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MASTER'S THESIS

Experiencing Ourselves Behaving

Creating Space and Time in the Theatre to Explore Present

People's Behaviour

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Prožívání lidského jednání

**Vytváření prostoru a času v divadle k prozkoumání jednání
přítomných diváků**

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Declaration

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

Experiencing Ourselves Behaving

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

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Abstract

This M.A. thesis is based on the author Eva Rosemarijn Burgerhoudt's practical research from creating the performance "*Go Away - See if I'm There*". The aim of this paper is to describe the findings regarding experiencing human behaviour in the theatre, through analysing the process and results of this performance. The author mostly uses personal experiences, as well as conversations with performers and attendees of the performance. In addition to this main research she uses behavioural theory from Robert Sapolsky, and theory from Richard Schechner and Hans-Thies Lehmann about the relationship between the performers and the attendees in performances. The author also uses several other experiences as a creator, dramaturg, performer and attendee from other performances as examples in this thesis. Towards the end she makes some conclusions on what mechanisms and elements have to be in place in order to create space and time to experience human behaviour in the theatre, in addition to an exploration of how these findings can be developed in future work.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce Evy Burgerthoudt vychází z jejího autorského projektu “*Go Away - See if I'm There*”. Cílem této práce je popsat zjištění týkající se prožívání lidského chování v divadle prostřednictvím analýzy procesu a výsledků zmíněné performace. K tomu autorka využívá především osobní zkušenosti a poznatky z konverzací s performery a účastníky představení. Kromě tohoto hlavního výzkumu pracuje s behaviorální teorií Roberta Sapolského i s teorií Richarda Schechnera, či Hanse-Thiesho Lehmana o vztahu mezi performery a účastníky daného představení. Pro účely této práce autorka kromě jiného využívá také své další zkušenosti jakožto tvůrce, dramaturga, performeru a diváka jiných projektů. V závěru práce uvádí, jaké mechanismy a prvky mohou v divadle vytvořit dostatečný čas a prostor k vyniknutí přirozeného lidského jednání. Spolu s tím zde také popisuje, jak lze její zjištění v budoucnu rozvíjet.

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1 Introduction

To understand why this research you're beginning to read is of importance, I'd like to start off on a personal note.

I played football for three years in high school. My sister doesn't react to uncomfortable situations until weeks after they occur. I cry easily. Sometimes I don't care if my friends come too late to appointments, sometimes I do, too. My mother is always looking for a solution when one of her close friends is in distress. I laughed at my grandfather's funeral. My brother can make friends anywhere.

I have an obsession with my own behaviour and the people around me. It occupies a lot of my time and headspace. I often ask myself: how do I coexist with others? Why do I make the choices I make? How do others' behaviours influence me? Who are the people I have surrounded myself with? I have been born into a certain family with two siblings, in a certain part of the world, in a certain town with access to certain facilities which makes part of how I live pre-decided for me. While on the other hand, the actions of the humans around me also have an enormous impact. What is our behaviour based on? How we behave and conduct ourselves is the core of how we coexist with each other and how we influence our daily lives and our own minds. I have always been extremely aware of the complexity behind how we behave. All the factors that lead to both conscious and unconscious behaviour feel like an entangled web of genetics, experience, biology, fear, ethics, etc. In everyday life there is not always the natural space to reflect on occurred actions. We often take behaviour for granted, unless there is something irregular about it.

The work I create as an artist is a reaction to the desire for time and space to focus on these kinds of behaviour, together with others. It always originates in something personal, and the personal is my source of inspiration and reason for creating. I make works that I myself would want to see, or works that are an attempt to fill a personal void or absence. I have a need for time and space with these topics as a human being. Sometimes the behaviour of others' I experience is something I want to carry with me and admire or appreciate for a while. Sometimes I regret my own behaviour the instant it occurs. Sometimes it takes me months to realize how certain behaviour has had an impact on me. As I'm sitting here, writing this, I'm sure I'm hardly aware of thousands of actions I and others have made, that have had an influence on why I'm sitting here writing this.

I aim to create room for this focus and reflection through theatrical elements. Theatre is the artform I choose to work with, because this is a space that has potential for creating meetings and connections between people. Traditionally, theatre has many elements that are used to discuss connections between people; pre-written text, objects, music, light, characters and movement are some of those elements. In my work the core of the performance is a different element. The topics I explore are so human that I am naturally attracted to the human beings themselves in the theatre. I want to focus on "actual people" in the artwork, as opposed to for example rehearsed movements or objects. These actual people are present as attendees in the performance, and they become a core element. I want to explore behaviour through creating live, temporary moments between those attendees and performers, who are also actual people but trained for facilitating this experience. I see potential in real interaction between actual people, framed through theatre.

Though these moments are my own personal starting points, there are other people who are concerned with similar thoughts as well, both people who work within the arts and people who don't. I would like to create space for attendees to spend time with these kind of questions about how we coexist with one another. I want to offer this through creating an environment where everyone present can feel that they are part of the experience, while still leaving room for the individual to make choices about how active they wish to be. As mentioned, I see the potential in theatre as the medium to work with these topics, to specify: I work within postdramatic theatre, theatre without division between attendees and performance. I will explain these terms that I am using later on. In working with actual people as part of the performance, I wish to create a space where the presence of both attendees and performers in the space are acknowledged, valued and somehow applied. While the performers have more knowledge than the attendees about what is going to happen, there is still a lot of space for the attendees to contribute and influence the event.

Theatre is art for, with and by people. To be able to connect with each other in the arts, I find it important to remove the idea of the artist as a genius who is above us regular people, or that art is something so extraordinary that you have to be special to understand it. I often experience this distance between the art and potential attendees of artworks. Instead, I would like to focus on situations that all of us experience. There is art in the mediocre, the usual and the simple, both when it comes to actions and stories, and daily events we all experience. These daily events and the people in our lives whom we have become used to and possibly take for granted are a territory for exploration. I am looking for a space where it is possible that the attendees are empowered and feel important to the event and how it plays

out. Accessibility is a word I often use. It is important for me to experience works that challenge the theatre in its traditional sense, that bring the attendees along on the journey. This is also why I work with speaking in clear speech and colloquial language, both in the pieces I make as well as in the texts I write. A big part of the work I make is creating an experience for other people, therefore I always work on the balance between the challenging and the accessible, to make sure I am not alienating people who have chosen to attend my performance. Behaviour and human relationships are themes that everyone somehow encounters in their lives. I believe in seeing the art in our everyday lives, in the people around us and in our actions. I wish to frame all of this through my work, proposing a direction to my attendees. This is because the pieces I make are about you and me, and the people we meet.

Having introduced the thoughts and issues that I concern myself with, I would like to give a peek into what that has meant for my artistic work. In the last years this has resulted in the creation of several different pieces. *“Milá V”* was based on an album full of postcards I found in a trash container. All the postcards had a friendly tone, were addressed to Mirek, without a stamp and signed by V. During the performance the attendees had the opportunity to read the postcards for themselves. *“Skvettlek”* was a movement piece inspired by the specific behaviour around worries and fears. *“Fine Dining”* was an intimate, sensory exploration of the family dinner table. *“Go Away - See if I’m There”* was based on personal experiences with people in our lives that we looked up to at one point or another. All these works stand on a base consisting of two pillars. The first pillar is my research on human behaviour, and the second is implementing that through theatre, and including the people present. I will describe these two main pillars, before discussing my piece *“Go Away - See if I’m There”*, which I will use as the main practical research for this paper. Then I will go

through several elements that I have found to be of importance in my work, through the practical process of this piece.

I will also compare other experience such as internships with Dutch artist Lotte van den Berg, working as a dramaturg for the Czech theatre company Ostruzina and performances I myself have experienced as an attendee. Though this is a written work, I want to offer you, my reader, some moments throughout where your focus has the possibility to shift. I've included clearly marked boxes with short stories and small exercises with instructions, with which you can do what you want. They are meant to bring your attention to some of the behaviours, thoughts and people surrounding you in real life at the moment you're reading this text. I have also included pictures of people attending my and others' performances. These are to be viewed as visual input, giving you an idea of the potential of experiences that can be experienced within the theatre when the attendees are a present part of the work.

Through all of these elements, I am looking into the potential of researching human behaviour in performative work, specifically between the meeting of actual people and art or artist. In this meeting every single person present brings their behaviour with them, which becomes part of the work. I believe this behaviour can be accessible through creating spaces where attendees feel welcomed, comfortable, but also in control of how much they can give of themselves to the experience. At the same time, I want to be sure not to shy away from discomfort, confusion or insecurity. We can't experience behaviour if we leave uncomfortable situations out of the equation. One of the recurring questions that seeps through most of my working process is how can we sensitively use actual people and human behaviour as material, while the actual people who come to the performance and their behaviour

are what's at stake? While wanting to give attendees a fair, honest and generous offer to experience time to explore behaviour, we need to use the unequal, uncomfortable and unstable elements of behaviour as material as well. The arts provide a tool with which we can create a framework in order to access material, although this causes an uneven relationship between the people attending the work and the people creating the work. The manipulation occurs when one side knows more than the other. If we accept manipulation as part of human behaviour, how does that affect the theatre experiences where creation of space and time is needed for the attendees to become part of the performance?

In this paper I will show that we can work with actual people as attendees in the theatre to create an awareness of human behaviour that is already present within those attendees, and is otherwise something that is often being taken for granted as part of our daily lives. This awareness can occur in time and space facilitated by specifically trained performers who guide the attendees to shift their focus to the complexity of their own and others' behaviour in the moment.

I am sitting in a cafe. I am reading at a long table where other people are reading too. Suddenly there is a sound that becomes clear above the murmur. I think to myself that it must be a loud coffee maker. The sound becomes louder and louder. I look up. I see more people around me being pulled out of their books and their conversations. We look around to see where the noise is coming from. We realise there is construction going on. We look at each other and laugh out loud. Then we return to our books and our conversation partners.

2 A Note on Wording

The words we use matter. How we describe our work has an effect on how it will be perceived and in what context. Of course, many artists would rather have their work speak for itself, and that includes me. I often experience words as a distant abstraction of what is actually going on in situations they describe, and find them limiting. However, in an article in the Dutch *"Theatermaker"*, a printed magazine as part of the website *"Theaterkrant"* (which translates to Theatre journal), Emke Idema and Anne Breure address fellow theatre colleagues and argue that in their opinions language has the potential to contribute to change and resistance.¹ Words can contribute to our work and exist alongside it, they do not always transform an experience into a weaker version of itself, but on the contrary, can add to the work. In Breure and Idema's text, they advocate for the way we communicate or "frame" our work through words to others who do not work in the field. Drawing from the George Lakoff's book *"Don't think about an elephant"*, the two theatre practitioners describe how the words we use trigger associations. Through choosing the right words you can activate certain value systems in the listener or reader. This is what Lakoff calls "framing". The text in the *"Theatermaker"* is aimed to make fellow theatre practitioners aware of the value we give our work when we discuss it with others. I can extend this awareness even further to the way I describe my own work both in the context of colleagues and other artists, and in the context of people as potential attendees. I often find myself in a defensive position when describing my work, having to describe it through naming what I don't want it to be like. It is tempting to do so, because I want to reassure people that it will be ok, even though they will be part of the experience. I found an article online about an Australian playwright who

¹ Breure & Idema, p. 43.

created a dinner performance for 12 people called “*Shabbat Dinner*”. In the article she describes a: “very casual, atypical theatre, sort of a performance but really just a dinner party with poetic elements and storytelling”.² Later she mentions that she hates participatory theatre that puts people on the spot. By mentioning this, she gives us associations of being put on the spot, while trying to make us understand that her performance will not be that kind of experience. I’ve found myself in that situation many times, and have read several texts and talked to people who describe their work by describing something they don’t want it to be. So I set out on a search for words: positive words that describe my work in a way that will add to my practice, language that frames my work in the right context, and words that inspire and trigger positive associations. Throughout this text I have been focusing on the positive framing of my findings, which you will encounter throughout the text. To understand my wording, I will begin by defining frequently used terms.

² Albert, J., *Now Showing: A Play That’s More Dinner Party Than Theatre*. Broadsheet, 2018.

3 Defining Terms

3.1 Performance

A performance is defined by Dictionary.com as entertainment presented before an audience.³ This word is in English (as opposed to some European languages) widely used for any kind of artistic event from puppetry to a rock concert. In “Performing” can also mean to act, or be used to carry out or execute an act.⁴ The term “Performance Art” has been used to describe a certain movement within postdramatic theatre “which strives for the experience of the real.”⁵ This description is by Hans-Thies Lehmann who wrote the book *“Postdramatic Theatre,”* which proved to be an instrumental theoretical work for contemporary theatre. I will discuss this more in Chapter 6: “Theatre including human presence.” I use the word “performance” for an occurrence of an event within the broad genre of theatre.

3.2 Theatre

Theatre is a word describing an artform derived from Greek traditions and the Greek word *“theatron”*. *“Thea”* being a sight and *“theorein”* meaning to look at.⁶ Theatre is a place for seeing, and is commonly understood as meaning the art of representation. I will describe the origins of the word further Chapter 6: “Theatre including human presence.” Theatre is the practice in which my artistic development began. I consider myself a theatre artist. The Western tradition of the word is often associated with

³ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/performance> (quot. 03.02.2019)

⁴ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/perform> (quot. 03.02.2019)

⁵ Lehmann, H.-T., *Postdramatic Theatre*. 1st English ed. New York: Routledge, 2006 p. 134.

⁶ Schechner, R. *Rasaeasthetics*. TDR/The Drama Review, 2001, vol. 45, no. 3, p. 13.

elements like narrative, pretending/playing a role, observation and distance. I no longer work with a focus on these elements. I would like to emphasize that the terminology for theatre in my vocabulary is within the field of postdramatic theatre. This is the area between theatre and Performance Art according to Hans-Thies Lehmann.⁷ Theatre that is the art of “what if,” and that can be seen in many different ways other than pretending; it also considers alternative possibilities and asks questions such as: “What if the world could be defined differently than what we are used to and take for granted?” There are many artists challenging the traditionally rooted term of theatre. What if there was no narrative, what if there was no pretending, what if there was an experience from within the action? Today, all of this is also theatre.

3.3 Devising

The work I create is always devised. A term that can be defined in many different ways within the field of theatre. Dictionary.com defines “to devise” this way: “to contrive, plan, or elaborate; invent from existing principles or ideas.” Applying this to theatre can mean inventing new mechanisms with existing structures, ideas and theatre elements. Devising is a composition from what already exist. From my own experience, devised theatre also refers to the creative process where both the theatrical elements and people in the creative team are all equal in position. As a director during the process of devising, I see myself as the person who leads that process. Collaborators whom I work with each have their own expertise, and remain part of the whole process. I often work with a simple starting point or theme, and a desire to research interaction with other artists and attendees. I surround myself with

⁷ Lehmann, H.-T., *Postdramatic Theatre*. 1st English ed. New York: Routledge, 2006 p. 137.

artists who have similar interests, and that's where the work begins. At this point all theatrical elements, ideas and material are similarly important, and will need to be tested in the process of creation in order to find out how they work best together.

3.4 Attendees

You might have noticed that I've used the word "attendees" for the people who are present at a performance, what is more commonly known as "the audience". The word audience is defined by dictionary.com as: "...the group of spectators at a public event; listeners or viewers collectively, as in attendance at a theater or concert."⁸

Though this is a more common term to use, I have chosen to use a different term. An attendee is "a person who is present at a specific time or place".⁹ Using this word emphasizes the presence of the person attending in the performance, as opposed to the senses the person uses to perceive the event. In my work attendees are not merely listening or viewing. I will expand on this idea in Chapter 6, "Theatre including human presence".

3.5 Material

Material is "anything that serves as crude or raw matter to be used or developed."¹⁰ I use this word in the same sense in the creation process; material is anything that has the potential to be developed within the theatre process. Material can come from many different sources, and it's the job of the artist to use, develop and mix materials to create one coherent artwork. Material can be physically present matter like textile

⁸ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/audience?s=ts> (quot. 03.02.2019)

⁹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/attendees?s=t> (quot. 03.02.2019)

¹⁰ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/material?s=t> (quot. 04.03.2019)

or glass, but within the theatrical context this can also be a personal story, a theme, a feeling, a sound, or an emotion.

3.6 Framing

There are many ways we can look at framing. As an object, a frame is known as a constructed border to enclose an image. To frame can be to compose or fashion something, as well as to direct, according to Dictionary.com¹¹ Lakoff uses the word “framing” within writing for directing the associations of the reader by carefully choosing words that are being used. Similarly, I use the word framing to direct the associations of the attendees present at a performance, although I make use of both words and also other theatrical elements. The artistic choices I make provide a framework as well as a context to the material.

3.7 Accessibility

When something is accessible, it is easily reached, entered, [or] approached.¹² I use this word to describe artworks that try to make things easier for potential attendees to approach them. By using the word accessible art, I don't mean to say that the content is easier, just that accessible art makes an effort to take care of the people who want to be there experiencing it. In my opinion, it should be attainable for anyone to access artwork, and that means taking care of the path that leads to the work.

¹¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/frame> (quot. 03.02.2019)

¹² <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/accessible> (quot. 03.02.2019)

3.8 Honesty & Authenticity

I wish to work with authenticity and honesty in my work. I want to work with performers who are authentic and truthful to themselves and others, and I want them to be honest when that doesn't happen or they aren't able to make it work. To be authentic is to be true to your nature, and honesty is being able to communicate the truth.¹³ Though even if we strive to be sincere, we can still be perceived as its opposite. I can't promise that my work will be something completely honest and authentic. In life you don't always know if you are being your authentic self, sometimes you trick yourself into believing you are being honest, while you aren't. When I work with actual people as a vital element of the performance, it's important that the attendees are aware they're not knowingly being lied to, tricked or made fools of. At the same time, these elements are also a part of human nature, and I don't believe in pretending that they don't exist. Honesty is at the core of the type of work I make, but I also think lying to one another and pretending forms a large part of human behaviour and is therefore part of human authenticity itself. Having the need or impulse to lie is authentic to the true self. I will expand in detail of what this means for my work at a later point in the text.

3.9 Manipulation

“To manage and influence skilfully” and “to adapt or change (accounts, figures, etc.) to suit one's purpose or advantage” are two definitions of this term.¹⁴ Manipulation often has negative associations. You manipulate for a reason, often for your own benefit, and it is also often described as something unfair. In theatre, this word is

¹³ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/authentic?s=t> (quot. 03.02.2019)

¹⁴ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/manipulate> (quot. 04.03.2019)

often associated with puppetry, or is used with the negative connotation of influencing attendees. For my work and this thesis, I examine manipulation as a given of theatre. As makers, we need to make artistic choices which form the basis of our work, and will affect the experience of the people who are present. That doesn't mean that I as an artist I have complete control over what attendees experience. This means making conscious choices about how I choose to present the material. To quote Spanish directors Roger Bernat and Robert Frantini Serafide; "the awareness of being manipulated is the indispensable prerequisite to constitute a hypothesis of emancipation."¹⁵ In other words, manipulation in theatre contributes to the fact that the artist has made choices influencing the outcome of the experience created.

3.10 Provocation

To provoke is "to stir up, arouse, or call forth (feelings, desires, or activity)."¹⁶ provocations are actions or words that induce an action from another person. In the theatrical context I personally try to avoid provocations. This is because I believe that behind a provocation lies a desire for a specific reaction. In everyday life I see provocations being used as statements that are controversial and that clearly will provoke some feeling, therefore are intentionally used to get a reaction. There are other, less intense provocations which can border on being similar to manipulation. The difference between these two terms to me, lies in the intention. In provocation I see an intention of calling forth a certain reaction, while in manipulation the intention is to guide and influence experiences.

¹⁵ Bernat, R. & Serafide, R. F., *Seeing Oneself Living*, in *Joined Forces: Audience Participation in Theatre*, 2006 p. 89.

¹⁶ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/provoke> (quot. 10.04.2019)

4 Who Attends the Performance?

As the attendees become instrumental to the performance, we need to know a little bit about them. Most of the time we don't really know who will come to a performance. As I am creating work within non-traditional theatre, often associated with performance or experimental art, there is small group of people who will actively seek out these kinds of performances and the type of venues that will show these kind of performances. These are often active people who are open to challenging themselves, and can span over several generations. Although I understand that my work has associations with something experimental aimed at people with a specific interest within the theatre, I believe in creating work that is accessible to anyone, not only the trained postdramatic theatre attendee. That means that in my creative processes I imagine that the people who attend the piece will have little prior knowledge or experience with similar theatre.



Image 1. An attendee is confronted with performer Maëlane Auffray's behaviour. From an early try-out of "Go Away - See if I'm There".



Image 2. An attendee and a performer pour pancake batter into a pan. From "Fine Dining".

5 Behaviour

As promised, I will now describe the first of the two main pillars that my work is built upon: human behaviour. You don't have to be a scientist or a psychiatrist to know something about behaviour. Each person has their own experiences and internal knowledge about specific behaviours. Still, to begin discussing this topic, I would like to start by looking at facts and discussing what specialists researching the topic tell us about it. According to Dictionary.com, behaviour is the "aggregate of responses to internal and external stimuli" and "observable activity in a human or animal".¹⁷ The actions we make are a result of an accumulation of an immense amount of stimuli. Neuroscientist and primatologist Robert M. Sapolsky writes in the introduction of his book "Behave" from 2017 that you can look at behaviour from several points of view including: biological, psychological, cultural and sociological. He points out that it's actually impossible to differentiate between those disciplines; they are all intertwined.¹⁸ In the epilogue, at the end of the nearly 700 page book, he says what is one of the most important things to remember: there is a lot we can know about behaviour, but we have to take in account that there are always exceptions in this field. Scientific research develops and corrects things we thought we knew in the past, which can make a ripple and completely changes what we thought we knew in other departments.¹⁹ We see scientific research as fact, but an important factor of that field is that is in constant change. We can dig deep and look at mechanisms, biology and so on, we can find out a lot, but each individual case is different and unstable. Sapolsky writes that using averages is useful and correct, but that means leaving a lot of exceptions out. I enjoy the balance between things we can know and

¹⁷ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/behavior>

¹⁸ Sapolsky, R. M., *Behave*, 2017, p. 5.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 674.

things we can't know about, for example: how we conduct ourselves and others.

There are so many factors involved that we rarely can get a comprehensive overview. In my work, there is potential into looking into facts and mechanisms, especially for a research process. It is important for me to know something about the science and complexity of the human being which is in constant flux. This can give some insight into why humans behave the way we do, and can give an understanding of some of the mechanisms I bring into the performance.

5.1 Empathy

To go deeper into the behavioural mechanisms I am talking about, and to give an insight into the complexity of the material, I want to take a closer look at one specific type of behaviour. Empathy is a topic that is particularly interesting because it is a mechanism that makes us negotiate between ourselves and others. Dissecting and analysing this specific part of human behaviour, helps me understand what I am doing in my artistic work. Sapolsky is specifically looking at empathy that occurs when someone is in distress, which I will also focus on, additionally I will make the case that this can be seen on a broader spectrum.

According to Sapolsky, empathy is about resonating with others' pain. Simply put: if you see someone fall on their back, the sensory cortex in your brain will be activated. Possibly your motor cortex will be activated as well: you crunch your own back together in reaction. This demonstrates the very basics of empathy. What you see is the stimuli, resulting in you "feeling their pain".²⁰ There is a connection between you and the person you see experiencing pain. To understand empathy I

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 522.

will need to tell you a bit more about the frontal cortex of the brain. Quoting Sapolsky who tried to put this in the simplest way possible: “The frontal cortex makes you do the harder thing when it’s the right thing to do.”²¹ In a subregion of this frontal cortex we can find the anterior cingulate cortex, ACC for short.²² This part of the brain deals with sensory information from within the body, like telling you have aching muscles, as well as processing the things that happen that are unexpected. Therefore unexpected, internal pain is detected here. The ACC is concerned with the meaning of that pain, which also includes social and emotional pain.²³ When unexpected pain occurs you learn from it, and therefore you understand you will need to avoid that what made you feel the pain. We can learn from seeing other people getting hurt as well. We learn more when we actually can “feel” others’ pain, than when we just observe it, therefore the pain we “feel” from someone else, is recognised in the ACC in order to take care of ourselves.²⁴ In summary, we can see a biological mechanism that negotiates between ourselves and others. We react to other’s pain, we can “feel” their pain, and the primary reason we do this is actually serving ourselves. This is just the affective side to our feelings of empathy, the cognitive side is another important side to take in account in order to get an overview of empathy.

To understand how cognition plays a role in empathy, we first need to look at the prefrontal cortex of the brain. This is the subregion of the frontal cortex, that ultimately makes decisions. There are two sides that influence these choices. There is the side that makes rational, unsentimental decisions and the side that considers emotions.²⁵ The rational part of the prefrontal cortex works the hardest when it’s

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 45.

²² *ibid.*, p. 528.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 528–530.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 530.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 54–55.

dealing with the more challenging situations. It is a hard, cognitive task to recognise someone's pain that you haven't experienced yourself, or pain that is less clearly identifiable, such as emotional pain.²⁶ For you to feel empathetic, you need both the affective ACC to make you feel something and the cognitive prefrontal cortex to try and make you understand why someone experiences pain. If something painful is happening to someone close, you understand them more easily, and are quickly affected. To empathise with someone distant to you, like someone you don't know, or is in a very different situation than you, is a difficult cognitive task, in which the ACC doesn't necessarily come in to play.²⁷ Knowing this it's also important to note that we as humans want and need to understand other people's pain, in order to empathise. Present within us is a mechanism that seeks to understand others' emotional, as well as physical situations.

So how do we actually use these mechanisms in our brain during our interactions with other people? There are a lot of nuances within the empathetic states we, humans can find ourselves in. For example, we can feel someone else's pain and feel empathy for someone, where this bad feeling turns into us feeling good about ourselves for being able to empathize. Another example of an empathic state is when you express that you empathise with a person, which could help someone feel supported or understood, but if you can't cognitively understand the pain, you still might not do anything to help them. Another reason for not acting on your empathetic feelings might be because you feel triggered by their pain, making you turn inwards toward your own pain. When people are consumed by their own pain they will feel less compelled to show compassion towards others' pain.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 532.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 534.

Now that I have briefly explained how basic empathy works, I want to make clear that there are a lot of things not mentioned that are also part of the equation: the hormone oxytocin, the amygdala and insula being intertwined with the ACC, the temporoparietal juncture and the superior central sulcus playing a role in the cognitive side of things, to name a few. Like Sapolsky, I want to make clear that I can't really explain or know everything about this specific topic of human behaviour, because there are so many factors that I can't see in one comprehensive overview, especially not as this is not my field of expertise. Even Sapolsky tried to do exactly that with this book, but as mentioned, he also couldn't give a coherent and complete overview.²⁸ The awareness of this impossibility is part of what I would like to actively use in my work. A certain behaviour is never an isolated event, like it is when it is in theory in order to dissect it. Behaviour happens in a context, and other people react and behave according to other behaviour.

Theory and analysis can create a good base for the work I create. On that foundation I want to create spaces where behaviour can be experienced. When we read about it, we can learn about mechanisms, and take those to the theatre. There we can share stories about past occurrences of behaviour, as well as spending time with current behaviour through surrounding ourselves with acquaintances and strangers and let ourselves be given the time and space to experience, reflect, discuss, share, feel, be confused, learn, listen or be silent. Through studying empathy, I learned that our brains are constantly busy deciphering other people's emotions and pain, making us also feel good about ourselves and learn from other people's pain so we can become more prepared for danger ourselves. Looking further beyond our reactions when faced with the pain of others, I also see that we want to understand other

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 674.

people's reactions and behaviour, and when we don't we can't always act upon feelings that come from within. Experience, exposure and perhaps even training with other people's behaviour is important for us. Much of our behaviour happens in connection with others. We do concern ourselves with the behaviours of others and how others conduct themselves, even if it's partially for our own gain from an empathic perspective.

*The mind can't think two thoughts at once.
Try to think two thoughts at the exact same moment.
And? Can you?*

Haenim Sunim²⁹

²⁹ H. Sunim, *The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down*, p. 75.



Image 3. Two attendees are lying on the floor during the “Dying Together” by Lotte van den Berg.



Image 4. Two attendees are asked to stand very close to performer Ine Ubben. From “My Apartment”

6 Theatre Including Human Presence

The second main foundational pillar of my work is theatre, and more specifically; postdramatic theatre that works with the people present in the space at the time of the performance. There are many different words that I have come across that describe this kind of theatre such as “immersive,” “participatory,” “interactive,” “audience engaging.” They are all connected and have contributed to the development of the relationship between art or artist and attendees in theatre through the decades. I have not chosen any of these words to describe my work, because they associate that the attendees have to be highly active, and that is not the core of my work. I will focus on two theories that are important to the constantly developing relationship between attendee and theatre.

6.1 Rasaesthetics

The original sense of the word “theatre” is a place for seeing. Traditionally in the theatre we observe and we judge, and this requires distance. Observations are an important part of modern science. In Western society seeing is knowing. *Poetics* by Aristotle played a major role in establishing these ideas which became the basis for most of our Western theatre and culture on until today. This information describing Western theatre origins comes from the article “Rasaesthetics,” wherein Richard Schechner compares this with how theatricality is experienced in Eastern cultures. In India he has found theatre theory with a focus on the “snout-to-belly-to-bowel route”. This “route” through the body is instrumental for processing food, nourishment, enjoyment, eliminating waste. It’s also where the gut feelings are located. It’s where

the inside and the outside meet.³⁰ The focus on the experience in this part of the body is closely connected to a term called *rasa*.

This word comes from an ancient Indian text called "*Natyasastra*". It is unclear when this was written, it was lost for some time, and it has been edited and republished in fragments.³¹ The text has detailed descriptions of how to perform gestures and emotional expressions, as well as descriptions of music, architecture, dance, movements and drama. The text has been influential on how Indian culture views the way they enjoy theatre. *Rasa* plays an instrumental role in the *Natyasastra*.

Schechner interprets this term as "flavour" applied to performance. This is the combined experience of the stimulus, the voluntary and the involuntary reactions that happen inside someone. The word "flavour" is used because it resembles the way we mix different foods, materials, and herbs into one taste. All the different elements are recognizable including the new flavour they create together in your mouth. In experiencing the smell, sound and visual aspect of the food, the whole "snout" is engaged. In Indian culture traditionally, hands and touch are used while eating to bring food to the mouth, which is the opening to the "snout-to-belly-to-bowel". *Rasa* brings something from the outside, inside, and is experienced through the body. This is what Schechner calls "rasaesthetics". In comparison with the origins and beginnings of Western theatre, "*rasa*"-based (or *rasic*) performance stands on a very different foundation.

The tradition of observing a theatre performance from a distance is still at the very core of how we see theatre in Western culture, and has had an influence on even the more radical Western performances. In the sixties, several performance artists did

³⁰ Schechner, R. *Rasaesthetics*. TDR/The Drama Review, 2001, vol. 45, no. 3, p. 27.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 28.

start to explore a more *rasic* approach of creating art. Especially when performance art was new and experimental, there was a lot of experimenting with the smelly, the wet, digestion, and other elements focused on the inner body and senses. Though this is different from the Indian theatre practice, you can see the approach resembles looking at theatre through a *rasic* lens. This is where my interest for *rasa* theory is rooted; not in the Indian artform itself, but in the way of looking at how theatre could be experienced. Rasaesthetics focus on a meeting point between the inner and the outer. In traditional Western theatre, the inner body, inner emotions and the inner nervous systems are not focused on especially, but through a *rasic* approach we can see a lot of potential for stimulating different parts of the body. Schechner closes his article with an invitation: “I am inviting an investigation into theatricality as orality, digestion, and excretion rather than, or in addition to, theatricality as something only or mostly for the eyes and ears.”³² There is potential in shifting the focus as a creator to make pieces for attendees based on their inner experiences and processes. I would like to give the attendees an experience where there are no enforced divisions - between the attendees and the artists, but also between the senses. That means giving more focus to other senses, but also being aware of the ones we already use differently. Stimulation of the senses in the “snout” includes looking at seeing, and hearing in a different light. These senses have been traditionally focused on in Western theatre. For people witnessing a theatrical event we have words like “audience” and “spectators,” words that are connected to the senses of hearing and seeing respectively.³³ When you remove the distance between attendee and performer, and place the person amidst the event, this will result in changes in the way we see and hear what is happening. You will lose the overview from a distance, and you will see things from a certain perspective, you will see details too. Details in

³² *ibid.*, p. 47.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 31.

facial expressions and movements of others become more noticeable and therefore present, and attendees possibly need to make more choices by themselves on where to focus their vision. The same goes for hearing: sounds can come from different directions, and choices need to be made - whispers and sounds that accompany bodily movements become more audible.

Dutch theatermaker Lotte van den Berg told me a story about when she realized the wish for “an overview” and distance is something that is a cultural preference. She worked for a while in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she kept trying to step out of the action she and her collaborators created. She placed chairs on the outside, and attempted to position the local people she worked with on the outside of the performance. For them it was difficult to stay there, they were continually drawn back inside. For them it made more sense to experience something from within.

I would like to return to how the words “knowing” and “seeing” are so closely connected to each other. The etymology of “theatre” and “theory” are derived from the same Greek words “*theatron*”. As mentioned earlier; “*thea*” is a sight and “*theorein*” means to look at.³⁴ We also associate the word “observing” with science and theory. What’s being seen is sent to the brain, and the brain makes observations and analysis based on the visual information received. The brain can process the rational information, which is a commonly accepted fact. There are newer studies that examine the idea of there being “a second brain” in the gut, that processes information from the inside. The Enteric Nervous System (ENS) works similarly to the

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 30.

brain, with neurons connected to each other, but working alongside the brain.³⁵ There seem to be facts backing up our “gut feeling”. When that happens, there are neural responses happening in the body. Strongly connected to the “snout-to-belly-to-bowel route” as well as traditions such as meditation, yoga and martial arts, Eastern cultures have been paying a lot more attention to the centre of the body as a space for experiencing and balancing.³⁶ The body receives information from different sources and different locations. We know through making conclusions based on all the information that enters and leaves our body. There is a strong focus on the visual and the rational in Western culture. There is more less-explored potential in getting to know, training and listening to our other senses and our whole body which give us information about the world and people around us. We *can* see with our nose, listen to our gut, and feel sounds. There is potential in proposing a shift in understanding how we know and learn. In our daily lives we know through doing, touching, sensing, smelling and hearing. This way we can know based on the experiences from within, as opposed to from a distance. Every day we learn from experiencing. We own years of experience from living and interacting with the world from within our bodies, which have the potential to provide a way of experiencing theatrical work from within the action.

6.2 Liveness

“Postdramatic Theatre” was written by Hans-Thies Lehmann in which he “attempts to develop an aesthetic logic of the new theatre”.³⁷ He specifically takes on Performance Art as an artform, and how it is instrumental to postdramatic theatre. He

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.35–37.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁷ Lehmann, H.-T., *Postdramatic Theatre*. 1st English ed. New York: Routledge, 2006 p. 18.

emphasizes how the role of a “spectator” is different in this genre. The shared experience between artist and audience is at the heart of this artform, asking spectators to react and experience in order to examine their own participation.³⁸

“Liveness” is a word described as a core term when talking about performance. Lehmann mentions that there needs to be a whole book specifically dissecting how performers conduct themselves and everything that is being demanded from them in new theatre - but he doesn’t want to go any further into more detail at this moment. The term “liveness” is described by him as “(...) highlighting the provocative presence of the human being rather than the embodiment of a figure.”³⁹ Lehmann uses a lot of words such as “rather than” where he describes postdramatic theatre, through comparing it to dramatic theatre. Instead, I would like to focus on the positive term “provocative presence of the human being”. This describes some kind of provocation in the presence of a human. Often in Performance Art, that means the performer uses their own body to perform actions on, which can have real consequences. These actions take away the aesthetic distance.⁴⁰ The potential I see in liveness is less physical, but can mean that the performer is not hiding behind anything, but is present with all that they are. I interpret Schechner’s words as a vulnerable and courageous act for the performer, with the possibility of being perceived by the attendee as confrontational - although I wouldn’t use the term “provocative” as Schechner does. The performer is present with all their flaws and mistakes, bringing honesty and authenticity into theatre. Can we also turn this idea around, and apply it to the “provocative” presence of the attendee? If the human presence is confrontational, that would include everyone in the space. There is the

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 134–135.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 137.

possible potential to create environments where actual people can be present with all their own flaws and mistakes. This can be a space where behaviour occurs.

6.3 The Challenge of the Accessible

In Schechner's own words, he is encouraging the investigation of theatre in a *basic* way, in addition to the traditional Western approaches. I think it is important to mention that for me it is not possible to completely discard the way we have practically experienced theatre for generations and decades. This is not because I don't want to propose a complete shift, but because it's realistically not possible if I want my work to be accessible. We need to take into account the ways people are used to, to be able to craft an experience that people will want to attend and take part in. For people to be open to this kind of experience, we have to take into account what they expect, are used to and take for granted. It is important that attendees have the possibility of mentally distancing themselves from the actions happening around them, if they feel it's needed, even if they are experiencing the performance from within. We will need to guide attendees from their starting points and expectations, to where we want to take them in order to make the experience accessible. If we were to take them immediately to the desired place, we would create a distance between ourselves as artists and the attendees, who have not researched, studied and rehearsed this type of experience. Theatrical experiences that include human presence as a main element, are challenging for many people, but I believe it is possible to make this accessible if we guide them carefully on the path towards being able to experience the performance from within.



Image 5. Attendees have the possibility to read postcards addressed to Mirek. From “Milá V.”



Image 6. An attendee is experiencing through touch. From “Deformation #2”

7 Go Away - See if I'm There

This performance was the final work for my M.A. degree at DAMU in Prague. I started working on it one year before its premiere, and had many try-out performances in and out of school, before it played three times during the fall of 2018 at Studio Alta in Prague. This work and its process has been my main research during my last year of studies in my M.A. degree, and the main practical research for this paper.

To be able to use this research and reference it, I would like to start by describing the work. This performance is an experience which depends on the attendees present. *“Go Away – See if I'm There”* is created between the performers and the spectators, who share the space together. Two performers tell stories - personal stories, fictional stories, strangers' stories - long and short. Each story is deeply personal, and centres around figures who have been important and close to the performers. While exploring the relationships between each other and the individuals present, the performers create temporary relationships, and once gaining the attendees trust, test and destabilise that trust again. There is no physical division between performers and spectators, which allows for active communication on both sides of the relationship.

The performance takes place in a theatre space, using theatre lights, but not the traditional elevated seating. The attendees are welcomed on the stage where there are pillows, stools and chairs in a loose circle. The aim is to create an atmosphere that transforms the theatre, into something different than their expectations. The cushions and soft seating arrangements are also chosen to function as inviting objects in a place where possibly some attendees wouldn't normally feel comfortable

sitting in. Performers play with real and imagined borders and the transitory spaces they create as well as the performativity and reality of their interactions. New relationships are formed in the moment, with all the instabilities and questions that entails. Is she telling the truth? Is he sincere? Did I do something wrong? We invite the attendees to take part in an experience where together we explore the mechanisms in relationships with the people that have shaped and still shape us; and uncover together where the performance can lead us.

7.1 Starting Point

“Go Away – See if I’m There” is a performance that I started, together with two performers: Jakub Vaverka and Maëlane Auffray. A few weeks in, I asked a dramaturg Ine Ubben and scenographer Sorcha Gibson to join the team. I was initially interested in what happened to you as a person when the people you looked up to and saw as your heroes, faded away, made mistakes, fell off their pedestals or even hurt you. As children, we learnt through imitating and repeating other people's actions. Having role models, and people to look up to and to inspire us in our young lives was and is important for developing and growing. When we get older we start seeing these situations and people differently.

This interest came from something deeply personal that happened in my own life at the time. I will give a quick insight into the events that played out in the relationship between my father and I. My father used to be my role model. He taught me a lot and for a long time I was very proud to be his daughter. When he left my mother, and quickly demanded my acceptance of his choices, our relationship turned upside down. I don't feel I need to go into details of what happened, but it is possibly

important to know that my struggle with him was ongoing throughout the whole creation process of “Go Away - See if I’m There”. A big part of me was hurt and lost, but there was an even more important part of me that was left with a hundred burning questions - all regarding this same change in my life. How could my I see my father so differently, in only a matter of days? What did it mean for me to have lost the loving support of a parent? How did he justify his own behaviour to himself? Do all heroes fade away and reveal themselves as flawed humans? Will some people always be role models, even if they make mistakes? Did my father think he had a responsibility as a role model towards me? I wanted to understand, and was interested in similar situations that other people had experienced.

Close your eyes and think of three people you look up to or inspire you, and why.

...

All the qualities you’ve just mentioned you admire in these three people; you already have them in you. You wouldn’t be able to appreciate them if they were not already part of you.

wisdom from my mother

7.2 The Process

Based on these questions surrounding the relationship with my father I started a research process together with performers Jakub and Maëlane. We researched with each performer separately the people in their lives that they had looked up to and learned from. I asked them to bring objects that were important to them, and to be ready to talk about why they were important, as well as which people were they connected to. Through the lens of researching heroes, it became apparent that both

performers had very different relationships in their upbringings. Maëlane almost exclusively talked about her close family, such as her grandmother and her grandfather. Jakub talked about childhood friends and fictional characters. We slowly expanded our research to all the people close to them in their lives. We experimented with them telling the stories in different ways. Slowly each of them gathered a pool of stories from their memories about important events, and smaller defining events. One day we invited people as attendees to test some material out, but when the moment came we weren't sure what we would do with the material. We had all these stories, but we didn't know what we wanted to do with them. At that moment we decided that the performers would improvise together for the first time, with each presenting the stories in their pool.

When we did this improvisation, many moments occurred that made the current, temporary relationships between them visible: like the power dynamics of a relationship between the performer and the attendee, the relationship between two performers who were on unstable ground, or the relationship between attendees that were insecure. At the same time the interactions were coloured by the performers' stories involving personal relationships. From this moment we started working together on creating a structure, a pool of stories, recipe and "game rules" for the show. We decided that a lot of the performance needed to be a structured improvisation, in communication with the present attendees.

The performance evolved to become an exploration of the expectations, disappointments, and trust formed within relationships. It sought to expose human interaction and communication, being facilitated by the performers who attempted to create relationships with the present attendees in the moment.

7.3 The Elements of the Performance

The following are what I believe to be the main elements of this performance, that we found and developed during the process.

a. Performing and Connection With the Attendees

The “liveness” of the performer is an important tool in this performance. The term that Lehmann mentions as the core of Performance Art means something confrontational for the attendees as well as the performer; it is necessary for the performers to be present as humans. This is a state that the performers needed to access. A state where they could let their personal issues and thoughts go for a moment and be present in the moment with the attendees. We discovered that the performers were the ones making the interactions happen through mirroring and “listening” to the attendees. The attendees became the performance’s material, so they needed to be given the space to be part of it in the way that they wished. We used the word “listening” for being focused and receptive towards the people that are present. Maëlane and Jakub became their guides.

There were times when the performers were not able to guide the attendees. They each had some “tools” or “modes” they would turn to when they were insecure in the moment, as most of us do. An example of what could occur, is that they would turn to humour, or sequences that had previously worked on a different group of attendees. By doing this, they were not present enough in moments with the individual, specific attendees, but made the time to take care of some of their own needs. This made

their role unstable, while at the same time made visible the performers as human beings. As humans, they have their flaws and their behaviour. These moments would at times lead to some attendees feeling alienated, and were experienced by both me and the performers as “mistakes”. At the same time these moments of being consumed by their own needs were also very human. When the performers were able to be open and communicate about their flaws and needs at the moment when it occurred, the “mistake” was able to become a valuable moment instead. It is important that the performers were self-aware within this performance. To achieve this state of self-awareness, they needed a minimum of two hours of warm-up allowing them to let go of their days thus far, past events, and any future worries. They needed to find who they were at that moment, which required separate meditation, as well as connecting to their own body, and connecting to each other.

The relationship between the performer and the attendee was challenged in this performance. The attendee came to the theatre with certain expectations, differing from person to person. One of the things we as attendees are used to is that the performers know more than we do, from beginning to end. Therefore the performers had some power from the start. The attendees awaited action from the performers. In *“Go Away - See if I’m There”*, (from now on abbreviated to *“Go Away”*), the performers welcomed the attendees into the space, and asked them to make themselves comfortable on the chairs, pillows and sheepskins prepared for them. Once everyone had a place to sit, silence fell. There would be a sense of expectation: attendees looked at the performers, and after a while they started looking at other present people as well. Then the performers made eye contact in silence. In this moment they wanted to get a sense of everyone present. For them this is when they could start “listening” to the people present, and recognising how

they joined in the relationship with them. At the same time this was a moment in which they were able to use the power of being a performer, as well as play with the attendees' expectations. When the actual people present became the core of the performance, one could recognise three different groups of present people in the performance who were dealing with the situation and behaving live. You could experience yourself as an attendee behaving, the experience other attendees behaving, and experience the performers behaving. Attendees have had different focuses on which of these they were most drawn to. Attendee Jana Starková told me that she was mostly focused on how the other attendees would react, while attendee Lucie Flemrová told me she was also focused on the other attendees and her friends in the beginning, throughout the show she would get more interested in how performers dealt with the situations that occurred.

b. Dramaturgy

Together with the performers, I created dramaturgy that could help the performers during the improvisation. We created a list of phases inspired by relationships. In chronological order we made these phases: encounter, contact, uncertainty, caring, challenging boundaries, coming together. The performance would start with "encounter", which consisted of welcoming the attendees and making them feel comfortable, followed by a long silence, before slowly beginning to make contact like I described in the last paragraph. From that moment, the performers started sharing stories with the attendees. They would whisper to one person, or tell it to a group of people, to everyone, to each other.

"When I was young I went to summer camp. My aunt was there too. She was a

volunteer at the camp. One day she saw all the children playing together, except me. After a while she found me sitting completely still, in big field. She came to me and asked what I was doing. I answered quietly; "there is a bee there.""

a story from Jakub Vaverka from "Go Away - See if I'm There"

After a while, attendees would share stories, or ask questions. Then there was a moment when the performers, if or when they saw fit to do so, started to tell each others' stories instead of their own, or told details that were not true. In this phase of uncertainty they would not finish stories, send mixed signals physically, or abruptly cut contact. The next phase would be when they would start to take care of the attendees. They were making sure they were comfortable physically and asked if they were doing ok. By this point, some attendees would be a bit sceptical and suspicious of their behaviour. Then they pushed some attendees' boundaries physically or verbally. This phase especially, like most, would only happen if the performers sensed that some attendees were ready for a challenge. It did not always happen, it could only work if there were the right people for it present, and the build up towards it had been good. At the end the performers gave everyone a glass of water and cookies. Here they would try the best they could not to be performers anymore. They asked people what they would do that evening, or ask where they were from. Slowly the tension and atmosphere would evaporate and the attendees started to talk to each other and pass around the jug of water. This last phase lasted until the attendees eventually left.

This whole dramaturgy is a security net for the performers, but they are not bound to follow it. In practice, this dramaturgy was a tool for the performers in their warm up,

and a foundation in the back of their minds during the performance. Often they would not follow it, or felt the need to do something else. We have experienced that it's more important to follow the potential of the individual attendees and the group. When the performers were properly "there", in the moment and could create a real connection with present people, this dramaturgical structure was not needed. Instead they would rely on the inner dramaturgy in themselves they have obtained through training: in our rehearsals we had many improvisations where they trained on an inner dramaturgy that they learned from within the moment. Some of the phases we created beforehand would feel too forced at in the moment during a specific performance, so we always left space for the performers to react to the attendees instead of the need of following a decided structure.

c. Uncertainty and Discomfort

Throughout the duration of the performance the performers would gain some trust from the attendees, as well as get to know some of them a bit more. When this happened, the performers had the possibility to challenge some attendees a bit. They would for example ask them challenging questions, take in close positions, play with them, tell them untrue stories. Especially in the phases "uncertainty" and "challenging boundaries", there were tools available for the performers to tap into the challenging parts of relationships. This uncertainty was an important element of the performance, though it might seem like a paradox because of the authenticity, honesty and accessibility I have mentioned also as important elements of my work. I do believe they can exist alongside each other. There is something dishonest about shielding attendees from unpleasant things such as insecurity, anger, awkwardness, sadness and discomfort. As mentioned earlier, behaviour is when we react to stimuli, and reactions mostly happen in the "here and now," in the moment just after the stimuli

inciting the reaction has happened. In “Go Away” we created a situation where the potential for reactions was high. The uncertainty of all the people involved created an atmosphere where both performer and attendee needed to be present in the moment. The performers as well as the attendees constantly had to decipher what was going on, what the situation was, and what position they would take towards it. Attendee Jana Stárková who I interview about her experience, told me that there was a lot of excitement around the fact that she didn’t know what was going to happen in the next moment.⁴¹ For her the experience was about expectation and anticipation. I believe the instability heightened the stakes, and made everyone present and on guard. It made you aware of how others behave in uncertain situations.

d. Space

The space we used is a theatre space. Practically speaking it could be done anywhere, but the scenographer and I specifically chose the “stage” part of the black box to perform this piece. The attendees and performers were together on stage with general theatre lighting which surrounded each individual attendee as well as the performers. There was either no traditional seating present, or it was present but remained empty. The space sets a context. We have tried to play this piece in a different, multifunctional, recreational space. This made the show into something drastically different, and it felt more like a social experiment. The experience needs to be seen through an artistic lens. Scenographer Sorcha Gibson created a choice of different kinds of seating material, that could be inviting, comfortable, and different so that there were different options to choose from. The beginning of the performance was a moment where the attendees were to negotiate with each other and

⁴¹ Jana Stárková, from an interview on 15.04.2019.

themselves about how and where they would like to sit. This was also how the performers welcomed them in: they asked where they would like to sit and if they were comfortable. The attendees, usually tested some of the pillows and stools before making a choice, as well as dealing with the fact that this event would happen on the stage, which for some was less comfortable. The attendees got some time to negotiate themselves and with each other to get comfortable. Discomfort could provoke someone to change seats, while for some comfort could invite a lie-down. We found that the very first image that the attendees see when they stepped into the room was of great importance for the whole performance. Through the process we experimented with many different beginnings. When we started with an empty stage, attendees would automatically sit by the walls, and it required a big effort from the performers to invite them onto the stage. We tried with the pillows and seats in a pile in the middle, so that the attendees could grab an item and place themselves where they wanted, but then they also would sit far away from each other and next to the walls. Once we tried spreading all the furniture evenly through the whole space. This time the attendees sat right where the items were placed, but through the whole performance there was no sense of unity between the attendees. We learned that we wanted the attendees to sit together and be able to be one group. This is how we ended up creating a circle that is a little bit messy. This way attendees still adjusted their seating a bit and thought about how they wanted to sit, but they were a group. The circle formation still has its cons, like associations with group circles that I would have liked to avoid (such as group therapy).

e. Movement

Throughout the rehearsal process we worked a lot with movement, and this became an element in the performers' toolbox in the improvisation. As discussed, they communicated with the attendees noticeably through stories and speech. Though not as clearly recognisable; their movement and positioning were also an important means of communication. The kind of movements they worked with were everyday movements, used in relation to the people present. They sat amongst the attendees, moved around them, sat in the centre of the attendees, towered over someone, sat directly in front of someone, overlooked someone, looked someone else in the eyes, held a hand, stood behind someone, etc. The way they physically behaved, could be experienced by the attendees from the inside. The information attendees got from the positions the performers could tell them something about the performers, or the nature of their behaviour. The physicality communicated something to the attendees, giving them a feeling about the interaction that wasn't verbally communicated. The performers' words and physical communication could be in conflict with each other. In these cases the attendee could use their experience with other people's behaviour from daily life, in order to try to understand the performer and their intentions.

7.4 Unresolved Questions

After performing "Go Away" several times, and taking some time to reflect on it, there are questions and uncertainties about the form of this performance that I think about from time to time. These are issues that I am not completely comfortable with, while at the same time believe are a core part of why the performance is able to make you experience human behaviour in the theatre.

a. Risk

One of the important elements that I still struggle with in this performance is risk. In my experience the show is balancing on a thin line between welcoming people and crossing their borders, where if it goes over to either of the sides of this line, it doesn't work. It's in the space between, where you are both feeling welcome as well as challenged, that the performance plays out. The balance between comfort and discomfort is a vital part of this performance, but there will be shows that are either too uncomfortable or too comfortable. We haven't yet been able to find a way to make it more secure for both the performers and the attendees. There are so many factors that play a role in the outcome of each experience, which we need to keep open for the structured improvisation to work. Sometimes this makes me question if this is worth it, or if the risk isn't too great. There have been instances where attendees have felt too exposed, tricked or that their boundaries have been crossed. The performances that have been light-hearted and secure didn't hurt anyone, but there was little nuances in the behaviour to be experienced during the performance. Should we aim to stay on the safer side, or is it worth it to risk crossing boundaries?

b. Manipulation vs. Provocation

There is an element of manipulation in this performance that I am still exploring. While at the same time creating space for the attendees, there are also moments where the performers test boundaries. These moments are fragile because the performer and attendee in question don't know each other, and don't know where their boundaries are. In these moments I am confronted with the feeling that our work is too manipulative. As I have mentioned, I recognise that theatre is manipulative in its nature. Theatre only exists when there are artists creating frames and to a certain

extent manipulate the experience. I personally don't like it when a performance crosses personal boundaries and provokes the attendees. There is a blurred line between necessary manipulation and active provocations, where I believe to provoke is to seek out a certain reaction. In this work we are not seeking out any specific reactions from the attendees, while like I mentioned earlier we do create a situation where the potential for reactions from the attendees is high. This element is instrumental to this research, and I will discuss this further in this paper as it is part of one of the vital discoveries and elements of this work.

c. Personal Investment

Every single time we perform "Go Away", I am emotionally invested. It takes a lot of energy from me, even though I'm not the one who is performing. This is important to mention, because it affects how I perceive each new performance. The performers invest themselves in the performance each time, and bring their own lives and behaviour as material. Once there was an unexpected reaction from an attendee who said clearly to one of the performers; "don't touch me!" The performer felt guilty for a while after the performance had ended. Real, live behaviour has real repercussions. Performer Jakub told me that the process for him was a time during which he learned to recognise his own defence mechanisms, learn to recognise them and try to prevent them during the performance. The process of creating this performance was quicker than his development in this area, which made some of the performances confrontational. He had to personally get to know his flaws deeply, and at times that happened in front of strangers while performing "Go Away". This has me questioning where the boundaries are for the performers. How much can we ask of the performers to themselves invest in a performance like this, where the line between

themselves as actual people and themselves as performers becomes blurred, and the position they're in is extremely vulnerable?



Image 7. An attendee in a conversation with performer Maëlane Auffray.

From "Go Away - See if I'm There"



Image 8. An attendee is giving her hand to performer Jakub Vaverka. From "Go Away - See if I'm There"

8 Actual People as the Source

Through the experience with creating “*Go Away*” I have discovered some elements that are important for future works and see as vital discoveries for the kind of performances I create. I will describe these elements in chapters 8–12.

The first of these discoveries I will discuss is the main element of “*Go Away*”. The core of this performance is the actual people that are present. They bring the material and are the material. There are many artists who work with participatory work where the attendees are invited to participate in certain parts of the performance. What I am aiming at here is more subtle than being participatory. The attendee is not asked to actively partake. Instead their presence is already enough, and we are not urging them to act in any way we have thought out in advance, or take part in a predesigned action. We create space where actual people are at the centre. The performers become facilitators of the experience. They create space for the attendees where they are able to behave. The performers try to catch what the attendees bring in, and give this focus. There are some conditions that need to be in place for the attendees to be able to become material that we can look at, and becomes part of the performance. In this type of space, there has to be room for attendees to participate in their own way, with themselves and their own particularity.

To express this more clearly I will take two performances by other directors as examples. The first performance is participatory in the more traditional sense and the second works with the attendees as the core. In both performances the attendees play a vital role, and in both movement is an important element.

The first example is "*Invited*" by Ultima Vez/Seppe Baeyens. The performance is described on the website as a research into "how the audience can help write the choreography of a performance" and to "establish a community embracing the cast and the audience".⁴² This performance used live music, 10 performers with different ages and backgrounds, and scenography in the form of a long, blue, moveable tube that the attendees can sit on. Throughout the performance the attendees were at several moments non-verbally asked to pick up the tube, while and the performers led where it would go and what shape it will take. The two main parts of the performance happened while the tube was placed along the edges of the space, so the attendees sat in a big circle. Performers sat among the attendees, and every now and then they got up to perform in the open space in the middle of the circle. At times they danced, other times they demonstrated what will happen, other times they would invite attendees to join by reaching out a hand to a specific person. When the latter happened, the performer would place the attendee in a position in the space, or have them walk across the space, jump over someone, run, do a gesture with another performer. Most of the time it was when you were specifically invited, you would become part of the work. There were also times when it was clear that anyone could join. Some movements were more free than others, some were quite constrained. The attendee was asked to join in some movements that anyone could do, and could do on their own. However, they could join only within a limited frame and set of rules. The performers had control over when and how much they let the attendees participate. For example, I was invited to run in a circle. Quickly more and more attendees were invited. Soon we were about 20 people running. I enjoyed it, and started to run faster, but before I could get up to the speed I wanted to reach, I could feel a decided hand pressing on my shoulder. I could see around me that everyone

⁴² Ultima Vez, <http://www.ultimavez.com/en/productions/invited>, (quot. 13.04.2019)

started to slow down, and started to get back to the blue tube to find a spot to sit. I was not supposed to run anymore.

The second example I want to use is “*SouHra*” by Ostruzina. This is a Czech company that has worked with dance and participation for children for several years. I worked with them for a few days to help with the dramaturgy. In this performance they created space for parents and children to play together. This is how the work is described: “Each participant witnesses the consequences of his or her own decisions. It’s an important moment – the audience together with the creators create a common experience. “*SouHra*” examines communication and collaboration in shared space.”⁴³ The four performers started outside the performance space by introducing themselves and what we were going to do. Once inside the space, everyone was in a circle where the performers led the actions. At first this was done in silence. The attendees understood that they had to imitate, or repeat. Then the performers added vocal instructions, before they split the group into four. In each group several games instructed by the performers continued. Slowly they allowed the attendees more and more freedom. At one point the groups merged again, through the performers giving focus to what other groups were doing, and giving them attention. This is when a moment of “free play” happened. The performer’s role shifted from instructor to facilitator. As facilitator they guided the focus of the attendees to the play that was happening in the moment. For example through physically mirroring or asking questions to an attendee that initiated a game or play, they create room for others to join.

⁴³ Ostruzina a.s., <http://www.ostruzina.eu> (quot. 13.04.2019)

In "*Invited*" the performers know exactly in which parts they want attendees to join in and what approximately what they would like them to do. They have a specific experience they would like to offer to their attendees, for example the experience of jumping over someone, or doing a specific movement together with a stranger. In comparison, in "*SouHra*" the performers look to the attendees to see what they are offering, and provide focus for what is already there. They also wish to create an experience that they would like to offer to their attendees, but it is not a specific action. They would like to create a space where actual people can play together, in whatever way they wish.

As I have some insight in the process as a dramaturg, I believe the team that works on "*SouHra*" could work even more focused on the attendees. I can recognise that there are some mechanisms present in the performers from more traditional theatre that sometimes slip through. In the moments when the play was not happening as clearly, and some attendees fell out of the action, sometimes there were some moments that a performer would force an idea to on the group, such as "we're all pirates!". In my opinion the performers don't need to do that, but instead focus on the ones that were actually playing, and join them where they were, or instead look to the attendees that fell out and join them where they were. This is a matter of training, focus and experience of the performer, and I will continue on this in the chapter about "Performing".

I enjoyed the performance "*Invited*" a lot, and the experiences they wanted to give me I could really get into. I was running and jumping, as well as watching others run and jump to rhythmical music. This is a participatory performance, in the sense that the attendee is allowed to take part in specific parts of the performance, in a specific

kind of way. The performances I'm focused on in my own work do not merely invite attendees to take part, on the contrary, they are the main source of the performance. As an attendee in "*SouHra*", you are not invited to behave a certain way, or fulfill a certain task. This is what interests me, and what I would like to develop further in my own work. You as attendee are invited to be present. You do not just take part in something that already existing. You are the core material and the source, which makes the piece able to exist.



Image 9. Attendees and performers are playing together. From “SouHra”

9 Manipulation

Now that I have established that present human beings are the core material of “Go Away”, and is one of the main elements in my work, I would like to discuss and dedicate some thoughts to the next vital element: manipulation. This is an element I have a turbulent relationship with. Regarding the examples mentioned in the previous chapter, I see both as pieces that rely on manipulation. I consider “*Invited*” as restrictive, controlling and using manipulation heavily, where the performers have specific experience they want you to get. The performers decide when they want you to join. When people that are invited do something unexpected, the performers have a way of controlling that things happen within a certain frame of possibilities. They also use live music to give rhythm and color to the atmosphere. In “*SouHra*” the attendees are the source for material, there is also manipulation: the way the performance slowly builds up the amount of movement and amount of self agency the attendees get warms them up so they can arrive at a moment of playing freely. In this performance the manipulation is a tool to get the attendees to a place where they can play without restrictions, in an empty theatre space. The experience they want you to get is open, where the attendee can bring themselves into the experience. The performance still relies on some form of manipulation in order to create an experience. The key is to create openness in the manipulated experience, and to manipulate the experience to become open enough for attendees to become the source of material.

“Seeing Oneself Living” is the title of an article by Roger Bernat and Roberto Fratini Serafide, and is also what they call a “radically theatrical experience”.⁴⁴ It is an uncomfortable experience to see oneself living, that makes you aware of your own self-awareness. Participation is according to Bernat and Serafide not offering sincerity - which is always a lie. Participation can only offer “the active and conscious form of constructing new models of shared inhibition.”⁴⁵ In other words, it heightens what’s already there. We do not need to pretend to add something that isn’t there, or that we wish to achieve some ideological change by making the attendees part of the performance. What is there is that the individual deals with their own inhibition, and that they deal with their self. You are constantly negotiating with yourself. Do I want to do this? Can I recognise this? Why did I react that way? Even something that happens in a group collectively, will ultimately send you back to yourself. Similarly, theatre as an artform doesn’t need to pretend that it’s something else than theatre, according to Bernat and Serafide.⁴⁶ Theatre is a manipulating mechanism in its origin, and the job of the theatre artist is exactly to create that manipulation skillfully.

The key is to create an awareness of this manipulation for the attendees. They join this manipulation willingly, and it is unnecessary to pretend that they have freedom within this space. As I quoted earlier in my attempt to define manipulation; “the awareness of being manipulated is the indispensable prerequisite to constitute a hypothesis of emancipation.”⁴⁷ I believe this is the core of working actively with attendees. The situation they will find themselves in is a manipulated one, and it is when they can consciously deal with that and negotiate with themselves, that an authentic experience with behaviour can occur. I have realised that I don’t need to

⁴⁴ Bernat, R. & Serafide, R. F., *Seeing Oneself Living*, 2006, p. 92.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 95.

create a new system where attendees need to believe that they are part of a community or some other constructed system, they only need to be present with themselves.

In “*Go Away*” it was the performers’ job to make clear that this performance was a manipulated experience, as well as a space that was open for the attendees to be part of it, within a frame. This awareness something that grew slowly over the duration of the performance. I think the silence in the beginning of the performance is a key moment, where a lot of this happens. The attendees get a moment to settle down, and to start understanding the situation they’re in: they’re on a stage, they’re with other people they might or might not know, the performers are sitting with them, and they might have some expectations or fears. The performers are showing in this moment, that they have some power over what will happen, but also that there is a lot of room for the attendees.

It is manipulation together with framing that outline the territory I want to guide the attendees’ attention to. An example of the manipulation that we use in “*Go Away*” is what type of stories a performer chooses to tell, how and to whom. All the elements we decided to use in the performance create the possibility for the experience. I believe “*Go Away*” is a performance that worked with slightly ambiguous manipulation. A performance that I made called “*Fine Dining*”, had manipulation that was clearer and more restrictive in the first part. I had one performer cook pancakes with one blindfolded attendee. While they were engaged in the practical and sensory action, the performer told them about how pancakes were a part of my life as a child. In this case there was a clear action that we had decided that the performer would do, while still leaving room for the particularities of the attendee. Sometimes the

attendee would ask questions, tell things about their own family, or had special ways of executing the cooking. After this first part was over, the attendees were guided to a dining room where they would eat their pancake together with 3 other attendees who also had made a pancake privately with a different performer. At this point, there were no performers present anymore, and the attendees were free to enjoy their experience in their own way. As a whole, this performance was more manipulated than “*Go Away*”, as there were a lot more boundaries and restrictions. The situation was clear: you are making a pancake with a performer without sight, and then you spend some time with other attendees. In “*Go Away*”, the manipulation was more hidden, and attendees had to work a bit harder to figure out what the restrictions were, what was possible, and in what way they were a part of this situation. It took time for attendees to realise that there was in fact very little that was not possible. They could take part in the situation however they wanted to. Some attendees became passive and preferred to stay in the background, while others chose to test the boundaries or take the chance to share something about themselves with others.

These unspoken, unclear boundaries become manipulation that is not in the foreground, and risk the feeling of the experience being a game or being tested. This is where the earlier discussed risk-factor comes in, which I still am somewhat uncomfortable with. At the same time, I think it is in this ambiguity the attendees are faced with that an unclear situation occurs they have to deal with, which this makes it possible for us to encounter several types of behaviour. Attendee Florent Golfier, who I interviewed about his experience, experienced this ambiguity as difficult to read. He questioned what the experience is was so open for. It was so open that he didn't trust himself to join, and possibly be in the way of the development of the

piece. He missed something more constructed from the performers.⁴⁸ What is important here is that he experienced the presence of the performers as well as the framing, so he also expected manipulation from them. This didn't happen as much as he expected, and so it was unclear for him how he could become part of the performance. I believe this describes well how "Go Away" really became ambiguous. I believe there is value in ambiguous: he clearly negotiated his own position and how he would conduct himself. At the same time, I'm wondering if there could be potential in communicating to the attendees more clearly what the manipulation consists of in this performance?

⁴⁸ Interview with Florent Golfier, 01.05.2019

10 Experiencing From Within

The third discovery I would like to accentuate on is directly connected to seeing the attendees as the source which I described in chapter 8. For a long time I felt strongly about having attendees experience theatre from the inside, as opposed to from a distance. I have experimented with this in many shapes and forms in several different performances and has been a main topic of my research for several years. Through “Go Away” I have been able to research this in depth, and work with more focus on what I would like to offer to attendees by placing them within the events.

*Sit up, close your eyes, take one deep breath. When you open your eyes find:
5 things you can touch, 4 things you can see, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you
can taste, 1 thing you can smell.*

In Matthew Ratcliffe’s article “Touch and Situatedness” he talks about how we perceive the world differently through the sense of sight and through our body. Through sight you can be disconnected from your body. You are merely depending on where your body is located to be able to see, but you will mainly be able perceive something that is separated from yourself. Through touch you use your body, and experience your body in the situation you are in here and now: the connection between what is to be perceived and yourself is present.⁴⁹ This is an example of specifically how touch works, as one of our senses, that help us perceive the world around us. We have all our senses to tell us different types of information, not just hearing and seeing. As mentioned before, in order to recognise actual people and live behaviour as the source of material, the performers need to have access to the

⁴⁹ Ratcliffe, M., *Touch and Situatedness.*, 2008, p. 2.

attendees. This works the other way around as well, the attendees need to have access to the events and performance to experience the behaviour. When the attendee experiences and uses all the tools their body has, there is less distance between themselves and the other people that are present. By placing the attendees on stage together with other attendees and performers, the action appears around them. At this moment more of the senses are engaged. As mentioned earlier, this is also what Schechner describes as a different way of “seeing”. We know, and the body knows. In my work the attendees’ the senses are engaged. More precisely I choose to focus on the type of engagement that also happens in daily life; just framed a little differently. As mentioned, to focus on behaviour I wish to create a situation where behaviour can occur: in daily life we also get information about the actions around us through for example our gut feelings, someone’s body language, the touch of the warm air around us or the smell of detergent on someone’s clothes. To experience the performance from within, puts the attendees in a position that is familiar, where they have all their senses to rely on to give them information about the people and the situation around them like in daily life.

11 A Multitude of Personal Stories

The next important discovery I made is based on an element I have been using in several of my works. The use of personal stories is an element I for a long time have recognised as a valuable tool when creating a performance. I have been actively developing this factor through and since working with “Go Away”. I am interested in uneventful stories from simple situations that make up daily life: stories that don’t necessarily have a point, nor a dramatic build-up. I enjoy those because they feel personal, relatable and like they are about daily life. There are a lot of grand stories about extraordinary events, and while I love a good fictional book or an emotional film every now and then, I believe there is potential in the stories that aren’t special. Through a story like this you can get to know something about someone, or about humans in general, or about everyday life. I will give three examples of how personal stories can be a relatable element to connect with people in artworks. The first two are personal experiences from creating two other performances, and the third is a more commercial example.

11.1 “*Fine Dining*”

In the earlier mentioned performance “*Fine Dining*”, I had one performer cook pancakes with one blindfolded attendee, while a performer told them about how pancakes were a part of my life as a child. They told them how my father would make them in the weekends, my sister and I always wanted to help, and what everyone liked on their pancakes. There was no point to the story, it was simply a description of how I remember these times around the diner table, the dynamics between the family members and how I experienced it. Through sharing this kind of story, we can

sometimes trigger associations in the attendee that remind them of their own family situations. How was the dinner situation in their childhood home? What did their father cook? Some attendees felt compelled to start sharing their own story with the performer. Some were thinking specifically about what kind of pancakes they used to make, others didn't make pancakes but something else, others were more triggered by the family constellations and would talk about their relationship with a certain family member.

As I mentioned in the introduction: the words we use, trigger associations. That is important in academic writing, as we learned from Lakoff, but this can be applied to text used in performance as well. In "Go Away", many attendees also felt triggered to share their own stories. In that performance there is not just one story, there is a multitude. All the stories that are told together by all the people present create a bigger whole. They have a lot in common, and together tell us something. What they tell us will be different from person to person, and depends on what associations have been triggered in each person.

The main purpose for me to use these kinds of stories is to create a space for sharing personal experiences that are relatable, so that people present can connect their own experiences and lives to what strangers are talking about and doing. The other important part of working with this material is to create something that is ambiguous like in real life. There is no clear story with a point and climax in everyday life. There are different perspectives, different focuses, similarities and opposites. No one has the same experiences, but everyone has similar experiences. This is the same as in behavioural theories. There are so many factors that play a role in why people behave the way they behave that there is no one clear way to give you the

facts. It's through the multitude of stories that we can talk about the complexity of how people behave, and bring the ambiguity of our lives into the experience.

11.2 “*Milá V.*”

In this small show I created in the beginning of my studies based on postcards I found in a container in my street, there was an album full of postcards present written to Mirek, signed by V. There was no stamp on the postcards, and on most of them there was a short text written about how they would play board games in a specific bar. “*Milá V.*” aimed to give life to these cards and lives of these two people. The content of these cards was quite uneventful, but there was interest in figuring out what the lives of these people looked like. The attendees were invited to read some of the cards for themselves at times. There were many things that were relatable and recognisable about these two ordinary strangers, like when V. asks Mirek to water her plants in her apartment while she is on a trip, and writes that she left a little treat for him in a bowl in her apartment.

11.3 “My Struggle”

“My Struggle” is a popular but very long book series about uneventful events by Karl Ove Knausgård. Benjamin Errett attempts to describe why people enjoy “My Struggle” in the short book “Elements of Taste: Understanding what we like and why”. In his books Knausgård describes his own life in extreme detail, for example writing about his daughter’s birthday party for 50 pages.⁵⁰ How is it that a story about an average guy with an uneventful life spread over six books is so popular? Amongst other reasons, Errett gives some emphasis to the fact that “My Struggle” is full of

⁵⁰ Errett, B., *Elements of taste: understanding what we like and why*. 1st ed. New York: TarcherPerigee, 2017., p. 142.

precise details that get full attention. Most parts of our lives are full of uneventful moments, boring hours and can be experienced in full detail.⁵¹ It is these moments that are relatable, they are about you and me, and have the potential of triggering memories.

There is a power in sharing something personal, which makes people connect. When we open up about something that is personal, that might even show your flaws, we feel trusted and taken seriously. Attendee Lucie Flemrová who I interviewed about her experience of “Go Away” told me that she felt like she made two new friends during the show.⁵² The performers shared things with her that she would normally only get to hear after a while of getting to know a new person. We decided early in the process that the stories that were told would describe the facts of how the performer experienced it, but would not add emotional value to it, so it would be more open for attendees to connect and interpret them in their own way. The story that I share through “*Fine Dining*” about my family when I was young, is more of a description than a story, but still it triggered a lot of associations in several attendees that I got feedback from. There is a pain present in the fact that this situation will never happen again, and there is joy present in the simpleness of a regular Saturday of a child. These are situations people can connect to, and it’s through the vulnerability of sharing these personal moments, attendees can relate to the performers.

When I was young, eating dinner together as a family was very important to my parents. We would sit and eat for a while. Everyone got to talk about their day. This

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵² L. Flemrová, from an interview on 10.04.2019.

was the only time during the weeks where we would all be together. My mother usually made dinner on weekdays. The idea was to eat around at 19:00. We would always wait for my father to come home from work. Often the food turned cold while waiting for him, but we always would. Until 20:00. That's where my mother drew a line. Then we would start eating without him.

Excerpt from "Fine Dining"

12 Performing

Finally, to describe my discoveries within performing I would like to start with sharing a personal experience. I did an internship with Dutch theatermaker Lotte van den Berg for the production “*We Have Never Been Modern*”. The production was inspired by the book with the same title by Bruno Latour and was about modern ecology and how people relate to nature. As part of the performative, outdoors installation there were one-on-one sessions with festival-goers. In these 10-15 minutes a performer would have a conversation and make a constellation with objects with the attendee. This was based on the systemic constellations method, which uses positioning of persons or objects to see personal problems physically. The basis of this method is to communicate through the objects and the way you position them in order to access subconscious material.⁵³ In the project there were three performers collaborating, who had a background in constellation work. I was also supposed to perform, even though I had no experience with this kind of work. The constellation we would make with the visitors would be created based on two shelves containing objects and four fixed questions as a structure. We would talk with the attendee about their personal relationship with nature, how they saw it and what they needed from that relationship. The days leading up the performance were busy, as multiple things went wrong and as an intern I was helping the scenographer most of the time. This resulted in me having only a few rehearsals with the other performers. The day of the premiere the other performers expressed a concern that I wasn’t ready yet to lead these conversations. It was decided that I would wait a few days before joining the performing team - the installation would be open for nine days, so I could take the

⁵³ North American Systemic Constellations (NASC), <http://www.nasconstellations.org/what-are-systemic-constellations.html> (quot. 11.03.2019)

time to rehearse and prepare. Due to unexpected circumstances one of the performers had to take time off after the installation was open for 2 hours, and they asked me to jump in. Though I of course was nervous, I felt good about doing it. I realised that in this work all I needed to be was a human being there for the other present human being. I needed to really listen to the attendees, be curious and make this their time. Although I didn't have any experience with constellations, all I really needed to be was a present and open person, together with another person. I wanted to transfer this experience to "Go Away", and talked about it with performers Maëlane and Jakub. I believe it was important for us all that in the moment of the performance the most important thing they could do is to be present with themselves and the other people in the room.

There are two main elements of the way the performing works in "Go Away", and one of them is exactly this presence. Seeing the actual people that are present as the source and the core of the performance, resulted in the task of the performer becoming to create a space where the attendees could become actual material. Through their presence the performers could get sensitive and catch up on things that were happening in that time and space. They became focused on what happened in themselves, and what was happening with the person next to them, as well as the group dynamics. Through presence, they gave actively attention and created space for others. The trick is for them was not to fill up the attention from the attendees with themselves, which is more usual for traditional theatre performances. The attention the performers got was in this performance redirected, through their actions, to other people or behaviour that was also present in that moment.

The other main element for the performer is specific training. The performer has to have many tools in their toolbelt, to be able to be this specific, balanced facilitator. The whole performance is an improvisation, where what they do during the performance depends on the attendees and the performers' training. There are some decided principles that we have worked with in the process of "Go Away". It is clear that these had to be trained over time, for the performer to embody them and make them easily accessible during the improvisation. These principles are: physicality, dramaturgical sense, sharing stories and this described "listening" to the present people. Most of these I have described through this text in different chapters. Physicality and movement are non-verbal elements of communication with the attendees. The performers needed to learn what and how their body communicates, and how they could use this actively in the performance. The performers needed dramaturgical training, because they became the dramaturgs in this performance at the same time. In order to keep as much space as possible open for the performers to connect to the attendees, we could not create a complete dramaturgical structure beforehand. The performers needed to develop their dramaturgical sense to take care of the rhythm and development of the performance in the moment. They also needed to create a bank of personal stories, from which they needed to know the other performers' stories, in addition to training how and when to share which story. These principles were all used in response to the present attendees, and for this the performers needed to train with test attendees to be receptive towards them.

These elements of performing were vital to "Go Away". Other than the design of the space, there was no other framing and manipulation from us as the artists, than the way the performers were present with the attendees. The behaviour could not have been experienced without this specific way of performing. The training we did with

the performers was a process of exploring how humans behave, and how we could create a situation where attendees could experience that.

13 Conclusion

After analysing my practical work with “Go Away” and the theories behind it, I can now formulate a mechanism that is present in the execution of this performance.

There is a loop between the attendees and the performers. The performers have a set of tools, which they apply in reaction to the attendees. Someone present behaves in a certain way, the performer frames that behaviour, and then another kind of behaviour occurs in reaction. Where actual people are the source, there is always material present, and it is up to the performer to catch it and choose how to give focus to it. The performer does this with the earlier discussed tools that they have been trained in like personal stories, physical movement, dramaturgical training, presence, and “listening” to the attendees.

To create an experience of human behaviour in the theatre, I have discovered five elements that are the core of attempting this. 1. The attendees are the core of the performance. Behaviour is a human feature, that they bring with them, it's something that's part of them. There is already so much in ourselves, that we don't need to make something up, but it's already there. 2. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the attendees need to experience this from within the performance. For them to experience behaviour, they will need to be in between and next to other actual people who behave. This way they can experience with all their senses, as they do in daily life. 3. It becomes theatre when the performers create an ambiguous, but manipulated situation, where they have the task of heightening and focusing on the behaviour that occurs. 4. It is of vital importance that these performers are trained in this specific kind of improvisation, so they can be present with their own and the

others' behaviour. 5. They also provide the personal stories that create moments where attendees can connect and relate to the performers.

There are also still several unresolved matters, and questions that ask for further examination and development. For example, the paradox of comfort and discomfort coming together to create an experience of human behaviour is dangerous and risky, and could perhaps be controlled more or been made a lot clearer. I've discovered many of these contradictory elements that have played a part in the creation and the result of "Go Away"; honesty and manipulation, truth and lies, the training of the performer, and the performer as a flawed human being. All of these conflicting elements bring complexity to the work, but also confusion. To experience our human behaviour I believe that many of the factors that play a role in our daily lives also have to be included in this framed behaviour, because our daily lives are similarly complex. We get conflicting information all the time. The difficult part is to find some balance, in a format that is largely build on improvisation. It's in the space between the comfortable, the challenging and the confusing, yet doesn't cross too far over anyone's borders, I believe that the behaviour can potentially be experienced, although it's an unstable ground to stand on.

13.1 Continuation

I would like to develop many of the ideas that I have analysed in this written work. One of the things I would like to be able to continue is to develop a training program for performers to be these facilitators for the present attendees to become the main source of the performance. As mentioned before, there are already a few principles in place, but I believe I can research and develop this system of training further and

more precise. Once I have the training of the performers as a foundation, I would like to look into seeing this as a format and within the format experiment with several factors. I realise that the work I created at this time is quite difficult for many attendees to digest. I would like to see how I can work more with accessibility. As of now the topic of behaviour is quite broad and could serve more as a foundation, and I see potential in developing other performances where we could narrow the topic down to focus on one type of behaviour. Other ways of experimenting with the changes of the format would be to apply it to physical theatre. How can we experience behaviour through physicality and movement, with the attendees as the source? To sum up I see potential in training together with performers, with the elements of the work of "Go Away", to create a base for performers to be able to become facilitators for experiencing human behaviour in the theatre. Then together with performers who are trained in this style of performing, I would like to research what the potential is to create different performances where actual people are the source. For example I want to experiment with how clear the manipulation is, how many pre decided factors are present, how much is improvisation, what kind of stories we tell, or what kind of space we use. These are only my beginnings at working with a focus on behaviour in the theatre. There is still a lot to discover and there is a lot of potential for developing this further.

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