

**TUTOR 'S REPORT OF MASTER 'S THESIS:****STUDENT: Ogawa Mai****Study programme: Directing of Devised and Object theatre / MA DOT****MASTER 'S THESIS TUTOR: MgA. Ewan McLaren**

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Mai Ogawa: BEYOND JUST ACTING: Towards Expanded Acting and Devised Performance

Master's thesis supervisor statement by Ewan McLaren

Mai (Sai) Ogawa's Master's thesis concentrates on how she developed, through her work and research at DAMU, approaches that allow the performance creator to transcend the rules, limitations and disfunction of what we call acting, a profession often too based on self-consciousness and emotional transfer to the detriment of creativity, independent thought, and awareness of context. Too often, modern acting relies on teachings that are manipulative and even abusive, from the side of some acting instructors and directors. Ogawa shows how she freed herself from these kinds of "professional deformation", taking responsibility for her own emotional experience and create meaningful performance material from it in an organic, authentic way. Her thesis maps out a demanding journey in an international Master's program based far from home and during a pandemic as a healing journey away from "just acting", towards finding inspiration in working with not only with authentic emotional experience but also with: meaningful objects, design elements in performance space, dramaturgy, audience expectations, and trusted collaborators.

Following an explanation of her own background in acting, she proceeds to relate details about her thesis performance *HSWD (How to Suicide without Dying)*, based in personal pre-recorded monologue and physical actions played out with cassette tape, pomegranates and plastic, then goes back in time to show its phases of development. She gradually discovers in herself an approach to creating performance that is in her own voice, imposed by no male authority figures, unencumbered by the need to portray dramatic characters, created in non-hierarchical consultation with her advisors and student dramaturg Levin Eichert, and is as strong visually as it is verbally.

Ogawa shows many discoveries here. She shows how, forced by circumstances to rely on herself to create without co-performers, she found partners in the objects she worked with and learned to give them agency, and became aware of the advantage of working with a dramaturg with whom there is a working relationship based on mutual trust. By experimenting with objects through the process of elimination, she moved beyond simple cliché towards the discovery that the right object can open up creativity and show unexpected ways to develop work further. While attempting various versions of the piece in different physical arrangements, she found that a chosen spatial solution for a performance is often a compromise that satisfies some criteria but not necessarily all.

While Ogawa's master's thesis focusses mostly on her own experiments and observations, she gives her findings furthers depth and texture by comparing experiences with other devised performances she has participated in as a performer during her time at DAMU. The author is not shy about criticizing her work. However there are only a few suggestions in her thesis about how should would do things in future, how she would like to continue with such explorations. I would like to ask the author to describe more how she imagines putting her findings to work after her studies.

For her bold, personal exploration of how to create an authentic devised performance environment, build trust in her own instincts and unexpected inspirations from around her, for her honest analysis of what did not yet work in its development phases as well as of how such performance a can work in its final presentation,

I recommend Mai Ogawa's master's thesis for oral defence.

**Date:** 10.6.2022:

MgA. Ewan McLaren

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**signature**