



01/2019

Christopher Balme & Nic Leonhardt

(Ludwig Maximilians-Universität München)

The Workshop.

On the Genesis of a Global Form

WORKING PAPER



This working paper series has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 694559 – DevelopingTheatre).

About the Series

The Working Paper Series “Developing Theatre” is part of the ERC Advanced Grant “Developing Theatre: Building Expert Networks for Theatre in Emerging Countries after 1945” (grant agreement No. 694559).

The working papers enable a pointed examination of theoretical and historical questions affecting the dissemination of the performing arts in a global context after 1945. They thus serve both the exchange of theoretical ideas and the development of conceptual foundations of the project. The goal of the short contributions is to present, critically examine and further develop theoretical concepts. The Working Papers, then, should not be understood as conclusive theoretical contributions, but rather as an invitation to exchange conceptual positions.

Editors

- Prof. Dr. Christopher Balme, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
- PD Dr. Nic Leonhardt, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Copyright and Content

The copyright remains with the authors of the respective Working Papers. The authors are responsible for the published content. The Working Papers reflect the views of their respective authors and not those of the editors. Further development and the final publication of the content elsewhere by the authors are explicitly possible.

Place of publication

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Munich, 2019.

Working Paper *Developing Theatre*

Paper No. 1/2019

The Workshop. On the Genesis of a Global Form

Christopher Balme / Nic Leonhardt

Abstract

This paper explores how the workshop, one of most ubiquitous terms and practices of contemporary life, has its origins in early twentieth century experimental theatre. It traces its shift from the nineteenth century shopfloor, where it was replaced by industrial factories, to pre-World War 1 university seminars in the USA. The famous 47 Workshop of George Pierce Baker at Harvard, a playwriting seminar, created a model for a theatre laboratory that slowly gained a following outside the academy. From there the workshop becomes a catchword for experimentation in the theatre and the new media radio and television. The paper provides a specific focus on how American philanthropy promoted the workshop idea in the 1950s and 1960s both home and abroad. The history and dissemination of the term and practice can be traced to a particular conjunction of factors within the US academy and philanthropy, which supported the rise of modernist theatre. This led in turn to a global distribution of workshop thinking. In this way the particular format developed by and associated with non-conventional theatre forms permeated contemporary thinking and pedagogical practice.

About the contributors

Christopher Balme is professor for Theatre Studies and Principal Investigator of the ERC Research Project *Developing Theatre* at Ludwig Maximilians University Munich. He has widely published on theatre and interculturality, intermediality, institutional aesthetics and transnational theatre history.

Nic Leonhardt is senior researcher and associate director of the ERC project *Developing Theatre* and the Centre for Global Theatre Histories at LMU. Her academic fields of interests cover global and transnational theatre histories, cultural encounters, visual culture, inter arts studies and digital culture. She is also a writer.

Introduction

It is highly likely that readers of this paper have encountered and participated in a workshop during their student or professional life. They may have ‘workshopped’ a play or any other text in a collaborative mode or imparted and received some kind of specialist knowledge within a temporal framework ranging from two hours to several days. Already in 1978 Ron Argelander, writing in TDR, referred to the workshop as “one of the most frequently encountered words in the avant-garde theatre community” (1978: 3). At this time the workshop was still the only format where budding artists could receive any kind of training at all outside actual membership in one the many groups that self-identified under that label. While Argelander logically linked workshop and theatre at this time, today the connection is largely forgotten. Workshops are ubiquitous and workshopping as a format for transporting knowledge is applicable to any sphere of activity outside structured curricula. Despite this ubiquity, the term workshop has very strong historical connections with the theatre and indeed in its contemporary understanding can be directly linked to what used to be called “avant-garde” or “experimental” theatre. The history and dissemination of the term and practice can be traced to a particular conjunction of factors within the US academy and philanthropy, which supported the rise of modernist theatre. This led in turn to a global distribution of workshop thinking. In this way the particular format developed by and associated with non-conventional theatre forms permeated contemporary thinking and pedagogical practice. This paper explores the remarkable career of the term from a noun denoting pre-industrial labour to a catchword for various forms of experimental theatre practice to a verb meaning to improve or develop something by this format. The first section looks at the etymology before focusing on the early twentieth century in the US where the semantic shift from shopfloor to university seminar took place. From there we follow its trajectory to American philanthropy of the 1950s and 1960s when the big foundations such as Rockefeller and Ford actively promoted modernist, non-profit theatre for which the ‘workshop’ became a signal, despite its somewhat Marxist overtones, best encapsulated in Joan Littlewood’s decidedly left-leaning Theatre Workshop established in 1945. Two sections examine the dissemination of workshop practices in the developing world, especially the Theatre for Development movement, which spread through the workshop format. The paper concludes with a discussion of Richard Sennett’s concept of the workshop and its relationship to authority.

Etymology

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word originates in the sixteenth century where it referred to usually a small room for the artisanal manufacture of goods. Often implied is the

This working paper series has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 694559 – DevelopingTheatre).

sale of the goods at the same place hence the combination work-shop which appears to derive from the Latin *officina*, a place of work and sale. In his book *The Craftsman* (2008) Richard Sennett traces the changes in the meaning of ‘workshop’ from a cultural historical perspective. While in the Middle Ages the workshop was still a social institution, a place “where labor and life mixed face-to-face,” (2008: 53) this changed in the course of the Enlightenment, and accelerated with the reorganization of work during industrialization in the nineteenth century. By 1900 English law distinguished clearly between ‘factories’ and ‘workshops’, the latter referring to “any premises, room or place, not being a factory, in which... any manual labour is exercised.”¹

With the help of data mining, the frequency of a word or phrase can be determined over a (theoretically indefinite) period of time, both past and present. The Google Ngram Viewer, for example, searches for words or sentences in digitally captured text corpora of the past centuries and thus provides information about their use and economic cycles. Figure 1 shows a Google N-gram for the word ‘workshop’ between 1800 and the year 2000 and clearly indicates the increasing use/ frequency of the term over the past 200 years.

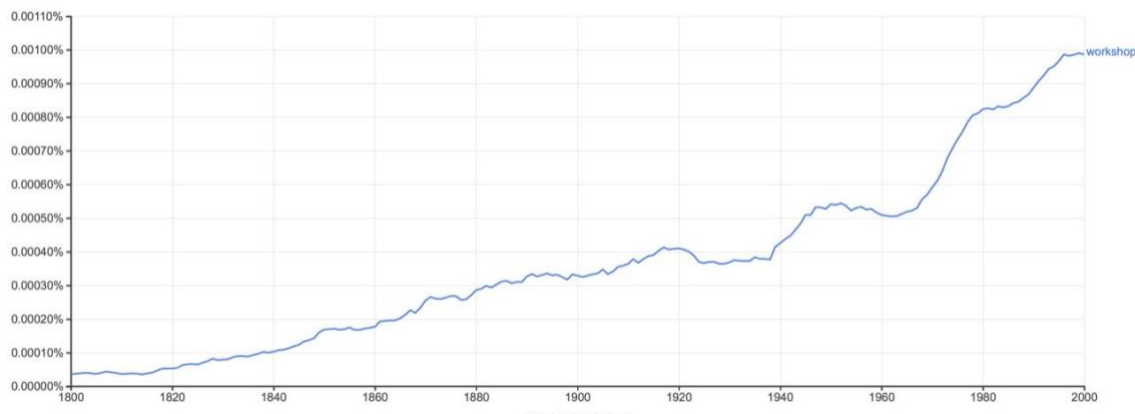


fig. 1: Google N-Gram for the word ‘workshop’, between 1800 and 2000.

In addition to the former digital tool for tracking words and their ‘career’, the digital dictionary of the German language deserves mention here, www.dwds.de. It records word clusters and the frequency of word usage over a period of 500 years, basically since the invention of book printing. The corpus of text sources, from which the percentage frequency is calculated, consists of printed products such as monographs, newspapers, world literature and periodicals. A query of the word ‘workshop’ results in a graph showing clearly that the use of the word is virtually non-existent in printed books before 1830. In the course of the nineteenth century, the frequency increases slightly; the curve of the frequency from the 1940s onwards shows a clear swing indicating the increasing usage of the word and concept of ‘workshop’.

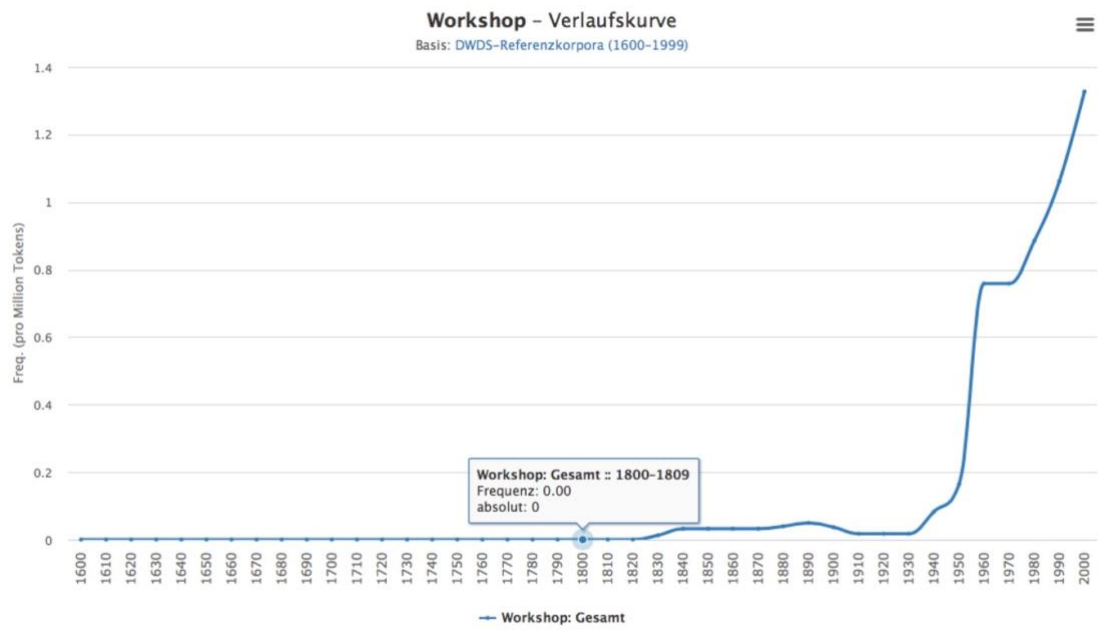


fig. 2: Graph generated by the digital dictionary of the German language (www.dwds.de) showing the frequency of the word 'workshop' (in English) in German text corpora since the 18th century.

In a figurative sense Disraeli's famous phrase that England had become the "workshop of the world" referred to England's increasingly reliance on the manufacturing industry, especially cotton.² mass production. For Karl Marx the workshop is already a site of the division of labour and its attendant alienation and thereby a precursor to the modern industrial factory (Marx 1887: 130-35). In the light of this connection with manual labour and incipient industrial manufacturing, it may appear surprising that the first semantic transferral (as opposed to figurative usage) occurs in the context of the new field of theatre and drama as a university discipline.

Theatre Workshops and Laboratories

In 1912, *The Writer*, a Boston-based monthly magazine dedicated to helping "all literary workers", carried a lead article featuring the Harvard professor of English literature, George Pierce Baker and his playwriting course designed to assist students with literary ambitions acquire the necessary skills and craft to further their dramatic ambitions:

it is now his hope to see at Harvard in the next few years a theatrical laboratory, so to speak – a combination workshop and theatre, where plays written by students can be

produced, and where the young playwright can obtain a practical knowledge of the staging of plays through personal contact with the things that make the theatrical wheels go 'round. (Ranck 1912: 21)

This is probably the first theatrical conjunction of the two seemingly antithetical terms 'laboratory' and 'workshop' that would, however, go on to form a natural alliance in the twentieth century. The idea of a 'theatre laboratory' almost certainly originates with Stanislavsky's Theatre-Studio (laboratory's cognate term) which he established together with Meyerhold in 1904 at the Moscow Art Theatre, "a laboratory for more or less mature actors" (Brown 2019: 4).

The playwriting seminar, known as English 47 after its course number, was redubbed 47 Workshop, an "engineering-like label" in the words of Shannon Jackson, which emphasized programmatically the idea of skill and practical knowledge over poetic inspiration for the budding dramatist (Jackson 2004: 69). Under this label Baker also began publishing selected products of the workshop. Harvard's 47 Workshop quickly established itself as a model for what came to be known as 'Laboratory Theatres', university-based experimental stages whose work, Constance Mackay, the first surveyor of the Little Theatre movement, emphasized, "is of the present; their productions have contemporary interests; they appeal to the general public – not to an archaeological public" (Mackay 1917: 181). Apart from Harvard, she lists Dartmouth Laboratory Theatre, The Laboratory of Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh, and, as the only professional, non-student example, Grace Griswold's Theatre Workshop in New York (Figure 3). Griswold, a professional actress, launched an ambitious undertaking in late 1916 to harness the energies of New York's many unemployed theatre artists and put them to artistically high-minded use, drawing her inspiration from the European Art Theatre movement. It is not surprising then that her undertaking received enthusiastic support from Sheldon Cheney's *Theatre Arts Magazine*, the US mouthpiece of theatrical modernism (Cheney 1917: 135).

Although Griswold's Theatre Workshop only seems to have lasted until the end of World War I it marked a first tentative movement of the university-based laboratory theatre to the professional stage. By the 1920s 'The 47 Workshop' had also expanded beyond playwriting to include the central areas of theatrical production, as Baker emphasized in the first anthology of one-act plays: "This is a 'Workshop' because anyone who believes he has the ability in any of the arts connected with the theatre – acting, scene or costume designing, lighting directing, or playwriting – may here prove his quality" (Baker 1921: vii).



fig. 3: George Arliss conducting a workshop rehearsal on the stage of the Knickerbocker Theatre for Grace Griswold's Theatre Workshop, New York, 1917. Source: Theatre Magazine January 1918: 30. ([https://archive.org/details/theatremagazine27newyuoft/page/30.](https://archive.org/details/theatremagazine27newyuoft/page/30))

Most importantly, by the 1930s workshop and laboratory are established as twin, almost synonymous concepts embodying a processual approach to theatre making inside and outside the academy.

The term theatre workshop begins to be attached to mainly left-leaning, non-profit theatre groups and in 1936 it provided the title for a short-lived eponymous theatre magazine founded by The New Theatre League, which was organized in 1935 as a left wing federation of little theatres and amateur theatrical groups, where it also ran a 'theatre workshop' that trained actors, directors, playwrights, and stage managers.³ Although a short-lived publication, *Theatre Workshop's* editorial board contained an impressive line-up of figures associated with the Group Theatre including Lee Strasberg, Mordecai Gorelik and Joseph Losey. Its editorial policy emphasized "craftsmanship" and a commitment to providing "every serious *theatre worker* with a quarterly magazine which he can call his own". while adding that "the contemporary theatre looks to Moscow today for artistic leadership" (anon. 1936: 79-80; emphasis added).

By the mid-1930s the appellation 'theatre workshop' had migrated from the apolitical Arts Theatre of Sheldon Cheney and Grace Griswold and had re-established its leftist

credentials. For example, The Federal Theatre Workshop was one of the many sub-projects funded by the WPA Federal Theatre Project.

With the founding (or rather renaming) of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in 1945, the two semantic streams merge in the theatre. The Marxist-inflected site of the shop-floor, labour and solidarity conjoined with the largely apolitical, modernist laboratory/studio where new forms might be rehearsed outside the constraints of conventional theatre production:

The new name, Theatre Workshop, signalled Littlewood's increasing emphasis on the processes inherent in making theatre. ...this meant committing to a regular study and training regime encompassing impassioned lectures on theatre history, theatre and communism and theories of acting, and physical training encompassing relaxation, voice and movement exercises. (Holdsworth 2011: 12)

While "impassioned lectures" on theatre and communism remained somewhat specific to Littlewood's enterprise (she and her then partner Ewan MacColl were both members of the British Communist Party), the processual elements of theatre-making such as voice and movement exercises were to become part and parcel of workshop vocabulary irrespective of political or aesthetic inflection. Process rather product became and remains the foundational principle of the theatre-related workshop.

Workshops, Philanthropy and Modernization

The immediate post-war period sees the rise of the 'workshop' as an emblematic format for progressive artistic techniques. It becomes synonymous with experimentation and was soon adopted by US philanthropy (which could hardly be accused of leftist inclinations) during its period of energetic support for media and the arts outside the purely commercial realm. In 1952 the Ford Foundation established the Television and Radio Workshop to foster experimental work in the new broadcast media. Why it chose the term 'workshop' to head its new funding stream is not entirely clear but was probably a conscious reference to the Columbia Workshop established in 1938 by CBS and directed by Norman Corwin to provide an outlet for experimental radio drama. The Columbia Workshop had no predetermined format and hosted contributions, among others, from Orson Welles, Archibald MacLeish as well as Corwin himself.⁴ According to media scholar, Paul Saettler, the precursor to the Columbia Workshop, a 'radio workshop' founded at NYU in 1936 in collaboration with the U.S. Office of Education, established the term workshop in modern parlance (2009: 215).⁵

By the early 1950s the word evidently connoted a realm that privileged art rather than soap opera. The most famous product of the Ford Foundation's Television and Radio Workshop was the Omnibus series for CBS Television, dedicated to making available to television audiences an eclectic selection of highbrow offerings such as a made-for-television version of *King Lear*, directed by Peter Brook, starring Orson Welles as Lear, Brook's wife, Natasha Parry as Cordelia, and with music by Virgil Thomson to round off its modernist credentials. Featured artists included Leonard Bernstein who hosted educational programmes on music, the improvisational comedy duo Mike Nichols and Elaine May, the choreographer Agnes de Mille and Eartha Kitt in a version of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (Hawes 2002: 17-18).⁶ Like its pre-war precursor in radio, the name 'workshop', whether it referred to a programme or funding initiative, signalled a modernist openness for formal innovation, which required, however, substantial philanthropic support to reach its audience.



fig. 4: Leonard Bernstein conducting *Beethoven's Fifth Symphony* for the Omnibus television series, financed by Ford Foundation's Television and Radio Workshop. Library of Congress. Public domain.

Back in the theatre, the 1950s saw a plethora of theatre companies featuring 'workshop' as part of their name. The Actor's Workshop, founded by Herb Blau and Jules Irving in San Francisco in 1952, established itself as an avant-garde theatre company; Anna Halprin set up her San Francisco Dancers' Workshop in 1955 and Derek Walcott began his ambitious Trinidad Theatre Workshop in 1959, an attempt to establish the Caribbean's first ensemble-based repertory theatre. As in the broadcast media the term signalled an approach to theatre that departed from established, usually commercially oriented rehearsal and production procedures. Again the process rather than the product was primary; informal, project-based formats, conceived as a countermodel to the rigid rehearsal procedures of commercial or even state-funded theatre (on the continent), began to dominate the theatre avant-garde. Probably the

most famous expression of the workshop approach was the Theatre of Cruelty season at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1963/64 directed by Peter Brook and Charles Marowitz. Their improvisations around the writings of Antonin Artaud could not be called rehearsals, although they were intended as preparations for a production of Genet's *The Screens*. The process was called an "experimental workshop" and consisted largely of exercises with sound and movement rather than with the text of the play itself. The group was labelled the Royal Shakespeare Experimental Group.⁷ Brook himself bemoaned the lack of experimental and avant-garde theatre, while articulating the latter's standard mantra: "In order to face new audiences with creative formulas, we must first be able to face empty seats" (Brook 1987: 57).

The commitment to experimentation was not possible without either state-support (in the case of the RSC) or private sponsorship. As we have seen in the case of television, American philanthropy was committed to supporting, if not radical artistic experimentation, at least a fair amount of modernist programming, especially in the U.S., but also abroad. In its 1961-62 financial year the Ford Foundation supported The Actor's Workshop with a grant of \$197,000 under its Development of Artistic Institutions initiative, "to provide partial operating support while the group is financing a permanent theater building."⁸ This enabled the company to continue paying professional salaries in the absence of a venue. In a similar vein the Rockefeller Foundation provided support throughout the 1960s for Derek Walcott's Trinidad Theatre Workshop, which for the first years of its existence quite literally conducted workshops before it finally began public performances in 1963. In 1967 the Rockefeller Foundation provided \$25,000 for the New Lafayette Theatre and Workshop in New York "toward costs of establishing a permanent theatre company and workshop in Harlem."⁹

By the early 1960s workshop thinking permeated philanthropic philosophy and not just in the realms of the arts and theatre. The annual report of the Ford Foundation in 1962 contains numerous references to workshops in the contemporary sense. Funds were allocated to "workshops for television teachers and production personnel" (12), "summer research workshops" on research techniques in business education (45), staff management workshops in Nigeria and Ghana (57), and a "workshop on elementary-science teaching" (145) in the same region. The format of the workshop, meaning (according to the OED) "a meeting or conference at which the participants engage in intensive discussion and activity relating to a particular subject or project" is originally a U.S. usage. By the early 1960s the workshop process, although originating in the theatre, had established itself as format of choice for funding initiatives outside established educational structures.

In both the Ford and Rockefeller foundations we find a clear commitment to experimentation in the arts for which the term workshop functioned as a marker. The

Ford Foundation established a funding line in the 1960s called “Experiments and Demonstrations” which was mainly directed at the visual arts but also included theatre funding. The latter was subsumed under the subheading “Demonstrations in resident repertory theater” and recipients included as well as the Actor’s Workshop, the Arena Stage in Washington D.C. and Theatre, Inc., New York at the Phoenix Theatre. A resident repertory theatre company was, in the U.S. at least, an experiment in itself in an otherwise commercially driven theatre culture. Grants in this stream totalled \$6.1 million “to strengthen the repertory theater as a significant cultural resource and as a major outlet for the professional dramatist, director, and actor.” (1962: 23) The Rockefeller Foundation also diverted funds in a programmatically experimental direction. It funded an Institute for Advanced Studies in the Theatre Arts, a three-year international fellowship programme based in New York. While focusing on the First World, guests also came from Third World countries. Its artistic ideology was made clear in the 1962 annual report: “Commendation for the institute has been vigorous from those who favor *conscious theatrical style and deliberate rationality* in drama; less warm from proponents of naturalism in acting” (Rockefeller Annual Report 1962, 81; emphasis added). ‘Conscious theatrical style’ and ‘deliberate rationality’ are shorthand for an antinaturalistic, high modernist approach with perhaps even a Brechtian inflection, which saw in naturalism an outdated, nineteenth-century convention that limited the artistic possibilities of the medium.

Outside the U.S. the trinity of workshop, laboratory and experiment provided financial support in developing countries when a new generation of theatre-makers attached one or more of these epithets to their undertakings.¹⁰ As well as Walcott’s Trinidad Theatre Workshop, Rockefeller allocated funds in 1953 to Ateneo Puertorriquero in San Juan, Puerto Rico, towards equipment for its experimental theatre, over \$9,000 in 1960 in support of the experimental drama studio in Ghana directed by Efua Sutherland and in 1964 a smaller sum was given towards an “experimental training program” at the National Theatre of Uganda. Across the world we see that Rockefeller (and in other countries the Ford Foundation) was funding theatre activities that were not just artistically but positively experimentally focused. In India the Ford Foundation established in 1992 an initiative called Forum for Laboratory Theatres, which was designed to help theatre groups become influential centres of theatrical research and creativity in their respective regions. After a competitive selection process twelve “laboratories” were set up across the country. In 1996 it was folded into the Theatre Development Fund (TDF), administered by the India Foundation for the Arts but still funded by Ford until 2005. The move to create theatre laboratories in the different regions marks an extension of wider policy on the part of the Ford Foundation in the 1980s towards decentralization, especially of its cultural policy.

Workshops and Theatre for Development

If Ford and Rockefeller were still motivated by the idea of supporting artistic institutions in the developing world, with an emphasis on ‘institutions’, this began to change after the 1980s. The emergence of Theatre for Development (TfD), especially in sub-Saharan Africa, in the 1980s challenged old-school institution building with its grassroots approach to theatre-making. Originally a loose umbrella term for an assortment of practices that went by other names—often community or popular theatre—it gradually solidified under the term Theatre for Development. Whatever the moniker, TfD has its origins in the mid-1970s and came to full fruition in the 1980s where it slowly shed its radical origins and often forged alliances with various governmental, international, and later nongovernmental development programmes. Through a symbiotic connection with the academy and theatre practice, a whole generation of theatre students were trained to go out into the community, carry out theatrical projects ranging from building latrines to popularizing the use of fertilizer, and come back and write up the results. Here too the workshop proved to be the format of choice for the dissemination of ideas and techniques. As Kees Epskamp notes in his brief history of TfD: “The didactic format was the workshop” (Epskamp 2006: 14). Workshops can, however, come in all shapes and sizes. In September 1983 an international African Workshop on Theatre for Development followed by a three-day conference was organized in Harare, Zimbabwe, sponsored by UNESCO, ITI and the Zimbabwean government with support from the International Popular Theatre Alliance (IPTA). It involved 100 participants, 43 of whom came from other African countries, and 57 from the host country. Through its sheer size and conscious design “to support its popularization and extension to other African countries”, the workshop had more the status of a so-called field-defining event (Kidd and Hummelen 1983: 6). The term ‘workshop’ occupied here a double function: it defined the overall framework of the meeting but embedded in it were smaller practical, ‘didactic’ workshops where particular techniques or ‘tools’ (the word of choice) were demonstrated.

The word ‘tool’ or ‘development tool’ recurs throughout the report by Ross Kidd and Remmelt Hummelen. Its recurrence marks a semantic return, albeit indirectly, to the ideological world of the shopfloor, organized labour and the “engineering-like label of Baker’s 47 Workshop. Politically the space between Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop and the early phase of Theatre for Development is not great. The pioneers of TfD like Ross Kidd, Ngugi wa Mirii and Michael Etherton certainly saw themselves harnessing theatre for the improvement of the masses. Indeed the historiography of TfD identifies the nationalist independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s and their use of dance, songs and poetry as one of the streams into which TfD tapped (Kidd and Hummelen 1983: 3).

The TfD workshop belongs to the realm of adult education, staff training and upskilling as evidenced by the Ford Foundation's grants for Nigeria and Ghana in the early 1960s, but it is also strongly defined by a Marxist or at least socialist understanding of the theatre as a medium for masses. Its origins are more closely modernist yet vocational where the budding dramatist learnt his craft and the tools of the trade. By the mid 1970s it had become the medium of choice for avant-garde theatre and all forms of dance theatre except classical ballet (here the workshop could not displace hard grind at the bar).

Workshops and expertise

Richard Sennett defines a workshop as "a productive space in which people deal face-to-face with issues of authority. (...) In a workshop, the skills of the master can earn him or her the right to command, and learning from and absorbing those skills can dignify the apprentice or journeyman's obedience" (2008: 54). This definition resonates with the conception of theatre workshops since the early 20th century. Workshops as places for knowledge transfer presuppose a knowledge gap and a hierarchy: the workshop leader is superior to the participants in terms of his knowledge and experience (supposedly, at least); he teaches them, they learn from him; and this advantage gives him authority, empowers him to be the head of the workshop. He is an "instructor", someone who "furnishes, prepares" (lat. *instruō*, "to construct, build up") - and thus also someone who possesses influential power. Sennett reminds us that in the artists' workshops – the studios – the masters sketch out their works, which the students then carry out; the originality and signature of the work is that of the artist; the pupils imitate his style. This presupposes that originality can be passed on, that extraordinary techniques can be learned. In the academies of art and music there are still 'master' classes in which renowned artists instruct selected students.

A further term emerges in the context of workshops in the 1940s and 1950s, that of the expert. Workshop leaders like Sennett's masters, are experts, they have gained experience over time, know their field well and are often invited by the media in artistic or scientific contexts to pass on their expertise through interviews, statements and workshops. This may also involve imparting a specific doctrine (*Lehrmeinung*) or ideology.

If Sennett calls workshops "social institutions", then the social aspect of this form of work deserves attention. Workshops are characterised by a limited time, a specific place, didactic and learning goals and common learning rituals (group work, pauses, exchange of experience, feedback etc.). "Workshops present and past have glued people together through work rituals, whether these be a shared cup of tea or the urban parade; through mentoring, whether the formal surrogate parenting of

medieval times or informal advising on the worksite; through face-to-face sharing of information," says Sennett (2008: 73). Therefore it seems banal to conclude that workshops only *work* if the duality of authority and obedience, teaching and willingness to learn, master and student is adhered to. A workshop is an agreement between two parties – and this arrangement bears a resemblance to the theatrical contract. In Sennett's terms:

In the archaic theater there was relatively little divide between spectator and performer, seeing and doing; people danced and spoke, they retired to a stone seat to watch others dance and declaim. By the time of Aristotle, actors and dancers had become a caste with special skills of costuming, speaking and moving. Audiences stayed offstage, and so developed their own skills of interpretation as spectators. As critics, the audience sought to speculate then about what the stage-characters did not understand about themselves [...] The classicist Myles Burnyeat believes that here, in the classical theater, lies the origin of the phrase "seeing with the mind's eye". Which is to say, understanding separated from doing, the "Mind's eye" that of an observer rather than of a maker. (2008: 124)

In a workshop situation, there are observers and performers, experienced experts and learners, the knowledgeable and the not-yet-knowledgeable. The eyes are on one person: the expert. From him (or her) they learn to understand the "How" that they can apply after the workshop – and thus they become multipliers of a doctrine, the acquired knowledge and the newly acquired skills. In contemporary workshops, these hierarchies are flattened; although there are still experts and masters who lead workshops and guide participants, the latter are not passive recipients, but can also be experts themselves according to the situation.



Fig. 5: Playwright and director Severino Montano gives instructions to players, mostly teachers with no previous experience. (Severino Montano: Progress Report. The Arena Theatre of the Philippines. Manila 1955)

Figure 5 shows one of these experts imparting his knowledge: Filipino director, playwright, educator and theatre manager Severino Montano teaching at the Philippine Normal College in Manila. The photograph shows him giving instructions to 'players' at the beginning of the 1950s, "mostly teachers with no previous experience in the field of theatre, at the Philippine Normal College", as the caption says. Although the setting is not that of a typical seminar situation, and despite the circular seating arrangement, the hierarchy of knowledge transfer is clear: Montano is the skilled master, his disciples are unexperienced learners. Severino, born 1915 in the Philippines, went to the USA early to study and teach playwriting, directing and economy and to work for the Philippine government in Exile in Washington, D.C.. He took part in the famous 47 workshop at Yale and subsequently gave courses and workshops in rhetoric, drama and communication at the American University in Washington. The Rockefeller Foundation contacted him in 1951, at a time when the development of theatre and its financial support was high on their agenda. Montano was recommended to them as an expert on "the development of drama in the Philippines". With a Rockefeller scholarship, he returned to his home country after twelve years abroad and began to implement his mission through numerous workshops for teachers at Philippine Normal College in the form of an "Arena Theater/Theatre in the Round". Montano is a three-fold expert: on the one hand he has expertise in the field of theatre, community theatre and management, on the other hand he enjoyed a solid American-British education and finally, he possessed

local knowledge of his place of work. This qualifies him to guide, to "instruct" - and to circulate the idea of theatre development "for the masses". His students would become multipliers of this idea.

If one considers these factors: format and organisation, social institution, expertise, knowledge gap and knowledge transfer as essential constituents of workshops as a format, it might be argued that it is precisely this structure that makes workshops the preferred means of knowledge transfer (and influence/ infiltration?) in the period after the Second World War - and that philanthropic institutions that promote culture subsidize workshops as a means of choice. Finally, it can be argued that the workshop with its balance between expertise, informality and openness provided the ideal format for imparting knowledge – theatrical in the first instance, but later any kind – especially in situations where there seemed to be a great distance between knowledge and learner. It certainly moved experimental thinking in the theatre and the arts into the mainstream of late modernity and has become the format of choice for the knowledge society.

Works Cited

- Anon. 1936. "Theatre Workshop. A Prospect." *Theatre Workshop* 1 October: 79-81.
- Argelander, Ron. 1978. "Performance Workshops: Three Types." *The Drama Review: TDR* 22 (4):3-18.
- Baker, George P. 1921. 'Introduction', Plays of the 47 Workshop, 1st series. New York: Brentanos.
- Eric Barnouw, ed., *Radio Drama in Action: Twenty-five Plays of a Changing World*, New York: Rinehart & Co., 1945
- Brook, Peter. 1987. *The Shifting Point: Forty years of theatrical exploration 1946 to 1987*. London: Methuen.
- Brown, Bryan. 2019. *A History of the Theatre Laboratory*. Abington: Routledge.
- Bruce, Harold, ed. 1922. *Plays of the University of California Little Theatre Workshop*. Berkeley, CA.: University of California Little Theatre.
- Cheney, Sheldon. 1917. "Editorial Comment". *Theatre Arts Magazine* 2: 134-138.
- Kees Epskamp. 2006. *Theatre for Development: An Introduction to Context, Applications and Training* London: Zed Books.
- William Hawes. 2002. *Filmed Television Drama, 1952-1958*. New York: McFarland.
- Helfer, Richard, and Glenn Loney, eds. 1998. *Peter Brook: Oxford to Orghast*. London: Routledge.
- Holdsworth, Nadine. 2011. *Joan Littlewood's Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)
- Jackson, Shannon. 2004. *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kidd, Ross, Rammelt Hummelen. 1983. "African Workshop on Theatre for Development: A Report on an International Workshop held in Zimbabwe", UNESCO, Atelier African de théâtre (ZIMBABWE) 1982-1983.
- Marx, Karl. 1887. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. 1st Engl. edition ed. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Montano, Severino. 1955. *Progress Report. The Arena Theatre of the Philippines*. Manila.
- Ranck, Edwin Carty. 1912. "'Teaching Playwriting at Harvard.'" *The Writer: A Monthly Magazine to Interest and Help all Literary Workers*: 17-21.
- Saettler, Paul. 2004. *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Greenwich, CN.: Information Age Publishing).
- Sterling, Christopher H. ed. 2011. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of American Radio*. New York and London: Routledge.

¹ Factory and Workshop Act 1901. <https://archive.org/details/b22416365/page/81>. See also the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

² See Disraeli's speech on the third reading of the Bill for the Repeal of the Corn Laws: 15 May 1846 Hansard, 3/LXXXVI cols. 665-679.

³ The first number was devoted entirely to theories of acting. For more information on the New Theatre League, see the archival holdings at the New York Public Library: <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/2133#c180652>.

⁴ See also the entry on 'Norman Corwin' in Sterling (2011: 70).

⁵ There is a direct through-line to the Children's Television Workshop and its innovative series *Sesame Street*, which changed educational television for children; see Saettler (2009: 430).

⁶ William Hawes, *Filmed Television Drama, 1952-1958*, New York: McFarland, 2002, 17-18.

⁷ For the term "experimental workshop", see Helfer and Loney, (1998: 127-28).

⁸ The Ford Foundation Annual Report 1962, New York 1962, 24.

⁹ Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report 1967, 141.

¹⁰ By the end of the 1960s the term “theatre laboratory” had come to be associated with Grotowski’s eponymous theatre in Poland, but, as we have seen, its usage goes back at least as far as Baker’s 47 Workshop.