be made towards some vague idea of what might be regarded as a child esthetic. Based on our experience and research we were strengthened in our view that it is actually the other way

around; the young human being is more prone to see beyond established ideas of how theater should be, and what music should sound like. In that same vein, the notion of participation and engagement did not have to be re-thought in order to accommodate the presence of young spectators, like expecting a noticeable affirmative activity as an extension of the noetic. Somewhat provoked, this was commented on by the head of the theater after the premier, when she said: “Why did you not let the kids in the audience be part of all the playing and building that was going on in the performance?” This remark clearly exposes the prevailing view that a young person is not capable of the same type of intellectual and mereological enjoyment as an adult.

What to be guided by

The preparatory work of getting to know the art of John Cage eventually led to a point where I could begin the process of transforming all the rich and complex pieces of inspiration and insights into a score of sorts, useful enough for a group of actors and musicians to build on. The main principle was to allow, not only the shaping of this score – what I will call the script – be guided by Cage’s esthetics, but all parts of the process and the production. This meant being continuously sensitive and open to what consequences his esthetics would have:

on which material to include,
 on the forming of the material,
 on the shaping of the rehearsal process,
 on the designing of the performance space,
 on the form and direction of the acting,
 and in the thinking about the relationship to the audience.

How to go about describing this transformation, of how we let Cage’s methods and thoughts steer the building of the performance, is not obvious as it entails creative instances of such diverse dynamics, ranging from the relatively confined situation of writing the script to the open and turbulent collective situation of the rehearsal. But one way of shaping the description is to go back to what I talked about in my introduction when I mentioned that Cage’s art and

practice provoked the existing roles of the composer, performer and listener, and follow these shifts, and their effect, when applied to the different functions in the process of making theater. To do so is to emphasize the weight we put on conceptualizing the performance so that it stayed as true as possible to Cage's own practice regarding this aspect: the restructuring and reformulation of the roles present in the unfolding of the expressive event.

Building the script – A score of chance and indeterminacy

From my perspective, as director, the process of making the performance split into two functions, or responsibilities: the responsibility of creating the script and the responsibility of directing. They are inevitably intertwined in different ways, but an emphasis on the separation of the two responsibilities underscores the intention to make the directorial activity subordinate to the structure and requirements of the script (which is talked about below as the shifting role of the director).

The making of the script could not be thought of as an act of writing, but rather as of finding, gathering, and arranging existing pieces of material. It also had to be thought of as creating guidelines and circumstances, suggesting that it was a frame for playing a game that in the context of the theatrical situation became "playing a play." Therefore it is relevant to describe the writing process as the groundwork for the directorial intention: the structure of the script that was being built framed quite precisely the possibilities – and the limitations – for the influence of the director. As a result the writing process meant a shift away from the conventional activity and role of the author, as being the one who shapes not only the structure, but the tone, mode and message of the performance. The convoluted task of assembling and arranging the material for the script was done in close collaboration with dramaturge Tora von Platen, and our discussions took off from the decision that the dramaturgical structure of the performance had to be created so that the influence of chance was present. In order to stay true to Cage's methods and ideas, this felt like an unavoidable choice. But to what extent - and how - was chance going to play a part in creating the script? Should chance operations be a part of making the script as well as the performance? Cage never made a secret of the fact that he used chance as a method when composing. He talked and wrote openly about it, explaining how

he worked with it, but he never mentioned it in conjunction with a performance of his music. It was not written about in the concert programs, and he never presented the music as composed with chance as a major compositional tool. In this specific aspect we thought it would be, from a dramaturgical point of view, interesting to do it differently and to try and actually show and tell that what we are about to perform is decided by chance. This meant that the sequence of the chance operation had to be given time to form inside the performance. We wanted it to be understood that the expressions were invented by the performers in the moment and not composed during the making of the script. It also meant that each performance would be different.

I knew that I neither wanted to nor could make a performance where all its parts were chance operated. One parameter that Cage often specified, even when creating scores where large parts of the artistic judgment were left to the performer, was the duration of the composition. In the case of *John and the Mushrooms*, I did the same. I decided that the performance was going to be built around three sections that were chance operated and that these would have a duration of nine minutes each. Following the decision to include chance in such a way, with three sections with a set duration preceded by the actual chance operated procedure as a visible part of the performance, prompted the questions of: *How* was chance going to play out in these three sections, and *when*? What material should the chance operations include/exclude? With what tools should the chance operation be carried out? What should happen before and in between these three parts? In order to make our way through the mire of questions we invented a fictive circumstance under which the performance as a whole took place.

The fictive situation at the theater

Defining the fictive level of the performance, building the situation in which the performers and the audience were going to come together, started off with the idea that this was going to be a situation and space where experiments took place, where music was played and new things were built. In other words, an art studio. This studio, we imagined, was going to be John Cage's loft in New York City, and we placed John himself there as the protagonist, as the initiator, as the question poser and as the inventor of the game: a decision that – as well as establishing

a dramaturgical core with a strong and useful momentum – came from an understanding of Cage’s tremendous social skills as a communicator. As such, our choice of placing John in the center of the action seemed well in tune with the biographical “fact,” which, to a certain degree, was a concern throughout the process. But who else should be part of this happening, this collective activity that takes place in Cage’s loft?⁵⁹ There were important aspects to consider regarding both the number of actors/musicians and their quality and skills, considerations related to the level of musicianship (i.e. knowledge of the repertoire) and to their readiness to engage in the specific demands of the production. Also, since the concept depended on the occurrence of simultaneously presented expressional forces, the number of performers had to be large enough for this to be attained. Since I had ideas about which pieces of Cage’s music I wanted to include in the performance, I knew that at least two musicians would be needed (piano and violin), and I thought that in order to establish a multilayered expression, a minimum of three actors would be required. The production came to include five performers; three actors and two musicians.⁶⁰

Apart from John, we decided that the characters in the performance should be biographical people, artists that Cage collaborated with or had a relationship to in real life. We chose: Merce (Cunningham), choreographer and long time collaborator and life companion; David (Tudor) a piano player and composer who Cage collaborated with for many years; Yoko (Ono), artist and musician who Cage knew about and who was very inspired by Cage; and lastly Rose, who was a fictive character in a text by Gertrude Stein, a text that Cage composed music for (see below, *Once upon a Time*).

Conclusively, the fictive situation was devised of a group of five artists, meeting in Cage’s loft, a place they came to, where each had their own working space, with their own (art) projects going on. In building the concept for the performance we had, so far, decided the setting, the characters and that the audience should “be told” that parts of the performance were generated

⁵⁹ The decision about how many performers to include in the production was made in dialogue with the producers, where esthetic aspects (dramaturgical and musical) were weighed against concerns around production size and economy. Discussions and considerations related more to the production side of the performance are to a large extent left out of this description.

⁶⁰ As described later in the text, the ensemble included six performers as the character Rose, which was the violin player, was divided between two musicians.

by chance operations. The work could then proceed to the question of what material to include; what to say, to sing, dance and play?

The things in the boxes and the making of the script

And that box over here that has ropes around it is full of I Ching printouts. So I have a great supply of answers to questions which I have not yet asked.

John Cage

The script was created around and dominated by questions and an investigative tone ran throughout the whole text.⁶¹ It was built in large part on Cage's own writing, predominantly from *Lectures on Nothing* and the text *Communication*. Interwoven were also other texts, statements and comments by Cage originating from different interviews and articles. In the process of putting the script together, our aim was to use Cage's own words as much as possible and also translations into Swedish that were already available, which was not always possible, so translations of some texts had to be done. The script also included works by other writers and thinkers like Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. Eventually the script came to consist of texts and statements by John Cage, quotations from Thoreau and Whitman, and quotations/translations of Cage from interviews and public appearances.

We also thought that it was important to include some texts and comments originating from Merce Cunningham as well as texts, statements and text-art pieces by Yoko Ono, since their voices were present on stage. In real life Merce Cunningham was not as concerned, or maybe as comfortable, one could say, as Cage was to express himself about his practice and art, but our aim (and also for the actor who played him) was to get to know Merce Cunningham's thoughts and ideas even though we incorporated very little of his own words. It was different with Yoko Ono since many of her conceptual pieces consist of short text instructions for performance pieces and actions, as well as poems. But the task to incorporate all these different voices into the actual script was dramaturgically

⁶¹ The subtitle of the play was *A Conversation Consisting Mainly of Questions*.

complicated and therefore solved by making them “the things in the boxes.”

These boxes were also a way to create the form for the parts that were chance operated. We let John come up with the idea of a game with boxes for each performer in which he/we could put different “things.” Every player had three boxes, one box for each part of the performance that was chance operated. And since there were three parts in the performance that were chance operated and five performers, all together there were fifteen boxes, each filled with twenty “things.” What kind of “things” should he/we put in the boxes that would generate different kinds of actions? And how should the “things” in Yoko’s boxes be different from Merce’s? If there were three different sections where the boxes were going to be used, how would box one, two and three relate to or differ from each other? Should there be some kind of progression, development of the possible actions suggested by the things in the boxes?

The work with the script was to a large extent about searching, deciding and choosing what should be put in these 15 boxes. The dramaturgical advantage of the boxes as vessels for all kinds of material was that it made it possible to include texts of various kinds that did not fit into the narrative structure of the script that surrounded the chance operated parts. In John’s boxes we put shorter texts by Cage, poems and texts by Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau, but we also added Zen Buddhist fables.⁶² In Yoko’s boxes there were texts by Yoko Ono, by Cage and also some Zen Buddhist fables. Merce’s boxes included texts by Cunningham, Cage, as well as some by Henry David Thoreau. The two musicians had mainly musical scores and instructions in their boxes but also some texts by Cage, Yoko Ono and Thoreau. And in all the boxes there were instructions for different performative actions. These are a few examples of the different texts included in John’s boxes:

If my head is full of harmony, melody, and rhythm, what happens
to me when the telephone rings, to my piece and quiet, I mean?
(J 1.3).⁶³

⁶² These are called *Koans* and are often a type of riddle or a statement to guide one’s thinking towards openness.

⁶³ The letter and the number after each instruction refers to who’s box the instructions belong to, which chance operated section it belongs to and which number it is. J 1.7 means that it belongs to John, that it is in the box that he uses for the first section and that it is number 7 of the 20 in that box. This prefix was only used to organize the material, and not necessary for the performers to take notice of.

It was Wednesday. I was in the sixth grade. I overheard Dad saying to Mother, "Get ready: we're going to New Zealand on Saturday." I got ready. I read everything I could find in the school library about New Zealand. Saturday came. Nothing happened. The project was not even mentioned, that day or any succeeding day (J 1.5).

Once when I was a child in Los Angeles I went downtown on a streetcar. It was such a hot day that, when I got out of the streetcar, the tar on the pavement stuck to my feet (I was barefoot). Getting to the sidewalk, I found it so hot that I had to run to keep from blistering my feet. I went into a five and dime to get a root beer. When I came to the counter where it was sold from a large barrel and asked for some, a man standing on the counter high above said, "Wait. I'm putting in the syrup and it'll be a few minutes." As he was putting in the last can, he missed and spilled the sticky syrup all over me. To make me feel better, he offered a free root beer. I said, "No, thank you" (J 1.6).

I dreamt once that I had composed a piece of music, all the notes of which were to be cooked and then eaten. On the way to the concert hall to perform this piece I stopped to rehearse and soaked the notes. Then around came a bunch of dogs and cats and ate them all up (J 2.13).

A wise man lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening when he was out a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing to steal. The wise man came back and caught the thief. "You may have come a long way to visit me," he told the prowler, "and you should not return empty handed. Please take my clothes as a gift." The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away. The wise man sat naked, watching the moon. "Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could give him this beautiful moon" (J 1.18).

Some pieces of material in the characters' different boxes were the same, which this last little Zen-story is an example of, but when putting together the material we made choices based on the idea that the materials in the boxes should relate to the interest and the "voice" of the character. This was done with the intention to support the image of him/herself as esthetically defined with a specific interest and temperament. Since the character Yoko was thought of as a fictive person who took inspiration from the artist Yoko Ono, it was obvious to turn to her own art and the many conceptual pieces that she has created, and to include them in the material. A few examples of these are:

We are all vulnerable. *Sing!* (Y 1.7).

Bring your shadows together so that they become one (Y 1.16).

Record the breathing of the room. Bottle the smell of the room as well (Y2.7).

I am looking forward to gather all wishes and make them into one (Y2.20).

Listen to the beating of a heart (Y3.4).

The instructive quality of Ono's own pieces made them fit well into the dynamic that we wanted to create and they also inspired us to develop pieces of material in the same mode.

The character Merce, who was molded, as mentioned, on choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham, had mainly instructions for movements and things to do in his boxes, rather than specific texts, although he did have some texts. Together with the production choreographer, the actor created a series of movements, a choreography that could be performed in parts and put together in different ways. Stylistically they served as short examples of Cunningham's esthetics and for the actor they functioned as a physical esthetic guide.

Dance the third part of choreography (M1.2).

Investigate five positions that relate to the back and the spine:
upright, curve, arch, tilt, twist (M 1.12).

Dance the second part of choreography (M 1.6).

To fall: find 10 different ways to fall and try them out (M 1.11).

You're a dancer who has a long arm, with a long wrist, and another with no wrist, so to speak. You can't expect this one to dance like the other one. You dance like you are, not as a dancer but as a person. If I, for example, shall stretch out my leg in a straight line and at the same time keep my back straight, how do I do that? How do you do that? And then I should hold my arms out. How do *I* do that? (M 1.18).

We grow up with habits, for instance we walk in a certain way. We will step off the curb with the right foot. And go up again with the same foot, and suddenly in the dance, you have to step up with your left foot (M 1.19).

These last two examples from Merce's boxes are texts by Cunningham and in the performance they could be used by the actor either as text to perform or as instructions for investigating movements – or both at the same time.⁶⁴

Even if the possibilities for improvisation and individual choices in instructions like these are multiple, they are predominantly text-based and it was important for the performers – and for the expression of the performance as a whole – that there were “things” in the boxes that allowed for non-textual actions to take place. These action-oriented “things” constituted somewhat a development, with different “themes” in each of the three chance operated sections. Here are some examples of what those instructions were like:

⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that although the actor who played Merce mainly had previous experience from working with more traditional text-based theater, he chose to transform most of his instructions into movements and different bodily actions.

Write down ten nouns or verbs, read them randomly as question and answer. It should take 1 min 30 sec (J 1.7).

Pull a string through the room, then hang three mushrooms on it (J 1.19).

Write down ten words, sing them as opera (Y 1.5).

Write down three thoughts, cut them in pieces and give them away (J 1.20).

Build something that doesn't exist. It should take 2 minutes (J 2.1).

Pull a string through the room, hang up five tones (Y 1.9).

Peel an orange in one minute and thirty seconds (J 2.6).

Sit down in the audience and think three thoughts you never have thought before. It should take exactly one minute (J 2.9).

Lie down underneath the grand piano and speak softly in Japanese:
NICHU NICHU KORE KO NICHU . . . (J 2.16).

Put together two thoughts with some strings. It should take 2 minutes (J 2.20).

Lie down on the floor and listen to the sound of the city (J 3.6).

Sing a song you like so softly that only grandmother can hear it (Y 2.4).

Build a creation. It should take 2 minutes (M 2.9).

Sit down on a chair, be silent and listen (M 3.7).

Pull a string through the room, hang up three thoughts (J 3.19).

Alltogether each box had 20 “things” in them, which meant that each performer theoretically had 60 different instructions that the chance operation could pick for him or her to perform. The number of combinations was thus multiple and the likelihood that any combination of materials would reoccur was extremely small. Though, as we will see in the rendering of the rehearsal process, different impulses among the performers made some pieces of material occur more often than others and even if the precise performative quality of each piece of material changed, some combination tended to be repeated.

The script started with presenting John as the protagonist and told about his desire to invent new things. It set out different questions that he was dwelling on and curious to investigate. The main query being if they – he and his artist friends gathered in the studio – could do something together without deciding what and how. In the first scene, after his friends have arrived, John says that he doesn’t think it is necessary for anybody to decide anything in order for them to get started, but when he starts to explain the rules of the game he is accused by Merce of contradicting himself: “So, now you are deciding.” John answers a bit reluctantly: “Yeah, well, I am suggesting how we can do something together, without somebody deciding.” John then explains the rules of the game – the game that “he” has created and that will serve as the impetus for the chance operated sections to come into play. As soon as John has finished giving his instructions the performers take their boxes, move up close to the audience and start the chance procedures. This was done with the help of a dice and a deck of numbered cards, and the outcome of the dice-card sequence decided what material to perform. It was a procedure that happened right there and then, in front of the audience. They saw how it was done, it was explained to them, and they also helped to hold the cards. The script consisted of the following parts:

Schematic disposition and dramaturgical function of the different sections

All scenes take place in John's studio, except for scene 5B where the setting is a TV studio.

Scene 1

John is preparing something. He presents himself, some of his thoughts, and his idea of how to invent new things. Merce, Yoko, David and Rose are watching him from the outside, commenting on what they see. They all enter into the center stage. John welcomes them and explains the game that he has created for them. He shows his friends the boxes filled with things and goes on to explain the chance operated process with the dice and cards. They all start throwing dice, pulling cards.

Scene 2

All performers engage in the activity to perform whatever instruction the chance operated procedure has presented them with. The duration of the scene is set to 9 minutes. It ends with Rose who starts to sing the song *Story: Once upon a time*. They all join in.

Scene 3

There is a written dialogue in which all the performers take part. It consists mainly of questions about what a sound is and what music could be, or not be. The latter part of the scene exposes questions and thoughts on the concept of time, and the experience of it.

Scene 4

All performers engage in the activity to perform whatever instruction the chance operated procedure has presented them with. The duration of the scene is set to 9 minutes. It ends with Rose who starts to sing the song *Once upon a time*. They all join in.

Scene 5

John starts talking about building a bridge out of tones and sounds. He leaves the room and comes back with lots of different appliances that he sets up in order to build his bridge, to perform *Water Walk*.

Scene 5B

The fictive situation in this scene is a TV studio to which John Cage has been invited to perform his music sculpture *Water Walk*. The character Richard (played by the same actor who plays Yoko), who is the host of the TV program, introduces John to the audience.

John performs *Water Walk*

Scene 6

All performers engage in a dialogue about thinking. Yoko presents the story about Rose (G Stein). The scene ends with the question: is it possible to think together?

Scene 7

All performers engage in the activity to perform whatever instruction the chance operated procedure has presented them with. The duration of the scene is set to 9 minutes. It ends when Yoko signals that they should all listen to each other's bodies (she is listening to Merce's).

Scene 8

They all listen to each other's bodies. They talk about listening and John goes to the window and opens it.

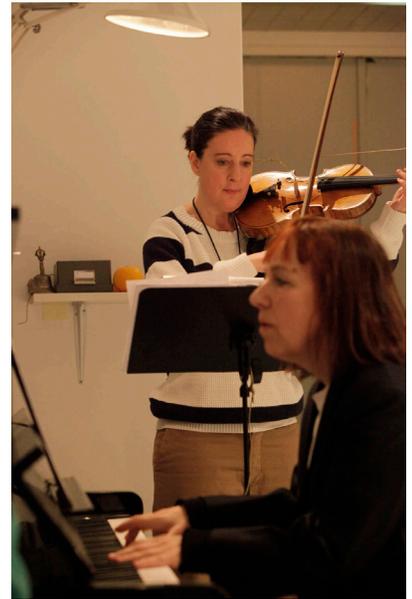
Scene 8B, Coda

Rose starts singing *Once upon a time* and they all join in.

THE END

The music and its place in the performance

There were three actors in the ensemble: Staffan Göthe, who played the character John; Jessica Liedberg, who played the character Yoko and Mauritz Elvingsson, who played the character Merce. There were also three musicians: Piano player Kristine Scholz, violin player Eva Lindal and violin player Anna Lindal. But since the two violin players were alternating only two musicians played in each performance. Kristine Scholz is a long time collaborator with extensive experience from working with theater and dance, including being part of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Her previous experience of working with the music of Cage, whom she also met, and the fact that she knew David Tudor from a number of meetings, made her somewhat the center of confidence in the rehearsal process as well as during the performances. The two violin players, Eva Lindal and Anna Lindal, also had extensive and varied experience from different orchestras and music ensembles, as well as from working as musicians in the theater and, therefore, were used to the type of processes that that entails. The main reason for mentioning the quality of the musicians is to draw attention to how their joint experience and knowledge stabilized the whole project, not only because of their previous contact with the art of Cage, but because their musical experiences made them slightly more ready to apply a compositional thinking to the multilayered structure and to the contribution of each part of the collective expression.⁶⁵



The process of choosing which music to include in the performance was steered by the idea that all the music should be by Cage and that the two compositions *Thirteen Harmonies* and *The Perilous Night* should be the main building blocks around which other compositions – and improvisations – should

⁶⁵ The actors were also highly experienced and knowledgeable, which was important for the creative process, both collectively and individually, but obviously their experience was more grounded in a traditional text-based rather than musical practice. The difference in attitude and capacity between the two groups is very interesting and could easily be extrapolated on, though in this work it is mainly taken up in conjunction with specific problems/details. A brief note on the professional experiences of the actors is given in the production information.

be placed. *Thirteen Harmonies* originates from a larger piece that Cage wrote in 1976 that is called *Apartment House 1776*, which is a composition that was commissioned for the celebration of the two hundred year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence (Cage 1976). In this composition, scored for four voices and any number of instruments, Cage included a series of songs of different origins like Protestant hymns, Sephardic and American Indian songs and so-called “Negro” calls and hollers. Ten years later, in 1986, the violinist Roger Zahab, together with Cage, selected 13 of the 44 songs that Cage had included in the original composition and created a version for violin and keyboard, with the title *Thirteen Harmonies*. Before Cage inserted the songs into the composition he re-wrote them or, one could maybe say, edited them. Through a chance operated process he eliminated a large number of notes, both in the melody lines of the songs and in the cord structures, creating an expression that was very fragile but strangely recognizable, as the music still moves through the original progression of the song. Cage wrote *The Perilous Night* in 1943 and 1944. It was a time in his life, seen by himself and his biographers, to be weighted down by troubles.⁶⁶ He said about the composition: “It depicts the sadness of a relationship that becomes unhappy” (Haskins 2012, 50). It is also possible to relate the title of the piece to the havoc of World War II that, at that time was being deeply felt on every level of society. But despite the dark and somewhat glum aspects of the title, the music itself is filled with energy and expressive force. It consists of six movements for prepared piano, moving through dense rhythmical patterns, sometimes more dark and mysterious, sometimes lighter and shimmering. Similar to many other compositions for prepared piano by Cage, my experience of *The Perilous Night* is that it has an unpredictable and playful expression. The six movements have the same preparation. Since we knew that it would not be possible to change the preparation of the piano during the performance, the fact that the composition exposed a rich rhythmical variety and a wide range of expressional modes, accommodated the need for having access to different expressional choices.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Cage was never very interested in talking about his personal life. In the last few years, a new wave of criticism has come about that is trying to reflect more in depth on his personal life including his sexuality. See for example Haskins 2012, and Bernstein 2001.

⁶⁷ The time it takes to prepare a grand piano according to the very precise instructions Cage gives in his scores varies slightly from composition to composition, but it is a process that has to be done with slow care and three hours is a minimum for *The Perilous Night*, so changing the preparations during the performance was out of the question.

To include music for prepared piano seemed important for many reasons: it exposes the inventiveness of Cage's compositional attitude; it shows how he was searching for new sound sources (and as such it connected to the composition *Water Walk*, see below); it inserted a percussive quality to the soundscape of the performance; and it shifted the idea of what a music instrument "should" sound like. In addition to these two compositions, other pieces by Cage were pulled into the process, investigated and added to the material that the musicians had in their boxes. These were *6 melodies for piano and violin*, *In a landscape* for solo piano (unprepared), and *Eight Whiskus* for solo violin.⁶⁸

To broaden the musical palette, both with the intention to create the possibility of variation but also to insert more of an improvisational freedom, the musical material was extended with compositions by French composer Erik Satie and with improvisations. Cage had a close relationship to the music of Satie; he arranged performances of his music, he often talked about it and also wrote about his esthetics.⁶⁹ This affinity was of course the reason to include Satie's compositions *Le fils des étoiles*, *Choral hypocrite*, *Autre chorale* and *Réverie du pauvre*. But, if incorporating the music of Satie was more or less sanctioned by Cage the inclusion of musical improvisations could be seen as more problematic since Cage, at different instances, voiced a negative opinion about that form of music making. His critique stemmed from the notion that a non-directed musical improvisation tended to rely on musical and technical habits and already established esthetics, therefore, not a way to create something new. The musical improvisations in the performance were instigated by different instructions but also by images, like drawings that had been made by children in the reference group (see below), and as such added to the other musical material.

⁶⁸ The time it takes to prepare a grand piano according to the very precise instructions Cage gives in his scores varies slightly from composition to composition, but it is a process that has to be done with slow care and three hours is a minimum for *The Perilous Night*, so changing the preparations during the performance was out of the question.

⁶⁹ In the 1958 *Art News Annual* Cage creates an imaginary conversation between himself and Satie: "Who's interested in Satie nowadays anyway? Not Pierre Boulez: he has the twelve tones, governs La Domaine Musicale, whereas Satie had only the Group of Six and was called Le Maître d'Arcueil. Nor Stockhausen: I imagine he has not yet given Satie a thought ... Current musical activities involve problems: (1) applying the idea of the series inherent in the twelve-tone system to the organization of all the characteristics of sound, viz., frequency, duration, amplitude, timbre, producing a more controlled situation than before attempted (Stockhausen: "It makes me feel so good to know that I am on the right track."); and (2a) discovering and acting upon the new musical resources (all audible sounds in any combination and any transformations) handed to us upon the magnetic plate of tape, or (2b) somehow arranging economical instrumental occasions (tape is expensive) so that the action which results presupposes a totality of possibilities ... Is Satie relevant in mid-century?" (Cage 1968, 77).

Just like the actors, the musicians had three boxes each, one for every chance operated section. They were mainly filled with musical compositions, or instructions for musical improvisations, but there were also some short texts and instructions for movements and creative activities that did not involve music making, for example:

Sit down in the audience and think three thoughts you have never thought before. It should take exactly one minute (D3.8).

Write down 10 words that don't exist, sing them as a lullaby (D 1.14).

Pull a string through the room, hang three notes on it (D 2.9).

Lie down on the floor and listen to an ant-hill (D 3.1).

Once upon a time – Cage and Gertrude Stein

When talking about the different influences that Cage lovingly acknowledged, the American writer Gertrude Stein was somebody who made a deep imprint, and who's writing he not only was inspired by but also quoted and put to music. As a reoccurring moment, and also as a cue for the ensemble to break up the chance operated improvisations when the nine minutes had passed, the character Rose (violin player Anna Lindal or Eva Lindal) started to sing the second movement, *Story*, from Cage's composition *Living Room Music* (1940). This piece is written for a percussion ensemble with four musicians. The third movement of this composition is an a cappella movement on a text by Gertrude Stein called *The World is Round* (Stein 1939). Stein's text is about a little girl called Rose who is searching for her identity. It tells about her philosophical ponderings and different encounters with both human friends and animals alike.⁷⁰ The first few paragraphs read:

⁷⁰ The themes exposed in *The World is Round* reoccur in many of Steins other texts: The search for identity; the investigating of the meaning of names; the playing with the onomatopoeic similarity between words; the nature of thinking, just to name a few. In one of the last scenes in *John and the Mushrooms* in which questions around the nature of thinking are asked, I inserted a passage from the book that tells about how Rose was thinking and thinking again. The beginning of the text goes:

Once upon a time the world was round and you could go on it around and around.

Everywhere there was somewhere and everywhere there they were men women children dogs cows wild pigs little rabbits cats lizards and animals. That is the way it was. And everybody dogs cats sheep rabbits and lizards and children all wanted to tell everybody all about it and they wanted to tell all about themselves.

And then there was Rose.

Rose was her name and would she have been Rose if her name had not been Rose. She used to think and then she used to think again.

Would she have been Rose if her name had not been Rose and would she have been Rose if she had been a twin.

Intermezzo: *Story a quartet of voices*

ROSE starts singing

Once upon a time, a time. Once upon a time. Once upon a time, a time. ...

ALL the others join

Once upon a time

The world was round

and you and it

and you could go on it

around and around and around

The use of this piece was thought about in a number of ways. As mentioned, it was placed in the dramaturgical progression at the end of the chance operated parts and instigated by one of the musicians when the nine minutes had past. This meant that she was the only one in the ensemble who needed to keep track of the time, allowing the others to fully engage in their improvisations, and hence feel more free. But apart from that structural function the performing of the composition created a moment of togetherness, an expression of something conclusive, in a totally different way than the multilayered expression that preceded it. This dynamic enhanced the sense that what was going on during the chance operated parts was a collective expression – a togetherness – even though with a totally different structure, and as such it functioned as a stabilizing factor both for the audience and for the ensemble. This latter dynamic, the function of the piece as a clear joint challenge, was also thought of, and used, as a vehicle for strengthening communication within the ensemble during rehearsals, and as well, it offered some basic musical training. These different aspects of *Story* and its function in the performance – as a signal for ending the chance operated parts; as a conclusive moment and a structure of togetherness of a more conventionally recognizable sort; as a piece of material for the ensemble to gather around – might be seen as a deviation from the idea of anarchic harmony, and as a concession to an ordering energy. Such an objection can certainly be pondered over but from a Cagean perspective the occurrence of set timelines, of forms of synchronicity and attention to performer discipline cannot be seen as foreign to his way of thinking.

Water Walk

In 1959 Cage was invited to be part of an Italian TV-show called *Lascia o Raddoppia* for which he created a piece that he titled *Water Walk* (Cage 1959).⁷¹ When asked why it was called that Cage said: “It includes water and I walk around when playing it.” The composition is a large sound art/performance art piece involving 34 different materials, as well as a single-track tape recorder. The materials required are mostly related to water and are placed on and around two tables and close to a grand piano, which is also used in the performance. The other properties are: a Water Pitcher, an Iron Pipe, a Goose Call, a Bottle of Wine, an Electric Mixer, a Whistle, a Sprinkling Can, Ice Cubes, 2 Cymbals, a Mechanical Fish, a Quail Call, a Rubber Duck, a Vase of Roses, a Seltzer Siphon, 5 Radios, a Bathtub, and a Grand Piano. The score consists of a list of properties, a floor plan showing the placement of instruments and objects, three pages with a timeline (one minute each) with descriptions and pictographic notations of occurrence of events, and a list of notes “regarding some of the actions to be made in the order of occurrence.” In an article, written the same year that *Water Walk* was created, the piece is commented on by Heinz-Klaus Metzger:

in *Water Walk* for piano, radio apparatuses, kitchen equipment, and water, arranged in three aggregates, the principle is pushed to such an extreme that the pianist must be involved with all the sound sources, which are as widely distributed in space as possible, so that the performer is thus in transit most of the time. Here – after the downfall of opera, the failure of the epic music theater, and the necessary end of realism in theater itself – is the beginning of a new music theater, tentatively evident, responsible only to not betraying its own possibilities. (Metzger 2011, 15)

A year after his appearance on Italian television Cage was invited to perform the same piece on the American TV-show called *I've got a Secret*. A rather perky and somewhat sceptical TV host introduces Cage as, more or less, an odd ball and

⁷¹ Cage subtitled *Water Walk* as *Water Music No. 2*

warns him that the audience (live in the TV-studio) might not understand that this is music, and that they might even laugh.⁷² Cage maintains a very calm presence and the dynamic between the two men has a slightly comic undertone. After their conversation and a presentation of the display of the musical instrument, Cage performs the piece steadily and very distinctly.

The juxtaposition of the unrefined, almost toy-like quality of the properties and the precise instructions in the score (as well as the distinct performance) radiates what could be seen as a pure John Cage stance: he shows that the possibilities lie in our attentiveness and in our capability to shift our thinking about things and sounds and music; about what the world is. The piece exudes a playfulness and humor, and the comical friction between the mainstream yet curious media figure and the lively integrity of Cage inspired me to use their dialogue in the performance. Transcribed and edited, it was placed as a scene preceding a presentation of the full version of *Water Walk*, performed by the character John.⁷³



⁷² This was the well known TV personality, Garry Moore.

⁷³ The actor Jessica Liedberg, who's main character was Yoko, played the TV host in this scene.

If *Story* was inserted in the performance mainly because of structural reasons the insertion of *Water Walk* was done with another purpose in mind.⁷⁴ The piece purports an idea of the avant-garde not as high art but instead linked to things present in our everyday lives, thus accessible outside cultural institutions; it connects the activity of art-making with the capacity and willingness to play and in its concrete performativity it shows a mature man using his creativity in a way that provokes the norms of both grown-up behavior as well as gender.

The interplay between the script, the boxes and other materials

The relational dynamics between the different parts and different types of material that were placed into the framework of the concept were thought of as sharp and distinct. The written script exposed, rather straight forwardly, the different themes and questions to be investigated and it laid out the rules of the theatrical game. It is a sparse and condensed text with one focus and written to be performed with a taut rhythmical quality. The chance operated parts on the other hand, with their inbuilt and unavoidable investigative mode, took on a lingering and listening quality, as it was in these parts that the music was performed and a musical thinking dominated the interplay and the atmosphere.

To some extent the three sections of the script preceding the chance operated parts functioned as an introduction to new themes that were then extrapolated on through the material in the boxes. Roughly speaking, these themes were divided into Building/Inventing – Body/Movement/Listening – Thinking/Togetherness. But perhaps the most obvious difference between the material in the three chance operated sections was that the instructions for the physical activities changed by expanding in size (and space) and by how they increasingly connected the characters and their activities. This development, or rather difference, between the material in the chance operated sections can be seen as one way to somehow compensate for the absence of a narrative trajectory and, therefore, a deviation from the idea of “everything always being in the middle.”⁷⁵ Though, due to the influence of chance, this difference (expansion in size and space) did not always

⁷⁴ Actually the opposite, putting the piece in the performance created structural problems as the complexity of the set-up of all the properties had to be done while playing through the time line of the performance.

⁷⁵ See introductory chapter for the reasoning around “being in the middle.”

play out as a recognizable process. But just the fact that the performers knew about this “progression,” influenced their interpretations regardless of which material they worked with.

As a somewhat simplified description of the relation between the different parts, one can say that the stability of the written parts of the script offered a steady rhythm for moving between structures of flux and indeterminacy.

The theatrical space in process

I am out to blur the distinction between art and life, and between teacher and student. And between performer and audience.

John Cage

My early notes on the characteristics of the space in which I imagined *John and the Mushrooms* should take place, say:

The situation is an open “coming together”

The room is a room for experiments

Workshops – worktables – drawings on the wall

Sitting around the four walls

The absence of chairs, the possibility to move around

The window with sounds from outside

The designer Daniel Åkerström-Steen and I started the planning of the scenography with the idea that we would all – performers and audience alike – meet in John’s studio. Cage sometimes talked about himself as an inventor and he had a very tactile and concrete relationship to the making of art and we imagined that the theater space should be designed as a workshop, a studio, a place where the connection between inventing, building and making art should be easy to do. We imagined it as an open space where the audience could come in close contact with the playing and investigations of the performers. We also thought that the audience should be seated around the four sides of the room and that no seat, no view should have a higher status than any other. Placing the audience around the walls had two main objectives. The first was that such an arrangement would

create the possibility for the actors and musicians to direct their attention and focus in different directions without losing contact with the audience. Also, as a way to facilitate and support the performing of superimpositions. Secondly, this arrangement created the possibility for the audience to view the other spectators as part of the “picture” in which the performative activity took place, and as such it was – in line with Cage’s overall esthetics – a design where the boundary between the performance and the audience was blurred.

Since all the characters in the play were thought of as individual artists, each working with their own projects within the same space, there was a need to create workstations, or places for their different art materials, tools and instruments. John was given two smaller tables on which he could also slowly place all the properties to be used for his performance of *Water Walk*. For Yoko, a slightly bigger but very low table was designed (so she could sit on the floor while working on it). Merce had as his workstation a special folding chair that he could dance/move with and around, and next to that a box with shoes and clothes. The actor’s workstations were placed quite far from each other, in a triangle, so that they covered almost the whole room. The musicians also had places where they could put sheet music and other types of material that they were using, though it was not tables. David had his in one corner where the grand piano stood and Rose in the opposite corner where the upright was placed. Apart from these individual “project rooms” the design was sparse with just a few specific details, like a shelf for the tape recorder and another shelf that was utilized for smaller objects that were used throughout the performance. The room was designed as an open and sparsely “furnished” space to allow for as much movement as possible, both for Merce, who needed space for experimenting with his movements, but also to make it easy for the actors/musicians to come in close contact with the audience.

The room had white walls on which it was easy to stick papers with drawings or writings. There were also big sheets of paper put up for John – or somebody else – to draw on.⁷⁶ Also, some of the musician’s scores were pinned on the walls for them to move to and stand by when playing. For the audience, small square yellow cushions were made and placed on the floor along all four walls of the room.

⁷⁶ When the audience came into the space they saw compositions, texts and drawings on the wall that Staffan Göthe had made specifically for that performance.

The low position enabled the audience to view the performance in a way that brought them closer to the action and the mobility of the cushions also made it possible for them to scoot around and change position. Both these designer aspects – the changeableness of what was put on the walls and the possibility for the audience to move – were important as signs of an ongoing process and for the sense that the performative moment was influenceable and in flux.

To infuse this type of changeability was an ambition in the overall work with the design, and thought of in regards to as many aspects and details as possible, including the lightning. In the chance operated parts of the performance it was important not to think about the different expressions as simultaneously happening in a specific hierarchal order. This would inevitably have happened if the design of the lightning had been predestined, or chosen to enhance specific areas. The lightning design was, therefore, programmed to run randomly within specific parameters and with a set duration.

The window and the sound of the street

For Cage, interacting with the world meant to acknowledge it: to see it, to hear it and accept it. There is more than one story telling about how he loved the rushing sound of 8th Avenue outside the windows of his Manhattan apartment, and in some well known compositions as well in his writings, he activates and problematizes the relation between the planned activity, i.e. the art piece/ composition, and the environment in which it takes place. A dynamic to which he allocates a decisive esthetic importance:

If the music can accept ambient sounds and not be interrupted thereby, it's a modern piece of music. If, as with a composition of Beethoven, a baby crying, or someone in the audience coughing, interrupts the music, then we know that it isn't modern. I think that the present way of deciding whether something is useful as art is to ask whether it is interrupted by the actions of others, or whether it is fluent with actions of others (Kostelanetz 1987, 210).

When such a stance is embraced, neither the performance nor the actual space could be seen as closed off, as a situation where unpredictable movements or sounds were regarded as disturbances. This was mainly important in regards to how reactions from the audience were influencing the performance. But as a way to enhance the possibilities for disturbances coming from the world outside the performance, a window was set into one of the walls. Since this window only opened up onto a back stage area in the theater, a microphone was installed on the street outside the building and connected to a sound system that distributed the noise of the street to a position by the fake window. At different moments throughout the performance the window was opened and closed by the performers, thus letting the sound of the street become a part of the soundscape inside the theater.

Identity as an artist rather than a character

The concept of the performance demanded of the actors that they, to some extent, had to conquer new areas and a new type of actor practice, specific to the demands of the performance. Even though the ensemble was very experienced, I understood that it was essential to accommodate their needs in regards to the challenges involved. These challenges could be described as evolving around how to merge the interpretation of their character with the creative impulses and artistic judgment that the interpretation of the different instructions entailed. What kind of method was necessary to make the actor feel strong and playful in a structure dependent on instant composition and improvisation? How to make them feel safe – in front of an audience – to use their creativity and acting capacity in a structure where unpredictability was so present? This last aspect, of feeling secure with the individual expression within a type of theater that did not offer the formal confirmation that a more conventional form of theater can assure, had to be seriously looked at, and the discussions around this aspect were present throughout both the rehearsal process and the period of the performances. The actor Mauritz Elvingsson talks about it from the perspective of dealing with the chance operations, and faced with an instruction he did not feel secure about:

Some days it felt fantastic and really inspiring and you wished you had gotten a few more instructions, and other days it was really difficult. Maybe you just didn't feel up to it and when that happened you had nothing to fall back on, like you have in a conventional play where I know what is going to happen. That just wasn't there. I had this piece of paper with an instruction and I had to do it by myself, I had to fill these nine minutes all by myself. It wasn't like I throw something out and then Staffan Göthe grabs it and does something with it and then throws it back again and then we keep on doing that, helping each other; you are just alone. The awareness that I am a part of the performance just as I am, in whatever I do, that wasn't of any help when I stood there alone on stage, knowing that it actually becomes a whole of some sort. It just didn't help me when I stood there thinking: What the hell shall I do?⁷⁷ (Elvingsson 2012)

To create an expression from a personal fantasy is of course the backbone of an actor's practice. However, most often improvisation serves as a way to find expressions and forms that are then stabilized and refined for use in the performance.⁷⁸ In this case, the dynamics of improvising were starkly different since the concept demanded that new expressions and forms be created for each performance. We talked about it – inspired by Cage's own wording – as a mode of inventing. In the preparations for the rehearsal process, our thinking around how to accommodate the need for the performers to feel safe and strong in this inventiveness was central. My method as director was to try to strengthen each performer in their idea of themselves as artists, outside their

⁷⁷ The performance of *John and the Mushrooms* had its premier in October 2011 and was performed through the spring of 2012. In May 2012 I conducted interviews with five of the six performers: Staffan Göthe, Mauritz Elvingsson, Kristine Scholz, Anna Lindal, Eva Lindal. These interviews were conducted in my studio in Stockholm and each performer was interviewed separately: M Elvingsson on 24 of May, S Göthe on the 24 of May, K Scholz on the 25 of May, E Lindal on the 25 of May, A Lindal on the 7 of June. The questions/themes in the interviews were grouped under the headings: Preparations, Rehearsal process, Collaboration, To be in the performance, After thoughts. The quotations in this text by the performers originate from these interviews. The interviews were recorded and are in my private collection.

⁷⁸ This was also commented on by the actor Mauritz Elvingsson: "We talked about it in the ensemble, at the end, that it would have been fun if we had gotten totally new instructions every day *or* if we had developed the performance into a fixed expression and decided everything."

character, thus encourage a merging of their own private sensitivity with their knowledge of the esthetics of the artist that they were portraying. Therefore, the need to create a rich and inspiring ground for the actors and the musicians to get inside the creative mind of the biographical figure that their character in the script referred to, was obvious. But since they were not going to create “portraits” of these people but rather use John’s, Merce’s, Yoko’s and David’s art practices and thinking as a vehicle for creating their own art activities and pieces, the process had to support their understanding of these artists and also encourage a picture of themselves being independent artists. One of the things we did was to compile different reference material that they could read and work with both before the rehearsals and during. Parts of this material were the same for all members of the ensemble, like some basic reading on Cage’s esthetics, contemporary art history and of course some music references. Other parts were aimed specifically at the task that the actor/musician had to work with, like getting to know their character. How they used this material and how they approached the pre-rehearsal process varied from performer to performer. Staffan Göthe commented on this in the interview:

I can say, that during the seventies mainly, when I was a young actor, there was a lot of emphasis on theory. So, if one made a production of Strindberg, let’s say, or Chekov, there were a lot of seminars on the playwright, on the subject. I remember when we were doing *Three Sisters* in Gävle that we studied some kind of critical work on how the Russian army worked at the time of the play. And, I don’t know, but eventually I came to the conclusion that all this studying is stimulating and interesting but the question is, sometimes, if you honestly ask yourself, how much use do I have of all this in my work with creating my specific character. You know, you have a large inventory of facts but when it really boils down to it, you might not be able to use it more than as irrational childish memories, you are pretending that you are like this, or? So, in the back of my head I had probably created a kind of skepticism about reading and researching too much. But I must say that this work has been quite different because quite

early on, when I read your first draft of the script, I saw that this was not about making a conventional work, creating a character with complicated relations and situations....But in this case it felt like to eventually be able to be in the room that we were going to create with these artists, who were creative, making things, it was necessary to put oneself in contact with the thoughts and philosophies that actually is the base or reason for their thinking and working. So, there was more like an emerging feeling of stress because it was such a large packet of books. (Göthe 2012)

The intention behind instigating individual preparations/readings/investigations should, as mentioned, be understood as an attempt to encourage each individual member in the ensemble to develop their artistic sensitivity further, beyond the idea of being one part of a collective effort, towards creating an individual artistic stance.⁷⁹ For the actor Mauritz Elvingsson, whose character was shaped around the choreographer Merce Cunningham, the preparatory work included two months of dance training, prior to the rehearsals, with choreographer and dancer Nathalie Ruiz. Nathalie focused both on basic physical training but also on inserting some of the essential physical qualities of Cunningham into a series of improvisational structures, or patterns, that Mauritz could use in the performance. The idea around exposing Mauritz to this kind of training was – like the specifics of the material given to Jessica Liedberg in preparation for her building the character Yoko, as well as for Staffan's John – to support him to see his character, as well as himself, as a unique creative being

Compositional thinking and being in variation

Dramaturgical and methodological considerations had to be given to the likelihood that the non-narrative and multilayered structure of the performance would make it difficult for the performers to understand their part of the expression as a whole. This was continually affirmed throughout the entire

⁷⁹ This can also be seen as another dramaturgical concept to compensate for the absence of a narrative trajectory, thus the activities, energy and temperament of each individual character, i.e. artist, being the putty that holds together the diversity of expressions.

process of making and performing the piece, and commented on by actor Mauritz Elvingsson: “But then, in the boxes it was like ... it was very hard to be in it as you didn’t get any comprehension of what actually happened, what was expressed really. It took a lot of performances before I could relax in that, and start to open up my listening to the audience. It was like ‘Aha, it gets interesting when I do this little thing here when that is happening over there.’ I would never have discovered that earlier because you were so much into what you were doing yourself. It was hard for me to be in the whole because I had no understanding of what it was. The only thing I could think of was ‘what shall I do with my instruction’. I was totally occupied with that.”

The pre-rehearsal material – literature, music recordings, physical training – were the main tools to prepare the performers for the esthetic responsibility that the concept demanded. But that process can also be described as an effort to increase the awareness of compositional thinking, as the material exposed them to different form experiments, and to the esthetic thinking of the artists that they were studying. In order to support the actors even further in thinking about themselves as artists with an individual esthetic stance – and to pull this notion into a concrete theatrical situation – parts of the early rehearsals were structured around each performer making stagings from concepts or stories they created themselves. In this, they were in charge, directing the others in the ensemble. As a complement to those “exercises” and to infuse more of an understanding, both for compositional structures as well as for experiencing the nature of improvising in a mode of superimpositions, the rehearsal process involved the studying and performing of Cage’s composition *Theatre Piece* from 1960. This is a performance piece written for 1 to 8 performers. It asks the performer to create the material to be used – words and sound sources – that then is played out in sequences and time lines determined by a chance operation. To engage in this was an intense and intimate way of experiencing the ideas of Cage but it also opened up for more possibilities to use language in the improvisations. Working with *Theatre Piece* introduced the task to create improvisations from instructions that had to be individually prepared and without a jointly established direction or story, and it exposed the performers to the notion of continuous variation. This, in turn, highlighted the very complex question of how to rehearse chance. How can a process that is supposed to be indeterminate

be prepared? Every performer had 60 different pieces of material (20 in each box). The directorial intention was that the performers should know and relate to every one of these in such a way that they could reach full confidence and strength in their improvisational performative presentation of them. Not only was this a huge undertaking for the actors, but more problematic was the fact – conditioned by the fictional framework of the performance – that the performing of each piece of material was to be done anew each time *and* as if they did not already know it.⁸⁰ The idea of shaping the material in a new way, each time it occurred, did not seem problematic for the performers but the latter demand, doing so with an investigative attitude, created tensions and a sense of conflict that had ramifications both on the rehearsals and the performances. The actor Staffan Göthe commented on this saying: “What’s happening is that the quality of indeterminacy becomes a contradiction to the repetitive demand; ‘I know this so well’, ‘This, I have done before’. And you see, this causes a feeling that the concept of the performance has its limits. I think that there actually should be new material for every day, for every performance, so that all was unknown.” During the rehearsals our attitude towards this inevitable problem, swung between encouraging each other to find a playful lightness to this contradiction and tense discussions on changing the concept; either towards even more unpredictability or the opposite, deciding a set form for the performance. The expectation that continuous rehearsals – and repeated performances – would result in a feeling of flow and security prevailed in the performers but it was obvious that the concept did not guarantee this feeling of a “second wave,” as the actor Mauritz Elvingsson calls it: “I don’t think that it is possible to get into that second wave, the way I think about it. And that’s because of how the concept is constructed. In other theater work I can, even if I have a bad day or something, I can express what’s expected because I know it and I know that it works, that it communicates. In this there was nothing of that. Even if I did my instruction as I had done it previously, maybe somebody else started to scream or somebody started to play music at the same time as I was doing my thing. There wasn’t the same possibility for repetition and, therefore, not possible to get into a flow, what I call the second wave.”

⁸⁰ The large number of texts (see script for boxes) for the actors to learn caused a certain stress, and was especially challenging since they were not attached to a specific situation or movement, and, therefore, harder to memorize.

I found that the most constructive directorial approach to these problems was to listen, participate and navigate the ensemble through these discussions. The complexity was not only structural, but also clearly bordered on issues of a more emotional type, like feeling safe and in control, and feeling connected. However, I chose to emphasize that the methodology of the rehearsals should increase the readiness to be in variation. The contradictions inherent in the concept had to be met, absolutely, but not by eliminating the open and indeterminate form but instead by reaching an acceptance for continuously being in process, thus accepting emotions of insecurity and vulnerability. This is a point where the frictional dynamics of an immanent process are exposed and to enable the transcendent force of the structure to be transformed into an immanent energy, it was important to infuse a sense of the potentiality inherent in continuous variation. It was important to create concrete experiences of the expansive qualities of indeterminacy. This could obviously not be planned, only hoped for.

The actor Mauritz Elvingsson mentions it in the quotation above, and the other performers confirmed it as well, that the compositional thinking and a vital experience of the relation between the individual expression and the whole, was something that took a long time to conquer and feel safe in. The preparations and rehearsals were planned with the intention to increase an understanding for this dynamic, but processes of this type of complexity cannot be thought of as taking one discrete step at a time towards insight and capability. A certain level of understanding and readiness can be gained during rehearsals but then, with the impact of the audience present, the question of feeling safe while being in variation and ready to open up to the present moment gets more complicated and charged.

The physical mode – Body and music

When conceptualizing a collective process it seems reasonable to think about it as creating a shared world. Not only a shared understanding of the themes and questions displayed in the material, but a shared world in the sense of shared experiences. The reading of a play, as well as the rehearsal, is of course an experience shared by the ensemble, but what I am talking about is an experience somewhat beyond, or below, the intellectual and removed from the work with

the material to be staged. Not removed in the sense of being anachronistic to the overall esthetic, but removed from the hermeneutic and interpretational activity, and instead an attempt to engage the performers in a more concrete physical way. So the questions in this case would be: What is the shared physical mode of the performance? What is the timbre of the body according to Cage? How could the general atmosphere of the performance be thought of regarding an overall sensitivity and temperament?

Cage's engagement in Zen Buddhist practice was, as we know, purely philosophical. He did not engage in its fundamental physical training in the form of meditation. But as the function and meaning of Zen meditation is so closely linked to its outlook on the world and philosophical tradition – which lay at the core of Cage's esthetics *and* our performance – the choice to use a Zen-meditation practice as the main collective training in the rehearsal process seemed obvious. Together the ensemble visited lectures on Zen Buddhism and took a short introductory course at the main Zen center in the city to grasp the basic principles of the technique. It is a practice with a strict form and as such it supplied our process with a type of energy that the concept of the performance did not. Meditating collectively every morning became a calm but concentrated way of being alone together, a way to open up the sensibilities in the ensemble, and it increased our listening abilities, in an overall sense. After a couple of months the ensemble felt the need to extend the physical training to include collective bodily warm ups, and it was decided that the meditation practice would be done individually. Pondering over that change in the daily routine of the rehearsals, the actor Staffan Göthe said: "Maybe I can now see, in hindsight, that it would have been good if we had stayed with the practice of meditating together. I mean, we did acknowledge that it was something that was really good to do together, totally different than doing it alone."

Another group training was the daily rehearsals of the composition *Story*. Those rehearsals provided a way for the ensemble to experience metric synchronicity, and it offered practice in listening and in dynamic sensitivity.⁸¹ As the rhythmical patterns of the composition were slightly difficult to memorize and the ambition was to learn it by heart, we chose to work with only a third

⁸¹ Throughout this text I mainly use the word *dynamic* when talking about the quality of different type of relations. Here it should be understood as a pure musical term.

of the piece. The composition has four parts that were divided between the performers, which meant conquering basic musical skills, like keeping the tempo and finding common articulation. The fact that the challenge of this undertaking had clear borders – it was on paper, there were given instructions with a right and a wrong - infused an energy into the process that was useful as a contrast to the evasive character of the chance operated parts. To create a balance in the rehearsal process, it was important to continuously shift between the challenges of being inside the unpredictability of indeterminacy and engaging in the parts with a distinct form. In this effort, both the Zen meditation practice and the collective musical work with *Story*, played important roles.

Theater as Process and The Shifting of Roles

Understanding, learning and building can only be seen as a process and in the framework of theater making this view comes easy to most performers. However, for that process to find a relevance in a theatrical context, it needs not only to suffice the creating of an expression that is stable in itself, but also must aim at increasing the sensitivity towards the nature of the spatial togetherness with the audience. When this observation is placed within the context of the work on *John and the Mushrooms*, it presupposes the possibility that the multiplicity of expressions and the absence of a narrative structure could cause feelings of meeting something unknown. This can obviously not be assumed to be a fact or a conclusive statement, but should be seen as an awareness that we took with us when we entered into the process. And, more importantly, it finds its relevance in relation to the fact that the performance was made for an all age audience.

To enhance an understanding and an increased sensitivity for the minds and thinking of the spectators, I often include a reference group, people from outside the theater to be part of the building of the performance. Meeting this group often takes the form of a workshop where the questions and themes in the performance are talked about and different ideas are tried out. It is a group made up of a variety of people who in some way are knowledgeable in the subjects that the performance is investigating, but also people just interested in theater. When working with theater art for young audiences, this group is obviously compiled differently then when making a performance for a grown up audience. My experience has led

me to understand that when the aim is to create a theatrical expression outside the mainstream, where the material and the form seek to create something more experimental, the dialogue with the reference group plays an even more significant role than if the theater is working with recognizable esthetic choices. The reasons for this are twofold: when making something “new,” confirmation that the expression communicates and has the potential to create contact, is essential for the further development of the piece; secondly, the performers often, in their vulnerable position, need reassurance that gives them an insight into how the different subject matters and esthetic choices of the performance communicate. Since the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* was going to be performed to an audience as young as four years old, we decided to create a reference group of children between the ages of four and six years old.

What questions did we want to ask this group? What did we want to investigate together with them? How would they guide us in our process of making the performance?

The perspective of the young ones

The idea of letting young people come in close contact with the music and ideas of John Cage had relevance to his own practice. Not only because he applied a playful – and to some naïve – attitude towards his own art making, but he also made pieces specifically for young performers.⁸² Instead, and even more important for creating an opportunity for a young audience to experience Cage’s work, was the connection I recognized between his way of working and thinking around art and art-making and the Italian pedagogical theory called the Reggio Emilia Approach. This is an educational philosophy that, since the seventies, has had a growing number of followers in Scandinavia and to a greater or lesser degree influenced the quality of the preschools. This “greater or lesser degree” refers to the circumstance that the theories of the Reggio Emilia Approach can be applied in a more or less strict way, ranging from “being inspired by,” to letting every aspect of the school – space, activities, food – be steered by it.

⁸² Cage created the composition *A House full of Music* in 1982, a circus of music performed by eight hundred school children in Bremen, Germany. Two years later he conducted an almost month long workshop in Turino, Italy, where a thousand children aged 4-12, took part. The workshop and performance in Turino was built on his experiences from Bremen and based on the same composition (Revill 1992, 273, 275).

It was started in the years after World War II by the teacher Loris Malaguzzi, along with parents in the villages around Reggio Emilia in Italy. Describing his thoughts about the pedagogy Malaguzzi says:

Our image of children no longer considers them as isolated and egocentric, does not only see them as engaged in action with objects, does not emphasize only the cognitive aspects, does not belittle feelings or what is not logical and does not consider with ambiguity the role of the reflective domain. Instead our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and children (Penn 1997, 117).

The connections between Cage and Reggio Emilia revolve around a belief in multiplicity and the idea that a creative capacity is there from the start, and does not need to be released by a transcendent force. Another common notion is that both things and humans alike are in continuous variation, and cannot be regarded as something fixed. Instead we need to disassemble our idea that we know something.⁸³ To provoke fixed definitions could be seen as a vocation as well as a need in Cage's practice, clearly illustrated when he says that experimental "music can have many definitions, but I use the word *experimental* to mean making an action the outcome of which is not foreseen" (Kostelanetz 1987, 216). An understanding of this, both from a Reggio Emilia and Cagean perspective, comes through the conviction that a fixed idea of how things and humans are closes us off from what is. It decreases our awareness of the uniqueness (of the child) and of the present moment. A Reggio Emilia pedagogy thus believes that work with children should be guided by an awareness of the uniqueness of every human being and by acknowledging their individual capacity. Therefore it is necessary to offer them as many alternatives as possible in their process to learn and understand about the world. From a Cagean viewpoint this connects to the notion of multiplicity as an esthetic choice, but it also relates to his criticism of educational methods that are built on transferring one alternative (exemplified by his questioning the idea that all students in the class read the same book).

⁸³ One of the comments made by the pedagogue Ebba Theorell at our first introductory meeting was: "We think we know something about the children but we know nothing."

As a basic strategy in the Reggio Emilia pedagogy, learning is done with an investigative attitude and through research projects in which teachers and children work together. Cage talks about himself in the same way: “I find that if I involve myself in some kind of discovery, then I can get through a situation in which I otherwise have difficulty” (Kostelanetz 1987, 25). For these and many other reasons that were conjured up along the way, we chose to use the viewpoints and ideas of Reggio Emilia in our work with the reference group,

The reference group

Ebba Theorell, teacher and scholar specialized in Reggio Emilia pedagogy and professor Gunilla Dahlberg, a leading expert on child psychology and particularly in the theories of Reggio Emilia, were the two people who functioned as consultants when preparing the work with the reference group, and Ebba was responsible throughout the process in leading our work with the group. The questions we wanted to investigate with the children focused on: What is music? What is silence? Can we make something together without deciding anything? And many other questions that emerged as an offspring of those. During the preparatory phase of the production we were continuously stressing the importance for the ensemble to, early on in the process, seek close contact with the children. From a directorial point of view this was a way to emphasize that our experimentations were made with the intention to create communication, and it was also a way to “warm up” the ensemble to the sensitivity and presence of young human beings.

Before our first encounter with the children, the ensemble met with Ebba to get an introduction into the thinking and methods central to the pedagogy. She encouraged them not to be shy about asking the children straightforward questions.⁸⁴ And she also emphasized how important it was to give time to every sequence in the exchange and to focus on listening. The group consisted of 15 children, all from the same daycare, and except for one or two cases of illness, the same children attended every meeting. Our first encounter with them came about one week into the rehearsals. It began with the ensemble going to the daycare to

⁸⁴ Since the ensemble had already talked about the question, as central to the methods of Cage, it both reassured and reaffirmed our process of incorporating Reggio Emilia pedagogy.

meet the children and then bringing them back to the theater. Different things and material to be used had been brought into the rehearsal space,⁸⁵ though before we all went in, to start our first investigation, we sat down and talked:

Ebba: We want to talk about music today.

Can you start and tell about what you think music is?

Lukas: Things that sounds, so that one should think it's nice.

Hugo: There are notes in the music.

Stella: Music is when it sounds different.

Ebba: What happens if it sounds the same?

Stella: Well, yes it can be the same but that's maybe a bit boring.

Ebba: Do you have any other ideas?

Hugo: There are different kinds of music.

Lukas: I also have other ideas. It can be cool with music.

Ebba: What does silence sound like?

Stella: It sounds kind of calm.

All the children start to make wind sounds, different ways of making sounds by blowing air.

Tyra L: This also means silence. *She makes a sign with her hands.*

Ebba: Can you make signs that mean silence?

Stella makes another sign for Silence and Walther then makes one too.

Ebba: Can you make music?

Stella: *Makes a chopped up sound with her voice like opera singing (vibrato): a a a a a!*

Hugo: You can play rock'n roll

All: *the children start to name different instruments: You can play trumpet, and drums, and electric guitar, and harmonica, and that is many tones at the same time. Accordion, piano, tuba.*

Ebba: But ...

Hugo: And recorder?

Ebba: But are there other ways of making music without using musical instruments?

⁸⁵ These were properties of different kinds that could be used as musical instruments, paper and pens and crayons to draw with.

Huga: You can knock!

Ebba: Can you show us? *Hugo knocks on the top of the table.*

Walther: This is also music. *Walther knocks on the table but from underneath.*

Lukas: *takes a napkin and puts it on the table and knocks on it:*
This is also music.

The difference in sound quality from the different ways of knocking on the table is clear when listening to the recording.

Hugo: It becomes music when you turn on the light.

All the children starts making a clicking sound with their mouth

Hugo: Ding Dong kind of like the church bell

Lukas: The bicycle bell.

Hugo: I can make music with my teeth. *He sharply puts his jaws together: clack!*

Some other children also say that they can make music with their teeth and they show it.

Leopold: I can make music when I swing my teeth – then it sounds inside my head. It sounds a lot, it has to sound inwards, otherwise it sounds too much.

Hugo: I heard something! Something buzzing.

Hanna: If we are silent we can hear the sound.

Everybody is silent

Hugo: I am silent! There is a knocking – sounds like a laundry machine.

Leopold: Now I am going to swing my teeth if everybody is silent.

Leopold grinds his teeth. Some are cheering – he grinds his teeth louder

Ebba: Is there any other music you can make with your body?

The children starts rubbing their backs against the chairs, they move their feet, clap their hands, knocks on their heads with their fingers.

Tyra *knocking on her head:* You hear music from in there.

Hugo: If you hold your ear to the stomach you can hear the heart beat.

Without going into detail about what the members of the ensemble thought after the first meeting with the children, it is the unrestricted and receptive view of the concept of music that the children voiced, that was both surprising and inspiring. The fact that they did not immediately connect the concept of music with specific sound sources organized in a specific way was further confirmed when the children and the ensemble went into the rehearsal space. In our preparations for their visit we had talked about the necessity of putting away, or covering up all the music instruments so that the children would not be tempted to use them instead of the different “non-instruments” that were placed in the room. We wanted to investigate together with them if they could be used for making music. The decision was not to put the instruments away, but just leave them as they were. It immediately proved to be the right thing to do as the children, throughout the whole first session – and the other sessions as well – were more interested in investigating and making music with sources of a whole different kind.⁸⁶

The meetings with the children were spread out over the rehearsal period and planned around specific themes. In the first meeting we wanted to problematize the concept of music and investigate different sound sources. The other meetings revolved around themes like: silence and movements; the possibility of doing something together without anybody deciding (as well as the opposite – making music with a conductor); drawing to music and making scores. Every encounter was documented and the pedagogue Ebba checked in with us in between the meetings, to support and lead the ensemble in discussions about what had happened and how could communication with the children be improved.

The impact of the reference group cannot be overestimated. Not only because they helped expose expansive and non-conformist ideas of what music is, but also because they infused a sense of curiosity in the ensemble, and their presence enhanced the process by proving that the questions and themes being treated in the performance were interesting and relevant to their thinking and to their imagination. When talking about the role of the reference group, the actor Staffan Göthe said: “I think it was very well thought through, ... especially this making us get into another universe. To get in close contact with a 4 year

⁸⁶ These were different kitchen utensils and other materials, like pieces of wood and paper of all sorts, plastic tools and mugs, and also soft materials.

old and at the same time get into the thinking of *The Competent Child*, that was something we could turn to and use. To gain access to their world of references and to their kind of naivety was necessary if we were going to be able to do this. You know, both to interpret and give shape to Cage, as a character, and to pull a string through the room and hang three notes on it. That requires a naïve disposition, right? And that is something you work yourself into by doing exercises with the children, listening to them” (Göthe 2012).

The director – Shifting role as a consequence

Running as a theme throughout all parts of this work, was the question of how our different roles, when making and experiencing theater, shift depending on the structure of the concepts that we set in motion. And this aspect is extrapolated on in different ways in the reflections on authorship and immanent processes (*Who is the Creator?*), and in the problematization of the relation between the performative expression and its audience (*Meeting – Meaning*). In the following I will try to say something about this dynamic more specifically in conjunction with the collective process when creating the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*.

To a certain degree, Cage complied with the triad composer (instructor) – performer – listener, without really questioning their relational positions, but *the consequences of his esthetics meant a radical change in their status*. Even before I had a more thorough insight into the thinking of Cage, I knew that if we were going to apply the idea of interpreting the whole esthetic world of an artist like John Cage – who so abundantly expressed his views on the role of the artist and the function of art – we would have to maintain a faithfulness to the history, method, structure and message of the material, as deciding factors in the conceptualization of the production. The impetus of this view in turn meant that I had to be open and willing to expose my own position as director to the incalculable consequences that Cage’s esthetics and methods entailed. What this exactly led to can only be traced by comparing the work and role of the director in *John and the Mushrooms* with how I otherwise formulate the responsibilities of the director. But also through comparing the specific limitations of the concept (created for the performance) with what a directorial undertaking of more fixed material entails.

When working with a text (or score) that is predetermined, it is in my view, the director's responsibility to offer a possible understanding and a suggested interpretation of the material to the people involved in the collaboration.⁸⁷ This serves as a starting point for discussions on how to develop the form and expression of the performance and all the different parts that are involved. The directorial process – and responsibility – then functions on a number of different levels, from being in dialogue with the performers, guiding and steering their work towards a satisfactory conclusion, thus balancing their individual ideas and choices with the overall intention of the directorial aim, to sustaining a dialogue with the different people working off stage, like set designer, lightning designer and others, making sure the practical aspects are taken care of. The conclusion of such a definition of directorial responsibility – and this is the interesting point and where a shift in regards to *John and the Mushrooms* takes place – is that all the esthetic decisions taken are, to a greater or lesser degree, influenced by the impact of the director. A number of aspects in the process of directing *John and the Mushrooms* can be said to fall into the description above, but in the chance operated sections – which amounted to almost half the duration of the performance – the dynamics were drastically different and it is in relation to these sections that the concept of a shift in directorial practice is mainly applicable.⁸⁸ To a certain extent the directorial impact in these sections can be seen as esthetically decisive since the choice of which material to perform – the things in the boxes – was in the hands of the author/director. But from that point on the expression of the performance was determined by chance and in the hands of the performers and their sensitivity and judgment. When rehearsing these parts the faithfulness to the rules of the game and to the specifics of the concept excluded any influence on any aspect of the expressive form, or on the specific choices that the performers made. It was not possible to respond to questions

⁸⁷ This whole description is a simplification and excludes parts of the director's impact that do not immediately have an impetus on the collective creative process. An example of this would be if the choice of which material to stage is the result of a negotiation/dialogue between the director and the head of the theater. The description also excludes other very common ways of creating collaborative theater work, performances that for example originate from ideas and material developed through discussions or investigative workshops. These are methods I have also used. The reasoning offered here is valid only under the precise circumstances of the performances that we are looking at.

⁸⁸ I chose not to elaborate on this right here, but the specific qualities of the dialogue between performers and director in the chance operated parts influenced the exchange and the directorial mode even in the other parts, towards a non-judgemental openness and reciprocity.

like: Did that idea (or expression) work? What did you think when I did this or that? Is it better if I am slower/faster? Responses to the choices had to come in a way that did not inflict or undermine their creative responsibility. Instead the directorial stance was to encourage creative thinking, to invoke the rules of the game, to express a belief in the concept, and to reassure the performers of the quality of the whole. It was about inserting and nourishing certain questions, like: What stops you from doing what you want to do? How can you support each other at the same time as you stay with your own trajectory? What type of dynamic and listening is required to create a feeling so that even the most finely tuned expression is given space? When you do not have any idea how to create something from your instruction, what can you do, how can you think? Do you notice the importance of discipline? The shift for the director can thus be said to be a change in *what kind* of directorial response that can be given.

The desire to eliminate the impact of a director can sometimes result in a decision to share the director's responsibilities among the members in a group. Though, this cannot be regarded as re-shaping the role (function) of the director, but rather replacing it with another type of organizing force; directing conducted in a collective mode. In the case of the rehearsal process of *John and the Mushrooms* I was continuously present in my role as director, but my impact on the esthetic decisions were extremely limited. Not because I was replaced by another type of director's practice, but because the function of the director had shifted.⁸⁹

It should be noted that although the directorial responsibility in *John and the Mushroom* focused largely on inserting and nourishing certain questions, most of the questions that were necessary to deal with emanated directly from the performers and their struggle to find solutions, and not from the director. The questions would have been there irrespectively.

The performer – Shifting role as a consequence

The process of understanding and the process of adapting a Cagean practice are closely linked, inseparable actually. It is not a tie specifically unique to Cage and to the material used in this production, in fact one could even suggest that

⁸⁹ This reasoning obviously relates to the chance operated parts of the performance.

the progression of theater rehearsals – irrespective of what material is worked on – exemplifies how an investigative attitude contains these two steps and that they are essential ingredients for the performers in order to find solutions as to how to shape their expression.⁹⁰ It is a sequence of interpretation that could be described as an opening up – physically as well as intellectually, orally/musically and rhythmically – to what the material does to “my” body, to “my” thinking; what do I understand (learn) about the material (text, music, method) from the experience of taking it in (temporarily accepting it) – and – how do I apply my understanding, i.e. make use of it, in the performative expression? In light of the professional experience of the performers involved in our production, a process like this is undertaken with the ambition to create a framework with a discrete (idiomatically) expressive form, limited in its flexibility. But in the case of *John and the Mushrooms*, the inventive attitude and the tactile activity of trying different formal solutions was taken one step further as the concept and the fictional situation was formulated as *a time and space where people (the performers) are involved in an ongoing process of investigating and inventing new things*, which meant not only that the outcome (qualities, solutions) of this approach was used in the expression but that the investigative activity, to a large extent, was brought into the performance. It is in relation to this circumstance that the concept of a shift finds its relevance. Improvising should, as mentioned above, be seen as central to an actor’s/musician’s practice, but when this is done in front of an audience and the demand is to create new expressions for each performance, there is no shared preconceived expressive goal, which means that the burden of authorship falls on each individual. The shifting of role was thus not about activating a creative responsibility that is otherwise inactive, rather it meant changing its sequential position: The concept of the performance created a need for them to use their compositional judgment *while the audience was watching* (instant composition).

If that can be thought of as a shift in creative responsibility, the presence in continuous variation exerted a shift in the performer’s awareness of the meaning and function of their individual expression within the whole. Their

⁹⁰ If this is considered a precondition for a theater practice it implies that a deconstructive esthetic inevitably transforms into a reconstructive one. But is this not the case for all art forms? I reflect more on this in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*.

experiences were mainly rooted, as mentioned, in a theater practice that strives towards a relatively fixed form and a relatively fixed meaning. In light of such a background, the unavoidable condition of flux in this performative situation was complicated for them and double edged. Sometimes they experienced it as freedom, as a playground open for any alternative action/invention, and sometimes as a hindrance and a challenge hard to overcome. It was a situation that presented them with what I call an *unstable area*; an area which is unstable both because it has more than one desired direction to move in, but also because it is multilayered and, therefore, escapes any attempt to assign one discrete meaning. This dynamic is the outcome of a multilayered compositional structure and an immanent creative process combined. The challenges for the performers and their need to re-think their performer practice because of these conditions, are extrapolated on in the essay *Who is the creator?*

The audience – Shifting role as a consequence

In regards to the role of the audience, the concept of a shift can only be talked about within a discussion on assumed affects and not as an attempt to appropriate the rights of the individual in the audience to take/think/feel/express any kind of position or reaction.⁹¹ Presumptions are formulated based on the notion that certain expressional structures encourage one type of engagement and that others generate other kinds. The complexity of this reasoning can only find its bearing if put in conjunction with the perceptual intention of the performance.

Following Cage, we wanted to create an expressive structure that moved the focus away from the quality of the performance towards the quality of the experience: “a shift from the composer to the listener” (Retallack, 1996, p 27). It was also important that the questioning of hierarchies, which derives from Cage’s own stance, should permeate the dramaturgical thinking as well as the working process, and reach into how we defined the relationship to the audience. Maybe the most difficult challenge regarding this was the question of the value of the different expressive elements; we had to restructure how we usually see (handle, perceive) the relation between different expressions going on at the same (different

⁹¹ This reasoning is reflected on in relation to the Deleuzian concepts of deterritorialization (and territorialization) in the essay *The Rhythm of Thinking*.

texts, musical expressions and movements performed simultaneously), all within their own time structure. It is from this observation, grounded in the vision of a democracy of experiences that the reflections on what kind of “meaning” the performance could possibly carry, should take off. Cage communicated in so many ways that he was not interested in creating “meaning.” He expressed this both in relation to the multilayered compositional structures he set in motion, but also as an implicit criticism to the idea of monadic esthetics. Instead he talked about processes happening in the listener, processes of co-creation, of co-composition.

The relevance of talking about a shift in the role of the audience is dependent on acknowledging two intertwined dramaturgical measures: firstly, a change in the ambition to create meaning in order to illuminate the potentiality in multiplicity; and secondly, a submission to the notion that each individual in the audience is the composer of whatever whole that can be experienced. An attempt to extend these thoughts is done in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*.

Coda

The audience has been waiting in the lobby to come into the theater, about sixty people of all ages. At this point, what they know about the performance could be things like the title, the number of performers, that there is music in the performance and other details that they have understood from the program or newspapers they might have read beforehand. But it is also possible that they know much more, that they have read, or been read to, the teaching/information material that dramaturge Tora von Platen had put together. This material gives suggestions on how to prepare for the visit to the theater: it gives a brief insight into John Cage and his esthetics, it talks about the multiplicity of expressions and introduces the reader/audience to the concept of the rhizome as used by Deleuze/Guattari, it tells about how the process has been inspired by the Reggio Emilia pedagogy and it gives suggestions on how to talk about the performance after the visit.⁹²

A host, a person from the theatre responsible for the audience, welcomes them and explains that when they come into the theater space they can sit wherever they want. When the audience enters the room they meet one big open space: there are

⁹² See footnote no 12 for explanation of the concept of the rhizome, as used by Deleuze/Guattari.

no rows of chairs or a raised stage to tell them where the focus of the performance is going to be. Dark yellow cushions are placed along all four walls. Most of them are on the floor, a few on stools. At this point, if necessary, the host guides the audience so that they spread out evenly around the theater space.

When the audience enters the room there is one actor “doing things.” It is the character John who is preparing the props – 15 small boxes filled with instruction cards – that he plans to use when playing a game with his friends who he knows are on their way. John sees the audience when they come in, he looks at them but he does not talk to them or change his plan of action other than spacing and timing his movements to correspond to the movement and timing of the audience as they find their places in the room. The four other performers are also in the room when the audience comes in, but they are sitting along the sides of the walls, just like the people in the audience are about to do. The character John keeps doing his doings, organizing, writing and putting things in place, but when the room has settled and he is the only one moving around he begins to talk. He is clearly speaking to the audience but not making an effort to “count them all in.” He talks about his father and his desire to make new things. He is making movements in the air like a conductor, he is making drawings on the wall, and while he is doing this the other characters – Merce, Yoko, David and Rose – still seated around the room, start making short comments, posing questions about what John is up to.

JOHN

Here is where I sleep.

At evening, the distant lowing of some cow in the horizon beyond the woods sounded sweet and melodious, and at first I would mistake it for the voices of certain minstrels by whom I was sometimes serenaded, who might be straying over hill and dale; but soon I was not unpleasantly disappointed when it was prolonged into the cheap and natural music of the cow.

YOKO *sitting in the audience*

I see a little boy – Little John – playing violin in his room. Without a violin

JOHN

Here is where I sleep.

We travel through time and space and our ears are in perfect condition.

MERCE *sitting in the audience*

What is he doing?

DAVID *sitting in the audience*

He is conducting?

MERCE

And what and who is he conducting?

JOHN

Here is where I sleep.

Here I wake up. Nichi nichu kore ko niche.

MERCE

Nichi nichu kore ko niche?

JOHN

Every day is a good day.

After another, slightly longer text where John talks about his father, his friends rise from their seats and join him in his studio. He tells them about his idea to investigate if they can do something without anybody deciding what and how. He wants them all to play a game with dices and instructions. He explains how, he gives them their boxes with things, and they all start throwing the dice and picking out their cards with instructions.

JOHN

Maybe there is someone here who knows what theater is ... but not what it can become, if we do like this (Petri 2011, 5).

INTERVIEW 3

In dialogue with The Institute for Unpredictable Processes

IUP: I'd like to start with a question that came up last time we met but that we didn't have time for, about the function of critical reflections. We both know that the founding of this institute is inspired by the idea of creating a forum for artists and theoreticians to jointly investigate the relationship between critical reflections and artistic practices, so I guess my question could seem obvious, but still, can you describe, from a distinctly personal view, how you see the relation between your critical activity and your practice as a director?

JP: That is a huge question, and I think it has to be divided into some sub-questions. First, it is tremendously important to keep in mind, that I engage in critical thinking only in relation to my compositional thinking. That dynamic is what hopefully creates some interesting tension. I am not capable and not really interested in developing strains of thoughts that find their stability, or reason you might say, through relating to a purely inter-philosophical or an inter-critical sequence. It would simply not have any bearing if I were to sit here and try to develop something like an esthetic criticism disconnected from my esthetic experiences and intensions. It is all very concrete. The critical work is related to my art making and driven by my restlessness.

IUP: Restlessness? What do you mean?

JP: Very little light would fall on an art practice if not critically treated through discourses outside its own domain and this notion is more or less automatically inserted as a basic methodological approach in artistic research. How that is done and with what kind of efficiency is another story, which we might want to come back to. Anyway, I too utilize a variety of critical sources in my attempt to carve out observations and extensions from my practice. But that is not a stance or an attitude, or whatever you want to call it, that I started to apply in correlation with the academic formalization that I have been subsumed by. It's been there for a long time, right at the core of my art making, as an interest for deepening my understanding around what I am doing, and why and how. Of course it has developed, become more insightful and complex

over the years, but I still think it is driven by a restless desire to move beyond my limitations. I am sometimes burdened by a stubborn staleness and it's not something that I feel is useful in any way. On the contrary, the movement towards something that surprises me and towards the sense that something rich is happening in the art I make, is almost always dependent on my capability of letting go. But to approach your question a bit more systematically, in order to try to disentangle all the different angles, we might start by looking at the relationship between theory and practice, on a more general level. It certainly is a polarity that's been pivotal in the history of philosophy and its many extensions.

IUP: But is it really necessary, I mean in this context when talking about your own art practice and how you relate to and problematize it through esthetic criticism and philosophical discourses of different kinds, to go back in time? First of all, you said earlier that you are not concerned with a purely inter-philosophical reasoning, and secondly I would suggest that if one takes the comment by Gilles Deleuze on the possibility of “doing” philosophy in a non-canonic way, as inspiration to a more free attitude, why not move straight into the tensions occurring right there and then, in the making of theater?

JP: I'm not sure Deleuze ever formulated himself in that way, and he certainly was connected to the history of philosophy. He did however emphasize the importance of invention, of creating new concepts and new ways of looking at things, as central to the “doing” of philosophy, and I guess that could be used as a somewhat simplistic impetus for what you are suggesting. Though, a possible entrance point for extrapolating on the relation between theory and practice, that to some extent evades the huge philosophical-historical dimension, is offered by Deleuze in a conversation with Foucault in 1972. He suggests that there is a new type of relationship forming between theory and practice that rejects what he describes as something I would call the paradigm of totalization. He reasons that through time, and through the history of philosophy, the practice has been considered an application of theory *or* the other way around, practice was thought to inspire theory. Either way, he says that the “relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalization,” and we cannot continue to think this way. The critical application of theory cannot be driven by an affirmative intention, where the thinking so to speak falls into place when proven by the practice. Such reciprocity represses difference, and it represents an idea that

obstacles, of any kind, are signs of failure in the theory or in the practice. Instead there has to evolve an acceptance for theory to be more partial, operating on and relating to limited fields, kind of like micro-sections. And all these sections, looked at through the critical attempt, do not connect, or connection should not be looked for. There is a multiplicity of areas of conflict that should be acknowledged and examined separately. They are in conflict, they obstruct each other, and there are obstacles within as well as between them. This whole dynamic is what theory has to live with, make use of, accept, not work against. From my perspective this thinking sets off contradictory observations. On the one hand, the building of an expression, even those that I construct with the intent to interfere with the tendency to experience something like a “whole,” or a narrative of some kind, they too strive towards merging a theoretical, philosophical thinking with a compositional one. You could say that this is an effort to mirror the two, and this is a sort of totalization, or an attempt at least. Though, at the same time I see how my theoretical focus is divided into specific and seemingly unrelated areas, and those create discrete fields of theory that I have to look at separately, as well as try to stay in their inherent intensity.

IUP: Tell me if I am wrong, but I hear a tone of self-criticism in your observation that this ambition to merge the theoretical reasoning with a compositional construct somehow resembles the dynamic of totalization. Do you feel that you are making some kind of compromise?

JP: No, actually not, but I think what you sense is my frustration that comes from being in the midst of all the many unruly factors and unavoidable circumstances tied to the making of art, perhaps even more so in collective theater making than in other art forms, and how those become obstacles for theory to flow. Of course, I know it’s exactly those obstacles that theory needs, as steppingstones between discourses and perspectives. Actually, those obstacles point to the fact that theories are abstractions that cannot govern the practice. The theories are discursive events and they are, as said, essential for the movement of thinking, but they cannot be valued and used simply in terms of their propositional content. That is what the obstacles point to and this is a dynamic one has to make amends with and have the strength to stay in the midst of. Sometimes this causes, at least in me, a friction and unsteadiness and that’s probably what you sense.

IUP: And what happens if you don't have the strength to stay in it?

JP: I imagine that the art then would have a strong tendency to seek its consistency in conservative and already codified systems, which is another way of saying that it fails to challenge preconceptions. It would just follow the stream.

IUP: Yes, that's a prediction easy to make. But my question has more to do with not understanding the effect, or rather, your way of incorporating how you activate the relation between theory and practice more concretely in your work. What can be said about the relation between these two perspectives, the large compositional and the many discrete fields of theoretical problems? This tension, that you emphasize the importance of being in the midst of, what is its relation to the shaping of the performances? Also, the term totalization, I understand is delineated by how it describes the relation between theory and practice. I do follow that, but at the same time the word sets off an image of a less complex nature, an image of the artifact related to terms like balance and completion and that, on a purely formal level, relates to the notion of a beginning and an end of a performance. Aren't there clashes, or contradictions happening here?

JP: I see an interplay of tangled forces that has to be recognized in order to approach these questions. First, I think the last observation that you made further misconstrues the term totalization. I might have indicated the same deviation earlier when using it in relation to the merging of the theoretical with the compositional, but I suggest we bring it back to signify the energy delineated by Deleuze, thus reaffirming the type of relation between theory and practice that he objects to. We have to use other words when describing the creating of the piece, the making of the composition, the putting together of the expressive material. I think it should be understood, and this is especially relevant when using immanent creative processes as a substrate for a discussion on esthetics, that the concept of totalization represents a transcendent force. Anyway, what I create move through time and theory is like the opposite, it breaks and creates disruptions. Theory is necessary but it can never resonate life, it is outside life, it is not concerned with aura in any other way than as a critical discourse. The transformation of theory that art making demands that weaves the complexity of the theories into a communicative form, into something that creates percepts outside the realm of intellectual interrelations, outside the compound of references and tangled ways of thinking, is a process that urgently needs to rely on the phenomenon of aura. One of the functions of theory,

in such a dynamic, is to investigate and deepen the understanding of perception and composition, so that new constructs can be made, constructs that break new ground but still will *stand up on their own*, in other words, don't depend on a perceptual process of an analytic and deconstructive kind. In their book *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari suggest that, from the viewpoint of an implicit model and from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections, this sometimes requires "great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality. But these sublime errors accede to the necessity of art if they are internal means of standing up (or sitting or lying)" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 164). I see this as dramaturgical thinking. The compositional use of unbalance, of incongruities in the material, of inconsistencies and of the unexpected will happen only if one has an understanding of how percepts and affects can find their rhythm and their way of moving, through paths outside known esthetic formats.

IUP: What I hear is that you think the extension of theory furthers compositional thinking. But how, and I apologize for repeating myself, does this thinking, in a more concrete way, find its way into the performances? It is obvious that it's not about exposing it in a rendering sense, right, but rather how it purports a reevaluation of expressive matter. Though, is that a strategy often used when problematizing the creative process?

JP: I am sorry if I'm unclear, but the sequence is really like this. If I understand or think that I have reached some kind of theoretical understanding of how processes of different kinds move in the world and in consciousness, outside the realm of what we consider art, this sets off a curiosity and an interest to transpose, you could maybe say compress that understanding into movements and forms within the formats that I work with. I am not sure I'm able to make it any more lucid, but I'll try to give you a discrete example. When Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* say that there "is a territory precisely when milieu components cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to be functional to become expressive." it generates, on the precondition that there is an understanding of what the concept of territory stands for and how that can be inserted and used in compositional thinking, concrete material that can be investigated, or tested, when creating an expressive form, as well as when looking at performance and directorial thinking and practice (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 347).

IUP: How is that?

JP: Well, I imagine that the “components” in the framework of the art I work with, are actor expressions of various kinds, musical expressions and bodily movements. Those are put out into the world in a mode of improvisation, chance and multiplicity. And, to investigate the potency in the Deleuzian/Guattarian observation, thus enhance the probability of the improvisations to “become expressive,” we need to think of how they can be guided so that they shift from being “directional” and instead become “dimensional,” and how they “cease to be functional.” In other words, we need to somehow clarify the meaning of these terms, in the context of an individual expression within collective improvisation. I choose to see a “directional” energy as an intent-driven movement with a specific and set goal, which limits the capability of listening and of becoming new and different at every precise moment. The “dimensional” on the other hand grows out of a close listening to the situation, to what happens in the surroundings, though not to the extent of subsuming itself to a system. It “ceases to be functional” by refusing to regard itself and shape itself as “functional” in a system that represses such movements. It creates a territory on its *own* terms, hence becomes expressive. Here we have a dynamic closely related both to the concepts of multiplicity and univocity, as they operate in a Deleuzian/Guattarian context, but also akin to the concept of anarchic harmony, as used by Cage. All this, is of course a way of reading that is effected by a net of other aspects and thoughts, it’s a fragment of a large weave. Then, we come to the question of how such a reading steers the conceptualization and how the direction is constructed and handled in order to transpose it into actual doing. Partly, it’s about making certain assumptions when setting up the concept for the performance, assumptions about what kind of circumstances and what kind of material and what kind of instructions can trigger those shifts. But the actualization of the reading is even more dependent on connecting, and provoking, each shifting point as concretely as possible with the performer’s practice. You know, like discussing and experimenting with what the different terms can mean, in terms of experiencing relations between the individual expressions, and for how the listening moves.

IUP: I can definitely see how a reading such as yours is dependent on what you call “a net of aspects.” I presume, though, that it’s even more dependent on an urgency to connect your reasoning to works that you created before all this thinking took place. I can’t help but feel that your reasoning is somewhat insufficient, a bit of a stretch. In artistic research I have noticed that appropriations of critical discourses often take on an affirmative function, hence they often utilize concepts in such a limited way that they are disconnected from the complexity of the appropriated discourse, as a whole. Such appropriations are done more or less successfully, or maybe one should say more or less accurately, and can therefore be misleading. This is a very vague formulation but it is intended to raise the question whether such utilization, *if* it carves out and formulates its own specific circumstances and usage, can be regarded as an acceptable brutalization? The distinction I’m after is about the difference between how esthetic criticism appropriates and how the artist does it.

JP: I was heading towards talking about a different aspect of theorizing, in relation to artistic practice, but now you bring up the concept of appropriation and that is certainly a relevant and complicated issue in this context.

IUP: We can get back to talking about the relationship between theory and practice later, but for me, from the example you conveyed, the question of how and why appropriations are done seems relevant, don’t you think?

JP: There are many ways of approaching your rather critical observation and I am not certain where to begin. Appropriation, or more precisely, the appropriation of critical discourses into our different doings, is a sequence more or less central to all kinds of reflexivity and this certainly applies to artistic research. It’s all around us as a necessary strategy and this utilization of theories and concepts picked up from various critical discourses is most often done to illuminate and problematize aspects like composition, interpretation, perception, cognition and so on. Obviously there is nothing new in the phenomena of surrounding an art practice with theories, or incorporating them more concretely. I am sure we can both come up with many examples throughout art history that would be proof of this; like the theories of affect in baroque music or the many philosophical investigations embedded in fictional literature. However, I don’t think it would be an exaggeration to say that this dynamic has been radically intensified through the occurrence

of artistic research. There is something really interesting happening through this intensification because critical reflective practices, that previously have been more or less secluded from any intrusions and from attempts to test their durability, are challenged by a more coarse treatment.

IUP: In 2010 *The Routledge Companion to Artistic Research* published a quite extensive anthology with essays on, methodology and the nature of artistic research in relation to other types of research. In one of the forewords, Hans-Peter Schwartz uses the terms mono-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary to delineate one of the core advantages in artistic research when he says that a “trans-disciplinary basic understanding represents a considerable advantage over most mono-disciplinary approaches to research dealing with art at scientific universities if we assume – and this is my opinion – that art-based research is not only a self-sufficient theoretical structure but also the driving force of innovation for art production and art reception.” Do you think that the sequence of transposition that you gave an example of earlier is related to what Schwartz talks about as trans-disciplinary? And do you agree with his idea that it could function as a driving force for art production and art reception?

JP: I am not sure that it is accurate or clarifying to label the example I gave as trans-disciplinary, mainly because I see the term as most useful to describe critical undertakings where more or less established *theoretical* discourses are interlinked. But your suggestion is interesting as it positions the practice, what I referred to as the coarse treatment, as one of the poles from which one type of thinking is transferred to another. As for it being a driving force for developing art and compositional thinking, of course I see it like that, otherwise I would not attempt such an interpretation.

IUP: I would like us to stay for a moment with the question of what I earlier called the acceptable, or unacceptable, brutalization of concepts that possibly happens when utilizing them in artistic practice. Maybe you could reflect on the difference between how esthetic criticism appropriates critical discourses compared to how the artist does it.

JP: The question if the appropriation is acceptable or unacceptable can probably be discussed in most cases, but I don't actually see the importance. There are critical attempts that fail to use its deconstructive tools in accordance with their original intrinsic complexity, but concepts, terms and critical thoughts are reconfigured through time and through the grinding process of

ongoing usage. To put it very simply, they change, we want them to change in order to make them reverberate in a contemporary context. Some changes are done thoughtfully and creatively, others more carelessly, but both are part of that process. Then, the question of how appropriations are done differently in academic criticism and in artistic research is difficult to talk about without looking more closely at specific examples.

IUP: Well, that's what I am interested in.

JP: In artistic research it is an artist who is doing the research, and the appropriations are most often done to problematize and illuminate the prevailing stance and understanding of her esthetics. The position that you inhabit as an artist implies a privilege that ought to be utilized: your practice is to create not to criticize. This does not mean that criticism is absent within the creations, but the movement, I guess one could say, goes in the opposite direction: from problematization into creation – which includes interpretation as well as composition – and therefore can exert a shifting energy. The appropriations become repetition of thoughts and concepts in a pure sense, a repetition *prior* to what the concept represents, in other words, related to what is intuitively sensed in the art practice. On the other hand, esthetic criticism is appropriating concepts and theories in order to insert them into *existing* phenomena. The appropriations are done with a referential purpose. This, we know, is a type of writing that creates its system, its framework and form through a continuous mode of referring to doings, as well as to other critical attempts, but it is not dealing with the compositional consequences of the theories, instead reflecting on them. These types of appropriations, for example philosophical discourses and concepts in academic esthetic criticism, are done, as you pointed out, more or less accurately. The utilization implies a certain risk that concepts and theories are used in such a restricted way that they are detached from the intrinsic complexity of the thinking that they come from.

IUP: I understand “compositional consequences” as explicable of the example you gave earlier and I would definitely like you to expand on that. But before we get there I'm interested to hear why you contradict yourself, twice as I see it. You said earlier that it's more or less uninteresting how appropriations are done, and now you seem anxious to criticize it, in a general kind of way.

JP: It might be that the reason I fall into a generalizing mode is because there are examples of critical appropriation that lay close to my own field and that somehow disturbs me, in the same way as you said earlier when you mentioned that appropriations are sometime given an “affirmative function.” I’ll give you an example. Not so long ago I read an article by performance studies scholar Stephen Bottoms that critically looked at the creative process of the American theater group Goat Island (Bottoms 1998). In that article the writer appropriates the concept of the rhizome, as it has been deployed by Deleuze and Guattari, and uses it to describe the distribution of creative power and to delineate a dramaturgical structure. This is clearly an example of brutalization of the concept, to use your formulation, but the question is if it’s acceptable? I don’t really think so, for two reasons. The first is that the thinking that Deleuze/Guattari developed is deeply dependent on the *relation* between concepts. They are intertwined and continuously renewed in ways that make them change. So taking one of them, disconnected from the others, and applying it as a matrix is problematic. The concept of the rhizome is used and activated by Deleuze and Guattari for reasons that have to do with the aspiration of thinking, and as a critique of the normativity embedded in the notion of truth and in the idea of knowledge accumulation. But Bottom’s article uses it to describe a non-hierarchical distribution of creative power within the collective, and also to give a picture of a dramaturgical structure. It is not difficult to see the logic and the reasoning behind this appropriation, but I wonder if it wouldn’t be, and I ask myself this question as often as I can, more constructive to deepen the critical approach with the help of extended and nuanced descriptions of a more concrete kind. I think we should use this approach much more than we do, you know, exchange the use of concepts with descriptive language. The second mistake in this article, which I actually think is more critical, is that the philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze/Guattari, like all philosophical activity, though I tend to see the Deleuzian even more so, is at its core confirmative of the ongoing processes of thinking and living. Therefore it is absolutely necessary, however difficult, to really encompass this perpetual movement and to let it influence the critique. To integrate concepts that are part of this movement into an analysis of artistic practices that strive toward fixity, toward creating artifacts of some kind, contradicts the core of Deleuzian thinking. You can come upon scholars who

discuss creative processes through the lens of Deleuze, and it might hold together on some level of representation, but then again, the actual expressive movements of the performances that they look at are preconceived, even if they might include disparate elements that could be described with words like multilayered, or rhizomatic. So, not only are these observations most often coming from outside a creative practice, which makes them somewhat anemic, but they apply analytical concepts to an object that in itself is resistant to the core characteristics of Deleuzian thinking. I guess you have to see this as the result of an academic economy, otherwise it's difficult to understand.

IUP: And this criticism does not apply to your own work? You seem to be pushing the limits of certain Deleuzian concepts in order to make them fit into your reasoning.

JP: Of course I do, I know I do, and that obviously should be scrutinized as it would be wrong to claim my own attempts as something other than a critical injection made to set dramaturgical thinking in motion. Though, when it comes to this latter aspect of applying concepts that derives from a process-oriented discourse on phenomena that does *not* unfold as an unpredictable process, I can only say that what I look at, and try to critically analyze, are artistic expressions that, even if surely bound to predetermined performance strategies, evolve in ways that are unpredictable and new. Not in their format but in their appearance.

IUP: But isn't improvisation always unpredictable? Collective creations of different kinds come about through instant invention. I mean, come on, it is present in most art practices. I read a draft of your text *Who is the Creator?* some time ago, and even though I truly think it is interesting, it seemed like there were references missing. Some of the concepts and types of processes that you talk about have been, quite extensively, critically analyzed elsewhere, and those could, in my opinion, be brought into your reasoning much more. Why, for example, are there not more references on the nature of improvisation, or devising, or other formats of collective creation that contemporary theater uses?

JP: There are many existing critical discourses aligned with the problems that I bring up in this work. Like improvisation and devising, both of which are related to a third prevalent concept, which is emergence. All of these are very interesting

and also to a certain extent compatible with the line of thought that I try to build. However, my work is not meant as a contribution to the understanding of these concepts on a general level. The reasoning is closely tied to my own practice, and the theoretical extrapolations are, as I keep saying, meant as a structural critique, and therefore the references should serve that purpose. If we take for example the notion of improvisation, I do mention that the readiness to improvise is absolutely crucial in the collective creative processes that the performances are built on. So it would not be strange if I looked more closely at the dynamics of improvisation in relation to all the criticism that's already out there. Take for instance somebody like Keith Sawyer who has written a lot on collective emergence and improvisation. To some people who are trying to understand the dynamics of improvisation, his work could be enriching to read. For me, not so much, and it might be that it has to do with esthetics. In one of his books, I think it is *Group Creativity*, he aims at describing the process of improvisation through a musical practice within a specific idiomatic framework. Though, this framework is not analyzed and described with its rules and predetermined formats. He talks about improvisation within jazz music without laying out its strict and clear idiomatic framework, like harmonic progression and its relation to how the improvisation evolves, like its way of using and relating to metric patterns, and of course, aside from all the technical aspects, its historical development. I think, at some point he even says that an improvisation within a jazz idiom is unpredictable. It is almost impossible to relate to that statement. Imagine if I would claim that improvisation in baroque music is unpredictable. Those who know music would just shake their heads. The emergence of creative expressions through an improvisational practice is, of course, interesting. I have spent much of my life in the midst of it, but it is not what I talk about in this work.

IUP: There's a dismissive tone in what you are saying that, even though I can understand your arguments, feels foreign and kind of out of place within a serious reflective academic practice.

JP: I don't have a problem showing respect for the type of academic writing that I mentioned. A lot of work has been put into it, and I could of course just refrain from bringing it up. I mention these examples just to describe what I am after myself, in my own critique, as well as they show how complex and difficult it is to activate one type of thinking within another.

HIERARCHY IN CREATION

A description of the performance of *vorschläge*

Entrance

I am aware that a deep sense of what actually happened throughout the different processes of creating the performances that I describe and use as references, cannot be truly attained through what I present here. The complexities of the many energies of the collective endeavor are concealed, not only in time passed but also within the inner process of each individual involved in the collaborations. But my claim that understanding or insights are unattainable is not done to infuse discouragement. Acknowledging this gap should instead be understood as a way to emphasize my intention to carve out thoughts and questions of a structural type, beyond the specific examples. The purpose of describing how the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* came about, was to chisel out a directorial thinking, a directorial practice rooted in a wider type of analysis, beyond hermeneutics, and to render the specific dynamics of an immanent creative process. Now, approaching the description of the performance of *vorschläge*, the main focus is still about the evolving of an immanent creative process and its effect on the dynamics of the collective creation, but the emphasis is somewhat shifted. If the field of tension, during the process of making *John and the Mushrooms*, was framed by the triad director – instruction – performer, the tension in the process of *vorschläge* derives from the relation between the author (composer) and the performer (musician). It highlights the sequence of exchange between instruction and performance. As a consequence, the role of the director is moved to the background, functioning mainly as initiator, and the different challenges that happen are mainly within the group of performers as they encounter the composition/instruction. This then can be said to place the author (composer) in the position of director. As the impact of my directorial position in such a conceptual set-up is reduced in regards to the shaping of the expression, I can well imagine that this might seem to indicate that my esthetic and emotional investment is less intense. Though, as we shall see, this is not

the case, rather it is the contrary: the directorial engagement is reconfigured to describe what I refer to as *directing as participation*. Deeply embedded in that notion, in that shift of the role of the director, is the issue of hierarchy: an issue placed in the foreground both by the primary material on which the performance is based but also by my intention to problematize the relation between performer and director. This leads us to the questions we need to begin with: What are the specific reasons for including a description/analysis of this performance within a discussion on the discourse of an immanent creative process? What are the different ways in which the material – the musical composition *vorschläge* and the process of making the performance – relate to the overarching investigative questions of this work? And, how does the collective creative process in *vorschläge* differ from the processes of making the performances of *John and the Mushroom* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting*?

Six musicians come together to make music from a source – a textual instruction – that coerces a social exchange, which is then followed by a collective musical creation steered by their individual sensibilities. That is what makes up the sound art piece, what we hear: a primary material in the form of an instruction; a social exchange in the form of a discussion; collaboration in the form of collective music making.⁹³ Though, it is not what I anticipated. As I worked with the musicians in the studio, and during the editing process, my understanding of the piece radically changed. What had earlier been thought of as material open for interpretation and improvisation, I came to regard more as a platform for a process of group dynamics. My original idea to highlight the process of interpretation was not only complemented, but in part overshadowed by the complexity of the social exchange; a socio-metric pattern that exposed a group's collective attempt at understanding, their desire to position themselves within the group, and their longing for inclusion.⁹⁴ It can therefore be said

⁹³ The word instruction clarifies how the material/composition is set in motion. The title of the composition is translated into *proposition*, which thus should be read as “a proposition for an instruction.” In this text the word instruction will be used throughout but in the script (see below) the voice of the instruction is given the name of the composition: *proposition*.

⁹⁴ Sociometry can briefly be described as a method for measuring social relationships, developed by J.L. Moreno. It looks at how groups are organized and how the individual is positioned within the group. A sociogram is an extension, or outcome of the method, which describes the position of the individual in relation to the others. In this context the term is used to indicate that the creative collaboration took on a social dynamic, and emphasizes that it is not about art-making but about social relations.

that *vorschläge*, both as process and performance, revealed a social aspect of collective creation, parallel to the level of performance, that permits us to look at the occurrence of an immanent creative process, of two rather different sorts: a group discussion, in a negotiating mode, evolving around the collective effort to interpret textual instructions from which music is meant to ensue; and the collective musical improvisation as an immanent creative process that escapes the control of its originator. Seen from the practice of a musician, regardless of which genre we are looking at, the process of interpretation is most often concealed behind a focus on the tactile aspect of the activity. As a result, the readiness to engage in an in-depth reflective discussion is not evident and cannot be regarded as central to the practice of a musician, in the same way as it is within a contemporary actor practice where continuous reflections on the material – the text, bodily positioning, relational aspects – are most often seen as a necessary tool for finding the expressive form. But if the musicians display a certain unfamiliarity when presented with a demand for deconstructive and analytical reflections, their engagement and participation in a collective musical creative process, even if containing sharp differences in individual expressions, does not cause a disjunctive energy. The tensions within the collective creative process – and therefore the flow of the immanent process – subsequently are different in *vorschläge* from those in *John and the Mushrooms*. In the later, the presence of a multilayered complexity with competing expressions raised the question of expressional hierarchy and the need for interpretive investment from the audience – choosing focus, inventing causality. The performative quality of *vorschläge* contains no such expressional tension in the music parts. This difference can be explained by the simple observation that multilayered musical expressions and multilayered phonetic expressions carry different potential in respect to being perceived as univocal. As a consequence, enhanced by the explicit intention of the composer to problematize the question of creative hierarchy, this description of the process of creating the performance of *vorschläge* will mainly revolve around the question of Who is the creator? thus placing the aspect of an immanent creative process somewhat in the background.

Related to the question of who the creator is, as well as to the question of hierarchy and to the issue of unpredictability, is the aspect of how the performance of *vorschläge* found its final form, and that needs to be briefly commented on.

The discussions and the creation of the music were totally in the hands of the musicians. They created the material that was then edited by me.⁹⁵ While doing the editing, I aimed to enhance the connection between their discussions and the instructions, but I also wanted to emphasize the phenomenon of translation and the confounding aspect of understanding semantic language, by alternating between a Swedish and a German voice. The fact that this performance was, on one level, out of my hands, but on another level quite significantly steered by me, might seem radically different from the other two performances, which is somewhat misleading. Yes, I did steer the framing and the formal aspects of the performance, but I did so in *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting* too, actually quite similarly, even if my influence was not placed in the same order, so to speak. The most significant difference between *vorschläge* and the other performances is that it does not unfold as a collectively shared unique performative event. The aspects of perception, multiplicity and co-composition are therefore less coherent, which is why those aspects are treated in conjunction with the performances of *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, and the aspect of creative hierarchy is the focus of this text.

The performers in the production *vorschläge* are musicians and not actors, and the expressive activity – as seen by themselves – is constituted by their musical improvisations and not their reasoning around how to go about doing just that. This clearly has to be weighed into the reasoning around the unfolding of the immanent energy and the performative situation. However, on the topic of musical improvisation there are a large number of reflective and analytical works that approach this activity, and most often these look at the improvisational process specific to the esthetic framework in which it takes place, its idiom.⁹⁶ I will not go into the specifics around the emergence of musical expression within free improvised music – which would be the closest definition of what the musicians engaged in when making the music in *vorschläge* – but instead try to give an account of the structural specifics of the process. Similar to the other descriptive texts, the underlying intention is to illuminate aspects of my

⁹⁵ The first public performance of *vorschläge* took place in Tensta Art Center, Stockholm. In the installation/exhibition the sound art piece was combined with images made by typographer Marcus Gärde.

⁹⁶ Esthetic frameworks in this case refer to different musical genres, like baroque music, different kind of ethnic music, Indian classical music, jazz and blues music of different styles, non-idiomatic free improvised music, and so on.

thinking and practice as director and how that is displayed in the construction and treatment of the concept. But, as mentioned earlier, the position of the director in the process of making the performance of *vorschlage* is somewhat different since the main directorial influence - and statement – is embedded in the decision to activate the material rather than to shape it. The investigative questions grow from the material and does not derive from a directorial invention. Instead it is in the decision to include and expose the interpretative process within the performance that the directorial impact is fully revealed, thus assigning an expressive value to a stumbling, searching activity.

From text to sound

When a musician is about to engage in playing orchestral or chamber music, the starting point is most often the reading of a musically notated instruction. Though, in some older types of music notation, used for example in baroque music, a musically notated instruction could be combined with a so called tablature, which can be briefly described as numbers written down in a specific order to indicate the structure and movement of the chords to be played, often as an accompaniment to a song or solo instruments. In other musical idioms the notated instructions look different, like when playing a jazz tune where a melody line can be defined through musical notation that is then combined with a specific cord progression written down with letters and numbers instead of musical notation. As a result of the rich and varied development of music that happened during late modernism, a large variety of music notation ensued, and the ways in which the composer specified his or her ideas that were to be communicated to the performer and result in sound production, brought about combinations of varied types of notation: conventional music notation combined with graphic notation, music notation combined with texts, images combined with text or numbers. But also pure graphic scores with no text, as well as pure text compositions.⁹⁷ The composition that functions as the ground material for the performance that this text is about – *vorschlage* (1993) by German composer Mathias Spahlinger - belongs to this last type: a musical

⁹⁷ This very brief overview is focused on music notation, thus leaving out various kinds of situations where music compositions are passed on through hearing, learning by listening.

composition in the form of a written text. Or rather, that is what it looks like at first glance. Through this rendering we will see that its inherent dynamics harbor the possibility of setting off much more than musical expressions.

To put Spahlinger's composition in a more precise historical context, which is helpful when carving out its specific intention, we can place it next to two other influential musical compositions based on text instructions: John Cage's *Theater Piece* from 1960 and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Aus den siebend Tagen* from 1968. In *Theater Piece* – which Cage in his foreword labels “theatrical music” – the use of text can be said to function on two different levels.⁹⁸ First, as notation: a textual instruction telling how to prepare and perform the piece, and secondly as source material to be performed. The score, which is created in eight versions, i.e. for eight different performers, consists of one page of written instructions, one transparent plastic sheet on which four different rulers are drawn, and six to eight pages with so-called time brackets where different numbers (1- to 20) are indicated. The written instructions and the transparent plastic sheet with the rulers are the same for all 8 players, but the rest of the score is different from player to player.⁹⁹ There are no specific sound sources indicated but instead each performer is instructed to come up with twenty nouns or verbs, each one to be written down on a separate card. Even if these words will result in movements, actions and sounds it is important to think of the language as functioning on two different levels. The instruction cannot be said to be directly connected to a conventional musical sound source, like an instrument – which it is in both the Stockhausen and the Spahlinger compositions – but instead creates a sequence of: text – text – activity. Cage's instructions carry a quality of being both precise and flexible, and at some points contradictory, suggesting expansions or alternatives initiated by the performer. He clearly states that no conductor or director should be involved in the performance and the execution is heavily dependent on the creative responsibility of each performer. This latter aspect is, on a purely structural level, similar to the other two compositions, though, as we start looking at

⁹⁸ Even before writing *Theater Piece* Cage had used different textual instructions in combination with other type of notation, like for example in *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–58).

⁹⁹ As many other of Cage's compositions *Theater Piece* can be performed with a varied number of performers, in this case from 1 to 8.

the Stockhausen piece the rendering of this responsibility takes on a slightly different tone, or maybe one should say demand. Stockhausen's composition – with the subtitle *15 text compositions for intuitive music for variable instruments* – has no foreword describing the concept, nor an outline that defines rules of an overall type. But when reading through the short, poetry like instructions a distinct picture emerges of which kind of sensitivity and awareness the composer requires the musicians to activate. Throughout the 15 instructions, though all in different ways, the musicians are instructed to reach for feelings, to go inwards and to find a kind of non-activity, a place of no effort and no intention, from where they should begin to produce sounds. Formulations and words that reoccur are: vibrations of the universe, the inner vibrations of the body, shimmering fire, complete harmony, dedication, non-thinking. It is interesting to acknowledge that even though the possibilities for the performer, when using these instructions for creating music, can be said to be limitless, the sharp and demanding tone inherent in the instructions makes the image of the composer prevail, and there is a strong sense that something very specific is meant to be accomplished. This dynamic is almost opposite to the mode in *Theater Piece* by Cage and, as we shall see, this difference in dynamic is exposed, problematized and made use of in the Spahlinger composition.

vorschläge consists of twenty-eight short texts. The composer intended these texts to be read and used as a starting point and inspiration for musical improvisations, thus resulting in the same number of pieces of music. The language in these texts spans from concrete and detailed instructions, to a more illusive, poetic quality. Just like in Cage's *Theater Piece* there is a foreword that precedes the actual instructions. One could say that Spahlinger uses a combination of the two compositional structures made by his forerunners. However, the meaning and effect of Spahlinger's foreword is different from Cage's, making it far more than a "simple" forward. In his, Spahlinger problematizes the relationship between composer and musician by questioning the hierarchy of the composer as decision-maker and the musician as executor. He raises the question of critical reading and emphasizes the importance of the musician to take responsibility for his/her relation to the instruction, and to the artistic expression. This should be seen as Spahlinger encouraging a kind of opposition, and a conscious

shift of focus from the composer to the musician who is interpreting the piece. This is what he writes

propositions¹⁰⁰

a concept to make the function of the composer redundant

deliberation

followed by the grace notes come the main notes. or rather: separation of main and side-thoughts, arguments, understanding and counterargument are omnipresent “temporary and develop gradually” (hölderlin), therefore transparent, exchangeable, determinable.

these concepts would like to contribute to the collectivization of the once unilateral privilege to allow oneself (to have) an idea. during their evolvment i have let myself be guided by some deliberations that i would like to bring up with the intention to insert them into the discussion and thereby clarify that my suggestions not always satisfy my own demands. with this said an indication of in which direction i imagine that thoughts of this type can be developed, is made:

those game-rules are the best (and also the most difficult to formulate) that already from the start are open, that demand or presume its own reflection, that comprise its own determination, its fluidity, its own abounding. game-rules for music – irrespectively if determined by the composer or if developed collaboratively from, or not from, a plan of some sort – should not be oriented towards result, should not be anything strict, a commanding decree, but instead in each and every moment of its performance be at disposal. the rule should be influenceable, changeable, yes possible to eliminate, even when its validity is defined it should be possible to

¹⁰⁰ Of utmost importance is to point out the unavoidable problem with translating the title of this composition. In German its title is *vorschläge* which has the double meaning of *proposition* and grace note with an obvious difference in meaning. Within the framework of Spahlinger’s reasoning this is fruitful. When thinking and speaking in English it is important not to enhance the difference between the two terms but rather seeing them as lying on top of each other. In this translation this problem will be dealt with by altering between the two terms, with the unfortunate result that the dual connotation will be lost, and the quality of the text therefor decreased.

infringe; it will show that a determined infringement of the game-rules will bring more truth into the light than any rule will ever accomplish. or: other, not predetermined definitions of game-rules will ensue only by experimentation or ad-hoc decisions, that on the other hand – beneficiary to the entirety – is possible or desirable to disagree with and oppose to. what this music proposes, expresses, is, is decided by those who perform it, each and every one of them.

decisions demands expertise. it is intended that they are possible to make on each stage of the development. the artistic competence is practiced and rehearsed before the discrete musical, the musical before the tactile, which always is restricted by relatively fixed regulations. in parentheses it should be said: the freedom of esthetic decisions should not be obstructed by social rules. this is about music. only when social processes instantaneously occur as sound, can they be allowed to appear in the foreground.

pedagogy and didactics usually convey goals of study. and for the person who is inclined to communicate something it is infinitely difficult to avoid becoming a wise guy. that is the opposite of esthetic experience. i have tried to formulate only such concepts to which realization i myself want to contribute.

the ancient greek word for school also means: calm and peace, untied time, (philosophical and knowledgeable) conversations; also slowness, lingering, idleness, dilatoriness. embedded in this lies both the demanding privilege of being detached from so called useful labor as well as the experience that those who educate themselves, think and play music most likely will reach their goal if they keep it out of sight.

unintentionality, which this concept presumes, should not be confused with passiveness or fatalism: it has always been an artistic and intellectual virtue, and it should be a social. presently the chances do not seem large that the will, wishes and dreams of the individual, in a surveyable future, would become real and true. to reach a level of self reflection, as well as a critical relationship to one's own will, without executing it, takes practice. let us

calmly start with that, even though and just because of that it might be too late. we will see, as hölderlin said, that the most free is also the most intimate context.

any selection of the “propositions” can be performed, in any sequence and in any combination, also simultaneously. some concepts can be part of others or incorporating others. any kind of variations and developments are welcome.

When juxtaposing Spahlinger’s foreword with the other two text-based compositions mentioned earlier, we can see how he might have been inspired by the openness and flexibility of Cage’s foreword to *Theater Piece*. But Spahlinger takes it a bit further as he emphasizes the creative responsibility that this openness demands, problematizing the relationship between the instruction and the decision process that the musician needs to engage in. If this observation can be interpreted as a critical extension of the meaning and energy in Cage’s foreword, the questioning and problematization of the hierarchical relationship between composer and performer can instead be seen as a criticism of the mode and energy purported in the Stockhausen piece. The demand for an individual creative responsibility is clearly present in all three compositions, but if Stockhausen implies a desire for unity and togetherness, a harmony constituted by simultaneous vibration, both Cage and Spahlinger oppose such a transcendent intention (force). Instead they expose a desire to reach anarchic harmony – a concept regularly used by Cage and adopted by Spahlinger.¹⁰¹ The energy, or one could say socio-political intention, in the Spahlinger piece removes it from the atmosphere of the 1960s and places it in the dynamics of postmodernism by extending the criticism of hierarchical structures outside an institutional framework and deep into individual responsibilities in creative – and social – contexts. It is inevitable to acknowledge the central position that Spahlinger – implicitly as well as explicitly – gives the concept of freedom in relation to creative activity, and as we listen to the musicians we will understand the inherent potency in those poles.

¹⁰¹ In the instruction *birds*, Spahlinger uses precisely that concept. See below.

Six musicians dissolving the Author

When deciding how to activate and “direct” *vorschläge* my first idea was to create a sound art piece that would include both the source material and its interpretation. I imagined the compositional form (text instead of musical notation, as the starting point for a musical expression) would lend itself to create a perceptible sequence of how one expressional form is transformed into another, and by doing so create an exposition of the process of interpretation. The dramaturgical consequence of such an intention would mean that the source, the notation – in this case Spahlinger’s instructions – had to be included in the final expression of the performance. Such a concept would lead to a form with two audible components: first the text, followed by music. However, when reading the foreword I distinctly saw how it corresponded to - and infused useful material into - my intention to critically investigate the relation between the theater director and the performers. Its inclusion of hierarchical questions in creative collaborations and status relations within the norms of interpretation, made me anxious to somehow find a way to incorporate not only the result of the interpretative process – instruction followed by music making – but also the critical reading of and reactions to the instructions. This would create a performance that would involve and include the complex and often invisible process of interpretation that necessarily precedes any performance. What is the musician’s understanding of and reaction to Spahlinger’s problematization of the relationship between the composer and the performer? And, how do they go about this? How do they think when turning the textual instructions into sounds on their instruments? These questions made it clear that both a reading of the textual instructions and a description of the musicians’ process to make sense of them, should be included in the performance, as an explication of the process of interpretation but also as a metaphor for the continual act of examination in which we are all continuously engaged in. As a result of this idea, the formal concept of the performance was built on the sequence: *instruction – discussion – interpretation*. The instructions would be heard, the discussion would be heard and finally the music would be heard, as distinct parts of the sound art composition. This form was applied on each separate

textual instruction creating what could be seen as movements.¹⁰²

Six musicians were invited: Anna Lindal (violin), Torbjörn Helander (viola), Eva Lindal (violin), David Stackenäs (guitar), Åsa Åkerberg (cello) and Torbjörn Svedberg (percussion). Their educational background and line of musical experience is diverse. Torbjörn Helander works for the Royal Opera Orchestra of Stockholm and therefore is not very experienced in improvised music, although he has some experience of working with contemporary music. Anna Lindal and Eva Lindal both used to work in the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra but left those positions a few years ago to work as freelance musicians in a variety of genres ranging from free improvised music to contemporary and baroque music. Åsa Åkerberg has mainly been working with contemporary chamber music, which has given her insights into new and unorthodox musical thinking/notation and she is a member of Ensemble Reserche in Freiburg. David Stackenäs has mainly been involved in free improvised music with extended techniques and instrumental preparations as reoccurring expressional tools. Torbjörn Svedberg has a background in contemporary chamber music, and extensive experience as a theater musician. Together they represent a large variety of musical knowledge. Although some of them knew each other, this was an entirely new working constellation.

Before coming to the recording studio the musicians were asked to read the foreword, but not the actual instructions. The intention behind this was primarily to infuse an awareness of Spahlinger's ideas about creative responsibility and to generate thoughts around the readiness to take an artistic stance. The decision to not present the actual instructions to the musicians beforehand was based on the idea that the interpretative process was something that should be done collectively, right from the start; I wanted them to move into the reading and understanding, together, I wanted it to be a common effort. So, the instructions were presented to them one at the time, in the studio, with the directorial request that they should read it together and discuss it up to the point where it was possible to start making music. They did not need to agree on the meaning of the text or its consequences musically, but only on the fact that, for the moment, the discussion was over and that they should start making music.

¹⁰² Of the 28 textual instructions that the composition includes, 6 were translated into Swedish and of those 4 were used in the making of the performance. The performance consequently consisted of 4 movements, and each movement included the sequence *instruction-discussion-interpretation*.

In the following, the four movements – *cicadas*, *independent variables*, *empathy* and *birds* – are presented as text; first the instruction and then there is a transcript of the discussion among the musicians (when the instruction reoccurs in the dialogue it is called Voice of Proposition). At the end of each discussion there is a link to the sound file presenting the two text parts, followed by the musical interpretation. The sound files include components that are not described in the above, but instead will be explicated later in this text.¹⁰³

cicadas

what kind of noise, almost impossible to separate from musician to musician and still very similar, could, individually independent with respect to time of performance, duration and created by many, be aimed at building a sound with meditative effect?¹⁰⁴

how can a sound like that start and end convincingly?

TORBJÖRN H

Can it be convincing and meditative at the same time?

ÅSA

Yes, why not? Though, when I think about cicadas I don't really think about anything meditative, because that can be a very strong sound.

DAVID

Well, I mean it can also be convincingly meditative, in some way.

TORBJÖRN H

Yes!

¹⁰³ In the recordings that follow below, the voice of the instruction - *Voice of proposition* - is performed in German by Mathias Spahlinger himself and when in Swedish by actor Clara Norman.

¹⁰⁴ The German word that Spahlinger uses for *sound* is *klangfleshe*, which indicates a broader, richer body of combined sounds, somewhat related to the English word *cluster*.

ANNA

But isn't it always difficult to know how things start and end convincingly. To start is always easier than to end something.

DAVID

There is one part here in the middle that I don't know if I really understand. Eeh, it says, What kind of noise ...

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

what kind of noise, almost impossible to separate from musician to musician and still very similar, could, individually independent with respect to time of performance, duration and created by many, be aimed at building a sound with meditative effect?

ANNA

Maybe it is this, the sound that he refers to, that a sound is created and not ... that one tries to create a sound together.

DAVID

Yees!

TORBJÖRN S

A sound with meditative effect.

TORBJÖRN H

What kind of noise builds a sound with meditative effect?

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

Eine klangfleshe mit meditative wirkung zu bilden.

DAVID

And that could actually be any kind of noise ...

ANNA
Yes...

DAVID
And that doesn't have to be a cicada, as if one tries to imitate a cicada that could be ...

EVA
To me it sounds very contradictory, I mean if I look at the beginning and the end of the text, and if I think about a noise with meditative effect, it just sounds contradictory ...

ANNA
But isn't everything that happens kind of very, ... like any sound that just keeps sounding, that just continues and continues...doesn't that create some kind of evenness, and that could be meditative. I mean, something meditative doesn't have to be calm and soft. The fact that it is in perpetual motion ... Isn't that what we need to accomplish, a perpetual motion. Or?

TORBJÖRN H
And how can something like that start and end convincingly?

DAVID
But, do you think that this discussion should lead to that we decide what we are going to play, or ... no.

EVA
I just feel a real urge to try something.

They all laugh, except David

DAVID

The goal for me is to, somehow ... that we should find a kind of collective... that what I play doesn't overtake in any way, I mean that I try to subordinate myself, and play something that doesn't kind of go against too much ...

EVA

Because we probably have ...

DAVID

...what the others do.

EVA

... six very different ideas about what we eventually are going to play, what kind of sound, music.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

almost impossible to separate from musician to musician and still very similar, could, individually independent with respect to time of performance, duration and created by many, ... (Auch

independent variables

each player brings forth a sound, many sounds or combinations of sounds. The latter should not bear the typical characteristics for a motive or a theme, in other words do not use e.g. tones in a common scale and in a rhythmical regard do not establish an evenly metric structure, or at the least alter this immediately in the continuing lapse, or at least avoid having it in common with the other players.

with regular or irregular recurrent insertions (each and everyone paying attention to good listening without fear of long pauses) everyone changes the sound or sounds very gradually but in regards to as many characteristics as possible, according to the principle: B is very similar to A, C is very similar to B etcetera, also N is very similar to M, but A can no longer be recognized in N.

even extreme alternatives should be investigated (for the sake of the exercise and the experience): B is similar to A, but already in C A can no longer be recognized. this version is very difficult to produce spontaneously and probably less effective the more players that are involved.

ANNA

Isn't that kind of the theme, independent variables, it says a lot already.

TORBJÖRN H

Hmm

ANNA

Independent variables means "each one by herself," the variations might happen depending on what one hears.

TORBJÖRN H

Hmm

ÅSA

In reality it's maybe just to play.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

“B is very similar to A, C is very similar to B etcetera, also N is very similar to M, but A can no longer be recognized in N.”

MUSIC Improvisation

DAVID

Shall we talk about what happened?

TORBJÖRN H

I was just thinking about how we fall into making “music,” I mean, I was thinking that, and I think I said something about it earlier, maybe in our first discussion, that I feel like I want to join in when some of us play at the same time, then you want to be with, play together, I mean you have your own voice then too, but it is so easy to fall back into some usual way of making music together instead of keeping your own voice.

ANNA

Usually we are disciplined. We are used to a lot of discipline, and it can be really nice to break with that too, to get carried away and just totally not give a damn about what he says.

They all laugh

ÅSA

What was the musicianship in this, then?

TORBJÖRN H

I wasn't really thinking about that this time.

DAVID

I think that ... what I did in this version was that I chose to play ... what I did was like a motif.

TORBJÖRN H

Yes, exactly ...

ÅSA

Yes, but as you said, a motif can consist of so many different things so if you just play one tone it's almost like a motif.

DAVID

But maybe it is ... it says: "typical characteristics for a motive or a theme"

TORBJÖRN S

I was very caught up with this slow transformation, I mean what I did was kind of like a theme but I tried to change it the next time I played it, so to speak. Slowly. If there was anything that I was concentrated on it was that: I wonder how my next phrase will change in relation to the one I just played?

ÅSA

I created transformation by maybe keeping some ingredient. Maybe keeping the ponticello but changing the note or ... something like that. But, how did you make your transformations?

ANNA

I just kind of moved the sound, a tone ... like this.

Anna plays a chord with two tones, repeatedly, in different ways, with different timbre and changing one of the two notes slightly every time.

You know, very concretely moving the grip, very simple.

TORBJÖRN H

It's a little as if one should think the most extreme case, where one small ingredient is carried on into the next insertion and when that ingredient in turn disappears then everything is gone, erased, already forgotten. A is forgotten when you get to C.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

B is similar to A, but already in C, A can no longer be recognized.

ÅSA

Exactly, maybe that was the version he played.

TORBJÖRN H

I was thinking more like small, also ...

DAVID

Shall we play?

TORBJÖRN S

Yes, let's play one more time.

EVA

Hmmm! Couldn't we try something vocal?

TORBJÖRN H

We can do that too, maybe.

ANNA

Could that be an individual choice?

TORBJÖRN S

Yes, it could be that.

EVA

It actually says vocally or instrumentally, but ...

DAVID

Well, yes, or one can do as one chooses, then.

empathy

few players, individual sounds, rarely many at a time, long to very long pauses are possible.

the first sound is brought forth with as little intention as possible (no acting or expressive self-assertion). the subsequent players try to determine from which intention, posture, state of mind, bodily tension, the sound has been brought forth by (this may be done consciously or not for the first player) and react accordingly: they search for a feeling of empathy within oneself, a way of playing that corresponds to what is heard and themselves, which means that they do not imitate but rather feel, changing and changed, at the same time each and everybody is free to select whom they react to, or if one wants to create a new beginning, which without every reaction could be interpreted as: every development is moreover an exposition.

in every sound the demand "place yourself in my situation" is concealed, which may be replied with "anything, anything but that."

during the first repetitions by way of introduction no key- or percussion instruments.

do not seek to attain dramatic processes.

ANNA

I react very negatively to this "no acting or expressive self-assertion."

EVA

Hmmm

ANNA

It kind of implicates that in some way, that musicians ...

DAVID

Oh, I see, what you mean.

ANNA

...are self-assertive in their playing.

EVA

That they kind of show off.

ANNA

Or. The fact that it has to be addressed means that it is a problem.

TORBJÖRN S

The sound is brought forth with as little intention as possible.

ÅSA

Yes?

TORBJÖRN S

For me, that's a problem.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

der erste klang wird möglichst absichtlos erzeugt

the first sound is brought forth with as little intention as possible

TORBJÖRN S

If there's no intent with what I play, I just don't play anything.

TORBJÖRN H

No!

DAVID

But intention can mean so many different things.

EVA, ÅSA
Yes!

ÅSA
But isn't it more like a wish that one should start from a feeling
or a mode, from inside?

EVA
Hmm

ÅSA
And you do something that mirrors that.

DAVID
The intuitive.

EVA
Hmm

ÅSA
And not that one plans what to play, like if I do like this I sound angry
She plays a loud and coarse tone very forcefully on the cello
That sounded very angry. I don't feel angry... so, that was kind of
stupid. But then also we should not imitate each other, like now she
plays a glissando, so I'll do that too. Instead try to understand the
emotion Anna had when she played what she played.

TORBJÖRN H
Yes, exactly, that's how it is.

ÅSA
And do, something.

EVA
That is empathy.

ÅSA
Respond more to the person than to the sound.

TORBJÖRN H
Exactly.

ÅSA
Or have I ...

TORBJÖRN S
No no, that is good.

EVA
You know, it's just not possible to kind of remove yourself when playing. Then that becomes an intention, that it should sound kind of dead or numb.

DAVID
Hmm

ÅSA
You mean that it becomes like acting?

ANNA
He actually contradicts himself here, one thing, in the text, if it's okay that I bring it up. He says that one should try to sense ...

VOICE OF PROPOSITION
"...the subsequent players try to determine from which intention, posture, state of mind, bodily tension, the sound has been brought forth by (this may be done consciously or not for the

first player) and react accordingly: they search for a feeling of sympathy within oneself...”

ANNA

“ this may be consciously” I mean, if it is conscious there is an intention, right?

DAVID

Maybe it’s formulated like that just so that we should react to it.

EVA

The text is maybe written just to provoke us. But listen, hallo, we don’t go along with this!!

TORBJÖRN S

I think about this “in every sound.”

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

in every sound the demand “place yourself in my situation” is concealed, which may be replied with “anything, anything but that.”

TORBJÖRN S

I should take in what you do, but I can also answer with something totally different. Or?

EVA

Hmmm

DAVID

It’s just like when we talk, now, I mean you can choose if you agree with me or if you think something contradictory.

EVA

But isn't it in this text that Spahlinger really tries to get this across, what he talks about in the foreword, that the composer is redundant?

ÅSA

He wants to steer and control quite a lot anyway.

EVA

Yes, but we are actually coming to the conclusion that no, we won't subordinate ourselves to this.

TORBJÖRN H

I feel a bit restricted with this "no acting, as little intention as possible or expressive self-assertion and no dramatic processes."

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

"no dramatic processes."

TORBJÖRN H

Without dramatic processes I would say one can hardly... is there music without dramatic processes?

ANNA

Yes.

DAVID

Hmm.

ANNA

Yes, I do believe so.

TORBJÖRN H

Okay, well of course, but then it's more like what we did before, more like a meditative sound scape.

DAVID

There is music that has other functions. Like in religious ...

TORBJÖRN H

Yes, tension and release in music, even if ever so little it ... and then the form, to react on the previous, it becomes a dramatic process, though still quite undramatic.

EVA

Hmm.

ÅSA

Yes, that is a process, yes.

TORBJÖRN H

I think that, eeh, to not seek any dramatic processes is the same as this non-intention, that I myself should not have any goal with what I create, I should not have a picture or idea where we are headed. It can maybe become quite expressive, large gestures anyway, but just that I should not plan ahead where we are going but that it is up to our collective unconscious.

EVA

It might turn out like this discussion, that's what will happen in the answers or interruptions, or whatever it will become.

ANNA

Place yourself in my situation.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

“they search for a feeling of empathy within oneself, a way of playing that corresponds to what is heard and themselves, which means that they do not imitate but rather feel, changing and changed, changing and changed.”

birds

each voice, vocal or instrumental, expresses itself characteristically as stereotype and/or has at one's disposal a limited supply of alternatives.

which characteristics must a statement of such nature have in order for the combined effect of the voices to reach "anarchic harmony," a result that is unsusceptible to chosen points of insertion, repetitions, superimpositions and in which no individual voice nevertheless is extinct.

it is appropriate to ask "natur um rat" (hölderlin): is such a free and open result possible without repetitions? Can, should, is art allowed to thematize/obtain a pre-stabilized harmony?

ANNA

I don't think that is so difficult. That we kind of, each one of us, has a strong individual voice but at the same time merge into a harmony and still everyone clearly can be heard. Is that it?

EVA

Hmmm

TORBJÖRN H

I just have to ask, this natur um rat...

ANNA

Ask nature for advice.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

Es ist schön und richtig wie Hölderlin sagt "natur um rat so fragen."

DAVID

But if one thinks about the question that he asks “is such a free and open result possible without repetitions?”

ANNA, DAVID

Yes/Yes?

TORBJÖRN S

I think that is what we should investigate.

EVA

Yes, well, I am not so sure about that.

TORBJÖRN H

Repetitions of what?

ANNA

That one repeats oneself.

TORBJÖRN H

But that is what we should do, right.

They all laugh

DAVID

But he maybe means the outcome ...

ANNA

An extended, deepening question.

TORBJÖRN H

Yes, that's it.

DAVID

... in the outcome the result is, does maybe not become repetitive, in an anarchic piece. I also think about this “expresses itself characteristically as stereotype,” if that means ...

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

each voice, vocal or instrumental, expresses itself characteristically as stereotype and/or have at one’s disposal a limited supply of alternatives

DAVID

... if that means that it kind of should represent the traditional idiom of the instrument, or if it only means that this is what I choose to do. How do you interpret that?

EVA, ANNA

Hmm

TORBJÖRN H

Isn’t it like a bird for example that makes almost the same sound all the time, with a slight variation, it’s almost stereotypical.

DAVID

Okay, it is only that ...

ANNA

Not the stereotypical way of playing the instrument.

DAVID

Not like instrumental.

TORBJÖRN S

No, I don’t know, I think more like you maybe decide a phrase that you decide to stick to...

TORBJÖRN H

But ...

TORBJÖRN S

... and that you in some way, with very slight variations.

ANNA, EVA, TORBJÖRN H

Hmm, yes

ÅSA

Should we continuously try to imitate some bird?

TORBJÖRN H

Maybe it doesn't have to be birds specifically, that is just some kind of ...

ANNA

Picture.

TORBJÖRN H

Picture, yes.

ANNA

This is what birds do.

TORBJÖRN H

Yes

DAVID

But it is a bit risky with titles like that, you immediately get a strong picture of or you think birds, okay, twittering you know.

TORBJÖRN S

What I read into this instruction is about repetition, limited number of variations, repetition, if there is something in repetition that can become musical, or create some kind of value for us.

ANNA

Yes

TORBJÖRN H

You know, it is left out ... it says nothing about how we react to each other, now.

ANNA

No, “unsusceptible to chosen points of insertion” that must mean ...

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

Ein resultat das unemphenglich ist ...

ANNA

... that must mean that whenever you play it becomes a unique voice that repeats itself.

EVA

Hmm

ANNA

The fact that you choose, that you limit yourself to some kind of phrase with very small variations it becomes unsusceptible to the surrounding, in other words it doesn't matter when you play it.

TORBJÖRN H

All these variations maybe adjust themselves from what we hear, from each other because we want to merge into a harmony.

DAVID

Absolutely.

TORBJÖRN H

And then it says anarchic, or anarchistic

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

anarciches harmoni

TORBJÖRN S

Anarchic

EVA

Yes, okay ...

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

which characteristics must a statement of such nature have in order for the combined effect of the voices to reach “anarchic harmony,” a result that is unsusceptible to chosen points of insertion, repetitions, superimpositions and in which no individual voice nevertheless is extinct.

TORBJÖRN H

But in a way that indicates that it’s supposed to occur by itself, because if it is anarchic we shouldn’t be influenced by each other, you should be totally stubborn, and stick to your stereotype.

EVA

This then can’t become a dialogue in the same way as ...

TORBJÖRN H

No it’s the opposite ...

EVA

... the last experiment.

TORBJÖRN H

... but the interesting thing here is if we should try to react to each other, if we should try to create this harmony or if we should counteract ...

ANNA

He asks which characteristics this statement must have. So, it cannot go on for like thirty seconds, that is too long, because if everybody, at the same time, made a statement that was thirty seconds long then would not each voice, the individual voice, be extinct, isn't that so?

DAVID

Why would a voice be extinct if you play for a very long time?

ANNA

Isn't there, no I mean isn't there a, I mean if one chooses a statement, let's say it's a statement, if you make a very long statement, and everybody else makes that too then it would be impossible, there is kind of a time limit for what you can perceive as a statement.

DAVID

Okay

ANNA

Or?

TORBJÖRN S

It maybe ...

ANNA

Just like when you talk, if I would just keep on talking and everybody else talks at the same time then maybe, if we just utter three words each, then maybe we would be able to hear all the words.

DAVID

But at the same time, maybe a harmony can occur in that, in that mess of words.

ANNA

But then it's just a mess and the individual voice is extinct.

DAVID

I am not so sure, maybe

ANNA

It's just something that I presume, that it's something concise, something concise that is necessary.

TORBJÖRN H

Maybe there can't be huge differences in dynamics, maybe, then we'll also ...

EVA

Yes, then your voice will be extinct.

DAVID

Well, yes, maybe then, for me it makes sense, then the individual is extinct.

TORBJÖRN S

I just think we need to listen to each other ...

ANNA
Once again

TORBJÖRN S
... damned, we can't get around that ...

They all laugh

DAVID
We can't get through this.

TORBJÖRN S
... because otherwise there is no reason to be here, if one
doesn't relate to the others.

EVA
But don't you think that you do that, kind of intuitively, as a
musician, you can't really turn that thing off, this listening to
everything around you, even if you think "oh, here I am and I
want to sound like this," you are so incredibly conscious about ...

DAVID
This is about claiming your voice but not ... you hear what's
going on around you, so in that sense I can't avoid it anyhow, to
take it in, on some level you get affected whatever.

EVA
Yes!

TORBJÖRN H
And this is actually totally contradictory to the last one, in that
we really should relate to our inner movements and now we
should stick to our own ...

ANNA

And still be included in the harmony.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION

it is appropriate to ask “natur um rat” (hölderlin): is such a free and open result possible without repetitions? Can, should, is art allowed to thematize/obtain a pre-stabilized harmony?

ANNA

Hmm

TORBJÖRN S

Right there, the image of the bird fits in quite well because they have their unique sound but it's when put together with all the other birds, then it's kind of like how suddenly the singing of birds occur.

TORBJÖRN H

Yes, I think it's interesting if we should react or if one should try to counteract this, to adjust in order to fit in or if one should be stubborn, stern.

ÅSA

But can't we be in variation, I mean it says here “have at one's disposal a limited supply of alternatives,” maybe one can ...

TORBJÖRN S

Yes, right, what does that mean, limited, really, we should also be able to discuss that.

ÅSA

Is that limited to one, then?

EVA
Or limited to twenty.

TORBJÖRN S
Though, still limited.

EVA
Yes

TORBJÖRN H
Okay, but I just wonder, should we decide that you, or, or that you actually think that you actually slowly are affected by what is happening. Or, what do you think?

ANNA
Should we decide that or should we just see what happens ...

DAVID
We can keep it open, no?

EVA
Yeah, let it happen.

ANNA
Somebody maybe chooses to stay, to stick.

TORBJÖRN H
Yes, then they will see how we are as persons, too.

VOICE OF PROPOSITION
ist ein so freie ...

Layers of energy

As a slight contradiction to the observation made earlier, that in the making of the performance of *vorschlage* the role of the director was moved to the background, I would like to start untangling the different layers of energy that were at work by examining my own incentive to create this performance in the first place. To review that aspect certainly ties into the intention to illuminate my thinking and practice as director, but in a way that goes beyond the idea that the directorial impact is to be found in the building and/or treatment of conceptualization. The reason for this is that my position as an initiator corresponds to the position of the composer, a status that is seriously questioned by the material. This questioning of the position of the composer/director as an uncontested ruler carries, in my opinion, the desirable opportunity to remove the director away from having a direct influence on the forming of the expression (even more so than in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* where that only happened in specific parts). In *vorschlage*, very little could be changed, no intervention could be made. The influence of my directorial judgment was eliminated and the possibility of interfering was confined to the editing process, i.e. putting the different parts together. As a director, why would I view this as desirable? That question should be included and asked in regards to all three of the performances we are looking at, since all of them, in various ways, are constructed so that the expressive movements evade the influence of the director.

It is the inconceivable possibilities of the unpredictable that are desirable, and hence constitute the main reason for enabling its occurrence within the expressive form. Embedded in the unpredictable are energies and openings that in different ways effect the directorial position. The most obvious is that the unpredictable presents solutions and alternatives beyond the limits of my own imagination. Something that has not occurred in me before, expressive forms that I have not been able to imagine, transpire, and the restraints of my capacity are loosened. However, what is desirable in that does not (only) have to do with the sense of tedium one can meet in the face of one's own decisions but rather that it harbors an opening towards inclusion: As the expressive movements emerge anew it enables me to feel more like I am participating in the expressive progression. My curiosity around what can happen, and the differences that can

emerge, makes me feel more engaged (happy, worried, surprised) and I move along with a sense, even though not concretely contributing, that I participate in the unfolding of the event. This is what I call *directing as participation*.¹⁰⁵

The collaborative situation in *vorschläge* consists of a number of elements and factors that steer the creative activities in ways that are more or less contradictory, thus creating tensions. A directorial stance characterized by observation and listening rather than infusing suggestions does not eliminate an influence but instead exerts demands of a formal kind (for example, the directorial instruction to the musicians to discuss the instructions). The performers are influenced by, on some level dependent on, the director's presence since it constitutes the structural foundation for what they are doing. In other words, the lack of influence on the expressive outcome does not equal a non-presence, just like the invitation in the foreword to neglect the instructions formulated by the composer does not eliminate his influence. They both represent forces within the creative activity and most obviously are geared towards producing an outcome of an expressive kind. The ensemble does *not* contest this since all the energies move towards making – something – whatever we want to call it. Here the tensions, the questionings and provocations, are all dependent on each other and circumscribed by the parameters of the situation. However, the elimination of any of these – the composition, the director, the musicians - would not eliminate the problem(atization) that the composition, at its core, intends to highlight but rather creates a shift, a change of “stage.” How is that? Well, the composition is not an invention in a socio-metric sense. Sociometry as phenomena is always present in groups of humans (and animals) and the situation that ensues from engaging in the composition could be said to “just” move the dynamics of elements and energies that already prevail outside the performative event (the realm of the composition), into a mold with an artistic format – a composition. To create such concentrated and artistically aimed representations of sociometric patterns is one strain in the work of Spahlinger. A more recent, as well as a more contested example than *vorschläge*, is his large orchestral composition *dobbelt bejaht*, which was presented at the Donaueschinger Musiktage in Germany

¹⁰⁵ From this point it is important to expand the reasoning into how the concept *directing as participation* - and the dynamic that it feeds from - relates to a dramaturgical thinking, beyond the personal, which then allows for converting it to an esthetic of perception. This is extrapolated on in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*.

in 2009. In this composition each musician in the orchestra is responsible for making individual choices during the course of the performance. Through the specific demands that the composition entails, and Spahlinger's theorization around it, the question of hierarchy is merged with a more explicit political discussion by placing it in relation to concepts like freedom, responsibility and "means of production," all of which connect to a Marxist critical apparatus. In his description of this composition and the rendition of the performance, as well as of the critical discussion that followed, Jef Chippewa writes about how Spahlinger's ideas "converge in a particularly effective constellation for their exploration and presentation" (Chippewa 2012, 21), thus indicating the connection to earlier work like *vorschläge*. In his opening section Chippewa formulates the core problem that ensued from the production of *dobbelt bejaht*: "The work polarized composers, performers and public alike, and polemic discussions ensued, not because of the four-hour duration of the work, not because of concerns about the effectiveness or musical interest of the concepts explored in the work's 24 individual pieces, not because of the 'open form' of the individual pieces, not even because the piece was to be performed without a conductor. The central point of contention in the discussions was in fact about whether the orchestral musician can be, wants to be, or even should be 'liberated,' an issue which arose from Spahlinger's use of the term *entfremdete Arbeit* [alienated labor], a concept elucidated by Marx explaining the division of labor in industrialized society, in relation to the structure of the orchestra" (Chippewa 2012, 21). The hierarchical situation and the cultural/historical connotations that the symphony orchestra as a format for collective music making are bound by, differ quite a bit from the chamber music format that the performance of *vorschläge* represents. However, the components and challenges are very much the same, seen from the perspective of the performer. The composition presents a problem that has to be solved in order for the composition to come into being: "Each individual piece can be considered a musical problem which the musicians are confronted with and examine, scrutinize and try to resolve as they play the piece, with the expectation that they will find a solution that is appropriate in conceptual, musical and socio-political terms to the nature of the problem" (Chippewa 2012, 23). The readiness to take on this task to make music from an instruction that needs to be "converted" through an individual decision is what *dobbelt bejaht* –

as well as *Vorshläge* – are attempting to challenge. The question is then, is this met with a sense of freedom or with a sense of fear? In the framework of the symphony orchestra and its “existing protocol of sociopolitical organization,” Spahlinger implicitly makes the assumption that the individual musician carries a double picture of him/her self; partly as an autonomous creative individual and partly as a worker who is the means to the production of an object that does not belong to him or her and which he/she has no role in designing (Chippewa 2012, 24). It is the embracing of this latter part of the self-image that becomes an obstacle when facing the task to make individual decisions. However, it would be a mistake to tie this field of friction – the creator vs. the worker – to something that solely operates on an individual level. Instead it is deeply rooted in the history of hierarchy and power structures that have prevailed, and still do, in institutional culture production. In the field of music, and most clearly so in the framework of a symphony orchestra, the hierarchical construct places the composer at the top, the musician at the bottom and the conductor in between. In his composition *dobbelt bejaht* Spahlinger omits the conductor: the piece, large and complex as it is, should be performed without a conductor. As a consequence, the composition problematizes the individual capacity *and* the question of collaboration, hence does not really question the composer and the composition. In *vorschläge* on the other hand, it is the status and influence of the composer that is questioned and the poles of tension are constituted by the instruction, given by the composer, and the performer. What Spahlinger sets in motion, or you could say what he creates a platform for, in both these compositions, is a radical questioning of prevailing hierarchical structures in collaborative creation and a plea for creative emancipation. But if *dobbelt bejaht* can be said to present solely musical problems to be solved, the concept of the performance of *vorschläge* adds another level to that challenge by demanding the musicians to engage in a reflective discussion aimed at solving not only musical “problems” but also problems of hierarchy. From a directorial point of view this difference is of crucial importance: If Spahlinger created *dobbelt bejaht* in order to make the esthetic implications of a specific means of production audible through the interpretation of the *music*, in *vorschläge* it is not the music but the *discussions* between the musicians that make the socio-hierarchical implications of a specific means of production perceptible.

The playing out

How did these different layers of energy play out when making the performance of *vorschläge*? Were the musicians fearful of the creative freedom given to them? Were they hesitant to take responsibility for their creative decisions? How did the collaboration evolve? And, how can we detect the immanent energy in the different movements of expression? Clearly, when listening to the performance we understand that some of the areas of tension exposed in the above reasoning reverberate more than others, and some just do not seem to exist at all. Most likely this is due to the fact that the musicians are experienced in making music that depends on their ability to carry out individual esthetic choices, for example related to “the freedom of interpretation and decision-making responsibility that we have long come to expect from a string quartet performance,” but also from their experience of musical formats like different idioms of improvised music (Chippewa 2012, 23). Consequently, the fear of making individual creative musical decisions was not an issue. Instead the overall energy in the ensemble can be exemplified by the violinist Eva saying “I just feel a real urge to try something,” or by the guitarist David who at one point cuts the discussion short by saying “Shall we play?” This, on the other hand, can be interpreted as an anxiousness to move beyond the discussions, beyond the demands of reflection and as a sign of being uncomfortable with the talking, hence opening up for the question if the playing of music and the readiness to engage in talking were two areas that were sensed as offering different levels of freedom and responsibility? Certainly all members of the ensemble were far more fluent making music than talking about the process of making it, but their willingness to discuss the instructions was there from the start even though, as we can hear, some of the musicians were more engaged in certain discussions and some in others.¹⁰⁶ A reoccurring figure in the exchange, that contradicts the notion that the musicians wanted to move ahead and “just play,” is their turning back to the instructions and their scrutiny of the details, as they try to find an understanding of the textual interplay between a sometimes sharp and instructive tone, and a tone of poetic

¹⁰⁶ The violin player Anna commented after the work with the *performance that, oddly enough, after years as concert master in symphony orchestras as well as a member of many different musical ensembles, she had never really talked about what she does and how she thinks when she plays her instrument, when she improvises.*

vagueness. This concern to understand and their sense of being responsible for what is expressed, is exemplified by the percussion player Torbjörn Svedberg's reaction to one of the instructions that demands that the sound is brought forward "with as little intention as possible" (*empathy*) saying: "For me that's a problem. If there's no intent with what I play, I just don't play anything." Such a statement indicates the willingness, almost a need, to obtain the authorship of the expression, and this was an attitude that signified the overall mode in the ensemble during the work. On the one hand, the thoroughness of such an attitude can be traced back to a level of tactility and the basic demands laid upon the musician, encountering *any* composition, that in order to produce a sound from the score the reading has to be precise. But in the context of *vorschläge*, and certainly enhanced by the problematization offered in the foreword, it should be understood as a force aimed to counteract the influence of the composer. Though not explicitly formulated, the general sense was that the ensemble came together as one authority against the authority of the composer. We hear almost no contentions within the ensemble, instead the only heated outburst was directed towards the composer when the cello player Åsa Åkerberg says that "He [the composer] wants to steer and control quite a lot anyway." and Eva Lindal continues by saying "Yes, but we are actually coming to the conclusion that no, we won't subordinate ourselves to this." Without negotiating with the other musicians Eva uses the pronoun *we*, indicating that she has a sense that they, the ensemble, are united (against the composer). We can conclude that the intent of the composition to instigate opposition against its position as an all mighty ruler has successfully played out.

Immanence in dialogue, immanence in music making

In search for what could be described as an immanent creative process in the making of *vorschläge*, we have to look at it as occurring on two levels, with different dynamics going on within the collective creation: the level of the movements in the discussions and the level of the music making. Is it really necessary to separate them? Yes, and no. As outlined previously an immanent energy within a collective creative situation is signified by how the creative expression is set in motion through the initiative and judgment of the individual performers involved,

and this in turn is influenced by the stimuli that is perceived by each performer. I also suggested that the immanent process is immanent because the development of the collective expression is not decided or rehearsed, it emanates from within the collective process as a sequence that involves impulse, reaction, response. From this it is possible to conclude that if we regard the discussions, preceding the music making in *vorschläge*, as a creative expression, no such separation is needed. On the other hand, if we want to chisel out anything of interest in regards to creative interaction, it is fruitful to look at the two levels as representing immanent creative processes of different nature and with different components.

Beyond the fact that the ensemble comes together because they are asked to do so, the instructions formulated by the composer exert a significant transcendent force in the evolvement of the discussions. The observation made earlier that the musicians repeatedly refer to the instruction text as a kind of compass, can also be seen as a need to gain impetus from a source outside the movements within the ensemble, i.e. an input of a transcendent character. The access to a fluent verbal expression (practice/habit/flow) is not obvious but what might be heard as hesitation or lack of creative impulses can also be heard as spaces of thinking and listening. In those spaces the immanent process moves, yet in a less expressive way. As a sign, or one could say as an expressive outcome, the guttural sounds made by the performers become a part of the talking-thinking weave. These sounds can be seen as spurts of energy inserted to feed the immanent movement, perhaps as signs confirming the *we*-mode and a wish for commonality. In the performance they are placed as introductions to each movement, pulled out and isolated from the rest of the dialog. To look at the discussions between the musicians through the concept of an immanent creative process is, as we can see, a somewhat strained venture. The dynamic is less about collective building of an expression and more about collective understanding, less about collaboration and more about participating in the emergence of a sociometric pattern with as few conflicts as possible. In that process, it is obvious that the members of the ensemble feel a high level of concern for the idea that the discussion is a joint effort towards making something together, and in that effort they avoid conflicts, choosing not to nourish discrepancies in their understanding of the instructions. It is possible to detect a resemblance between this dynamic (listening, rhythm) and the one they use in the next step, the music making.

The music that is created is free improvisations in a non-idiomatic mode. Or rather, that is how musicologists refer to it, since it does not use structures established in idioms where improvisation is a major part, as for example in different kinds of folk music or jazz. However, there is an unspoken but shared understanding within the ensemble as to which musical idiom the improvisations belong to. This understanding derives partly from formulations and concepts given by Spahlinger in the instructions – like the production of *sound structures* (rather than tones or keys), *superimpositions*, no *common scales*, no *evenly metric structure*, *extreme alternatives* – all markers of an esthetics with roots in late modernism (and early post-modernism) where tonality is in flux, sound structures replace tonal structures and evenly metric structures are dissolved through the use of multilayered rhythmic formations. So, one could say that Spahlinger guides the musicians into a specific musical language. But this can only happen if there is some kind of pre-knowledge and experience from playing and listening to a wide variety of contemporary music. The unfolding of the immanent creative process must therefore be seen in light of this idiomatic delineation and understanding: its energy and character is influenced and shaped by a tacit knowledge of musical idioms. Nevertheless, in the actual music making the evolvment of the expression does not grow from a conceptual agreement preceding the present moment of the improvisation. Rather, the collectively created music – emerging as a sequence of: activity, listening, adjustment/judgment, activity – is to a large degree steered by listening. This is also acknowledged by the members and commented on by the percussion player Torbjörn Svedberg: “I just think we need to listen to each other because otherwise there is no reason to be here, if one doesn’t relate to the others.” And the violinist Eva Lindal answering: “But don’t you think that you do that, kind of intuitively, as a musician, you can’t really turn that thing off, you listen to everything around you, even if you think ‘oh, here I am and I want to sound like this’, you are so incredibly conscious about.” Through the interpretive sequence – reading and scrutinizing the instruction, weighing the dynamics and characteristics of the expressive activity, listening and adjusting – there is a high level of discipline, and this notion of carefulness and precision is interesting to acknowledge (actually in relation to all three performances) as it is the exact opposite of

the popular perception of how art making based on chance, indeterminacy and improvisation, is made. Petr Kotik comments on this in relation to some compositions by Cage when he says that it is “the discipline, the exactness, the precision, the focus, the concentration” that is needed, because without that “the application of chance turns the music into nonsense” (Kotik 1993, 25–6). In defining the characteristics of the mode in which the immanent creative process is happening in the musical improvisations in *vorschläge*, we slowly see that there are a number of different aspects that rule how it unfolds, ranging from the transcendent force of the instructions, through the idiomatic mode implicitly understood and applied by the performers, and the discipline inherent in the musical practice (education, experience) of the musicians. All this put together makes for an expressive outcome that differs in temperament from the immanent creative processes produced in *John and the Mushrooms* and also in *Ryoanji – A Meeting*. The individual expressions are less disparate, contradictions less apparent, the friction between competing expressive qualities less harsh. The combined expression does not generate a need for the listener/audience to choose one perspective in the process of perception, or rather the need to dismiss certain expressive elements, in the same way that the multilayered structures of the other two performances demanded. There is a consolidation happening regardless of which type of investment the audience/listener applies. This is partly a result of the expressive material – that it is musical sounds and not spoken language or body movements – but also because the improvisation ensues from one and the same primary material, the same instruction. The interesting – and important – explication of that observation is that the expression finds its consolidation not only depending on the nature of the primary material but on the nature of the consistency of the expressive parts.

To move along

Initially the incentive to create a performance based on Spahlinger’s composition came from a curiosity to investigate the question of interpretation and the type of thinking and creative effort a musician must engage in when transforming a pure text instruction to musical sound. But my understanding of the composition

changed as the performance took form – actually underwent a shift that goes beyond the notion of “a deepened understanding” – and therefore it is possible to say that the directorial position was moved by an immanent energy, impossible not to follow. The dynamics that were conjured up by the exposition of the material could not be ignored or overrun, instead the directorial gaze had to change. Conclusively, the performance of *vorschläge* is, just like the other two, firmly grounded in its own concrete circumstances, limitations and problems, and I can only speculate that this description will find its place and reverberate interestingly when placed next to the critical exploration and dramaturgical reasoning offered in the essays that surround it.



The performance of *vorschläge* as staged at Tensta konsthall

INTERVIEW 7

In dialogue with The Institute for Unpredictable Processes

IUP: I sense that there is rich ground to cover in order to understand the choices you have made regarding deciding to not decide. How would you describe, from a more personal point of view, the tension of being in the contradictory position of initiator and director at the same time restricted from using your own judgment to shape the end result. I have reservations about this idea of the personal imprint being reduced more by certain esthetic structures and less by others. I'm sure you've heard people say that one can always hear in Cage's music that he is the composer, even though he placed a lot of the expressional responsibility into the hands of the performers.

JP: I don't see my choice to work within more or less unpredictable forms as a way to avoid taking responsibility for the esthetic expression. That was definitely not the case for Cage either. The way I see it, it's actually the opposite. But it has taken me awhile to understand why I place myself, and my art practice, in those circumstances. And without saying too much, I think the reasoning behind the choices I have made is akin to Cage's. In my early years as a musician I was deeply involved in improvised music and as a consequence of engaging in free improvisation came the challenge to stay in the midst of the uncontrollable. The music demanded that I took responsibility for something I sometimes thought was bad. I remember how it ached inside, and for a long time I couldn't make sense of why I had chosen to express myself through a form that so obviously provoked my tendency to keep things in order and my desire to create balance.

IUP: What do you mean by bad? In what sense, in relation to what?

JP: As I remember it, what I today refer to as bad was a lack of communication within the ensemble, with the musicians I played with.

IUP: So, it doesn't refer to specific esthetic qualities?

JP: No, I think it carries another meaning, exposing that there are reasons behind my artistic choices that are clearly visible, and others that are less clear, more sensed than understood. To a certain extent it points to an intuitive pull towards placing myself in creative situations that provoke a desire for balance

and control, and towards what now has become a conscious esthetic choice that is sensed – by myself – as problematic and as such invokes a reflective energy, both in the moment of creation and in the moment of perception.

IUP: I don't fully understand. I hear a change in the temporal perspective. You said "become a conscious esthetic choice." What is the progression here?

JP: A deeper understanding of why I placed myself within a creative situation like that has come to me in later years, through reflections on the specifics of such a creative collaboration, but also through encountering works and ideas by other artists. That has taken some time. As a young musician, music making was an outlet for free expression and a possibility to accommodate my not uncommon desire to not be categorized. Even if the collaborative creative situation caused a feeling of vulnerability and provoked my fear of dependency as well as my urge for control – tendencies I see as part of my personal burden – the sense of expressive freedom combined with the hidden possibilities in the indeterminate process, pulled me into it. Though, I am prone to think that placing the provocative aspect in the background is misleading. Instead, since my involvement with free improvised music, and my commitment to the form was long and extensive, I suggest that the provocative aspect – obvious dependency, lack of control – can be interpreted as an urge to become acceptant of something I experienced as disorder, as well as an intuitive way to overcome these personal shortcomings.

IUP: Now you're talking about an inward movement, that the reasons to do what you did were personal, almost psychodynamic. But mentioning the aspect of perception, as you did earlier, indicates an awareness of its affect. There must be a process going on here, an analytical attempt? Is it possible to disentangle these two focuses?

JP: Yes, I would say that one is going inwards, pointing to my own needs and inducements and another, more related to the theory of affect, pointing to the aspiration to create art that contributes not only to esthetic multitude but to esthetic unpredictability and imbalance: as a counter weight to the ordering tendency of esthetic and political power. To think like this or make an analytical attempt, as you called it, should be seen as an addition to the practice of art making, with the intention to move beyond a narcissistic realm.

IUP: That is where I want to go with my next question, towards the aspect of intent. What you have been talking about so far, is a creative situation where you performed, but you position yourself differently in your practice today. You're on the outside, facilitating, directing, and in that capacity you often set in motion structures and material that forces you into a position that resembles the vulnerability you experienced when making improvised music. Why do you instigate these kinds of processes now, in a larger theatrical context?

JP: First, it's absolutely crucial to understand that what I earlier sometimes experienced as vulnerable situations when being in the unpredictable and uncontrollable, has changed. Now, if I find myself inside a creative situation that is esthetically predictable, even as an audience member, I feel left out. I connect this crucial turn-around to an experience I had that at the time I couldn't really understand. Right in the middle of a working process at the theater and surrounded by a lot of people, a situation I sincerely liked, I could feel really dark, almost depressed. And I started to wonder if there was something in the hierarchical situation, with myself as leader and as such, positioned outside and disconnected from the course of the performance, its execution and rhythmical progression, that was the cause of this sorrow. Or was I just tired of my own voice and distrustful of my ideas and decisions? These feelings and thoughts came, as I remember it, from the experience of directing plays of a more conventional character where a set script was to be interpreted and staged and the work with my collaborators was aimed at shaping a fixed expression. In that situation, I didn't feel a part of things. Obviously, I was involved in the discussions about different creative decisions, but not in the collaborative expression emerging in the present moment. When I look back I see this experience of outsideness as a catalyst that inspired me to work the way I do. To create concepts for collective creations with an immanent energy at the core, is a way to deduct the predictability of my own esthetic choices, and a means to create participation through a simultaneous and shared discovery.

IUP: It sounds like you have come full circle, ending up where you started, but now supplemented with a layer of esthetic criticism. I am interested in what this sequence, or circle of development, actually represents, and why you set it in motion? We hopefully have time to get back to that. Though, I would like you to say more about why an immanent process is of such importance to you?

JP: Facilitating immanent creative processes is to instigate movements of variation and to participate in variation is to accept one's connectedness and dependency. The vibration of variation thus constitutes the substrate in the search for the roots of my esthetic stance, and it exposes the fragility of dependency. When in variation there is a possibility to move beyond the predictable self. Or: If the self, and its emotional conditions, is experienced as limited, the immanent process is a way to disconnect the restrained personal from the outcome of the expressive whole. Cage says: "I wanted my work to be free of my own likes and dislikes, because I think music should be free of the feelings and ideas of the composer" (Kostelanetz 1987, 65). The emotional experience is then relocated; from the moment of creation to the moment of perception.

IUP: Relocated for the artist, that is.

JP: Yes, of course. And that relocation holds a possibility to experience the unfamiliar and be surprised. To initiate immanent creative processes is to create situations where I don't know what is going to happen. Or, you could say, that the hidden possibilities of immanent processes equal the emergence of something never before experienced.

IUP: So, as I understand it, the shared discovery is the moment when the initiator, the composer in the case of Cage, and the audience come together in the listening. But your use of the word participation seems like a stretch if it is describing an audience member taking part in a creative act, or even you as the director. What kind of participation is that, specifically, beyond participating in the event, you know buying my ticket, sitting in the audience, thinking, feeling, being bored?

JP: In the case of the performances we are talking about, the performer does not know beforehand what to express or how to shape it, neither does he or she know what the others in the ensemble are going to do: the unfolding of the expressive form is happening together with the audience, during shared time. Together they participate in experiencing something new emerging. The dynamic of this experience is of course different if you sit behind the piano or in the audience, but I use it as a description of a shared present moment. I don't need to talk more about the aspect of participation, really. We did that, in relation to Rancière's book a few weeks ago, and it is a very interesting aspect when discussing dramaturgical questions, but in order to get further we

need to look at participation *in what*? If we don't discuss participation based on an analysis of dramaturgical structures, the differentiation of the concept of participation will not happen.

IUP: And you mean that such a discussion should evolve around the elimination of narratives, indeterminacy and immanent creative processes?

JP: That is not what I am saying. Those perspectives, or parameters, are obviously not the only entry into discussing this topic. It has constructively been approached for a long time and from many different angles in performance theory. Though, those aspects that you mention are highly active and in the foreground of what I do.

IUP: It is obviously not difficult to see the reason for your immediate incorporation of the term and concept of variation when talking about an immanent creative process. It points very concretely to the process of constant change, and it is a term Deleuze uses. In *One less Manifesto* he says that the instigation of continuous variation is a way to eliminate representation and thus to eliminate the power of theatrical signs. How do you connect to and develop that in relation to your objectives?

JP: In order to understand variation in relation to the thinking of Deleuze it is probably necessary to connect it to his thinking about difference, when he says that difference is behind everything but behind difference there is nothing. Though, relating the movement of variation to my own objectives I choose to see that what is highly charged is its direct opposition to fixed definitions. To be in variation is to reject one single truth. Or: Variation opposes fixed definitions. As I suggested earlier, the choice of involving myself in immanent processes could be seen as my feisty reaction to finding myself in a world of expressions where specific ideas are purported as true. My reaction to the oppressiveness of fixed definitions can be seen both as a part of defining an esthetic of my own, in my younger years, but maybe more interesting is to view it, especially as it has prevailed, as an artistic opposition to generalizations. Variation as a counterforce to generalizations - the ones that repress me as well as the ones I use to repress others - is placed in a theatrical context by Deleuze when he says "might not continuous variation be just such an amplitude that always overflows, by excess or lack, the representative threshold of majority measure? Might not continuous variation be the minority becoming of everybody in contrast to the majority

rule of Nobody. Might not theater, thus, discover a sufficiently modest, but nevertheless, effective function?" (Murray 1997, 253).

IUP: So, variation is a process of continuous change, the rejection of fixed definitions. But that is not something that you instigate. Is that presumptuous to say? Isn't it a choice of stance, a chosen outlook?

JP: Obviously, setting in motion immanent creative processes can, even in the context of a theater performance, be seen as a continuation of a process already in motion. Such a view dissolves the object; no beginning, no middle, no end can be experienced. Variation as artistic intention thus creates a blurring of the distinctions between art and life, and a temporal connection between the messy and complex process of my inner life and the activities that happen to happen in the theater, occur. The emotionality that is laid bare in my observations from earlier experiences, indicate an unformulated inclination towards this dissolving of boundaries. But turning back to Deleuze I find, which is maybe the most interesting and demanding dynamic of variation, that from a perceptual point of view it is inevitably related to a consciousness about difference, to all differences around us. He says that it "is in difference that movement is produced as an 'effect', that phenomena flash their meaning like signs. The intense world of differences, in which we find reason behind qualities and the being of sensible, is precisely the object of a superior empiricism. This empiricism teaches us a strange 'reason', that of the multiple, chaos and difference – nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies. It is always differences which resemble one another, which are analogous, opposed or identical: difference is behind everything, but behind difference is nothing" (Deleuze 1994, 57). If this is understood beyond fear, and seen as the one and only resource to turn to, my engagement in immanent processes is an intuitive way of doing just that.

IUP: Beyond fear?

JP: Well, the word nothing creates the image of a void. To be truly aware of difference, as being behind everything, allows you, or forces you, to look into that void. Difference is what generates life, as well as our perception of it, and that movement is perpetual. Though, if awareness is moved into the realm of relations, any relation, human or non-human, all hierarchies and all generalizations have to be abandoned. That is very demanding and many people avoid it.

IUP: The concept of variation hence casts a stark light on all relations, human acceptance, on ethics definitely, far outside your own creative space.

JP: Absolutely. It helps me to move beyond the burden of my own tiresome voice and its inevitable predictability. It requires different changes in the way I place myself in relation to my collaborators as well as a redefinition of esthetic preferences. The memory I shared earlier, about feeling dark when directing, implicitly tells about a desire to change the traditional hierarchical structure in which theater art often is created. Therefore I feel akin to Cage when he says: "I want to give up the traditional view that art is a means of self-expression for the view that art is a means of self-alteration, and what it alters is mind, and mind is in the world and is a social fact" (Kostelanetz 1987, 216). Change and self-alteration does not, as I choose to read this, only relate to the perceiver but to the creator as well. And this need that I felt to change my position was met through facilitating processes of immanence.

IUP: You mentioned that there is a search in all this for the roots of your esthetic choices. What is that about? Or rather, why is it important to uncover those roots, and maybe more interesting, is that something that needs to be shared? I can see a reasoning in your critical attempt that can contribute to discussions around dramaturgy and theater directing, but what is there to gain from getting an insight into this more personal level? Even though my first question indicates that I am curious to hear about the reasons why a director actively chooses a position that to a large degree undermines his responsibility for the expressive output, I question the function of such a perspective within a critical pursuit. It tends to result in a certain blurriness.

JP: Is that a question?

IUP: The question is, what do you think this more personal perspective contributes?

JP: Well, the move beyond structural reflections is a move away from criticism of a formal kind, towards a perspective of a more personal and illusive type. Instigating this is based on the assumption that, since my own limitations are unfortunately not unique, such a perspective can contribute to a critical discussion of the work and role of the director, as it puts the dynamic of that position in more vibrant contact with the structural characteristics of the performance. Also, to look at my practice from a personal perspective and to ask questions around what it is that pulls

me towards creating concepts and structures where my own impact as director is dramatically reduced, actually helps me to see more clearly the relationship between my expressive intent and structural specifics, and that, I hope, can open up for possibilities to expand the directorial practice beyond the activity of interpretation.

IUP: All fine, but I feel the tone suggests that you think this is a new idea, and I think it would come across better if you acknowledged that lots of performing artists and art groups have asked similar questions.

JP: What I say – or do – does not aspire to be original in some pompous all-encapsulating way, really. And to continuously make that clear to the reader would implicitly stupidify them. Certainly I know that it is one of the core requirements in conservative academic writing, that its stability and authority is built around acknowledging its relation to existing thinking and research. I think the energy and the aspirations of artistic research should be somewhat different. It is based on an artistic sensitivity and relates to artistic outputs. That does not mean that arguments shouldn't hold together or that the demand for producing criticism should be ignored. But your comment points to the academic formula of continually referencing observations to preexisting thoughts, anxious not to take any risks.

Here we might find the most obvious friction between the artist and the critic, since the artist is putting things into the world that are unstable, vague and transparent to a certain degree. So it must be, there lies its aura. The critique produced by the traditional academic is not interested in aura, only clarity, whatever that is.

IUP: Is that not an easy way out? After all, you produce this work within an academic framework and why budge from the idea of stabilizing your thinking by connecting it to existing thinking, and doings?

JP: I don't do that. As we discussed in an earlier conversation, I find that none of my intellectual extensions, or concrete theater making, could move forward without conflating it with a large number of other voices, ranging from dry academic to intuitive reactions in the rehearsal space. To say the least, all my doings would be impeded if that were not the case. Though, I don't think it is necessary to continuously back up my reflections with more or less reasonable references, nor do I feel it's inadequate to include my personal perspective. That's where we started talking today, wasn't it, with that question: Why the personal?

DIFFERENTIATED PRESENCE

A description of the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*

Where do we go from here? Towards theatre. That art more than music resembles nature. We have eyes as well as ears, and it is our business while we are alive to use them.

John Cage

A garden of music and social connections

Ryoan-ji is a fifteen-century Zen-style garden in Kyoto, Japan. It is a 248-square-meter rectangular plane of gravel raked carefully every day by the monks, to resemble water, and it has fifteen rough stones placed upon it, grouped in different sized formations. It was made as a place for meditation. It is beautiful, it is calm, and it is somewhat mysterious: a place that, in his later years, came to mean a lot to John Cage, both for his practice as a visual artist and as composer. In the same way that Cage turned to, and used, Asian philosophy when carving out his very own esthetic stance, he used Ryoan-ji as a musical compositional device. To claim any relation between Asian music and Cage's compositions is highly contentious. Instead it is important to understand that "his borrowings were not so much faithful transcriptions of ideas as they were carefully constructed intellectual subversions" (Patterson 1996, 51).¹⁰⁷ Cage made a series of drawings and dry points based on the structural components of the garden, and a series of musical compositions with different instrumentation, all with the title *Ryoanji*. Over the years, when listening to his music, this composition in particular made a strong impression on me. It kind of sunk into my body and reverberated there even when I was not listening to it. I was struck by how, within its confined structure, it managed to maintain a sense of unpredictability and I was also taken by how it radiated vitality despite a sense of darkness. I came to see it as a composition that made manifest how Cage "spent the last fifty years of his life approaching calmness." (Lewallen in Bernstein

¹⁰⁷ For an in-depth view on Cage's relation to Asian philosophy, art and thinking, see Patterson 2011.

and Hatch, 2001, 234) But this calmness was not about abandoning complexity, or friction, or unpredictability, but rather about how it created a world of its own, and that understanding was important for my experience. So, even though the performance of *Ryoani – A Meeting*, both in its conceptualization and now in these research reflections, was/is thought of as a staged investigation of sorts, it grows out of an unshielded emotional reaction, a bodily impulse, to the music.

When this intuitive and almost physical reaction to the music commingled with my thinking around the concepts of anarchic harmony (Cage), relation of non-relation/connection through non-connection (Massumi), immanence and multiplicity (Deleuze), and inter-subjectivity (Braidotti) and with Cage's own descriptions of his thoughts behind the relationship between the Ryoan-ji garden and his compositional thinking, I became completely intrigued by the idea of making a performance piece with the musical composition *Ryoanji* as the time-space in which human subjects moved and danced.¹⁰⁸ I started to imagine how it could be performatively made into a world in which meetings could take place. Initially, the idea held investigative questions about how human relations are formed, sustained, dissolved and reshaped, and when I look at my early notes I find formulations like “processes of socialization,” “transformation, movement, change” and also questions that evolve around theories on inter-subjectivity. And one question that reoccurs is: “To be alone together – how?” (Petri, private notebook, 120110).

That is how a musical experience and some unstructured thoughts fused to become the seeds from which the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* came to grow, and which this text is going to be about. In comparison to the other two descriptive texts, the critical borders will be drawn by focusing on the conceptual, methodological and directorial thinking, and this mainly on a theoretical level. The actual collective creative process is not discussed. Instead, it is the correlation between compositional choices and their presumed impact on the collective process – as well as on the audience – that will be looked at. An exception from this descriptive approach, which is an exception caused by the importance of the music in the performance, is the inclusion of thoughts and reflections by the two musicians, Ivo Nilsson and Jonny Axelsson, which creates contact with the corporeality of the performance. In line with that, I will critically

¹⁰⁸ The names of referential voices mentioned here are just indicative of my own personal process/reading/thinking and of course *not* meant to assert some kind of origin of the concepts/phenomena that they are attached to.

weigh my own telling against the experience of looking at the documentations. They do not come close to offering an experience like the one of being in the space during the performance, but they can function as a reactivation of the initial ideas, and as a base for a discussion on the expressive impact.

The performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* is a project that is open and rich and at the same time problematic, stable but at the same time very unstable. It is a project that on a conceptual level has clarity, but at the same time it is, both in its collective creative process and in the process of perception, quite blurry. These contradictions clearly expose what is at stake in a collaborative creative situation based on an immanent creative process: They show that there is risk-taking involved when setting in motion creative processes that build on open structures and investigative intentions. This in turn, underscores that the risk-taking is absolutely necessary and desirable, for a number of reasons: It is a precondition for a process that aims to be truly investigative; it makes apparent my attempt to provoke myself into creative situations where my directorial impact is limited, thus disconnecting the work from my own subjectivity; it contains the possibility to experience something I have not anticipated; and it asserts that there is a direct link between the level of risk-taking and the possibility of an immanent process happening, in the making and sharing of the performance. In other words, there is an unavoidable connection between the fragility of the performance and the possibility for co-composition. Therefore these contradictions must be seen as a substrate for the reasoning. In the most concentrated way they encapsulate the potential to ask, investigate and research, what really is behind setting it all in motion.

The composition

To briefly look at how Cage composed *Ryoanji*, the structural specifics, is interesting mainly because of how its components and compositional choices inspired, and in some cases even were directly transferred into the performance. The composition exists in different versions where a limited number of structural components are placed into varying instrumentations. There are two, what Cage calls “accompanying parts,” to be played either by solo percussion or by a small orchestra with about twenty-four players. The instrumentation for the percussion part is not exactly defined but in the score Cage states that it should

be “At least two only slightly resonant instruments of different material (wood and metal, not metal and metal) played in unison” (Cage 1983, 1). When this accompanying structure (see picture of score below) is transferred to the orchestra the musicians should “play any pitches, or make any sounds that they choose, but they make always the same sound, as though they have become percussion instruments” (Retallack 1996, 240). In our performance the percussionist Jonny Axelsson chose to play the part on wood and stone, in other words, on an instrument not suggested by Cage. Axelsson chose stone because of the timbre and when commenting on altering the instrumentation he says “it’s hard for me to believe that he [Cage] would think it’s a deviation from his intention. If I am really honest I don’t think he thought of the possibility, playing the part on stones. He just didn’t think of stones as a part of a percussion players set up” (Nilsson/Axelsson, Interview 1 at 59:28).

RYOANJI

JOHN CAGE

The image shows a page of musical notation for the piece 'RYOANJI' by John Cage. The title 'RYOANJI' is centered at the top in a large, bold, serif font. Below it, 'JOHN CAGE' is written in a smaller, all-caps serif font. The notation itself is a rhythmic score consisting of ten horizontal staves. Each staff begins with a vertical stem and a flag, followed by a series of rhythmic marks. The notation is sparse and minimalist, characteristic of Cage's work. Bar numbers 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are placed at the beginning of the first, second, fourth, sixth, and eighth staves respectively. The notation continues down to the tenth staff, which ends with a vertical bar line.

Bar 1 to 23 of accompanying part

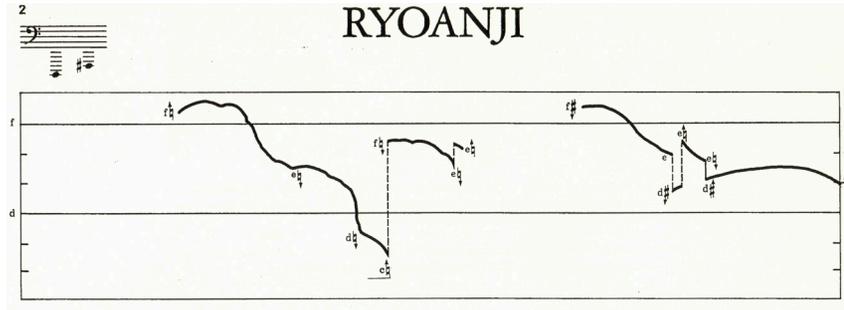
As we can see from the score the accompanying part has an even metric construct with either one single quarter note, or groups of two and three (there are actually only two groups of three in the whole score). Throughout the score these groupings are separated by quarter rests, from one up to six beats, with no rhythmical subdivisions. Neither are there any repeated patterns, except when the full score is repeated.¹⁰⁹ The lack of rhythmical subdivisions and the very limited variation in groupings generates, at first, a sense that it is a sequence of a repetitive construct. Though, there is no repeated sequence, it is continuously varying, which in turn contributes to the experience of unpredictability. The perceptive outcome can thus be said to be both steady *and* somewhat unbalanced. This ambivalent quality is also present in the instruction Cage gives regarding the dynamics, when he says that they “should be played quietly but not as background. They should even be imperceptibly in the foreground. They should have some life (slight changes of imperceptible dynamics) as though the light on them is changing” (Cage, 1983, 1).¹¹⁰

One of the accompanying parts – the solo percussion version or the one for small orchestra – should be performed together with a solo part, of which there are five, specifically written for flute, voice, oboe, double bass and trombone. The version played in the performance was the one for trombone. It seems, from Cage’s own explanation of how he came to start composing *Ryoanji* that the composition actually grew from an idea about the solo part. He explains how it began with an oboist who asked him to write a piece especially for him, and after listening to the oboe, hearing it slide, Cage reflected “it could be a sliding sound, and what could bring that sliding sound about would be the perimeter of a stone. And in the garden in Kyoto called Ryoanji there are fifteen stones.” (Retallack 1996, 242). It is these fifteen stones then that Cage elaborates on in the making of the piece, by moving them into the “garden” of the score, which is represented by a stave, each page having two staves,

¹⁰⁹ The score is 77 bars with the time signature varying from 12 to 15 beats, and one repeat of the full length is indicated.

¹¹⁰ When percussionist Jonny Axelsson is asked how he understands the contradictory instruction - *imperceptibly in the foreground* – he says that he sees it as an indication/instruction for articulation for when “it is played with a very clear articulation it can be played very softly but still be experienced as lucid, as ‘close’ to the listener, and not as something blurry in the background. Yes, I would say it’s an articulation instruction. You see, if the instruction was that it should be played with a clear articulation, its very easy to play too loud, because then it becomes clear, right.” (Nilsson/Axelsson, Interview 1, 53:25).

each spread four staves, and the staves “are actually the area of the garden” (Retallack 1996, 240).¹¹¹



First staff of the first page in the solo trombone part

Musician Ivo Nilsson, on reading the score says: “For me the score itself is a space. I think of it as a volume, almost like a cube. And with that I mean that all the parameters move in depth as well as in pitch. You know, you can experience some music as if it moves to ‘the right’, that it has a direction. That’s not at all the case here, here you move in all directions. There is no path to follow. Every two pages is a garden, that’s my inner picture, and then when you turn the page you move into another garden, which is very much the same, but it has different dimensions” (Nilsson/Axelsson 2015, 1:06:15). This three dimensional inner image that Ivo Nilsson refers to, as constantly present when playing, has an interesting extension that more directly relates to the performance situation when he says that “sure, it’s possible to say that the sliding sound is a concrete transference of the stones perimeter, but I don’t think that it necessarily has to be a stone, but more a volume, a space in the air, and what’s special when we do it now, with dancers, is that the stone could be a dancer, a body.” (Nilsson/Axelsson 2015, 1.13.40)

Cage indicates in the foreword to the solo part, the possibility to include more than one solo instrument in a performance. He says that when “there are two or more parts active at the same time their relationship in time need not be exactly the one delineated. Each part should be played or recorded independently

¹¹¹ It is a bit confusing whether Cage sees each staff as “a garden” or each two pages, a spread, as representing the garden, because contrary to this statement he says in the forward to the solo part that “Each two pages are a ‘garden’ of sounds” (Cage, 1983b, 1).

of the others but within the same total length of time and following the general outlines of proportional notation.” (Cage 1983b, 1) Through a specific sound design set-up, this is also how the music in *Ryoanji – A Meeting* was performed, prerecorded versions of percussion and trombone were included (also played by Nilsson/ Axelsson) that extended the depth of the soundscape as well as increased the complexity of how the trombone moved through “the garden.”¹¹²

The duration of the piece is, like very often in Cage’s compositions where many parameters are left open for the performer to decide, a parameter that is relatively fixed. However, that is an observation that is rather dubious, since it applies only to the solo part and, more specifically, to the solo part *in parts*, which theoretically makes the duration of the piece as a whole, quite uncertain. In the foreword Cage says that each two pages, a spread, should take two minutes. But he also says that the “Percussion piece begins and ends a performance, in each case with about two measures. It continues during silences of any length between voice (trombone) pieces” (Cage, 1983b, 1). A piece should here be understood as the spread of two pages (two minutes times eight), but then between these “pieces” there can be “silences of any length.”¹¹³ Cage is quite vague when he says that the percussion should start and end with “about two measures,” and that there can be pauses in the solo part of any duration, decided by the performer.¹¹⁴ This leaves us with a more or less undefined duration of the composition as a whole.

Various components, methods and ideas from the Cage composition were transferred into the conceptualization of the performance, and influenced how it was prepared and how the material was formed. Most importantly – and in my eyes unavoidable – the overall atmosphere of the performance had to be

¹¹² Sound designer Niklas Billström describes this process/work: “Ivo Nilsson and Jonny Axelsson had previously recorded a number of percussion and trombone parts. I built a ‘player’ in the program Pure Data in which I could activate the different parts separate from each other, kind of like a keyboard and each part could then be placed and moved around in the space independently. The parts could also be played kind of fragmented. The live instruments were also amplified so that they could be merged with the prerecorded material.” (Billström, Interview 150930)

¹¹³ The different version have different length. The version for trombone is two minutes times eight, but the version for solo voice is two minutes times six.

¹¹⁴ It is worth noting the very interesting choice Cage makes when formulating this instruction, by using the word silence. Why and how does he see the sound of the percussion as part of the silence, and what does that mean? Does it indicate that the sound of the percussion (being “imperceptible in the foreground”) should be heard as some kind of ongoing audible event, in the world as a whole? And also, how does this formulation relate to his well known composition 4’33, which originally had the title *Silent Prayer*?

closely related to the type of sensitivity that I experienced from listening to the music. But also, it was important that it stay true to Cage's insistent instruction of soft dynamics and to the notion that the sound (movement, activity) should be "as much as possible like sound events in nature rather than sounds in music" (Cage, 1983b, 1). I imagined that these aspects had to be carefully nourished in order to create a "space-time" with a specific temperature in which the meetings happening within the performance situation (expressive and social) would take place.

The fact that the composition is used as a base, and frame, for a dance performance is a concrete interpretation of Cage's formulation that the "score is a 'still' picture of mobile circumstances" (Cage 1983b, 1). But looking at other compositional aspects that were important and integrated into the space-time composition of the performance, I want to first make mention of Cage's idea that (musical) movements should move ("be played") independently of each other.¹¹⁵ This became the approach not only for the collective movement – the starting point for the performer activity would be the individual initiative – but it also steered the creative method so that all material that was produced ensued from individual choices, made by the performer. A second structural component that was appropriated, mirroring the solo part (trombone), was the idea of letting the performer movements start and stop, taking long pauses, resting in stillness; a structure that holds the potential of experiencing the movement as continuing through the stillness (the sound of the trombone is there even if the musician does not play). Related to that on-going-ness was my decision to extend Cage's instruction so that the percussion part would start and end the composition (with "about two measures") allowing for a much longer sequence of solo percussion, both in the beginning of the performance and at the end. If the decision by percussionist Jonny Axelsson to use stones as one instrument in the instrumental set-up, can be said to pull in the garden more concretely, into the sound of the music, that idea was then taken one step further when, at one point in the performance, all the performers were directed to play the percussion part using stones.

¹¹⁵ Cage's formulation in the foreword is: "where there are two or more parts active at the same time their relationship in time need not be exactly the one delineated. Each part should be played or recorded independently of the others but within the same total length of time and following the general outlines of proportional notation" (Cage, 1983b, 1).

When this understanding of the characteristics of the composition merged with the notion that the percussion part could possibly be part of a “silence,” it created in me a picture that the performance, as a whole, should be representative of an ongoing movement that is there but not sensed until experienced. A further impact of the specific quality of the music was that its timbre, rhythm and way of structuring time created a sense of a world all its own. I imagined this quality would enable the audience – and the performers – to experience all the seemingly disconnected expressions moving through the space, as connected.¹¹⁶ Which I, in turn, saw as harboring the potential of redirecting affirmation away from the singular to the collective, to pull the individual subject into a larger social movement.

Problematizing choreography

I don't regard what I did when working with the dancers Anna Pehrsson, Love Källman, Pontus Pettersson and Tove Brunberg, as making choreography. The end result can certainly be talked about as a choreographic presentation but my work with the dancers should rather be described as a conceptualized process in which I instilled different materials – instructions for improvisations, performative tasks, a relational framework – to be used for investigating and developing individual bodily expressions. This stance/methodology did not stem entirely from the fact that I have no expertise in forming choreographic material on a detailed level, but instead grew from the unavoidable outcome of the decision to work with immanent processes in which the individual performer's creativity/responsibility is the source of the expression. However, when conceptualizing the working process, I decided to create and present suggestions for actions and ways of thinking that would function as starting points from which the improvisations could grow. My approach was therefore not about suggesting specific movements, but to suggest different ways of creating them. I also thought that my suggestions, in their totality, should

¹¹⁶ Commenting on the nature of the “world” that the composition conjures up, musician Jonny Axelsson relates it to the limitations of the material, saying: “The music consists of such a limited material,, and this I think, effaces a traditional kind of narration. You know, if the material is of a more contrasting type, then you get a story of sorts, but with this very limited material you don't. ... As a musician in a performance like this you are very aware of what kind of space that will ensue when you start playing” (Jonny Axelsson, Interview 1, 3.45).

somehow indicate a type of sensitivity and focus that the performer could search for from within, and which would create, as I envisioned it, a specific energy and atmosphere. I foresaw that this would become a process in itself, meaning that whatever suggestion I would make could be reformulated and revised, by the individual.

I formulated a series of instructions/suggestions that were placed in 10 different groups: Body and Time, The Concrete, Impossibilities, Changes, Inner Movements, To Think, To Feel, The World Outside, Positions (in the space, in the garden), Tableaus.

Body and Time

The movement I think was my very first.

Make a movement that's in your family.

Make a movement that you by habit did before but not any more.

The movement you imagine will be your last.

Make a movement you have dreamt.

A movement that goes back in time.

A movement somebody else has made a long time ago.

The Concrete

The most concrete movement I can think of.

A movement from the bed.

A movement from the street.

A movement from the kitchen.

A movement that is what it does.

A movement you do every day.

Impossibilities

Which is the movement you want to do but can't.

A movement so fast that it can't be perceived.

A movement so small that it can't be noticed.

A translocation/movement without any effort

Changes

- Create a movement that goes from ambiguity to clarity.
- Create a movement that goes from clarity to ambiguity.
- Create a movement that goes from having high inner energy to low outer energy.
- Create a movement that starts out as political but becomes philosophical.
- Create a movement that starts from nowhere and ends with something you think is important.
- Create a movement that goes from being contained to explosive
- Create a movement that moves from one strength to another.
- Create a movement that transforms from concrete to spiritual.

Inner Movements

- Make inner organs talk to each other.
- Dance the movement of your stomach.
- Dance to your own pulse.

To Think

- Think one movement then do another.
- Think one movement while you are doing another.
- Think through in detail one movement then do it with out thinking.
- Make a movement somebody else has thought.
- Make a movement that nobody ever has thought.
- Make a movement without thinking, then think the same movement, then do it again.
- Think quickly, make slow movement.
- Make a movement without thinking, repeat the same movement while thinking.

To Feel

- A movement emerging from an old pain.
- What I feel I feel when in stillness.
- A movement in precise sync with what I feel right now.
- The movement that is the absolute opposite of what I feel right now.
- A movement emerging from a pain somebody else feels.
- A movement that feels tremendous but can hardly be noticed.

The World Outside

A movement that comes out of a desire to change the world.

A movement that comes out of a desire to improve the world.

A movement that comes out of a desire to communicate with the world.

A movement that comes out of a desire to be together.

A movement that comes out of a desire not to be in this world.

A movement that mirrors the world.

A movement that mirrors those I care about.

Positions (in the space, in the garden)

I am I when I am in a position that's my own, and in between those, I am everybody.

(When I am in a position I have chosen I am I, when I move between them I am everybody.)

I take a position where I can see myself better.

(I take a position where I understand myself better.)

I feel one thing in one position, and another when in a different position.

(Different positions give me different things.)

When I am in my position I am alone, that is good.

(When I move between my different positions I am not alone, that's also good.)

When in my positions, I listen.

(When in my positions, I listen with my whole body to the others.)

(When in my positions, I listen with my whole body to myself.)

My positions help me.

(My positions are troublesome, complicated.)

No silence or stillness is to be found.

(My positions don't offer any stillness, even if I am still.)

Tableaus

Each dancer prepares tableaux/choreographies/stagings of social situations that they remember from their life. They use the others in the ensemble to create their staging by giving them simple instructions for improvisation. The “choreographer” is very matter of fact in her work; adjusts, rehearses, directs *and* is also part of the staging.

A dancer/choreographer makes a tableau/choreography that is a meeting between two other dancers. The “choreographer” is not participating.

If possible: make a staging/tableau of a self-experienced moment of anarchic harmony.

Seen from a contemporary collective creation perspective, a task and process oriented methodology such as these instructions implicitly describe, is in no way a unique approach to thinking and working, rather I would say, it is quite common. It is a method that relies on improvisation and improvisation is at the core of the development of modern western theater and actor/dancer methodology.¹¹⁷ A brief way of describing how a task and process oriented methodology can be used, would be to say that it can either function as part of the creative process to gather and develop material, to investigate themes and form, or as the conceptual foundation for a performative presentation.¹¹⁸ In *Ryoani – A Meeting* I thought of the instructions both as an investigative tool as well as the basis for the performance. I did not anticipate a process that was first about finding/creating material and then this material would be put together into something more or less set. Instead I foresaw that the rehearsal process, working through the instructions, and all their alternatives and emerging variations, would generate a common sensitivity and a sense of

¹¹⁷ Almost every article in Syssoyeva’s/Proudfitt’s overview of the development of modern theater/contemporary performance brings up the aspect of improvisation as essential – on different levels and for different purposes – for the development of actor practice, as well as for collective creation within different theatrical formats. One can almost say that the creative activity of the actor (dancer) would not be possible without the interplay between the material (text, task, instruction) and improvisation (Syssoyeva, Proudftt 2013a, Syssoyeva, Proudftt 2013b)

¹¹⁸ The most obvious example of the latter is of course the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* in which major parts built on the performers’ performative activation of instructions that they, through chance operations, picked out during the performance.

a common theme. Creating the instructions was probably also a way for me to deal with the insecurity around not knowing how to get the movement going, where to begin.

Even if a conceptual set-up of this kind, with an improvisational frame as the starting point, was not something that I expected would be foreign to the dancers, I certainly anticipated that complications – or rather I should say, additional demands – would emerge when setting it in motion. Those complications, in the planning stage, all had to do with my role and capacity as director. First, if I, as a director, with a specific intention formulate a gamut of instructions/suggestions about where to start the improvisations, I should also consider and weigh if those changes that will be made by the individual performer (in the process) are in line with the quality/sensitivity that my original suggestions represent. The second area of complication that I anticipated was about judgment, i.e. the process of accommodating the individual need for feedback. I present the instructions, I encourage individual initiative and individual judgment in shaping the expression, the performers work, they create, they make suggestions, refine them, and in that process there is a need for a dialogue. How can that dialogue be formed, what kind of language can be used? How should I, as a non-choreographer with limited understanding of a dancer's technique/practice, contribute to the process so that it evolves/proceeds in a constructive way, without making the fallacy of



saying “that’s good” or, “that I don’t like so much.” It could be questioned if the task oriented methodology, and the emotional/psychological nature of some of the instructions are indicative of an attempt to merge a theatrical language with dance, and that my directorial contribution to the process was about molding an implicit narrative, though that was not how I thought about it. Rather the opposite, that the dance should be “just” dance.

Elements for interaction and connection

The chosen methodology for the creative process consists both of structural components transferred from the Cage composition and of uniquely created elements that I inserted in the process/performance. Seen together the transferred components and the new elements constituted, in the planning of the performance, the only possible directorial measures. With that I mean that my intent when approaching the directorial task was to hone it down and use a very limited number of concrete measures to create the atmosphere of the performance and the intensity of the expression. The first component that I transferred from the Cage composition was the idea of the timeline on which sections of activity were altered with sections of stillness (positions). These sections had, just like in the Cage composition, a specific duration and they each included specific components/activities. Hence, this timeline became an overarching structure, a “phrasing” of the performance as a whole. A second component that was brought in from the musical composition was the collective playing of the accompanying part. Since percussionist Jonny Axelsson chose to play his part on wood and stone, I decided to have all performers, at two specific places in the performance, make music on stones. The first place when all the performers played the accompanying part was in the beginning, and they did it just by listening to and following the percussionist, not reading the score.¹¹⁹ I extended this section quite radically in order to make it into something like an overture with a persistent nature. I wanted this long musical introduction to infuse the space with a specific temperature and a sense of time disconnected from the world outside. But I also thought about it as a means to shift the performer focus

¹¹⁹ This way of playing - listening/following, instead of reading the score – I knew was going to result in a rather large discrepancy in terms of timing. A sense of unison could not be expected but instead a strong sense of what Cage calls “Korean unison,” which implies a playing, not in time, but rather creating an effect of playing a bit before, or after the beat.

towards listening, towards a connectedness through sound and rhythm. I wanted to enhance that awareness in every possible way, as I wanted the dancers to be guided by “listening” also in their bodily relations. The second place where all the performers made music on the stones was about two-thirds into the performance. At this point too, the idea of playing by listening and following what was heard was used, but instead of following the percussion part the performers followed/ mirrored the sliding sound of the trombone, by grinding stone against stone. This moment of togetherness was inserted in order to generate an opposite, like a counter expression, to the diverse individuality of the dance. I saw these dynamic shifts, between an untamed diversity and a kind of “coming together,” as dramaturgically important since they emphasized what I regarded as the main theme: the continuous struggle/tension/grinding between the individual and the group.¹²⁰

Transferred into the performance from the musical composition, I foresaw that these components would have a strong influence on the formal aspects but would not carry much of an expressive intent. They would not, in my eyes, be enough to infuse shifts in the expression. That is why I inserted/created two other elements to be part of the performance, elements that I thought of as dramaturgically and structurally necessary: the wooden shields and the masks. The shields I anticipated would have an effect on the quality of the movement, since the flow/rhythm of the dance had to be interrupted/changed when lifting/ moving them. But the wooden shields also had the possibility of generating a variety of associations, as my instruction to the dancers was to treat them as their own personal belonging, as something they intimately related to, as if they represented a personal space (a house, a room, a bed). From the puzzling and seemingly meaningless activity of placing and replacing them, they symbolized a building, of sorts. The intention was to create a semiotic confusion: the decisive concreteness of the activity – radiating meaning – resulting in nothing but a beautiful meaninglessness.

Even if I could not fully foresee the dramaturgical effect of inserting the masks, I was certain that their presence was important. They were full-faced masks with no added features, made as copies of the individual performer’s face, that I thought was crucial since it bestowed on them a radiance beyond the archetypal.

¹²⁰ To illuminate and problematize this theme was the impetus behind the insertion of all the different elements used in the performance.



And, as a result, their expression stayed within the subjectivity of the performer, but added something of a fragile naiveté at the same time as they shielded their individuality.¹²¹ Initially, I thought the masks would enhance the subjectivity of each performer, that the still expression would intensify the experience of subjectivity in the non-mask sections. However, the use of the masks was very much an experiment, and I cannot say that I was clear, either to myself or to the ensemble, about their full meaning. But if the purpose of the performative investigation was to set in motion “processes of socialization,” and to create an expression that moved between a level of abstract form (movement as movement) and a level of social interaction, I thought that the strong but shunning – in regards to the constitution of the subject – expression of the mask(s) would infuse a desirable complexity/unbalance.

The construction of the concept for the performance meant laying out material to be activated within specific circumstances. The relation between the material and the circumstances could then, to a greater or lesser degree, generate friction depending on how the material converged with the circumstances. In regards to this, I assumed that the tension between the implied “emotionality” of the instructions and the “dryness” (limitations) that the directorial elements

¹²¹ The masks, made by Susanne von Platen, were the same color as the wooden shields.

constituted, would generate a disturbance that in turn would add a relevant intensity to the expression as a whole. From a directorial point of view, i.e. without actually going into if/how this was experienced, this was not a consciously investigated dynamic but more of an open question, a thought figure lurking in the background. I saw it as a polarity that could possibly enhance the theme of social interaction, and the ongoing struggle of positioning the subject in relation to all the surrounding phenomena.

What is being investigated?

The performative investigation took place on divergent planes. Some questions I kept to myself, kind of on a sublevel of the directorial practice. They reverberated as assumptions, thus intuitively guided my esthetic choices. The one question that stood in the foreground on that unexposed level was about relations, or rather *relation-of-nonrelation*. More specifically, if all occurrences – in the world – are singular events of non-relations and their perceptive coming together, in relations, is the expressive effect of co-creation, it follows that the multiplicity of expressions being played out in the performance cannot be regarded as disjunctive or meaningless. Instead it is a situation where this ongoing perceptive process is compressed, *actually brutally simplified*, as the occurrences are radically limited. The dramaturgical intent (assumption) behind such an outlook, is that the performative structure – placing sharply delineated movements/occurrences within a time-space outside, or rather next to, the perpetual perceptive process going on otherwise – constitutes a possibility for the co-composing subject to experience a continuous becoming. A determinant factor in this dynamic is – which of course is not unique for the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* – the focus that the space-time demarcation of a performance situation generates in and by itself.¹²² When conceptualizing the performance, my thought was that this focus would be further strengthened by the concentrated timbre and rhythmical “simplicity” of the music. I anticipated that, taken together, these

¹²² This is enhanced by the dominant preconception of what a theater is about (cultural conventions, idiomatic/esthetic definitions), that in itself “organizes,” and focuses the participants. Such an observation involves aspects that are not closely tied to compositional thinking, even though it is an awareness that is constantly present in the making of theater, thus not dealt with in this text.

forces – the unstoppable perceptive sequence, the space-time delineation of the performance situation, and the sharply defined “world” of the music – would bring differentials of experience together across their disjunction, hence transform the non-connectiveness to a unitary experiential effect. Though, I contrived to operate this effect non-consciously, which means that the idea of a clear and obvious connection between the perceptive experience and the performative expression must be abandoned: the notion of synchronization is devoid; the perceptive juxtapositions (the creative making-relation-of-nonrelation) cannot be thought of as one precise moment but an accumulated merging effect extended over time, spread apart, delayed, thus unclear, non-conscious.

The consequence of a directorial approach that endorses the notion of relation-of-nonrelation as the dramaturgical base is that the determinant factors for the expressive possibilities are determined by which components are to be included. It could be said that such an observation is a simplification of the compositional challenge, but instead it should be understood as heightening the *importance of the significance of each component*.¹²³ This aspect is hence strongly present in my approach to the directorial task – in *Ryoanji – A Meeting* as well in the other two performances that I refer to – as it shifts the directorial concern away from coordination, away from steering the specifics of the relations, and instead gears it towards choosing the components *and* towards carving out a methodology that presumably strengthens each of these individual components/performer expressions.¹²⁴

If the investigative workings of the notion of relation-of-nonrelation can be said to be about processes of perception, the other plane on which the performative investigation in *Ryoanji – A Meeting* is meant to happen is on the inter-relational, social plane, and revolves around the question of how subjects are formed, and social relations manifested. The theories on subject-forming-factors, on a large sociological, psychological and cultural level, are diverse and each approach comprises numerous factors of a complex nature. Even if profoundly aware of

¹²³ When reflecting on the commonly expressed opinion that Cage's graphical notations are imprecise, the musician Ivo Nilsson asserts the opposite when saying that “the more you work with his music, the more you understand how precise he is in his graphical notation. The score is so much more distilled than you can ever imagine.” (Axelsson/Nilsson, Interview 1, 17.25)

¹²⁴ Such a stance certainly means that the same type of relevance/importance is assigned to all of the components present in the performance, like scenography, costume, light, and so on.

this complexity, I found it interesting, and actually unavoidable to problematize the production of subjectivity and processes of inter-subjectivity.¹²⁵ The reason I saw this as unavoidable should be traced to my overarching understanding of Cage's esthetics, and to his vision of a (social) harmony, possible to find in an anarchic mode of multiple personalities – and expressions – existing side by side.¹²⁶ This understanding had to be considered in the esthetic/investigative intention of the performance since it, to such a high degree, involved the esthetic world of Cage.

The instructions to the dancers (listed above) were conceived of as the impetus for the (social) tension to occur. For the most part, they are concerned with and supportive of subjective choices and, as mentioned earlier, dependent on individual initiatives. Within that subjective framing they incite different themes, like: memories of emotions, emotions moving through time, loneliness/togetherness, social/emotional connectivity. This did not mean, however, that I imagined the movements would take on symbolic meaning and metaphorical associations, but instead this polarity – between the nature of the instructions and the lack of restrictions in regards to the formal specifics of the expressions – should be understood as a means to infuse pure variation of rhythm and expressive intensities with an urgency of a personal nature. The underlying thought was that the individual dancer would develop a material with its own specific quality and strength. When these then are set in motion it would come to a multiplicity of individual movements, different positions, status and focus. This would create a dynamic of relation-of-nonrelation, meaning that no fictive relations of a sort that could be recognized from outside the event itself, no relations outside the consolidation of the performative process, would exist. However, the initial dramaturgical impact of the simultaneous presence of human bodies is that they signal the possibility of social relations and the autonomy of the individual subject is therefore immediately put in flux/at risk by the presence of the other(s). The working of this dynamic is what I see as the basis for the investigation of the stability – and potential change (transformation) – of the individual performer

¹²⁵ The term inter-subjectivity understood as the impact of a continuous social exchange for determining the experience of a self, and the position of an I.

¹²⁶ For a more thorough reasoning around the concept of anarchic harmony, and the Cagean take on its relation to esthetics, see the chapter *Cage Interpreted and Performed*.

subject. It is the perceptive dynamic and dramaturgical condition for asking – through the performative enactment – questions like: What does the convergence of the many different individual expressive trajectories do to their subjective initial intention? Does the convergence of the individual expressive trajectories cause shifts in their expression? Can we think about their effect on each other as social contamination? How can this contamination be manifested? What happens to the experience of relations when (social, emotional) contamination is revealed in the performative expression? These questions (and their many extensions) were central to my directorial thinking since I wanted the expression as a whole to be about influences, instability, exchange and an interlacing of subjectivities. Though, I thought of the convergence – and transference – of energies not as something explicit, but as an activation of the senses, hence more as a shared listening to all the surrounding activities. An example of such an extended notion of listening is given by musician Ivo Nilsson when he says: “As I see it the listening is not only acoustic. I listen to a body that is behind me, I mean I maybe don’t hear it but I feel its presence and that is also a kind of listening. Listening is the resonance that’s in the room. There are different planes, the audible percussion and the breathing from the dancers, and the audience” (Nilsson/Axelsson, Interview 1, 10.30). The directorial intention was thus to sustain a sensitivity for the transferences of both explicit movements (mimicry) and for expressive intensities (emotional contagion). Such sequences of transference could however clearly be played out simplistically (naively), and therefore the direction had to infuse the possibility for this exchange/transference to operate on an almost subconscious level.

The investigative aspect of the performative-setting-in-motion relation-of-nonrelation is open ended. No conclusive result can be expected, or even aimed for. Each and all experiences of emerging configurations are ineffable and that is why I think the notion of investigation should be complemented with the notion of potentiality, or rather: conditions for potentialities. The investigation into performative contamination (social, emotional) is just as evasive on a perceptual level, but it also has a concrete aspect. This aspect is about the challenge to carve out a directorial methodology that is both clear (in the sense of sensible/ understandable and useful), at the same time as it corresponds to and relies on the refinement that the concept of the subconscious represents.

It is only this last aspect of the investigative intention that is exposed in the creative process, and therefore the only aspect that is somewhat possible to attend to with directorial measures.

What do I see?

Can the perceptive intentions that I describe above be detected when watching the documentations? Looking at them is certainly not like the experience of being in the space during the performance, but to what degree do they indicate the possibilities of the dramaturgical thinking? And furthermore, what would be the point of testing the durability of the perceptive intention through a reflection done by myself? Inevitably it will be colored by my deeply subjective position. Moreover, even if an attempt at a critical rendering can strive towards a time of coexistence with the event being examined, the following reflections are nothing like that. Instead these “notes” should be seen as a further exposition of the way I think as a director, and a guide to how I predicted the individual audience member would/could possibly react, feel, and suppose, hence as a reactivation of the initial dramaturgical ideas.

The seemingly long musical introduction is there to reconfigure the listening, to heighten perceptive sensitivity, but when looking/listening I sense the fragility in that intent. I get impatient. This feeling is probably enhanced by listening/looking without actually being there, from not getting a spatial experience of the timbre. My sense of the performers is initially not as dancers, I see persons standing, sitting around the performance space. I feel uncertain about who/what they are, and what are they going to do? This uncertainty is dramaturgically important, and indicative of a sort of wavering perceptive quality that I want the performance to radiate throughout. The wooden shields standing against the walls around the room contribute to this uncertainty but their perceptive impact is not sensed much until the performers start to relate to them, which initially happens just by positioning their bodies close to them (not carrying), but done with a sense of intimacy. The extreme frequencies of the trombone (“What is that sound?”) enhance, significantly, my experience of being in something unknown. This is the opening; deliberately unclear and encouraging questions like: What is this? Who are they? What are they doing? What is this sound? Is it music?

What are those wooden things? – all intended to trigger a sense of uncertainty about the expressive aim.

The movements become bigger, the dancers start to inhabit the space and I observe, with curiosity, their varying characteristics. Some are more architectural, some more naturalistic (narrative, metaphorical, emotional), some enter into pure variation and rhythm. I see this as subjective, (compositional, improvisational) choices of quality and the variety is sought-after. The four performers slowly become personalities. I don't get a strong experience of an inner urge, more as if they are exposing their compositional ideas. Then this impression changes when bodily formations/combinations with two or more dancers are created. Though, in the coming-together of bodies there is a sense of sustainability, so somehow each individual compositional trajectory is kept quite stable. It is from this individual stability (insistence) that the working of relation-of-nonrelation is set in motion as the relations are not indicative of social relations but rather compositional, which is dramaturgically expected. The intensity, or rather lack of an obvious urgency to compositionally connect, triggers me to focus on small, intricate details of one dancer's improvisation, then in the next moment I see the larger formation - the expression of the two (or three, or four) dancers simultaneously inhabiting my gaze – as a mesh of movements that bounce off and against each other. This sense is sustained until rhythmical relations of a more conventional connective character occur: common pauses, simultaneous and similar outbursts of energy. Such expressive figurations are signs of contamination, a phenomena thought of in the conceptual formulations as exchanges of an emotional and social nature, but often I sense that they radiate compositional choices rather than an intersubjective social dynamic. The bearing and repositioning of the wooden shields has the desired effect; both unpredictable and necessary. I not only ponder what they are for, but in the precise moment of lifting and carrying the shield, I also wonder: Where is she going to place it? Is she/they going to build something with them?

When the music stops things happen. I see the space and all the relations differently. My directorial prediction of the impact of this moment was not concise, but I did foresee that it would cause shifts. The elimination of the sound is first and foremost a variation, a difference and it fuses something of a relocation of the perception. Mainly so because it opens up the space to the fragility of attention:

there is nothing to rest in. It causes a slight sense of the performer(s) being lost, for a moment, but it also seems to activate tighter formations, compositional relations of a different kind, and an increase in the intensity of the movements.

I take myself through different “solutions” during the experience of looking. I swing from being intensely focused on the rhythmical and expressive details of one dancer, to experiencing the multiplicity of the many, wondering, seeking, creating connections between the movements (co-composition) as well as between the individual performers. The experience of social relations and connectivity/tension does not really occur until all four dancers put their masks on and are gathered together center stage. This sequence stands out because of its non-dance character, but also because of the nature of the contact between the performing subjects: they face each other, they indicate social communication and they “talk” with a kind of naïve theatricality. The refinement of the dancers expression is gone now and the over all quality is quite crude. This moment, as a discrete part, is both an expression that fuses interpretations, but it is also throws light on the activities – and relations – before and after this quite awkward gathering.

The simultaneous lifting of the shields, and the collective forming of “spaces” by placing them in close relation to each other is a performative problematization of coming together, of communication and collective creation. The possible metaphorical connotation of building, the manifestation of relations, mirrors the collective process leading up to it. The whole sequence is a joint movement and the placing of the shields is an organizational attempt, of sorts. Though, there is no clarity – in regards to the meaning of the shields – to be found: they radiate, both in their form *and* in the handling of them, the dubiousness of sharpness and meaninglessness. When, at the end, they are just standing there, leaning against the wall, I think of the now absent dancers, how they have been carrying them around for the last hour with authority and direction; but why and towards what?

The overall expression of the performance radiates a certain coolness. This observation is important because it points to a complex perceptive dynamic that plays out strongly within myself, and lies at the core of what I want to create – and investigate. This sought-after dynamic rests on the idea that the musical world, the atmosphere (time, temperature, intensity) created in the

room by the sounds, becomes a domain of possibilities. This domain is only accessible, as a different and unknown space, if its limitations are accepted and received as an offering. It has, and has not, an insisting energy; it does not push or place itself in the foreground but it is inescapable; it only nourishes if one allows it to be so; it is not cold but has a self-sustained atmosphere of coolness.¹²⁷ This intensity/temperature is what I envision functions as the antithesis of the subjective expression: the strength (its delineation: capacity, expressive aim and existential urge) of the performing subject is illuminated by the space-time (“world”) ensuing from the music. There lies a loneliness: the non-narrative, the non-semiotic, non-representational expression of the music both isolates the expressive subject at the same time as it embraces (carries, stabilizes) it.

Dance can, through specific compositional decisions, break itself up, empty itself of symbolic meaning and metaphorical associations and become pure variation of rhythm and intensities. However, the conceptual formulations in *Ryoanji – A Meeting* did not specifically emphasize such an intention but strove to investigate the expressive landscape that contained both non-representative expressive intensities *and* expressive figurations in which the human body was a vessel of subjective emotions and reactions. When I look at the documentations I certainly see the potential for this but I also become acutely aware of the fragility of the co-compositional, co-creative intent in the dramaturgical set-up.

Vulnerability unrevealed

Clearly, the creative process and the performances of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* include the main themes in this research work – immanent collective creative processes; creative hierarchy; compositional and dramaturgical problematization. But there are three aspects, closely intertwined, that stand out when I look at how I created the structure and how I anticipated that the work would proceed. Firstly, I see my urge to engage in a process in which I don't know how to “be,” how to proceed, or how to position myself as director

¹²⁷ This is what I conceive as its integrity, necessary for the expressive multiplicity to play out.

within the collaborative process. Secondly, it is clear that the insecurity that this could possibly generate, is held at bay by placing it in a very well defined structure, and that this polarity – between the sharply structured time-space of the Cage composition and the openness of the process – mirrors the dramaturgical presumption that multiplicities, superimpositions and multi-vocality represent a richness when placed inside a “world.” And, thirdly, my limited capability of contributing to the development of the choreographic material through more detailed suggestions regarding the specifics of the movements, forced me to create a set of tools, a methodological “language” built on concrete measures, measures that – I predicted – would infuse the work with an esthetic consequence, in line with my communicative intention.

But these aspects are not what make the work with the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* different from the other two (they are to a certain degree present in all three performances). Instead, they differ because *Ryoanji – A Meeting* does not in any way *expose its investigative intention*. It does not performatively reveal its inbuilt vulnerability, like the chance procedure and open discussion about collective creation in *John and the Mushrooms* does, or the openly displayed conflicts around creative responsibility, revealed in *vorschläge*. *Ryoanji – A Meeting* can therefore be said to withhold – take responsibility for – its own risk-taking. The exposure of the investigative questions and the performative presentation of problems (creative, collaborative, hierarchical, esthetic), that happen in *John and the Mushrooms* and in *vorschläge*, introduce the theme of untangling, setting off a mode that there is something to be solved, and the dramaturgy is constructed to increase the readiness in the audience to participate in this untangling. In *Ryoanji – A Meeting* no such introduction is offered. On the contrary, all the indeterminate factors are undisclosed. The vulnerability of the performance is disguised in a formal strictness.¹²⁸ The sharp formal borders and undifferentiated mode of the music and set design – as well as the relative homogeneity of the performers’ expressions – create a sense of a delineated (artefactual) esthetic domain, which counteracts an investigative, co-compositional perceptive approach.

¹²⁸ From the perspective of contemporary theater this is what is most common, and, in my eyes, what makes the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* conventional. But it also makes the reasoning around the specifics of the performance relatively transferable to other theatrical expressions.

The directorial intent was obviously not to let this formal stability become a hindrance for a co-compositional engagement. Instead, the condensed characteristics of the expressive matter and of the compositional/dramaturgical form were thought of as something that would relocate the focus and calibrate the dynamics for the co-compositional activity. This should be understood as a honing-in on a different (compared to *John and the Mushrooms*) type of relation-of-nonrelation. There are three factors that sustain this concentration, this honing-in. Firstly, the fact that the problematizations are not explicitly exposed/introduced and that the theme of untangling is concealed. Secondly, the formal stability makes the differences between the individual expressive trajectories seem less sharp, more about rhythm and intensities *within the same idiomatic domain*. And thirdly, the intensity of the performer's movements indicates possible social relations. Taken together, these factors make the workings of relation-of-nonrelation, so to speak, more finely tuned and they play out perceptively within a dynamic span concurrent with the subtleness of social contamination.

The difference in how the investigation/problematicization performatively develops in *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, is one of the reasons that it complements the explication on creative responsibility and the production of meaning that I present in the following essays. It highlights a perceptive situation where a formal strictness has to be broken through in order to find access to the workings of relation-of-nonrelation and a co-compositional engagement. I therefore suggest that the exploration of the specific circumstances in the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* increases the relevance of my critical reasoning to examples where an investigative deconstruction is not explicitly exposed.

WHO IS THE CREATOR?

Art instead of being an object made by one person is a process set in motion by a group of people.

John Cage

What about the creator? It is independent of the creator through the self-positing of the created, which is preserved in itself. What is preserved – the thing or the work of art – is a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari

Setting out

When looking at and reflecting on how a group of people that come together to create theater, music or dance, relate and communicate, there are many aspects and levels through which it is possible to enter. Some of those are attached to the individual, like his or her life experience, technical expertise, incentive to be a performer/artist in the first place, self-image and confidence, and each of these can be looked at within discrete critical discourses. Other points of reflective entry evolve around the dynamics of the collective, like communicative willingness and potential, social – and artistic – hierarchy, the question and distribution of power, the question of responsibility and respect. All these aspects are of course related and dependent on each other in multiple ways. However, if the collective creative situation is built around the idea of using chance and improvisation as the main tools to instigate the expressive activity – which is the case in the performances we are looking at – the dynamics among all of these aspects become, I would like to suggest, more charged and even more complex to disentangle into separate areas of reflection. Frictions occur instantaneously between such central concepts as freedom and limitations, between the individual and her dependence on and consideration of the group, between the individual desire of expression and the expression of the whole.

Setting out to trace the causality of a creative process dependent on such circumstances might be seen as a futile endeavor, and rightly so, if the aim is to

catch the origin of a movement or a sound, or any other expression. That is not the undertaking attempted here. Instead, navigating through this complex flow of energies will be done as an attempt to understand the dynamics of how the collective creation evolves when chance and improvisation steer the progression rather than a predetermined and rehearsed score of some kind. It aspires to shed some light on how the exchange of stimuli and expressions moves and grows within a group of performers. How impulses are given and taken, how listening evolves and effects the expression of the individual performer, how rhythmical structures ensue and transform, how decisions are made, shaped and changed depending on the collective expression at that particular moment. In other words, how a collective expression grows from within and how all the different expressive choices made by the individuals, in their togetherness, generate a process that is indeterminate. How can such a process be thought of as immanent, as an immanent collective creative process, and how can that be analyzed?

In my attempt to answer those questions I will look at seven different aspects of the unfolding of the performative creative process: Immanence in the indeterminate collective creation; the meaning and impact of relations in an immanent creative process; the question of responsibility in such a process; immanence and the shifting of roles; immanence and performing participation; immanence and hierarchy; and lastly, the aspect of the director in immanent creation. The reasoning will commence with outlining the main concepts and their relationship that, in an attempt like this, can become quite complex. This is not only caused by what I talk about in the introduction as the reoccurring critical strategy of transferring philosophical concepts from an ontological level to specified creative esthetic processes, but also from the fact that the concepts I utilize are so closely intertwined that their meaning and function becomes co-dependent and therefore overlaps, and thus might seem to be interchangeable, which they are not. After outlining the central concepts the text looks closely at a short sequence from one of the performances of *John and the Mushrooms*, in which I try to trace how the individual expressions emerge and transform within the ensemble. I suggest ways to see how one expression generates another, then moves into another, and so on, unfolding in an immanent mode. That opening section, intended to provide somewhat of a base for the subsequent problematizations, is followed by a reasoning that focuses on the relations

between the different individual expressions, and how they are experienced by the performers. In a collective creative situation where there is a demand on the performers to continuously invent something new, the relational aspects are a complex challenge since the relations constantly have to be determined and performatively negotiated. The reasoning then continues by problematizing the notion of creative responsibility. This aspect is vibrant in an immanent creative process, since the performers are asked to use and rely on their own judgment and sensitivity when shaping their expressions, and not on directorial instructions. How is this demand to instantaneously, *and* in front of an audience, create new expressions and forms for each performance, handled and experienced? The subsequent section is closely related to the previous as it extends the reasoning around performer's/actor's creative investment and responsibility by putting it in relation to how it can be looked at historically. It tries to carve out a difference – pointing to a shift – in how the performers work and think when their instant compositional judgment has to encompass the position of each (newly invented) expressional activity in relation to the overall esthetics and intent. In the section that follows the reasoning tries to investigate the actual performer experience of participating in the collective creation. What do the performers sense that they are partaking in? What is their sense of their relation to all the surrounding elements? My suggestion is that the notion of the *whole* can be used to signify the experience of – and the aspiration for – being together in the expression. The last two parts of the text are concerned, in different ways, with the correlation between my role as director, the performers creativity/responsibility, and the construct of the concept. I propose that there are unavoidable hierarchies that emerge between these fields. Even if an immanent creative process might be seen as open and “free,” it creates many fields of tension and those are being looked at through the concept of hierarchy. In such a perspective the role of the director is charged and problematic, and the reasoning ends by trying to disentangle the role of initiator; the function of the director in immanent processes; and the purpose of the performances vs. the purpose of the director.

The reasoning that lies ahead is delimited to the processes happening within the ensembles, in other words disconnected from the relationship between the expression and its reception. Though, the different problems and their expositions in this text can be construed as containing the seeds of the treatment in the

two following essays, in which questions around perception, meaning and affect are looked at. What this precisely means is that the creative force, and the emotions within each performing individual around the questions of creative invention, expressive relations, creative responsibility, hierarchy, and so on, change when the constitution of the event changes; from happening in a limited, known, milieu – the rehearsals – to an open public event.

Consistency and Consolidation

A reoccurring reference throughout this text will be reflections by philosopher and Performance Studies scholar Laura Cull, from her book *Theatres of Immanence, Deleuze and The Ethics of Performance* (2012). The exposition, treatment and formulations offered by Cull, critically examine how an immanent process in the realm of contemporary theater and its creative collaborations, can be defined. In her opening chapter she makes an observation that can serve as a relevant point of departure:

immanence and transcendence are distinct modes and different ways of understanding creativity and organization. In some forms of organization – whether we are thinking in terms of ontological, social or artistic processes – creation or the production of form relies on ‘a transcendent instance of command’: something that functions as a leader, director or author from a position outside the process itself (Holland 2006, 195). In turn, we can say that this transcendent ‘thing’ need not take the form of a person, but could equally be a different kind of body, like an idea. Whatever form it takes, the role of this transcendent figure is ‘to guarantee coordination’, to impose organization top-down on the chaos of processes or, again, to conceive what to create from the material and to execute that conception (Holland 2006). As Eugene Holland has explained, transcendent modes of creation are those in which the ‘modes and principles of ... organization’ are external to the activity in question – they are neither part of that activity, nor have they issued from it (Holland 2006). In contrast, imma-

nent modes of organization and creativity allow coordination to emerge bottom-up, and the ‘modes and principles of ... organization’ to come from within the processes themselves, not from outside them (Cull 2012, 25).¹²⁹

This quote guides us into some of the important and useful distinctions and dynamics of immanence in the framework of collective creative situations by putting it in relation to what could be seen as its opposite; transcendence. The picture that emerges is a distinct polarity between the two forms of (creative) organization. Though, as we shall see by looking at the experiences of practical theater work, the two forces are in constant dialogue, intertwined and dependent on each other (which of course is prevalent in Cull’s critical treatment). However, if the concept of immanence is the substrate of the critique, taking off from the dynamic suggested by Cull, the exploration extends by making use of some central concepts in the thinking of Gilles Deleuze (and Felix Guattari), that are related to the notion of composition. The concept of composition, as outlined in their book *What is Philosophy?* (1994), is securely attached to the creation of art, expressed with a distinct clarity: “Composition, composition is the sole definition of art” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 191). Though, the concept of composition is given a necessary complexity when put side by side with the turbulence of chaos, since art is the composition of chaos “that yields the vision of sensation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 204).¹³⁰ Within that sequence, and possible to see as the inner organs of composition, are the concepts *consistency* and *consolidation*. In my reasoning these two concepts are inserted as a complement to the term *relation-of-nonrelation* and meant to function as *descriptive of an immanent (performative) organization* of multiple and seemingly non-connected expressions. So, once again the analysis is making use of philosophical concepts outside their ontological abode, which is why I will try to outline and clarify their use and function in this apparatus.

¹²⁹ Here Cull is quoting from Eugene Holland’s book *Nomad Citizenship and Global Democracy*, 2006.

¹³⁰ An interesting formulation to make note of, as it can be read as a link between the notion of composition and artistic research, stems from the idea in which the concept of composition (of art) is inserted as a possible prolongation of the plane of immanence, suggesting that “instead of creating new concepts that occupy it, they populate it with other instances, with other poetic, novelistic, or even pictorial or musical entities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 66).

Deleuzian/Guattarian thinking around the process of consistency and consolidation is encircled by a complex exploration of (ontological) movements of different dimensions and with variable relations that, so to speak, precede the workings of the two concepts.¹³¹ As a slight detour, before moving into consistency and consolidation, I will briefly indicate what I see as relevant in that exploration. The starting point is the concept of chaos, as conceived and formulated by Deleuze (and Guattari). In chaos there are no connections, chaos generates chaos and infinitely undoes every consistency. It is a movement that is “characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 42). On that plane of infinite speed, of disconnection, disappearance and inconsistency the plane of immanence works like a sieve, giving, through its concepts, consistency to chaos. As the first instance above chaos Deleuze and Guattari place the concept of the refrain.¹³² It is initially presented as what might be called a primal expression (urge) to mark a territory, a need to “fix a fragile point as center” in the forces of chaos that underlie all immanent movements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 344).¹³³ It should not be understood as a starting point, really, since everything is perpetually becoming, though, it can be seen as the beginning of a new sequence: the refrain to mark a (new) territory, the territorial refrain. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the refrain as a territorial assemblage (which to a certain degree contradicts the use of assemblage as a concept referring to combinations of expressions, and it contradicts their observation that a territory is an outcome of relations) that should be understood as the first stage towards consistency. It is this (self)organization of the refrain and

¹³¹ The exploration made by Deleuze and Guattari unfolds in such a way that the interrelation between structures of percepts within the immanent movement of the world and movement set in motion through a cultural/artistic invention becomes fluid. This vagueness, or rather oscillating, is what generates the passage between the experience of the real and the artificial, which in turn should be seen as the main reason for looking through the same lens, and activating some of the concepts as tools in the attempt to examine the intricacy of the relations in this context.

¹³² This preceding, underlying ontological exploration that I am referring to can be found in the book *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari (chapter four) in which they place, as the first movement above chaos, the concept of the refrain. Important to note though, is that the refrain has different functions and ways of organization, and in their reasoning Deleuze and Guattari develop this differentiation extensively, through the lens of (different) art as well as through nature. Here, obviously, just the initial stages of their reasoning are utilized in order to move on to the use of consistency and consolidation.

¹³³ This is a sound, an improvised expression that moves from one part of the body, the vocal chords, to another, the ear, thus both claims as well as confirms a presence.

its transmutations that can be viewed as correlating to the occurrence and forming of expressive matter in and by the individual performers. How is that so, and how can we see the improvising performer in this sequence? Well, the correlation can be found in the initial moment of setting forth an expressive figure of some kind: it is a movement or a sound, the seed of an expression, it is in a new born state, it is untested and its possible unfolding is unknown, it is isolated but carries virtual possibilities. As soon as it is put into the world by the performer it becomes a refrain that will grow by and of itself, creating a territory that harbors all the motifs of the refrain and that transforms into its interrelated version. Here, it finds its consistency.

In looking at how the concept of consolidation is used – and how it relates to consistency – I want to refer to the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, which will also be the focus in the continued analysis. The underlying structural principle of that performance contains two distinctly different forms of organization: The script with its set dialogue, and the rules and placement of the chance-operated parts (both with a transcendent quality, in different ways). As we know by now it is within the chance operated parts that the immanent process is taking place. The structure within these parts is indeterminate, as it evolves through time, ensuing from the development of forms and formations created by the subjects (in view of the above this is what I see as the refrain, searching/finding consistency). The coming into being of this unborn structure is double-edged. Firstly, it can be said to exist only in a supplementary dimension to what it gives rise to, and secondly it becomes, in itself, an important part of the expression. In the immanent creative process there is no plan of organization. Forms and expressions grow unpredictably along lines that ensue from the interplay between each expressive matter. This plane is the plane of (multiple and diversified) consistencies on their way to consolidation. It is a plane of non-contradiction. It is univocal as different expressive matter coexists with no immediate hierarchy, as a plane where the “number of dimensions continually increases as what happens happens, but even so it loses nothing of its planitude” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 294). Such a multilayered expressive form could, in the wording of Deleuze and Guattari, be called an assemblage and the notion of consistency concerns the manner in which the different components,

the individual expressive matter, holds together within this assemblage. Hence, the problem of consistency emerges when heterogeneous elements are convoked, i.e. making it (consistency) relational, which is the moment when the concept of consolidation becomes relevant. Though obviously, consolidation cannot be descriptive of how relations within the immanent creative process ensue, as relations are everywhere and continuous. Instead it signifies how the individual expression transforms and adjusts through the influence of all the other individual expressions, thus enters into a perpetual reciprocal sequence of transformation – towards consolidation.¹³⁴ Further on, in connection with my extended – and exemplified – explication of this process, I will try to expand the understanding of consolidation to encapsulate a certain time aspect, showing that consolidation is a process that in hindsight illuminates the specifics of what has passed. But, as we will see, it is not possible to make a distinct delineation between the two concepts by saying that consistency refers to the birth and forming of individual expressive matter and consolidation to the forming of their interrelatedness. Not only is the process towards consistency (of the individual expressive matter) dependent on and influenced by processes of consolidation, but the collective expression can also be talked about in terms of consistency. A further understanding of how the two concepts are used might be gained by looking at them from the perspective of the performer and what they represent as sensed experience. It is then possible to say that they explicate how the individual expression, in itself as well as in relation to the other individual expressions, is sensed as both unstable and stable. However, that is not a perspective that can be used in this reasoning, and neither can the terms stable and unstable, as they represent a binary dynamic that is disconfirmatory to the processual outlook that the concepts consistency and consolidation represent. But as we listen to the performers reflecting on their creative process, the experience of such a polarity is clearly present and that observation can be used to illuminate the opposite, to underscore the transformational and processual movements that lie within the concepts consistency and consolidation.

¹³⁴ An understanding of how the relations in an immanent collective creation develop begins with the notion that every expressive matter is in search of consistency and consolidation.

Immanence and collective creation

An immanent process within a collective creative situation is, as outlined in the foreword, signified by how the creative expression is set in motion through the initiative and judgment of each performer involved. Cull expands on this: “The material bodies involved in the creative process do not obey commands issued from a transcendent source, but generate their own rules and forms of creation” (Cull 2012, 25). I imagine such a collective creative situation to look something like this: A group of actors and/or musicians are gathered together in a specific space. They have agreed on making something together. This agreement can include or not include rules and/or instructions. In the latter case, the chain of activity – expression–stimuli–reaction/expression – is set in motion from an unpredictable point, it evolves collectively through paths shaped by each individual’s artistic judgment which in turn is affected by the stimuli he or she experiences in the moment.¹³⁵ But the immanent process can also be set in motion and be steered by specific material that the performers are given – by themselves (or somebody else), rules and instructions that infuse a specific type of material, or a set length, or other limitations.¹³⁶ That is how the performances *John and the Mushrooms* and *vorschläge* were conceptually built.¹³⁷ The performers were confronted with an instruction or a text that had to be interpreted and transformed into an expression in the moment of the performance. To further link the concept of immanence as a creative force to the specific circumstances of the concepts and processes involved, it is necessary to explore in detail what happens when the performers move into the first chance generated section of *John and the Mushrooms*.

¹³⁵ The idiomatic mode of this creative process is shaped by culture, education, experience and expertise, knowledge of each other, number of performers, number and type of musical instruments and many other aspects. But I shall have to exclude an exposition of these aspects since they fall on the outskirts of the specific dynamics that I attempt to reflect on here.

¹³⁶ As mentioned in the foreword, it is important to keep in mind that a sharp and definite division between transcendent and immanent processes in collaborative art making cannot be made. Immanence is everywhere and concurrently also present in processes that can be described as transcendent.

¹³⁷ In the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, the improvisational structure was not built on instructions presented to the performers at the moment of the performance but instead ensued from a freer concept that was prepared, discussed and investigated throughout the rehearsal process.

Box One, Variation 51:¹³⁸

14.15 Kristine starts to play music on the grand piano.¹³⁹

The others are putting their boxes back, looking at their pieces of paper with instructions, preparing, not making sounds but moving their bodies as if thinking, looking at the different materials that lie on their tables.

John throws a coin up in the air, it falls on the floor, he looks at it, picks it up.

15.03 The piano music stops.

John goes back to one of his tables. Jessica looks at Staffan doing what he is doing, then she walks over to the piano, looks into it, looks at Kristine, then walks back to her table, sits down, thinks, making gestures.

15.17 Anna starts playing the violin.

Kristine almost immediately starts playing the piano.

15.33 Staffan takes a big piece of pink cardboard paper and a scissors, walks to the middle of the space, kneels down and starts cutting the paper.

Jessica moves in towards Staffan and puts an orange on the floor next to the pink paper Staffan is cutting.

The music with violin and piano, played in a broken, pointillistic style, continues.

Jessica goes back to her table, picks up something small off of it, a piece of paper.

15.53 At the same time as Jessica picks up her paper Mauritz starts to dance, a sequence with straight arms moving out, straight swinging legs. The dance sequence continues as he bends his body. It moves into a slowness, stillness, then sharp fast moves, standing still erect, then lying down. Staffan keeps cutting, now while standing up in the middle of the room. Jessica moves away from her table, towards the piano, then back again to table, arranging small papers.

Music continues – Mauritz's dance sequence proceeds – Staffan is cutting his paper, standing, moves to his table, puts the scissors down –

¹³⁸ The performance of *John and the Mushrooms* was performed 65 times. Five of these were documented. The number refers to which of these 65 performances was documented. The four other documentations will occur at other places.

¹³⁹ In this detailed descriptions of the chance operated sections in the performance, I use the performers private names instead of their fictive names within the play.

- Jessica is by her table occupied with paper and tape.
 Staffan has cut out a kind of rake. He puts paper clips on the floor, starts raking the clips with his paper rake.
 Kristine stops playing the piano and picks up some large papers from the floor, starts working/playing with them, making paper-sounds.
 Violin continues playing.
- 16.36 Jessica moves a little bit away from her table and starts speaking, reciting a text.
(Ingen vila finns ...) She moves around in the room while talking.
 Staffan takes a box of dice and paper clips from his table and pours everything out in different places in the room. Mauritz keeps dancing, sometimes looking at his watch.
- 17.16 Anna stops playing the violin. Jessica is still speaking, moving around.
- 17.22 Mauritz stops dancing, he goes to his chair, takes his scarf and puts it around his head. He folds his chair up, takes it in his right hand, starts walking around in the room close to the audience and speaks/sings a made-up language, sometimes directing himself straight towards someone in the audience.
 Staffan has taken up his pink paper-rake again. He goes to the middle of the room and picks up a big blue paper. He holds it in his left hand and rakes paper clips that lay on the floor.
- 17.57 Jessica stops talking and goes to her table
- 18.20 Kristine and Anna start playing *Harmony* together at the electric piano.
 Jessica slowly walks around the room.
 Mauritz puts his chair in the middle of the room and sits down on it with his scarf on his head. He sits still.
 Staffan is on the floor on his knees with the blue paper that he cuts into a rake-shape. He folds it.
 Jessica has started reciting her text again, in front of Mauritz who looks at her as if he was her audience.
 Staffan is walking around with both his rakes, to different points in the room and rakes up paper clips.
- 20.07 Music stops.
 Jessica takes the last word of her text, standing in the middle in front of

Mauritz, she makes a crescendo with her voice, like a high pitch tone, almost a scream. Mauritz applauds her. He stands up then sits down again. Mauritz stands up, gives her a short applaud again, then takes his chair and puts it back to where it stood before.

Jessica improvises a text about the sun and the earth, about movement that never stops.

Staffan is down on his knees raking up paper clips with his blue rake.

- 20.42 Kristine starts playing the piano softly, with a few scattered high-pitched notes. Jessica moves softly, round and round in the middle of the room, with the orange in her left hand and a long stick in her right, twirling round and round, while speaking.

Mauritz has sat down on his chair and is looking at his instruction papers.

- 20.57 Anna walks over to the sheet of music that is attached to the east wall, and starts to play the piece, simultaneously as the piano is improvising. Jessica has now moved to her table, and sits down on the floor beside it. Staffan is now by the north wall raking paper clips with both his rakes, close to the audience.

- 21.15 Mauritz leaves his chair and walks up close to the audience along the north wall. He sits down and starts telling a story.

The piano music gets more intense, more energy, flowing, alternately dense and fragile.

Anna has left the music sheet on the wall and has moved to the grand piano, directing her sounds into it, improvising.

Jessica sits by her table thinking, listening.

Staffan gets up. His blue rake is full of paperclips. He walks over to one of his tables.

- 22.06 Mauritz stops telling his story, stands up and walks over to the opposite wall and the audience that sits there. He sits down and starts telling his story again.

Anna walks, while playing, over to the west wall, next to the electric piano. When she does this Staffan stands up on his yellow table with his watch in his hand, and looks at it.

- 22.50 Mauritz stops his storytelling, and walks back to his chair. Staffan drops all the paper clips from his blue rake down onto the floor while standing

on the yellow chair. Anna stops playing the violin. The piano music continues.

Mauritz sits on his chair. Staffan has come down and is now raking paper clips right in front of Mauritz.

- 23.20 Anna walks into the middle of the room and starts singing *Once upon a Time*. Kristine stops playing the piano and they all come up, forming a circle close to Anna, and start to sing.

When going through the above description of the fifty-first variation of *John and the Mushrooms* we know that their actions derive from instructions that the performers pulled out of their boxes a few minutes earlier. We do not know precisely which instruction the performers are working with, but we know it comes from box number one.¹⁴⁰ Each expression has an autonomous quality and follows an individual trajectory (even though the section that we will be looking more closely at starts with Anna and Kristine interpreting the music together). This quality of semi-isolation was prevalent more or less throughout the chance generated sections, since the concept (rules and instructions) guided the performer to stay within an individual sensitivity in respect to form and development. Portent in this dynamic of individual expressions that moves simultaneously but not synchronized lies the possibility to construe how the immanent process ensues as the tension between the different performative trajectories become more clear.

As an attempt to trace the immanent process of one short section, starting at 18.20 ending at 20.57, I suggest the following: Kristine and Anna are by the electric piano playing one of the Cage pieces (*Harmony 19*) which has a soft and somewhat slow expression. The progression of this piece is fully determined by the musical score. The other members of the ensemble have probably heard this piece sometime before, so it can be assumed that it creates a feeling of “known element” in the group.¹⁴¹ Indicated by Jessica’s wide-walking circular movement throughout the room, the music seems to open up the space. When

¹⁴⁰ In each box there were twenty different cards with texts to perform or instructions to carry out. By looking at the script we can guess which of these each performer is carrying out during the performance. Though, this is not of crucial importance for the analysis of the immanent process.

¹⁴¹ It can be noted that the different expressive parts that each individual performer worked with, in all the performances, to a greater or lesser degree, had this quality of “known element.” The term is thus only referring to a possible experience from previous performances (or rehearsals).

she passes the two musicians she sings very softly along with the music, like imitating some of the notes in the melody. The obvious performative, stringent quality of the music creates the possibility of “sitting down and listening,” which is what Mauritz does. Right after the music starts he takes his chair, places it in the middle of the room, sits down, moving his hand, his finger, slowly, along with the music. He looks at the orange on the floor that Jessica had placed there earlier. Halfway through the piece of music Jessica starts reciting a text about outer space and about time. She does this “within” the ongoing music, which has an effect on how she handles the rhythmical presentation of the text, giving it a calm, fragmented quality. It also makes her increase the volume and she pushes the timbre of her voice towards *Sprechgesang*. She is standing, whirling, right in front of Mauritz who has clearly become her “audience.” When Kristine and Anna have finished playing the entire piece and the music stops, Jessica repeats her last sentence and makes a crescendo, letting her voice grow almost to a scream, into space. Mauritz then stands up from his chair and starts to applaud. Jessica acknowledges thanks with a light nod and then walks towards the audience on the east wall and starts improvising a story about the earth and the sun and outer space. Her arms are flung outwards, moving in circles as she speaks. Mauritz takes his chair and walks to his “place.” During this time, Staffan is occupied with going to different places in the room where he has dropped paper clips, raking them up alternately with his pink or blue paper rake. Kristine now moves from the electric piano to the upright piano and soon into Jessica’s text she starts to play a high pitch, a twinkling and sparse improvisation that “surrounds” Jessica’s words and whirling movement.

It is relevant to assume that the expression and form of the music by Cage that Anna and Kristine are playing, has an impact on how Jessica’s and Mauritz’ expressive trajectories are shaped. This is underscored by the fact that Staffan’s activity so clearly is not effected. The music’s impact on Jessica and Mauritz can be described as working on a level of atmosphere (mode) as well as on a rhythmical and situational/relational level (narrative). Jessica has maybe not decided to recite her text when the music starts. She passes the musicians and when doing this she picks up a tone and sings very softly and briefly. From that point on it is clear that she is allowing the music to have a strong influence on the performative quality of her actions, if not exactly which specific text to recite, at least how it is

shaped. The fact that she extends the music after it has stopped by using her voice, underscores her attentive listening: her vocal expression grows and “continues” the instrumental music. Just before this sequence starts, Mauritz has been playing/acting with onomatopoeic sounds, as if telling a story in a made-up language, walking around, close to the audience, carrying his chair. At the beginning of the sequence, his actions reach a point of saturation. It seems like he is accepting this, not really pushing forward with an activity.¹⁴² Though, when the music starts the impression is that the room opens up for his body to move. He is surrounded by the music and it is reasonable to assume that he gets an impulse from it that sets him in motion. Slowly, within the temporal quality of the music, he stands up and again picks up his chair and moves towards the center of the room where he sits down and listens. His position, which is chosen with a clear relational awareness of the orange in front of him, and his “audience-like” concentration is almost immediately picked up on by Jessica who, while performing her text, takes the orange and performs her text and movement right in front of him. An intersubjective relation is formed, trajectories merge, feed from each other and the immanent process produces what could be described as a representational form (a possible narrative). This “scene” within the sequence could be seen as pulling together four of the five performers into one dramaturgical “whole” as the music that Kristine and Anna are playing accompanies Jessica’s performance, for which, in turn, Mauritz becomes the “audience.”¹⁴³ When Mauritz returns his attention to Jessica by standing up and applauding, the causality of their actions is further validated. The short moment of silence that follows pulls the dynamic of the voices down to a different level. Jessica starts speaking much more softly and intimately which – and here the impulses become reversed, actor performance feeding musical performance – makes Kristine improvise a soft and high pitched phrase on the upright piano, somewhat connected to Jessica’s telling about the sky and the stars. The twinkling, twirling quality of the music can then be assumed to affect Jessica’s brief, soft dancing movement.

¹⁴² The work, the discussions and process during rehearsals evolved to a large degree around how to reach a point, in each performer, of calmness, of accepting the non-activity and of not pushing forward with an action that did not ensue from the present “situation” and the instructions he/she were working with.

¹⁴³ The inclination to use/create a meta-level of a performance within the performance was something I noticed that the performers were attracted to, partly because it offered a more recognizable (felt) type of communication within the ensemble, but also because it was position to find refuge in.

Although Staffan's activity during this sequence does not seem to be influenced by the activities of the others, it is not as if his actions are isolated and not interacting with the rest. That would be a misinterpretation. He is conscious of his *difference* and the friction that he creates. He might also be experiencing his own actions in the perspective of the whole. The interesting question is then, if the immanent process can be said to be influenced by his somewhat isolated trajectory and seeming indifference to what is going on around him, even if the signs of interactivity are not there? In what way does his "independence" influence the quality of the other performers' expression? Is the stubborn perpetuation and isolation of Staffan's action affecting the others on the inside but not explicitly in relation to what they are doing? These assumptions around the impact of Staffan's expressive activity conjure up the question of what the specifics of an immanent process are, and how that process can be described, if it is not affirmed by established - visible, audible - signs of affect? Is that question a contradiction in terms since the (immanent) movements of silence and stillness belong to the incorporeal and ineffable inner world? As immanence is everywhere and perpetual, every event - lived, observed, acknowledged - holds the movement of immanence, and since immanence as definition encapsulates relation - between all movement - we must yield to the observation that even if we cannot describe - see or hear - any effect of Staffan's performative activity within the expressive action of the ensemble, it is - as we shall see - an influential part of the experience and perception of the whole. This means that to reach for an understanding of the impact of Staffan's activity on the immanent process we need to look at the (compositional) interplay between the different expressive parts through the concept of consistency on the plane of immanence, and through the concept of consolidation and counterpoint.

The expressive force of a dynamic like the one in the scene we have just looked at, is dependent on its consolidation. Multiple expressive matters are superimposed and their possibility of consolidating, creating what can be experienced as a togetherness, is dependent on the characteristics of each matter; "the matters of expression themselves must present characteristics making this taking on of consistency possible" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 363). In the collective creative situation, each performer, even when staying within his own expressive trajectory, is in a highly perceptive state, which generates a flexibility that increases

the possibility for consistency to occur (this could mean that each individual expression would take on a different consistency in a different milieu). But this is not what ensures consolidation. Rather, as consolidation is inherently creative and something that grows from the relational tension that emerges between expressive matter, its succession is durational. It creates itself not from adjustments made according to a preconceived notion of homogeneity but from the birth of disparate rhythms, “an articulation from within of an interrhythmicity” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 362).¹⁴⁴ How can this be understood? Well, different expressive matters are simultaneously put into the space. No preconceived narrative or metric linkage is in play. Movements, sounds and vocal expressions with different dynamics, different timbre and different articulations are “forced” into the same space and time zone. From this, more or less chaotic compound of expressions, the consolidation grows through a process that has two interrelated levels. One is characterized by the intuitive rearranging of intervals of different kinds (time, dynamics, articulation). These adjustments are made on a micro level, not noticeable as changes in the material or expressive trajectory but rather as a distribution of inequalities. The second level of the consolidation process is what might be called the emerging acceptance of difference; the unavoidable coexistence of expressions establish, over time, a consistency (through inter-rhythmicity) of a never before existed kind from which consolidation ensues. It may be so that in such a succession it is the most disparate component that assures the consistency of the assemblage.¹⁴⁵ And it is precisely this dynamic that occurs in the scene we have just looked at. The performative activity of Staffan – the raking of paper clips – takes on the quality of a vector, consolidating the expressive whole of the totality of expressive matters, and it pushes the demands for accepting (perceptually) synergetic

¹⁴⁴ In their exposition to elucidate the concept of consistency Deleuze and Guattari, rather indulgently, turn to bird-song and the interplay between different melodic and rhythmic patterns among one specific species. The melodic, non-semantic, rhythm-focused, though non-metric quality of this example undoubtedly relates to how, in general terms, the expressions of the performances that we are talking about, hold together (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

¹⁴⁵ “Even in a territorial assemblage it may be the most deterritorialized component, the deterritorializing vector, in other words, the refrain, that assures the consistency of the territory” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 361). An understanding of the concepts of territorialization and deterritorialization carries a wide complexity within the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari. They are to a certain extent described and activated later in the text, however a condensed understanding of the Deleuzian and Guattarian use of the concepts is related to the process of connectivity/consolidation and transformation. The grounding view is that life creates and furthers itself by forming connections and territories. This is a process of territorialization. But the same forces can also allow it to become what it is not, to transform into a new (being or assemblage), which is a process of deterritorialization. As these concepts encapsulate different kinds of processes, Deleuze and Guattari insert them into many different levels in their apparatus, mainly developed in the book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

structures. It underscores the fact that the immanent collective creative process is unruly and results in a “new” complexity signified by unstable relations creating their own consistency. Brian Massumi’s view on this instability is an extension of the notion and creation of consistency: “I try to emphasize that the notion of the virtual requires that all relation actually be seen as a relation-of-nonrelation. Connection and relation, such as they are, are not always exhilarating. They can be terrifying. Or boring. Or restricting” (Massumi 2011, 84). This dynamic is assumedly felt both within the ensemble and in the audience. Though, even if this is an assumption that cannot be verified, it points to the important compositional aspect that the expressive relations within the ensemble, that transpired from the immanent process, are to a certain degree disjunctive. Difference in temporal as well as “narrative” trajectories creates a bundle of expressions that “can be seen as a practice for bringing awareness of the disjunctive operations of experiential fusion to the surface of [dance], making consciously felt the fact that the compositional principle of this technique of existence, like all techniques of existence, is *always* differential. There is always disjunction. No technique of existence can so purify its field as to make it homogeneous: simply non-relational. All techniques of existence operate through relations-of-nonrelation. Experiential fusion-effects. Mutual inclusion of heterogeneity of factors becoming, singular-generically, forces of pure expression. “Pure” does not mean homogenous or simply all. “Pure” means: having the compositional power to mutually include; to bring differentials of experience together across their disjunction, to unitary experiential effect; to effectively convert heterogeneous outside factors into immanent forces of singular-generic expression” (Massumi 2011, 144).¹⁴⁶ In other words, consistency necessarily occurs between heterogeneities, “not because it is the birth of differentiation, but because heterogeneities that were formerly content to coexist or succeed one another become bound up with one another through the ‘consolidation’ of their coexistence and succession” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 364). There is a saturation of the event happening, it becomes full, even though confusing on a certain level. The activity of Staffan, seemingly disconnected, influences the consolidation through its placing in time and space, in relation to

¹⁴⁶ Massumi’s comment on a multilayered, superimposed compositional esthetic derives from his reflections on the collaboration between John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham. Therefore it serves as an interesting hub and connection between the esthetics of Cage, the concepts reflected on in the performances, and on immanence as process.

the other singular movements. However, to eliminate Staffan's activity, to pull him out of the room, would not push the combined expression into a non-consolidated state but force it to reconfigure, transform its balance, to deterritorialize. This is a consequence of the conceptual structure of the performance: the consolidation is not produced through *specific* multiple expressive matters simultaneously moving through time, but through the compositional decision of making them happen within the one limited field of perception.

The simultaneously ongoing expressive activities, in *John and the Mushrooms* as well as in the other two performances we are looking at, can be thought of as an instant composition of counterpoint. In traditional music theory the concept of counterpoint has a more or less strict technical meaning, whereas in the esthetic thinking of Deleuze it is developed and used in a way that, while still strongly attached to the notion of composition, evokes the effect of superimpositions and polyphony, well outside the framework of music and musical structures. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of counterpoint in relation to processes in nature, presenting images of how different territories cut "across the territories of other species" forming points of junction: "There is counterpoint whenever a melody arises as a 'motif' within another melody, as in the marriage of bumblebee and snapdragon" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 185). If the reason to activate the problem of consistency within the immanent creative process is to elucidate how the convergence of seemingly disparate expressive matters conflate and consolidate, then the activation of the concept of counterpoint would in turn be to observe the effect of polyphonic presence of *semantic* expressions happening in the immanent collective creation. Words are spoken at the same time and with different directions, stories and vocal expressions with different energy and intention share the same time and space; a polyphony of voices fills the room. Even if language were spoken, and individual performative adjustments of the kind described above, were made, this mesh sometimes resulted in a polyphony (especially in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*) with a consolidating quality beyond semantics, as it did not report real or fictional conversations but brought "out the madness of all conversation and of all dialogue, even interior dialogue" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 188). Perceived in such a way, the immanent collective process produces an expression of counterpoint that mirrors the ongoing diversity of

statements in the world, outside the performance. But from within, as we will hear from the performers later on, the effect of polyphonic semantic language seemed to infuse a sense of hierarchy between expressions and tension between the performers (which did not occur in the same way when music and bodily movement dominated the assemblage). This, in turn, intuitively increased the willingness to adjust the different expressions along counterpoint thinking, like shifting duration and expressive dynamic to create contrast of a supporting kind. The concept of counterpoint, as a definition of different relations/problems ensuing from superimpositions, was more present in the discussions within the ensemble, than the concepts of consistency and consolidation.

Does consolidation always happen in an immanent collective creative process? Did it happen in every chance operated section, in every performance of *John and the Mushrooms*? Is it at all relevant to pose these questions when the movements on the plane of immanence are continuous and obviously produce consistency and consolidation regardless of whether or not this is acknowledged, in the theater or elsewhere? Instead the question has to be how and when was this experienced by the ensemble? To think about consolidation in relation to what the performer experiences, means that the concept is loosened up (or contaminated) by personal experiences and opinions and as a result the sense of consolidation differs from performer to performer. When the performers describe their experiences in the following, using words like connectivity, togetherness, communication, relations and listening, it becomes clear that consolidation was not regularly sensed, rather the opposite. Struggles with their compositional/expressional relationships were continuously discussed – to an extent that it became part of the process towards an awareness – outside the rehearsal/performance situation, but *also* implicitly in the performance where it came out as a sense of over-saturation and confusion. *It is exactly at this point in the collective creation that the immanent process finds its impetus for change and transformation, it is where conjugations and connections of a new kind come to constitute the consistency of each expressive matter and consolidation is reconfigured.* Brian Massumi reflects on this dynamic when he says: “By intensity I mean the immanent affirmation of a process, in its own terms. This is not a stated affirmation. It is an activity. It is when a process tends to the limit of what only it can do, and in that act resonantly embraces its

own range of variation” (Massumi 2011, 84). Relations of various kinds, with different dynamics and characteristics is what the immanent creative process continuously produces, giving rise to a chain of problems. Hence, it is these various relations we need to locate and analyze.

Immanence and Relations

For the actor, the dancer and the musician, the continuous demand for invention and making new meant an extensive challenge regarding the relational aspects of the different expressions that were created. Most often the actor builds his or her expression in relation to the intent and action of the character portrayed, as well as to the intent and actions of the other characters on stage, and also in relation to the development of the narration. A similar relational creative process can be observed, even though most often in a more abstract and implicit way, in the collective creation of music and dance. An immanent process and its inherent indeterminate progression create a flux in the relationships between the performers on stage. This was underscored by the fact that the fictional situation in the performances was conceptually formulated as “a space where people (the performers) were involved in an ongoing undetermined process of building new things.” This formulation of a relational sublevel was sometimes – and sometimes not – in their need to feel connected, made use of by the performers. A fluctuation in their trust in the conceptual impact of the performance, as well as a wavering belief in their own expressional force were two factors that led the performers to seek contact and consciously create relations. This was most clear in the case of *John and the Mushrooms* where the demands looked different since the performers had both a character to portray and texts with a fictional quality to execute, most often with a monologic structure. This was commented on by the actor Mauritz saying:” It was hard to feel the relations ... Towards the end we found it, some kind of dynamic in the fact that ‘now she is talking over there, and now he is talking over there and now I am speaking over here’ and then one could feel like ‘now we are, together, in this racket,’ and now it is calm and now I am here doing my thing and ... It took a very long time before I got to that place, before I could feel it. We talked about it after a performance one day, we all had a sense that ‘Now something happened,’ that we all were

there at the same time but still doing our own things. During a period it was like we got too nice and too considerate, we started to listen a little bit too much and then the listening just became like ‘now you can talk and then you can talk and then I can dance’. It took a while until we came to see that we are doing everything by ourselves at the same time but still together. In the beginning I was so focused on doing my instruction and just that. But then I really started to enjoy performing, acting when I could do my thing and at the same time be a part of the whole.” The process that Mauritz describes can be understood as an increased sensitivity to new ways of experiencing participation and how his own activity extends to the others, and the other activities that are going on parallel to his own. This relates to Laura Cull’s observation, when she says “Deleuze’s immanence precisely concerns the participation, multiplication and extension of the human body – understood as that which is produced by relations of force and encounters with the affects of other bodies” (Cull 2012, 10). To be more precise one could say that what Mauritz experienced is the emergence of new, what Deleuze calls “points of counterpoint” and that he finds a balance in relation to the autonomous fixity or variability of the expressive matters surrounding him. This leads us to a fundamental observation, applicable to all the instant compositional expressions we are looking at, *that the relation is prior to what it places in relation* (Deleuze and Guattari 2004).

Although connectivity is everything and relations are constitutive, it should be noted that the complexity of the interrelatedness of the expression is increased by the fact that the individual expression is not immediately, or inevitably, or constantly, in a transformative relation to its surrounding. The construction of the concept calls for an autonomy of expressions. This certainly does not factor out that internal impulses also stem from simultaneously ongoing expression. The individual expression cannot, and does not want to be unaffected by the movements of the surrounding components. So, the expression created by the performer is, on the one hand, in search of an individual autonomy and stability, and on the other hand is fully aware that it cannot find its pulse outside its relations (Deleuze, and Guattari 2004). One cannot therefore assume that the determination of the expressive matter corresponds to its inherent potentiality, in an autonomous sense, but instead it is defined through its relational potentiality. This is further explicated in the observation that expressive qualities or matters

of expression, in effect, enter shifting relations with one another that ‘express’ the workings of the internal (individual) impulses as well as the circumstances in which they occur (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). Which is to say that each expressive matter seizes its compositional value in relation(s). However, a compositional relation is not produced but inevitable, therefore we can call it passive: it needs only to be acknowledged to find its form. Since these passive compositional relations, within an immanent collective creative situation, are not left alone, but instead adjusted, reconfigured along the line of representational assumptions as well as socialization, their expressive determination becomes reciprocal. Each individual expression “understands” its expressiveness only when its relation has become qualitative.

With this in mind, if we return to the performers and the dynamics of the relational aspect within the ensembles, we can detect that the feelings surrounding this aspect and the approach to it partly differed from the musicians to the actors and dancers, but it also seemed to shift during the process of performing. The musician Kristine in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* said: “Well, you know I have my instrument and I’m so kind of tied to it, and it was so interesting that the others came to me. I searched for relations more musically, through my instrument. So I guess I could say, yes, I searched for musical relations, but I appreciated very much that the others came to me. I found that really delightful.” Sometimes the performers expressed a need for contact affirmed in a more conventional way through interactions and listening where signs of affect were more obvious. This need was more obvious in the beginning of the process when the level of insecurity was higher and the urge to establish a collective practice was more strongly felt. Kristine went on to explain: “Sure, I searched for relations, that was very important. And I think that was our way of solving things, in a way. We realized that we needed a lot of contact with each other. That became our way of approaching some problems that were there in the beginning. It was important with contact and relations because it also created some tension.” The longer the performers were involved in creating a multilayered structure, their ability to experience contact and communication grew and changed. The musician Anna in *John and the Mushrooms* commented on this when she said that the “...relations became more and more important. In the beginning they were not, as I was so into a conceptual way of thinking: ‘I’ll do my thing and you do yours’ but then it got

more and more so, it kind of got necessary... and it made it more fun. When we really had a broader focus, when my view took in the whole picture, then it grew, the concept grew." In other words, the search for relations ensued partly from a need to understand the possible impact of each performative expression and receive confirmation of this, but also, on the contrary, from an increased capability to feel free and playful enough to experience the force of the multilayered structure. Anna continues by saying: "I think one wants to create relations and connections and communication. Of course you need to keep your own focus strictly, but at the same time it gets really boring if you just stick to your own thing. Sure, I believe in that, but things happened that you never could have anticipated. Ever. I will never forget one performance when all of us just suddenly, in a kind of whirling energy, just stopped exactly at the same time. Subito, like that, really strong. Everybody was doing things but it was so clear to all of us 'now, this is it,' this is the peak, kind of. Suddenly it was as if we were sucked into something, very strong."

The performers expressed at different times a clear understanding of the overarching esthetics of the concepts, as well as of the perceptual ambition behind them. But it would be a misinterpretation, as I have already indicated, to read their search for confirmative relations within the collective process as something more than a sign of a certain inability to trust and find meaning within the seemingly unorganized turbulence of expressive matter. However, this inability should be understood as something that came and went. The sense of disorganization and lack of relations occurred in moments of transformation, in moments of the immanent transcoding – as Deluze would have put it – of the expressive assemblage. Those were moments when the consistency of the assemblage was sensed as losing its consolidation hence experienced by the performers as a dissolving of relations. The transformative quality of these passages, lacking in confirmative relational articulations, conjured up a feeling of isolation followed by a wavering confidence in the autonomy of the individual expression. There are two levels at this particular moment in the creative process that can be reflected on from the point of view of relations. One is about the tendency to capture/create relations of a representative kind, and the other reveals how duration reconfigures the experience of relations.

As I have asserted earlier it is during moments of transformation that the immanent creative process produces the most vibrant mode of presence in the ensemble (as well as for the audience). These are problem-moments, moments

of a problematic energy and as such they are crucial to the progression of all the different expressions in the collective. Conversely they present the performers with the challenge to harbor a double view of the dynamics of their activity: the expression of their individual doings and the expression of the collective (composition) as a whole. It can be suggested that even if the collective expression just moments earlier (in a hypothetical sequence) was experienced by the performers as *both* new (never-before-experienced) and relationally satisfying, the readiness to acknowledge and experience relations as consolidative *outside* recognizable (representational) patterns is subsumed by the tendency to search for something supposedly similar (type of relations). The encounter with experiencing the-never-before-experienced is then not carried along and used as a reinforcement for confidently staying within the individual expression and all the unexpected relations that the phase of transcoding conjures up. In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze fortifies his critique of representation in relation to the faculty of thinking and diagnoses the tendency of staying with the known as “the postulate of the model, or of recognition” (Deleuze 1994, 167).

Preceding the experience of a coming-together, that Anna’s description above tells us about, the structure of the expressive matters, that exists on the plane of univocity, was an experience of no relations. Though, these are not moments of non-relations. They are sensed as disjunctive and as a-rhythmical, but at the same time they are phases on their way to passing into coordination, as movements of transcoding in which the relations of the future are encapsulated. Just moments later this experience of a disjunctive type of relation will fold back and generate, not a turning of time, but an awareness of time, as the experience of the past energy is illuminated by the present experience. The relations of the present encapsulate the relations of the past, and also of the future. When the performers get a sense of relations (of a confirmative kind) their notion of past relations changes, or rather, they become aware of the relational quality that they just left behind. We can take this even further by observing that the experience of relations is constant, but inevitably dependent on an acknowledgment of change, transformation and difference. The challenge behind accepting relations characterized by difference, experienced in the complexity of being in the midst of a creative assemblage dominated by multiplicity and difference – what Cage would describe as anarchic harmony — is made more understandable

by Deleuze when he says, “It is in difference that movement is produced as an ‘effect,’ that phenomena flash their meaning like signs. The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible, is precisely the object of superior empiricism. This empiricism teaches us a strange ‘reason,’ that of the multiple, chaos and difference (nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies). It is always differences which resemble one another, which are analogous, opposed or identical: difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing” (Deleuze 1994, 57). Neither in the thinking of Deleuze nor in the framework of the performances can difference be seen as opposed to relations. Although the above quote could conjure up the image of a frightening void, the formulation must be seen in the light of the radical criticism that Deleuze put forward in *Difference and Repetition*, where difference is placed as the condition for all becoming, thus beyond the fixity of representation. Difference is the affirmation of infinite variation and relations are a constant, they cannot be dissolved, since they are an outcome of each other, inseparable. Therefore, the problematization of the relations within the immanent collective creation should be understood as happening on two separate levels. The first is the unavoidable ontological level where every relation is weighed by its dramaturgical effect. In the second level, the dynamics of relations should be seen as carrying connotations that are more confirmative than conceptual, akin to relations already experienced. The awareness within the ensembles of the conflation of these two levels of relations emerged as an increased, sometimes frustrating, understanding of the relationship between the individual expression and its compositional impact, complicating the notion of creative responsibility.

Immanence and creative responsibility

The possibilities are infinite? Chance and improvisation create openings but also fear and insecurity. Indeterminacy is an asset as well as a cause for confusion. Embedded in the immanent creative process, undetachable but fluid in definition, lie areas of friction that have to be looked at in order to understand the esthetic possibilities, as well as the problems. In the moment of the performative situation these areas evolve around the demand for creative responsibility and individual esthetic decisions, around the question of communication, listening

and contact, and around the dynamics of dominance and subordination. My experience is that the dynamic in these areas of friction, in which the demands on the individual performer extend far beyond interpretation, is actually different for actors than for musicians and dancers, and that the indeterminate creative collective process causes different type of frictions and is handled differently by these different groups.¹⁴⁷ But the common denominator within an immanent process - as a time and space where people (the performers) are involved in an undetermined ongoing process of investigation and the building of new things - is that the performers must rely on their own judgment and sensitivity when shaping their expressions. Most often, this is a positive energy in a creative practice but it took on a starkly different dynamic in the performances we are talking about, since the concepts demanded that new expressions and forms had to be created for each performance, instantaneously *and* in front of an audience. When facing this requirement for a continuous and instant invention, tensions and problems transpired. The actor Staffan Göthe commented on this: “But the really uncomfortable difficulty was when I felt that I had no ideas, and that had nothing to do with the audience sitting there waiting. Instead it was like I just couldn’t make something up and then I thought to myself ‘I guess I can sit here and play *I have no ideas*’ ...and in some ways that made me feel inhibited.” So, even if there is no real demand to create an action, and even if the actor has an instruction that he could use as incentive for his activity, the demand, from within himself, is that he should come up with an idea for an action. The immanent energy is then - as Staffan experienced it - at rest, it does not exert a creative force in that moment; he feels inhibited. This is an internal emotional state that does not stop the immanent process but the feeling growing inside the performer is one of being stuck. In every day life, this would not be the case. Staffan would probably not have the same experience, but what is conjured up by the performative situation is a pressure to perform, to show something

¹⁴⁷ This observation can be expanded and reflected on at length, since to a large extent the practice of the musician differs from the practice of the actor and the dancer. Most clearly, and especially relevant when looking at the emotional state of insecurity, is that the musician can rely on - and hide behind - more discrete technical skills. This was an obvious difference in dynamic in the ensemble of *John and the Mushrooms*, and commented on by Staffan Göthe: “And then there was something that happened, namely that Anna and Kristine and Eva didn’t work or behave like musicians I was used to but they were so free, so totally unguarded when it came to improvising. ... In the beginning of the process, when we started with the chance operated instructions they just jumped right in and it was just to jump on.” (Göthe 2012)

and it is this demand that creates the feeling of incapability. He calls it the entertainment-devil: “You know, it was about keeping the entertainment-devil away, not to think about satisfying the audience. To dare to do this, to walk the thin line, and not start questioning: Does the audience understand this, do they think this is boring, have nine minutes passed yet, nothing is happening and blablabla ... That is the real challenge, to keep those thoughts away all the time. And you know, if one manages to do that everything just takes off, but if you doubt and start looking around, judging the expression from the outside like ‘now it is boring’ and start blocking yourself thinking ‘I can’t do this, I have to come up with something else’ ... it is just very important to keep those thoughts away.” The feeling of being stuck comes from the idea that he must contribute something important to the expression, and he feels that he is doing nothing. With this in mind, it is possible to say that the immanent process is not something that is at the surface of the performer’s consciousness. It is moving beneath. There is comprehension of how the performance is conceptualized and of immanence as a perpetual force, but there is a blockage that stops him from seeing the present moment as full and generous, thus assign meaning to his stillness and inactivity.

But what is really hardest for Staffan: this feeling of having no ideas followed by inactivity *or* an activity repeated with no intention? He says: “But sometimes I took refuge in my action with the rake and the shovel because I had no other ideas, nothing came up. I thought, ‘I guess I can try with the rake and the shovel.’ And that was something I felt as terribly, terribly unpleasant.” Here we have a reaction to repetition conceived as not different enough. The actor demands from himself to be the author of his action – a desire that shows that he is inclined to regard his own activity apart from the collective, which in turn discloses an unawareness of the difference that ensues from synergy – and when that is not captured there is a sense of failure, of being deprived. He does not want to appear to be doing just anything but instead wants to feel that what he is doing is fresh and above repetition. A way to expose the complexity – and expansiveness – of this predicament is to place it next to a comment by Deleuze in which he aligns himself with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in their critic of Hegel, and that he – Hegel - does not go beyond false movement and the abstract logical movement of mediation: “They want

to put metaphysics in motion, in action. They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. Rather, it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind” (Deleuze 1994, 8). We will have a number of reasons to return to this quote, but in this instance, inserting such a perspective on Staffan’s situation of feeling stuck and inadequate, one could assume that he is searching for a way to dodge mediation. He expects the immanent force to be of a particular dynamic in order to produce and insert an energy that can be recognized - and felt - as a stimuli resulting in a true movement. When illuminated through the complexity of the theatrical presentation, with its restraining presumptions and cultural expectations of what theater should be and what an actor/musician should do, as well as through the emotional problems surrounding the creative demands, the immanent process is split into two diverging directions: the perpetual immanent force, which the inactive actor loses sight of, and the immanent process within the collective creative situation. Accordingly, even if Staffan feels isolated – and maybe even longing for a transcendent energy – he is not disconnected from the immanent process, from the other bodies populating the performance (and the world). He is within that organism, his consistency is transforming but he is still contributing to the consolidation of the assemblage. Though, that is not what he experiences. He feels that the situation is perishing, a feeling of non-relation, out of touch of feeling the relation of non-relation. For Brian Massumi it is important to give these states their due “without imposing a value judgment on them from outside or at a general level. Giving continuity and relation their due also involves doing the same for discontinuity, because they are necessarily implicated in each other. Something that is continuous with itself is so precisely because it detaches its activity from the outside it absolutely lives-in” (Massumi 2011, 84).

In the context of collective improvisation, immanence can therefore be described as a generating process that escapes the control of its originator. A tone, a movement, a word instantly sets off a response, that in turn effects the

trajectory of the first energy (player). The expressive force of the two parallel activities merging into something that no one could foresee can therefore possibly result in an expression in which the individual performer feels lost and maybe even disconnected. Even though the quality of the concept of *John and the Mushrooms* and its intention regarding the perceptual impact was thoroughly discussed and processed during rehearsals – and carried out specifically with the intent to reduce just this fear of not contributing to the expression of the performance with a discrete and autonomous expressive matter – the feeling of being stuck and inadequate was seemingly not possible to avoid. In her reflections on how an immanent process has been used by theater practitioners in late theater history Laura Cull turns to the avant-garde theater of the 1960s and 70s. This was a time of lively discussions around creative hierarchy and the relationship between the group and the individual, and the concept of immanence was mainly used as a tool to deconstruct and question the prevailing circumstances under which collective creations were made regarding the influence and power of the members of the group. Cull, in commenting on the Living Theater and their work, says: “the Living Theater experimented with a range of de-individualized strategies with a specific focus on finding ways to bypass the operations of conscious intention. In this way, we might insist that their critique of the individual and their interest in collective creation were not simply based on a notion of the self-present subject” (Cull 2012, 35). The term *de-individualized* is retrieved from Michele Foucault and inserted by Cull to reflect on “how the group conceives and assembles its constituent parts” (Cull 2012, 34). Consequently this leads to the inevitable friction that occurs when the desires of the individual (performer) are placed in a collective expression. This view allows us to think about Staffan’s dilemma of feeling stuck as an incapability to engage in and rest in the notion of immanence as a force that is everywhere, regardless of him and his own individual investment in its progression. In this instance the power of his consciousness could possibly be regarded as a transcendent factor distracting him from moving: “Were it not for consciousness, the transcendental field would be defined as a pure plane of immanence, because it eludes all transcendence of the subject and of the object” (Deleuze 2005, 26).

Immanence and the Shifting of Roles

Shedding light on Staffan's predicament – his fear and confusion – is also partly done to illuminate the problems emerging from what I have described as the shifting of roles that the immanent collective process demands from its players. Inventing, building, making new, finding solutions to unexpected situations, were the performers main tasks. I suggest that a major reason for increased vulnerability and insecurities when approaching this challenge can be ascribed to the fact that the making of theater, and music and dance – as well as the prevailing educational focus of each discipline – is to such a large extent built on conventional hierarchical structures, while the decisions taken within the group are most often done with a collaborative consensus attitude. When this is the case the ability and readiness to develop individual esthetic choices is understimulated. In view of the structural demands that many compositions by Cage present to its performers – equally relevant to the performances we are talking about – Clarkson says: “Though the tactics of his experimental pieces vary greatly, the overall strategy remains consistent, namely, to set in motion processes that engage the musical imagination of the performer. The success of a performance depends on finding musicians who are willing to put not only their abilities as performers on the line, but their imaginative and spiritual capacities as well” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 72). An obvious but necessary first observation on our way to disentangle this nexus around creative responsibility and its definition and use in this apparatus, is that creative responsibility, as we have concluded earlier regarding improvisation, is crucial in *all* performative artistic formats. Actually, the demands formulated by Clarkson above would probably seem obvious to any contemporary actor working within the western tradition. However, there are a number of levels on which creative responsibility within theater, dance and music can be discussed, and therefore it is important to be somewhat precise. Further complications transpire from the fact that the history and practice of the different practitioners – actors, dancers, musicians – vary, and there are variations and differences in the actual language that has been used when discussing individual performer activity and responsibility within the different groups. In the text *Hierarchy in Creation; Description of the performance of vorschläge*, I look closely at the practice of musicians and their

relationship to creative responsibility, and in the text *Differentiated Presence; Description of the performance of Ryoanji – A Meeting*, the dancers' relation to creative responsibility was reflected upon, though in a slightly different way. We will therefore mainly focus on the actors and their relation to creative responsibility.

An exposition of the development of the actor's practice throughout modern history of western theater cannot be rendered here. But, to find points of differentiation it is useful to look briefly at how, and along which lines, the concept of the "creative performer" have advanced, and this is done, which must be emphasized, *only with the intention to offer a reference that helps separate the nature of the processes in the performances that we are looking at, from collective processes built around other types of material and other types of concepts*. Which is to say, that these examples are not methodologies that were used in the creative processes, and they are not descriptive of the performer's creative approach (even if they should be considered a common knowledge base). Therefore one could say that the following overview is only connected to the creative processes that we are looking at as a countermand.

The two influential theater artists, Russian actor/director Konstantin Stanislawski (1863-1938) and German writer and theater theorist Berthold Brecht (1898-1956) are chosen here as points of departure since their thinking and theories propose methods that more or less consciously and actively assert an influence on actors' creative responsibility, even in practices that formulate other methodological trajectories. In their work and in their writings, even though in many other respects worlds apart, Stanislawski and Brecht shared an intense interest in the actor's practice, questioning and developing methods around artistic decision-making, and insisting on the need for not only an activation of the actor's individual judgment, but a relentless critical approach to their different choices. Stanislawski, firmly grounded in a naturalistic esthetic, had and still has, a strong influence on acting methodology, and in a wide variety of critical work that has emerged over the last fifty years, his ideas have been examined, utilized and expanded on. The core quality of an actor's expression lies, according to Stanislawski, in the actor's capability of finding an expressive truth, of finding the human being within the character portrayed and to find a natural flow in the activities on stage. His view on how

the actor should reach this, needless to say, changed and developed over time. His initial methodological focus was on the actor's emotions, on the capacity to imagine and tap into memory, to be conjured up and used as experiential references and transferred into the character that is portrayed. Stanislavski was convinced "that an actor's past experience, his 'emotion memory'," was a means of achieving that symbolic relationship between the actor's personality and the character" (Benedetti 1988, 174). It was about finding real emotions for the actor to use in the portrayal of the character being played. Based on the reading of Stanislavski's book *Creating a Role* (1983), Shomit Mitter takes it even further when he finds that "Only by feeling something can actors be satisfied that they are intimate with it with a fullness that approaches the required condition of being that thing" (Mitter 1992, 10). If we put this in relation to the work of the actors working in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, the reach for an emotional grounding of the expressions and claim on the autonomy of the character were constant aims within each individual actor. This was not something that was emphasized in the direction, but instead can be thought of as embedded in two divergent, more or less visible, causes. The first, and less visible, is the strong influence that such an actor methodology still has on actor-training and thinking – even though deeply questioned and problematized by many contemporary views on acting methodologies – and therefore how it imposes a kind of inescapable influence on the actors' way of working. The second cause is the fact that the conceptual setup implied that the actors' expressional incentives grew from their understanding and shaping of the characters inscribed by the script. A further complication that emerged from this complex weaving of layers was the fact that the creative responsibility constantly shifted due to the improvisational demands, and therefore the shaping of the character could never, in any way, be disconnected from the demand/responsibility to create anew.¹⁴⁸ Stanislavski, as mentioned, continually reevaluated and extended his theories around acting and he came to shift his methodology from a focus on the psychological to a more physical one, suggesting that the actor's point of entry into the psychology of a character was through physical action, saying that the "logic and coherence of physical

¹⁴⁸ A circumstance that is applicable to all three of the performances that we are looking at - *John and the Mushrooms*, *vorschläge*, and *Ryoanji – A Meeting*.

actions, directed to a given end (What do I want and what do I do to get it?) results in a logical, coherent psychological life” (Benedetti 1982, 69).¹⁴⁹ And this, what we might call a phenomenological turn in the Stanislawsian methodology, became an extremely present tactic for the performers in all three of the performances that we are looking at, because the constitution of their emotional state so much depended on the invention of physical activity in the present moment of the performance and as such, came to build, and constitute, a “coherent psychological life” for the performative persona they aimed at establishing.

Brecht’s writing on actor methodology is not as extensive as Stanislawski’s, but in conjunction with his critical writing on theater esthetics in general, it made an important imprint on the issue of the actor’s creative responsibility. Brecht’s view on acting could be seen almost like a counterpoint to that of Stanislawski, but he made it perfectly clear that on some points he was inspired by – and aligned with – the thinking of Stanislawski; on the point of the artist’s responsibility to society and the social meaning of the actor’s craft, on the importance of an actor’s keen observation of reality as a means of finding true expression, and on the importance of thinking of the ensemble as collectively creating the impact of the performance (Brecht 1964, 236). An important initial observation to make, regarding Brecht’s view on the work of the actor, is that it is tightly conflated with his idea of the alienation (*verfremdung*) effect.¹⁵⁰ Brecht’s devoted development of the alienation effect, as an esthetic device in theater making, came from the idea that a “representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar” (Brecht 1964, 192). And the desired outcome of this effect is to infuse reflection and to make us look at things with new eyes, which “implies the antecedence of a general familiarity, of a habit which prevents us from really looking at things, a kind of perceptual numbness”

¹⁴⁹ It is relevant to add that some theater scholars point out the importance of reducing the conflict between the early theories of Stanislawski that focus on emotional memories, and his later emphasis on the importance of physical action. For example, Kent Sjöström takes this up in his book *The Actor in Action* (2007), and expands on this by saying that Stanislawski based his early method on “the work with *emotional memories* and *the creative condition*, but considered them to be too volatile and not objective enough for the actor to have access to them in each and every performance” (Sjöström, 2007, 147).

¹⁵⁰ Frederic Jameson, in *Brecht and Method* (1998), argues that to translate the term *verfremdungseffekt* into alienation effect is misleading. His reasoning is backward, by saying that alienation as identified in Marxian terminology is *Entfremdung* in German and therefore the correct translation should be *estrangement* (effect). In this work though, I will use the term alienation effect, as it is the term more often used, and established (n13, 85).

(Jameson 1998, 39). Just like all illusion, the idea that the performance is anything else than just that – an artificial creation – should be avoided; the actor should incorporate a reflective awareness into the style of acting. The actor’s task – i.e. the creative responsibility – is to find a balance between a clear and complete presence in the activities *without* being transformed into the character he portrays, which could possibly cause the undesired effect of putting “his audience into a trance” (Brecht 1964, 193), and a reflective, somehow distanced quality in the expression. Brecht invented the technical term “fixing the ‘not...but’” for the acting procedure. This term is used to signify a split in the actor’s concentration, so that when he “appears on stage, besides what he actually is doing he will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that is to say he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible, that his acting allows the other possibilities to be inferred and only represents one out of the possible variants. ... In this way every sentence and every gesture signifies a decision; the character remains under observation and is tested” (Brecht 1964, 137).¹⁵¹ The distance and the reflective quality within the performative moment, desired within a Brechtian methodology, was not something that was actively discussed within the different esthetic discourses underlying the performances that we are looking at, but with that said, it should be noted that a related kind of awareness did emerge through our focus on questions about relations, connectivity and meaning. In other words, the multilayered compositional structure in which the production of affect grew from superimpositions and synergies, and the split in actor/dancer concentration regarding the impact of the individual expression in relation to the whole, was constantly present, and it produced a vibrant awareness of the importance to weigh each expressive activity in relation to the other movements. Another factor, in line with Brecht’s thinking, that infused an actor-gaze, was the closeness to the audience, and the possibility to direct the focus of the expression towards a

¹⁵¹ Two important observations can be made, as extensions leading straight into the problems treated in other places in this work. The first is that the Brechtian emphasis on keeping the actor expression under “observation” – while being in the midst of it – indicates a demand for compositional thinking/awareness when one is in an immanent collective creative process. Secondly, one of the important dramaturgical outcomes that Brecht assigned to an “esthetic of alienation” was an increased freedom for the audience. The actor’s renouncing of any illusory, refraining from filling the character with feelings of an authentic quality, would increase the possibility for the audience to engage in a process of reflection. Brecht commented by saying: “The audience must have complete freedom here” (Brecht 1964, 194). This transparency relates to the compositional consistency of the multilayered expression that is an outcome of the immanent creative processes in the theatrical expressions that we are looking at, aimed at creating the same dramaturgical relation to the audience, a relation of freedom to find an individual path of perception (See the essay *Meeting – Meaning*).

limited section of viewers, which allowed for a heightened understanding of the reciprocity of the expression.

One of the followers of the methodologies and esthetics of Stanislavski (and in certain aspects, also of Brecht), reasonable to mention here in regards to the historical undercurrent within the study of the actors' practice, is the Polish theater artist Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999). Grotowski developed an acting methodology that, to a large extent, prepared the foundation for contemporary physical theater through an expansion and deepening of the actors' creative responsibility. Grotowski, like Stanislavski, focused intensely on the importance of the actor's expressive truth and awareness of presence, but he intensified the need for each individual actor to reach what he called "self-revelation" and underscored the importance of articulating this process. In the Grotowski acting methodology, the actor's physical work with his/her body was crucial for achieving a bare, true expression of the here and now. He was convinced that expressiveness can only be found through a thorough investigation of the body, its limitations and capacities. An extensive research into a variety of vocal and bodily exercises was developed and implemented so that the actor would "be able to decipher all the problems of his body which are accessible to him" (Grotowski 1968, 35). To put this into a Swedish context, the director Ingemar Lind (1945-1997) represents a theater artist who for many years comprehensively investigated, together with his group *Institutet för Scenkonst*, actor questions of this type. What's interesting about the work and thinking of Lind is that he encourages the creative invention of the actor to stay open to what he calls the "social situation" which forces the actor to see constant change as part of the "material" of the actor (Lind 2003).¹⁵² The depth and thoroughness that signifies the Grotowski method, in regards to the intense focus on bodily training/expression and "self-revelation" were not qualities that were searched for or explicitly noticeable in our performances. But, since the material and concepts to such a large degree demanded expressive invention, the use of the body and its "truth" inevitably became an important aspect of actor/dancer creative responsibility, an aspect enhanced by the strong presence – the here and now – of musical movements, colors and rhythms.

¹⁵² Important to note is that Lind's use of the term "social situation" only seems to be referring to the internal, collaborative situation inhabited by the actor. And not – which is such an important aspect in this work – the exchange between the performance and its audience, which I refer to, in places, as a social situation.

What lies in the forefront – or maybe rather as a strong substrate – in the work, thinking and theories of Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski is the notion that the vitality and strength of theater is dependent on the quality of actor performance and, what is most relevant to the reasoning that I am trying to carve out in this apparatus, is that the actor who has to do the work, who has to activate his/her awareness and creativity in order to shape the individual expression. There is no way around the necessity for the actor to, not only evoke, but also expand his/her capability to take responsibility in order for this to happen. And the quality, in its core, does not depend on an outward performative quality but on an inward expressive truth; to be found, weighed and shaped by the individual performer.¹⁵³

As a means to fast forward this overview to a place in modern theater history that certainly had a pivotal effect on the notion of creative responsibility in collective creation – the late 1960s and 70s – it is useful to make the observation that not only do the above examples epitomize the domination of a male gaze in the modern history of western theatre, but also, in the way their methodologies are formulated, they uphold and validate the dependence on a hierarchical setup where an external authority is the judge and evaluator of success or failure. The actor is creatively responsible for shaping his/her individual expression, but there is a constantly present outside force, that represents the overarching responsibility for the compositional aspects and the dramaturgical consequences of the individual choices. This can certainly be experienced as a contradiction that is maybe hard to stomach, and the evolvement of the group theaters that grew out of the political turbulence of the 1960s and 70s, should be regarded as a reaction against this.

In their attempt to trace the motivations behind the theatrical creations of the 1960s and 70s, Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit in their book

¹⁵³ The very influential director Peter Brook, for many years deeply interested in the work of Grotowski, made a comment in 1964 on actors' creative responsibility, when discussing the need for the actor – and the director - to find new ways of thinking and working outside a naturalistic esthetic, that can somewhat serve as a bridge to our present time: "Now we are putting the actor in situations where, for instance, he has to take his first impulse and turn it maybe into a leap, maybe into rushing up to a sheet of white paper and attacking it with paint. What we are trying to bring about is for the actor, in making his choice, to make it as an independent, responsible creative artist. Instead of turning his impulses into one of the many forms that are already there (so that his choice fits into the form that he has learnt to appreciate and assimilate), here his responsibility is to transcend his first naturalistic impulse, and then he has to manifest the best expressive choice, in a way that he can afterwards defend as being the limit of his consciousness. Funny enough, what the actor first wants to do in an improvisation is only superficially his first idea: when he realizes this, in a Zen-like way he can find an even quicker expression, one which he is operating as an artist, not in accordance with his trained reflexes" (Williams 1988, 32).

A History of Collective Creation (2013), observe that the creative seeds for the extensive questioning of and experimentation with theatrical forms, methods and expressions can be found in artistic movements happening long before the turbulence of 1968. From their predominately North American perspective, they mention Erwin Piscator who was teaching at The New School for Social Research in New York City in the mid 1940s and who came to influence many theater artists, among them Judith Molina, who recalls the energy of that time: “We were mowing towards the spirit of ’68, still 20 years ahead of us, just as the socialist revolutions of which Piscator spoke were 20 years behind us” (Syssoyeva and Proufit, 2013a, 115). The esthetic experimentations, exemplified by the work of John Cage and Allan Kaprow, grew side by side with the founding of a number of experimental theaters. The Living Theatre, to give one example, searched for new and nonhierarchical methods to create theater. However, it is reasonable to say that it was the political and social turbulence of the late 1960s that set off a more precise and focused criticism of prevalent structures within theater making. And thereby, the birth of collective creation, as a term signifying opposition to existing hierarchical structures, can be said to have an ideological source. The questioning and rejection of the different roles in a traditional production situation, like the role of the producer, the playwright, and the director, was at the core of the critical shift, a shift that aimed to replace these figures of authority with collective labor and collective creativity. Consequently the question of creative responsibility, which is what we are trying to locate, became the central issue of the intense reconfigurations enveloped during this time. The responsibility for the artistic expression of the performance was removed from an individual authority, and placed on the shoulders of the collective. The complex dynamic of shared creative responsibility and the contradictions and ambiguities that a collective process entails, are obviously grand and would be a rich topic in itself. Though, we will rest in the observation that, generally speaking, the outlook and importance placed on exploring individual creativity within collective processes, radically changed during the late 1960s and 70s in a way that, one could say, sowed the seeds for how actor responsibility in collective creation is viewed today.

There are two factors, in the productions we are looking at, regarding the demands on the performers, that most clearly differentiate them from the types of

creative responsibility that we have located in the above. The first, which mainly relates to the methods of Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski, is that there is no outside reference judging, adjusting and commenting on the actors' choices. Secondly, the performances are not fixed; the collective process has no goal to create a predetermined form and expression. This is in contrast to how the notion of collective creation – both in the theater movements of the 1960s and 70s as well as in more contemporary collaborative practices, like *divising* – principally should be “understood as a series of challenges to the traditional authorities within theatre’s creative process” (Syssoyeva, Proudfit, 2013a, 125). Hence, it is clearly a reaction to the hierarchical and hegemonic structures of their own theatrical traditions, but not, notably, a reaction to the idea of the fixed artifact. This can be exemplified by Laura Cull’s description of the collaborative process of The Living Theatre (in relation to *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, 1964, and *Paradise Now*, 1968) when she says that, “the company allows order to emerge from the bottom up. . . . Rather than allowing an individual to coordinate and command the process of creating a performance from the ‘outside,’ The Living Theatre engaged in lengthy group discussions as the primary method for generating, developing, and organizing new performance material” (Syssoyeva and Proudfit, 2013a, 133). Cull continues by pointing out that “no matter how fully a company might embrace the idea that they cannot, and do not want to, occupy a God’s-eye view outside their creative process – they must inevitably arrive at a point in that process where they must at least *stage* an occupation of such a position in order to edit and organize their material, arrive at a ‘finished’ work, and perform the ‘same’ show more than once?” (Syssoyeva and Proudfit 2013a, 134). From this, we can understand that even if the creative responsibility is distributed among the members of the collective, a certain “order” is aimed for (we do not know what this order refers to: compositional, dramaturgical, narrative?) and the group discussions are directed towards “organizing” the material, with the goal to create a predetermined form and expression. When looking at this example of a collective creative process – which to a large extent mirrors how collective creation is also approached today – one can discern that the egalitarian quality that it purports is about the process *leading up to a performance*, not the performance itself. Consequently, the distinct difference between creative situations and creative responsibility is not to be found in the presence (and use) of a certain variable factor, for example improvisation, but

rather exactly *where* this variability is placed in terms of process and performance. In the immanent creative processes that we are looking at, set in motion during time shared with the audience, the creative responsibility for the performers was to make instantaneous *compositional* decisions. This differentiation requires, for reasons of clarification, that we put aside the term *collective creation* in favor of the term *instant collective composition*.¹⁵⁴

The improvisational shaping of the individual expressive matter is the activity which demands taking responsibility on that particular level, but then, a keen awareness of and sense of responsibility for its combined effect in the present moment, is also required. It is this latter level that calls for the use of the term instant collective composition, which in turn envelops the term shifting of role. To put this creative dynamic in perspective we can compare it with the Black Mountain performance *Untitled Event*, mentioned in the foreword. From comments made by the participating artists, we know that each artist had separately prepared an activity that was then performed during shared time, creating an expressional structure of superimpositions. Experienced artists with different practices took responsibility for preparing and shaping their expressive matter before the actual event, and during the actual performance the adjustments of the expressive matter happened mainly on a subconscious level. Merce Cunningham had this to say about the performance process: “nor was I to have anything to do with what anybody else was doing necessarily” (Fetterman 1996, 102). This is different from how I, in the rehearsal processes of *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoani – A Meeting*, focused on the question of how to listen, adjust and calibrate the individual expression in relation to the others. That focus was intended to produce an understanding for the need of each performer to extend their awareness beyond the challenge of shaping their individual expression, to relational aspects in compositional thinking, and this is what I choose to see as a shift in the role of the performer; from being creatively responsible for the individual expressive matter to – instantaneously and without any process of negotiation with the other participants – being forced to take responsibility for weighing its effect in and on the expression as

¹⁵⁴ Within the genre of *free improvised music* – musical improvisations not attached to a specific idiom – the term *instant collective composition* is sometimes used. This term can be understood as indicating a shift away from an extended and deconstructed jazz idiom, towards a more sound oriented mode related to contemporary compositional esthetics. Theories on musical improvisation will not be addressed here, even though its relevance is obvious.

a whole.¹⁵⁵ It is therefore essential to understand that the concept of the *shifting of roles* refers to the discrete moment of performing and not to the process of creating the performance, but to the very moment of performing it. This is what differentiates the concept of *shifting of roles* from the type of changing of roles that comes with methods like “devising,” “collaborative creation” or “theater improvisation” in which the traditional roles and hierarchical structures are shifted by, for example, the actor also functioning as author, the musician as actor, the actor taking on responsibility for the direction and so on.¹⁵⁶

To activate the compositional judgment of the performers does not only place the ability – compositional as well as expressional – of each individual in focus, but also highlights the question of intent. Intentionality is inevitably relational, and its definition is linked to phenomena and dynamics both within the discrete realm of the (art) piece as well as to the outside world. So, if the intention behind a performance derives from the choices and initiatives taken by the director, producer – and on a certain level, cultural politics – it is then extended, or countered, by the intention of each of the performers involved. This latter level of intention, tied to the choices and expressions of each individual, is commented on by Clarkson in the framework of Cage’s esthetics: “The individual for Cage and Tudor is someone whose actions arise not only from the ego-system, but also from the guiding center of the personality, the source of ethical impulses that link the individual to society” (Clarkson in Bernstein and Hatch, 2001, 74). In order to activate – and somewhat synchronize this demand for a personal intent with the overall intent of the event as a whole – it is important to infuse an awareness in each individual involved of: why this is happening in the way it is happening. The shifting of roles consequently produces a need not only to compose, but also to understand “why I compose.” The challenge of this was commented on by the actor Mauritz: “That was something

¹⁵⁵ To use the term a shift in connection to interpretation (acting) is sometimes done to indicate a shift of meaning of the text that is performed through a change (or shift) in the actual performative moment. This is much simpler than it sounds as it describes the possibility for the actor to, through his way of shaping the material, imply the meaning (intent) of the text. This is just mentioned to make a distinction between the shifting of roles that this work is focused on and the shift in meaning that this latter assertion points to.

¹⁵⁶ This shift is thus all about the allocation of creative responsibility and if it is transferred into the performance of *vorschläge*, where the performers are musicians, the term could be descriptive of how they use their creative input and imagination outside the actual music making and through a critical discussion of the interpretation of different texts, thus shifting the responsibility from music making to a hermeneutical activity. Connected to that shift in the role of the actor/musician is the shifting of the role of director who, in such a situation, has no impact on the expression of the performance.

that we realized, kind of collectively one time when we had played a performance where a lot of sounds and activities were going on at the same time, everybody was just doing a lot of things. And after that we talked about how the whole performance is so much about listening. It just felt so great to be reminded of that overall perspective, that the performance is about listening.” The aspect of intention, within the framework of the performances, was further complicated by the fact that they, to a certain extent, wanted to be non-intentional. This ambition was fueled by Cage who said: “What I would like to find is an improvisation that is not descriptive of the performer, but is descriptive of what happens, and which is characterized by an absence of intention. It is at the point of spontaneity that the performer is most apt to have recourse to his memory. He is not apt to make a discovery spontaneously. I want to find ways of discovering something you don’t know at the time that you improvise – that is to say, the same time you’re doing something that’s not written down, or decided upon ahead of time” (Kostelanetz 1987, 222).

It is of course necessary to understand the term – and process – of *shifting of roles*, in this context, as relative. Each performer involved in the different performances saw themselves as an artist in their own right, continuously making choices and activating their artistic judgment and sensitivity in their specific practice. But since the concepts were dependent on an investigative attitude that, to a large extent, was brought into the performances, it meant that parts of the struggle with one’s own individual art practice were disclosed. It could then be said that an immanent process allows one to investigate the unfamiliar, plus, functions as a way into an understanding of how our shortcomings can become a resource and part of the expression. In the case of the musicians working with the production of *vorschläge* by Matthias Spahlinger, it is possible to claim that the shifting of roles meant something different than for the actors and dancers, since the musicians felt less stressed and insecure around the fact that they had to improvise and invent their own expression. For them, instead, it was the demand to – in a collective immanent process – reflect, analyze and verbally discuss how to read and understand Spahlinger’s instructions. This was a shift from “just” reading and playing a score to actually talking and thinking about what they should play and why.

For the performer, the challenges emanating from an immanent process are, as we slowly come to understand, manifold. Not only is there a need to create expressions using compositional judgment but also to encompass the position

of each expressional activity in relation to the overall esthetics and intent. In the preparation process for both of the productions *John and the Mushrooms*, and *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, this challenge was met by activating the thinking and awareness around the relational and perceptual aspects in and of the performances, but also by emphasizing that each character/person on stage should be seen as an individual with a strong artistic practice.¹⁵⁷ The shifting of roles, from that aspect, meant viewing the expressional force as an individual activity rather than collectively, which obviously – and inevitably – caused friction when coming together to create something. The capability to nourish this dynamic is related to the ability to experience the vitality in difference and to open up the senses to the wholeness of diversity and multiplicity. Linkages between apparently colliding forces and expressions need to be enjoyed, as well as acknowledged, and this demand actualizes the question: What is it that I, as a performer, participate in? When reflecting on, and critically treating the notion of performance participation, an obvious picture that might turn up is the exchange that happens in the space as a whole, encapsulating everyone, performers and audience alike. Though, as we at this point are looking at the dynamics of instant collective composition within an immanent process from a performer perspective, we will need to temporarily exclude the gaze that incorporates the audience, and stay within the creative dynamics of the different ensembles.¹⁵⁸ It is helpful however, to keep in mind that the concepts that are used to illuminate participation within the ensembles are transferable to the level of the whole event, hence not only building a bridge between the two but also indicating how tightly conflated they are and mutually influenced.

Immanence and Performing Participation

The notion of participation refers to the performer's individual and subjective experience of partaking in the relations to the surrounding elements. Therefore the resemblance to the previous discussion on relations is obvious. Though, the

¹⁵⁷ In the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* this challenge to work and think as an artist in his/her own right was complicated because their character appeared in the script with a name that was attached to a biographical person. In *Ryoanji – A Meeting* however, the dancers were not asked to work on any fictional level but instead with their own personal experience and artistic sensitivity.

¹⁵⁸ The extension into the broader picture, including the audience and the aspect of affect, is treated in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*.

gaze in the treatment above on the differentiation between expressive matter, its consistency, relations and consolidation found its bearing in the notion of relations of non-relations. This fact can be used as a dividing factor since participation cannot be constituted by its opposite in the same way; claiming participation through non-participation. This distinct difference places the above discussion on the relations between expressive matter within a discourse of composition and dramaturgy and the discussion on performer participation within, what might be labeled, a socio-esthetic field. To further demarcate the area of discussion we can ask: Participation in what? In the following, the suggested answer to that question is – the *whole*. This term is certainly complex, both on a philosophical level and from a perception psychology perspective, but the exposition of the participatory aspect is not an attempt to locate this term in a philosophical discourse or in cognitive theory, but instead in the actual doings of the performers. With that said it is useful to keep in mind that processual thinking to a large degree is concerned with the aspects of interrelatedness, multiplicity and the notion that all togetherness is signified by difference. However, what we will see in the following is that the notion of the *whole* is used to signify the experience of being together in an expressive form and the energies and feelings that appear around such phenomena as connectivity and inclusion.

The affective nature of being in an immanent creative process is of being in a new form, unfamiliar and as such, fragile. The first instinct is to reach for recognizable signs of relations and participation; a search for a sense of being a part - of the whole. But what is the whole in this context? What is its nature? Is it stable? Is it something that everybody (in the ensemble) agrees on? I want to suggest that this whole is something recognizable either as an affective sequence in the world outside the performative situation, or as an established and normative esthetic matrix. Juxtaposing the organizing instinct and desire to be in the whole with an immanent creative collective process subsequently creates friction since it continuously produces new forms and new combinations that cannot be immediately recognized. The actor Staffan Göthe, in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, made a comment that conveys how this friction set off a collective effort to understand and comply with the inevitable flux of the whole: “We [the ensemble] talked a lot about the idea that even if each piece of the material, every part, was known to us, one could be extra sensitive to the fact

that the actual combination had never before occurred, was totally new. I think it was through those discussions, and this way of thinking that we retrieved the luster in the performance.” This is an example of how the ensemble of *John and the Mushrooms* gathers after a performance to talk about it.¹⁵⁹ In other words, the “disorganization” that ensued from the immanent process in the ensemble during the performance is somehow structured, on an emotional level, through a conjunctive immanent process on a social level (a discussion of a critical esthetic nature). It is as if the unfamiliar, that they themselves create, had to be confirmed as something valuable from outside its existence in order to become endurable. Which in turn becomes a confirmative process that actually creates a chain of meta-levels, as this discussion around the challenge to fully engage in what is unfamiliar, is something that is explicitly talked about between the characters in the performance:

MERCE

Nooo, I think I think or ... What becomes of all that is happening, together, at the same time? I wonder. Does it work?

YOKO

Yes! I do my thing and you do your thing and it becomes together.

MERCE

Become together? Is that together, what I do and what you do. Differ together?

YOKO

Yes, at the same time here, nowhere else, then it becomes like that. I do and you do and we live in it. I cannot differ, I am I, but want together.

(Petri 2011, 9)

¹⁵⁹ I had no knowledge about precisely how and when the ensemble collectively worked/discussed the development of the public performances, but as the creative process during rehearsals were more or less dependent on a continuous dialogue among the performers it was obvious that it continued after the premier.

The impetus behind the desire for participation in the whole of the expression can be seen as an organizing instinct that the non-narrative and non-representative esthetic provokes. The immanent process can therefore be said to be – partly – influenced by insecurities and desires for organization and balance of an affirmative kind. However, this observation does not make the immanent process transcendent (the transcendent force thus being norms and conventions) but confuses the borders of the two polarities. The search for a confirmation of the status of the new and unfamiliar, as exposed in the exchange between the performers, is not the pendulum movement between the two forces that all interpretative activity entails, like the listening and communicative process within a string quartet playing written music, but instead it is a movement of an esthetic and psychodynamic nature. Taken one step further, the movement towards the whole can be seen as a social formation, indicating the tendency that each individual intuitively adjusts his or her expression to correspond to what might be described as either a norm of social behavior (rhythm and interplay, dynamic responses of listening and speaking) or compositional preexisting conventions. This tendency can possibly be regarded – and problematized – as a transcendent influence. When working with the Mathias Spahlinger's composition *vorschläge*, where discussions and the exchange of views among the musicians were part of the performance, this became clear:

DAVID

But, do you think that this discussion should lead to that we decide what we are going to play, or ... no.

EVA

I just feel a real urge to try something.

They all laugh, except David

DAVID

The goal for me is to, somehow ... that we should find a kind of collective... that what I play doesn't overtake in any way, I mean that I try to subordinate myself, and play something that doesn't kind of go against too much ...

EVA

Because we probably have ...

DAVID

...what the others do.

EVA

... six very different ideas about what we eventually are going to play, what kind of sound, music.

The implication in this exchange is that to become a part of the whole, the individual expression has to be adjusted - adjustments made along the way towards the collective creation; considerations and awareness to the unfolding of the immanent process. The impetus behind this is the aspiration for collective authorship, which presumably will create a sense of a whole. The collective process is therefore influenced by the preconception of how the collective expression - in relation to already existing esthetics - should be shaped. But the example given, of the exchange between David and Eva in their work with *vorschläge*, also illustrates that the group was anxious to find consensus outside their performance practice by intuitively developing a socio-metric pattern towards consensus and inclusion, thereby mirroring the joint compositional effort in the music making. Both of these levels of awareness can be seen as conscious calibrations towards preexisting definitions - and experiences - of the whole.

Is then the notion of performing the whole inevitably tied to modes and qualities already known, to an idea of what it is - before - it has occurred? The complex substrate of an indeterminate immanent collective creative process, we come to see, encompasses quite a few contradictions and fields of friction of this kind, but these fields cannot be regarded as obstructions. They are information. They are real, in so far as they consist of emotions, ambitions and desires within each individual involved. The reflections above connote that an immanent process within collective creation can be disrupted, even stopped in its flow, and that the exchange of stimuli and response between the performers is composed of certain specific qualities. Of course this cannot be a constructive and valid stance. Instead it is necessary to affirm that *every* action and reaction is a part

of the immanent process: within the performance, as well as in the world, as a whole. The intrusive nature of such a view is commented on by Laura Cull when she says that the “immanent/transcendent dyad cannot simply be mapped onto specific instances of performance, allowing us to separate the bottom-up from the top-down, the good from the bad. Indeed we have noted that this very gesture would be a kind of transcendence in itself, an application of pre-existing concepts onto performance as if it were a passive and pliant example” (Cull 2012, 55). So, to what extent can the desire to establish participation through relations of a more recognizable nature within the performances, be seen as a stratifying energy: As a way to avoid a feeling of isolation and vulnerability that might grow from being inside an immanent and indeterminate process? A vulnerability that stems from the notion that we will “never feel grounded when immanence is the starting point for our thinking” (Cull 2012, 9).

There is an initiative taken – Immanence and Hierarchy

You can always start wherever. I don't think what I decide is better than what you decide and I don't think what you decide is better than what Yoko decides and I don't think what Yoko decides is better than what David decides and I don't think what David decides is better than what Rose decides. I think that everything can be there at the same time and I think that everything can be silent.¹⁶⁰

Johan Petri

An initiative must be taken for an activity to ensue. In the case of the three performances we are looking at, I took the initiative. The role of the director could therefore, be said to be preceded by the role of initiator. Though, that is not an accurate description of my roles – first initiator followed by director – rather, as we shall see, these two roles are closely intertwined and there is a shifting dynamic between the two. And it is this dynamic that actually constitutes the core friction and main source for these reflections. Why is that?

¹⁶⁰ This is a line that the character John has in the performance of John and the Mushrooms.

Well, the initiator is setting the activity in motion by creating the circumstances under which the collective activities are possible to take place. The intent of the initiator, as such, is not to steer the expressive quality of the performance but “just” to create the possibility for it to happen. The director, on the other hand, engages in shaping the expression (of each performer as well as the performance as a whole). All three concepts, on which the performances were based, were created to decrease the need and impact of the director, redirecting this role towards the role of the initiator. Whichever of these two roles we choose to look at, and in whatever way we choose to define them, they both constitute power over significant aspects of the collaborative process, and the question of hierarchy is certainly present and in play.

Mathias Spahlinger, in his foreword to the composition *vorschläge*, says that “those game-rules are the best (and also most difficult to formulate) that already from the start are open, that demand or presume its own reflection, that comprise its own determination, its fluidity, its own abounding. game-rules for music – irrespectively if determined by the composer (as a plan) or if developed collaboratively from, or not from, a plan of some sort – should not be oriented towards result, should not have anything of a strictly commanding decree, but instead in each and every moment of its performance available for disposal. the rule should be influenceable, changeable, yes possible to eliminate, even when its validity is defined it should be possible to infringe; it will show that a determined infringement of the game-rules will bring more truth into the light than any rule ever will accomplish. or: other, not predetermined definitions of game-rules will ensue only by experimentation or ad-hoc decisions, that on the other hand – beneficiary to the entirety – is possible or desirable to disagree with and oppose to. what this music propose, express, is, is decided by those who perform it, each and every one of them (Spahlinger 1993). Here, Spahlinger not only questions his own role as decision maker but he instigates a flux in the flow of communication between the performers and lays the ground for changing how the expressive musical form emerges; as coming from somewhere else – maybe – than from the composer’s instruction. He encourages the musician who opposes the instructions of the composer, the musician who moves beyond the suggestion of the score and activates his or her own sensitivity and judgment. The main incentive behind Spahlinger’s formulations - and the act of creating

the composition (*vorschläge*) - is to offer a stage, or a circumstance, from which the different levels of hierarchy involved in a process of interpretation, as it has been shaped by western music history, can be criticized and explored. But it also connects to what Cage says when he claims that "I don't hear it as I write it." which he elaborates on by saying that he wants to experience something that he cannot imagine (Retallack 1996, 184). Spahlinger expresses something similar: "i have let myself be guided by some deliberations i would like to bring up with the intention to insert them into the discussion and thereby clarify that my suggestions not always satisfy my own demands" (Spahlinger 1993). The construct of the Spahlinger concept is then what Deleuze would call a precise operation that deducts an element of power, but is not a negative operation (as both Cage's and Spahlinger's comments point to) because it already enlists and releases positive processes (Murray 1997).

In the same way as Spahlinger does, when he questions his role and authority as composer in the foreword, the concepts of the performances we are talking about are also built to consciously undermine such hierarchies. Though, the nature of the creative situation in the performances is not characterized by an absence of transcendent factors (that on a certain level disqualifies it as immanent) but is steered by an organizational principle, an open but still compositional structure. The control over this structure – the choice of material and its placement on a durational sequence, is in my hands as initiator/director. As repeatedly pointed out, the use of unpredictable chance operated procedures within these structures reduces the director's control (in some major parts, it is fully truncated from pivotal artistic decisions), but the structure is still a transcendent force, even if it does not have a direct and precise relation to that which is invented/developed/expressed. Did this power over certain aspect of the process inflict on the performers creativity? If so, how and in what way?

We might need to be reminded again of the specific circumstances – the rules of the game – that the performances were based on. Just like in the Spahlinger composition, the starting point for the performers was different kinds of instructions: textual instructions to be used for creating music, instructions for an action to be made or instructions in the form of a poem or a fictional text to be performed in some way. The instructions found their value only through the individual performer's improvisational expressive action or reflective response.

According to the rules of the game these expressions and/or responses were controlled by the performer and could not be judged or adjusted. This was mainly because the quality of the performances lay in the instantly invented expression of the performer and any directorial comment or even suggestion would subsequently contradict and counter act the need and demand on the performer to fully rely on his/her own responsibility and capability to shape the expression. When formulating his own stance and esthetics in regard to this aspect of performer responsibility Cage says: “The position should not stay – in the case of music – should not stay with the composer once he’s written something. It should move over to the next person who deals with it, and that person – the performer – should become responsible, and responsible to himself or herself, rather than to the composer” (Retallack 1996, 293). In addition to the fact that the expression in the discrete moment of performance (or rehearsal) could not be adjusted or shaped by the director, the openings for directorial intervention were circumscribed by the use of chance operations and the indeterminate mode that this produced. The first field of tension within the concepts of the performances in this polarity of dominance and subordination is clear-cut: The initiator – who is also the director – facilitates the situation where the performer is demanded to activate and use her/his creativity to express something of her own in order for the performance to come into being. In other words, the director controls whether the performer is going to be able to express herself, by creating – or not – the situation in which the improvisation can take place.¹⁶¹ The performer on the other hand controls the expressive quality. Though, this is not fully true as the initiator/director/ composer has the power over *which* instructions there are to choose from (or that the chance operations pull out), hence deciding and creating what material to be used in the immanent creative process. But does this level of directorial power over the material – inevitably followed by restrictions – conflict with the immanent process? How does this intricate weave

¹⁶¹ This must be understood in the framework of the specific production situations, and the hierarchical structures within them. The possibility for the performer to express her/himself elsewhere cannot be encompassed in this reflection. Also, there are of course, a large number of factors that are in play and that effect the dynamics of the collective work, which cannot be included here. An example would be the economical aspect, and the fact that no real freedom can exist, neither for the director/initiator nor for the performer, as he/she is being paid to do the work. In our case, the possibility to produce the performances lay in the hands of different heads of theaters, dependent on the economical conditions framed by politicians, as the performances were produced in state subsidized theaters. Subordination to the power of economics naturally makes the emotions regarding the hierarchical structure more complex and charged.

that determines how the power is allocated within the collective creative process effect aspects like creative freedom, the sense of control over the expression, the role and function of the director, and the communicative relationship between the performer and director? These questions can only be met by reflecting on what frictions and problems they exert in the collaborative creative situation.

As the proprietor of power over the artistic decisions shifts between the different parts in the collective creation, the directorial challenge is to infuse an awareness of how these shifts alter the demands in respect to creative responsibility. But, as important, is to find a way to establish a level of security in each performer, in the parts where they invent and are in control. The circumstances under which the performers could gain strength to oppose the power of the director/composer varied in the different performances. The members of the ensemble in *John and the Mushrooms* did work as a group, but as the concept encouraged them to stay within their individual sensitivity, their possible objections to the instructions in the script, formulated and inserted by me, were somewhat decreased as this individualization reduced the strength of their opposition. This aspect of opposition within the ensemble working with the composition/performance of *vorschläge* was different, as the concept of the performance allowed them to synchronize their emotions and opinions into a joint force. In the movement called *Empathy* Spahlinger instructs the players by saying “the first sound is brought forth with as little intention as possible (no acting or expressive self-assertion).” Throughout the whole discussion process, this demand to approach their music making without intention provoked the ensemble in different ways and a bit into the work there was this exchange:

ANNA

He clearly contradicts himself here, at one point in the text, when he says that one should feel and try “...to determine from what intention, posture, state of mind, bodily tension, the sound has been brought forth (this may be consciously or not for the first player).” Well, if there is consciousness there is also intention.

DAVID

It is probably formulated like that just so that we will react to it.

EVA

The text is maybe written just to provoke us. But guys, hallo, we don't go along with this!

The power over the artistic decisions is never contained in one place, and in this respect no clear division can be asserted between the different parts of the performances, even if the power *formally* is allocated to one particular position. They continuously overlap and effect each other. This is about contamination: the parts where the performer has the power to, not only shape the expression but also choose what to express, are easily contaminated by the hierarchy in the parts in which the performer does not exert control to the same extent. I suggest that there are two energies that lie behind this problem. The first is about unspoken expectations, about energies and different levels of status prevailing in the collaborative situation, irrespectively of where the power is placed at the moment of creation. The actor Staffan Göthe comments on this in our conversation: “but you know I could feel that there was something problematic with, and maybe I just imagine this, that ‘Johan has such an incredibly close relationship to Cage that I can’t really do my thing ...’, do you understand? I felt that it was difficult to take it in my own direction. JP: So you felt trapped in my imagination as it occurred in your imagination? SG: Yes, as if the main reason was for me to satisfy that.” (Göthe 2012) The power that the director exerts in a process can thus, unintentionally, be authoritarian. It is probably reasonable to say that such an impact often works on levels concerning expectations and what’s left unspoken. To nourish an immanent process this kind of given-power is something that the performer needs to be encouraged to break loose from since it obviously gets in the way of listening to and being aware of the signals and impulses moving through the ensemble.¹⁶² The unintentional authoritarian impact was assumedly amplified by the emission of directorial responses, which produced a vague and sometimes complicated notion of where the power lay.

In addition to the disruption on the creative process that emanated from the unintentional authority engraved in the hierarchical structures, there were

¹⁶² It is absolutely necessary to make clear that even if this reasoning is based on the comment made by actor Staffan Göthe, he did not repeatedly express a feeling of being controlled by unspoken expectations. On the contrary, his energy and integrity was strong throughout the work.

other forces within the ensemble that further complicated the question of power and how it was allocated when creating the individual actor expression in the immanent process. The actor Staffan Göthe went on to explain: “and also that I in some strange way felt inhibited, like when Kristine and Anna very early in the process threw themselves in there and just played. Also Jessica could be totally uninhibited and shout and scream and run around, do things, and I couldn’t... it was really unpleasant that I wanted to do something but felt inhibited or embarrassed or something, so there was a kind of struggle to manage to do what I desired.” What we can understand from this is that even if the power over the expression formally is allocated to different positions in the collective, structures of hierarchy still prevail. This is partly, as I said, because these structures are ingrained in the traditional way of making theatre, but also what could be described as the hierarchy of expressions. The question then is if it is possible to view these sub-forces as disturbances on the immanent process? Since immanence as a perpetual movement is unimpressionable, the answer is no. But still, as immanence in this framework is viewed as a sequence of exchange where stimuli and expressive responses create a building from within, it is reasonable to say that these hidden hierarchies inflict on the creative process of the performer and somehow deprive him/her of the power to contribute. I leave open the question of how to prevent and meet these structural problems, as it goes deep into aspects of prevailing cultural/political phenomena that are outside the realm of the collective creation, as well as, involve complex questions of a sociometric nature. But what I can say is that during the work with the different productions, we were forced to address these questions and their impact on the process. As the occurrence of disturbing factors was an undeniable and unavoidable fact, the question of hierarchy and power was dealt with on a micro level and addressed in relation to each discrete creative situation where the performer felt inhibited and confused. The general attitude then, was to strive for an increased awareness of what was going on and where the power lay, i.e. to illuminate both my own unintentional impact, as well as the individual performer’s responsibilities and possibilities.

In his text *One Less Manifesto* Deleuze addresses the question of hierarchy and power from a number of vantage points: the interventions of the director, the hierarchy of language, the hierarchy and power of what theater represents, as well

as “the power of theater itself” (Murray 1997, 251). In other words, his reasoning goes beyond the nature of the creative process that is happening when making theater, honing the reasoning down to the very specific conditions under which an expression that is in *continuous variation* can occur. It is Deleuze’s point of focus and explicit opinion, that the distribution and dissolution of power, as exerted from the theatrical expression (as well as from the theater as an institution) can only happen when continuous variation is set in motion. If continuous variation then is the priority, the question of what means are needed to attain it, is subordinate. This is indicated by Laura Cull in her observation that if “a dominant director is needed to construct such a theater, then so be it, Deleuze seems to imply; whatever way works” (Cull 2012, 54). The correlation between this observation and the performances that we are looking at is obvious but intricate. The intention to create expressional movements in continuous variation is similar, but there is also the presence of a transcendent power (exerted by the concepts delineating the expressive matter and the aspect of duration). In other words: Hierarchy prevails. However, the specifics of how and at which points the hierarchical structures are under attack differ, as continuous variation, in the case of our performances, is a desired outcome but not something that is constructed/composed in a fixed sense. Instead it is an outcome of chance and indeterminacy.

Immanence and the director

The paradoxes that occur when juxtaposing the notion of unavoidable hierarchies with creative situations that are built on a process of immanence, chance operations and indeterminacy maybe become most charged when looking at the role of the director and its inherit transcendent status. The contradictions are as obvious as when Cage talks about “interpenetration and non-obstruction” or “purposeful purposelessness.” Clarkson suggests that an often-used way – by performers/directors – to tackle this contradictory dynamic is to “conclude that these formulations may be hoped for ideals but are unattainable in practice” (Bernstein and Hatch 2001, 71). Though, for me as a director, the interesting challenge is to allow and affirm the frictions and the charged polarities that are exposed through the collective creative process and the built-in paradoxes of the concepts, and to not give in to the idea that

democracy in collective creative situations – as well as between expressions – is a hoped for ideal but unattainable in practice. Instead, I want to look at how the directorial interventions can take form. With that said, we have to start the reflections on the directorial task from the observation that just as the unfolding of an expression built on chance and indeterminacy escapes its initial origin, the expression of the performance escapes the control and impact of the director. No adjustments can be made, and no comments regarding the expressive quality can be voiced. Consequently, if chance is allowed, if immanence and indeterminacy is desired, if the artistic judgment of the individual performer is at the core of the expression, then the directorial interventions that are possible to make have to be of a specific type and on a specific level. The sensitivity and judgment that must be used in such a challenge is certainly tied to my subjectivity, but it also directly mirrors a directorial intention and is therefore connected to the question of artistic responsibility. How is that so? Well, to renounce the possibility to steer the separate parts of a performance, or even its combined expression, does not imply that the initiator(s) – the director, or if it is a collective – is deprived of the artistic responsibility. Instead, a different outlook is needed, an outlook that abandons the image of the performance as a carrier of one specific meaning, with the director (or the collective) as its author. The removal of my influence on the expressive outcome thus generates a shift in focus and a need to transform the question: What statement do I make by instigating the performance and what is my responsibility for its treatment, its message and ethics? And further, how do I take responsibility for making it possible for a certain type of experience to occur? The answer is to be found in taking responsibility for the formal structuring of the performative event, its relations and its energy, but not for the individual expressions. Performance studies scholar Erika Fisher-Lichte reflects on the position of the director in the type of experimental performances that, since the 1960s, have developed forms and methods to create performances with social and interactive qualities rather than purely esthetical. She says, “the job of the director lies in developing staging strategies which can establish appropriate conditions for this experiment” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 40). This is a rather accurate description of my role as director in the productions that we are looking at. Though, the difference is that the esthetic aspect – the choice of material, the design of the theatrical space, the conceptualization of the process, all which had

an important impact on the esthetic experience – cannot be separated from the intention to shift the esthetic experience to a social one: they need to be thought of as closely intertwined and dependent on each other.

The removal of directorial responses that the concepts entailed clearly produced a vague, contradictory and complicated definition of my role as director. Hierarchy was present, no doubt, but blurred and therefore at certain moments created insecurity within the ensemble and in the individual performer, as confirmation and guidance were most often given on a structural level. This insecurity, inherent in the form, had to be met, from the start, by infusing an understanding and acceptance of the creative situation and its intention. In other words, the directorial task – more or less equal in the three productions – involved to a large degree activating and supporting the awareness of the perceptual intent on which the constructions of the concepts were built (see *Cage Interpreted and Performed*). Extended into the concrete work during rehearsals, this meant continuously reminding the performers how and why the concepts were formulated the way they were, as well as supporting them to trust the perspective of the expression as a whole, and to affirm its impact. In her reflections on the work of Goat Island, Laura Cull offers useful and relevant entrance points for looking at the function of the director when working with immanent processes: “But rather than presume that such evocations of outsidership necessarily involve transcendence, we might ask after the nature of the ‘outside’ being alluded to here, given that Hixon and other contemporary directors do not accord that position with any necessary privilege. What, if anything, is specific to Hixon’s relationship to the material? One response would be to suggest that this ‘outside’ is always a relative outside, and also one that enables *the preservation rather than homogenization of difference* - as a kind of immanent or internal outside – within a process of collaborative authorship” (Cull 2012, 44). This relates directly to what I think is the directorial task when guiding the performers in a multilayered composition where expressions of different kinds are superimposed and the question of the hierarchy of expressions inevitably becomes necessary to address. “Preservation rather than homogenization of difference” in the context of our performances can be read and applied in parts – as well as in full – to analyze and describe my work as director. Preservation can be seen as the directorial task, to watch over the implementation of the conceptual rules and restrictions,

since they are the foundation for the expression of the performance as a whole, and maintain a sense of security within the ensemble.¹⁶³ Homogenization can be used, disconnected from difference, only as a reminder that this process – of homogenization – is what’s most often strived for and expected from an audience point of view and, as such, something that can be regarded as a pre-condition. “Preservation rather than homogenization of difference” was, in the working process of *John and the Mushrooms*, most often talked about as anarchic harmony.¹⁶⁴ However, if the problems that occurred around the allocation of power and expressive responsibilities were mainly addressed directly in conjunction with a specific moment in the performative sequence, the challenges of being in anarchic harmony, handling the multitude of expressional levels, was instead met through a more general discussion but also with what could be described as a sort of training, instigated as a directorial measure. This training, aimed at increasing our awareness of nuances, of acknowledging the impact of smaller and softer expressions, even when surrounded by larger and more dominant ones. It also wanted to infuse an understanding of the richness to be found in juxtaposing different tempos, different dynamics and articulations, and to encourage the deconstruction of expressional competitiveness. In other words, training aimed at strengthening compositional thinking and awareness.

When the performer in *John and the Mushrooms* gets an instruction that says: “Write down three thoughts, cut them in pieces and give them away.” or one that says “Build something that doesn’t exist.” the actor activity can go in many directions and take on a large number of different expressive qualities. As there is no fixed and predetermined concept of what these activities might look like and the actor is in full command of the shaping of the expression, a directorial response had to be made in a way that did not exert a need for a mutual responsiveness. Instead it should support the actor to weigh other possibilities to shape the expression, as well as encourage an inward reflexive motion towards being in the present moment, as much as possible. This is a directorial approach that is different from

¹⁶³ “The philosopher is the concept’s friend; he is potentially of the concept” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 5). A transformation of this notion into the collaborative situation illuminates the stance that the director is the friend of the concepts that are being used as driving forces in the performance, rather than being the friend of the performance itself.

¹⁶⁴ This is an expression often used by Cage describing the presence of multiple expressions and their coming together in difference, and therefore the term naturally became a part of our vocabulary.

a creative collaborative relationship between director and actor that is built on a mutual responsiveness, and where indeterminacy and improvisation are tools used only in the rehearsal process and not part of the performance. A description of such a collaborative exchange between actor and director is offered by Laura Cull, again in connection to the practice of *Goat Island*: “Mutually responsive, there is no clear separation between directive as the creator or as the condition of the creativity of the response; the response creates the directive as much as the other way around, such that no traditional hierarchy of value might emerge to privilege the role of the director over that of the performer” (Cull 2012, 44). Consequently, this is true but also not true in the context of the creative situations we are talking about. The circumstances did not admit a directorial involvement in judging the value of the expression, like suggesting that one expressive quality was better than another. So far, the example by Cull relates to the situation of our performances, but looking more closely at what might be called a reciprocal directorial approach, an exchange where the performer’s “response creates the directive as much as the other way around,” I think the correlation dissolves. Such an exchange, where a suggestion from the performer is reacted on and developed through a directorial response, thus allowed to influence the expression of the performer, could not be used either in the chance operated sections of *John and the Mushrooms* or in the other two performances. Instead I met the directorial demand by asking questions. These questions were mainly aimed to increase awareness of the present moment, and as encouragement to expand their imagination, but also to instigate discussions and reflections among the performers. To a certain extent this directorial approach connects to Cage when he talks about his compositional practice: “Instead of representing my control, they represent questions that I have asked and the answers that I have been given by means of chance operations. I have merely changed my responsibility from making choices to asking questions. It’s not easy to ask questions” (Kostelanetz 1987, 214).

These notes on the directorial approach connote, to a certain degree, that it was possible to apply a quite sharp conceptual attitude towards the task of directing the performances. That is of course not entirely true.¹⁶⁵ My desire to remove myself from the authoritarian role and from making decisions that I

¹⁶⁵ Throughout the processes there were all sorts of demands made on me that had to be met. All totally normal in a collective process of making theater, and that had to be addressed with means other than conceptual formulations.

instead wanted the construction of the concepts to steer, continuously transmitted tension into the collective process that demanded that I, at certain points, took on the role of director in a more conventional sense. Those situations, when this demand was most clear, were often related to the need to affirm that the creative process of the actor/musician was vital, and to infuse courage to continue. Even if that aspect of the directorial work certainly should not be seen as disconnected from the creative process, it represents discussions and methodologies that are less relevant for this discourse, and to expand the reasoning into that area would be somewhat of a deviation from problematizing immanent creation. Instead I want to try to summarize what has already been said.

Reconnecting to the fields of tension

Who is the creator? Who needs to know, and why? The criticism of a search for the creator, of the stubborn desire to find one transcendent force, lies in the midst of the Deleuzian, Deleuzian/Guattarian philosophical explorations. Such a search stymies the understanding of multiplicity and shields us from sensing that each element “ceaselessly varies and alters its distance and relation to the others” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 34). Embracing multiplicity is then what offers the possibility to “escape the abstract opposition between the multiple and the one, to escape dialectics, to succeed in conceiving the multiple in the pure state, to cease treating it as a numerical fragment of a lost Unity or Totality or as the organic element of a Unity or Totality yet to come, and instead distinguish between different types of multiplicity” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 36). The process towards an understanding of this notion is endless and it might be so that the experience of an insight only comes in glimpses at those points when an image of a fractured self is accessible. The esthetics of the performances harbor the idea that the creative situation generates the possibility for such a glimpse. However, the aim in the above reasoning has been less about finding out whether those glimpses occurred, and more about investigating the frictions, problems, contradictions and challenges that come with instigating and directing an immanent creative process. As we have seen, this process is quite complicated to untangle and my tactic has been to look at how the immanent creative situation relates to and affects a few delineated – but interrelated – aspects: the creative energy of the performer; the forming of perfor-

mative relations; creative/ compositional responsibility; the question and sense of participation; the role of the director and the problem of hierarchy. If we remove the borders between these aspects and look at what they have in common, and what it is that constitutes a general (and problematic) condition, we will see that it is an unpredictable process and in continuous variation. This condition of unpredictability is what generates the problems the performers experience, that have to be dealt with in an instant and performative way. And, it is within this condition that we can locate some of those *fields of tension* that I outlined in my introduction and stipulated as crucial for my critical exploration. As I pointed out, I see these fields of tension mainly as a methodological construction (they only fully hold together on a critical-conceptual level), but when honing in on the specifics of the performative situation, as I have done in the above, they become sharper and their corporeal aspect takes shape.

Fields of tension emerge between compounds of energies (diverse intensions and desires) which I defined as: The energies of the performer(s); the force of the material; the perceptive dynamic of the full event; the injection of my own personal energy, esthetic intent and conviction; the choices and the activation of critical discourses. What I have been trying to locate and critically activate in the above reasoning are those fields of tension emerging between the energies of the performers, the specifics of the conceptual setup (material) and the directorial approach (esthetic intent and conviction).¹⁶⁶ The performer is instructed to invent at the same time as the concept/instructions imply restrictions; the performer searches for collaboration and connections at the same time as the concept asserts that the performer should stay within his/her own expressive trajectory; the concept of the performances radiates a strong compositional responsibility at the same time as it demands the performer to take responsibility for the compositional aspect of his/her creative invention; the concept of the performances purport a non-hierarchical outlook (multiplicity) but the performer senses a continuous struggle to locate and establish relations and the presence of the director is not one of non-presence and therefore infuses uncertainty. Formulated like this the performative

¹⁶⁶ As the reasoning above is focused on the individual performer – his/her task, challenges and thinking within an immanent creative process – the compound of energies within the full event (perceptive dynamic) is not really relevant at this point.

challenges might seem insurmountable, but we know they are not. They are the dissolvent that opens up the expression for diverse possibilities.

What is there to gain from taking apart and assigning specific descriptive concepts to movements and occurrences happening on a micro level in the exchange between the performers in an immanent collective creation? What is there to find out, and for what reason? Well, initially the idea of illuminating the specifics of how a collective expression grows from within and how all the different expressive choices made by the individuals in an immanent indeterminate creative process are generated, should be seen as an attempt to capture the inner workings of the constituent parts of composition and compositional thinking. But beyond that lies an assumption that the qualities and the particular demands inherent in a process of this nature generate a specific ambience that in a significant way effects the transference between the performance and its audience. This ambience is produced by the performative condition of unpredictability and continuous variation and is *prolonged into the experience of the expression as a whole*; new-borne transformations happening in front of an audience. This esthetic-perceptive extension of the immanent creative situation, into processes happening outside the ensemble, will be explored in the essay *Meeting – Meaning*, which takes off from the question: Can the concept of an immanent creative process be transferred to a sequence of perception in the audience?

INTERVIEW 5

In dialogue with The Institute for Unpredictable Processes

IUP: A couple of weeks ago we talked quite extensively about the question of appropriation and there was one formulation that you used that has stayed with me and that, if possible, I would like you to explain in more detail. You talked about a sequence where appropriations become a repetition prior to what the concept represents. Or how did you formulate it?

JP: Yes, and what I tried to describe was how I imagine a compositional sequence can be steered by an appropriation of, for example, a philosophical concept, and become a movement that precedes the concept and what it stands for. The philosopher Simon Critchley offers a link between a theoretical appropriation and a corporeal, or compositional approach when he says that philosophy “offers a scene of instruction, of encounter, in a psychoanalytic sense it is a transference experience” (Critchley 2010, 16). And that leads me to the question I wanted to get to which is, if it is possible to swap this around so that it is not about appropriating but instead *letting oneself and one’s esthetics be appropriated*. In other words, not “only” moving them from one reflective discourse into another, but instead looking at the possible concrete compositional outcomes they might generate. What happens then is of course dependent on what the artist apprehends from the theories put in relation to the specific premises of the artistic practice. In the case of Deleuze, such a reversed sequence could, if one wants to, pull the idea of appropriation into a radical light.

IUP: Why is that?

JP: Well, I’d like to suggest that the in-depth, and extremely consistent criticism of a representative esthetics - woven around a cluster of different concepts like for example multiplicity, univocity, difference, repetition, variation, immanence, territorialization and deterritorialization, major and minor, rhizome – shifts the philosophical focus towards perceptive qualities, building almost like a theory of perception. If one chooses to approach Deleuze’s critical apparatus in such a way – which I think Brian Massumi’s extensive prolongations of the Deleuzian thought complex inspires – the question is: what happens to the

energy and the thoughts that the artist has regarding his or her creative intent, and with the organizing of expressive matter?

IUP: The “organizing of expressive matter” – doesn’t this formulation imply a somewhat dated idea of the stable artifact, with an uncontested status?

JP: Yes, I see what you mean, but that’s not how I want it to be understood. I see today’s art making – and this is in contrast to the critical discourses that it often surrounds itself with – to a large extent still driven by the idea of representation and the urgency to consolidate the “piece,” in a representational sense. If this notion is positioned next to how I understand the unavoidable consequences of Deleuzian thinking, a real clash occurs. When everything is in a perpetual becoming, when difference and the singular are acknowledged, when multiplicity is let free, when acknowledging that “thinking” the art piece is already a subordination to representation, *and* the artist lets him or herself be appropriated by this understanding, then shifts *have* to happen. It changes how one relates to the creative act and how one views the construction of the compositions one makes. Maybe the most burning question is what such an openness provokes: How is the idea of the creative subject holding up, what happens to its stability and creative energy, when the philosophical-esthetic discourse shifts the focus towards perception in such a pronounced way? On the one hand, the incorporation or utilization of Deleuzian theories and concepts are exceptionally useful for an understanding – and for the problematization - of compositional structures and their communicative impact, but what happens to the idea of the artist as a creator of affect? What happens to the notion of borders in space, time, and narration?

IUP: If I understand you right, you are suggesting that a more or less unresolvable conflict occurs between a truly profound appropriation of Deleuzian, Deluzian/Guattarian theories and the notion of art making, the notion of the artist as a confined expressive subject? Even if not put in the same way, the dissolving of a stable subject is central in contemporary esthetic criticism, so how does your suggestion take that further? Secondly, your reasoning implies that you question not only the artist but art making per se, and I don’t see how that complies with Deleuze’s clear affinity with the spirit of art.

JP: Obviously, such an envisioning of the consequences of appropriation is a choice, not a fact, a suggestion for what “happens” if eaten down to its bone.

But it's not really interesting to stay in the question of whether such a reading is an extension that leads to distortion. Instead, I am interested in looking at the compositional consequences that arise when accepting it. To regard it as unresolvable would not generate a challenge, obviously, instead I try to use the tension that it creates to think further. The conflict, following such a reading, ensues from and is tied to conservative and commodified notions about art, about the artist and about expressive forms, etc. and those notions have to be contested in order to resolve the conflict.

IUP: And how do you see that being done, in light of the shifts that the appropriation enforces?

JP: If we, for the sake of argument, say that the most basic level of an art practice is a desire for building and making things that occupy a certain space, I suggest that this energy is subordinated, in a repressive sense, by the idea that the outcome of the practice should be recognized as an addition, to what's out there in the world already. The formats that prevail for these additions are not only commodified but also sustained by what feminist theory would label the phallogocentric system. To counteract this notion of art as an addition, hence evade a reinforcement of such a system and *at the same time* acknowledge the inherent energy in the intuitive urge to create, is an equation that can only be approached through extended thinking around dramaturgy and composition.

IUP: This is getting very abstract, so if you could place these thoughts in relation to your own work, I might be able to see what you mean more clearly.

JP: A fundamental claim behind this thinking is that it's not about adding another thing to the world but to regard the theater as a place of becoming, of co-composition. The intention of the "piece" is then to be a catalyst for unpredictable movements. There is a compelling field of critical discourse that has approached the political and esthetic implications inherent in such a claim, and those can be found to a large extent in gender studies or feminist esthetic theory. I still have a long way to go until I gain insights into this field that can be connected with the specifics of my own art practice and thinking, but a truly inspiring starting point for me has been the book *Nomadic Subjects* by Rosi Braidotti. I read this book mainly as a profound feministic political and cultural criticism, but it also, as an extension of her analysis, points to discrete compositional consequences. I'll just give an indication of how I see those. At the core of Braidotti's discourse is the

necessity to apprehend a nomadic state as a stance in the critical undertaking. The claim is that this stance, which is signified by an avoidance and extensive criticism of the repressive and sedentary nature of patriarchal power and power-definitions, is necessary if we want to create a world rid of conquerors and imperialists.

This is my understanding, not her words. However, this nomadic state demands movement, continuous repositioning, but the repositioning applies mainly to the focus of the critical gaze and not necessarily to a corporeal repositioning: “It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling” (Braidotti 1994, 5).

IUP: In this context, conventions refer to all conventions; political, power, esthetic, social, and so on. Is it about questioning all kinds of prevailing structures? Is that the kind of shift you’re talking about? Though, the very first question that comes to me when you bring up Braidotti’s book, which is a core text in feminist theory and gender studies, is how do you approach the fact that your own understanding of her criticism is different for you as a man, working and functioning within the same power structures that she sincerely questions?

JP: It’s an important question, of course, that has to be dealt with if I want to develop my thoughts around the relationship between the critique of existing power structures and dramaturgy. Nevertheless, one can stay within Braidotti’s own reasoning, which might be a reasonable limitation even though it was twenty years since the book was written and many other thoughts around this issue have been developed. Her criticism of a male gaze is clearly dismissive and she says that she’s “viscerally opposed to the whole idea” of men in feminism (Braidotti 1994, 137). Though, in her thinking she separates the notion of feminism from “feminist theory” and if an understanding and contact with the former is an impossibility for the male gaze, the latter on the other hand, as it produces an academic field that’s more or less up for grabs, offers a possibility – for the male critic – to short-circuit the complexity of the feminist project and streamline it into a mold that “he” can recognize and, as Braidotti puts it, “bulldoze their way through feminism as if it were not qualitative different from any other academic discipline” (Braidotti 1994, 138).

IUP: And that is not you, you’re not bulldozing your way into a field just because you sense it is “the last bastion of radical thought amidst the ruins of the postmodern gloom,” as I think she puts it?

JP: I'm not interested in academic positioning. I see myself as an artist clearly allied with the criticism of power structures and normativity that she and other feminist thinkers assert, for political reasons as well as esthetic. I am looking for and interested in the esthetic ramifications of this criticism because I see an opening, a way to merge, in a more conscious way, my esthetics with my outlook on the world.

IUP: So, then how do you see the esthetic extrapolations of the theories that Braidotti formulates?

JP: Before I go into that I just want to mention that Braidotti inspires us to look for the positive repercussions of thinking through the notion of gender outside feminist theory, both in regards to academic criticism as well as, which is interesting from my point of view as an artistic researcher, a kind of methodological discourse when she says that "the notion of gender challenges the pretense at universality and objectivity of conventional systems of knowledge and of accepted norms of scientific discourse. It introduces the variable of sexual difference at the very heart of theoretical research" (Braidotti 1994, 259). But to get back to your question, I would say that the esthetic implications of Braidotti's text is only to a certain extent exposed by herself, in the connections she makes between her analysis and esthetic alternatives. As I see it, there are compositional and dramaturgical extrapolations that can be uncovered from a more detailed reading. For example, in the beginning it happens through slight shifts in language when she, for example, exchanges the word state with style and says that "The nomadic style is about transitions and passages without predetermined destinations or lost homelands" (Braidotti, 1994, 25). She is still clearly speaking within a political context, but we know that Deleuze, who she has a close affinity to, uses that term in conjunction with the production of artistic production. I see this as a very conscious shift. Another example of how her language creates connections to events of an artistic nature is when she says that shifting to a nomadic state designates "a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and knowledge" (Braidotti 1994, 6). And then when she says that writing "in this mode [nomadic] is about disengaging the sedentary nature of words, destabilizing commonsensical meanings, deconstructing established forms of consciousness," I think she explicitly points to the esthetic ramifications of her critical discourse (Braidotti 1994, 15).

IUP: And from this you're inclined to draw compositional consequences?

JP: Certainly. But to use the word consequences, which I know I also did earlier, I am inclined to see it more as compositional and dramaturgical openings. I don't hesitate to make assumptions using the word consequences in regards to an affective outcome of certain expressive structures, but the actual collective doings are characterized by a laboratory and investigative attitude and cannot lean too heavily on presumptions about the affect, or consequences, if you want to call it that. Instead it has to be instilled as a sub-stream in the conceptual construct. I am sorry, I didn't mean to get stuck on the wording of your question, I do understand what you're after.

IUP: That's fine, but before you go into describing these openings in more detail, I must say that an esthetic formed around deconstruction and the destabilization of meaning is something that occurred much earlier than the 1990s. It has been a strong current since early modernism and I know that you have worked with literary texts that clearly expose such characteristics, Gertrude Stein for example. Can you clarify what you are after, does it find its reasoning in the context of theater?

JP: Yes, it does, yes you're right. Literature has for a long time investigated those modes Braidotti is talking about and it's an unavoidable undercurrent in a contemporary hermeneutical endeavor to consider such a stance. However, the relevance of Braidotti's formulation in a theatrical context is different, for two reasons. Firstly because it relates to my own specific search for stabilizing the thinking around dramaturgical structures dominated by non-narrativity, multiplicity and superimpositions, and secondly, it fuses the question why we don't see the same investigative attitude within theater. And not really in the criticism of theater, either.

IUP: What do you mean?

JP: It seems like a lot of criticism accepts the conventional confinements of theater and theatrical forms. For example, there's a book by performance studies scholar Jill Dolan called *Utopia in Performance*. Dolan's reasoning is driven by a passion for the theater as a place "in which social discourse articulates the possible, rather than the insurmountable obstacles to human potential" (Dolan 2005, 2). This is the utopia that Dolan see in theater, a place for finding "affective and effective feelings and expressions of hope

and love” for the human community (Dolan 2005, 2). On one level this is all fine. As the impetus for an investigative undertaking that forces an urgency, is something I can align myself with. However, moving into the book there is no deeper analysis of the expressive material and in what way, it contributes – or diminishes – this sense of utopia. There is no problematization of the relation between dramaturgical structures and affect, and there is no problematization of the reoccurring concept of community. Instead the reasoning relies on this drone of hope and love and “that everybody needs to see a story performed” (Dolan 2005, 61). I think it’s unfortunate when contemporary performance studies refrain from examining the idea that “the theatre is, in and of itself, a community site” because “living bodies onstage address bodies assembled in the same place,” and that such a situation automatically is different and more communitarian “than a mass of individuals watching the same television show at the same hour” (Rancière, 2011, 16). When such an understanding is not seen as the basis for a critical outlook I think it traps the notion of theater in what Deleuze would call a Major position. And this is why I think we need to search for critical openings elsewhere, outside what we call theater and performance studies.

IUP: I can understand why you want to connect Braidotti’s formulation to your own research and esthetic stance, but to say that there is no investigative attitude in contemporary theater, *that* I question. It rather surprises me. Haven’t there been many dramatists and theater artists who have been interested in this dynamic, the fragility of words and the destabilizing of commonsensical meanings? We have Ionesco and Becket, Stein, or more recently Jelinek, and many other, lesser known. And then there are forms of theater that grow in interactive dialogue with the circumstances and inputs ensuing from within the performative situation. All these, in different ways, are examples of forms of expression that contest exactly that type of stability.

JP: I sense a misunderstanding, and I certainly take the blame for that. The way I see it, the nomadic shift is not only happening on a semantic level. The specific esthetic choices are tied to the criticism of power structures and those power structures prevail, transformed into production circumstances as well as dramaturgical structures, within the theatrical forms that dominate today. Yes, in regards to the examples that you gave, it can be said that they contest and

provoke the notion of dramatic structure, but only to a certain degree. What they do with language is rarely done in regards to a three-dimensional time-based rendition. It's complicated to delve deeper into that reasoning without delineating the specifics of the primary material and the creative constraints. However, if we allow a generalization, and this stems from the criticism of the phallogocentric, the dominating scheme when composing expressive forms, in theater and in music, is an unchallenged idea of how consolidation is achieved. For the sake of simplicity I will call what is done an alignment with a monadic paradigm where the expressive force is intended to be found in an inward uninterrupted concentration, an energy attached to the idea that *das Werk* is a world of its own, and this world holds together, finds its consolidation, through its self-defined style in which all dynamics of opposition, contradiction, associations and alliances are controlled, weighed and balanced. I see this as a hierarchical construct of the expressive matters and, to put it in relation to my own esthetics and what I want to make, it counteracts the intended experience of multiplicities. The different parts are not given leeway to become non-contradictive contradictions, or to find their consolidation in non-consolidation, but instead they are embedded within one force, and such a construct is *not* about "disengaging the sedentary nature of words, destabilizing commonsensical meanings, deconstructing established forms of consciousness." A kindred, and quite beautiful, formulation that I think illuminates the tension between these two approaches to a creative undertaking is offered by Trinh T. Minh-ha when she says that if "structure, as a man (R. Barts) pertinently defines it, is 'residual deposit of duration,' then again, rare are those who can handle it by letting it come, instead of hunting for it or hunting it down, filling it with their own marks and markings so as to consign it to the meaningful and lay claim to it" (Thrin T. Minh-ha 1989, 143).

IUP: Within a theater practice a dramaturgical enterprise is closely connected to hermeneutics. Most often it is a process shaped through understanding, interpretation, deconstruction and reconstruction of existing expressive materials, like words, images and music. Though, such a notion of dramaturgy has fortunately been problematized and the term has been made more contemporary by connecting it to the rich variety of performance art, for example by Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt in their book *Dramaturgy and Performance*.

They comment that the term has expanded in meaning and become flexible in order to more sufficiently connect to contemporary theory and practice (Turner and Behrndt 2008). How do you see that your thinking and practice contribute to this aim to expand the definition of dramaturgy? It seems to me that you're consciously pushing the boundaries in the same direction.

JP: I like how they continuously connect dramaturgical thinking with the idea of composition, even though it is not done on the type of micro level that interests me.

IUP: Would you say that this type of critique can be found in Deleuze's text *One Less Maniesto*, on the theater art by Carmelo Bene? You wrote something about that text, and have mentioned it in our conversations before. As I see it, Deleuze's critical treatment tries to chisel out the correlation between expressive structure and affect, and it is most certainly political. Is that an example that could be used to illustrate the need for reformulating the notion of dramaturgy?

JP: The problematization that Deleuze extrapolates is an excellent example of a dramaturgical treatment, in its own context and its own time, but inadequate in relation to how much performance art operates today. The reason for this is that when Deleuze observes that Bene's conceptualization – of Hamlet – has a constitutive power, it is done with the play; its components, its narrative dynamic and history of interpretation, as an absolute necessary reference, what Deleuze call “a primary play” (Murray 1997, 239). The radical directorial choices made by Bene become – in the eyes of Deleuze – constitutive, and critique is a constitution. If we define the constitutive as an energy of definite replacement, as the establishing of an alternative gaze, it correlates to my interest to replace a narrative disconnected from the now, with the presence of the co-composed. Even more relevant to how I think, is that the critique as it is performed by Bene and extrapolated by Deleuze, is tied to intricate performative measures, to the treatment of the material, which means that the ethical and political engagement is reflected as much in the structural and conceptual qualities as in the spoken language. Deleuze says: “Bene sought the means for theater to surpass this domination of words and to arrive at a direct perception of the action” (Murray 1997, 250). However, I don't need to go further into Deleuze's critical treatment of Bene's rendition of Shakespeare to see that em-

phasizing a certain reading through deducting parts or elements in the material, or creating shifts through imagery or bodily expression are central operations in modern dramaturgy. This is *not* to say that Bene's art isn't strong or unique, though the reason to mention Deleuze's text has less to do with Bene and his theater and more to do with the question of what can be utilized in its critical approach to see *how the notion of theater as constitutive critique can be formed when there is no "primary play" at hand*. This is a crucial question for contemporary performance art as so many artists develop performances out of totally different types of material than existing plays, or texts for that matter. Consequently, the question that follows must be how can we define, treat and problematize the concept of dramaturgy when there is no material such as "a primary play," hence no hermeneutic process of interpretation is required?

IUP: Does the theater become a void then?

JP: Of course not. But when the creative process of theater making doesn't take off from a primary material, like an existing play or text, the theoretical premises are different and the notion of dramaturgy moves out of the confinements of a pre-formulated material.

IUP: Is that a condition that you see as positive?

JP: Yes I do. It allows for a critique of an alternate kind. Rather than making a, so to speak, known source as a prerequisite for creating an alterity, the actual material itself can be seen as, and made part of, the critical intention. The critique is then not "just" created through the reconstruction/deconstruction. It might be so that by activating material of a non-theatrical type, highlights how theater as an institution exerts a power even if the rendering is of a critical kind.

IUP: But then I wonder about the delineation. I mean, how does original and new material that's developed by, for example a group of actors in a mode of devising and then repeatedly performed in the same way, relate to the concept of "a primary play"? Does it become a primary play as soon as it is set in its form? Is that a precondition for it to become a possible object of a dramaturgical treatment similar to material that has a longer and more extensive performance history?

JP: I see what you are getting at. Well, a critical dramaturgical approach can of course be applied to any expressive structure, stable or unstable. But the reason I pull this term into our discussion is to differentiate and problema-

tize the creative investment and how it shifts when the expression, instead of emerging from existing material, grows out of a more bare position: I am here, I want to say something, and I am searching for exactly what that is and how it can be done. This open process is central to an artist's practice and sometimes it's done in a collaborative mode through creating a performance from a multiplicity of voices and inputs. Such a process most often moves through states of unpredictability, even confusion, but that does not necessarily mean that the performance itself is in flux, in continuous variation. Therefore, I guess it's possible to say that, on a purely structural level, its outcome, if a fixed performance, relates to the Deleuzian term.

IUP: So it's about fixity or repeatability; when expressive material finds its form it becomes a "primary play"?

JP: As I see it, the connotation of the Deleuzian term goes beyond that, as it grows out of the specifics of the material that he talks about. Shakespeare's Hamlet is a piece of material that has been processed through an enormous number of different treatments and therefore has seeped deeply into "our" consciousness and taken on a status of almost mythological dimensions. I see Deleuze's choice to use the word "primary" in light of that observation. But placing that next to the rather new term and creative method, devising, as you do, is interesting as it highlights a specific tension that surely says something about the emergence of new creative forms, and it also expands the connotation of "primary" beyond the dynamic that I just suggested. In the book we talked about earlier, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, the writers attach the devising method to a feminist counter-tactic against the dominance of a male canon, and they describe it as a "strategy to explore feminist alternatives to mainstream traditions," and a way to problematize "patriarchal linguistic and representational strategies" (Turner and Behrndt 2008, 83–4). That certainly makes Shakespeare, Bene and Deleuze a target, wouldn't you say? So devising, seen with such a gaze, is about getting rid of the "primary play" but it is still, at least in my experience, about creating a repeatable and stable artifact.

IUP: And that is not how you define your own performances, I mean the ones we are talking about?

JP: Yes and no. The performances are performed in the same space and with the same material, and the production situation and the institutional fram-

ing connotes repeatability and stability. But the way they unfold and find their expressive quality within that frame is aleatoric and different from performance to performance, hence unstable in their development. So, following my own thinking, I would suggest to exchange the concept of “a primary play” with “a primary event,” with the reservation that the “primary event” is not *one* specific event, but many different. When that is done, another type of theorizing and dramaturgical thinking has to evolve, a theorizing that is not about rearranging or restructuring or reinterpreting material, but instead looks at the performance itself and how its formal structure relates to philosophical issues, to political issues, to issues of power and to ethical issues.

IUP: And this kind of critical meta-level is not active when the creative process is built around an existing play, a primary material of a Hamlet-type?

JP: I think it is, very much so. It makes sense that the questions or problems that are being treated in the primary material should be the incentive; we need to know what it is about, what there is to understand, and how we want to present it. But, if the critical extrapolations and the dramaturgical thinking that’s going on in the process of creating a performance are confined by the material, if it doesn’t confront itself with questions regarding the event itself – its conditions and construction – the possibility to increase the surface of contact with the turbulence of the world outside the theater, is diminished. It is possible that the two levels don’t necessarily have to be investigated at exactly the same time, I mean there is often a need for a more concrete discussion about the forming of the material during the process, but to create this parallel critical discourse not only stabilizes the process, but makes it more easy to see what *not* to do. Just to make this clear, I am not talking about how the specific themes of the material possibly mirror a reality outside the theater, and I am not talking about techniques, like deciding to work with certain types of processes, or actor methodology, or within a certain genre like forum theater, or mime or whatever. I am talking about the conditions of the event. And with conditions I mean spatial relations, the quality of the contact between performers and audience, the conditions for the mind to move along multiple paths. Those conditions are dependent on the structural specifics of the composition of the event.

IUP: You have used the term composition a number of times today and my understanding of your use of it shifts slightly every time. Maybe that’s because

I know about your background in music, and I keep referring to its musical delineation. What can you say about that?

JP: In the text *Who is the Creator?* I spend quite some time talking about how I extend the concept of composition, as it is defined by Deleuze and Guattari in their books *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* into the specific nature and esthetic intention of my own performances. I outline a definition of composition that exceeds the act of putting down a “text” on paper, and instead I talk about the forming of circumstances, creating structural conditions for the building of multi-layered expressions. In both those books, the concept of composition is used as a term to describe processes of merging, of a coming together, happening immanently in nature as well as in art. When that is acknowledged – as a compositional process happening independently of what the artist does – I think one can say that composition is happening on two levels, or in two steps. First the choosing of the material and the forming of the creative circumstances and then followed by the perceptive co-creation, what I have been talking about as co-composition. When such a view of composition is combined with the two terms consistency and consolidation, we can very well say that we are equipped with tools that sufficiently help us to elucidate the interplay between all the different energies involved in creating art that moves through time. Composition is then not something static. It moves, it changes, it constantly has to be re-defined, and, I would almost say, captured.

IUP: I can’t say I am totally satisfied with that answer but it’s getting late and I have one more question that might function as a kind of wrap-up. There are voices within the contemporary art scene that claim that art loses its esthetic and political strength if it is created with an instrumentalist intention and hence valued on its social and ethical relation to its presenters and audience. This notion has been heavily criticized by for example Claire Bishop. What do you say to those who claim that there is a similar type of risk of draining the power of art when pulling artists into the academic world and the type of deconstruction and reflection that it entails?

JP: I don’t know if I would say anything. The whole idea of “draining the power of art” is just ridiculous. A dedicated artist who decides to spend more time focusing on reflection and research does not become less good because of that. He or she might not produce interesting research, but I don’t think the

strength and integrity that her work conceivably had initially is lost through thinking and reflecting. However, I would like to say one thing on the question of “draining,” if we want to call it that, which has a political, economical connotation and is about how resources are used. In the political environment that I spend most of my time I sense, without having any specific numbers to refer to, that economical resources are taken away from artists, art institutions and free groups that produce art for the public domain, and allocated to academia. There is a draining of the resources for everyone who works with art, and on some level that equals a draining of its power. Even if my assumption is not correct, in precise numbers, I think it is highly relevant to ask the question of how the production of culture, in society as a whole, would develop if the money that’s spent on artistic research were instead used to make art for the public domain. Although it’s maybe an unfortunate question, as it indicates that these two phenomena are linked in a competitive way, and they shouldn’t be.

IUP: If I ask you to look at my previous question from a more personal point of view, how do you see that your own creative energy has been influenced by your critical activity? Are there conflicts or changes happening, shifts in focus, any type of draining, if we want to return to that concept?

JP: I remember, and I think it has happened more than once over the years, that a member in the ensemble has told me not to think so much. It’s always said jokingly, and I take it like that too, but it exposes not only something about myself but also about the relationship actors and musicians have to intellectual activity, and to theorizing. To be intuitive, to let go and dance, to let oneself be fed by impulses in the moment is seen as crucial to the creative process, and the fear is that those impulses can be stifled by “thinking.” Obviously I’ve never had that fear. I love to dance but I also think that art making has a tendency to find its stability and communicative power in conservative formats if we don’t think about it. So, obviously I can’t relate to the idea of reflective activity as reductive, but instead it’s about finding ways of experimenting and, as I said when we talked about Braidotti, it’s about investigating ways to merge, in a stronger and more conscious way, esthetics with an outlook on the world. Conversely, I don’t mean to purport the idea that the thinking going on in creative processes and the thinking in academic criticism is similar. As I mainly work in different kinds of collective creative situations, thinking moves and finds its impetus in a mode of

exchange. Producing criticism, thinking in an academic setting on the other hand, is about writing and a kind of writing-thinking, that is charged with a totally different energy. It's a different process. Even if writing on a certain level exudes decisiveness, its core is experimentation and I often feel that I write on the edge of my own understanding. In the creative processes that I instigate as a director, the thinking is geared towards consolidation, and this can be said even when chance, multiplicity of expressions and deconstruction are present as energies, but the writing-thinking remains unfinished and open.

IUP: Do you really see any good reason for trying to differentiate the thinking that goes on in artistic creation and that in academic theorizing? I would be inclined to suggest that the discussion within artistic research instead goes in the other direction and evolves around how to reconcile the different types of thinking.

JP: This traversing of thinking between faculties is taken up by Deleuze in his text, *The Image of Thought*, in the third chapter of his book *Difference and Repetition*. There are obviously many layers to it but on a very basic level it's possible to say that his critique is about how the faculty of thinking is a victim of representation and common sense. However, at one point when treating the communicative interplay between the different faculties of sensing, imagining, remembering and thinking, and reflecting on their relation, I detect a line of thought that not only can be productively inserted into compositional thinking, but possibly descriptive of the nature of artistic research. Deleuze says, "We could just as well say that there are Ideas which traverse all the faculties, but are the object of none in particular. Perhaps in effect, as we shall see, it will be necessary to reserve the name of Ideas not for pure *cogitanda* but rather for those instances which go from sensibility to thought and from thought to sensibility, capable of engendering in each case, according to their own order, the limit- or transcendent-object of each faculty" (Deleuze 1994, 146). What I read from this, is that the creation of Ideas is not necessarily tied to the faculty of thinking, but to other sensibilities of a corporeal, unconscious, intuitive nature – all of which, to a greater or lesser degree, are activated in artistic creation. That type of "thinking" – the traversing between the faculties – can in turn give birth to thoughts of a new, less-representative, violent, non-commonsensical kind. Is doing then thinking?

MEETING — MEANING

The structure we should think about is that of each person in the audience. In other words, his consciousness is structuring the experience differently from anybody else's in the audience. So the less we structure the theatrical occasion and the more it is like unstructured daily life, the greater will be the stimulus to the structuring faculty of each person in the audience. If we have done nothing, he will have everything to do.

John Cage

In the midst of it all

When you walk into the performance space, things are already going on. Dancers are moving and musicians are making music. Soft percussion sounds can be heard. There are no raised stands to sit on and no obvious stage. Instead, low dark-yellow benches are placed on the white floor about two, three meters away from the black walls, on three sides of the room. You take a seat, like everybody else in the audience, and from where you sit you can see not only the dancers moving, but also other members of the audience, across the room. You do not see the dancers who are moving behind you, but you hear them. The music is continuous but its intensity varies. Sometimes the trombone makes a strong long low sound, sometimes only the air blown through the instrument can be heard. The timbre of the percussion is wood and stone and the sparse metric pattern creates a sense of time being measured, low in dynamic, but steady. The four dancers are in their own very personal world of movements. There is no doubt that they are dancing but they all incorporate moments of stillness and, in certain sequences, they seek to establish relations between each other, either by moving close together or by mirroring one another. Nobody is talking, all you hear is the music and the brushing of feet against the floor.

Five high, box-like wooden shields, varying in width, lean against the walls, at different places in the room. One dancer with yellow socks moves into the center of the room, slowly, looks at his hands and lies down as if sleeping. Another dancer, the "blue-shirted-woman," is sitting by the wall, close to one of the wooden shields and when the "yellow-socked-man" lies down, she slowly

starts to dance and gravitates towards one corner where two other dancers, the “green-socked-man” and the “red-shirted-woman,” are developing movements close to the floor, disconnected from each other in tempo and articulation. For a moment these three dancers form a sort of group of rhythmically disparate movements. Suddenly the “blue-shirted-woman” pulls away and runs along the walls, behind the audience, all around the room but stops abruptly when she is back by the wooden shield where she sat a minute ago. Exactly when she stops, the dancer lying on the floor starts to move one of his yellow-socked feet. He starts building a new sequence of movements, it grows in intensity and the “blue-shirted-woman” standing by the wooden shield is pulled into the center of the room, closer to the “yellow-socked-man” and their movements become more and more related in type and tempo. As if drawn in by their intensity the “red-shirted-woman” joins in with movements in the same mode. The intensity and articulation of the movements among the three dancers increases, becomes like a rupture until it slows down and the three of them, still in the center of the room, drift apart and their movements head down closer to the floor. While all this is happening the “green-socked-man” stands behind the audience at the end of the room and makes very slight movements with his hands close to his head, near to a wooden shield. The three dancers in the center become two when the “red-shirted-woman” dances away behind the audience, and the two that are left, the “yellow-socked-man” and the “blue-shirted-woman,” develop what could be described as a duet with emotional, relational connotations. The “red-shirted-woman” walks to a wooden shield by the wall, moves it slightly, and when she does this the “green-socked-man,” at the other end of the room, grabs the wooden shield close to him and moves with it through the center of the room, and places it next to another wooden shield along the long wall. The duet is dissolved at the same moment as the “green-socked-man” walks through the center, and the “yellow-socked-man” and the “blue-shirted-woman” drift towards different walls, behind the audience.

After putting his wooden shield down, the “green-socked-man” bends his back so that both hands and feet touch the floor and he walks like that into the center of the room. He slowly bends his body upwards and starts developing a sequence that has the quality of testing the smallest muscles. The “red-shirted-woman” moves along the wall, approaches the center of the room, while walking with both hands

and feet on the floor. She gets closer to the “green-socked-man.” They relate. The “blue-shirted-woman” sits down by a wooden shield, she moves her neck as if tired, then she looks up and her left arm follows, up, up. The “yellow-socked-man” moves one wooden shield a short distance, then he lies on the floor behind the audience, and starts to move like a worm, towards the center of the room. When getting closer to the couple in the center, who are now in a duet-like sequence, the “green-socked-man” walks away and leans on a wooden shield by the wall. At the same time the “blue-shirted-woman” becomes more energetic in her movements. She gets up, she moves around the room, along the walls and then she comes into the center. The “yellow-socked-man” lies down, looks at his hand. The movements of the “red-shirted-woman” become more inward, she dances out of the center. The “blue-shirted-woman” develops an intense dance close to the lying “yellow-socked-man.” All this time, the music is there, the wooden percussion and the sparse low sounds from the trombone.

The dancing continues, shifting in intensity, different configurations of groups form and dissolve until, after about an hour, the “blue-shirted-woman” places one of the wooden shields in the middle of the room. The “yellow-socked-man” crawls slowly into the center, he comes up close to the “blue-shirted-woman” who is sitting on the shield she just placed on the floor. The “green-socked-man” and the “red-shirted-woman” come into the center of the room each carrying a wooden shield, and place them standing up on their short ends, next to the one that the “blue-shirted-woman” just put down. The “yellow-socked-man” stands up and moves to a bench and sits down amongst the audience. The other three dancers, in the center of the room, pick up their wooden shields and carry them up-right while they slowly walk around with them, as shields. When the “yellow-socked-man” sees this he stands up and walks up to one of the wooden shields that is still leaning against the wall. He picks it up, carries it up-right, like the others and walks into the center where the other three are slowly moving with their shields. The group re-arranges themselves, carrying the shields, trying different configurations. They move close, like a wooden cluster, they separate and one follows another, the two other follow after, they form a new group, they stand still, one of them starts moving again and the others follow, then it all dissolves when the “blue-shirted-woman” walks away carrying her shield and leans it against the wall, with the back side showing (opposite from before). The other three dancers do the same, one by

one, slowly, until all five shields (one shield has not been moved at all throughout the performance) lean against the wall, side by side. The dancers move into the dark. The music continues for a while, then it stops. The lights slowly go down.

Introduction

As an extension of the essay *Who is the creator?* this text intends to investigate if the exchange between the expression of the performance and its audience can be thought of as an immanent process. A good way to start is to turn back to the introductory quote and ask what is the “everything,” that Cage indicates the individual in the audience has to do? What is the “structuring faculty” that needs to be engaged? It is possible to approach these questions asking instead: What is it that the performance *does not* do when it renounces the idea of one major focus, of one main narrative?

In the performances we are looking at, different expressive material is set in motion in a mode of superimposition and multiplicity. In such a structure, “the less,” that Cage refers to, equates with an abandonment – hierarchically/rhythmically/dynamically – of all predeterminations regarding the relations between the different expressive components. It means that the performance does not put forward a line of reasoning, it does not offer any causality or narrative to which the components can be placed/related, nor is there one specific order that the components within the assemblage must adhere to. This is the “everything” that the “structuring faculty” of the individual in the audience has to do: create his/her own inner idea of the order, put them on an inner map, acknowledge, decide, and assign weight and relationships to the different components. The structuring faculty is not, however, something that is turned on when one comes to the theater. It is a continuously present impulse to organize what is perceived, and it is dependent on a large number of factors ranging from preconceived notions about all the phenomena surrounding us (such as theater) to impulses contingent on a primal human need to handle and structure all incoming stimuli. The dramaturgy in the performances relies heavily on the potential of this structuring faculty.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ The aspect of the structuring faculty, as a human capacity, is, to say the least, an imposing subject. It reaches into almost all areas of the human sciences, from cultural and social sciences to psychology and neurology. The outlook on this phenomenon, in this reasoning, is distinctly instrumentalist and sharply delineated by the circumstances of the performance and the dramaturgical intention.

They are made with the intention to engage it on a highly active level, beyond the idea of a need to navigate through life, and it is this active engagement that I talk about as co-composition, or co-creation. The question is if this perceptive process of co-composing can be seen as mirroring the dynamic of an immanent process of creation happening within the ensemble? Can the concept of an immanent creative process be transferred to a sequence of perception in the audience? How does the abstraction of the expression take on meaning as a creation made by each individual in the audience? In other words, can meaning lie in the experience of co-composition? And if so, can the experience of co-composition be thought of as a process of becoming? And, which is most central, how can these questions be processed, investigated and transformed into directorial thinking and compositional choices? However, even if these questions constitute the investigative impetus of the following, they are rhetorical. They connote a search for a structural generality outside my own directorial thinking, outside the three performances that function as our reference, and even if that search for extensions is partly my explorative intent, it is crucial to keep in mind that the questions derive from their intentional counterpart: *they expose a hoped-for outcome*. Every measure taken, consciously or unconsciously, individually or collectively, during the process of directing, was aimed at, not only investigating the relevance of the above questions, but to set them in motion.

Embedded in the attempt to render the perceptive situation as an opening for co-composition and hence a possibility of becoming, lies an obvious risk of confusing assumptions with facts, and that needs to be observed in order to avoid undermining the refinement of the processes going on. When, for example, Marvin Carlson in his foreword to Erika Fisher Lichte's book *The Transformative Power of Performance*, says that the shift from an object-oriented to an event-oriented esthetic carries the possibility to "have an experience which causes us to gain a new, refreshed comprehension of our own situation of being in the world," it must be understood as an intention, as a theoretical extension of a critical reasoning, and not as an evident outcome (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 7). The most interesting reason for bringing this up is because it allows us to make the important observation that any kind of dramaturgical restructuring should, from the artist's point of view, be seen as *rooted in esthetic preferences*. The introductory description above, from a part of one of the performances of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, should be apprehended

in light of this observation: It is an attempt to give an impression of the sequences of movements and sounds going on in the performance, an attempt to paint a picture of the complex perceptive situation, and as such intended only as an entry into thinking about the production of meaning in multilayered and non-narrative performative expressions and *not* a rendering of a directorial intent.¹⁶⁸ This is to say that the notion of perceptive complexity is not the primary incentive for creating the performance, in the first place. Instead, I would say that the creative seed for the performance comes from a desire to enable an encounter with a world less known. The different choices made in that endeavor are certainly based on a thorough esthetic reasoning but nevertheless intuitive in their nature. Assumptions of possible perceptive outcomes are part of those choices, but it would be a mistake, that could lead to an instrumentalist dynamic, to place the perceptive intent ahead of an artistic choice. Such a gaze is apparent in esthetic criticism, like performance and theater studies and, no doubt, inspiring to insert as critical momentum in the reasoning. But the challenge in the following text is to harbor both perspectives and to find a correlation between looking at the creative/esthetic intent from a directorial point of view, as well as at the perceptive possibilities. This leads us to the very important question: What kind of criticism is this reasoning trying to produce? Problematizing the concept of meaning by looking at how different formal structures can be valued regarding the possibility for the viewer/audience to be co-creative when experiencing the theater performance, is certainly not a new question among theater artists or in performance and theater studies. Rich explorations, offered for example in the book mentioned earlier by Erika Fisher-Lichte (2005, 2008), or in the work by art theorist Claire Bishop (2012), on central issues and concepts for contemporary performance art like; participation, co-creation, meaning, the performative event, and so on, can easily

¹⁶⁸ When confronting myself with the question of why I chose to write a winding description of one of the performances of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* when there are four different documentations available for the reader to look at, I lapse into an assumption about how we perceptively engage in different media. As mentioned in the foreword, the nature of documentations of live performances clearly enhances the tension between the fundamental ephemerality of the performance and the fixed quality of the documentation. The distance in time and space, between the past presence of the performance and the viewing of the documentation, is crudely obvious. The transference from one media to another enforces a sequence of interpretation that, in my opinion, carries almost no potential for a sensual experience. This is not to claim that the introductory description is of a kind that generates just that, a sensual experience, but I do want to suggest that the perceptive potential, in general, that is inherent in the meeting between a text and its reader, allows for a more direct, less mediated experience, and can thus possibly enable a sense of transience.

be found in contemporary performance studies literature. Since the connection between critical works of that kind and the undertaking being made here is clear, we need to define the difference. In doing so, the critical gaze is placed in the midst of the creative process: my position as director, as instigator and constructor of the different concepts. To start from that pivotal position – which obviously is unavoidable – allows us to illuminate the interplay between esthetic choices and their intended effect, but it also allows for the possibility to follow the intricate entwinement between detailed compositional choices, their relation to a directorial thinking and to the question of an immanent process in the exchange happening between the expressive matter and the audience. An evaluation of, and theorizing around the esthetic choices made from such a position also makes it possible to pose the question: what do the specific choices that are made when creating the performances, exclude? By turning the question around, the concepts of *co-composition*, and *a process of becoming*, become central elements in the discussion on the perceptive dynamic, hence also descriptive of dramaturgical strategies.

When looking at such complicated processes, as the experiencing of theater performances through the lens of perception theory/psychology and philosophy, it is crucial to return to the actual experience, the actual space and energy in the performances. The level of abstraction, and assumption, is by necessity high and therefore important to treat with care. The theorizing of the immanent process within the creative collective that I tried to develop in *Who is the Creator?* was to a certain degree, stabilized by the dialogue and interviews with the actors and musicians. Now, when looking at what happens in the exchange between the performance and its audience in respect to an immanent process, the possibility to weigh my reflections and questions against other voices and experiences is not there in the same way.¹⁶⁹ The trajectory of the reasoning therefore takes on a slightly different character that moves circuitously between description – intention – assumption – reflection.

The different parameters of the performances, their quality and constitution, are intertwined and in continuous shifting relationships. In other words, each occurrence – and consequently the analysis of its status – is dependent on its

¹⁶⁹ Which is not fully true, since during the process of creating the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* we worked with a group of children, whom we talked to and interviewed. This is explained in *Cage Interpreted and Performed*.

immediate surrounding circumstance. Nevertheless, it is unavoidable that a reasoning around the production of meaning has to trace the different influential parameters – or it maybe makes more sense to think about them as formal aspects – more or less separately, in order to link them to a directorial thinking: *how these aspects are anticipated when creating the concepts and handled in the actual compositional and directorial practice.* The critical separation of the different parameters also enables us to trace how their interrelated concepts are molded to fit the dynamic of the reasoning. Central to the exploration so far, has been the concept of an immanent creative process as descriptive of the creative mode within the ensembles. It has been delineated by the notion that the different individual expressions are set in motion through the judgment of each performer, and that each expressional form emanates from a personal initiative/action/improvisation, that is in turn influenced by the stimuli that is perceived by each performer, resulting in an improvisational sequence within the group of performers. In the following, however, the concept of an immanent process is intended as descriptive of a mode of exchange between *everybody simultaneously present in space and time*, as participants in the theatrical event. Such an extension of the communicative interplay inevitably elicits other concepts and ways of looking at the performance situation, as it is then confronted with preconceptions of what theater “is,” what a theater space should look like, how a story should unfold; all of which the audience brings with them to their visit to the theater, and factors that have to be acknowledged, respected and met with specific directorial choices and compositional decisions.

The performances take place in specific spaces. They are specific not only because they have been chosen but also because they have been altered and designed specially for the performances. This is of importance in the reasoning around the question of meaning, and to look at the details in regards to the space, how it functions, what it generates and how its design correlates to the perceptive intent, hence to the production of meaning, is therefore significant. On that point, the concepts of *shared space* and *encounter* are inserted to problematize the notion of esthetics of production, and of the performance as a “piece of work.” The underlying directorial reasoning, functioning almost like a substrate throughout, is that the space itself is transformed from being a place for a presentation to a place for a coming together.

When reflecting on the production of meaning, it is almost impossible not to problematize the concept of *representation*: representation as a system where the codification of signs, symbols, semantic and semiotic language are established. This is the system in which the performances that we are looking at operate. They are part of a world built on a representational coding. But as representation purports definitions as fixed, as operating with defined measures, and can thus be seen as exerting a transcendent force, it is essential for the immanent creative process, as well as for the overall esthetic intention, to not only problematize its workings in the moment of perception, but to look at how it can be counteracted and replaced with a notion of presence. The critique of representational esthetics moves like an eddy, round and round and round, and it produces overlapping reflections on the phenomena, its constitution, power, importance, unavoidability and crisis. To move into that apparatus, to incorporate the many strains of thought on this issue, is not what will be done here. Instead, I will look at representation as an obstacle, as an unavoidable precondition in the creative processes and in the compositional/dramaturgical thinking.

No Borders (of Immanence)

The low but steady intensity of every day life passes for the most part unreflected upon, even unnoticed. Sounds come and go, and our bodies and minds constantly shift in and out of multiple situations, multiple relations. Perhaps it can be assumed that humans most often strive to experience the articulation of the perpetual shifts and changes that constitute life, as having an even, steady character. Irrespectively, the initiative to visit a theater performance can very likely be understood as a conscious move away from the intensity of the ordinary as it conveys the expectation that something different will be experienced. And, on our way into the theater we anticipate that there is a threshold to climb over, a step to take, into a particular space where something different will commence. But as immanence is everywhere and perpetual, one could say that no starting point exists, no event starts from zero. Therefore, the performance can be seen as a continuation, with no discrete perceptual borders. Can this also be described as life, and all its movements, being in a “constant middle”? In the mode of perpetual motion, and reflecting on the esthetics of Carmelo Bene, Gilles Deleuze says:

“Of interest is the middle (*le milieu*), what is happening in the middle. It is not by chance that the greatest speed is in the middle. People often dream of starting or restarting from zero; and they also fear their arrival, their terminal point. They think in terms of future or past; but the past and even the future are *history*. What counts, on the other hand, is the becoming: becoming-revolutionary, and not the future or the past of the revolution.” (Murray 1997, 242). This reoccurring “dream of starting or restarting from zero” is closely related to the discussion around creating and being in “the whole,” an organizing instinct that a non-narrative and non-representative esthetic provokes and undermines.

To make the idea of being in a constant middle the starting point for reflections on a possible transformation of the performance – from a monadic entity into an open, fluctuating and dialogic event – entails a conceptualization of the relation between an all-encompassing and perpetual immanent movement *and* the form and matrix of the performance. Because, if the immanent condition of ongoing life is separated from the immanence/transcendence of the performance, the possibility of an immanent process happening within the performative event, is reduced. So the question arises: How do the specific temporal and spatial borders of the performance (as an unavoidable artifact) relate to an anti-hierarchical view on events and to immanence as perpetual and indefinite movement? The diverse circumstances of the performance are, in themselves, indicators of a value-claim, of sorts. A value that, in the pre-notion of what theater “is,” separates it from the ongoing life events. Cage talked about the performance of a piece of music as a possible “other world,” with specific qualities that could not be found outside its presentation, and that this notion could serve as a possibility. As my directorial intention is to acknowledge this possibility and to reassure its occurrence *at the same time* as looking for synchronization with the movements that surround the performance, the focus must be on analyzing how the imaginary borders can be respected as well as deconstructed and reconfigured.

The interest to approach this dynamic, to modulate and play with the boundaries between a performative quality based on specific performer skills, on thorough preparations and on precise expressive intention *and* a more bare, unshielded and daily form of performative communication, has for a long time been central to contemporary performance and theater art. In the context of how

the individual performer works in the performances that we are focusing on, I find that the most relevant way of talking about these two, certainly fluctuating modes of acting, is as “self-articulated” versus “dialogically-articulated.”¹⁷⁰ However, dissolving the boundaries between the uniqueness of the performance and ongoing life has been the core around which dramaturgical investigations and performative experimentation of different kinds have evolved since the mid-1900s. The list of examples is long and cannot be rendered here, but generally speaking, it can be seen as an attempt to dissolve the binary relation between performance and spectator, between the object and the viewer. In keeping with Erika Fisher-Lichte, here lies an “aesthetic of the performative,” and it can be talked about as signifying a performative turn in which dichotomous pairs such as subject/object and signifier/signified lose their polarity and begin to oscillate (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 25). Historically, this turn, this aim to dissolve the boundaries, is not solely attached to the art of theater but has also emerged in fine art, music and literature, when the creative expression tends to be realized in and as performance. This can be seen as a shift towards processes and the “pivotal point of these processes is no longer the work of art, detached from and independent of its creator and recipient, which arises as an object from the activities of the creator-subject and is entrusted to the perception and interpretation of the recipient-subject. Instead, we are dealing with an event, set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 22-23). When considering the development of contemporary theater, and following the line of thinking offered by Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva in her two volume exposé of collective

¹⁷⁰ It is a challenge to find the right terms to describe this shift/difference in acting styles so that they give relevance to what is going on in the performances that we are looking at, but also so that they relate to the different terms that are used in theater science and performance theory in general, when talking about acting and actor style in different traditions. Often, confusion or misunderstandings occur. The two most common terms to describe actor expression, both encompassing a wide range of variation and approaches, are “stylized form” and “naturalistic form.” Some clear examples of stylized theater forms are *Commedia del Arte*, Japanese *Noh* theater, or Indian *Kathakali*, all highly precise and rule driven acting styles with no intention to resemble qualities of ongoing life. The naturalistic form, on the other hand, is dependent on the notion of realism. It is an acting style that certainly has a methodology and technique, established more by definition of the actor’s approach to the material and to the fictive situation, than through general rules. If many of the stylized forms can be said to have deep historical roots, growing out of old story telling traditions, the naturalistic form heavily depends on the notion of the subconscious, i.e. post-Freud, hence far more recent, seen from a historical perspective. With the risk of confusing these, quite simplified definitions, I would like to say that what I choose to label as a “self-articulated” mode can, without too much of a stretch, be seen as a stylization as it adequately indicates that the form of the acting expression is given a distinct preciseness (as well as, the term in a fruitful way corresponds to the connotation that Deleuze gives to the concept of style).

creation in theater art, it is clearly possible to attach the problematization of borders to the counter culture (esthetico-political) movement of the 1960s and 70s during which hierarchical structures within creative collaborations were deeply questioned, fusing a similar intense questioning of the dyad performance – spectator. (Syssoyeva 2013b) ¹⁷¹ Embedded in that movement lay an intention to “think of collective creation as straddling the threshold between the performativity of social life and performance as such – positing that collective creation foregrounds the creative action of social and ethical structuring in a dynamic interplay with the creative action of performance making” (Syssoyeva, 2013b, 7). Continuing that line of thinking and putting it in a historical context, Syssoyeva makes the observation that when the theater lends itself to this kind of an encounter, it can be seen as an extension “of the dialectical play between drama’s traditional concern with the social and the intrinsically social nature of making and sharing drama” (Syssoyeva 2013b, 7). In such a light, and stemming from the political turbulence of the 60s, it is easy to see this development as an outcome of socio-ethical impulses, and that collective creation appears “less as a manifestation of any one ideological position than as a genre of performance making that positions itself at the intersection of social and aesthetic action” (Syssoyeva 2013b, 8). This can surely be seen as a redefinition of the relationship between actor and spectator, between performance and audience, since the theater was no longer aimed at being “conceived as a representation of a fictive world, which the audience, in turn, was expected to observe, interpret, and understand.” Instead, it was about an exchange “*between* the actors and the spectators and that constituted theatre. It was crucial that *something* happened between the participants and less important *what* exactly this was” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 20-21).

In order to move into the specifics of the performances that I cite as references, the most clear and helpful divider to use, is to separate those experiments that seek to dissolve the borders by placing the performance outside the theater, on the street, or in public spaces of different kinds, from those that are placed within a space that, either permanently or temporarily, is given the status of “a theater.”

¹⁷¹ It is definitely worth noting that Syssoyeva is concerned with problematizing the notion that collective creation within theater is born out of the political turbulence of the 1960s: “Such a temporally and culturally bounded reading negates a rich tradition of collective creation practices of other types, in other countries, in other eras – preceding, running parallel to, and following from their more visible 1960s counterparts” (Syssoyeva 2013b, 2).

It is in such spaces that the performances take place, in such situations that this reasoning around the work of the performer finds its validity, in relation to spaces of that type the problematization of the above described dynamic finds its relevance, and it is under such circumstances that my directorial intent is developed. It is a space that does not pretend to be anything other than a theater, with all the presumptions and cultural heritage that comes attached to that notion. Maybe it is fair to say that, to a large extent, the most influential artistic experimentations regarding this issue happened outside the confinements of “the theater,” like in the development of performance art.¹⁷² But it is obviously not fair to claim that contemporary theater artists, in general, are unaware of and uninterested in approaching and provoking/testing these expressive borders. Though, I suggest that the distinct circumstances and the dynamics of the performative expression that the theater is rooted in, historically and formally, holds the potential and capacity to fluently shift between different degrees of stylization. It is precisely this multifaceted capacity, contained in the sensitivity of the performer, where we can find the intricacy that allows us to explore how the border between what I earlier called the “self-articulated” and the “dialogically-articulated,” can be inserted into directorial and dramaturgical thinking.

If my choice as director is to create a performance within the walls of a traditional theater, with actors, musicians and/or dancers, and at the same time work to reduce the height of the threshold that demarcates theater as such, *and* try to enable a synchronization with the movements of life that surround the performative event, I need to focus on the possibilities for the performer to shift his/her expressive quality (mode of contact, level of stylization). Concretely that means that I need to create the circumstances in which a truly flexible membrane for diverse types of contact can occur. The performers do not aim to expose anything private, there is no mode of an “ordinary” kind. The foundation of their performative expression is what they, with the help of different technical

¹⁷² The list of performance artists/performances that can be included in this development is tremendously long and its content would obviously vary dependent on which esthetic domain that is used as the basis, as well as on the cultural context. In this framework the *Untitled Event* is an obvious example (See *It is All in the Passing* for description) but another influential, and Cage-connected, example is the performance series *9 Evenings*, curated by Billy Klüver and Robert Rauschenberg. It was a series of experimental, investigative (the artist collaborated with engineers from Bell Laboratories) performances that took place in New York City, October, 1966. The artists who participated, apart from Cage, were Robert Rauschenberg, Öyvind Fahlström, Lucinda Childs, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, David Tudor and Robert Whitman.

tools and with different words, create and describe as a character (a performative persona).¹⁷³ As director I encourage this approach/actor methodology, as I see it as the creative space in which the integrity of the performer can take shape, and this is applicable both to a situation where the performer is explicitly portraying a character (for example Merce in *John and the Mushrooms*), as well as when that is not the case (as for the dancers in *Ryoanji – A Meeting*). This way of looking at the work of the performer is not only in tune with the un-reflected expectation of what a performer “does,” but it also encapsulates and exposes the technical expertise that the performer holds. It is a capacity that enables the performer to shape and pull the expression to different levels of refinement and stylization. Just to clarify; the presence of this performative approach solidifies the borders between the performer and the spectator, but it *also* is a necessary condition for the expression to reach the expressive refinement that the particular material demands, and as such it is the precondition to generate a possible “other world,” with specific qualities that could not be found outside its presentation. Consequently the directorial challenge is to find ways to, momentarily, change (deconstruct, dissolve) this approach in order to enable an experience of the border reduced, gone if possible, so that a membrane of contact with the rhythm of life as it moves outside the performative event, is established. Inducing shifts of that kind in the performer approach/contact is something that contemporary theater often plays with, and can be thought of as perceptive multi-stability, destabilizing the perception of the actor body by switching between their bodily-being-in-the-world (the phenomenal body) and their representation of a dramatic character. Referring to her own thorough exploration of the development of theater history, contemporary theater and performance art, Erika Fischer-Lichte deepens the understanding of this dyad by saying that, at “this point, we are able to radically redefine the term embodiment. By emphasizing the bodily being-in-the-world of humans, embodiment creates the possibility for the body to function as the object, subject, material, and source of symbolic construction, as well as the product of cultural inscriptions” (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 89). Such a formulation recognizes a wavering quality between stylization and reality, but it can also be understood as extending the dyad of the phenomenal and the

¹⁷³ An exception to this is in the performance of *vorschläge*, where the discussions among the musicians obviously expose their private subjective stances.

fictionalized body into a de-individualized body (material, source of symbolic construction), and this concurs with my aspiration to create a collective expression where the singular subject is subsumed by the collective, though *not* to the point that the notion of the singular is lost. However, this, which we will come back to later, is an outcome of structural specifics, and emerges as a result of compositional strategies.

In compositional structures where the actor's activity is based on chance and improvisation, the triggering of shifts in performer approach cannot be transferred through detailed directorial instructions but need to be worked with on a conceptual and methodological level. As a director, I tried to accomplish this, in all three of the performances, by inserting components – “things” – that moved the performer rather than the performer determined the moves, with the intention that this would produce a specific expressive quality. One could say that the thing exerts a governing force, and that the performer is forced to relate to the radical exteriority of it. However, it is important to note that the expressive outcome of such an encounter is totally dependent on whether the performer attitude, when encountering this thing, is geared towards incorporating it into a stylized movement, i.e. if it is incorporated in a stylistically coherent way *or* towards acknowledging it as a difference, pulling the performer away from one type of expression into another. This is of course also dependent on the nature of the thing. Let's try to make this more concrete by first looking at a couple of examples in contemporary theater where the nature of this “thing” exposes the wide range of phenomena/circumstances it can refer to.

In 2006, the Swedish director Suzanne Osten created the performance of *Baby Drama*, a theater piece that is known as the first-ever made for preverbal children, created for an audience aged 4-12 months old.¹⁷⁴ Very early on in the process, the director and the ensemble realized the significance of examining the quality of the *very first meeting* with the audience, and how important it was that the audience – caretakers and children - felt secure and comfortable to open up responsively. To create a calmness, and proactively meet assumed concerns about what to do if the child was uncomfortable, had a tantrum or

¹⁷⁴ The performance of *Baby Drama*, was produced by the theater company Unga Klara (Young Klara) in Stockholm, Sweden, which Suzanne Osten founded and was, for 30 years, its main director. I worked as the composer and musical dramaturge, on this production.

needed a diaper changed, totally shaped the prologue of the performance, which was a discrete part of the performative event. The “thing” in this instance was not the child, or the caretaker, but the combination of intention and understanding: We wanted to make a performance for really young human beings, and in order to succeed we needed to meet the needs of the spectators. The governing force that moved the performance/performer in an unavoidable direction was, in this case, the specific needs of the audience that had to be met in order for them to be able to participate in the event.

The director Kia Berglund created together with her ensemble Teater Giljotin, in Stockholm, Sweden, in the spring of 2011, the performance of *Become an Idiot (Bli en dâre)* where the audience was invited to partake in a 48 hour long performance that took place in a mental institution, as a fictional place.¹⁷⁵ The performance included a wide variety of performative modes, ranging from discretely delineated performances of songs, to dialogic moments, interviews/discussions between one individual from the audience and an actor. The complexity of the interaction – the exchange between the performers/performance and the audience – clearly steered the quality and intensity of the performer activity, i.e. the performance. The “thing” that the construct of the performance concept inserted as a governing force, exerting extensive influence on the expressive outcome, was the individual audience member.

These two examples are related as they both acknowledge and allow the subject towards whom the performance aims to communicate to be the “thing” that moves the performer/performance outside a predetermined and self-articulated form. And, they are also clear examples of how the borders, surrounding the event as a preconceived artifact, can be reduced and reconfigured through the insertion of an outside component. However, when moving into looking at how “things” were inserted into those performances that serve as our reference, we will see that the nature of their constitution can and must vary. All the same, the purpose of the directorial choice to make such insertions is to shift the energy of the performer away from his/her realm of expertise towards a less heightened expression, of a more “real” kind.

¹⁷⁵ As an alternative to be present for two whole days, the audiences were given the possibility to attend the performance for a shorter time, one day. Obviously the experience and conditions were different between the two alternatives, for the individual audience member.

Now, looking at the things in the performances of our focus, we can begin with *John and the Mushrooms* and the specific moment when chance, for the first time, was let in to steer the performance. This was a sequence that both, in a tactile way but also in its unpredictability, confronted the performers with stimuli that exerted a governing force. The throwing of the dices, the choosing of the cards, and the reading of the instructions, were all moments that to different degrees required the performer to activate a kind of judgment and sensitivity that lay outside the characteristics of their character.¹⁷⁶ In that particular sequence, the moment that most radically demanded the performer to alter his/her rhythm and focus was when he/she asked a person in the audience to hold the deck from which he/she was to pull out the number of cards that the dice had shown. For this to work, the performer needed to slow down and establish contact and trust in the audience members in front of them, wait for a response (Who, of the audience members seated here, is going to stretch out his/her hand and grab the deck of cards?), maybe give them a small instruction on how to hold the cards, pull the cards out and with a nod, a word or a blink of the eye, say thanks.

In the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, the “thing” that forced the performers to shift their energy away from a fluent and unique personal dance expression, was actually just a thing, an object with rather cumbersome dimensions: five tall, but light in weight, box-like shields made of wood. At the beginning of the performance they were placed around the performance space, standing/leaning against the walls. The instructions to the performers was to, at randomly chosen moments, lift one box, carry it away and place it somewhere else in the room, leaning it against the wall. This could become a long walk from one end to the other, or shorter, it could happen as a singular movement or simultaneously by two or more dancers. In any case; the simplicity of the instruction combined with the cumbersome dimensions of the shield shifted the dynamics of the moving bodies away from their virtuosity into a quite plain, almost work-like expression. The position of the hands holding and arms lifting the shield, was, for purely practical reasons, done more or less in the same way

¹⁷⁶ In the essay *Who is the Creator?* I mention the unexpected encounter with a “known element” as descriptive of a situation where the performer recognizes a component (piece of music, movement, text, etc.) that they have encountered before but in a different combination. Obviously the “thing” inserted, in this case the chance procedure and the interaction with the audience, is both a “known element” as well as an external governing force.

by all the dancers. In comparison with the one instance in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, described above, the carrying of the shields was something that happened many times, all throughout the performance.

The “thing” inserted as a governing force in the performance of *vorschläge* was again of a totally different nature. It was a combination of a piece of material – a text – and an instruction: read this text together, and then discuss how you understand it and what you get out of it. This thing – the text/instruction – meant that they were presented with a musical source that they were not used to, something outside their specific expertise as musicians. Reading and analyzing texts in a collaborative mode, participating in discussions around the meaning of written language, is not something that musicians engage in as part of their “every day” work. The task caused something to happen in the ensemble. It exposed a kind of stumbling, a wavering, an uncertainty that in its mode of consideration and listening clearly resembled the sensitivity that the musicians expose when making music. But, in its indecisiveness it showed a rather sharp contrast to the expressional strength that each individual exposed in the playing of music.

In order to refrain from saying anything about the ineffable experience within each individual performer when encountering the different “things,” for example making assumptions as to what degree they experienced the things as useful or useless constraints, we need to stay with the reflections around the directorial intention behind incorporating them. The most rudimental explanation is that they are inserted to create a difference, a difference in performer energy. Further, lies the idea that the experience of this difference is an opening up for increased contact between the performed and the perceiver. As such, and from a directorial/dramaturgical perspective, the “things” constitute constraints with an enabling effect: to different degrees, they enable a de-hierarchization of the relations within the performative event.

In all three of the performances there are major expressive components that demand – and radiate – performer virtuosity, expressions impossible to reach without a high level of technical skills. This is assumedly sensed by the audience, and constitutes the main condition for experiencing “the other world.” But the radical exteriority of the inserted “things” forces a shift precisely away from this. In *John and the Mushrooms*, a performance that to a greater degree than

the other two is built on materials that demand a high level of expertise when performing, the specific moment in the performance described above might be seen as a detail, passing by in a flash, but in an overall dramaturgical sense it has a tremendous impact in this respect.¹⁷⁷ Through this “low” moment of contact, the high level of stylization (and performer virtuosity), was given a body and a reason to ensue, as well as it carried the implicit message that: I cannot do this without your help; you (all) contribute to making the performance happen the way it happens. The carrying of the wooden shields in *Ryoanji – A Meeting* was a movement that did not pass in a flash, instead came in as longer or shorter repeated disruptions. In its unavoidable practicality, it shifted the expression from a certain level of stylization – dance – to a level of bareness (bare activity), and as such it embodied a movement that we, the audience, can also (imagine/ manage to) do. Related to that dynamic – I can also do what is being done (in the performance) – is the tentative discussion among the musicians around the meaning of the textual instructions in the performance of *vorschläge*. Though, that relatedness is not limited to the question of capability – discussing, talking, sharing – but harbors an additional layer of an existential nature as this attempt to understand (to carry) relates to the perpetual processes going on in every life, at every moment.

The directorial choice to insert “things” in a conceptual/compositional setup, is not unique in anyway, but their effect – and consequently their relevance in this specific reasoning – can be found in how they are thought of as influencing the perceptive possibilities inherent in the expressive material. In the complexity generated by the multi-layered superimpositions, the non-narrative structures, and in the non-idiomatic musical mode, the insertion of the “things” offers the audience a surface for contact of a more austere, less multifaceted nature. However, the insertion of “things” is just one of the measures taken to increase the possibility of shifting the performative event from a presentation of sorts to a meeting, and quite a few other aspects and perceptive sequences need to be looked at in order to understand how the directorial intention to dissolve the borders, was worked with.

¹⁷⁷ Another directorial detail in *John and the Mushrooms*, inserted with the same intention though with a less clear communicative quality, was in the beginning of the performance when all the performers except John, sat among the audience (placed around the room before the audience came in), positions from where they spoke their first lines, sharing thoughts on what John was doing, across the room.

Shared Space

The collective being in the theatrical space conjures up a sense of community. Though, regardless of whatever the theatre-makers might think or whatever they set forth to do, human beings are already “tied together by a certain sensory fabric, a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together” (Rancière 2011, 56), outside the time and space of the performance. This is an inescapable fact, that makes loneliness and separateness a part of that; a togetherness. If different kinds social configurations are constitutive of life in general, then we need to ask how these take shape – and how do I as a director want them to take shape – in the theatrical situation? In the book by Erika Fisher-Lichte mentioned earlier, *The Transformative Power of Performance* (2008), the writer enters into an analysis of the performative turn in the 1960s through the German theater theoretician Max Herrmann, who was active in the early twentieth century and who’s work lay the foundation for the academic field of theater studies. He urgently argued that theater is performance and not literature, a social event and not an experience of a text: “The original meaning of theatre refers to its conception as social play – played for all. A game in which everyone is a player – actors and spectators alike ... The spectators are involved as co-players. In this sense the audience is the creator of the theatre. So many different participants constitute the theater that its social nature cannot be lost. Theatre always produces a social community” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 32). This notion of the unavoidable forming of a social community that happens at the theater is clearly a prerequisite for the critical treatment that Jacques Rancière develops in his essay *The Emancipated Spectator*. He starts out with confirming, and extending, the observation by Herrmann, by saying: “Since German Romanticism, thinking about theater has been associated with this idea of the living community. Theatre emerged as a form of aesthetic constitution – sensible constitution – of the community. By that I mean the community as a way of occupying a place and time, as the body in action as opposed to a mere apparatus of laws; a set of perceptions, gestures and attitudes that precede and pre-form laws and political institutions. More than any other art, theatre has been associated with the Romantic idea of an aesthetic revolution, changing not the mechanics of the state of laws, but the sensible forms of human experience. Hence reform of theatre meant the restoration of its

character as assembly or ceremony of the community” (Rancière 2011, 6). The implications of this have, according to Rancière, resulted in a view that theater signifies “an exemplary community form.” and “an idea of community as self-presence, in contrast to the distance of representation” (Rancière 2011, 5). In other words, this sense of community can only be critically extrapolated if placed in a dialectical relation both to the specifics of the “togetherness” that constitute the event, as well as to the individual experience of being in it. What does that mean? Well, the dramaturgy and the formal structures of the performances that we are looking at, see apartness as an impossibility. This view is a prerequisite for the dramaturgical thinking, and what it relies on when claiming that multiple focuses and a polyphonic structure can be an opening for each individual experience to move along its own trajectory and take on its own quality.¹⁷⁸ However, if that can be said to indicate that the experience is of a solitary nature – as the likelihood that “my” experience is mirrored, hence confirmed, by somebody else in the room, is very little – the directorial intention is *certainly not* to create a feeling of apartness, or loneliness. Rather the opposite, it is based on the idea that the situation should present alternative ways of thinking around the concept of a collective body, and that the uniquely personal experience is not one of isolation but of multiplicity. If the word “place” is exchanged with “experience” we can find the thought behind this idea sharply formulated by Jacques Rancière when he says that the construction “of the solitary place aims at creating new forms of socialization and a new awareness of the capacity of anyone and everyone” (Rancière 2011, 59).¹⁷⁹ It is not a stretch to connect this view with the esthetics and social consciousness of Cage and his use of the concept anarchic harmony, as it mirrors Rancière’s term “dissensual community,” which he refers to as an esthetic community “structured by disconnection” (Rancière, 2009, 59).¹⁸⁰ Having said that, the

¹⁷⁸ The term *polyphonic* should be understood as descriptive of the same dynamic as superimpositions: an expressive structure with a large number of different “voices.”

¹⁷⁹ Rancière continues by saying: “But the collective discussion of its design already actualizes the form of community that is its goal” (Rancière, 2011, 59). This is a precise description of the directorial intent to evoke a mirroring of the immanent creative process that happens among the performers and the exchange between the expressive outcome and the audience.

¹⁸⁰ “The artistic ‘dissensual community’ has a dual body. It is a combination of means for producing an effect out of itself: creating a new community between human beings, a new political people. The tension between ‘being apart’ and ‘being together’ is bound up with another tension between two statuses of artistic practice: as a means for producing an effect and as the reality of that effect. To the extent that it is a dissensual community, an aesthetic community is a community structured by disconnection” (Rancière, 2009, 5).

dramaturgical idea to set in motion a multiplicity of expressive compounds from which each individual is encouraged to create their own experiential trajectory, has to acknowledge that it is a way of thinking that might meet a certain resistance inherent in the preconceptions of what the relationship between a theater performance and its audience is about, and my intention as director is to find ways to meet this resistance in a way that both enhances the sense of being together as well as encourages the view that this experience is of an individual nature. In this challenge, the specific spatial qualities of the shared space – what it allows, what it enhances, what relationships it generates – is of great importance.

If we look at the space where *John and the Mushrooms* was performed, it was designed as an open space, like a studio with cushions and low stools placed around the four walls, which could be moved and rearranged. There were working tables and musical instruments placed all around the room, facing in different directions. It was a space built to radiate both a tactile reality and an imaginative world, and this in-between, or dual quality was thought of as mirroring the concrete experimentations that the performers were engaged in, as well as its unpredictable, expressive outcome. It was not a fictive place; its time and materiality was in total sync with the occurrences outside its spatial confinement, but the specifics of the space made it possible for things to happen in a way like nowhere else.¹⁸¹ When the audience enters the performance space there are things going on. One actor is moving in the center of the room, doing things, preparing, and the four other performers are sitting around the four walls, alternately looking at him and at the approaching audience. They are sitting where the audience is going to sit so soon they will be right next to each other. Initially the audience radiates a sense of confusion and dislocation. The combination of looking at the ongoing action, and at the same time wondering where to sit (there are no seat numbers) seems to evoke some insecurity. Contact, communication and negotiations between the individuals in the audience – and with the performers already sitting down – are unavoidable outcomes of this situation. The space is fairly brightly lit, everything is visible, as people look at each other, bump into each other, take into consideration their various choices (Can I move this cushion here?

¹⁸¹ When opening the window, which was part of the set design, sounds from outside the theater could be heard through a loudspeaker that was connected to a microphone placed out on the street.

Can you move over a bit?). The dynamic of this whole exchange is largely generated by the design of the space and by the aim to reduce the sense of difference between the well-prepared performer and the cautious anticipation of the audience member, hence an attempt to de-hierarchize the situation. It is a moment of increased awareness of shared space, and a sequence – due to the positioning of the performers among the audience – set up to instill the message that the audience will not be confronted as objects, with non-negotiable terms. Instead “their bodily co-presence creates a relationship between co-subjects” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 32). All this could be said to happen *before* what the audience experience as the start of the performance, but from a directorial/dramaturgical point of view it has started. The sequence precedes the esthetic experience but is directed in a way that corresponds to the general idea that the space should open up “possibilities without defining how they will ultimately be used and realized” (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 108), and therefore a sequence meant to influence the temperature and quality of the performance *and* indicative of its immanent possibilities.

Both in the performances of *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting* the audience is placed in such a way that they more or less face each other. If the other measures that are taken to reduce the borders between the performance and the audience, are done to destabilize the binary relation between the object and the viewer, this choice of seating arrangement is partly made to diffuse the binary opposition of public and private: For the audience member on the other side of the room, “I” become part of the performance, “my” movements and reactions can, if I choose to see it that way, become part of the performative expression.¹⁸² But the seating arrangement also has the potential to increase the sense of the individual in the collective body: “I” can see that the rest of the audience is made up of specific individuals, not “just” a number of other people, which makes “me” see my own position as unique.

As well as this social aspect of the seating arrangement, there is an esthetic aspect to the non-proscenium design: This relates to the multiplicity

¹⁸² This way of thinking, like many of the other aspects around the spatial influence on the theatrical experience, cannot be considered unique in the framework of contemporary theater art (as the two examples given earlier from the directors Suzanne Osten and Kia Berglund, show), but the aim of this reasoning is to reflect on its relevance to and influence on the dramaturgical structure of the expressive form and its capacity to facilitate an immanent process happening.

of expressions and the perceptive intent, which suggests that all the different places create their own unique view. Not just so that, what is seen is seen from a slightly different angle (like from the balcony or from down in the stalls), but more radically: Some see certain things going on, others see different things.¹⁸³ In other words, the performances were not just different from one day to the next, but also different dependent on where the individual audience member sat.¹⁸⁴ Hence, the experience of the performance evades the possibility of one single relevant description. The theater is then a place for an individual experience (in solitude) happening in a setting of togetherness. It can, and certainly should be argued that every (esthetic) experience is unique and individual, regardless of the specific circumstances it is made in. That is why the notion that the participants in the event build a community of a social nature that “cannot be lost” has to be problematized as it implies homogeneity, and exudes a repressive generality of sorts, hence goes against the esthetic/perceptive intent of the performances that we are talking about.

The decisions around how to design the space – just like the direction in general – is invoked by the idea that every social encounter between humans, as small and insignificant as it might seem, involves the act of interpreting signs and energies beside the spoken language. The quality of the encounter that happens in the theater space can thus be reflected on in relation to what it does, what type of relations, reactions and expectations it sets off in those people involved in the exchange. This might be seen as an indication of wanting to replace a sensual experience with a social one, thus putting it in alliance with the previously quoted comment by Fisher-Lichte (regarding the desired outcome of the Peter Handke play *Offending the Audience*), that the meaning of the theatrical performance lies in the fact that *something* happens between the participants of the event and less importantly *what* exactly this is (Fisher-Lichte, 2008). This is not an observation applicable to the performances that we are talking about. Instead, the directorial thinking and the esthetic ambition are deeply rooted in and dependent on the specific esthetic qualities of the material that is being performed and with an

¹⁸³ This is, as mentioned in the previous footnote, not a unique approach in contemporary performance/dramaturgy but in my directorial work it is very active as I pay a lot of attention to how the depth of the images are experienced from the very many different points of viewing.

¹⁸⁴ As mentioned in *Who is the Creator?* this dynamic created, especially in the beginning, a certain instability within the ensemble, since the performers sometimes felt unsure about which audience reaction related to which expression.

idea of their potential. Not just any material could have been placed within the dramaturgical concept of *John and the Mushrooms* or *Ryoanji – A Meeting*. The potential meaning of the meeting is embedded in a combination of the sensual and the social experience. Though, the way the performances are constructed, with an emphasis on the concreteness of the present moment and on the shared space-time experience and its social possibilities, directly mirrors life as it moves outside the theater. This is to say that my directorial intention is not to seduce, or to pull the audience into a world that represents something missing, but on the contrary to emphasize that what is, what is there right in front of them, is what there is. In order to address the perceptive repercussions of this thought inevitably entails confronting the complex question of representational esthetics.

Breaking through the Representational

I would like to start talking about the relationship between an immanent creative process, the production of meaning and the hegemony of representational esthetics by telling about one specific instance in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*. The first of the three chance operated processes to decide what the performers were going to play, sing, say or do, was a concretely performed sequence and a discrete performative event within the performance. It happened quite early and in close contact with the audience. After talking with audience members, of all different ages, who had seen the performance, we learned that many of them did not understand that the process of choosing what material to perform actually happened right there and then, before their eyes. They saw it, it was explained to them, they even helped to hold the cards with the instructions, but the willingness to comprehend that what they were seeing was generated by chance was just not there.¹⁸⁵ One could say that the event that was ahead of them was locked inside their expectation to experience something that had its meaning in its relation to something existing outside the present moment. In a reversed sense, this dynamic is tied to the question of an immanent process happening in the perceptive moment since it indicates the presence of a transcendent force, a grip, in which the perception is being captured. This

¹⁸⁵ This was obviously not the case for everybody but still a clear enough tendency.

transcendent force is the notion of representation: the expression is mediating something else, it is there to replace something missing. Following Deleuze, Claire Colebrook makes the important, and unavoidable, observation that such a binary division is disconfirmatory to the notion of an immanent process, when saying that this “dogma of representation is tied to transcendence: one point can act as a foundation or beginning for some other point. There is a world and then its representation. Representation is also a commitment to equivocity (two types of being, the real and its representation). And it is a refusal of immanence, for if we accept the thesis of immanence, that there is only one univocal plane of being, then how can we differentiate some already present world from its secondary and subordinate representation?” (Colebrook 2002, 162). It might be necessary to acknowledge, as a prelude to the following reasoning, that there lies the probability of detecting a tension between the notion that the immanent movement of the performance is a continuation of the perpetual movement of the world outside the performance, while *at the same time* maintaining the idea that the performance is a world in itself. Though, it is exactly at this point of tension where criticism of a representational esthetic has to be inserted. It throws light on the notion that whatever world we are in – the world of the theater or outside – a representational coding refrains us from seeing and understanding change and difference, from experiencing a continuous becoming, as it operates on a level of mediation. This view permeates the esthetics of the performances we are looking at: They are not in connection with the world outside because they offer a representation of phenomena existing in what we call reality, but because they place a multilayered, fluctuating and perpetually changing concreteness within a spatially limited field. In other words, representation cannot be wiped away. It is a precondition not only for problematizing such central phenomena as communication, language and social interaction, but for building – and understanding the workings of – the dramaturgy of expressive structures.¹⁸⁶

The history of philosophy and esthetic theory have produced an abundance of criticism, thoughts and reflections around the relationship between art and

¹⁸⁶ It is inaccurate to assert that this condition – that representation is inescapable – is the same as saying that immanence is dependent on transcendence. However, in his last essay *Immanence: A Life* (Deleuze 2005), Deleuze talks about immanence as dependent on the transcendental field, which appear “as a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self” (Deleuze 2005, 25). This is a field that “were it not for consciousness” would be defined as a pure plane of immanence (Deleuze 2005, 26).

the phenomena of a representational esthetics, and certainly many of those strains are related to theater as the concept of mimesis lies at its core. Equally so, throughout the philosophy of Deleuze, the critique of representation – and of a thinking that avoids to contest its solidity – is, to say the least, strongly present, and at points in rather close contact to the performative aspect of theater. It is not really desirable to create a hierarchy between the different concepts that constitute the core gamut of terms in Deleuzian thinking, but as the phenomena of representation can be understood as standing in the way, being the most stubborn obstacle, in his theories on how life and thinking move through time, it is reasonable to regard it as the substrate, as the main referential opponent, in his philosophical explorations. It can also be argued that such a positioning of representation, as a determining concept, comes from its inherent relation to mediation, hence crucial to problematizing theater as an expressive form. With that said, it is important to point out that Deleuze's critique of representation is deeply intertwined with his extensive thinking around the notion of difference.¹⁸⁷ Although that thinking cannot be rendered here (as repeatedly pointed out, we are engaging in a reductive reading), but a pragmatic understanding of the dynamics of difference, in the Deleuzian discourse, is that it constitutes the essential impetus for the infinite possibilities inherent in the infinite multiplicities of being and perceiving.¹⁸⁸ All of which, as we shall see, are repressed by the generalizations that a representational coding imposes. Difference, when seen in such a light, and when placed in the framework of the performances, corresponds to the esthetic intent to allow for divergent, and contradictory, experiences. This is, however, neither an attempt to navigate through the impervious complex of how the notion of representation has developed throughout (art) history, or an overview of the many faceted treatments it is given by Deleuze, but an endeavor to problematize the workings of representation in relation to the performances and to the production of meaning. The take on Deleuze's critique of representation is, in other words, an emphasis on those aspects that resonate with the conditions of the performances, as well as it – which is much due to the nature of the material

¹⁸⁷ "Difference is not and cannot be thought in itself, so long as it is subject to the requirements of representation" (Deleuze 1994, 262).

¹⁸⁸ "Another way to say this might be to say that difference is what all things have in common, for Deleuze; or, further, that because nature differs, what all things have in common is that they are not 'things' at all, but processes of ceaseless variation, change or creativity" (Cull 2012, 27).

that is performed – asserts the notion of representation as an obstacle. Such a take generates two questions: What did the performances want to accomplish in regards to the aspect of representation? And secondly, what dramaturgical and directorial/compositional measures were taken to enhance the possibility for the performances to escape the burden of representation?

The very first aim, when creating the performances, was to expose the esthetic and perceptive possibilities as untamed; to make the performances into openings (for unpredictable movements). Laura Cull places this aim in relation to the thinking of Deleuze when she says: “The program: to construct a theatre that escapes representation and creates the conditions for presence as the encounter with what Deleuze calls ‘continuous variation’. But how can theatre ‘break free of this situation of conflictual, official, and institutionalized representation?’ Deleuze asks. ‘How do we account for the underground workings of a free and present variation that slips through the nets of slavery and eludes the entire situation?’” (Cull, L 2009, 5). To set in motion such an “underground workings of a free and present variation” certainly depends on the particular nature and the specific moment of the exchange between the performed and the audience, thus dependent on how the concept of the performance is constructed, but it needs to start on the level of the individual performer expression. Is that really a fact? Does one not have a choice, in thinking this way? Yes, it is a directorial choice, and to not make that call would be to think that the expressive material is set in motion by a “non-subject.” It would be to regard, to treat and approach the individual performer as an executioner of an unchangeable instruction, and in an immanent collective creative process of the kind we are talking about here, that is not possible.¹⁸⁹ This is because it is a situation where individual creative decisions continuously have to be made, where improvisation is a major part, where the expressive outcome is dependent on the individual performer finding his/her specific strength *and* where dialogue and collective responsibility is a major concern, and therefore it is necessary to acknowledge the individual subject as the source of the expression. As an outcome of such an approach – which must be understood as grounded in a directorial methodology rather than a philosophical, ontological outlook – questions that are related to the domain of representation

¹⁸⁹ This is not to say that it is impossible to work in such a way, because it certainly has been/is being done by many groups/ artists/performers.

occur: What is the relationship between the expression that I create and my private self? What is the meaning of this text? Who is expressing it? What is my expression suppose to signify? What is the meaning of the performance? What is my relationship to the other characters, to the other performers? and many more. Questions of this type, when raised by the performers during the rehearsal process, must be met. Not because a representational esthetic is desirable, but because they are tied to the performers' more or less present need to define a source, a meaning and direction for their expressive activity.¹⁹⁰ My directorial stance/opinion is that these questions have to be processed in order to reach a point where they can be left behind and brought into a conceptual consciousness. Or, as formulated by Simon O'Sullivan: "Representation is the condition of our subjectivity and as such has to be 'gone through' as it were. It is here that thought and the possibilities of thought are crucial. We can *think* the world and ourselves differently" (O'Sullivan 2006, 16). But to use these questions around representation, posed by the performers, as a starting point – both for the creative processes as well as in this problematization – should also be understood as indicative of an important investigative undertaking, which is about wanting to look at the relation between truly subjective creative choices/decisions *and* concepts like immanence, anarchic harmony, superimpositions, collective creation, collective being. This investigative stance is, I confess, rhetorical as it ensues from the assumption that the crisis of representation is also a crisis in typical subjectivity, and therefore it is an active attempt to think our own subjectivity differently.

In contrast to encouraging questions around representation in the working processes, my directorial intention – manifested in the construct of the concepts – was to move beyond a representational dynamic; to blur the boundaries of as many definitions as possible, to trespass any interpretation, to create an expression that signified possibilities rather than solutions, to affirm the unknown and to ensure the unpredictable. In that aim representation can only be viewed as an obstacle. It stymies and fixes. It functions as an ordering faculty, it counteracts difference and multiplicity, and claims the position of being the ground on which

¹⁹⁰ The level of this, what I call "a need," is of course different from individual to individual, and different between schools/traditions/esthetics. It also varies between different professions: actors are often more inclined to attach their creative process to questions of this sort, dancers and musicians less so. Regardless of this difference, the directorial intention was to bring up and encourage this discussion among the performers.

all judgments should be made. To put it that reductively is of course contradictory to its undoubtedly multifaceted and complex workings, but to radicalize it in such a way is relevant to the esthetic intention *and* it is a stance that, through the impact of the many different concrete circumstances – the nature of the material, the subjectivity of the individual collaborators, the ins and outs of the production situation, and the influence of all the different relations – is grinded down and somewhat deflated, and therefore a formulation that finds its justification in what it provokes. However, it is useful to look at how to understand the stymieing as a phenomenon separate from fixity. When something is stymied, movement stops, it stands still, holds a position already taken, movement *can* happen but does not happen. Following Deleuze and placing it in relation to the activity of thinking, one can imagine it as an illusion of movement, in other words encapsulating its opposite i.e. unbound reflection. Taking this effect as a starting point for how the dynamics of representation have steered the development of philosophy, Deleuze enters into the activity of thinking in which the hegemony of representation and the discourse of the representative have deprived it of its possibility to move by constitutively purporting the notion that: “Everybody knows, no one can deny” (Deleuze, 1994, 130). It is worth quoting Deleuze further, as it is particularly appropriate to inform, even when taken out of its philosophical context, what kind of thinking that lay behind the esthetic choices that were made. He says:

Many people have an interest in saying that everybody knows ‘this’, that everybody recognizes this, or that nobody can deny it. (They triumph easily so long as no surly interlocutor appears to reply that he does not wish to be so represented, and that he denies or does not recognize those who speak in his name.) The philosopher, it is true, proceeds with greater disinterest: all that he proposes as universally recognized is what is meant by thinking, being and self – in other words, not a particular this or that but the form of representation or recognition in general. This form, nevertheless, has a matter, but a pure matter or element. This element consists only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the presupposition that there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or

an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*. It is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think. The most general form of representation is thus found in the element of common sense as an upright nature and a good will (Deleuze, 1994, 131).

This is an argument that grows out of an expansive critique of philosophy and philosophical practices and it is not so obvious how it – the movement of thinking – connects to the multisensory experience of being at the theater, but there are three distinct aspects that are linked both to an immanent creative process, and to the production of meaning, as well as to theater as such. The first, which is the most obvious, is that when representation governs, the concept of recognition (“universally recognized”) pulls everything that is perceived into a system of established signifiers and away from the actuality of the present (the “particular this or that”) thus denying the immanent movement (of the performance). The second aspect concerns how the faculty of thinking is bound up with the notion of “a pure matter or element,” and how this notion ties the experience (of the matter/element) to what already is known (by thought), as the truth (about the matter/element). The performances elaborates with the idea that the “natural exercise” of thinking can be encouraged to move away from one truth to another, by experiencing a discrepancy between what is already thought (known) and what is directly experienced in the event. This is to assign a value *not* to thinking as such (as it is already supposed to be “the natural exercise of a faculty”) but to thinking the unthought within the perceptive moment, *and* to regard thinking not as an obstacle for a direct (intuitive, emotional) experience but as a coherent part of the complex process of perceiving. The third aspect is tied to the notion of a “*good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*” and its relation to theater as institution, to its historical (self assigned?) position within western intellectual culture, and its relation to politics and political issues. It is a history that puts conflicts at the center: conflicts of thoughts as well as conflicts between political systems. The overarching intent of such theater is to incite, to participate in and contribute to the public dialogue around political/social

conflicts by staging and “telling stories” that criticize the prevailing power and the repression that it stands for. That intent is governed by a thinking characterized by a “good will” and “an upright nature” (Which is why western theater often regards itself as part of the backbone of democracy.) Such an adaptation of a representational thinking (into the making of theater) creates formal structures of a type that are criticized by Deleuze as being stuck in an esthetics of representation that actually reproduces, consolidates – and commodifies – conflicts rather than dissolving them, or maybe one should say, rather than offering alternative ways of approaching them.¹⁹¹ Though, such alternative approaches cannot, as we shall see, be based on the idea of making representation infinite (an excessive, overflowing chain of re-shaping), as it “*nevertheless does not acquire the power to affirm either divergence or decentering*. It requires a convergent and monocentric world.” (Deleuze 1994, 263).

To start looking at the workings of representation by examining its influence on the activity of thinking is to grab it by its root.¹⁹² It is in what we conceive as thinking, that the division between the perceiver and what is perceived is fixed, where the division between the actual and the virtual is drawn up – by representation, thus installing a referent of a transcendental nature. In following Deleuze, Clair Colebrook clarifies the connections between the activity of thinking, the notion of common sense and representation by saying: “From the viewpoint of representation and common sense, the actual world provides a foundation or external model (transcendence), and thought ought to be a faithful copy or replication of the actual. If we were to accept this, then thought would be judged according to its accuracy or correctness or the degree to which it recognizes some outside or external reality (transcendence)” (Colebrook 2002, 2).¹⁹³ An attempt to enter into the intricate interlacing of perception and thinking cannot be done here, but to locate the binary dynamic of the two-world-view that representation

¹⁹¹ Deleuze: “But why do conflicts generally depend on representation? Why does theater remain representative each time it focuses on conflicts, contradictions, and oppositions? It is because conflicts are already normalized, codified and institutionalized. They are ‘products.’ They are already a representation that can be represented so much the better on stage. A conflict that are not normalized depends on something more profound” (Murray 1997, 251–2).

¹⁹² “The ‘I think’ is the most general principle of representation” (Deleuze, 1994, 138).

¹⁹³ Another way of formulating it, even more attached to Deleuzian thinking, is offered by Laura Cull: “any binarism of ‘reality’ and ‘image’ or ‘original’ and ‘copy’, cannot be sustained by Deleuze as a thinker of immanence; for instance, ‘the real’ is always considered as that which also involves ‘the power of the false’, as that which ceaselessly differs from itself rather than as any self-same presence that is doomed to be distorted in mimetic activity” (Cull 2012, 4–5).

produces and how it relates to the dramaturgical structure and esthetic intent of the performances, is, independently of which philosophical discourse we follow, urgently relevant. It illuminates how meaning ensues within an immanent process, how the understanding continuously swings between different levels of perception, and how the polyphonic, non-narrative structure of the performance provokes representation as such.

The requirements of representation produce rifts of different kinds. Rifts that all emerge from the notion of separation: a strict distinction between *a* world and the images it produces when perceived. This is what is referred to as a two-world-view and it is a notion that is incoherent with an immanent (creative) process – as well as with the esthetic/perceptive intent of the performances – for quite a few reasons. Maybe the most incoherent of these is that representation is based on the notion that what is expressed (image, movement, speech, sound) is there to replace something that exists in what we conceive as the real world, something that is missing, and in relation to which the expression can be judged. But there is no image that precedes the movement/activity of the performed, it does not stand for *something*, and there is no certainty of how it is going to unfold. The dramaturgical intent, or the expressive wish, if we want to call it that, is instead to find ways to disconnect the expression from anything outside its own presence. This is to say that what signifies the moment of the encounter is that it cannot be represented. It has a duration but, it is not moving in time: neither referring back to what lies in memory or to expectations of a future; it is nothing outside its precise unfolding.

As one of many examples of how a sequence of interpretation, invoked by representation, inevitably is trapped by the position of the perceiving gaze, it is worth turning to Jean-François Lyotard and his essay *Beyond Representation* where he, in quite a harsh way criticizes the attempt to apply a psychoanalytic approach to the understanding – and interpretation – of art, saying that it is an approach that “transforms entities of language, painting or music into signs or groups that *stand for* something else, and therefore treats the material and its organization as a surface to be penetrated, one finds the same prejudice: the notion that works has a substitutive or vicarious function. They are only there in place of a missing object, as the accepted formula has it; and they are there only *because* the object is missing” (Benjamin 1989, 158). Secondly, it can be

claimed that a representational esthetic separates the world of the expression from the world of the perceiver, that it carries the dynamics of detachment, and thus guides the involvement in a specific way: it separates the subject from the object, and by doing so asserts values of a specific kind, like the object is the “knower” and the possible carrier of insights, hence denies the perceiving subject to rely on her own inner creation, her own inner makings of the experience. Thirdly, it can be argued that a representational esthetics creates the illusion of stable entities: the expression is one, and the world outside the expression is one, and that the dialectical relation between the two is what carries the meaning. If the expression, through representation, is given a stable status it reciprocally purports the notion of a stable perceiving subject in control of its origin, as well as its growing (expansion, development). Such an illusion of stability denies difference, it establishes unusable borders for understanding the notion of interconnectivity and continuous becoming. It is here we can turn back to the Deleuzian notion of difference and how it is captured by representation. Difference is behind everything as it is the movement of time through time, but it is also carries the infinite unstable becomings that are subsumed by the calculus of representation: “From this, it is concluded that difference in itself remains condemned and must atone or be redeemed under the auspices of a reason which renders it livable and thinkable, and makes it the object of an organic representation” (Deleuze, 1994, 262).

What is the point of rendering this quite well established understanding of how a representational dynamic plays out within an artistic expression? Well, the main reason to locate these “rifts” caused by representation, is that it illuminates some of those forces that stand in the way, and that somehow have to be dealt with, if the intention is to pull the experience of the performance into a meeting in which an immanent process can happen in the exchange between the expression and the perceiver, similar to how it happens in the exchange between the performers. But then again, is that really a goal that is reachable? Is it not so that a non-representative esthetic, which implicitly is a critique of representation, also is locked within the workings of representation as it “takes place within, and is determined by, the field of representation itself, albeit a representation that is in crisis. We might say that the critique itself polices the possibilities of thought” (O’Sullivan 2006, 16). In the concreteness of theater making, where critical extrapolations and intellectual

processes must be subordinate to and concur with the idea of contact, affect and communication (if we dare to use that word), the intricacy of such a critical observation can only be used as a substrate and as a reminder that radicalizations also have to be given a sequence of varied intensities.

Representation is thus, irrespectively of how it is approached, a condition to which both the creative process and the expressive intent have to adapt. It exists on the level of corporality, on the level of the signified subjectivity of the character/performer and on the level of narration. The intensity of its grip varies depending on the expressive form: language constitutes one intensity, bodily expression another, music another, but these levels are related regarding enhancement, subordination and structural density, i.e. depend on and effect each other in respect to representation and to the production of meaning. This fact, the intricacy of the semiotic influence they assert on each other, should be thought of as one of the most important insights for a director to gain, since it constitutes one of the main resources for investigating, and altering, the dynamics of representation. Their interrelationship can be seen as making up the body onto which different operations can be made to create shifts and changes in the intensity of the representational grip. Such an observation is relevant both to a conceptual setup as well as to one of thorough composition, even though the concrete decisive operations are made on different levels.

The notion of operating on a body of art is, in this case, retrieved from Deleuze's essay *One Less Manifesto* (1978), where he develops an in-depth critique of the esthetics of the Italian theater director/actor Carmelo Bene (1937–2002), and he does so in close relation to some of the core concepts developed in his philosophical work elsewhere. In this text Deleuze suggests, through his exploration of Bene's theater work, different types of operations, or rather operational devices, which are: to subtract, to amputate, to minorate, and to stammer. These are terms – and directorial manipulations – that are tightly intertwined and complexly dependent on each other (they also generate adjunctive terms), but a simplified understanding of their objective is that they are activated in order to destabilize representation and to generate what Deleuze calls a movement of “continuous variation” and it is the enabling of this movement that is crucial for avoiding the rule of a representation (Murray 1997, 247). Another way of putting it is offered by Laura Cull when she suggests that Deleuze is “concerned with rethinking representation

rather than rejecting it, and with reconsidering presence as a mutually transformative encounter between the different, rather than as an instance of recognition, identification, communication, communion or coincidence between a subject and an object” (Cull 2012, 5). The operational devices suggested by Deleuze are, to a certain degree, dependent on the kind of interpretational framework within which Bene’s work is situated, and therefore not immediately relevant to creative situations where newly-invented material (improvisations, chance operated sequences) are performed, but the notion of continuous variation surely is, as it encapsulates the intention to avoid the fixed, and encourages multiplicity in all aspects of the perceptive situation. In such an expressional movement it is not the text, and the semantic understanding of it that counts but rather its spatiotemporal continuity of variation, a variation that presupposes the extraction of constants. So, how can the concept of continuous variation be understood more precisely, within a compositional practice, i.e. separate from the perpetual production of difference happening in the world? ¹⁹⁴ Deleuze guides us towards looking at the “geometry of speeds, intensities, and affects,” to find the answer (Murray 1997, 250). These are terms that can be more finely divided, hence thought of as rhythm (rhythmical structure), duration, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, timbre, tension, release, *and* the transformative relation between them all. The one observation he makes regarding the occurrence of continuous variation, underlying all the others, is that “two essential aims of the arts should be the subordination of form to speed, to the variation of speed, and the subordination of the subject to intensity or to affect, to the intense variation of affects” (Murray 1997, 249). This conjures up a picture of a structure that is more concerned with difference (variation of speeds) than clarity, and one that does not necessarily avoid the unbalanced as long as it has an expressive intensity and is clear of its affective intention. Such a structure can, rather elusively suggested by Deleuze, be generated through “sluggishness”; interruptions, cuts and recuts in the material (Murray 1997, 250). Within such a structure there are two progressions of variations, moving simultaneously through time, that when combined create the rhythmical complexity, thus enhancing continuous variation:

¹⁹⁴ “Difference is behind everything but behind difference there is nothing” (Deleuze 1994, 57). All movements are movements of a perpetual production of difference and this is what we recognize as a continuous becoming. In *One Less Manifesto* variation is tied to the notion of becoming and therefore in opposition to representation. But here variation needs to be given a different connotation, outside the perpetual movements of the world as the term is put in relation to an artistic expression.

the variation of language and the variation of gesture. The sluggishness is therefore not necessarily caused by the specific quality of one of these two layers of variation but generated through their combined effect, “*forming one and the same continuum*” (Murray 1997 250).¹⁹⁵ What we get from this, in regards to how to ensure a quality of continuous variation, can be found in the implicit proclamation that the communicative intention should be subordinate to variation, i.e. to the vitality of disjunctive shifts regarding all the parameters, mentioned above. This can be attained both through detailed instruction/preparation of each expressive movement (thorough composition), or, which is the case in the performances we are looking at, through a conceptual setup where variation and disjunctiveness is an outcome of chance, game rules and improvisations. Deleuze also points to the possibilities of repetition (which certainly is a phenomena that can be recognized in stammering, as we know it in real life), and how variation can be obtained through shifts in duration and articulation in the same expressive figure. He makes the observation that “the same gesture or word is never repeated without obtaining different characteristics of time. This is the musical formula of continuity, or of form as transformation” (Murray 1997, 249). I also think that variation through repetition can be seen as a readiness to *move beyond what already has been done*, which is a stance closely related to – whatever compositional technique or conceptual setup we are referring to – the notion that the expression needs to be instilled with an energy of urgency, i.e. not only as a pre-shaped form, that ensures that *the choice of how to direct the utterance/gesture continuously is made in the present moment* (Petri 2015).

The above rendering of Deleuzian reasoning might be seen as a deviation as it does not point out, more specifically, how the different expressional components differ in respect to what degree they are caught in a representational grip, and it does not more precisely approach the question of how their interrelationship effects the rigidity of this grip. But what it does do, is highlight how operations that aim to create a destabilization of representation (where an immanent process happens), are about the extraction of constants and the rejection of reference points, and it also suggests that an alternative to a representational esthetics is the enabling of continuous and infinite variation. However, the extraction of

¹⁹⁵ This is most easily understood when imagining the relation between the rhythmical expression of an actor's body movement and the structure of his/her vocal expression - a relation that can be formed more or less contradictorily.

constants and the rejection of reference points is *not* a formulation that can be used as an impetus for the individual performer (it cannot be the ground for an instruction), and neither is it relevant to use those terms to describe the intended perceptive effect. Instead, it is when creating the conceptual setup that the question of constants and reference points has to be met: Since control over the representational grip cannot be something that is dealt with on a level of detailed instructions, the destabilization needs to be instilled through the construct of the performance concept, which in turn is based on presumptions that certain juxtapositions create certain affects, in regards to representation.

Concepts of Multiplicity – Pushing representation towards non-representation

The reflections on how the construct of the concepts – the playground for the performances – was thought of in respect to representation, has to commence with problematizing the idea of extraction of constants and the rejection of reference points. The reason for that is not only because these terms can signify operations and compositional manipulations of varied types, but also because, in a reversed way, they indicate that constants and reference points are phenomena that exert a transcendent force that can be eliminated, which is not possible. Instead they take on new forms, appear in new shapes, they are continuously created in the perceptive moment and this unstoppable process is what the dramaturgical thinking in the performances relies on. But these are intricate and intertwined perceptive and dramaturgical processes and a step-by-step reasoning might be useful.

The relevance of the terms is dependent on defining what it is - in the framework of theater art – that constitutes a constant and what it is that signifies a reference point. Is it the progression and causality of a narrative? Is it the stable delineation of a performing persona? Is it the causal interconnection between the performers/ characters that we see on stage? Is it the rhythmical and temporal structure of the performance? Is it the constitution of the performance space? Whatever it is, the idea of extraction of constants and rejection of reference points can only be of use if understood as a deviation from a preconceived notion of the constitution of any of these (or other) aspects/phenomena: the expression takes on characteristics that exert imbalance and uncertainty because it deviates from a preconceived form. In the Deleuzian critique of Carmelo Bene, the extraction and rejection are

connected to semantic language, to how it is used, enunciated, and performed in the theatrical situation.¹⁹⁶ Bene's performative treatment causes an unbalanced expression through a "continuous variation on language, on all interior elements of language, phonological, syntactical, and semantic" (Murray 1997, 247).¹⁹⁷ Through this the constitution of the performing persona is destabilized and the perception of it cannot rest in a representational understanding of the semantic language, rather is drawn into a dynamic of a different presence. But the destabilization, with the extraction of constants and rejection of reference points as operational devices, can be aimed at different levels of the expression: on the level of the constitution of each different component (semantic language, as in the case of Bene, or the psychological constitution of a performing persona, or the rhythmical structure of a musical progression) *or* on the level of the expression as a whole. To exemplify this, and to put it in a historical perspective, we can turn to Erika Fisher-Lichte and her general observation that performance art since the 1960s has experimented with disconnecting "individual theatrical tools from their larger context." In her rendering of a hypothetical performative sequence of such experimentation, the notion of a de-stabilized subject and the rejections of reference points are clearly prevalent, thus connecting it both to the Deleuzian critique, and to the production of meaning in a three dimensional polyphonic structure: "They have not only ceased to subordinate those tools to the logic of action and psychology but tried to liberate them from all causal interconnection. Following specific geometric or rhythmic patterns, or determined by chance operations, these elements appear in space, are stabilized for varying periods of time, and, in some cases, undergo a continuous process of transformation before they vanish again without a comprehensive reason or specific motivation for either appearing or disappearing. It seems that the appearing elements can largely, if not exclusively, be described as emergent phenomena. The emergence of the various elements leads to a process which, at first, seems paradoxical and which bears for the performances semioticity. Emerging in isolation, these elements

¹⁹⁶ The specifics of the operational devices that Deleuze presents in his text have not been gone through here but it should be noted that this formal quality is an outcome of the operation of stammering (Petri 2015, 16).

¹⁹⁷ An extensive extrapolation of that observation can be found in *A Thousand Plateaus* "where the extraction of constants from language is connected to (the distinctiveness/nondistinctiveness of) speech and the "impact of tone on phonemes, accent on morphemes, or intonation on syntax." which taken together, enables the possibility to "expand the variables: make language stammer, or make it 'wail', stretch tensors through all of language, even written language, and draw from it cries, shouts, pitches, durations, timbres, accents, intensities" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 115).

appear de-semanticized because they are perceived in their specific materiality and not as carriers of meaning; they are neither put in relation to other elements nor to any other context. In this sense, the elements are insignificant – devoid of meaning” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 140). From this image we can assume that the bodies are stable (constant) but that their interrelationships and their placement in the overall structure remain in flux. In other words, the extraction of constants equals the extraction of a single narrative, of a single focus, of a reference point of sorts.¹⁹⁸ These two examples operate with the extraction of constants and rejection of reference points by doing exactly that: creating destabilization by disposing certain factors that would put them in connection with a representational coding. In the case of Bene, an onomatopoetic approach deprives the language of its normal melodic and rhythmic structure, whereas in Fisher-Lichte’s hypothetical example of a collective expression any kind of over arching narrative is extracted. Precisely the same kind of dramaturgical thinking, as described in the Fisher-Lichte example, was applied in the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, as it did not supply the movements and all the performer interactions with a predetermined causality or an overarching narrative (her example could actually be said to, on a structural level, mirror the performance). Though, contrary to this strategy of elimination, the dramaturgical idea in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* was instead to achieve the extraction of constants and rejection of reference points through an overload, by saturating the expression with multiple constants and multiple reference points. However, irrespectively if the extractions of constants and rejection of reference points are caused by a process of elimination or a process of overload their aim is the same: to place the expression in continuous variation, to allow for imbalance, hence to enable a pluralization of potential meaning.

¹⁹⁸ As a complementary and clarifying example, strongly related to the performances and with a similar approach to the notion of materiality in a performative expression, we can turn to Trinh T. Minh-ha and her reflection on the esthetics of dancer/ choreographer Merce Cunningham: “Merce Cunningham’s dances, for example, also express nothing but themselves. Instead of telling a story or exploring the relationship between movement and the psyche, they focus on the physicalness of the body. In other words, they feature the body simply as ‘a way of moving’. Cunningham composes movement with no attempts to direct expressivity, and with no specific meaning or emotional referent intended. Shattering any sense of plot and sustaining no literal interpretation, his approach to movement sequencing relies largely on chance operations. The dance derives its rhythm not from a music preconceived and imposed from without, but from the very nature of the step or the phrases, and from the dancer’s own musculature. It is thus expressive of nothing else but itself. Yet, if the interest of such a dance resides in its own consummate physicality rather than in its ability to reveal what is verbally inaccessible, it is precisely because dance here refuses to encode the ‘natural’” (Trinh T. Minh-ha 2011, 87–88).

The idea to counteract a representational coding through an overload needs to be understood beyond the structural principle of setting in motion multiple expressions simultaneously. It needs to be complemented with the understanding that each individual expression, as part of the polyphony, was instructed to not only carve out the specifically personal, but to see it as a free-standing entity, rather than as a complementary part (a cog in the wheel) to a collective movement, devoid of a personal urgency. This takes us back to the hypothetical example by Fisher-Lichte as quoted earlier, which must be understood (apart from telling about how experimentations around the individual and the collective has been going on in contemporary theater for quite a while) as descriptive of an expressive structure that has the intent to escape representation by transferring, elevating, the meaning away from the individual performer to the expression as a whole. The singular performer body is there – in its seemingly non-relational movements, characterized by a dismissal of the logic of action and psychology – to make a contribution to a collective expression that aims to encourage a co-compositional engagement and an opening up for a pluralization of potential meaning. In the absence of an expressive focus the audience are “being forced to independently prioritize their sensorial impressions” (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 33). It can thus be said that it is the performance itself, that takes its own course, depriving everybody involved from any claim of transmission: it is a “third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (Rancière 2009, 15). Such a dynamic of de-subjectifying the individual performer, to transfer the meaning of the expression away from the personal to the collective expression, consequently differs from the directorial and dramaturgical intent in the performances we are referring to.¹⁹⁹ Neither the conceptual setup, nor

¹⁹⁹ If this would be about elevating the fictional into the realm of the common, one could of course argue that the destiny of one single fictionalized character carries such metaphorical potential but the intent was to push the destabilization even further, to enable a disintegration of the single subject into a movement/activity dependent on each individual but perpetuated by the collective. This connotes an observation by O’Sullivan: “Art then has an independent and self-sustaining existence in the world and as such ‘works’ independently of its producer. ... this is not a monument commemorating the past; an art work has less to do with origins in this sense (in the subjective state of the artist, in the mode of production of the time and so on). Indeed the monument is not summoning or conjuring up a once present absence; it is not ‘in’ memory in this sense that the materials for art are to be found, but rather in that complex material of ‘words and sounds’ or of ‘tones and colour.’ We have moved away here from a deconstructive paradigm, from the ‘absent presence’ of the artist, from art as a kind of trace or signature. Indeed, we have moved out of representation altogether” (O’Sullivan 2006, 54).

the instructions were aimed at reducing the individuality of the performer, or talked about in terms of non-representation. The intention was instead to combine concepts of a strictly formal kind in which improvisations could occur, with an emphasis on the performers subjective choices when forming the expressions. In such a construction, the extraction of constants and the rejection of reference points should be understood as an attempt to destabilize the representational aspect of the expression as a whole, but at the same time reciprocally complemented, or counter acted, by a strengthening of the performer's individuality, thus making it the opposite of a structure in which the elimination of the subjectivity of each performer is the aim.²⁰⁰ Therefore it can be said that overload, as a means to avoid a representational coding, was not thought of as something that happened solely as an outcome of setting in motion a multitude of non-representational expressions, but as an outcome of a multitude of urgent personal expressions of a more or less representational kind. The performance as a “third thing” can thus be seen as owned by everyone.

All the different expressive components simultaneously occurring in the performances – bodily expressions, semantic expressions, musical expressions – surely effected each other in regards to representation: certain juxtapositions had the potential of being captured by a representational coding, others less so.²⁰¹ But the construct of the concepts did not control how the different components came into play, i.e. how they were combined, since they emerged from a process of chance and improvisation. The concepts “only” had control over which material could be inserted, but even that control was limited as the possibilities for the performers to create their own material (*Ryoanji – A Meeting, vorschläge*) or interpret instructions/text (*John and the Mushrooms*) in an unencumbered way, were plenty. With the music it was different. Both the performances *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting* were conceptualized around specific musical compositions, chosen for their

²⁰⁰ It must be noted that in her extended reasoning Fischer-Lichte observes that irrespectively of whatever method that is used in setting the bodily movement in action, the performer is unable to exist beyond the individual phenomenal body, nor by eliminating it: “It must be reiterated that the character cannot exist beyond the individual phenomenal body, nor can it eliminate this body” (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 89).

²⁰¹ For a rendering of an example of how the interplay between movement, music and text could occur in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, see the essay *Who is the Creator?*

particular expressive qualities, and this, combined with the fact that the influence of music on the representational aspect is crucial, makes it important to examine the role of the music.²⁰² However, this is not the place for a thorough musical analysis of the compositions that were included. Instead the analysis is limited to its general mode and the overall structural specifics regarding rhythm and intensity, which anyway, is the most relevant approach as those specifics stand in the foreground and have the strongest impact in regards to representation.²⁰³ The music in the performances *Ryoanji – A Meeting* and *John and the Mushrooms* were chosen from the oeuvre of John Cage and included compositions spanning from his early years to those written towards the end of his working life, but still similar in regards to important structural and expressive aspects.²⁰⁴ Generally, and simply described, their structure and mode have an even metric construct, devoid of melodic phrasing and harmonic progressions, a lack of musical dialectics, and are very condensed in timbre.²⁰⁵ The fact that the music is not built on melodic or harmonic progressions (no signs of a suspension/resolution dynamic), *and* that it presents a unique musical language with few kindred examples, gives it an expression without semiotic signals or narratives, but instead rests heavily on its materiality.²⁰⁶ Put together, these characteristics not only strongly reduce a representational coding, but they effect all the surrounding expressions in the same direction. In my directorial thinking the choice to let a musical expression of this kind dominate the expression of the performances, allowed for the other components to actually take on a representational quality without necessarily being drawn into a representational coding. The music was hence thought of as exerting a counter force. To deepen the understanding of this dynamic it is constructive to move into the aspect of rhythm.

²⁰² The performance of *vorschläge* was also based on a musical composition, but it is not included in this specific reasoning as its music did not occur in combination with other expressive forms.

²⁰³ The influence of the music is ample enough to bring up in relation to many other aspects of the creation of meaning in the perceptive moment, and will be treated a bit more extensively in relation to the experience of multiplicities.

²⁰⁴ The performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* was built around the composition *Ryoanji* (1985), and in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* the centerpiece was *The Perilous Night* (1944), from which different movements functioned as an interlude to the chance operated sections.

²⁰⁵ It is important to keep in mind that this describes the overall structural specifics.

²⁰⁶ Exceptions to such a description are the compositions *Harmonies* (version for keyboard and violin of *Apartment House 1776*) and *Six Melodies*, both of which were included in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*.

Rhythm and Representation

The rhythm carries the meaning.²⁰⁷ Rhythm is the foundation of performative transmodality. The concept of rhythm encapsulates everything from the smallest detail in the shaping of each expressive component, to the overarching dramaturgy of duration, and therefore it is an aspect of composition that throughout history has been central in most genres.²⁰⁸ In a performative expression, it is the rhythmical aspect, regardless if the material is representational or non-representational, that places it in a present moment. It could also be said that it is the rhythmical handling of material with a representational coding that offers the possibility to push/move/transform it into a non-representational domain. At the same time it could be argued that rhythm has the capacity to infuse a non-representational material with a representational coding. Rhythm can therefore be said to be of crucial importance in the discussion on how to entangle representation as a force.

In the multiplicity of expressive events happening simultaneously in the performances that we are looking at, there is consistency, of a dis-connective type. Nothing has to be done – by the performers or the spectator – to assure this. All occurrences are in what Brian Massumi would call “relations-of-nonrelations,” and these relations find their consistency through time without any investment, or attention given to them (Massumi 2011). This is an ontological observation

²⁰⁷ There are a number of instances in this research work where it is relevant to bring up the aspect of rhythm. It is something that I, as a director, continuously problematize and relate to, both on a purely compositional level as well as sociometrically. It could therefore be thought of in conjunction with many of the different parts in this research: in conjunction with the concept of representation, co-composition, the production of meaning, improvisation/collective creation, relations, and with ethics. Hence, into aspects of perception that lie well outside what the concept of meaning encompasses.

²⁰⁸ What is important to keep in mind throughout is that the term duration has different meanings, depending on in which discursive context it is used. In musical terminology it is descriptive of the length of a composition (thus annotating *chairs*) and has no affective value. In a Deleuzian (and Bergsonian) discourse it is attached to the experience of time, as “a process of alteration,” and becoming (Cull 2012, 187). This does not mean that composers, throughout the history of music, have not been aware of its impact and highly consciously have elaborated with duration as an affective aspect of their work. Rather, the aspect/handling of duration, both in time-based art as well as in human rituals of different kinds and in different cultures, has for thousands of years been the absolutely central measure, or ‘tool’, when shaping dramaturgical structures, and the list of art movements or artists who have created radical shifts in how materials are arranged in terms of duration, is long. But even if that list were limited to theatrical presentations of different kinds (i.e. neglecting music, film, dance), and even if the reasoning is framed within the notion of contemporary western theater art, it is quite strange to say that only “since [Robert] Wilson’s ‘invention’ can we speak of a proper aesthetics of duration”, which is what Hans Thies Lehman claims in his very influential book *Postdramatic Theatre* (Lehmann 2006, 156). The only way to understand such a confounding view is maybe, to see it as another sign of how scholars need to create unfortunate demarcations necessary for the reasoning to find its solidity, but that are foreign to a broader and more complete view of art/art history. In the following, I move between talking about duration as an experience of time, i.e. the Deleuzian/Bergsonian use/activation of the term, and as descriptive of length (of a composition, of a process, or sequence).

and not congruous with the perceptive experience, in which the inclination is to *search* for a consistency, from which meaning can be derived and experienced. Crucial in that perceptive activity is the notion – and experience – of rhythm. The definition of rhythm, useful in the framework of theatrical composition, cannot however be based on the proportional metric system used in music analysis, but instead it needs to be defined in such a way that it refers to the experience of impressions coming together. Filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha offers an inspiring and coherent starting point for such an extended definition:

Rhythm relegated to the realms of music and poetry is often thought of as a mere arty device, bound to notions of meter, measure, pattern, and symmetry; while the sense of rhythm is either reduced to a technical musical ability or mystified as a godsend, that is, a gift one is either naturally endowed with or not at all. For me, such a narrow understanding of rhythm is indicative of the degree of which we revel in ignorance when it comes to non-verbal communication. I would say that rhythm is what basically determines the “quality” of social relationships and of artistic manifestations. What makes work “inspiring” is not the idea, the vision, the information, the insight, or the craft per se. It is how all these unexpectedly click in, come apart, meet halfway, and so on; in other words, how they do and undo one another in their diversified movements, forming a strong assemblage of *No Thing*, rather than of *nothing*. This is rhythm (Thrinh T. Minh-ha 1992, 261).

What is highly relevant in this observation is that the notion of rhythm should be seen through the lens of relations. All the different parameters of the expressive matters that are produced in the performances constitute relations of different kinds and quality, and it is the aspect of rhythm that lies in the forefront for how these relations are experienced.²⁰⁹ In a multilayered

²⁰⁹ Cage saw rhythm as the most important aspect of music. Deleuze also expresses in numerous places the importance of rhythm, for example in conjunction with his extrapolation of the concept of the refrain, territorial motif, and milieu: “In this in-between chaos becomes rhythm, not inexorably, but it has a chance to. Chaos is not the opposite of rhythm, but the milieu of all milieus. There is rhythm whenever there is a transcoded passage from one milieu to another, a communication of milieus, coordination between heterogeneous space-times” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, 345).

expressional structure, characterized by superimpositions, rhythmical balance of a metric and more recognizable kind, is more or less absent. Rather, as we saw in the reasoning around consistency and consolidation (*Who is the Creator?*), it is qualities of disjunctiveness and collision that dominate the rhythmical relations. Rhythm is *not* something that is created, it is not a specific type of time-organization; it occurs between events inevitably and unconditionally. The rhythmical relations between the different expressions that the performers create is of this nature and, as we noted before, the process and challenge for the performer is to open up for this “new” unorganized (chaotic) structure and to recognize its relational potentiality. In order to take this further and connect it to our main focus, we need to somehow define the connection between rhythmical structures and representation, between rhythm and the experience of a present moment, and its influence on the experience of contact. In other words, *not* expand the question into how rhythmical relations are formed and developed within the collective expression, but how different rhythmical structures are co-composed and experienced by the individual in the audience.

The rhythmical relationship between the different elements in a performance creates a temporal structure that the spectator, more or less intuitively reacts to and, for instance, experiences as choppy or unhurried, as fast or sudden. It is created by numerous, simultaneously occurring and independent parameters: the voice (one or more concurrent voices), movements of the body/bodies, music (with its own multilayered rhythm structure), light and the scenographic elements. Our need of integrality and continuity causes us to rhythmically link together all these elements that move through the time span of the performance. In the performances that we are looking at, because of the superimpositions, the process of rhythmically linking different instances together happens on multiple levels. The first can be said to be the expressive trajectory, formed by the individual performer, in which there is a sensed time contour with shifts and changes experienced as rhythm. That singular expressive sequence is mono-linear but it can be polyrhythmic, and in the perceptive moment the shifts and changes happening in that sequence are linked together.²¹⁰ It is what Daniel Stern

²¹⁰ The mono-linearity of a narrative can be polyrhythmic, but not necessarily so. A non-narrative multiplicity in turn is poly-linear and poly-rhythmic in and of itself. And this is the precondition for asserting that rhythmical experiences are co-composed; that the performances are built around superimpositions and multiple expressive trajectories.

talks about as the perceptive process of “chunking,” which is “the work of the present moment. It is the basic building block of psychologically meaningful subjective experiences that extend in time” (Stern 2004, 44). As the performances consist of many such individually shaped sequences, the perceptive linking has a more complex character in which the co-compositional activity/investment is central. The rhythm of one sequence is superimposed on the others, and in this turbulence the co-compositional activity is about the attention given to certain occurrences and not to others. Hence, the rhythmical experience, due to the many rhythmical “alternatives,” is a reduction, a concentration, of the overload. Certain relations are enhanced depending on the direction of the attention. The perceiving subject, in “search” of rhythm – and meaning – creates consolidation out of the multitude, and this process is the process of attentively, co-creatively placing one temporal structure in relation to another. The rhythm is there to be found, or maybe one could say chosen. The performance generates and offers multiple alternatives, and the experience of rhythm is then dependent on which relations are co-composed by the perceiving subject.

When Erika Fisher Lichte says that the “rhythm of the performance collides with the various rhythms of each individual spectator,” one can assume that she is referring to a performance that has one dominant rhythmic structure. One, more or less defined, rhythmical movement in the performance: A rhythm with a mono-linear structure – even if instances of a polyrhythmic character can be part of it – which is carried forward by the ensemble (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 136). If the rhythmical consolidation of such an expression has a predetermined progression, and is more or less fixed in regards to how the sequence proceeds, we can talk about it as a “structured rhythm” (Petri 2012). The structured rhythm is not receptive to outside influence, but shaped by the different expressive materials, *and* by decisions made by the actors and director, sequences that comprise the intricate conflation of voice (text/music) and bodily movement in the ensemble. Consequently, the rhythm in these sequences does not consciously open up to what is happening outside the rehearsed sequence.²¹¹ It is consolidated before the meeting with the audience, it radiates its own stability, and it emphasizes the border between the performance and the audience, which is most likely the

²¹¹ Of course, the rhythm can slightly shift and fluctuate depending on, for example, audience reactions or staging technicalities.

reason why “it collides with the various rhythms of each individual spectator.” This is not applicable to the performative situations that we are looking at, in which multiple expressive trajectories are in motion. They are uncontrollable poly-poly-rhythmical structures.²¹² The discrete sequence created by the individual performer is improvised and the rhythm of it is instantly composed, thus controlled by that individual. But, the playing out of the superimpositions, the rhythmical sum, so to speak, is out of the control of everybody involved. The situation is, from a relation-of-nonrelation aspect, *not* rhythmically unstable, but the perceptive experience is, until the spectator creates her own reduction. In the multiplicity of expressive events happening simultaneously, the notion of rhythm is therefore not something that can be defined as one sequence, as an entity/movement or as something that is stable *or* unstable.

Installing this wavering quality – the destabilization of rhythm through the extraction of reference points – was a way to suppress a representational coding and allow for movements in search of continuous variation. Though, even if a clear delineation in regards to representation cannot be based on an analysis of the consolidating factors of the rhythmical structure, it *is* possible to assume that the experience of contact and the performance–audience relation changes depending on if the rhythmical structure is a “structured rhythm” that is possible to engage in if it is simply paid attention to, *or* if the experience of rhythm emerges out of the co-compositional activity.²¹³ The different affective effect, the dramaturgical impact, of these two alternatives was something that I worked with in both *John and the Mushrooms* and *Ryoanji – A Meeting*. I imagined that the possibility to experience the shift between the two structures could actually be seen as part of the continuous variations and thus vitalize the engagement in the co-compositional activity. The rhythmical-dramaturgical thinking was also based on the idea that the difference between a conventional rhythmical unity and an expression built on improvisation and multiple trajectories would enhance the perceptive sensitivity

²¹² Poly-poly-rhythmical: Simply describing a multitude of poly-rhythmical sequences playing out simultaneously. The result could certainly be described as “just” poly-rhythmical, but the reason to invent/insert the term is to indicate that the poly-rhythm of the individual sequence is developed in isolation, so to speak.

²¹³ It is important to note that both a “structured rhythm” as well as performative structures dominated by improvisation/ instant composition have the capacity to provoke representation if defined as a faithful copy or replication of the actual (i.e. the strict distinction between *a* world and the images it produces), and both can also produce the opposite: a movement in search of continuous variation, aiming for the extraction of constants and the rejection of reference points.

for experiencing the relations-of-nonrelations as relations of a confirmative kind. In the two performances, these rhythmical references – the structured rhythm – look different, but in the theoretical exploration they are akin in regards to how they can be seen as factors of tension and release. In the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* the sections with superimpositions and expressive multiplicity ended with the ensemble jointly performing of the third movement of Cage's composition *Living Room Music*. It is an *a cappella* movement where the four percussion players (which is the instrumentation for the composition) use their voices to perform a strictly composed version of a Gertrude Stein text. Its rhythmical structure is quite simple and all subdivisions are metrically even. The impression of its compositional autonomy – and of its excluding character – was further enhanced by the fact that the ensemble performed it more or less with their backs to the audience. The shift in the rhythmical structure in the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* differed, but only in some ways. The section of rhythmical unity, mirroring the one in *John and the Mushrooms* just mentioned, grew less sharply out of the ongoing musical composition (*Ryoanji*). It tapped into the percussion part and was more of a shift in perspective – an illumination of the slow and steady, but subdued, perpetual movement that ran throughout the performance. In contrast to the liveliness of *Story* in *John and the Mushrooms* its 'togetherness' was manifested in what could be described as a stillness. Just like the musicians, the dancers took a position from which they concentratedly, and with an inward focus, listened and played on stones in unison with the other performers.²¹⁴

In both examples, the experience of a metrically even structure thus becomes an ordering of sorts. They constitute a directorial measure that changes the quality of the performance-spectator contact in so far that the representational coding of the rhythmically stable sequences undermine the experience of a present moment: There is no perceptive action, only reaction. The rhythmical consolidation is not an outcome of co-composition but of thorough composition. And, this reaction, contrary to the perceptive dynamic of the multiplicity, carries the potential to generate a sense of perceptive communality. The construction of the rhythm of the performance can therefore be seen as a dramaturgical tool not only for the production of meaning but also for shaping/shifting the social experience.

²¹⁴ Unison, in what Cage called a "Korean" style, means that there should be tiny differences in how the beats are played. Which, by the way, happened automatically.

This implicitly suggests that there is not much to gain from talking about the experience of rhythm as an experience of rhythm. And, *especially so* in a perceptive situation dominated by an overload of unprepared occurrences and in which the experience of rhythm is an outcome of co-composed reduction. Should it instead be talked about as an experience of time? As an experience of duration?²¹⁵ What would such a shift infuse into a dramaturgical discourse? Laura Cull queries if theater performances can offer us “the chance to know more of what time is, but specifically in a lived rather than representational sense?” (Cull, 2012, 182). Is the elusive concept of time really useful when looking at the relation between compositional structures and the perceptive outcome? The sense of time is subordinate to the sense of change and change is rhythm. From a directorial, dramaturgical point of view, rhythm encapsulates an experience, but the concept of time does not. Assumptions can be made on what the rhythm *does* to the audience and to their experience of the performance. Like, that it directs and redirects attention, shifts the meaning, changes the atmosphere, that rhythm can alter the sensitivity of everyone present, and changes the experience of the body/bodies. But, when the expressive creation – and the perception of it – emerges in a mode of immanence and multiplicity, the validity of those assumptions is radically reduced. The experience becomes so diversified, so fully divided into individually differentiated experiences, that the interesting dramaturgical question is not to ask what rhythm does, but how it is perceptively formed. To do so is to affirm the openness of the immanent expression/perception *and* it points out that, it is the “vitality affect” that is the goal, not the experience of specific rhythms.

The concept *vitality affect* is retrieved from psychologist Daniel Stern’s extensive work on the nature of the present moment.²¹⁶ Its connection to the experience of rhythm, as a feeling, and how it places rhythm within a conceptual framework, enhances this work when pondering over the affective effect of immanent creation/perception. Stern says that everything “we do, see, feel, and hear from people has a temporal contour. We also attribute contours to many events in nature. We are immersed in a ‘music’ of the world at the local

²¹⁵ If the co-composing of rhythm is seen as the instant co-composing of counterpoint, and if counter point – seen from a conceptual point of view – is the formation of duration, it somewhat contests that statement.

²¹⁶ Because of its psychological abode, *vitality affect* is developed through and intertwined with thought lines that include aspects and concepts not so relevant in this reasoning. Its relation to rhythm is explicit in Stern’s reasoning, but the use of the concept here only represents a limited span of its meaning.

level – a complex polyphonic, polyrhythmic surround where different temporal contours are moving back and forth between the psychological foreground and background. These temporal contours of stimulations play upon and within our nervous system and are transposed into contours of feelings in us. It is these contoured feelings that I am calling vitality affects. They are the complement to temporal contours. In other words, by temporal contour, I mean the objective changes (even small) over time (even short) of intensity or quality of the stimulation (internal or external). By vitality affect, I mean the subjectively experienced shifts in internal feeling states that accompany the temporal contour of the stimulus” (Stern 2004, 64). This is a description of a perceptive dynamic as it transpires in life. It can occur as “a rush of anger or joy, a sudden flooding of light, an accelerating sequence of thought, a wave of feeling evoked by music, a surge of pain” (Stern 2004, 64). So, the vitality affect is there whether we want it or not, as soon as our senses open. But it is not necessarily experienced as rhythm, it is a chaos that “becomes rhythm, not inexorably, but it has a chance to. Chaos is not the opposite of rhythm, but the milieu of all milieus. There is rhythm whenever there is a transcoded passage from one milieu to another, a communication of milieus, coordination between heterogeneous space-times.” (Deleuze, and Guttari 2004, 345). In the performances, immersed in the totality of the multiple expressions, the experience of rhythm is the result of the co-composed relations that each individual in the audience makes. From my directorial point of view, the thinking and treatment of rhythm in such a situation, cannot be concerned with the carving out of specific rhythmical sequences (i.e. determining relations) but must focus on enabling a free flow of variations, of speeds and slowness, of articulation and dynamics. It is within the richness of expressional shifts and changes that the possibilities of rhythm resides, and on which the vitality affect depends.

The nature of the vitality affect cannot be predetermined, neither in the experience of a structured rhythm or co-composed. It is always individual. Though, as mentioned earlier, the vitality affect of the co-composed is fully diversified and evades assumptions, as it ensues from the subjectively, co-composed linkages that are made. The making of those linkages is the “acting” of the vitality affect. It is the experiential reward of co-composing, what bounces back. Daniel Stern says that this “acting” carries the feeling of leaning forward

across the present moment, and that it provides “a line of dramatic tension that gives a feeling-coherence to the unfolding of the present moment. The vitality affect acts like a temporal backbone on which the plot is hung. They also help the chunking process by containing the phrase within one envelope. They give the present moment the dramatic feel of a lived history.” (Stern 2004, 70) To connect the perception of the expressive materiality of the performance, and the experience of vitality affect, to a feeling of drama and “lived history,” takes us back to the question of representation. It indicates that the non-meaning, the abstractness, finds its representation in the vitality affect.

It comes and goes

The above attempt to attach the production of meaning to an immanent, co-composed rhythmical experience is done only to suggest that the workings of representation are not something that can be dealt with conclusively, like asserting that certain expressive configurations automatically evade a representational coding, while others do not. Though, this was not an issue that stood out when working with the performances; the concept of representation was not actively included, in the directorial thinking or in the dialogue/process within the ensembles. Instead, our thoughts and formulations revolved around creating the new and unexpected, the never-before-experienced. Such an experimental ambition grew out of the irritating observation that it “is strange that aesthetics (as a science of the sensible) could be founded on what *can* be represented in the sensible” (Deleuze, 1994, 56). But an escape from representation cannot be a goal in itself, it cannot be made into a doctrine, as this would indicate a kind of continuously present judgmental gaze on both the quality of the expression and on how it is perceived and understood: Are I/we creating a non-representational expression now? Does the audience comprehend this beyond a representational coding? If such a judgment were inserted, the strength and expressive potential of the individual performers would be immediately impaired. It would point to the idea that, if only representation is erased, if the sensible is taken out, then the expression can unfold on its own terms. This procedure is not much better, as it would initiate an “attempt to withdraw the pure sensible from representation and to determine it as that which remains once representation is removed (a

contradictory flux, for example, or a rhapsody of sensations)” (Deleuze, 1994, 56). Representation is thus a malediction to which the creation has to atone, and in the full complexity of the performance situation, it is perhaps sufficient to assume that the intensity of the representational grip is something that constantly shifts, that there is a continuously shifting relationship between subject/object and materiality/ semioticity, and therefore the workings of representation, so to speak, come and go. Therefore, it might be useful to ask if the concept of representation, in a performative event dominated by a non-representative aesthetic and with an intention to instigate an immanent process happening in the exchange between the expressive matter and the audience, can be replaced with the notion of presence, or more specifically, the present moment, understood as descriptive of an experience of being part of the unfolding? In other words, a discourse that looks at how the event unfolds, and how this unfolding is experienced. A constructive entrance point, from this perspective, is to look at the relation between instability/stability and the experience of presence.

In the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* there were certain sequences that had a predetermined progression, hence more or less fixed in regards to how the sequence proceeded. They were *not* receptive to outside influence, but shaped by the structure of the different expressive material, and by decisions made by the actors and director, sequences (theater workers often use the word “blocking”) that comprise the intricate conflation of voice (text/music) and bodily movement in the ensemble. Consequently, the unfolding of these sequences did not consciously open up to what was happening around them.²¹⁷ A structure such as this is consolidated before the meeting with the audience. It radiates its own stability, and it emphasizes the border between the performance and the audience. Those structures that emerged out of an immanent process were clearly different in dynamic. They grew from improvisations generated by different instructions, and moved forward through individual creative initiatives that were more or less influenced, more or less in contact with, the surrounding expressions. A third type of structure, distinctly different from the first, emerged through an interaction – and attempt to connect – with the audience. Such structures open the process up even more to something the performers do not

²¹⁷ Of course, the rhythm can slightly shift and fluctuate depending on, for example, audience reactions or staging technicalities.

have control over. Their stability depends on the nature of the responses, thus giving them a dialogic quality.²¹⁸

This hasty delineation of expressive/rhythmical structures, and how they ensue, should not be understood as allocating one type to the notion of representation, and the others to the notion of non-representation. Surely, it is clear that a predetermined structure connotes a two-world-view – which relates it to a representational esthetic – and it is also clear that the third example is less likely to be captured by a representational coding as it moves forward through unknown and various types of impetus. But all three have the capacity to provoke representation, if defined as a faithful copy or replication of the actual (i.e. the strict distinction between *a* world and the images it produces), and all three can serve as vehicles for a representational esthetic. So, even if a clear delineation in regards to representation cannot be based on an analysis of the consolidating factors of the expressive structure, it is possible to acknowledge the different types of performance–audience relations that they generate, relations that differ regarding the quality and experience of contact and the experience of the present moment. What is that difference then? Well, in the first example (a predetermined progression) the experience of contact equals attention. The expressive/ rhythmical structure is the way it is, right there, possible to engage in (listening, looking), if attention is paid to it. It is placed in its own time, it has its own duration and whether it enhances the experience of the present moment has nothing to do with its structure, only with the intensity of attention and engagement. The quality of the contact is then ruled by the terms of the performance, and can thus be said to constitute an opportunity for the audience to “dance along.” Here, the expressions unfold independently and therefore radically reduce the experience of a present moment, as a unique occurrence.²¹⁹ The second example is a structure that is continuously in an unstable state, primarily because the performers are involved in instant composition, where mistakes, collisions, disruptions and misunderstandings are part of the consolidating process. It is a sequence that does not consciously open

²¹⁸ Detailed descriptions and examples of these different types of structures can be found in the text *Cage Interpreted and Performed*.

²¹⁹ Interesting, as an example of how the stability of such a structure can be provoked, hence both shift it into something less stable and conversely illuminate its fixity, is to observe the moment in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* when the actor Jessica Liedberg misses a cue to start singing the song *Once upon a Time*, and the ensemble needs to start over. See for example documentation of variation #50, 23'13"

up to what is happening outside the group of performers, but since the awareness among the performers of the emerging process is geared towards change, and is searching for responses and relations, the sensitivity to what is going on in the space, as a whole, is heightened. For the performers the immanent process carries an enhanced focus on the present moment since there is constant uncertainty about how it is going to precede, which infuses the expression with a tension, that is in turn, sensed by the audience. The instability of this structure and its flexibility regarding contact, between the performers and the performers/audience, intensifies the experience of the unfolding and subsequently of the present moment. The third structure is not necessarily more unstable than the second but, since it ensues from the momentum of the audience, the experience of its unfolding is more direct. As the instability of this structure, and its transformation into a (stable) expressive form, is a shared experience that pulls the event into a sense of togetherness, the sense of the present moment is potentially more intense. The first two structures can assumedly generate an oscillating movement between different experiences of time, and of the engagement in – and separation from – the present moment, something like: “I” engage in the concreteness of the activity, the materiality of the event; “I” let what I perceive generate an assumption of what is going to happen, or an assumption of why it is happening/done; “I” then move “my” attention back to the concreteness of the expressive movement. The third structure, however, does not allow such an oscillating movement to the same extent, which can be understood as a consequence of the “demands” of the present.²²⁰

The notion of the present moment within the context of the experience of art is problematized by Simon O’Sullivan in his reasoning that the experience of the present is inaccessible to consciousness and all we ever have “is its trace (we experience passing moments),” as a “kind of echo, the *representation*, of affect” (O’Sullivan 2006, 44). To enhance the experience of the present through deconstruction of the artifact is then in vain as it is always “predetermined by the discourse that surrounds it. The event as always already ‘captured’ by representation” (O’Sullivan 2006, 45). To leave out, to reject, the problems attached to representation and instead redirect the problematizing gaze towards the

²²⁰ There is nothing unique, or for theater workers, unfamiliar, about how these kinds of structures are formed. Rather the opposite, since they often occur in different versions and combinations in contemporary theater, as attempts to deconstruct both specific materials as well as preconceptions about theatrical forms.

quality and intensity of the contact between the performance and its audience, then becomes an attempt to rescue theater from this double bind: it shows a disinterest in anything other than in the quality of the meeting and in the possibilities of an expansive experience. Or as O’Sullivan optimistically puts it, we need to see the event “as something genuinely unexpected” (O’Sullivan 2006, 45).

Considering all the above, it is reasonable to say that the question of representation is not immediately connected to the emergence of an immanent process happening in the exchange between the performance and the audience. But the dynamics of a two-world-view, of the idea that the performance is replacing something that is considered as real, does steer the perception into a mediation that is dependent on phenomena outside the materiality of the event, which in turn reduces the possibilities for an exchange, of sorts, to happen. Since expectations on art are so predominantly representational – after all, we live in a representational world – the search for meaning when experiencing the movement and language of the performance can, to a certain degree, be expected to stymie presence. Hence, a sensible observation could be that the escape from representation comes in spurts, and that the immanent process follows the same phrasing, so to speak. Consequently, the compositional/esthetic challenge is not only to be aware of the dynamics of representation, but to accept them as a precondition from which the dramaturgical structure has to grow.

The notion of Potentiality

The potential in and correlation between a dramaturgy that relies on the structuring faculty of each individual and an immanent perspective, is pointed out by Laura Cull when she says that, after “all, an immanent view insists on a fundamental connectedness between the apparently unconnected, and a shared nature among the seemingly opposed or discrete, which must include participatory performance and ‘observed theatre’ (or works of art designed for contemplation rather than participation). That is to say, an immanent perspective is inherently participatory in outlook – not only thinking in terms of a continuum of tendencies between the two poles of immanent participation and transcendent separation, but also construing participation (or immanence) as the more fundamental of the two tendencies. Or again, according to thinkers of immanence, it is not that we begin with separate things (such as an actor

and ‘an audience member’), which then take part in each other in a manner that presents participation as derivative of the participants. Rather, immanence suggests that participants are *produced by* processes of participation. As such, our question should not be ‘What is participatory performance?’ (to which the answer would be ‘everything’), but ‘Why (and under which circumstances) do some performances appear nonparticipatory?’ and ‘What types of participants do different performances produce?’ (Cull 2012, 146).²²¹

There is a lot to find in this reflection by Cull. Two things in particular stand out as most valid for this problematization. First, that the concept of participation is related to acknowledging “a fundamental connectedness between the apparently unconnected,” and thus participation is about inventing relations, which in turn makes it possible to replace the concept of participation with co-composition, or co-creation. Secondly, and inevitably, is that participation/co-composition in a theater performance, is as much an inward movement (within each individual) as it is a concrete and noticeable engagement.²²² It is then reasonable to think about this mute and ineffable extension of “the apparently unconnected,” of the non-narrativity of the expressive structure, as the *pre-narrative of the experienced*. The non-narrative cannot possibly be just that, but instead it is what comes *before*, hence the idea of the non-narrative is erased, taken away as useless, just like the idea of unconnectedness. Everything that is done, that is expressed, lies before meaning. Meaning is an outcome of “using” the expression beyond its limits, which mirrors Cage’s stance that “meaning was determined by use, not by intention” (Retallack 1996, xiv). That is also in line with how Fisher-Lichte extends her reasoning (in the quote above) by asserting that the meaning of such a performative sequence is produced through its materiality, and that each perceiving subject is triggered to create and experience her/his own “associations, ideas, thoughts, memories and emotions,” thus enabling connections to be made to various other experiences/phenomena (Fisher-Lichte 2008, 140).

²²¹ The concept of participation is problematized extensively in recent esthetic criticism, and particularly so in performance studies literature. It is obvious that Cull, in this quote, just like Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator*, wants to extend the use and meaning of the concept, towards ineffable movements. This text will not delve into the notion of participation or participatory art, but it is relevant to see the connections between the concepts.

²²² In a performance with a multilayered structure, performed in a non-proscenium space where the audience experiences the depths of the space and the positions of the actors/musicians/dancers very differently, the focus of each individual in the audience is therefore likely to be unique. This radically decreases the possibilities for common and clear signs of participation.

This radically condensed outline of the perceptive sequence, that the dramaturgical construct relied on, is however, truly insufficient for illuminating the esthetic intention of the performances. The idea that the structuring faculty of the individual in the audience has the potential to produce causality and meaning out of multiple and simultaneously occurring expressions, does not take us anywhere. It emphasizes the inherent potential in the individual, but that is not enough of a foundation for creating a performance. Yes, the perceiving mind does whatever it can to figure out, to invent connections between the different components, but in order to extend that theory into an esthetic criticism of sorts, it is necessary to recognize that what comes out of this inherent potential – as an experience – is totally dependent on what goes in, in other words, determined by the specific quality of the different expressive components. And it is this aspect that takes us further, beyond a general observation, into the directorial thinking. The reason for this is that the specificity of the components – chosen and inserted by me as director – not only steers the intensity and atmosphere of the performance but also the type of relations that the co-compositional investment generates. Why did I choose these particular components, and not other ones? In what direction were the chosen components anticipated to steer the co-composition? Well, the choice of components derives firstly from their specific qualities, as singular entities: I like them, they are chosen because there is something in them that attracts me, or something that confuses me, or something that intrigues me to investigate further, and/or they generate a particular performer energy. But the choice of components also derives from the assumption that, together, they have the potential to create a special kind of world in which connections between seemingly contradictory expressions/phenomena can be made, thus a possibility to expand the expression/experience into the un-thought, the un-imagined.²²³ The potential is, in other words, twofold: the potential to compile and conjoin the seemingly unconnected (the structuring faculty) *and* the potential inherent in the quality of each expressive component.

²²³ Brian Massimo makes a very interesting, and somewhat provocative, comment (made partly in relation to the work of Merce Cunningham) on the aspect of choosing components/elements to be included in a composition, when he says that the “compositional problem cannot be addressed without at the same time addressing the problem of relational co-habitation, which is *ecological*: which extra-elements will be admitted into the symbiosis of compositional co-immanence? Which will be treated as predators or competitors and be held at bay?” (Massumi 2011, 155). Placed in relation to the thoughts presented here, this comment both affirms my assertion that the choice of material is pivotal, as well as it provokes my idea of presenting “a world” through the compilation of components.

In the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* the different pieces of material related to the thinking, esthetics and methods of John Cage. The choices grew out of my reading, my understanding of his work, as well as the inspirational sources it generated, but all distinctly attached to Cage's esthetic abode. The co-compositional possibilities, the experiential outcome of the structuring faculty, was thus thought of as a means to make connections both explicitly akin to the ones Cage himself made, but also in a mode of experimentation, similar to his. The possibilities of the co-compositional activity was clearly then not limitless, but carried the potential of unpredictability as it allowed for combining and placing together components that are usually seen through a discrete and particular lens.

In the performance of *Ryoanji – A Meeting* the structural setup with multiple expressions simultaneously moving through space, mirrors the one in *John and the Mushrooms*, but the quality of the materials were dissimilar. There was not a collection of different musical compositions but just one with a very undifferentiated timbre and concentrated atmosphere. No words were spoken, and no props of a realistic nature were to be seen in the space. Bodies were moving, dancing. Wooden “shields” were present and carried around and white masks put in front of the performers faces. This gamut of expressions and “things” was created/inserted to trigger the co-compositional activity to move with a different intensity and along different paths, than in the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*. The potential of the structuring faculty was presumed to generate possible images of the performers' inner narration and emotions, of their relations, and of their subjective and collective development. From a dramaturgical/perceptive point of view the co-composition was thus consciously placed on a very unstable plane, but a plane I anticipated/hoped would be experienced as “the pleasure of uncertainty.” My thinking around the potentiality of the structuring faculty, the willingness to co-create, when the material is of such an ephemeral nature, as in *Ryoanji – A Meeting*, revolves around exactly this; how to ensure the possibility of experiencing the uncertain, the untold, as something that is pleasant to be in the midst of. In the case of that performance, I wanted the concentrated musical atmosphere to create a mode of stable breathing, a vessel in which the perceiving subject could hold, and transcode, the diverse and multifaceted impressions. So, once again, we see a possible reciprocity between the potential of co-composition, and the potential of the material.

The image that is conjured up when imagining a polyphony of expressions moving through space and time, can very well be an image of continuous variation but deprived of meaning. That is certainly not my intention in setting it in motion. Instead it is an attempt to introduce a possible world made up of the chosen components – and all their infinite combinations. The perception of such an expression “will no longer be a window onto some outside world; it will itself be an encounter or event of difference, an active or desiring becoming. Not a perception and then the object perceived, but interacting perceptions each producing itself and its other through the encounter. On a univocal plane of being we do not divide the world into perceivers and perceived; there are just perceptions from which relatively stable points are effected. Imagine if we could perceive all differences that confront us: each ray of light, each sound wave. We would not have a ‘world’ so much as a vast and chaotic influx of data. We perceive ‘things’ by slowing difference down. Deleuze also uses the word ‘contraction’ to describe the ways in which one living being manages to form or experience its world from the flow of difference and becoming.” (Colebrook, 2002, 35) This quote does not directly relate to esthetic criticism but renders, in a highly condensed way, a Deleuzian view on how the human structuring faculty handles all the infinite movements moving on a univocal plane of being. As such, it emphasizes the grounds on which the dramaturgical thinking is based, and interestingly, it implicitly asserts – just like the introductory quote by Cage – that if the structure of the composition is shaped in such a way that it takes on some kind of responsibility to replace, or precede, the human structuring faculty, it renounces the potential of the spectator. It, so to speak, simplifies *before* it is contracted, slowed down, by the human structuring faculty, which results in experiential malnutrition. If the claim then is that this deficiency can be counteracted, by setting in motion expressive structures of multiplicity and superimposition, how can the notion of meaning be introduced as it is renounced by such directorial measures? What can be said, really, about the activity of co-composition? Is it happening and what does it produce? How can we talk about meaning when clearness and distinctness are not part of the equation and the formative potential of the expression lies beyond its constitution? Can we talk about meaning in the same sense as we do in situations where signs and languages are used within established semiotic systems? Must not the whole idea of meaning be placed outside those systems and instead formulated in relation to

the perceptual circumstances? Yes, I think so. Meaning cannot be thought of as a “thing” but the experience of process, a process with two closely intertwined strands: the process of the co-compositional activity and the process of becoming.

The process of co-composition has been outlined as the individual creating relations between the different components in the performance. The value of being immersed in such a process – which is the reason why it is thought of as replacing the notion of meaning – is that it holds the potential to experience the invention of something new. Such a perceptive possibility stems from the idea that to be *at all* “is to be active in a production of novelty consisting in the transformation of the potential into the actual.” (Massumi, 2011, 1) In order to connect this idea of being active in the production of novelty, to the notion of becoming entails initially to recognize all occurrences as part, and as an outcome, of processes. To do so is to *not* believe in things but that “objects are derivatives of process and that their emergence is the passing result of specific modes of abstract activity. This means that objects’ reality does not exhaust the range of the real. The reality of the world exceeds that of objects, for the simple reason that where objects are, there has also been their becoming. And where becoming has been, there is already more to come. The being of an object is an abstraction from its becoming” (Massumi 2011, 6). The things are then not things, they are their becoming, and placed within perception I see this processual motion as the transforming of the sensed materiality (the concreteness of the performance) into its not yet reached form (its culmination) in the experience: the reality of the performance exceeds its occurrence.²²⁴ This is to say that if/when art (the performance) is sensed as becoming - as a continuous (abstract) process of change and transformation – it has the potential to infuse an intuitive understanding of being as becoming. The thing (the performance) is “*taken for* an object but given potential by the next occasion’s becoming,” to use the words of Massumi (Massumi 2011, 9). This “next occasion’s becoming” I think of as the active perceptive presence (co-composition) in the production of novelty, and its potential is determined by how it is effectively taken up, as a relay experience feels its way into its (new) occurrence (Massumi 2011).

²²⁴ This should obviously be understood beyond interpretation. Instead it is the unavoidable extension/perceptive outcome of a multilayered, polyphonic materiality.

The notion of becoming is then twofold: the event unfolding, unstoppable and everywhere, continuously becoming *and* the actual experience of this unfolding creating a *sense* of becoming in the perceiver: the creative participation in the production of novelty. Such is the experiential (experimental) intention behind the making of the performances. Replacing the concept of meaning with the concept of process is consequently not enough, instead the formulation should be: *The potential of meaning within the experience of process.*

Coda (Maybe fear guides the idea?)

Placing the potential of meaning within the experience of process means that the answer to the question that I started this reasoning with – Can an immanent process of building within the ensemble be mirrored in the moment of perception? – lies hidden within the potential of each individual. The potential is the unknown, the potential is the hoped for, the potential is a promise. In my practice and esthetic thinking this certainly goes two ways: as a director, I want to move beyond my own limitations, but I also want to create situations where the potential of the audience is activated beyond the known. We might call this the dream of the potential, which I think is the radiance of Brian Massumi’s comment when he says that we “never just register what’s actually in front of our eyes. With every sight we see imperceptible qualities, we abstractly see potential, we implicitly see a life dynamic, we virtually live relation. It’s just a kind of shorthand to call it an object. It’s an event. An object’s appearance is an event, full of sorts of virtual movement” (Massumi 2011, 43). But *within* the reciprocity, inherent in the possibility of an immanent creative process being mirrored in the moment of perception, lies a dream of a meeting: a meeting in the present, that replaces representation. A meeting not with something clearly specified, but a meeting with the experience of the unfolding. This meeting is the meeting in the space, yes, but the meeting is then also the meeting with the newly made, with relations of a new kind.

These are elusive formulations that somehow contradict the technical intricacy of the reasoning I have presented above, but they are intended to indicate what I think is at stake. Let me put it this way: Whether there is an immanent process of building happening in the exchange between the

performance and the audience, whether there is an experience of becoming, is not what is important. Instead it is *the structural effects of trying to create it* that are interesting, since it cracks the material – as well as the creative and perceptive process – open. In order to attach such a thought to the world outside the theatrical experience, it is constructively provocative to imply that there's a fear underlying such an attempt: the fear that, if divisions are created in the performance – in the world – they cannot be overcome. A fear that separation becomes the ruling paradigm, because “if you start by presupposing a subject-object divide, there is no way of preventing the separation from deepening into an abyss. How can the subject cross the divide to reattach itself to the objectivity ‘out there’ on the other side? Doubt takes over. What if there is no other side? What if it's all illusion?” (Massumi 2011, 7). If my above attempt has been to critically examine how different forces within a performative presentation, like for example the notion of representation, relate to – and sustain – this divide, the subsequent essay *The Rhythm of Thinking* is instead concerned with its consequences, and how they can be thought of in terms of ethics.

INTERVIEW 14

In dialogue with The Institute for Unpredictable Processes

IUP: During our last seminar we discussed at length your paper *The Pleasance of Uncertainty* and the issue of creating expressions that you called unstable. And the question that kept coming up was about the relationship between the structure of a performance and how the individual in the audience processes and shapes the experience. I wonder if we could talk a bit more about that. What interests me is what you see as the repercussions of installing instability?

JP: I use the word unstable to describe a dramaturgical structure that is not only in “continuous variation” to use Deleuze’s wording, but also in continuous contemplation. It is a performative figure that is not only concerned with creating an experiential milieu in which thoughts can wander, but also so that the expression itself unfolds in a reflective mode. In the framework of my own performances the structure is unstable both because it has more than one desired direction to move in, but also because it is multilayered and therefore escapes any attempt to assign any one discrete meaning, or story, if you like.

IUP: Would you say that your production *John and the Mushrooms* is an example of a performance that includes this structural element?

JP: Yes, the structure of *John and the Mushrooms* is a clear example. When we created that performance I knew that chance and indeterminacy had to be in the structure, so of course I was aware of the instability caused by unpredictability that was at play. The compositional methods that Cage used for the major part of his oeuvre were based on chance and I saw it as necessary to think the same way when making the performance. So the intent was partly to stay true and close to the methods and qualities of Cage’s own work, but also to create fertile ground for what I earlier described as a multilayered structure of expression; an expression where the individual in the audience has to choose his or her focus, his or her own path of attention.

IUP: Couldn’t that be criticized as a way to relinquish making an artistic claim? This was voiced at the seminar and I think it’s an adequate question.

JP: No, I think it's the opposite. When I created the piece, I nourished three parallel levels of expressional forces. First: It is when the audience invests their attention in the expression of the performance that the performance comes into being. Second: It is when the actual structuring, the dramaturgical building of the performance becomes visible and a part of the theatrical gestalt, that the experience that something is being built anew, becomes possible. And thirdly: It is when coming in contact with the unrecognizable that a shift can happen and a new understanding can occur.

IUP: Can you expand on that?

JP: Well, the first level is about an ambition to create a structure that I would like to call translucent. With that I mean a quality that equally encourages and demands not only an interpretation but also a type of co-creation of a possible – or needed – causality. The second level illuminates the theater as fictional, as a place where a “world” is built. This makes way for an understanding that what is being built – the performance – is a construction that can be rebuilt, in a different way. This notion, when transferred into the world outside the theater, encourages one to question the world as “it is what it is.” The third level is about encountering something never before experienced and that this encounter carries the potential for displacement and change.

IUP: I can see the ambition to generate a reaction, or rather a loop of activity, and that is surely not unusual. But in this case, when you use the words displacement and change, the question is: displacement of what, and what change and why? Or is there no why?

JP: There is absolutely a why. When I create a performance, like *John and the Mushrooms*, many different energies drive the work forward, ranging from rigorous planning in my own studio to intuitive decisions taken during rehearsals. In the beginning I have an idea about what the performance should attempt to offer its audience. I have thoughts and emotions around the material, around the texts and the music. All this, combined with the complexity of the collective creative process, creates confusion that, in order to be made sense of, has to include an answer as to why. And this why refers, firstly, to performer questions like: Why am I saying this? What is it my character wants to accomplish? What does all this mean? But then when we get back to the question concerning expressive instability, we meet a reflective activity somewhat removed from the artistic practice.

IUP: Removed from the artistic practice, those words surprise me. Can reflections be more or less removed from the object of reflection?

JP: Sometimes in theater practice we talk about our *reading* of the text, indicating that we make specific choices in the process of interpretation that we then use as a decisive factor in the shaping of the theatrical expression. This is an activity that moves along hermeneutical paths. Parallel to the formulations that this interpretative activity establishes, there is a need for the theater artist to define: Why the heck are we putting this out into the world? and What do we want it to contribute? Answering these questions creates the discourse of the theater performance. The why that concerns the unstable area belongs to this latter level, the chosen *political* intention of the performance.

IUP: So, there is a political aspect, or intention, to instability?

JP: Yes, it has to do with multitude, with creating an expression beyond the expected and beyond established values. And for me the most explicit political aspect of expressive instability is that it allows for the new, a meeting with the never-before-experienced. Cage once said that from "what we already know, comes no change. From what we for example know as beauty comes nothing new, comes no change" (Retallack 1996, 69). It is this aspect - encountering something never before experienced - that has led me to some questions on how three specific phenomena might relate to each other in a theater performance, or rather how they relate to each other when perceived by the audience.

IUP: And what are those phenomena?

JP: The Structure, the Never-Before-Experienced and the Thinking.

IUP: In relation to each other, or in relation to the audience, or to both? You said, "coming together in the viewer." That sounds like an attempt to reflect on an individual experience, which inevitably is hidden.

JP: Yes, that's right. I am interested in exploring if it is possible to reflect on what the theater performance does to the *inner world* of the audience. More specifically how it moves the *thinking* of the people in the audience.

IUP: An analytical approach formulated in that way indicates that you want to apply an instrumental conditioning to art and art making. Doesn't that contradict what you have formulated as your "interest in the spiritual condition" of art?

JP: For me the spiritual condition is embedded in what I, inspired by Brian Massumi, call the possibility of self-creation (Massumi 2011). The reason I want to pose the question about what happens in the audience when experiencing the theatrical gestalt and the theatrical situation, is because I want to test whether the intention to create certain reactions and activities in the audience can be described in ethical terms? The theater performances that I create strive, to a very high degree, towards generating non-recognizable experiences. I can even go so far as to say that the main reason behind my artistic activities is to investigate things I do not know and to present something that has never before have been made. This is about the importance of process and openness to what is not yet known; it is about relations and it's about counteracting generalizations. All this relates to the question of ethics.

IUP: In earlier texts, and from other performances that I have seen, I clearly hear an intension to politicize artistic forms and expressions that are not immediately seen as political. Now, when you mention the relationship between art and ethics, as being an important aspect of your work, isn't that a discourse impossible to avoid at the moment. It seems to be a link many artists are making. Could that be interpreted as a desire to reach below or beyond the language of ideologies?

JP: Theater art – not only in Sweden –relies on the semantic level of language. With that I mean that the main tool the theater uses to comment and interact with what's happening in our society, and the way it expresses its desire for change, is through spoken language. It trusts, to such a high degree, the impact of the spoken word that it has shown very little interest in the intense critical dialogue that other art forms have engaged in since the beginning of modernism, regarding the relationship between form and meaning, like for example in the visual arts and performance art. The ethical discussions and general stance of the theater has, as a result of this, been played out solely in spoken language, resulting in sometimes almost comical discrepancies between what the text conveys and how it is presented: an engagement in change, of norms, of society, placed in conservative and uncontested theatrical formats. I think that most of my work is about bridging this gap, trying to create performances that in their formal qualities truly correspond to the quality and intent of the material. It's like when Brian

Massumi suggests that the “politicality of a pulse of process is the manner of potential it passes on for self-creative successor effect.,” thus an attempt to reach for an esthetics of a ethico-political nature (Massumi 2011, 13).

IUP: In view of Cage’s rather developed and extensive opinions about the placement and use of art in society, I can see how such an attempt corresponds on a theoretical level. However, I guess that when this view is applied to the work of Cage it must mean that there are many different, more concrete, aspects to take into account that the theater is unused to? You mentioned earlier the method of chance, for example. Could you point out any other level that you see as important?

JP: A very significant aspect of the work of John Cage is his problematization of communication as we use it in today’s western culture. When Cage for example, emphasizes the importance of asking questions rather than producing answers, he implicitly suggests that we should refrain from the idea that answers can change the world, or that my answer is the most relevant one. Communication should then be seen as setting questions in motion. Even if the concept of communication is at the core of a theater practice, it is rarely problematized *within* the performances. That is what I am interested in. I want to performatively problematize communication in such a way that its instability is illuminated, and hence offers multiple possibilities. This kind of double-edged expressive intention can be problematic for the performer since it can be confused with a self-reflective and self-critical meta-level that can dilute the expressive force. That’s why it not only has to be part of a collective consciousness but also considered in the conceptual set-up.

IUP: Let’s come back to what you earlier talked about as the *movement of the inner* world of the audience, and the question of ethics. Is that somehow connected to this criticism of communication?

JP: I don’t make that connection, but first let me point out that I don’t think I said *movement of the inner world*, but rather separately the *inner world* as a distinct subjective place and then *movements* in relation to the activity of thinking. It is in relation to the movement of thinking that I want to place the question of ethics.

IUP: Is this linked to your reading of Cage?

JP: Well, yes and no. I have come upon only one example where Cage himself mentions ethics and it does not include the aspect of thinking but it is an interesting little story as it connects to theater. It occurred during a discussion that Cage was listening to, somewhere in upstate New York, where two well known American actors were casually talking about their work on *Hamlet*. Cage experienced the whole thing as very unstructured and sloppy and quote “totally disgusting.” The chairman of the meeting felt the same and, knowing that Cage was in the audience, he asked him to speak his mind. Cage then asked the actors what they thought of happenings as a form of performance, and discovered that they had no knowledge of them whatsoever. They were only concerned with the *Hamlet* problem. When Cage later commented on this event he said: “He [Grizzard, one of the actors] kept being humble in order to show that he wasn’t so stuck up. But it was clear that he was as stuck on himself as he could be, and that he wanted the best thing to happen to him that would happen. He thought it was nice and ethical of him to have preferred to do Hamlet instead of something on Broadway. That kind of shoddy ethic is just intolerable” (Kostelanetz, 1987). The concept of happenings, at that time, stood for something new. This aspect - encountering something never before experienced - is what leads me to the question if a theater performance can be referred to as more or less ethical dependent on what kind of thought processes it encourages. The question is partly inspired by Cage who talks about creating “experiences that contribute to changing us and, particularly, to changing our preconceptions” and this can only be accomplished, in his eyes, by creating expressions that have never before been experienced (Kostelanetz 1987, 214). One could say that Cage aims unremittingly to make new things and he does this with such concentration and devotion that it’s possible to see it as the fuel for everything he does. He wants to invent and yet you can’t invent something that’s already invented. He embraced the concept of experimentation with no fear of his music being rejected as not fully realized creations. He said that experimentation should be “understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown” (Cage 2009, 13).

IUP: And how do you relate these quotes to each other and how do you see that they connect to the question of thinking and ethics?

JP: These quotes point to the idea that the quality of the art is immanent in the kind of reaction it causes in the viewer, they indicate the idea that art can – Cage would probably say should – take on the function to inspire change, maybe you could say growth. Here I see two things connected to the question of ethics. First, in the emphasis on experiencing something new and the kind of thought movement that that experience can possibly create. Facing, meeting, experiencing the never-before-experienced carries a possibility of new thoughts and those in turn can be an opening to understanding. Secondly, I see the ethical aspect in the notion that the structure of the performance should recognize the individuality of each person in the audience.

IUP: What do you mean?

JP: The theater situation is sometimes talked about as a place where the audience confronts itself as a collective and therefore it comes to signify an exemplary form of community. Jacques Rancière brings this up in his essay *The Emancipated Spectator* and comments on it when he says that it is “clear that it means more. It signifies that ‘theater’ is an exemplary community form. It involves an idea of community as self-presence, in contrast to the distance of representation” (Rancière 2009, 5). Like Rancière I think the dilemma of repressive generalizations is inherent in this situation. If the expressive structure of the performance relies on established and accepted value systems – even if treated in a critical way – this, combined with the collective reactions from the community of the audience, limits the possibilities for a more individual interpretation.

IUP: When you say that, I come to think of Adorno who talked about artworks as bundles of indeterminate stimuli, in themselves, beyond judgment; any claim to know is a projection (Adorno 1997).

JP: Yes, and even though this assertion, as we know, was made in the mode of monadic esthetics and therefore has been picked apart in recent esthetic theory as well as contested by the development of contemporary art itself, I think it can – both in the context of my own project and in critical thinking – be used as a spring board and reference. This is for two reasons. Firstly, because most art works are still made in the mode of monadic esthetics, and secondly, because it activates and problematizes the aspect of exchange between the art work and the viewer in a way that relates to the question of repressive generalizations.

IUP: Which brings us back to the aspect of ethics, no?

JP: Yes, because the way I choose to insert the question of ethics in my work focuses on the relationship between dramaturgical structures, the individual and the community. It draws on the ambition to recognize each person in the audience by creating expressive structures that carry the possibility of a truly personal interpretation beyond established codification and that allows the individual to engage in a “process of self-creation.” This is an expression I borrow from Brian Massumi who in his turn borrows it from Alfred Whitehead. Turning to Massumi is a way to establish an understanding of the individual capacity to be creative in the moment of perception. Massumi frames the event so that it lies embedded in the microcosm of the movement of the present moment. The event is, as such, the moment of potential, it inherits the possibility of the thinking-feeling activity which is a process of becoming, a process towards *self-creation*. This notion of an unstoppable human activity that sets the objects in the world in motion towards semblance, is undeniably an unchallenged human resource. The activity of becoming lies in the creative act of applying the device by which the actual discontinuity between moments of experience is passed over. Or you could say molded together. This could be described as an interactivity that inserts a macro-continuity of what I earlier talked about as a “necessary causality.” The creative act of the individual in the audience, moving into the expression and engaging in the act of co-composing is enjoyed as an affirmation of the individual’s life capacity. A transformation takes place and this transformation includes the immediacy of self-enjoyment (Massumi, 2011).

IUP: I think about ethics as relational, as a dimension that becomes visible through our actions toward the world around us. So reflecting on the relation between ethics and esthetics in the building of a theatre performance, doesn’t it have to focus on the quality of all the different relationships involved in the process of making and presenting the performance?

JP: I too see ethics as a relational concept. Therefore it is important to understand, in the discourse I am trying to sketch, that the ethical aspect of the structure of the performance can only be understood as an implicit quality. I talk about ethics within the theater performance only with the equation in mind that the relations are open and continuously have to be created, and that this in turn inspires a reevaluation of the relationships the

individual spectator is engaged in, otherwise, outside the theater. So, this is also a transformation, a transformation of vitality and affect. There is a quote by Deleuze I'd like to bring up since it leads back to Massumi, but also forward as it talks about thinking as an activity that not necessarily molds, or creates causality. It opens up for a deepening of the question of the relation between the never-before-experienced, the form of a theater performance and ethics. Deleuze says that thinking "is neither innate nor stirred by the reassuring familiarity of encounters with the known. It is an involuntary activity that takes place when the mind is provoked by an encounter with the unknown and the unpredictable" (Deleuze 1994, 139). The question of ethics becomes bare when this observation by Deleuze is put next to the question if "the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of specific content and quite independent of results, could this activity be of such a nature that it 'conditions' men against evil-doing?" (Arendt 1971, 418). This last question is a quote from Hannah Arendt's essay *Thinking and Moral Consideration* from 1971. It is quite extensive in its attempt to draw a picture of the meaning, role and function of thinking, and it develops reflections on evil and loss of thinking in relation to action and judging that she so sharply – and provocatively – spotlighted in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1964).

IUP: Cage, Deleuze and Hannah Arendt are rather strange bedfellows.

What I mean is that the work of Arendt has deep and specific political and historical connotations, and it seems you leave that aspect out by creating this linkage, creating a drama that actually has its core somewhere else, outside the immediately political? And also, if I remember correctly, Deleuze and Guattari in their last book *What is Philosophy*, quite explicitly reject the idea of philosophy as an activity that's about reflection and judgment, saying that no "image of thought can be limited to a selection of calm determinations." Shouldn't we understand that as an objection to thinking as being about weighing alternatives?

JP: I think that Deleuze and Guattari make their objection to thinking as corrective, even more explicitly when, following Nietzsche, they say that "thought is creation, not a will to truth" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 54). So, no doubt, juxtaposing those two quotes, taken out of their context, could be seen as careless. But for me it's a way to emphasize how serious it is, and the

consequences it is possible to imagine if we leave out of the discussion the kind of negative impact it has if we refrain from contesting representative esthetics. In other words, I think one should dare to create this kind of dynamic in a world where most of the messages, images and expressions that we meet are aimed at sedating us rather than reminding us of our rich inner capacity. In my own attempts to reflect on the activity of thinking, the ethical aspect is more about relatedness, and infused with the idea that thinking is “like being-there with and for other entities, forces ” and that it “ cracks open the shield of tedium and predictability in which we wrap ourselves in order to get through the day” (Braidotti 2011, 360).

THE RHYTHM OF THINKING

We do not begin with a moral image of man or human freedom; we rely on the examination of syntheses, interactions and the openness of life to a not already-given future. We begin, therefore, with perception: not a subject who perceives, nor an object perceived, but an interaction or event of perception which then creates a relation, territory or machine of two responding terms.

Claire Colebrook

The visceral foundation

I picture the theater as a space where things happen. I do not know exactly what, and I do not know how it will be perceived. It is an atmosphere of possibilities. What I know is not actually interesting. The known is a restriction, almost like a burden. It is the movements of the attempts we make to find our way that are beautiful. They come when we are lost. It is then I start to invent. (What am I inventing? Something to hold on to? Relations of sorts?) The event is full of movements and sounds and words and when I am inside I alternately feel and think, think and feel. This variation makes me feel alive. I sense that I am part of time's unfolding. The inventing is perpetual. It makes up my inner world, and is steered by the ongoing evolvement of events that surround me. As an artist it feels impossible not to let this momentum be part of the conception. Rather, to actually see it as the driving force.

The inner world of the individual in the audience is an image that is constantly in front of me. The turbulence of that other inner world is also mine. But it is almost always, in my imagination, more unruly than my own. Is that because it generates empathy, or because this image represents possibilities greater than my own? Irrespectively, it is the image of the inner movement of the singular individual that inspires me, and that I envision and "talk" to in my constant thinking about the workings of the performance. It is my interest in this inner movement that makes whatever story, or problem or drama to be presented, seem less important. Rather, it is the freeness of the movement that I am concerned about, its vitality and ultra-sensitivity, a kind of volatile membrane. The dramaturgical thinking is all about imagining how this membrane will and

can respond to the different components that make up the composition. The turbulence of the inner world must be sustained. It is not about containing it, but about acknowledging it.

I assume that hidden possibilities can only emerge if we enter into that which is not restricted by thought. All compositional measures are constrained by the limitations of thinking: dramaturgy is, and is not, a science. The limits of my thinking once irritated me, now I see them as a lever. I say: my limits constitute the incentive for experimentation. In the making, there is intuition and play, there is uncertainty and assumption; it is a search for intensities I have not yet experienced. The initiative is then about setting possibilities in motion. Or: All I do is create conditions for something never-before-experienced to happen. Or: Invent possibilities for experiencing the experience of existence; it is not about being in it, inside the multiplicity (which, of course, we always are) but to co-compose.

If the above thoughts are something like a declaration of my esthetics (or: an exposition of the visceral foundation for my artistic practice), the following is, in turn, an explication of how its dramaturgical and compositional transformations correlate to my outlook on the world: How it is moved from an I into a We-context. How it extends the reasoning beyond the structural specifics of the performances, into the concepts of ethics.

Since the occurrence of the components in the compositions are founded on, and shaped by esthetic choices and decisions, an ethico-esthetic aspect is not something that is assigned to the expression but embodied and enclosed by it. It grows from within, it ensues from the nature of the material, from the structure of the creative processes, from the dramaturgical construct, *and* it finds its potential in the meeting with the audience. To define the correlation in that order grounds the reasoning in the intuitive creative act, *but immediately* as I enter into the work, a shift occurs. The esthetic aspect is then “just” the initial impetus because as soon as the processes are set in motion, as soon as the dramaturgical questions enter into the doings and force us to explain why we are doing what we are doing, the position of the gaze changes. Or rather, is complemented. The perspectives are thus thoroughly meshed and to attempt a demarcation between esthetics and ethics (which in this precise instance should be understood as encapsulating the concepts of value and politics) is a

challenge. Why does that challenge have to be met? Why is it necessary to talk about ethics in the framework of an embodied practice? Firstly, because I think it is important to infuse the creative doings with the responsibility that the concept implies; it pulls the doings out of innocence. Secondly, a discussion of ethics implicitly points to the notion of social relations and their importance. And thirdly, because the overarching esthetic principle in the performances is an ethics, emerging from a vision of the subject.

The operational systematization that the reasoning implies (contrary views are probably numerous) is done to enable transformations, but also to illuminate how different compositional measures rest on a broader ethico-esthetic conviction.

Sustain the turbulence

The expressive force in the performances is not to be found in what they convey, but outside what is explicitly exposed, in the reaction they cause. That observation must be analyzed and expanded on extensively, as it can be applied to a wide array of esthetic expressions. The starting point must be to ask: What *specifically* is meant to occur outside “what is explicitly exposed”? And, what is the nature of the reaction that I am talking about? To meet those questions I want to temporarily replace the term co-composition with the term *figuring-out* and suggest that what is meant to perceptively occur outside that which is explicitly exposed is an activity, an activity of figuring out, among the audience. But, it is not about figuring out how a story is going to unfold, but a figuring-out of a more, one could say, inventive type.²²⁵ As the performances that I am referring to consciously, through their dramaturgical construct as well as through the quality of the material, try to escape narration and representation and aim to present something that is never-before-experienced – hence not mirroring occurrences outside the performative situation – the starting point of the figuring-out-process becomes: What *is* this that I see/hear? From my directorial position, it is not, however, important to supply an answer

²²⁵ An inspiring clarification of the type of figuring-out that I am after, is to see it in light of Gertrude Stein’s observation that the need to figure out what is going on in the theater can be rather disturbing since “the thing seen and the thing felt about the thing seen not going on at the same tempo is what makes the being at the theatre something that makes anybody nervous” (Stein 1935, 94). The disturbance Stein is talking about stems from the demand to figure out the causality of a dramatic narrative (Shakespeare). That is obviously not what I’m talking about.

to that question. What is important is that the figuring-out *actually happens*, as an active engagement in the multiplicities, playing out as co-creation.

In order to delineate the dynamics of the figuring-out-activity – *and* to specify the nature of the reaction/activity – it is helpful to employ the thinking of Berthold Brecht (1898–1956). Doing so offers some distinct perspectives on audience activation, involvement and investment that mirror the type of activity that I am trying to trace (hence placing it in a historical perspective). But Brecht’s thinking also represents important differences in relation to our performances; differences that help to illuminate how I envisioned the audience reaction would play out. When describing his view on the relation between his plays and the audience Brecht says that: “The audience has got to be good enough psychologists to make its own sense of the material I put before it. All I can guarantee is the absolute correctness and authenticity of what happens in my plays; I am prepared to bank on my knowledge of human beings. But I leave the maximum freedom of interpretation. The sense of my plays is immanent. You have to fish it out yourself” (Brecht 2006, 14).²²⁶ In order to set this fishing-out-activity in motion Brecht sees the need to present the incidents “baldly so that the audience can think for itself.” and by doing so get their “enjoyment from setting its reason to work” (Brecht 2006, 14). Fishing-out, thinking, setting reason to work – are all activities that place the potential of the expression in the hands of its audience. The dramatic text is less concerned with its own inner stability and more with its perceptive outcome, and its presentation should be formed so that the spectator is “given the possibility (and duty) of assembling, experimenting and abstracting” (Brecht 2006, 60).²²⁷

It is from this point, that the comparison becomes more interesting, and somewhat charged, as it enters into what the figuring-out-activity is suppose to generate, and hence offers this reasoning a constructive friction. In his extensive prolongations of Brechtian theories, Walter Benjamin defines the plays

²²⁶ In the interview with Bernard Guillemin (1926), from which this quote is taken, Brecht does talk about directing and the importance of the staging, but the overall sense throughout the interview is that it is his writing, the construction of the text and its dramaturgical repercussions, that is central.

²²⁷ Two important things need to be mentioned in relation to this. Even if Brecht fears that his writing can seem chaotic, from a contemporary reader’s standpoint, it is concentrated and clear in terms of dramatic causality and inclination. Secondly, the dramaturgical aim, as formulated by Brecht in this interview (and elsewhere in his writings on the workings of epic theater) is closely connected with specific directorial measures, which is not something this text will treat.

that Brecht presents to his audience as representations of the conditions and circumstances under which human life is lived (Benjamin 1968). They represent forces and incidents that exist in the world, and in his exposition of these forces Brecht does not reject representation, nor turn his back on narration (I would actually say the opposite, in both cases). Instead, it could be inferred that they are sharply delineated metaphors of social and political conditions existing outside the theater and presented with the aim “to expose the laws of cause and effect” (Brecht 2006, 71). The difference between such a dramaturgical/intentional stance and the one in the performances we are looking at, are twofold. The first concerns the structure of the material; where Brecht offers condensed dramatic situations with a representational esthetic, the material in the performances are of a non-representative, non-metaphorical type. The other significant difference is that while the work of Brecht finds its dramaturgical stability through mono-linear narration, the dramaturgical construct in our performances is instead built on a non-narrative multiplicity. The figuring-out in the Brechtian context includes, in my opinion, the activation of moral judgment, while the figuring-out in the multiplicity of our performances aims to efface moral judgment and encourage the invention of relations. So, even if Brecht claims that he is anxious “to teach the spectator a quite definite practical attitude, directed towards changing the world,” and that such a process “must begin by making him adopt in the theatre a quite different attitude from what he is used to” (Brecht 2006, 57), the alternate gaze that Brecht wants to infuse relates, through the representational esthetics, to phenomenon that exists in the world outside the performance. The fishing-out becomes a rearranging of what is true, as Brecht himself puts it. This truth is a political truth that will ensue from experiencing – and judging – the dialectical forces presented in the play. Such a dialectical dynamic, conjured up by the concept of truth, is not applicable to the performances that I refer to, as they instead confirm the idea of experiential diversity in which the truth is the multiplicity of alternatives.

The most important difference between Brecht’s *fishing-out* and the *figuring-out/inventing* that I am talking about is, however, to be found in a formulation in which his dramaturgical thinking touches on a philosophical domain that borders on the idea of immanent perceptive processes (Is he consciously or intuitively picking up formulations akin to process philosophy?) when he says: “At any rate

I am not so discouragingly chaotic as people think. I may confine my plays to the raw material, but I show only what is typical. I select; that is where the discipline comes in. Even when a character behaves by contradictions that's only because nobody can be identically the same at two different moments. Changes in his exterior continually lead to an inner reshuffling. The continuity of the ego is a myth. A man is an atom that perpetually breaks up and forms anew. We have to show things as they are" (Brecht 2006, 15). Even if this observation acknowledges a perpetual forming of the new, it ends on a static note. This is contrary to my view, as nothing in the performances is about how things *are*, but what they can *become*. If the Brechtian exposure of the forces aims at generating an activity of reflection and judgment, resulting in possible solutions, the turbulent multiplicity in our performances is instead there to encourage the *avoidance* of putting things in one order; a continuous reshuffling of (outer) relations.²²⁸

Irrespective of the difference in the qualitative specifics of the expressive material, regardless of the disparity in the sought after outcome, the similarities between the perceptive dynamic that I search for and the audience creative activation that Brecht's dramaturgical thinking seeks to attain, is clear. This activation is, as Walter Benjamin points out, indicative of the theater as a moral institution as it "not merely transmit knowledge but actually engenders it" (Benjamin 1983, 11). It is well known that Brechtian theories expose the political aspect of dramaturgy, that they pull the question of form into a politico-esthetical discourse. But to disengage the aspect of ethics from the political is not possible. Consequently, the discourse I want to delineate should be understood as nothing other than a politico-ethical-esthetics, hence acknowledging the embedded relation and dependency between the aspects. The question that this leads us to, and with which I want to exit the Brechtian reference and return to our performances, is if the ethical aspect of esthetic expressions is to be found in the treatment of known (recognizable) forces *or* is it to be found in the not yet experienced, in the invention, in the process of discovering the (still) unknown?

With that question in mind, how can the meaning of the word ethics in the locution "ethics of dramaturgy" be understood? A good way to start tackling that question is with a quote by Claire Colebrook in which she, rather conclusively,

²²⁸ This is of course related to the idea - and energy - of anarchic harmony, the state of being-together in difference often referred to by Cage, and talked about in the essay *Who is the Creator?*

formulates a Deleuzian onto-ethics: “We do not begin with a moral image of man or human freedom; we rely on the examination of syntheses, interactions and the openness of life to a not already-given future. We begin, therefore, with perception: not a subject who perceives, nor an object perceived, but an interaction or event of perception which then creates a relation, territory or machine of two responding terms” (Colebrook 2002, 143). This is an ethics that is embedded in an experiential process of existence. It is what I have chosen to call an onto-ethics, framed by concepts like syntheses, interaction, empowering modes of becoming, exchange and inventing of relations, and so on. These are all concepts affirmative of what Rosi Braidotti calls a vision of the subject: a human subject coming into – and experiencing – being through relations unfolding through time. It is in this Braidottian extension of the Deleuzian theories, that contact with a dramaturgical thinking becomes almost tangible.²²⁹ I see the *vision of the subject*, as an ethical grounding, harboring two strong, expansive parallel but co-dependent potentialities. The first are the infinite possibilities within the creative resources of the imagination, and the second is the potentiality of all relations that life presents. It is in the nourishing of these potentialities – and their correlation – that an ethics occurs.

By placing this outlook within composition I will suggest its correlation to and consequences for the dramaturgical structure. However, this correlation is not a mirroring type. The dramaturgical structure cannot, in itself, be seen as ethical but instead it is constitutive of those circumstances under which the individual being can (possibly) have an experience of an ethical kind. The performance(s) is thus thought of as an environment that presents *possibilities* for (life-)movements that affirm a vision of the subject. In other words, nothing in the following is about what is actually going on, what the actual experience is like. Rather, it is an idea of how the perception of the individual subject *might* move when the circumstances are such and such. This claim of a reciprocal relation between a vision of the subject and the esthetics of the performances is probably the most expansive, and yet delicate extension of

²²⁹ Rosi Braidotti’s philosophical project, as a whole, is what she calls the developing of a nomadic theory. She has, in a number of books, inserted/activated this term/concept as the main tool in her feministic philosophical/socio-political/esthetic criticism. The concept of the nomad and nomadic theory is also used and developed by Gilles Deleuze. Needless to say, the appropriation of the Braidottian term(s) is extremely delimited. A fuller explication can be found in her books *Nomadic Subjects* (1994) and *The Portable Braidotti* (2011).

the compositional thinking that I am trying to trace. But even so, the claim is of little interest if it is not placed within the concept of composition, or rather within the *problematization* of dramaturgy and composition. In other words, placed outside language. It follows, that even if the main critical discourse throughout this work is built around the concept of immanence – in collective creation and in the performance/audience exchange – we need to talk about this aspect as the *ethics of dramaturgy and composition*, and not primarily as the ethics of immanence.²³⁰

However, even if the aspect of ethics – in whatever way it is delineated – reaches down to levels of existence and thinking that the performances can only touch upon, it can still be used to outline the conditions that govern the shared experience of the performance, hence influence all its different parameters. The movement, or the onto-ethical process, that the outlook proposes, is what the performances want to trigger, what they want to encourage, what they want to support, through their structural specifics. So, let me place this in relation to one of the performances.

An open beginning

When I formulated the creative circumstances for the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, I nourished three parallel levels of expressive forces in order to generate the turbulence, from which the activity of inventing (which by now

²³⁰ Understandably, this is not the place for a thorough exposition of the discussions on the distinction between ethics and esthetics in the history of philosophy, which goes all the way back to the pre-Socratics. The delineation for the definition of an ethics has to be found in the materiality of the performances, in conjunction with the perceptive intent. With that said, it is interesting and rewarding to engage with Kenneth Surin's (2011) discussion of Deleuze's stand on the issue. Surin claims that he has not been able to detect if Deleuze made a really precise distinction between ethics and esthetics other than in an interview in which he attaches ethics to "a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved" and esthetics to "as style of life, not anything at all personal, but inventing a possibility of life, a way of existing." Ethics, in a Deleuzian sense, is then about assessing (a way of existing) and esthetics in turn focuses on inventing (a way of life). Surin suggests that there might be contrarian views claiming that ethics alone "is capable of sustaining both assessment and invention" and also the opposite view, that it is esthetics that "can do this without any need for recourse to ethics" (Surin 2011, 143). The follower of Deleuze (Surin) who insists on this dyad – ethics/assessing, esthetics/inventing – needs to find an adequate basis for establishing a demarcation between ethics and esthetics. The intricate relevance of this reasoning, to the dramaturgical thinking in the performances, and its relation to ethics, is that the perceptive situation is anticipated to involve both assessment and inventing (the former as a prelude to the latter) indicating that esthetics can actually maintain both aspects and that no demarcation is needed. On the other hand, this does not mean that thinking about ethics in artistic expressions can be developed without searching for what is intrinsic to ethics and esthetics "which warrants the assigning of the assessment of the terms by which a life is led to ethics, and the invention of a life to aesthetics" (Surin 2011, 143). This demarcation, in whatever way it is formulated (Deleuzian or not), is necessary to extract what I call a vision of the subject, and to problematize the relationship between this vision and the compositional specifics of the artistic expression.

should be understood as the creative extension of the figuring-out-activity), could emerge:

When the audience invests their attention in the expression of the performance, the performance comes/can come into being.

By making the actual structuring of the performance apprehensible, it becomes possible to experience and understand that something is coming into being.

When encountering the never-before-experienced, a shift can happen and a new understanding can occur.

The first level underscores the ambition to create a structure that equally encourages and demands co-creation and invention, beyond interpretation. The second level illuminates the theater as fictional, a place where a “world” is built. In other words, what is being built – the performance – is a construction that can be rebuilt in a different way which, when transferred into the outside world, encourages one to question the world as “it is what it is.” The third level is about the potential within encountering something unrecognizable. All three levels indicate a demand (or duty, to use Brecht’s wording) for an active inventive audience. However, it is the third level that is most clearly attached to the question of how ethics relate to the nature of the esthetic experience.

The viability in claiming that there is an ethical aspect to be found in an esthetic experience of something never-before-experienced, has to rest on the idea that an open definition of the individual subject is intrinsic to the concept of never-before-experienced, as revealed in the Deleuzian onto-ethical outlook quoted above. This openness describes a subject who is in a process of constant becoming. It is a mode that affirms the (unrestrained/infinite) possibilities of life, *and* – which was a determining factor for the esthetic choices in the performances – ascertains that those possibilities can only emerge in an environment where relations are conceived as perpetually created anew, outside of/separate from social, cultural and esthetic norms. To *not* begin with a set image of morality or of human freedom, nor with “a subject who perceives, nor an object perceived, but an interaction or event of perception which then creates a relation” means, through formal transformations, shifting the focus of the theater away from being a producer of monadic esthetics, messages or ideas, towards what I earlier have talked about as the Meeting. This meeting then, because of its immanent unfolding, has to “rely on the examination of

syntheses, interactions and the openness of life to a not already-given future” (Colebrook 2002, 143).

The transference of such an outlook to compositional thinking could mean to see, measure and value what is created both in light of how the expressional form engages the creative resources of the individual subject, as well as which relations it sustains. In a performative situation this means that all relations - social as well as expressive ones - should be given the opportunity to appear as new (never-before-experienced), thus acknowledging the subject’s potential to invent and expand in whatever direction she/he desires. So, when I speak of ethics in this context - the performative-ethical momentum - I refer to an exchange, and to how the nature and constitution of that exchange reflects a vision of the subject. What the performances are trying to create is, in their own limited sense, an ethics defined as a practice that cultivates affirmative modes of active forces and relation (Bradotti 2011). This ethical pragmatism rejects the idea that the object of ethical inquiry is a subjective individualistic core that represents a moral intention or rational consciousness, but instead assigns it to the effects each individual’s actions have upon others in the world. When Braidotti conceptually links this to “the notion of embodied materialism and to a non-unitary vision of the subject.” it correlates to the nature of the performances/meetings because of their non-metaphorical and polyphonic construct. The specificity of that correlation is, firstly, that the dramaturgical aim is to create/establish a materiality in the performance(s) that is its “own,” independent of outside references. And secondly, a non-unitary vision of the subject is affirmed by the multiplicity of expressive trajectories in which many stories (or ideas, or intensities) - not just a single one - are purported. In such a perceptive environment the ethical discourse is a “discourse about forces, desires, and values that act as empowering modes of becoming” as opposed to morality, which “is the implementation of established protocols and sets of rules” (Bradotti 2011, 300).

When the process oriented and relation affirmative onto-ethics of the Colebrook/ Deleuzian outlook - and its Braidottian extension - is activated in compositional thinking, the notion of ethics is inevitably linked to a critique of representational esthetics. That is to say that, to search for the ethical aspect in dramaturgical structures, outside language, beyond ideas and messages, and to shift the theatrical experience towards an experience of a Meeting, a representational coding needs to be challenged. It installs the polarity of an

object perceived by a subject and it sets off sequences of thinking that find their bearing – and values – in phenomena existing outside the event. In such a perceptive dynamic the figuring-out-activity loses the quality of invention.

I want to suggest here, that the ethics of dramaturgy is about the movement of perceptive processes; their openness, their affirmative potential, their liveliness and demands. Consequently, the precondition for a sustainable performative-ethics is that everything that stymies this movement should be eliminated.

The rhythm of thinking (and the authority of narratives)

So, what are those perceptive movements? What does it really mean, to talk about their openness, affirmative potential, vitality and demands? Movements of what? And how are they actually experienced? I have talked about them as a process of figuring-out/inventing but what is the actual activity in these movements? And, what is the relationship between this activity and an ethics? Do not all (esthetic) expressions produce affect, and if ethics is the science of affect is there not an ethics attached to all expressions? (O’Sullivan 2006).²³¹ How can the claim that there is a correlation between ethics and a non-representative esthetics then be understood? Is it the specific nature of the affect that a non-representative esthetics generates that determines this claim, and hence needs to be looked at? I want to approach these questions by examining them through the experience of *co-composition* and *becoming* – and, through what these experiences entail and affirm.²³²

²³¹ The notion of activity within the perceptive moment should be understood as the playing out of affect; the conscious – and unconscious - reaction to the perceived expression. The extensive contemporary critical discourse that develops, treats and problematizes the concept of affect, will not be included in this work. Still, it is necessary to note that affect certainly is central to the philosophical/perceptual theories of Gilles Deleuze and Brian Massumi. Following Deleuze (following Spinoza) Simon O’Sullivan states that affects “are passages of intensities, a reaction in or on the body at the level of matter. We might even say that affects are immanent to matter. They are certainly immanent to experience ... we might define affect as the effect another body (for example an art object) has upon my own body, and upon my body’s duration” (O’Sullivan 2006, 41). We can, in this reasoning, sufficiently stay with that definition, but extend it with the assertion that ethics is about the qualities of intensities that move through time, and that they are *evaluated*. In her essay *Happy Objects*, Sarah Ahmed, uses the word evaluate in conjunction with affect, which is interesting to notice here, in this attempt to conjoin ethics and dramaturgy. She says: “To be affected by something is to evaluate that thing” (Gregg, and Seigworth 2010, 31). I understand this to mean that the intensities are being sensually experienced *and* actively weighed – not judged – and that this weighing is a movement of thought *within* the movement of sensing.

²³² Becoming, in a larger philosophical/existential perspective, is not tied to the simultaneous recognition of a perceptive process, but an outlook on being, as such, and therefore not often tied to the notion of thinking. The correlation between the two, that is made here, needs to be understood in light of the polyphony/multiplicity of the performances, and that being is an outcome of becoming, perpetually exchanging places.

When Brian Massumi asserts that the “co-composing of formative forces constitutes in each exercise of experience a novel *power of existence*: a power to become” (Massumi 2011 12), we not only sense the ethical vibrations but also that co-composition and becoming are closely intertwined. Placed within the perceptive situation of the performances, I want to suggest that this entwining, in an intricate way, is related to the activity of thinking. Or rather: for them to occur in (be an outcome of) the perceptive moment, thinking is a vital part – the indispensable inner movement – of experiencing them. Thinking should therefore, in this context, be understood as the activity going on in the individual – as the contribution of the brain – when experiencing the artistic expression. This is not to say that thinking *is* the movement, but that it is one experiential component in co-composition and becoming. Brian Massumi and Erin Manning capture this dynamic when saying that “the activity of neurons enters the event on an equal footing with other ingredients: from the angle of neurons’ ability to co-compose relational fields. Alone, they are nothing. Together with other ingredients, which are of every conceivable determinable nature, the neurons vie to have their ‘voice’ heard most loudly in the way in which the event moves toward expression (Massumi, Manning 2014, 21).²³³ Those “other ingredients” should be understood as sensuous experiences, experiences not processed through the activity of thinking. A kindred and enhancing image of the movement of thinking is offered by Deleuze (and Guattari), when they talk about the sensuous contraction happening through contemplation: “Sensation is pure contemplation, for it is through contemplation that one contracts, contemplating oneself to the extent that one contemplates the elements from which one originates. Contemplating is creating, the mystery of passive creation, sensation. Sensation fills out the plane of composition and is filled with itself by filling itself with what it contemplates: it is ‘enjoyment’ and ‘self-enjoyment’. It is a subject, or rather an *inject* ... These are not Ideas that we contemplate through

²³³ Massumi/Manning enter into their reasoning by problematizing the overflow of neuro-isms (“The ‘neuro’ is everywhere in the air today,” and they objects to the impulse to identify an experiential event with a brain state to take precedence” over what they call a “neurodiversity.” (Massumi and Manning 2014, 19). This term should be understood as descriptive of a perceptive experience of a radically more complex nature, encompassing phased becomings, variations, flickerings and as such, a constant reminder that “the simplicity of clear consciousness is no measure of the complexity of complete experience” (Massumi, Manning 2014, 20). The correlation between Massumi/Manning’s investigation and the reasoning that I am trying to carve out is clear throughout. However, in this particular instance the correlation emerges when the activity that I attribute to ‘thinking’ is what they call “the activity of neurons.”

concepts but the elements of matter that we contemplate through sensation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 212). However, it is not possible to simply assign the sensuous to one type of ingredient (understood as what I earlier talked about as the ‘material’, the ‘components’, or ‘expressive matter’) and the non-sensuous to another. Sharp delineations like this cannot be made, especially not when looking at a performative situation. Even if the different “ingredients,” on a purely structural level, can be assumed to set off an experience that tends either towards a non-sensuous or a sensuous – like for example semantic language as non-sensuous and music as sensuous – the experiential effect cannot be deduced as such, since it is dependent on the compositional and performative handling of the material, as well as on its level of representation. The creative – co-compositional – impact of thinking is thus contingent on the rejection of the idea that the sensual experience excludes thinking. Instead, thinking is part of sensing – and – there is an oscillating movement between the two, a movement Brian Massumi describes as a thinking-feeling process (Massumi 2011). This oscillating movement is like a swirling intersection where the activity of co-composition and the experience of becoming meet. Hence, it is implicitly connected to the question of ethics, which is why it is a dramaturgical/compositional concern, to explore its workings and sustain its vitality.

Tracing thinking in co-composition, making assumptions on how it moves and what it entails, can take off from the notion that there are things that do not disturb thought and then there are things that force us to think (Deleuze 1968). The first category encompasses recognizable things, and even if thought is somewhat employed in that perceptive activity it has, following Deleuze, nothing to do with thinking. They set off an activity in which thought is just “filled with no more than an image of itself, one in which it recognizes itself the more it recognizes things: this is a finger, this is a table” (Deleuze 1968, 138). Is it then, only when we have difficulty in recognizing something that we truly think? When Deleuze says that something “in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*,” it is not connected to or dependent on an esthetic experience (Deleuze 1968, 139). Nevertheless, it *is* related to the sensuous; the primary characteristic of an encounter “is that it can only be sensed” (Deleuze 1968, 139). This captures the notion of thinking and feeling as inseparable, the nonsensuous and the sensuous

as intertwined, *and* it reinforces the dramaturgical importance of understanding perception as the sensation of intensities.²³⁴

In the context of co-composition the question of recognition is, and is not, a concern. The concern is the movement of thinking as co-creation, and the production of the never-before-experienced. In the performances the attempt to escape recognition – a representational coding – happens through time and through polyphonic processes. The different components carry a kind of mix of representational and non-representational coding. In *John and the Mushrooms* for example, some of the music by Cage includes rhythmical formations that are representational though combined with sound structures that I would describe as non-representational. Semantic language is used but superimposed. Also, there is the unavoidable recognition/representation of human bodies, which is met by placing them in relations-of-nonrelation through the multiplicity of expressive trajectories. All this affirms confusion as an important expressive mode, generating a semiotic ambiguity that causes the thinking – in the perceiving subject – to move in unpredictable ways: Components are recognized, but their relations are not. The investment – the creative additions that the audience makes in the perceptive moment, how the individual concludes, extends, creates meaning of the perceived in a non-narrative expression – is the activity of co-creation. Thinking is then the co-composing of relations between the different intensities, an experience possibly sensed as becoming “as an extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations without resemblance or, on the contrary, in the distance of a light that captures both of them in a singular reflection” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 173).

The dramaturgical/perceptive suggestion is then that the experience of the co-compositional activity (thinking–inventing) is what causes the experience of becoming. Does this indicate that co-composing entails thinking and becoming does not? That the becoming is an outcome, a kind of post-thinking state, and that the notion of becoming is affirmative of being, but not of thinking? A

²³⁴ Even if it is a slight deviation, though strongly related to the thinking-feeling-process, it is interesting to note Brian Massumi’s reasoning, that takes off from Daniel Stern, in which he inserts the term *amodal* as descriptive of how operative traces are not in one sense mode or another. They “can jump not just between situations but also between sense modes,” depending on their activation contour. Massumi claims that it is “the direct perception of what happens between the senses, in no one mode. All and only in their relation. Purely non-sensuous. Abstract. What is felt abstractly is *thought*” (Massumi 2011, 110). This points to the significance of the non-semantic (in expressions) and how the shaping of the intensities, and their rhythmical relation/correlation, can be brought into both compositional and performative thinking.

problematizing approach to these questions, in the context of the performances, is that this movement – where thinking and feeling perpetually exchange positions – finds its dramaturgical validity in a situation that sees becoming as a process in which the experience is self-explanatory “in the way it complexly plays out, composing a self-expressive outcome for itself” (Massumi, Manning 2014, 22). A way of to understand this is to think of the experience of co-composition as resonating a becoming, *but* that the actual experience of becoming can only emerge (be sensed) if recognized, as co-created: *simultaneously created, experienced and recognized*. (Experiencing the experience of becoming is immanent in the thinking-feeling process: it affirms its own movement.)²³⁵ Embedded in such an outlook is the notion that the recognition is sensed as a discovery that in turn generates the desire for another (discovery): “When the process continues, it is because it has succeeded in affirming its own operations through an immanent, qualitative, self-modulating evaluation” (Massumi, Manning 2014, 126).²³⁶ The dramaturgical-ethical aspect is then to be found in the idea that the compositional measures should sustain – and enhance – the vitality of this movement.

A prerequisite for the idea of co-composing is that the term/concept relation-of-nonrelation should be given a central role in the dramaturgical construct. A closer look at this term, through the thinking of Brian Massumi, enables an understanding of how co-composition and becoming can relate to a vision of the subject, an ethics, as formulated above.²³⁷ As mentioned in the text *It is All in the Passing*, this term finds its bearing in a view that all elements contributing to an occurrence are in themselves disparate. This might lead us to believe that moments

²³⁵ As the fundamental nature of ritual, Brian Massumi calls the affective tonality of such an experience *proprioceptive*, a concept descriptive of an “experience that is self-referencing, registering its own unfolding as its only content; as opposed to the exteroception of sensory experience registering impulses from outside that are in principle outwardly referenceable to objects” (Massumi 2011, 125). The relevance of this observation, for this reasoning, is further enhanced by the fact that the proprioceptive experience is of a thinking-feeling nature. It is “not one sense mode among others. It is the mode of experience of the amodal as such.” And rhythm is amodal, it is “the abstract shape of the event as it happens, across whatever modes it happens with” (Massumi 2011, 125).

²³⁶ What I am suggesting is that the ethical aspect of immanence lies in: The possibility of the individual not only to choose his or her own focus but to perceive that the experience she is having is of her own making. This is somewhat contrary to Cull’s thinking: “We may not be able to say, when asked, what we have lived in and as performance, but this does not make that experience any less valuable – particular in an ethical sense” (Cull 2012, 183).

²³⁷ As I pointed out in the text *Differentiated Presence*, Brian Massumi, in his exploration of activist philosophy, elaborates on the concept of relation-of-nonrelation by closely following Alfred North Whitehead. In that exploration the concept is of course not placed within a performative situation, and the application made here is not only confined by the time-space of the performance, but also a very limited exposition of how Massumi applies the dynamic of the concept elsewhere in his reasoning.

of experience cannot be experienced as they connect to each other, that “they may be said to ‘come together’ only in the sense of being mutually enveloped in a more encompassing event of change-taking-place that expresses their differentials in the dynamic form of its own extra-being” (Massumi 2011, 21). However, relation-of-nonrelation is paradoxical in so far as it both aims at capturing the discrete occurrence of elements *and* their perceptive coming together. The phrase is thus used as “a way of holding together, in the concept of the event, the differential status of its conditioning elements and the dynamic unity of their sheer occurrence as a little absolute” (Massumi 2011, 20). The connotation of co-composition in the workings of relation-of-nonrelation appears when Massumi makes the observation that the relation between different experiences plays out and is “purely effective: on the creative level of effect.” This is then, just as in the multiplicity/independency of expressive trajectories in the performances, the simultaneous acknowledgement of the non-connective discreteness of elements and of the potentiality in their confluence. Following Alfred North Whitehead, Brian Massumi asserts that the relation-of-nonrelation is a necessary condition for creativity, and that it is what makes space (“elbowroom”) in the world for an experience to come absolutely into its own production of novelty, “uncramped by the constraint of connectively fitting in” (Massumi 2011, 21).²³⁸ Here we start moving closer to ethics. To activate a relation-of-nonrelation outlook on the non-narrative, on the ‘incomplete’ multiplicity of the performances, is to create a space for the individual subject to form, through co-composing, her/his own story, or meaning, or whatever we want to call it. The non-narrativity of the multiplicity opens up, through a relation-of-nonrelation outlook, for the individual to have a say in what is being expressed, implicitly giving “you” a voice: “you” are not spoken to, but invited to invent. In a narrative, your voice is borrowed or stolen by the progression of the inbuilt causality. It installs the illusion of a transcendent factor, it tranquilizes “the sluggishness of our brain, by the ready made facilitating paths [*frayage*] of dominant opinions, and by our not being able to tolerate infinite movements or master the infinite speeds that crush us (so that we have to stop the movement and make ourselves prisoners of the relative horizon once more)?” (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 49). In the multiplicity of expressions, on the other hand,

²³⁸ In the spirit of Cage, Massumi makes the observation that a relation-of-nonrelation outlook “makes all the world expressive” (Massumi 2011, 21).

the voice is disorganized, divided, and has to be assembled. This affirms a vision of the subject as co-creative, co-composing, sensing-thinking, inventing; a subject that senses becoming through co-composing relations, unfolding through time.

The perceptive sequence of figuring-out that happens in an expressive environment dominated by a non-representative, non-narrative esthetics immediately enhances the experience of the specifics of the situation. It places it in a now, redundant of any history or imaginable future. Such a dynamic effaces the notion of a fixed being, and instead inserts a motion of becoming, thus mirroring the Deleuze/Guattari assertion that: “We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 169). If this assertion by Deleuze and Guattari is fully embraced, the time spent with the performance obviously cannot be seen as something removed from this ontological outlook, like a petrification of the movement of contemplation. Life is an ongoing becoming and when we are in the theater this becoming has the potential of taking on a strikingly different nature, creating sensations and relations of a kind other than usual. Directing then is to form the circumstances under which this becoming can transpire.

The vision embodied – Univocity

What does it mean to think about directing as “the forming of the circumstances”? What encapsulates “the circumstances”? How can the specific quality of the circumstances be thought of as mirroring, supporting a vision of the subject?

Well, the circumstances should be understood as the specifics of everything that makes up the performance: the constitution of the space, movements of (all) bodies, the handling of text, of sound/sound structures, of dynamics, of articulation, *and* all relations, expressive as well as social, between the performers and the audience, and between the members of the audience. To think of the performance as a compound of circumstances is to set the stage for possibilities. To approach the totality of these circumstances with an ethics in mind, can be thought of as an embodied vision of the subject. It is then not about an ethics that operates on semantic or semiotic levels, but on all levels of expressive intensities: cultivating affirmative modes of relation, active forces and values (Braidotti 2011). The idea of directing as the “forming of the circumstances” is a submission to the totality of the components. If the reasoning

around the experience of turbulence and around the activity of thinking, of composing and becoming, can be said to somehow happen within the singular subject, it should also be noted that it emerges within this totality, within the whole, and not in isolation. Therefore I suggest that a commitment to “the forming of the circumstance” is also a commitment to the notion of univocity.

The insertion of this concept is done as a means to trace an embodied vision of the subject through the extensions inherent in the experience of the multitude. Just like it sounds, it is to embark on a flight into turbulent forces that tip the dramaturgical thinking away from the idea of being about fixed energies (inherent in the specifics of the expressive material) into an experimental exploration of the perceptive situation as a construct mirroring, or intensifying the univocal being in the world. Following Rosi Braidotti, it is an attempt to firmly locate affirmation “in the exteriority, the cruel, messy outsideness of Life itself. Creative chaos is not chaotic – it is the virtual formation of possible forms. Life is not an a priori that gets individuated in single instances, but it is immanent to and thus coincides with its multiple material actualizations. It is the site of birth and emergence of the new – life itself” (Braidotti 2011, 305–6). The organization of the performance (and the performative and perceptive activities going on within) is, and is not, a part of this “cruel, messy outsideness” which is why the idea of thinking of the performance structure as a diversity existing on a univocal plane of being includes a large number of contradictions (tension between the philosophical concept – what it stands for – *and* the concrete performative outcome of the expressed). The use of the concept univocity thus becomes an experiment, an opportunity at best, to further the ethico-esthetic discussion.

Univocity, closely entwined with immanence, means in the Deleuzian discourse that “there is only one kind of thing or being in reality, and as such no fundamental separation or hierarchy between the nature of words and things, body and mind, subject and object, representation and the real, theory and practice” (Cull 2012, 7). To think of being as univocal is then the removal of a transcendent force, which precludes us from “separating some distinct being as a center or foundation; all beings are located on a single plane (pluralism)” (Colebrook 2002, 32). However, a univocal being is the being of difference, of multitude and *not* the idea of One (transcendent) being. Univocity, like immanence, “is just this commitment to staying at the level of difference, refusing any external explanation of difference” (Colebrook

2002, 32). In the world – and in the performances – the notion of a univocal being equals ontological instability and this instability is the circumstance in which the individual subject has to navigate with the help of all elements, creating/inventing/co-composing relations.²³⁹ The transference of the ontological dynamic that is tied to the notion of a univocal plane of being, into the realm of art and perception is, and is not, elusive. As a vital and unruly outlook on life, it is something of a contradiction to compress the notion of a univocity into any kind of formal restriction. In other words, to esthetically/compositionally apply the notion of a univocal plane of being is to adhere the compositional measures to an outlook on living things characterized by difference and the autonomous “power to differentiate itself or differ from itself in an infinite number of ways” (Cull 2012, 8). It means submitting to a “logic” in which the subject itself (humans, and expressive matter alike) is embedded in an immanent process, and everything, every event, consolidates on its own terms and in its own time. This immanent “logic” is contrary to a traditional view of composition in which material is organized, and brought to consolidation according to internal, autonomous premises.²⁴⁰ This observation, that highlights the contradiction inherent

²³⁹ It could be argued that it would make sense to incorporate the concept of participation in a reasoning that aims at discussing the individual’s engagement with the whole, but the purpose of that would only be to recognize its uselessness. Mainly because my reasoning (I hope) has replaced it with more concrete descriptions of creative and perceptive exchanges that should be conceived as involvement/engagement/participation. But also because the term, through its extensive use in contemporary performance and art theory, has more or less dissolved into a sign designating an assumed value, rather than descriptive of dramaturgical/perceptive specifics. This is also noted by Laura Cull when she says that after all, “an immanent view insists on a fundamental connectedness between the apparently unconnected, and a shared nature among the seemingly opposed or discrete, which must include participatory performance and ‘observed theatre’ (or works of art designated for contemplation rather than participation) (Cull 2012, 146). The uselessness of the concept is further enhanced when accepting/embracing the notion of relation-of-nonrelation as the “paradox of the relation-of-nonrelation excludes what is commonly called interaction or interactivity from qualifying as relational” (Massumi 2011, 21).

²⁴⁰ In this research, I have chosen not to refer to the esthetic theory of Theodor Adorno, which certainly would make sense considering that his work is so deeply grounded in similar questions, to say the least. In this particular instance it is however, constructive to confront the idea that the potentiality in art (and composition) is immanent in the perceiver inventing (assembling of impressions, co-composing), with the Adornian notion that art (composition) is dependent on its own inherent logic, and that “nothing would be enigmatic if their immanent logicity did not accommodate discursive thought.” And he continues by saying that it is “hardly metaphorical” that one moment is said to follow from the other, but that art works have an “obligation to become self-like” through its logical building (composition) (Adorno 1997, 187). The idea that lurks behind this is that the expressive consistency is dependent on a specific arranging of materials, which is contrary to the notion that all occurrences – as singular or multiple – find their consistency through time: Every event unfolding on its own premises. To assign the possibility of (artistic) expression to a logically organized voice is the same as the rejection of the possibility of multiple voices immanently coming together. And, it is the rejection of co-composition. Any ‘logical’ disposition of expressive matter is the same as the rejection of an immanent coming together on a univocal plane of being. Though, as mentioned, there are several contradictions (or tensions) that can be found when applying this thinking to the circumstances (of the performative situation). Yes, there are openings to co-composition, to the individual inventing of relations, and meaning does not ensue from a prearranged compositional organization. However, in the chosen material, as well as in the methodology of the creative processes (and in the activation contour of each individual expression) there is consistency, independent of its confluent relations.

in the idea of composing processes that evade control, could be said to be the impetus behind the use of the term, “the forming of the circumstance.”

But even so, my esthetic attempt to create a performative reciprocity between the “quality” in a univocal outlook and a vision of the subject does not submit to the forces implied by Rosi Braidotti above: it is a question of formal decision, with its own logic. A logic however, that aims at allowing the excess, that a univocal outlook illuminates, to be the foundational condition, the milieu, in which the expressive matter moves. This logic then offers a conceptual grounding for the multiplicities of expressional trajectories and also a point of contact with the unstable world and the turbulence in which the perceiving subject leads its life. Simon O’Sullivan remarks, following Jean-François Lyotard, that the affirmation of excess is what “constitutes art’s effectivity over and beyond its existence as a cultural object” (O’Sullivan 2006, 40). And this excess need not be theorized as transcendent, “but that we can think the esthetic power of art in very much an immanent sense, as offering an excess not somehow beyond the world but an excess of the world, the world here understood as the sum total of potentialities of which our typical experience is merely an extraction” (O’Sullivan 2006, 40). The attempt to create a conceptual transference of univocal being is thought of as an affirmation of the potentialities inherent in the experience of the “excess of the world.” This is why I see the performative conceptualizations as an embodied vision of the subject.

What is then the actual ethical momentum to be found in the “quality” of a univocal outlook (and its extensions into ontological instability, and excess) when applied as a foundation for forming the circumstances? More precisely, in what way does it encapsulate a vision of the subject? Firstly, it captures the esthetico-ethical attempt to illuminate the non-contradiction in difference. Or: it is affirmative of, a commitment to, a multitude of different singular instances – and experiences (subjects) – present on a univocal plane. Secondly, the ontological instability is confirmative of a dramaturgical structure (multiple trajectories moving through time with no coherent meaning) that effaces a dialectical type of narration, hence evading a moral stance. What is there has to be invented anew, resting only on what there is. Embracing the multiple differences of a univocal being thus encourages inventions that are, at best, dislocated from any outside judgement. It is ethics precisely because there is no morality. With no

transcendent influence but just one univocal plane of difference, “the ethics and politics cannot adopt some separate position of judgement. The task of thinking and ethics will be one of *amor fati* (love of what is): not judging what is, but rather living up to the differences of life” (Colebrook 2002, 35). And lastly, one could say that a univocal being confirms the ambiguity of the performative expression as an opening to a multiplicity that “has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions,” thus not dividing the world into perceivers and perceived (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 9).

Forces and Togetherness

When John Cage came out from a concert having heard Handel’s *Messiah* he was asked by a friend if he did not just love the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ and he answered that “No, I can’t stand it.” The friend then asked if he didn’t liked to be moved, and Cage responded by saying that, “I don’t mind being moved, but I don’t like to be pushed” (Kostelanetz 1987, 234). This anecdote highlights how the workings of compositional specifics can relate to the question of “elbowroom”; it exemplifies an experience where there is no room to expand and take off into co-composition; it captures the dynamic of an experience enclosed in a compositional format that proceeds without handing over any “responsibility for the authorship of the performance” to the perceiving subject (Cull 2012, 219). In its own very concise way, this story can therefore serve as a reference for approaching two questions that reverberate underneath the notion of both co-composition and a univocal plane of being. Questions that I see as unavoidable if one wants to look further into the ethico-esthetic aspects of a jointly experienced theater performance: How do the precise qualitative specifics of the expressive material allow – or stymie – those experiential movements that are affirmative of a vision of the subject? And, how does the unique individual experience of the performance relate to the inescapable togetherness of the event?

What Cage felt when listening to Handel could possibly be described as *ressentiment*. The music demanded that he was obedient to its force, and this was probably what caused his reaction. He could not be active, only reactive. The solid force of Handel, a force that was solidified independently of his presence and, so to speak, did not make use of his own capacity. Laura Cull, in her last chapter

of *Theatres of Immanence*, takes us through a complex Deleuzian/Nietzschean line of thinking that attaches an ethics of immanence and the question of value to the experience of forces, obedience and resentment. It is a reasoning that takes off from Deleuze's work on Nietzsche – *The Genealogy of Morals* – in which he suggests that, “differing systems of value are the products of distinct modes of life, particularly the difference between the way of being that he [Nietzsche] assigns to ‘the noble’ (or master) and ‘the slave’” (Cull 2012, 213). The definition of a slave morality, as recounted by Deleuze, is a system of values “derived from reaction and negation, rather than affirmation, as built on the principle of *ressentiment* or ‘imaginary revenge’” (Cull 2012, 214). This morality is a reactive force that reacts to chance occurrences as unwanted deviations “from expectations or predetermined ideas.” In other words, it resents the instability of an immanent unfolding of (creative) events (Cull 2012, 214). It might seem harsh, from a language point of view, to equate the perceptive situation that Cage experienced with one of a slave, but it illuminates that it is “reaction rather than action that dominates the production of values in slave morality” (Cull 2012, 214).²⁴¹ In Cull's continued explication of the Deleuzian/ Nietzschean discourse, the active and the reactive are explained as qualities of forces, forces that should be understood as dominant and dominated, respectively. The quality of these forces – translated by Deleuze into the concepts of obedience and command – are linked; they are present in and comprise “a body.” If the theater is seen as this “body,” Cull suggests that it constitutes “the ideal poles between which theatres of immanence operate” (Cull 2012, 214). It is the handling of these forces then, that could be understood as the challenge when making performances that are contingent on immanent (creative) movements. But how can we evaluate and understand, more concretely, the relationship between obedience/command and the structure of the artistic expression? What counts as obedience and command in the context of a perceptive situation and how do we measure the amount of active and reactive force in a given body? Cull says, we “will not find large qualities of obedience and *ressentiment* where we

²⁴¹ Cull offers a fuller meaning of the term ‘slave’ by quoting from Deleuze's book *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: “The Nietzschean notion of the slave does not necessarily stand for someone dominated, by fate or social condition, but also characterizes the dominators as much as the dominated one the regime of domination comes under the sway of forces which are reactive and not active. Totalitarian regimes are in this sense regimes of slaves, not merely because of people that they subjugate, but above all because of the type of masters they set up” (Deleuze 2006, ix).

expect them to be in theatre, or anywhere else; hence the need to go as far as possible to address the singularity of specific performance practices, rather than trying to generate some kind of blueprint for all immanent theatres to come” (Cull 2012, 215). This is a very important comment. Not only because it points out that the concepts of obedience and command cannot be seen as having fixed dynamics, but also because it emphasizes the importance of looking more closely at the specifics of the artistic practice, which in my opinion, entails analyzing the energies inherent in the different expressive matters; to go *down to what is below the dramaturgical level*. Esthetics and ethics coincide not just because the ethico-esthetic force operates on all levels of expressive intensities (not only on semantic, or semiotic levels) but because of the specific nature of the expressive material. Which means, in the context of performativity, that it is about the exact structure of the material *and* the specifics of its deliverance (shaping). If we refrain from analyzing and discussing these aspects the thinking around a reciprocal relationship between esthetics and ethics will stay on the surface, and never move down to the dynamics of perceptive effect. We cannot, however, be so simplistic as to say that obedience to the forces of a composition is only enforced when certain formal phenomena like narration, or traditional harmonic cadenzas, or even metric patterns, i.e. a representational coding, are in play. No, of course, any compositional structure pushes the perceiver in different directions. So how then do we approach the important question of whether theatres that tend towards immanence have a higher value – are better – than theaters that do not (Cull 2012)? And if that is the case, what are those values and how can they be described? Can theater performances that lack the possibility of an immanent process in the exchange between the performance and its audience, automatically be given one value, and those performances that encourage it, be given another? Should performances with a multilayered structure, building on superimpositions, be more highly valued, just because of that? These questions have to be met firstly, by a look at how the forces operate, and how and if they allow for co-composition, which actually makes the question of whether theater of immanence has a higher value than other kinds of theater, somewhat obsolete. Instead, the question of value equates the value of the composition in regards to what it can generate. As I have already asserted that there is a vision of the subject – an ethics – to be found in the potentiality of co-composing, hence the question

of ethics reverberates by itself, underneath, and can therefore be left alone. So, just as we earlier had to exchange the notion of an ethics of immanence with the notion of an ethics of dramaturgy, we can now rephrase the question: Instead of asking if theaters that tend towards immanence have a higher value, if they are “good,” we should ask how the compositional structure of a performance can allow for experiential movements that affirm a vision of the subject.

One way to analyze the forces at play would be to ask what the qualities of non-narration and superimpositions *do not* offer. What is missing? What can be considered subtracted?²⁴² Well, the dramaturgical structure does not provide a story.²⁴³ There are no predetermined relations between the performers, there is no fixed relation between performance and audience, no explicit meaning, no set positions. Not One voice, no predetermined course of action, no dramatic dialectics, or lone focus, no single rhythm. The “deficiency” that these subtractions cause can be thought of as a release, not a negative. The subtraction of these elements cannot even be said to be “a negative operation because it already enlists and releases positive processes” (Murray 1997, 245). However, as some of the subtractions happen through superimpositions (“stories” are not absent but multiplied, rhythms are not missing but superimposed), certain forces are sustained but take on a different status, spread out, diluted, and as such they enable the occurrence of continuous variation. The “incompleteness” that the subtractions produce enables – commands – action, and does not cause reaction, in an obedient sense. An action is released, to use Deleuzian wording, and this action is the activity of co-creation, co-composing.

A self contained compositional structure, brought to consolidation according to internal, autonomous premises – what we might call monolithic – divides the perceptive alternatives distinctly into two; either you obey and move along with the composed progression, or you are left out. It is a binary situation. My

²⁴² In Gilles Deleuze’s critique of Carmelo Bene’s theater art, *One Less Manifesto* (Murray 1997) subtraction is one of the terms he uses to describe Bene’s directorial “operations.” The term stands for the subtraction of components that are part of what Deleuze calls the “primary play,” which in the case of Bene, is a play by Shakespeare. In this reasoning the term is used in relation to another type of material, but its reciprocal effect is thought of similarly: it allows for the release of ‘something else’. The difference between the two situations is then that in the Bene case the subtractions are happening in a creative situation that is about setting in motion existing material and in the case of the performances that we are looking at the creative activity is about building something from newly invented material.

²⁴³ This is only partly true. In the performance of *John and the Mushrooms* the absence of a story line is something that comes and goes, depending on the chance operated sections. In *Ryoanji – A Meeting* and in *vorschlage*, there are no narratives.

assumption then is that the reaction Cage had to the music of Handel was caused by the monolithic structure of the composition. But *also* from being “pushed” along the same path as everybody else listening to the concert.²⁴⁴ This brings us to the question of how the individual audience member relates to and experiences the communality of the performance when the dramaturgical structure is devoid of a mono-linear force, when there is no “story” to be shared? Does this absence separate the individual’s partaking in the performance or does it form a communality of difference? Is there a sense of contradiction between the sharedness of the situation and the impossibility of a common understanding? Is the willingness to trust the individually co-composed experience increased or decreased by the communality of the event? And, what is the ethical aspect of an experiential situation in which the communality on one plane is obvious and concrete and on another plane illusive? Initially, these questions entail a further problematization of the aspect of individuality in the activity of co-composition, because traces of such an activity can also be found in experiences of mono-linear structures. Any viewing, any experience involves that the spectator acts in a contemplating sense, she “composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way – by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she had read or dreamt, experienced or invented” (Rancière 2009, 13). This observation could at a first glance be descriptive of co-composition, in the way I have talked about it. But it is not. There is no invention, or co-creation of relations between the different materialities in the performance. It is not the assembling of dispersed material. Instead it describes an association process of how an impression sets off a memory, or something previously experienced that emanates from a voice other than her own. Jacques Rancière suggests that the communality in this experience, if happening at the

²⁴⁴ Cage makes a reflection around the issue of forced communality that quite clearly indicates this. He says that he dropped out of college because he was “absolutely horrified by being in a class which had, say, two hundred members, and an assignment being given to have all two hundred people read the same book. I thought that if everyone read the same book, it was a waste of people. It was sufficient for one person to read the book and then somehow through that person, if the book had anything in it, everyone could get it, by talking with the person who had read the book. But to look at those desks with everybody reading the same book, that struck me with horror, so I marched away and went to the stacks in the library. I read books as irrelevant to the subject as I could find; and when the questions were given for the examination, I got an *A*. I thought there was something wrong with that system, so I dropped out of college” (Kostelanetz 1987, 252).

theater, is that even if the spectator perceives the expression in her own way, and makes it into a “unique intellectual adventure” she is “similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other. This shared power of the equality of intelligence links individuals, makes them exchange their intellectual adventures, in so far as it keeps them separate from one another, equally capable of using the power everyone has to plot her own path” (Rancière 2009, 16–17). There is no reason to argue against this. The claim that all experiences are individually unique intellectual adventures is obvious, and everybody at the Handel concert that Cage attended, would surely adhere to this idea. So the reasoning has to be extended beyond the notion that the shared experience, in and of itself, is indicating some kind of community, even if it is acknowledged as consisting of the dual regimes of conjunction (the shared space, the shared presence) and disjunction (each individual plotting their own path). It has to problematize what a “unique intellectual adventure” can mean, and what sort of “links” can occur when these singularities are not embedded in the same “sense data: forms, words, spaces, rhythms and so on” (Rancière 2009, 57). Such a problematization has to start from the understanding that even if each individual experience is a unique intellectual adventure, and even if there is a communal potential in the (possible) awareness that this experience is similar among all the individuals, *the nature of this intellectual adventure and the constitution of the communality it produces, is fully dependent on the structure of the composition, i.e. how the different components (“forms, words, spaces, rhythms”) of the composition relate and what kind of activity it sets off.* Both these aspects – the nature of the intellectual adventure and the constitution of the communality – are related to the figuring-out-activity, and hence to the aspect of ethics.

A perceptive experience, such as the one Rancière’s description implies, is not an experience of being involved in the materiality of the expression. It indicates, as said, an experience of creating associative extensions in which the intellectual adventure, the individual path is found by “drawing back,” not carved out by co-composition. This is probably the most common idea of the relationship between an artistic expression and the perceptive mind and it is firmly attached to a mono-linear structure as well as to a representational coding. The impact of such compositional structures can thus possibly be experienced both as a resource (as in the case of Cage’s friend) and as a constraint (as it was for Cage): on the one hand, a possibility

to move along with the others, *or* causing a feeling of submission as it separates the individual from his/her own capacities and powers (Jun and Smith 2011). In other words, to infuse a figuring-out-activity the structure of the expression should not be concerned with its own consolidation but with difference and multitude. If that is done the audience is – and is not – embedded in the same sense data: what occurs is perceptively accessible but since the structure is dominated by relations-of-non-relations, like in the performances we are looking at, the causality of the unfolding and the assigning of relations becomes an outcome of co-composition. To formulate a sharp delineation between a process of association and a process of figuring-out is only relevant as a means to problematize the forces that are set in motion by the structure of the composition. The two processes should most constructively be seen as communicating and somewhat shifting.²⁴⁵

The question of communality and how it plays out, becomes radically more vibrant in a diversified and multi-linear expression. It is even possible to say that the concept does not infuse an interesting – and for this investigation useful – dynamic until it is connected to such a perceptive situation. The assumption behind that assertion is that the experience of a mono-linear structure is diversified only so far as it holds the possibility of understanding that what the other(s) understood/felt is different from my own. It is not a structure that affirms multiple ways of inventing, but one that takes on the function of one single reference, functioning as an interlocker of sorts. The conjunctions manifested through the sharing of time and space, are thus affirmed by the compositional structure. It can be argued that any performance placed within pre-formatted circumstances is, in itself, regardless of the compositional structure, a transcendent force, hence the boundaries for the experience of communality are set. This is an observation that should be seen as the unavoidable reference for a multilayered, relation-of-nonrelation esthetics. Contrary to a mono-linear structure, such an esthetics elaborates on the idea that the instability of the compositional structure is, in that respect, a counter force. It is an enhancement of the contradiction between the sharedness of the situation and the impossibility of a common understanding.

²⁴⁵ An interesting and clarifying example of this is some of the minimalist music that came out of the American school in the late 1960s with the composer Steve Reich as the forefront figure. In his music, there is a clear materialist level that enables the listener to partake in the progression of the composition (a figuring-out), but there is also a concern to create a concentrated and elusive timbre that sustains and affirms a perceptive approach of an associative type, of “drawing back.”

The communality does not then evolve around one commonly experienced reference, but it is further diversified and affirmative of a communality of difference. If the compositional structure is concerned with opening up, in an affirmative mode, to a vision of the subject as a “radically, intensive body, that is, an assemblage of forces or flows, intensities, and passions that solidify in space and consolidate in time within the singular configuration commonly known as an ‘individual’ self” (Braidotti 2011, 303), then such forces as Handel represents should probably be left out, subtracted or diluted, as it is a structure that neither demands a figuring-out-activity or enhances the experience of difference.

Just as relevant to this question, as the specific quality of the expressive matter, is the design of the performance space and the spatial relations. Neither the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, or *Ryoanji – A Meeting* are performed in a proscenium situation. Instead the audience is dispersed in the room, more or less along the walls. Even if such an arrangement might produce a sense of a lack of focus and concentration, there is a sensory fabric that ties the audience together. What is common is sensation. It would be wrong not to acknowledge this. However, the individual process of co-composing could be experienced as contradictory to the enhanced experience of togetherness that comes from a space designed so that the audience members face each other, from across the room. The co-composing has a character of contemplation going on in isolation, and there are few signs of a relation between percepts and affect, and few signs of unison reactions. The concreteness of the others being in the space and the elusiveness of the expression thus becomes a staged “conflict between two regimes of sense” (Ranci re 2009, 58). What is shared (except what is being embraced by sensation) is maybe a sense of confusion, of wondering or disengagement. Maybe the sense of being in isolation creates a feeling of loneliness and a decreased willingness to trust the individually co-composed experience? Laura Cull worries that a theater of immanence could become too chaotic, “for many of us,” and that it “must find the right mixture of stratification and destratification, order and chaos” (Cull 2012, 225). This comment is, on the one hand, rather problematic as the experience is so personal and art would not get anywhere if thinking about what “the many”(whatever constitutes this grouping) can take in or not, or what “they” think is “the right mixture.” On the other hand, it can

be seen as being about togetherness and ethics, in so far as it implies that if the expressive forces of the composition are too concerned with themselves, and not with creating possibilities for contact and relations, they might be sensed as rejective and non-affirmative of difference.²⁴⁶ This points clearly to the importance of understanding what exactly is at stake in the disjunction that a differentiated experience (of being apart) carries, hence what lies behind the directorial measure to create the potential, through the spatial arrangements, for sensing and possibly relating to the other audience members. And it is also the reason for my directorial instruction to the performers to, in different ways, seek contact with the audience. Such measures are in no way unique in a contemporary theater context. But, in a performative situation with multiple and elusive focuses, they establish a level of concrete human relations and as such function as an grid, a type of diversified communality to counteract the lack of confirmation and reinforcement of the individual experience that commonly shared, unison reactions can offer.

There is an inbuilt vulnerability in a diversified perceptive situation, but that should not be misconstrued and taken for indistinctness or weakness. The apparent fragility of the immanent process is instead a dispersing of normative signs of communality. What I have tried to outline in respect to this aspect is that there is an ethics, a vision of the subject, to be found when trusting that each “individual self” is an intensive and dynamic entity within “a portion of forces that is stable enough to sustain and undergo constant though nondestructive fluxes of transformation” (Braidotti 2011, 303).

²⁴⁶ But then again, as the Cage example showed us, it is obvious that an extremely formalized and non-chaotic expression can be experienced as something violent. It is therefore tremendously problematic to attach this whole reasoning to general assumptions on the affective effect of different esthetics.

INTERVIEW 19

In dialogue with The Institute for Unpredictable Processes

IUP: Your last seminar here at the institute, when you presented your text *The Rhythm of Thinking*, ended kind of abruptly, and there was no time to ask questions or to discuss the ideas that you laid out. So, that's where I would like to start our conversation today. And then, since I know we don't have many opportunities to meet in the near future, I would like to take up some questions that we haven't had time to talk about, if that's okay?

JP: Of course!

IUP: I don't find it strange that you bring up the aspect of ethics, as it has been reverberating, at least in me, throughout our conversations. Mainly, because you have continuously returned to the aspect of social relations. In our previous discussions you have talked about your use of the concept of immanence in the collaborative processes and also how you activate this concept when thinking about the exchange between the performance and the audience. So, why are you not talking about the ethics of immanence? Deleuze, whom you often refer to, formulated an immanent ethics as "a set of 'facilitative' rules that evaluates what we do, say, and think according to the immanent mode of existence" (Smith in Jun and Smith 2011, 124). That's an extremely brief formulation, and not explicative of how it is developed as contrary to the constraining rules of a transcendent morality, but it seems consilient with the perceptive dynamic that you strive for, and of what you call "a vision of the subject." Why have you not chosen to, more closely, attach your reasoning around ethics to what I understand is a rich and important discourse of philosophical thinking, an immanent ethics? I mean, isn't the definition that you use quite limited?

JP: Rich and important, I am not sure I would use those words. But it is a complex area of philosophical thinking and to grasp it in some kind of entirety and to create your own understanding, which is necessary in order to activate it in this more concrete way that I am trying to do, then the strands of thinking you need to follow are numerous. Just to give one very interesting example is to

mention an essay by Daniel W Smith called *Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics*, in which he develops a line of thought that looks on an ethics of immanence in relation to a theory of desire. In this text, Smith outlines the heritage of Deleuzian thinking around an immanent ethics in relation to Spinoza and Nietzsche, and then, in order to more closely link it to the question of desire, he points out the importance of Freud and Lacan, and also furthers his reasoning by looking at Nietzsche through Leibnitz (Smith in Jun and Smith 2011). However, and this is what I want to get to, even if one could say that Smith's rather short essay points out quite a few possible extensions into dramaturgical problematizations – especially because it extrapolates a political dimension to an immanent ethics – it is an example of a philosophical practice that encompasses levels and concepts in a way that my specific reasoning, at least at this point, would not gain from engaging with. To tie the dramaturgical thinking deeper into a philosophical complexity that doesn't constructively provoke questions around composition, does not interest me. The understanding of the concept of ethics, the way I use it, must instead be understood as transdisciplinary rather than an elaboration of its philosophical complexity. With that I mean that its grounding can also be found in theories on human capacity that are developed in pedagogy, or in psychology. For instance, in the theories of Reggio Emilia pedagogy, that I worked with in the production of *John and the Mushrooms*, which is, to put it briefly, built around the question of how the creative vitality and knowledge in each individual subject can be supported through an affirmative and creative pedagogy. Those are the kind of ethico-esthetical links I actually want to investigate more. But sure, in view of the very compressed formulation of an immanent ethics, which is that it is opposed to transcendence, or to universals, and as such criticizes “anything that *separates* a mode of existence from its power of acting” then it is linked to the dynamics of immanent collective creation – and perception (Smith in Jun and Smith 2011, 125). The relation is clear.

IUP: Considering this depth of the concept, and of your specific demarcation of its meaning, why don't you make an effort to search for concrete formulations? If I remember correctly, you have said that it is constructive to apply an explanatory approach, rather than to attach the reasoning to existing, often complex and multifaceted concepts. So, again why is it necessary to talk about ethics?

JP: I did answer that question in my paper, but one thing I didn't say was that to insist on an ethical reading of experimentation is to emphasize that there is a political urgency in the attempt, beyond the level of curious investigation. That has always been, I think, the conviction of the avant-garde. But it just doesn't seem to lose its actuality, or the need to keep saying it. We can't just hand over the issue of ethics to those who fill the stage with predictable, and often righteous narratives that expose what we already know. I think it would be interesting to more persistently ask if *that*, in its conformism, is unethical, even if it has its "heart in the right place." In view of, let's say, the last hundred years of western art history, it feels kind of flat, almost naïve, to come back to this observation. But, just because an avant-garde modus has this strong ethical aspect, or potential, it's impossible to leave it unsaid.

IUP: When you bring in the avant-garde, and its place in history and claim that there is an inherent potential in its mode, I come to think of Bruno Latour and his essay *An Attempt on a "Compositionist Manifesto"* in which he criticizes the avant-garde phenomena as being blindly devoted to the idea of progress and that "the flow of time had one – and only one – *inevitable and irreversible direction*"? (Latour 2010, 472) His argument is that this progress, embraced by the avant-garde, is not sensitive, or attentive to the immanence of the world. I don't want to get away from our discussion on ethics, but how do you respond to such a criticism and how does it coalesce with your embracement of the term?

JP: It's a bit of a jump to start talking about that text. But yes, Latour's view on the avant-garde is relevant in this framework, and his essay certainly has a political urgency. Because that is what it is, a cultural-epistemological-political argument. It is situated in a political realm and within a discussion around how to critically approach the prevailing mode in which academic politico-philosophical analysis is carried out. It is not referring to esthetic circumstances, to dramaturgical questions, or questions about perception. And, it is within that framework that I use the term avant-garde. It should be understood as signifying a mode of formal experimentation conjoined with a conviction that there are alternative ways of forming – and relating to – expressive phenomena. As I understand the introductory reasoning in Latour's text around the phenomena of an avant-garde, it is not that he criticizes the

avant-garde from that angle but because it contributes to a type of critique that produces a polarity. His whole reason to formulate a *Compositionist manifesto* is to refute a political analysis that places itself so much in opposition to the prevailing circumstances that it fails to make use of what Latour actually labels the immanent level. It is an argument against the idea that what's desirable lies beyond the actual. It criticizes the intellectual-critical stance that a solution of the world's problems, lies in the type of progress that transforms existing energies instead of acknowledging them.

IUP: And how do you see that his use of the concept of immanence relates to how you use it in a dramaturgical context?

JP: Even if I can see that there is a potential for connections between Latour's essay and the kind of micro workings that I try to focus on, and that such a connection *is* enriching as it holds a strong political outlook, I feel a bit reluctant to make too much of what could be seen as correlations. His essay has a broad perspective and it elaborates on the notion of science studies and cultural, political criticism and he decomposes three fields, which are critique, nature and progress. This all means that the ramifications of his reasoning go quite far beyond what I try to carve out. But in respect to his criticism of forming a critique by exposing conflict and delineating contradictory poles – which is akin to the two-world-view that representation produces – there is a correlation. The dramaturgical attempt is *not* to explicitly formulate an alternative to the prevailing conditions, to narratively present a stance, offer an opinion that would lead to a change of the present situation. The performances offer the possibility to engage in a process. A material process, where things are what they are, and they are multiple. I see this as being in line with the critical mode that compositionism presents, which is that “there is no world beyond. It is all about *immanence*.” (Latour 2010, 475)

IUP: The fact that Latour's reasoning activates concepts like process and immanence, terms that are central in your own work, would you be inclined to make other connections between his essay and the theories you present?

JP: I think so, and this actually brings us back to the aspect of ethics. When Latour says that compositionism searches for a universalism, taking up the task of building a common world, it is not in a homogenous sense but a “world that has to be built from utterly heterogeneous parts that will never make a whole.

But at best a fragile, revisable, and diverse composite material,” he is aligned with the idea of multiplicity and the crucial importance of difference.

IUP: And why does that bring us back to the question of ethics?

JP: Well, in my dramaturgical and compositional thinking the attempt is to transpose this heterogeneity and fragility, precisely because it structurally carries an ethics and signifies a vision of the subject. In that transposition a formal experimentation is not only necessary but made into an important component, and that’s where we come back to the notion of the *avant-garde*.

IUP: Many contemporary artists are engaged in developing socially engaged practices that provoke conformist ideas about what art should look like, where it should be placed, and how it can be formed through interactivity and participation – yes, I know that you want to avoid that word – *and* many of the thoughts that are developed within these practices evolve around their ethical connotations and impact. These are observations that have been theorized and problematized by quite a few critics, for example by Claire Bishop. In her writing, I can see a relevance to what you are talking about, that it connects to your thinking. Is it not so for you?

JP: I don’t dismiss the term participation, but the way it has been used in recent art theory it seems a bit too coarse to bring into the dramaturgical and compositional reasoning I’m trying to develop, that’s all. With that said, when it is problematized in such a thorough and interesting way as done by Claire Bishop I can certainly see a relevance, for example, in her problematization of evaluating art works that are built on active participation (Bishop 2012). She notes that there is a tacit hierarchy between experiences that can be labeled “*esthetic*” and those that are “*participatory*,” where the latter ones are seen as creating “*real efficacy*,” while the former do not. In her criticism of this perceptive dynamic and the question of value, she makes two points that in different ways, and with different intensities, mirror what I have been talking about. The first is her observation that socially engaged art practices often claim to be uninterested in the *esthetic* side of presentation, and the intention is to create a social lacing, a social exchange. I think she talks about it as social achievements. In other words, the aspiration is to move beyond art, but “*never to the point of comparison with comparable projects in the social domain*,” which means that its outcome is not critically judged in relation to the work of pedagogues or museum educators for example (Bishop 2012, 19).

IUP: I am sorry if I'm interrupting, but how do you see that this relates to your way of thinking?

JP: Well, it does, so to speak, by not relating to it. The performances that I make don't strive for their own abolition, they don't move beyond theater, really, even if *I* think they do. They are situated in conservative institutions and are confined not only by their locality, but also by preconceived notions of what kind of presentational forms usually occur in these places. The examples that Claire Bishop takes up show that many artists are not concerned with creating works of art, but instead interested in generating new forms of relations outside the museum, changing the nature, or temperature, of the spaces where life takes place. Such a strategy is understandable as it is an escape from the confinements of the institution; places that not only symbolize, but connote forces that do *not* stand for engagement and vital relations. The kind of theater that I make is, for the most part, not doing that. It is captured within institutions signifying art as disconnected from life. The "escape" is instead thought of as happening on the esthetic level, only. The theater is then not criticizing itself, as a meaningful, or meaningless, institution, but it is criticizing theater as a spectacle, as something separated from the potentiality of invention. Anyway, to get to the second point, Bishop argues that the evaluation of socially engaged art, inducing participation, is not only about esthetic hierarchy, so far as the participatory work is seen as "better" than those that are not, *but also* that there is an ethical evaluation intrinsic to it. Meaning, that developing work through social processes, through listening and interaction, has an ethical efficacy that art works that focus on aspects conventionally labeled esthetic, do not have. As I see it, here lies the problem. The activity that I talked about in my paper *The Rhythm of Thinking*, as encompassing the possibility of an ethical momentum, is a perceptive process in the individual. It is not a social activity. It's the activity of individually inventing within his/her own inner world. I don't see the need to regard these two views of where the ethical impact lies as necessarily effacing each other *but* if the actual experience of socially engaged art is a sense of repression and confinement, it underscores the importance of the question of how ethics can be talked about, and viewed, as an inner world experience. In other words, within a purely esthetic experience.

IUP: Mirroring what Rancière calls esthetic efficacy?

JP: Well, what's most relevant can be found in Rancière's further reasoning that there is an ethical *immediacy* in this, that the ethical is covered, or hidden within, *and* that the efficacy "is produced by the very rupturing of any kind of determinate link between cause and effect" (Rancière 2009, 63). In this we can find what I have talked about as the level outside language, beyond ideas and messages.

IUP: So, in your eyes the notion that an esthetic focus is devoid of an ethical impact, and socially engaged art is automatically charged with it, is a simplification?

JP: It's not only a simplification but also disregards the power of the sensual. The ethical aspect is then not to be found in the affective responses that the performances generate but in the way they are made.

IUP: Which leads us to a question I need to ask. Why haven't you included the collective creative process in your thinking around ethics? Particularly because I know that you have, quite extensively, looked at the issue of hierarchy within collective collaboration. Why have you chosen to exclude that aspect?

JP: There are two main reasons. The first is that the ethical aspect of group work and creative collaboration – which is a compound of social interaction, of creative and social hierarchy, of emotionality and professionalism – is *not* an aspect that I see as connected to dramaturgy or composition. The second reason is that the ethical way, so to speak, to investigate and illuminate the ethical aspect of group work should, I think, grow from a vital and suspended dialogue with everybody involved.

IUP: But surely, it must be possible and quite interesting to look at creative collaborative work, with ethics as a focus.

JP: Certainly, and it has probably been done. In other fields where collaboration is central but where art production is not the objective – of which there are plenty – I know that critical studies on ethics can be found. What could be asked though, in view of ethics and my reasoning about the perceptive process encapsulating the possibility of becoming, is how those aspects can also be applied to the performers and their experience when performing. They are involved in a creative process that is a mixture of tension and release, of feeling uncomfortable and of feeling balanced. I understand that at certain moments the performers sense that their creative invention falls into place and that there is something of a

complete connection in and between their doings, their bodies and the doings and rhythms of the others. At other times they might feel the opposite, incompleteness and disconnection. This vulnerability mirrors the perceptive dynamic of co-creation and the possibility of a sense of becoming, so a deepened study into the performer's experience could evolve around the question whether or not their creative activity produces a sense of becoming. Such a question would be one way of talking about ethics within the creative collective.

IUP: I get slightly confused, and the same thing happened when I listened to your presentation of your text *The Rhythm of Thinking*, because on the one hand you talk about becoming as an ontological process, and then at one point you talk about it as being “produced.” Isn't there a contradiction here?

JP: Yes, I see what you mean and I can only agree with you. I think one can say that it stems from appropriation, from moving it and activating the concept within the specific circumstances of art perception. Life is an ontological process in and of itself; it's not there because it's pointed out, and it doesn't stop if we choose to pick mushrooms instead of talking about it. If I say: “being is becoming” it's an observation that doesn't disturb its movement, but to say that the intention of a performance is to enable an *experience* of becoming is to disturb the immanent movement of the concepts. Though, such contradictions are the collateral damage, so to speak, that comes with the attempt to align the reflections with a philosophical discourse that by nature is interested in the full complexity of forces that inhabit life as a whole, as it unfolds in the world *outside* the performative event.

IUP: Maybe somebody would say that the experience of co-composing and becoming should be described as an emancipatory experience rather than being about ethics. Can't emancipation be seen as exactly what you are talking about, as the verification of the vitality of the individual inventing?

JP: Well, I have not talked about the actual experience as being ethical or not – I don't see that as possible – but tried to outline ways to think about ethics within dramaturgy and composition. The idea of emancipation through an esthetic experience, and especially so in the history of western theater, is central. But in that tradition the dominating line of thought is one where emancipation has a revelatory quality and *not* one of ongoing contemplation and invention. The politics of theater have regarded, and still do, emancipation

as the uncovering of truth, a light is let in, or, as Rancière puts it, as a “re-appropriation of a relationship to self lost in a process of separation” (Rancière 2009, 15). But, even if it’s not really relevant to align the co-compositional experience with one of emancipation, it helps to distinguish the type of investment, the activity of inventing, the contemplative movement, and the notion of “work” attached to co-composition. However, we have to commence with the fact that we don’t know anything about the perceptive activities – the workings of co-composition – within the individual. The ethics cannot lie in asserting that the outcome is so and so. It is all about the potentiality.

IUP: I can’t refrain from feeling that there is something of an unlimited acceptance, a shimmer of “everything goes” that looms over an esthetic based on what you suggest. Like an all-embracing atmosphere, and it disturbs me somehow. It’s like claiming that narration should be abandoned, that the notion of the artifact is useless, that beauty, the organized rhythm, the possibilities within thoroughly composed structures is meaningless. Isn’t there a certain power in an exclamatory form that has the potential to move the perceiver in the same ethical directions that you envision?

JP: The power in what you call an “exclamatory form” is one of subsumption, and the illusion of transcendence. With all due respect, I don’t see the need to once more go through how I think about this in terms of dramaturgy, composition and perception. As to your comment that an immanent esthetics, or an esthetics in which immanent movements are sought after, equals an attitude that “everything goes,” I would say, is a misconstruction. Yes, I think of my art as affirmative projects, as affirmative of a fundamentally positive vision of the ethical subject. Rather than focusing on conflict, friction, fragility or mourning, the performances place positivity, vitality and undiscovered possibilities, in the foreground. Does that mean that there is no discipline? Does that mean that there is no vulnerability? Does that mean that there is no criticism or conflict involved? Of course not. The dramaturgical constructions that I work with are quite contained and disciplined, just like the material I place within them. It is not about letting everything just hang out. Your comment is good because it allows me to again point out that the specific quality of the material *also* is indicative of an ethics. And by that I mean that the compositional details *within* the material cannot be overlooked. Then, in regards to your comment about

unlimited acceptance, indicating that there is some kind of an overall consensus covering the expression, like a blanket, I can just say that a positive vision of the subject does *not* “deny conflict, tension, or even violent disagreements between different subjects” (Braidotti 2011, 303). I actually see conflict not only as one of the driving forces, but as something that the expression should nourish – and – be capable of harboring. The ethics could actually be said to be about inventing, accepting and sustaining relations of a conflictual nature.

IUP: If I put what you are saying now in relation to what you said in your paper *The Rhythm of Thinking*, in which you placed an emphasis on the activity of thinking as an “indispensable inner movement,” I wonder if it’s there, in the thinking, that you see the conflicts playing out? That the figuring-out is the handling of conflicts? If so, isn’t it trapped in the void of the mind? Doesn’t the conflict then become mysterious, useless, what does it help to resolve?

JP The “conflicts” are the reason and the source of inventions and for co-composing the never-before-experienced. They are the energy behind, and also within, the activity, and to establish compositional structures that treat forces of a contradictory type as non-conflictual is to accept their co-existence. Maybe such a dynamic finds its strongest potentiality if we consider that the expressional “conflicts” are constituted by human beings creating individual expressive trajectories. You know, in view of this it’s interesting to go back to what we talked about earlier and Claire Bishop’s constructive critique of participation. I have not experienced so-called participatory work as something that opens up to the unknown. Instead it has given me the experience that I am engaged in, and thinking about the molding of social consistency. It is a dynamic that is similar to when I come into a dinner party, or when I am at a conference, or when I meet new students for a course or other situations in life where a social form is taking shape. It is not about co-creating something never-before-experienced. My experiences of participation, whether in the theater or in a wider art context, have not been sensual, esthetic experiences, but they have been social experiences. Maybe they have been interesting to be a part of, but the coping with the social aspect and interacting in the social weave have, so to speak, repressed other more sensual and expansive types of experiences. I guess my point is, the conflicts that I have sensed in participatory art situations have *also* been of a social nature. My take on art

formed by socially engaged practices, is that the exposition of conflicts is seen as useful for resolving things, but also that there is an inclination towards consensus that stymies the movement of thinking.

IUP: That is a generalization, but I understand it comes from your experience.

JP: Of course it is, but it leads me to the point that the idea of resolving something is totally irrelevant within the esthetic framework that I am outlining. The immanent movement is perpetual and likewise the emergence of the new, and the intention is to create an experience where this is sensed as a vital expansion, beyond any type of resolution, thus mirroring Deleuze's assertion that when "consciousness abandons solutions and interpretations, it thus acquires its light, its gestures and its sounds, its decisive transformation" (Murray 1997, 256).

IUP: But then, if there is an ethics in the attempt to infuse vital movements of thought in the individual, how do you formulate yourself around the unavoidable question of how this is transposed onto relations outside the performance? How does it have an impact on relations in the world, to other beings? Your reasoning conjures up an image of an enclosed circular movement, and I get frustrated, to put it bluntly, from not hearing you talk about its transformational potential, its impact on the world.

JP: I can say many things in response to your questions, but perhaps the two most important are that when expanding into the discourse that such a transformation signifies, the stakes are broadened. It obviously opens up to inter-relational situations and the thinking has to be stabilized through much wider references, and treated in a different way. Which leads me to the second point, which is, to make such an expansion the aspect of ethics is pulled away from being problematized in relation to esthetics. I must insist on that demarcation for the sake of staying somewhat within my practice. With that said, there is of course a transformational thought behind everything. I would not be able to think of my work as political otherwise, that there are, so to speak, envisioned repercussions of the esthetics. I mean, if I say that the compositional thinking is guided by the conviction that "an ethics which eschews immanence invariably sunders us from our powers and capacities," it makes me think of the building of the structure as a way to establish a link between the two worlds (Surin 2011, 144). But there is no immediate success to be found. Such signs are ruptured, to use

Rancière's word. It instigates a mode with the hope that it should influence the individual in regards to how she perceives and moves in the world. If we take the notion of movement in thinking as an example, I would say that the question of whether or not an art piece can be regarded as more or less ethical depending on what kind of thinking processes it encourages, can only be based on the presumption that if the thinking is fluid, the possibility for actions that *don't* consider the consequences of this action in the outside world, is less likely to take place. The vitality of the thinking then becomes not only the determining mode of your own existence but also the determining mode for your outlook on all existence.

IUP: It is the transference of the activity from one situation, the perception of the performance, to being in life elsewhere, this I can see. Though, how do you relate that observation to the Deleuzian/Guattarian assertion that the success of a revolution "resides only in itself, precisely in the vibrations, clinches, and openings it gave to men and women at the moment of its making and that composes in itself a monument that is always in the process of becoming, like those tumuli to which each new traveler adds a stone. The victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution's fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 177).

JP: Are you suggesting that what Deleuze and Guattari are saying is that all attempts are in vain? That it should be understood as if the power of affect, of art, is ephemeral? That's a way of reading it, and I don't want to argue with that, but it also points to the power of the moment of the experience, and the possibility of a vibrating success. The potentiality of this success is what keeps me doing what I do, even if there is betrayal around every corner. Though, and this is what I think we're talking about throughout this conversation, it would be too simple to think that this revolutionary potential, as a vibrating phenomena open to its own making, can ensue in any esthetic surrounding. I mean, the political does not lie in pointing out and insisting that this potentiality for a revolution is there to be found, but instead in developing a critique that explores under which circumstances it can occur.

IUP: It is interesting to put your reasoning in relation to Walter Benjamin's text *The Author as Producer*, which is a text that to a large extent also revolves

around theater and Brecht, dramaturgy and the question of power. To engage in a thorough critique of power is in Benjamin's analysis closely tied to questioning how the production means are allocated; a central value of art must be to oppose its means of production.

JP: Yes, I have come to understand that that text turns up quite often as a reference when discussing contemporary art and its socio-political impact. Though, even if the context of Benjamin's reasoning is highly political, it should also be understood as a dramaturgical proclamation as he places his thoughts in the midst of creative activities, theater making and literary writing, and therefore its impact on the dramaturgical, structural specifics of art is unavoidable. He says that, "to supply a production apparatus without trying, within the limits of the possible, to change it, is a highly disputable activity even when the material supplied appears to be of a revolutionary nature." (Benjamin 1998, 94) This is almost mirrored by Deleuze who says that the "actual power of theater is inseparable from a representation of power in theater, even if it is a critical representation" (Murray 1997, 241). To acknowledge the kindred, I would almost say complementary, relationship between Benjamin's text and Deleuze's allows both for an enhanced political reading of Deleuze as well as a reaffirmation of Benjamin's strong engagement in trying to disentangle the relationship between structural specifics of art and its perceptive possibilities.

IUP: Sometimes I wonder to what extent audiences really *want* that power to be exposed; the power of the institution, the power of representation. I understand fully that it is a tricky angle to use when developing dramaturgical and compositional thinking, but I throw it in just to highlight the notion of resistance, and how resistance is a pre-experience phenomenon.

JP: I am not sure I understand what you mean?

IUP: I know it sounds obvious, but what I want to get to is that there can be resistance when the breaking with signs of power does *not* take on a form that has the coding of opposition. Massumi talks about a dance performance that he had worked on and that was criticized for being politically bankrupt because it had no "real" interaction, because it didn't attempt to network out of the confined space of the performance. Do you agree with him when he says that such a critique misses the point?

JP: Yes, I do. It is a critique that claims that what's in the frame of the

space is “reducible to the actual spatial parameters, and anything that appears within that frame has no relation to anything outside.” And in his continued reasoning, if I remember correctly, he formulates a thought that I think mirrors the idea I presented as underlying my ambition around the construction of *John and the Mushrooms*, which was to construct the performance in a way that opens up for an understanding that what is being built – the performance – is a construction that can be rebuilt, in a different way. Massumi suggests, why not “accept for a moment the constraints that the artist carefully built in, and see what you can feel with them? It may turn out to be autonomous in the way I redefined it – in a relation-of-nonrelation with other formations that might analogically “want” it and be able to capture and reframe it, so that it expands or contrasts to fit other spaces and takes off from other conditions, where its effect could well be political” (Massumi 2011, 79). He’s saying that autonomy does not have to mean that the expression is closed to the dynamics surrounding it, that it is unpolitical, but that it can, depending on how it is built, be both. If I connect this further to the performance of *John and the Mushrooms*, I thought of it as a sensuous-philosophical event in so far as it is an esthetic formation interested in generating questions. And it is an ethico-esthetic event in so far as it aims at generating a thought-felt experience of becoming. And, it is an esthetico-political event in so far as it aims to counteract fixed notions of how the world can be built. All those movements are not only “reducible to the actual spatial parameters,” but to the inner world of the individual. I’d like to think that to assign great value to those ineffable movements is a way to resist being subsumed by a capitalist economy. When an economy “subsumes all other economies, it is not just capturing monetary value. It is capturing processes of individuation. It is capturing entire fields of emergent relation. It is capturing powers of becoming ... It subsumes them, sometimes gently, more often brutally, to techniques of relation dedicated to quantitative value-adding and accumulation” (Massumi and Manning 2014, 122).

IUP: I can envision how the notion of difference is captured by the same force, so before we move on to a question that takes us in a different direction, I would like you to briefly say something about that, how the concept of difference can be thought of from an ethical-compositional perspective. When Claire Colebrook says that in order to produce an event within capital-

ism “we need to do more than point out its unfairness, its contradictions and its biases. We need to think difference differently.” What are your thoughts on that? Colebrook 2002, 49).

JP: Oh, Deleuze wrote a whole book on difference, and the concept is, to say the least, absolutely central to his thinking, and I cannot possibly encompass all its philosophical implications. But, with that said, the passage that you are quoting is an example of how Colebrook manages to inspirationally compress Deleuzian thinking into formulations that actually, in my eyes, float right into esthetic and dramaturgical thinking. So, even if there is a complex Deleuzian reasoning behind it, we could just ask, from the position of the theater worker; what are the repercussions of letting it guide how and what we do? After the initial observation that theater is captured by capitalism and made into a spectacle – to allude to the unavoidable Guy Debord, who’s *Society of the Spectacle* lurks underneath all this – it asserts that a critique of this same system cannot rely on an existing language. It becomes disqualified, useless, as it has been subsumed by a capitalist system that has “mastered difference directly by managing it economically” (Colebrook 2002, 49).

IUP: And to “think difference differently,” which is needed in order to escape this condition, how can that be thought of? It seems to suggest a movement.

JP: That’s how I also see it, that one should understand difference as untamable, that difference is never steady, that difference continuously produces new difference. The esthetic transference of this outlook, its repercussions, would be, firstly, that instead of producing representations of already established differences, rendering unfairness with a language infected by the coding that the capitalist system has given it, we need to elaborate with components and structures that have a semiotic fluency. Secondly, I think it’s possible on a performative level to appropriate this untamability in such a way that even the smallest component is allowed to carry, and radiate, an uncertainty, a doubleness, an instability. The expression, at the same time as it is One, is also another One, and another One. In my imagination this second level of a possible application, or critical transference, opens up for infusing fluency into material that is steady, too steady. From a directorial point of view, it’s a perspective that offers truly interesting possibilities.

IUP: I am tempted to ask what that really means, more concretely, but if you don't mind, I would like to continue with a question that leads us into a different area of your work. There was a suggestion from one of the collaborators here at the institute to have a seminar about making theater for young audiences and you were asked to organize it, but it didn't happen. You seemed reluctant, no? That surprises me, since you have worked a lot with theater for children, and written about it too.

JP: The director Suzanne Osten starts one of her articles with saying that "If I don't want anybody to read this contribution I should put the word child somewhere in the title" (Osten 2002, 146). That is sad, but true. The perspective of the child does not have any significant status within esthetic theory, if it's not taken up and treated in contexts where it's expected, where it is "suppose" to be. It is as if the discussion around the child in society – and in the arts – has to stay within certain areas and limits. It's possible to discuss pedagogy, media habits, childcare, to discuss the quality of their schooling, and other aspects concerning how children are controlled or taught, but a structural analysis of the society as a whole that's *grounded on the perspective of the child*, is overlooked and *not* allowed to have any real impact. Likewise, a more advanced discussion about esthetics and its relation to young human beings, I mean a discussion that goes *beyond* the demarcations that rule existing ideas of how esthetics and age are related, are very rare.

IUP: Are you saying that your hesitation to talk about your work with making theater for young audiences has to do with this low status?

JP: No, that's not why. I would say that there are two other reasons. The first is that a critical undertaking that aims at weaving together esthetics, power, and an outlook on the young members of our society, extends beyond what I am trying to work with at the moment. It is something that I do want to explore, but it needs to be given a separate focus, with other questions and references than those I have elaborated on. Just to give you an example, we could take the Deleuzian concept of minoration, which he uses in *One Less Manifesto* and inserts into his analysis of Carmelo Bene's theater esthetics. It is a concept that in Deluzian thinking has philosophical, esthetic and political strands and is certainly interesting to activate when talking about theater art for young audiences. Partly because it *is* a relevant critical gaze but also because it infuses a temperature, an understanding of what's at stake.

IUP: Why is that?

JP: Well, minor stands in opposition to major, and to minorate is to illuminate the mechanics of power and specifically the rule of doctrines. The repressive force of doctrines is generality and generality not only dismisses multiplicity but stymies difference. However, the formulation that encircles the critical workings of minoration in such a way that connects it to the critique of the institution and the power of representation, can be found in the text on Kafka where Deleuze and Guattari say that “minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature” (Deleuze and Guattari 2012, 39). So, to minorate is to challenge both the status of the material as well as the institution as Major.

IUP: The material being whatever is set in motion on stage, in the theater, and the institution refers to the theater itself, is that how you think?

JP: Yes. To minorate is dependent on a political gaze that grows from a view of the world *outside* the performance, outside the premises of the primary material and outside the composition. This political view is not just any, but one that acknowledges and creates an alliance with the minority. In the Deleuzian reasoning *minority* has two meanings, related but distinct. The first asserts that minority “denotes a state of rule, that is to say, the situation of a group that, whatever its size, is excluded from majority, or even included, but as a subordinate fraction in relation to the standard of measure that regulates the law and establishes the majority. In this context, we can say that women, children, the South, the third world, etc., are still minorities, as numerous as they are” (Murray 1997, 255). This first meaning does not imply any motion; it’s an observation, an analysis. Though, it gives birth to the second meaning, which is a movement, towards reaching the “goal,” and a call for a continuous reevaluation, and must in its essence be considered ethical. It asserts that “minority no longer denotes a state of rule, but a becoming in which one enlists. To become-minority. This is a goal, a goal that concerns the entire world since the entire world is included in this goal and in this becoming inasmuch as everyone creates his or her variation of the unity of despotic measure and escapes, from one side or the other, from the system of power that is a part of the majority” (Murray 1997, 255). The unavoidable challenge

inherent in this observation is to approach the task of how to precisely construct the formal structure of the performative event – and the shaping of all its components – so that it not only mirrors but creates an experience of such an outlook on the world.

IUP: What are the possible concrete measures that could be considered in such an undertaking? Are there any such measures that can be formulated in a more general way, without attaching them to a specific material, to a specific compositional intention?

JP: Initially, one could claim that no such undertaking is possible if the artistic activity does not involve a process of placing it within, and relating it to, a political analysis in conjunction to a pre-developed idea of the relation between this analysis and esthetic choices. Secondly, one could argue that minoration entails an increased awareness of which semiotic systems are being used and if – and how – it is codified in such a way that pre-knowledge is needed, in other words functioning as an excluding factor. However, these are just two aspects – brought forth by problematizing just this one concept – that points to what I said a few minutes ago, that an investigation into the workings of esthetics, power and young people, needs to be given a separate focus and expanded references.

IUP: I hope this is something that we here at the institute can work on together. What's the other reason for your hesitation to instigate the seminar?

JP: The second reason is that the discussions and investigations that I have tried to develop are about esthetics, ethics, collaborative creative work, the production of meaning, dramaturgy and composition. And, in that investigation I don't think it's relevant to rely on some undefined idea about human age and its influence on the issues. It's not necessary for the problematizations. Making such a distinction would actually, in my eyes, fortify an approach to art for young people that I don't want to contribute to.

IUP: And what is that approach?

JP: It's an approach based on generalizations about the affective effect of art perception, about what type of esthetics that “work,” or whatever word we want to use, for a certain age group. The experiential values in such thinking do not ensue from the actual experience but from preconceived notions, and as such they avoid diversity and uncertainty, and they exude an

almost instrumentalist desire to be affect-effective. There are not many things that I can say I really know about how art is experienced, but I *do* know that an interest in and an appreciation of for example the music by Karlheinz Stockhausen or the poetry by Lorine Niedecker, has nothing to do with age. We paste our own limitations onto children. Our own blockages that inhibit us to be playful and imaginative are then converted into ideas about what “works,” what’s “reasonable,” what’s “relevant.”

IUP: You make it sound like an unavoidable chain of repression. Where do we end up, if each relation, let’s say between parent and child, is not regarded as a fundamental possibility? Just a minute ago you talked about your art as affirmative projects placing positivity and vitality in the foreground.

JP: If you think this is a contradiction, I can only say that I do not see it like that. The tension between the observation that we transfer our limitations to children, which is a broad cultural-political one, and my formulations around my esthetic intention, actually constitute the frictional domain in which I think most art is made.

IUP: So what you are saying, going back to your example with Stockhausen and Niedecker, is that there are no limits for what a young audience can appreciate, or experience as exciting, or enriching, or whatever word you want to use?

JP: What I am saying is that a serious investigation of dramaturgical or directorial problems should not be divided along a line defined by some unchallenged assumptions about a correlation between less life experience and esthetic preferences, hence indicating that the real heavy duty questions are only to be found when working with an adult audience in mind, and then more light weight when making theater for an all-age audience. I actually think it’s the opposite, that there is a demand for clarity and communicative mastery when meeting the latter. Obviously, that doesn’t mean that there are not subject matters or themes that a human being with limited life experience cannot relate to or comprehend.

IUP: So, what is this required clarity about?

JP: I could choose from quite a few different experiences and examples that point towards the same dynamic, but one that brought the aspect of clarity to the forefront was when I worked with a theater production together with the company Unga Klara called *Baby Drama*, directed by the companies founder

and artistic director Suzanne Osten. It was created for an audience aged 4-12 months old, and I wrote the music and worked as music dramaturge.

IUP: A pre-verbal audience in, I assume, the company of caretakers, seems like very special circumstance.

JP: Yes, there are numerous interesting aspects to this work, seen from a dramaturgical point of view, but I will take up just a few that relate to the broader picture that I have been trying to outline. Since the use and understanding of verbal language had not yet developed in the young audience, *understanding* as a concept was devoid. The power and impact of the present moment was everything. The polarity between the nonsensuous and the sensuous that I took up in my paper *The Rhythm of Thinking*, and in connection with Brian Massumi's term *amodal*, could not be thought of as a polarity (Massumi 2011). Everything – semantic language, movements, different practicalities – had to be conceived of as being in one mode, purely sensuous.

IUP: And this, I can clearly see, points to the significance of the non-semantic and the shaping of the intensities, and their rhythmical relation.

JP: Exactly, the mechanisms that governed the barter between stage and audience, was all about rhythm and shifts and changes in rhythm. The performance had a distinctly dialogic quality, and there were sharp variations between different rhythmic structures.

It was clear how the audience changed its focus in connection with rhythmic shifts, and I understood that there was a strong link between rhythmic variation and vitality and the degree of focus and attention exerted by the audience. For me, the most important insights that came out of this experience, moving down to such a fundamental level of theatrical communication, is that the message that the director and actors have decided to express finds its clarity when it is transformed into rhythmic energy, when the importance of duration is considered. Then the notion of understanding can move down to a deeper level.

IUP: We don't have much time but could you give an example of how these experiences took off, left traces in other performances?

JP: Not so long after working with *Baby Drama*, I directed a performance with texts by Gertrude Stein for a young audience.

IUP: Her work is considered quite complex, also by more experienced readers.

JP: Maybe. I can't go into describing that performance in detail, and you *really* need to look at the specifics of the language structure, but it is a good example of how a dedicated focus on embodiment and rhythm can untangle, I would almost say unlock, language structures that might seem impermeable. But I also saw how important it is that such a focus is not just about grounding the material in the body and creating cool rhythms, or something like that, which one could say is what actors and directors do all the time, but that the process of embodying and rhythmization are thought of as investigative tools, *continually throughout the actual performing*. I think that's what created the clarity in that performance, and it was probably the reason why many grown ups in the audience said that it was the first time they understood Stein.

IUP: Those aspects are part of a detailed and concrete performative level. But if, to round this off, we return to an esthetic-philosophical approach, I would say that it is far more common for theater to partake in political discussions than engage in philosophical problems. Now, you seem to insist on a dependency between the two areas.

JP: I am not sure it's necessary to think of it as if I am engaging in philosophical problems, and I don't think I would talk about it as a dependency. The type of work and the type of intellectual methods I understand as the practice of philosophy find their stability and line of reasoning by following and developing inter-philosophical connections. What I do is more of an attempt to find embodied prolongations of some, quite restrained, philosophical outlooks.

IUP: Laura Cull asks if "immanent theatre really [is] 'good' theatre or is this to conflate philosophical, ethical and aesthetic value in a problematic fashion?" (Cull 2012, 220),

JP: I would say that it is not problematic, in a negative sense, as such confluations generate creative and constructive openings for problematizing dramaturgy, *but* it is a question that very soon becomes obsolete since it does not approach the actual experience. It does not problematize the relationship between the specifics of the expression and the affect. I know that the work by for example Laura Cull, strongly contributes to inspire practitioners in ways to think, to carve out a useful language, and this exchange between approaches does takes us forward, I hope.

IUP: Your seminar on the text *The Rhythm of Thinking* did help me to see more clearly where this urgency that I so often have felt in our discussions

comes from, but it also, as our conversation today has shown, caused a lot of questions and I was surprised that you didn't give your paper more of a conclusive character.

JP: What is your question?

IUP: What can you conclude from your research? Do you see that as an irrelevant, maybe provocative question?

JP: No, however, I don't think we need to go into the charged discussion of what type of conclusions artistic research should or can produce, I mean on a broader level, outside the specificity of my own work, which is somewhat what your question implies. But conclusions, well, I have a friend who says, when I complain about how the perpetuance of my thinking makes it hard for me to come to a conclusion, "just don't think about it, just pull the horn out of your mouth." I think it's a quote that comes from Miles talking to Coltrane who said that he didn't know how to end his solos. Anyway, I actually think there is *too much* conclusiveness in my reasoning already. Nothing in this can be considered stable. They are experiments, both the performances and my research reflections. And the fact that our conversations have a searching quality – at least for me – is more in line with the modality that I want to sustain in what I do and say.

IUP: It might be so that your work will be seen as irrelevant if put into the realm of theater as it is thought of today, that the consequences of your thinking about dramaturgy and theatrical composition carries the possibility – or risk – of dissolving the borders of theater as idiomatically defined through history.

JP: For me this attempt to problematize, in dramaturgical terms, the relation between components and energies that make up a performance and aspects like ethics and politics, yes, the relation between the structural specifics and their socio-ethico-political intention, is a beginning. I have, quite tightly, attached my reasoning to the performances that I have made, and tied more or less every thought to the conceptual specifics of those three performances. The reasoning and the references go very much hand in hand, and the consequence is that the material, the conceptual set-up and the collaborative processes, don't really offer any strong resistance. What I am interested in is investigating what parts, which aspects of these dramaturgical and directorial thoughts can be used when approaching totally different kinds of materials. How a processual

type of thinking can be placed within materials of a more set character. Then the dramaturgical thinking has to be transposed into different solutions in order to enable, for example, the experience of co-composition, or a sense of becoming. I imagine it as being something that happens further down, more of adjusting, adding, reshuffling, configuring on a very intricate level of directing. It would not be interesting to me, actually kind of a failure, if what I describe as the reciprocal relation between dramaturgical and formal aspects and esthetic-ethico-political intensions was not transferable to let's say, a narrative and dramatic progression of a so-called realistic kind.

IUP: And those possible transformations are what you were thinking of when you earlier talked about the operational systematization that the reasoning implies, and that they are carried out as a way to enable transformations?

JP: Yes, into new compositions. There is a quite well known quote by Deleuze saying that "To think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought" (Deleuze 1994, 147). I would like to boil that down and suggest that thinking can only happen in composition.

SAMMANFATTNING

Inledning

Avhandlingen *The Rhythm of Thinking; Immanence and Ethics in Theater Performance* är resultatet av ett konstnärligt forskningsprojekt inom området teater, med regi och dramaturgi som fokus. Syftet med avhandlingen är att genom specifika problematiseringar av teaterskapandet och av relationen mellan teaterföreställningen och dess publik, belysa frågor kring kollektivt skapande, regi, dramaturgi och komposition. Detta innebär att avhandlingen skriver fram två parallella undersökningsfält: Dels den kollektiva kreativa processen, dess förutsättningar, problem och framväxande, och dels frågor kring meningsskapande, perceptionsdynamik och affekt.

Projektets kritiska utgångspunkt är att såväl de kollektiva skapandeprocesserna som perceptionsprocesser betraktas, undersöks och beskrivs som immanenta. Mer specifikt innebär detta en ansats att genomlysna vad som skulle kunna kallas immanenta processer, eller immanent teater. Undersökningsfrågorna och de kritiska observationerna spänner från konkreta erfarenheter av det kollektiva skapandet till teoretisk kritik inom diskurser som teatervetenskap, filosofi, perceptionsteori och musikteori. Den övergripande ambitionen är att bidra till teorier om relationen mellan teaterns struktur – dramaturgiskt och kompositoriskt – och erfarenheten av meningsskapande. Denna intention kan sägas vara indelad i en rad frågeställningar om; hur teoretiska och filosofiska resonemang kan omvandlas till konkreta kompositoriska strukturer; hur dramaturgiska diskurser bortom ett semantiskt språk kan formuleras; hur den binära relationen mellan komposition och en intuitiv och emotionell kreativ kraft kan problematiseras; hur hierarkiska strukturer, både vad gäller uttryckets form och kreativt inflytande, kan undersökas och upplösas; hur regissörens kreativa process kan kartläggas; och avslutningsvis, hur en möjlig relation mellan kompositionens struktur och en etisk hållning kan formuleras.

Grunden för samtliga undersökningsfrågor är att det kollektiva skapandet – och den för publik presenterade föreställningen – växer fram genom slump och ögonblickliga kreativa beslut. Så är förutsättningarna i de tre teaterföreställningar

som forskningen bygger på och som genomgående används som referenser. Föreställningarna, som initierats och regisserats av forskaren/författaren, är på olika sätt baserade på material och metoder hämtade från och inspirerade av den amerikanska tonsättaren och konstnären John Cage (1912-1992). De består av olika komponenter, de är gjorda under olika produktionsförhållanden, har olika dramaturgiska strukturer, och de skådespelare, dansare och musiker som medverkar skiljer sig åt. Det är dock tre aspekter som föreställningarna delar och som är avgörande för analysen och för hur undersökningsfrågorna lyfts fram. Den första och mest avgörande är vad som alternativt benämns som *mångfald* (*multiplicities*), *individuella uttrycksbanor* (*individual expressive trajectories*), *överlagringar* (*superimpositions*), *polyfoni* (*expressive polyphony*), och *överlastning* (*overload*). Dessa termer och fenomen beskriver en instabilitet, vilket återspeglar idén om att föreställningarnas uttryck konsolideras genom en oförberedd process, en process i vilken en mångfald av relationer slumpmässigt uppstår, utvecklas och förvandlas, och inte som ett resultat av en genomkomponerad struktur. Den andra aspekten som är gemensam mellan föreställningarna är att de på ett avgörande sätt är beroende av de medverkandes kreativa investering – deras förmåga att uppfinna och improvisera. Detta eftersom föreställningarnas konceptuella struktur bygger på de medverkandes kreativa ansvarstagande. Den tredje aspekten är att de alla tre är formade kring musikaliska kompositioner. Detta är inte enbart avgörande för de dramaturgiska strukturerna och intensiteten i föreställningarna, utan påverkar även hur kritiken tar form och vilka koncept och termer som används i undersökningen. De tre föreställningarna heter *John och svamparna*, *vorschläge* och *Ryoanji – ett möte*.

Den estetiska domän som föreställningarna rör sig i – befolkad av skådespelare, dansare, musiker och publik – formas i avgörande grad av att den kollektiva processen och det performativa styrs av oförutsägbarhet, slump och improvisationer snarare än ett fastlagt och repeterat manuskript. Detta får som följd att uttrycket domineras av en icke-narrativitet i vilken en mångfald av individuellt formade improvisationer skapar en polyfonisk samhörighet. Det är dynamiken i denna kreativa och perceptiva process, hur den vecklas ut, som är undersökningens fokus och som belyses utifrån fyra olika perspektiv. Det första perspektivet kan sägas ligga till grund för de andra och koncentreras kring frågan om hur stimuli och uttryck utbyts

och växelverkar inom ett kollektivt skapande där slump och improvisation är dominerande faktorer. Det andra perspektivet belyser hierarkiska aspekter – kreativa, konstnärliga och sociala – och undersöker hur dessa visar sig och påverkar samspelet. Det tredje perspektivet riktar in sig på frågan om meningsskapande. Hur kan erfarenheten av meningsskapande definieras i en polyfonisk, icke-narrativ dramaturgisk struktur? Det fjärde perspektivet är en kritisk ansats, ett försök, att formulera och diskutera en möjlig korrelation mellan föreställningarnas estetiska struktur *och* en etik grundad på begreppet – och idén om – potentialitet.

Det som undersöks är teaterföreställningar och de frågor som forskningen rör sig kring springer ur kreativa och perceptuella processer fast förankrade i skapandet och upplevelsen av teater. Men, i undersökningen och i den kritiska bearbetningen är det inte i huvudsak teatervetenskapliga perspektiv som används utan istället är det olika filosofiska diskurser som sätts i rörelse. Denna filosofisk-kritiska strategi företräds främst av den franske filosofen Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), men också av den kanadensiska filosofen Brian Massumi (f.1956), och den italiensk-australiensiska filosofen Rosi Braidotti (f.1954). Den sekundärlitteratur som arbetet använder sig av domineras av författare som utvecklar Deleuzes teorier kring konst och teater, men ett visst teatervetenskapligt inslag förekommer. Mest förekommande är filosofen och teatervetaren Laura Cull, filosofen och Deleuze-experten Claire Colebrook, konstteoretikern och Deleuze-kännaren Simon O’Sullivan, teatervetaren Erika Fischer-Lichte och filosofen och Deleuze-experten Manuel Delanda.

Beståndsdelarna i projektet

Beståndsdelarna i projektet är filmade dokumentationer av föreställningarna med elva vidhängande kritiska texter. Dessa texter är av tre olika typer: föreställningsbeskrivande texter, essäer och intervjuer. De har olika karaktär och är tänkta att i både ton och innehåll komplettera varandra. De tre beskrivande texterna redogör för hur föreställningarna är gjorda. De går in i detalj på materialets beskaffenhet, dramaturgisk struktur och konceptuell organisation, beskriver repetitionsprocesserna och föreställningarnas möte med publiken. Dessa texter är länkade till de filmade dokumentationerna,

men också till ljud och musikinspelningar, partitur och manuskript. (Dessa material är tillgängliga, tillsammans med den fulla avhandlingstexten, via: www.gu.pea.uu.se) Intentionen bakom de beskrivande texterna är att ge en bild av föreställningarnas uppbyggnad och på så vis möjliggöra en förståelse för hur forskningens kritiska diskurs ansluter till olika nivåer i föreställningskonceptens struktur, och till materialets specifika egenskaper. Tanken är att de beskrivande texterna, i kombination med dokumentationerna, ska möjliggöra en kontakt med de taktila kvaliteterna i föreställningarna; ett sorts kroppsligt fundament för reflekterandet. Texterna avviker då och då från att vara direkt beskrivande. Dessa avvikelser skall inte läsas som kritiska förlängningar frikopplade från den konstnärliga praktiken, utan som en inblick i hur regissörens tankar utvecklas och tar form för att kunna ta sig an regisserandet. Denna kommentar är främst viktig att ha i åtanke vad gäller texten *Cage Interpreted and Performed*, som innehåller en ganska utförlig genomgång av John Cages estetik.

Om de beskrivande texterna kan sägas växa ur föreställningarnas konceptuella förutsättningar och konkreta kroppslighet, så är essäerna å andra sidan ett försök att placera dessa erfarenheter in i ett stramare och diskursstyrt reflekterande. De är utvecklade med tanken att föra upp de taktila erfarenheterna och de strukturella observationerna till en estetisk-filosofisk nivå. Detta genom att undersöka kopplingen mellan föreställningarnas dramaturgiska och kompositionella egenskaper med ett filosofisk perspektiv. På så sätt kan man säga att de omsluter praktiken genom att exponera vad som vibrerar under de estetiska val som föreställningarna representerar, samtidigt som de indikerar vilka möjliga förlängningar de inbegriper. Titlarna på de tre essäerna är: *Who is the creator?*, *Meeting – Meaning* och *The Rhythm of Thinking*.

Som ett forum för en kritisk dialog kring de tankar och frågor som forskningsprojektet vill belysa, formade forskaren 2013 i San Francisco, USA, *The Institute for Unpredictable Processes (Institutet för oförutsägbara processer)*. Institutet är ett center för konst och forskning som undersöker kollektiva och individuella skapandeprocesser i vilka slump och oförutsägbarhet är en central faktor. Institutet har över tid genomfört ett antal intervjuer med regissören/forskaren/författaren och fem av dessa ingår i forskningsmaterialet.

Disposition och kritiska temata

Avhandlingens inledande kapitel, *It is All in the Passing*, presenterar grunddragen i den estetik som genomsyrar föreställningarna, det beskriver undersökningsfrågorna och de temata som är centrala, och ringar på så sätt in vad som kan betraktas som forskningens kritiska bidrag. Texten redogör i korthet för projektets olika delar men gör också en mer detaljerad genomgång av de kritiska diskurser, begrepp och termer som används i analysen, såsom *processfilosofi* och *immanens*.

Efter inledningen följer *Interview 20*, vilken bemöter ett ifrågasättande av forskningsprojektets uppbyggnad. Intervjun reflekterar över de krav som ställs på läsaren som en följd av dess mångförgrenade karaktär och hur denna kan betraktas och användas.

Den första beskrivande texten, *Cage Interpreted and Performed*, belyser processen och tankarna bakom skapandet av föreställningen *John och svamparna (John and the Mushrooms)*. Eftersom John Cages musik och estetik är styrande för hur de tre föreställningarna är uppbyggda och därför också centrala för projektet som helhet, är den inledande delen av texten en utförlig genomgång av Cages konstnärliga metoder och estetiska hållning. Detta för att tydliggöra i vilken relation de står i förhållande till den kreativa processen och föreställningens alla beståndsdelar. Den andra delen av texten går sedan i detalj in på hur föreställningen konstruerades. Textens huvudsakliga intention är att beskriva hur Cage's estetik och tänkande transponeras till föreställningen; till konkreta dramaturgiska och kompositionella beslut.

I *Interview 3* förs en diskussion om relationen mellan teori och praktik. Den belyser den friktion som kan uppstå mellan å ena sidan en konstnärlig verksamhet och å andra sidan en kritisk, och belyser problem med att appropriera begrepp och tankefigurer som ligger utanför den konstnärliga praktikens specifika fält. Diskussionen tar upp frågan om och hur teorin kan tillåtas att operera och relatera endast till avgränsade områden och ifrågasätter ambitionen att sammanföra ett teoretiskt-filosofiskt resonemang med ett kompositoriskt tänkande.

Den andra beskrivande texten, *Hierarchy in Creation*, redogör för uppbyggnaden och skapandet av föreställningen *vorschläge*. Föreställning är baserad på en komposition med samma namn av den tyske tonsättaren Mathias Spahlinger. Spahlingers verk, och följaktligen också uppsättningen, belyser

frågan om hierarki i kreativa situationer. Detta genom att problematisera relationen mellan tonsättarens roll som auktoritet, de begränsningar och krav som materialet (kompositionen) ställer, och musikernas kreativa ansvar. Precis som Spahlinger i sin komposition belyser och ifrågasätter sin position som styrande auktoritet, problematiserar texten regissörens roll som initiativtagare och beslutsfattare. Denna fråga – och detta spänningsfält – är en viktig estetisk, processuell aspekt i alla de tre föreställningar som forskningen refererar till och är därför ett av textens centrala teman. Ett begrepp som resonemanget skapar och använder sig av är *regi som deltagande* (*directing as participation*), vilket är ett försök att konceptuellt ringa in och beskriva en regihållning följer med i hur föreställningens uttryck formas, utan att konkret bidra.

Samtalet i *Interview 7* rör sig kring frågor av mer personlig natur. Den tar upp frågan om vad som ligger bakom initiativet att arbeta med immanenta processer och belyser en möjlig motsättning i en situation där regissören är initiativtagare (och på olika sätt styrande) samtidigt som hen avsäger sig inflytande över det slutliga resultatet. Innebär valet att arbeta med slump och oförutsägbarhet i uttrycket att regissören förverkar sin möjlighet till ställningstagande?

Texten *Differentiated Presence*, som beskriver föreställningen *Ryoani – ett möte* (*Ryoanji – A Meeting*) har en något annorlunda uppbyggnad än de andra två beskrivande texterna. Istället för att placera den kritiska blicken mitt i den kreativa processen är den ett försök att jämföra regins intention med hur föreställningen upplevs utifrån publikens position. Den centrala frågan blir då hur föreställningens dramaturgiska struktur och ambition korresponderar till upplevelsen av den. Efter en detaljerad beskrivning av Cages komposition *Ryoanji* – vilken ligger till grund för föreställningen – redogör texten för föreställningskonceptet och för den registrategi som användes. Som begreppsliga utlöpare av termerna mångfald, individuella uttrycksriktningar, överlagringar, polyfoni, och överlastning, introduceras begreppen *relation-genom-ickerektion* (*relation-of-nonrelation*) och *med-komponerande* (*co-composition*). Dessa begrepp är centrala i resonemangen kring hur perceptuella processer kan utvecklas och är hämtade från filosofen Brian Massumi. I försöket att sätta regins intention i relation till en möjlig upplevelse hos den individuella föreställningsbesökaren följer sedan en längre ”anteckning” där författaren noterar sina egna tankar och reflektioner från att ha tittat på dokumentationerna. I en avslutande del av texten kommenteras det faktum att

föreställningen *Ryoanji – ett möte* inte performativt exponerar sin undersökande hållning och att detta faktum innebär att de perceptiva förutsättningarna är annorlunda jämfört med de två andra föreställningarna som ingår i projektet.

Essän *Who is the Creator?* är den första av de tre essäer som undersöker kontaktytan mellan föreställningarnas dramaturgiska strukturer, de taktila erfarenheterna och en teoretisk-filosofisk utblick. Den analytiska blicken är till största delen placerad mitt i det kollektiva skapandet och undersöker och reflekterar över hur det komplexa kreativa förloppet inom ensemblen rör sig och utvecklas när slump och oförutsägbarhet är avgörande faktorer. Centralt i resonemanget är begreppet immanens. Det används för att belysa skillnaden och relationen mellan transcendent processer och immanenta, vad gäller skapandets karaktär och specifika utmaningar. Detta utvecklas till reflektioner kring hur immanenta processer uppstår – och kan understödjas – i kollektiva kreativa situationer. De två begreppen *konsistens (consistency)* och *konsolidering (consolidation)* introduceras som beskrivande för föreställningarnas olika expressiva komponenter tar form, relaterar och transformeras; såväl sammantaget som individuellt. Resonemanget förs också in på frågan om hur det kreativa ansvaret påverkas och formuleras i en situation av oförberett och slump-genererat kollektivt skapande. Som en följd av hur det kreativa ansvaret problematiseras och av att resonemanget föreslår att det uppstår en viss typ av roll-skifte i skapandeprocessen, avaktiveras termen *kollektivt skapande (collective creation)* till förmån för termen *ögonblickligt kollektivt komponerande (instant collective composition)*. I den avslutande delen av essän utvecklas diskussionen kring skapandeprocessens hierarki och den problematiserar på så sätt regissörens position, inflytande och makt.

I *Interview 5* fördjupas samtalet om företeelsen att appropriera kritiska och filosofiska diskurser in i estetiska och konstnärliga sammanhang. Som en förlängning av den diskussionen dyker frågor upp om relationen mellan tänkande och skapande.

I den andra essän, *Meeting – Meaning*, expanderas idén om en immanent process till att inkludera relationen – och utbytet – mellan föreställningen och publiken, d.v.s. den beskriver hur det som sker skapas av *alla närvarande i tid och rum*. Texten undersöker hur olika dramaturgiska, kompositionella strukturer kan öka möjligheten för publiken att vara medskapare av upplevelsen. Resonemanget ringar in tre aspekter som en sådan utvidgad användning av begreppet (kreativ-)

immanent process manar fram. Den första av dessa är frågan om vilken typ av samhörighet (*communality*) som den icke-narrativa mångfalden i uttrycket i kombination med den unisona tidsliga och rumsliga närvaron genererar. Den andra aspekten (som med sitt komplexa ”system” och sin omfattande inverkan kan sägas vibrera under alla resonemang i detta arbete) är frågan om representerande kodifiering. Denna aspekt behandlas utförligt, både i relation till John Cages estetik, till föreställningarnas dramaturgiska struktur och till frågan om meningsskapande. Den tredje aspekten som texten diskuterar, kopplad till den utvidgade immanenta processen (med alla närvarande i tid och rum), är om det är i själva med-komponerandet som meningen ligger.

Interview 14 inleds med en diskussion kring stabilitet-instabilitet i en performativ situation som bygger på en mångfald av uttryck och överlagringar. Samtalet går sedan vidare till frågan om perception och om den estetiska intentionen bakom att låta slump och oförutsägbarhet styra föreställningarna. Den estetisk-etiska aspekten berörs. Dels i relation till Cage och hans syn på experimenterande, men också utifrån frågan huruvida en teaterföreställning kan ses som mer eller mindre etisk beroende på om den erfars som något aldrig-tidigare-upplevt. Frågan om relationen mellan tankerörelser och etik diskuteras.

Det estetisk-etiska perspektivet är det som dominerar essän *The Rhythm of Thinking*. Detta eftersom den konstnärliga intentionen i föreställningarna delvis handlar om att transformera en etisk hållning till dramaturgiska strukturer och kompositionella beslut. För att förklara – och granska – ett sådant anspråk, d.v.s. en växelverkan mellan en estetik och etik, formuleras (med hjälp av Rosi Braidotti) en onto-etisk hållning där begreppet potentialitet (*human potentiality*) är centralt, vilket sätts i relation till de dramaturgiska strukturerna. Texten experimenterar också med att koppla samman erfarenheten av med-komponerande med frågan om hur tankarna hos publiken rör sig och aktiveras i mötet med föreställningarna. På så sätt närmar sig texten några av de frågor som genomsyrar detta arbete som helhet: Kan förekomsten av en immanent (kreativ) process i utbytet mellan föreställningen och dess publik tillmätas ett specifikt värde? Vad är det för värde i så fall, och hur kan det beskrivas? Kan föreställningar som saknar möjligheten till att en immanent process ska uppstå i utbytet mellan föreställning och publik generellt ges ett värde, och de som främjar en sådan ett annat? Kan detta värde beskrivas i etiska termer?

Interview 19 kan ses som en direkt fortsättning av essän *The Rhythm of Thinking*. Diskussionen kring relationen mellan estetik och etik fördjupas, bl.a. genom att genom att problematisera begreppet *deltagande (participation)*. Den avslutande delen av intervjun tar dels upp frågan vad det är att komma till en slutsats, men tar också upp det inte tidigare diskuterade temat om att göra teater för en ung publik.

Spänningsfält – metodologi

Avhandlingen lokaliserar olika *spänningsfält*. Detta för att skapa en metodologisk strategi och för att definiera vilka krafter som påverkar de kreativa processerna *såväl som* den kritiska analysen. Dessa spänningsfält uppstår mellan vad som beskrivs som *sammansättningar av energier, intentioner och önskningsar*. Fem sådana sammansättningar lokaliserar, de är tätt sammanflätade och beroende av varandra.

Den första av dessa är den medverkande skådespelaren, musikern, dansaren (och följaktligen också det kollektiv de utgör tillsammans). Hen är fylld av energier, önskningsar och förväntningar: att skapa, att samarbeta, att använda och utveckla sina förmågor och insikter, men också andra, både individuella och kollektiva. Att tala om de medverkande som *en* sammansättning ska bara förstås som beskrivande av deras gemensamma uppdrag och position i föreställningen. I det kritiska resonemanget utgör de en enhet, varför det är viktigt att hålla i åtanke de många, och osynliga, variationerna i varje enskild individ.

Den andra av de fem sammansättningarna är själva materialet. Inte de medverkande utan det som kan ses som hårdvaran: den konceptuella konstruktionen, de musikaliska kompositionerna, den text som förekommer och är förutbestämd, scenografi och rekvisita. Denna sammansättning (kombination av material) är en kraft i sig och utövar ett inflytande som den kreativa processen måste underställas (även om detta sker som ett opponerande). Den har sin egen expressivitet och formar förutsättningarna – regler, begränsningar, möjligheter – för hur uttrycket formas och hur de olika komponenterna relaterar.

Den tredje sammansättningen är den fulla tilldragelsen, den publika presentationen, där mötet mellan föreställningen och publiken inkluderas. Att betrakta detta möte som en sammansättning är att betona och understryka

den perceptiva aspekten. Det skapar ett fokus på hur den enskilda individen (i publiken) upplever och skapar mening, och det belyser frågan om hans upplevelse är en av samhörighet eller en av avskildhet. Med andra ord består denna sammansättning av alla erfarenhetsmässiga aspekter.

Den fjärde sammansättningen består av de många olika energier som regissören bär på. Den innefattar hans grundläggande estetiska hållning, hans övertygelse, kompetenser och tillkortakommanden, hans personliga historia och förväntningar. Med andra ord, alla de anledningar som får regissören att göra det han gör.

Den femte och sista sammansättningen är också styrd av regissören/forskaren och formas av de kritiska diskurser som används i analysen. Den innefattar hur den kritiska blicken är placerad, vilka transdisciplinära kopplingar som görs, och definierar på så sätt den kritiska domänen och hur denna relaterar till befintliga teorier. Med sina begränsningar är denna sammansättning fast förankrad i den övergripande estetiken (representerad av föreställningarna), även om den är applicerad i provokativt syfte.

De fem sammansättningarna är alltså: De energier, önskningar och förväntningar som de medverkande bär på; materialets beskaffenhet; den fulla tilldragelsen, mötet mellan föreställningen och publiken; regissörens energier och intentioner; och slutligen, valet av analytiska diskurser. Det är inte nödvändigt – och självklart inte möjligt – att överblicka alla de nivåer av energier som dessa sammansättningar representerar. *Vad som är nödvändigt är att lokalisera och bekräfta dem, och att aktivera de spänningar som uppstår när de kritiskt sammanflätas.* Då uppstår spänningsfält, och det är dessa fält som formar kärnan i resonemanget. De genererar den nödvändiga rörelsen i den kritiska ansatsen och utgör på så sätt undersökningens metodologi.

Analytiska perspektiv och begrepp

Vad som är uppenbart är att dessa sammansättningar inbegriper – och orsakar – processer av olika slag. Skapandeprocesser, förberedelseprocesser, processer av tänkande, själv-organiserande processer, samarbetsprocesser, upplevelseprocesser, processer av meningsskapande, problematiseringsprocesser, interaktionsprocesser och processer av relationsskapande, processer av med-

komponerande, och processer av tillblivelse. Vissa av dessa är mer påtagliga då de inbegriper mänskliga relationer, andra mer dolda då de rör sig i en inre värld. Vissa hör samman med den kreativa situationen, och vissa med upplevelsesituationen och de är sammanbundna liksom växelverkande. Viktigt är dessutom, med tanke på den situation i vilken de vecklar ut sig, att vissa av dem är *medvetet förhöjda och exponerade som en expressiv del av föreställningen*. De analytiska perspektiven är följaktligen inte enbart valda som relevanta och användbara för att belysa och reda ut alla dessa typer av processer, utan för att de är rotade i och bekräftande av en *processontologi*. Detta är en term som inte kan frikopplas från den filosofiska gren som går under beteckningen *processfilosofi*. Eftersom denna filosofiska gren, på olika sätt men i hög grad, utgör en stark influens på de teoretiska referenser som detta arbete huvudsakligen använder sig av – Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi och Rosi Braidotti – är det rimligt att övergripande beskriva det analytiska perspektiv som aktiveras i undersökningen som *en utvidgad definition av processfilosofi*. Valet av detta perspektiv är i det närmaste helt och hållet inspirerat och styrt av grundmaterialets konstitution (det som alltså sätts i rörelse i föreställningarna) och av föreställningarnas konceptuella struktur. Detta samband är mångfacetterat men kan enkelt uttryckas som att det analytiska perspektivet är bekräftande, och kritiskt dekonstruerande, av en estetik som betraktar processer som avgörande i både kreativa och upplevelsemässiga situationer.

I motsats till en epistemologi som utgår ifrån ett insiktsfullt subjekt som observerar och beskriver världen, placerar processfilosofin själva varat som grundläggande premiss för analysen. En subjekt-objekt polaritet är med ett sådant synsätt inte relevant utan istället formulerar processfilosofin en ontologi där relationer kontinuerligt och konstant uppstår på nytt. Allt är i ett kontinuerligt blivande, skillnader och den enskilda (enheten, individen) bekräftas, och mångfald har fritt spelrum. Ingen början finns; livet – och tänkandet – måste ses som ständigt varandes i mitten (Deleuze, Guattari 2004). Avhandlingens perspektiv lyfter fram det faktum att en processontologi väjer för idén om att relationer kan vara åtskiljande (d.v.s. icke-existerande), istället är de i kontinuerlig transformation. Konsekvensen av detta är att världens generella tillstånd inte är kaos. Alla binära relationer är eliminerade, alla motsättningar utsuddade, och all förändring ses som kontinuerliga transformationer fyllda

av potentialitet. Detta är en antydning om huvuddragen i det som avhandlingen växelvis benämner som processontologi och processfilosofi. I den fullständiga texten görs en djupgående beskrivning av dess innersta väsen och syn på hur perceptuella sekvenser – förnimmandet av händelser – växer fram, men vad som är väsentligt och relevant för analysen är för det första att processfilosofi belyser perceptionens intrikata progression, och för det andra att ”den är direkt förbunden med livets omedelbarhet” (Massumi 2011, 1).

Om processontologi är den underförstådda grunden för undersökningen, så är det genom begreppet immanens, och vad avhandlingen benämner som ”immanenta processer,” som de kreativa och perceptuella situationerna analyseras. I avhandlingen görs ingen genomgång av hur detta för filosofin centrala begrepp har definierats och används genom filohistorien, utan dess definition hämtas mer eller mindre uteslutande från Gilles Deleuzes teorier (vilka naturligtvis har sina historiska rötter). Den definition av immanens (immanenta processer) som avhandlingen laborerar med, och som alltså är placerad utanför själva tänkandet, betecknar en process som växer inifrån och som framträder genom ett görande. Den är inneboende i världens alla ting, i djur och människor, i sociala relationer, och i naturen. Det immanenta planet är inte relaterat till någon högre makt. Immanensen är allomfattande: i allt enskilt varande likväl som på den helhetliga nivån, i vilken alla enskildheter ingår. Begreppets betydelse och användningssätt i avhandlingen framkommer tydligast genom hur det appliceras och konfigureras i resonemanget kring de specifika kreativa och perceptuella situationerna, men en inledande förståelse för dess verkningar som kreativ rörelse och funktion i analysen kan förmedlas genom observationen att föreställningarnas uttryck växer inifrån det kollektiva skapandet och styrs av de innovationer som varje enskild medverkande formar. En immanent energi betecknar med andra ord hur uttrycket sätts i rörelse genom överväganden av de medverkande, och att varje enskilt uttryck och varje skapad form springer ur individuella initiativ och aktioner, som i sin tur är påverkade av all inkommande stimuli. En immanent kreativ process sätts inte nödvändigtvis i rörelse med någon specifik avsikt utan blir till genom själva görandet. Den är öppen och oförutsägbar inom de gränser som de olika delarna (de medverkande, rummet) representerar. Den immanenta kreativa processen är en genererande energi som kan vara stillsam, tyst men aldrig stillastående, därför i kontinuerlig variation. Den är immanent därför att

utvecklingen av det kollektiva uttrycket inte är förutbestämt eller repeterat: det växer ur den kollektiva processen och hämtar sin styrka från varje den enskilde medverkandes initiativ (impuls, reaktion, övervägande, respons). Sammantaget: *en immanent kreativ energi* beskriver en process av ett intuitivt, omedelbart och oförutsägbart byggande av en expressiv form.

För att kunna placera och aktivera immanensbegreppet – i dess ovanstående betydelse – i undersökningens olika delar, kombinerar avhandlingen detta begrepp med ett antal andra termer, vilka de viktigaste är: *enstämmighet (univocity)*, *relation-genom-ickerelation (relation-of-nonrelation)*, *med-komponerande (co-composition)*, och *en vision av subjektet (a vision of the subject)*.

Enstämmighet betecknar, i det Deleuzianska tänkandet, ett synsätt som utesluter att vi urskiljer någon distinkt existens som ett centrum eller grund, en transcendent referens. Alla existenser befinner sig på ett och samma plan – detta är ett plan av enstämmighet. Inom avhandlingens kontexten används begreppet för att koppla samman, och analysera, föreställningarnas expressiva mångfald, dess överflöd, med perceptionssituationer såsom de existerar utanför föreställningens begränsningar. Men begreppet är också viktigt i diskussionen kring expressiv hierarki.

Termen relation-genom-ickerelation används för att beteckna en estetisk och perceptiv grundförutsättning, och är därför viktig för förståelsen av de dramaturgiska strukturernas uppbyggnad såväl som av den kritiska hanteringen. Termen är, inom avhandlingens kontext, tätt sammankopplad med och beroende av både enstämmighet och med-komponerande, och skall initialt förstås som att de komponenter som bidrar till att något framträder, i sig är disparata. Om de befinner sig i spänning så är det ”just för att fungera som åtskiljande av deras respektive positioner. ... Komponenterna är egentligen inte sammanbundna” (Massumi 2011, 20). Denna icke-sammanbundenhet betyder självfallet inte att relationer suddas ut, utan ska förstås som att ”alla existenser verkar genom relation-genom-ickerelation” (Massumi 2011, 144). Om begreppet appliceras på upplevelsen av det som uppstår mellan tilldragelser så existerar ingen sammansmältning i homogen bemärkelse. Istället finns där alltid ett åtskiljande och inget kan ses som varandes i en icke-relation. Detta placerar termen i ett dramaturgiskt och perceptionsrelevant perspektiv, och pekar ut dess operativa intention: att användas som beskrivande och bekräftande av hur en mångfald av olikartade expressiva uttryck (former, banor) kan ses som en

rik möjlighet, en bördig grund, för med-komponerande. Avhandlingen påpekar också att termen bär i sig ett omvärderande av de relationer som förlitar sig på etablerade kulturella koder av vad relationer ”är,” och hur de är beskaffade (socialt, estetiskt, politiskt).

Med-komponerande är perceptionens sammanlänkande av intryck (av alla typer och i alla situationer). Det är upplevelsen uppfunnen, upplevelsen ”uppfinner alltid. All perception är kreativ och kulminerar i produktionen av en förändringshändelse. En förnimmelse är sin egen händelse. ... Vad en förnimmelse skapar är i grunden sig själv. Den är själv-skapande. Det finns inget ’utanför’ till vilken den korresponderar, som den återspeglar eller representerar” (Massumi 2011, 27). Att bejaka denna perception-skapande kraft – vilken alltså avhandlingen refererar till som med-komponerande – är att se på regissörsuppgiften som ett skapande av de förutsättningar där den får spelrum. Vilket betyder att föreställningarna får sitt värde genom publikens investering: den blir en upplevelse genom med-komponerandet. Avhandlingen förlänger resonemanget kring upplevelsen av med-komponerande genom att ställa frågor kring relationen mellan denna upplevelse och processfilosofins idé om varat som blivande. Kan upplevelsen av med-komponerandet härbärgera ett blivande?

I undersökningen av relationen mellan dramaturgi och etik, vilket främst sker i essän *The Rhythm of Thinking*, används termen *en vision av subjektet*, vilken är hämtad från Rosi Braidotti och länkad till en immanent processontologi. Bilden av subjektet i en immanent processontologi är att hen är icke-enhetlig och i ständig utveckling. Det är ett subjekt som blir till, och erfår varat genom en kontinuerlig utveckling och omvandling av relationer. När denna syn på subjektet kombineras med begreppet vision innebär det att föreställa sig livets (subjektets) fulla inneboende potential när ingen transcendent kraft erkänns. Med ett sådant synsätt på existensen finns inget som separerar subjektet från hens möjligheter att agera, och det etiska ”blir en sorts etisk pragmatism, en etik som definieras genom främjandet och bekräftandet av relationer, som aktiv kraft och fyllda av värde” (Braidotti 2011, 300). I avhandlingen är den estetisk-etiska användningen av termen, enkelt uttryckt, beskrivande av en kompositionell struktur som relaterar och bekräftar varje enskild individ som är involverad – i skapandet såväl som i framförandet av föreställningen – som varandes i ett ständigt blivande.

Sammanfattningsvis kan man alltså säga att de analytiska och begreppsliga förutsättningarna för avhandlingens resonemang är: en processororienterad ontologi; immanens som en kreativ energi; enstämmighet som en icke-hierarkisk syn på varat; relation-genom-ickerelation som en grund för omvärderandet av kompositionella (och sociala) relationer; med-komponerande som en upplevelse av blivande; en vision om subjektet, vilken betecknar en etik grundad i relationer och subjektets inneboende potential.

Forskningens modus

Avhandlingens omfattande referenser till filosofiska diskurser, och främst då till Gilles Deleuzes tänkande, skall inte ses som en strävan efter en filosofipraktik. De filosofiska teorierna som används är inte i någon djupare bemärkelse granskade eller satta under kritisk press, eller utförligt belysta genom andra filosofers och kritikers arbeten. Avhandlingen kan därför egentligen inte sägas gå i klinch med filosofiska frågeställningar utan snarare med frågeställningar som rör komposition, dramaturgi och affekt – *inom ramen för en teaterupplevelse*. De begreppsliga approprieringarna är instrumentella. Detta skapar en friktion och vad som eventuellt kan betraktas som feltolkningar eftersom processfilosofi (såsom alla filosofiska ansatser) strävar efter att omfatta existensen i sin helhet, och försöket att transformera teorierna beskär därför deras omfattning och verkansgrad. Det är därför viktigt att förstå att den filosofiska grunden är ämnad att *etablera en ontologisk referens*, den finns där för att öka den existentiella insatsen och relevansen. Den möjliggör en bredare och mer vibrerande kontakt mellan föreställningarnas skarpa avgränsningar och den värld i vilken de är placerade. Den är en förutsättning för att undersöka hur en perceptionsdynamik rör sig och utvecklas bortom ett semantiskt språk. Det tänkande som presenteras i avhandlingen skall följaktligen förstås som en strukturell kritik, som ett försök att modulera fram observationer vilka kan förlängas, bortom föreställningarnas specifika omständigheter och kvaliteter.

Akademiskt skrivande måste kontinuerligt konfrontera frågan om hur det positionerar sig. Kanske är det detta som tydligast åtskiljer dess karaktär från en konstnärlig praktik (oavsett vilken estetisk hemvist det befinner sig i). Den strukturella bundenhet, begränsningar och normer som akademiskt skrivande

omges av kan också sägas vara på kollisionskurs med den opposition som en konstnärlig verksamhet bärs fram av. De esoteriska kvaliteterna och den instabilitet som präglar mötet mellan ett konstnärligt uttryck och dess mottagare bör därför lämnas i fred. Konstnärlig forskning – det fält som detta projekt ingår i – gör dock ibland försök att formulera tankar och bidra med insikter kring detta möte, *samtidigt* som den avfärdar den typ av bestämningar som språket för med sig. Detta framstår som en motsägelse, och det är det. Hur ligger det då till med det här forskningsprojektet? Tillhör det denna kategori av motsägelsefulla kritiska försök? Ja, det gör det. Men, det är inte denna motsägelsefullhet som är undersökningens fokus. Istället visar den på två underliggande problem ur vilka alla de andra problemen växer fram. Det första av dessa problem är inbäddat i relationen mellan tänkande och intuitivt görande. Det mesta av tänkandet som pågick under skapandet av föreställningarna skedde genom ett görande. Det betyder att tänkandet i hög grad skedde på ett inre plan, dolt, och inte något som utomstående har inblick i. Vad vi vet är att en del av detta tänkande resulterade i olika uttryck; skapande i tid och rum. De olika val och beslut som låg bakom dessa uttryck var baserade på genomtänkta estetiska resonemang, men inte desto mindre intuitiva i sin karaktär. Det som med andra ord är viktigt att ha i åtanke är skillnaden mellan de kreativa processernas görande-tänkande och den sortens tänkande som forskningsarbetet representerar: tänkande genom problematiserande reflektion. Denna senare typ av tänkande refererar inte till fenomen som är stabila utan till aktioner och rörelser som inte bara är dolda utan som dessutom utvecklas och transformeras genom relationer utanför, och oberoende av, avhandlingens kritiska hantering och analytiska blick, *och* i en process med en kompositorisk intention. Ingenting i de kritiska texterna återspeglar denna energi och typ av process; de är spekulativa och oavslutade.

Det andra problemet är relaterat till metoden att överföra och aktivera termer och koncept utanför deras diskursiva hemvist, utanför den komplexitet som de oftast är beroende av. En sådan strategi är inte ovanlig. Men problemen blir något mera tydliga när en processfilosofisk diskurs används eftersom dess bärande termer och koncept är och bör vara i flux, kontinuerligt ifrågasatta och omarbetade men används för att belysa och analysera konstnärliga uttryck som är mer eller mindre fastlagda i sin form. Där uppstår en spänning mellan

öppenheten i det filosofiska tänkandet och det visserligen aleatoriska men den ändå tydliga artefaktartade kvaliteten i föreställningarna. Denna motsättning uppstår även inne i själva det kritiska resonemanget eftersom det obestridligen är beroende av en viss (språklig) stabilitet, samtidigt som det måste instämma med det faktum att alla försök att avgränsa begreppens rörelser är en sorts distorsion. Deleuze kommenterar denna oönskade friktion ganska skarpt när han säger att när ”skillnad underordnas det som det tänkande subjektet uppfattar som konceptets identitet (även där denna identitet är syntetisk) försvinner tankens skillnad” (Deleuze 1994, 266). Denna spänning bör ses som en uppmaning till misstänksamhet: Idén om en spegling mellan livets alla oändliga rörelser och den avgränsade performativa tilldragelsen håller bara ihop på en konceptuell nivå, inte på en erfarenhetsnivå.

Besläktad med frågan om hur det kritiska arbetet positionerar sig i förhållande till existerande analytiska diskurser, är frågan om kunskapsproduktion. Bidrar forskningen med någon kunskap, och i så fall hur? Kan konstnärlig forskning avfärda den frågan med argumentet att föremålet för forskningen, konsten som belyses (och som *samtidigt också* representerar själva ansatsen) genomgående och på så många olika sätt baseras på personliga, intuitiva och dolda val och överväganden? Utifrån denna avhandlings perspektiv handlar det inte om att avfärda eller inte avfärda frågan om forskningen bidrar med någon kunskap. Istället handlar det om att rekonstruera och omformulera hur kunskapen framträder, om att stämma av idén om och synen på kunskap med en processontologisk utblick: potentialen finns i den ständiga rörelsen, i det experimentella och det spekulativa.

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