

Editorial

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In recent decades there has been a significant expansion in the forms and practices considered under the banner of performance. This expansion has been accompanied by - perhaps driven by - a critical and practical interrogation of the role of the spectator/consumer/audience in the realisation of art. These developments have been documented and theorised extensively in critical accounts of recent performance practice. However, the majority of these accounts have focused on issues of reception and dramaturgy. Responses to the question of how performers might develop or adapt their skills to prepare for the evolving spatial and social contexts in which contemporary performance takes place have been more limited.

This special issue of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* is intended as an initial attempt at gathering together some of the practical and theoretical research on training that has been happening in the aligned fields of immersive, interactive and participatory performance. Specifically, the call for papers asked potential contributors to explore how theatre and performance forms that invite audiences to interact, participate and be immersed with performers can be understood to have contributed to the development of new and different approaches to performance training.

In order to help shape the conversation that I wanted to have within the pages of the journal, I suggested the following areas of inquiry:

- Articles analysing and contextualising approaches to training developed by companies and practitioners working in immersive, interactive and participatory contexts.
- Articles that question how audience participation and interactivity reframe the performer's role and, therefore, the training s/he requires.
- Analyses of existing and historical models of performance training in the light of the performer's need to function in participatory, interactive and immersive contexts.
- Articles that reflect on how the creative and critical dialogue

surrounding participatory aesthetics (seen in the critical writings of Rancière, Bourriaud, Bishop, White etc.) have led (or might lead) to new ways of thinking about performer training.

The response to the call was extremely positive. This issue contains eight full-length articles, as well as a busy Training Grounds section (edited and introduced by Thomas Wilson). Taken as a collection, the articles represent the breadth and diversity of research currently being undertaken in the field.

Perhaps most significantly, the issue shows how the terms 'immersive', 'interactive' and 'participatory' are being used to describe a very wide range of practices. It would appear that they are being used to map broad territories, rather than strictly define forms and aesthetics. Indeed, this special issue shows a process of investigation being undertaken by scholars and practitioners who are attempting to analyse what these terms mean in the context of training performers for the act of performance. Each of the articles implicitly or explicitly proposes particular definitions of these terms. Sometimes the definitions relate to the material or social conditions that frame the act of performance. At other times the definitions relate to something more unique and idiosyncratic.

While one of the strengths of the contributions gathered in this issue is the heterogeneity of the approaches, contexts and ideas analysed by the authors, it is also interesting to note some of the shared themes emerging within the articles' exploration of training. These shared themes can be loosely categorised in relation to three broadly defined areas of inquiry connected to the performer's preparation and training for immersive, interactive and participatory performance:

- Balancing the need to complete a pre-determined score/text with unexpected and spontaneous contributions from the audience.
- Adapting and appropriating historical training methodologies and techniques for use within immersive, interactive and participatory contexts.

- Training that responds to the affective and corporeal relationships that emerge within immersive, interactive and participatory performance.

Each of the articles responds in some way to all of the themes listed above. However, most of the articles prioritise one theme over the others.

The need for performers to develop skills for dealing with the unexpectedness and spontaneity of interactive and participatory performance is tackled explicitly in Lawrence Ashford's article, 'The Flexible Performer in Interactive Theatre'. In the article, Ashford examines the ways in which immersive and interactive theatre drawing on the influence of computer games demands that performers respond to that spontaneous and unexpected events that occur as a result of the audience's participation. Ashford argues that performers working in interactive and immersive contexts can benefit from improvisational training associated with Commedia Dell'Arte, making connections between Commedia's 'lazzi' and the dramaturgical structures of immersive performance.

The issue of balancing predetermined narrative and spontaneous interaction is further explored by Henry Bell in his article, 'Speak at This: An Approach to the Completion of Speech Acts in Shakespeare Performances in Schools.' Bell's article examines how he has used J. L. Austin's speech act theory to develop a form of training that encourages actors to enter into active dialogue with young audiences. Bell's approach somewhat reverses Ashford's focus in that he concentrates not so much on how the actor can respond to the unexpected during performance, but rather on how the actor can persuade the audience to become active participants in the performance. Bell argues that through encouraging young audiences to become active agents in the performance, Shakespeare can be demystified and made more approachable.

In my own article, 'Using the Method to be Myself: Adapting and Appropriating Historical Training Approaches for Interactive Performance', I look at how training approaches from the Stanislavskian tradition of performance might be adapted for use within immersive, interactive and participatory contexts. I argue that the approach to living truthfully in given circumstances developed

by Stanislavski and his followers can be adapted to help performers manage the relationship between spontaneous interaction with the audience and a pre-planned performance score. My article contends that using experiences of truthfulness and authenticity as heuristics during interactions with audience members can help the performer to establish comfortable spaces for dialogue during performance.

Rebecca Savory-Fuller's article, 'The Interactivity Lab: Training Toward the Performer as 'Architect-Clown'', also makes use of historical training methodologies in the process of teaching students to create and perform interactive performance. Savory-Fuller draws on training models developed by Jacques Lecoq, filtered through her own experiences studying at the London International School of Performing Arts, in order to articulate the performer's dual role as 'architect' and 'clown' in interactive performance. The article provides yet another exploration of how the performer in interactive performance needs to balance direct listening and sensitivity with a more reflexive awareness of the piece as whole.

Sarah Hogarth, Emma Bramley and Teri Howson-Griffiths echo Savory-Fuller's analysis of the performer's dual role in interactive and participatory performance. However, their article, 'Immersive Worlds: an Exploration into how Performers Facilitate the Three Worlds in Immersive Performance', adds a further layer of complexity to the discussion by noting the performer's need to sometimes embody a character during immersive performance. As the title of the article suggests, Hogarth, Bramley and Howson-Griffiths, specifically define three worlds that the performer needs to negotiate during immersive performance: the Fictional, the Now and the Imaginary. The article examines how techniques developed within the context of applied theatre might be used to train performers to facilitate the audience's experience of these three worlds.

In each of the articles I have discussed so far, the affective and corporeal aspects of the training are important but largely implicitly stated aspects of the analysis. The theme of corporeality is emphasised more explicitly in Christina Kapadocha's 'Towards witnessed Thirdness in Actor training and

Performance. Working from a somatic perspective, Kapadocha analyses the need for performers to develop skills in acknowledging and shaping the 'intercorporeal dynamics' that emerge between performers and spectators. Kapadocha articulates interactive, immersive and participatory performance as 'environments of potential *witnessed thirdness*', connecting the lineage of somatically informed actor training to the work of the psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin. Kapadocha's article explores the vital importance of somatic knowledge for performers working in immersive, interactively and participatory contexts.

The focus of somatic knowledge and understanding is further developed in Deborah Middleton and Nicolas Nunez's article, 'Immersive Awareness'. Middleton and Nunez's work echoes that of Kapadocha in its articulation of the performer's need for 'an expanded and multi-focal' awareness in immersive performance. As in the articles written by Ashford, Savory-Fuller and myself, Middleton and Nunez re-examine historical examples of training in the light of contemporary performance. Drawing on Grotowski's work during his Theatre of Sources phase, the article directly examines the possibility of developing a training that increases the performer's capacity for immersion.

Finally, Karen Quigley's article, 'Departure Points: Beginning Training in Site-Based Performance', takes a slightly different approach, in that it examines the work of multiple practitioners working in site-based performance in order to draw connections across training methodologies that are currently being developed within higher education establishments in the United Kingdom. The notion of site-based performance is used to capture a range of different practices, but many of the techniques and approaches discussed by Quigley's interviewees reflect the practices described and analysed throughout this special issue. The article provides an invaluable starting point for discussing the wide-range of practices related to site-based performance being introduced to students within the academy today.

Although it has been my good fortune to receive so many fascinating and insightful contributions for this special issue, it can only provide a snapshot of

the work going on in the area of training for immersive, interactive and participatory performance. I hope that it will function as both a provocation and a foundation for further discussions of developments in the field of contemporary performer training, both in the pages of this journal and beyond.