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The Director of Devised Theatre: Facilitating, Collaboration, Ownership and Empowerment.

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Contents

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Introduction

How I arrived at this project

In the second year of my undergraduate degree in Theatre Studies at the University of Glasgow, I took part in a group devising project, which used a research question addressed to a classic text to investigate modern and postmodern theatre practitioners. The group was 20 students strong and although the project was facilitated and guided by a theatre studies tutor, it was devised, directed, performed and designed by the group. We each had an equal stake in the project from the start of the process and as such there was no initial hierarchy of playwright, director, actor that can be found in more traditional theatre-making processes. A number of important things effected the dynamic of the group at certain points of the process. Although no one was appointed director there were a key group of three or four members who ended up making key dramaturgical decisions about the structure of the piece; and though there was no writer, those performing developed material for their own strand of the presentation. One problem in this process was that it became very difficult for anyone to make decisions about the content of the piece without offending someone in the group. There was also a sense that the naturally more dominant or loudest members of the class had their say and got their ideas realised. It later became apparent to me that of the four people in the 'dramaturgy' group three of them were male in a group that consisted of 5 male students to 15 female students. What on the surface seemed like a collaborative and democratic devising process was, in fact, a highly problematised one where a few dominant members of the class assumed a prioritised status within the group dynamic, resulting in the contribution of the less empowered members being over-written.

In the subsequent two years of my undergraduate degree, I followed the progression of a group of friends who established a devising collective, For We Are Many. The group was established in the mould of a socialist idea of theatre-making in which there was no director and everyone had an equal say. It made three full-scale productions as a company. The first production was *Shit and Sugar* (2006) with nine performers and no director. A review of the show by Joyce McMillan in *The Scotsman* comments that 'this is a young company that needs to

stop demonstrating what it can do, and start thinking harder, and with more discipline, about what it needs to say'.[1] Its second show, *The Dream Life of Louise Michell* (2007) was performed with eight performers, one of whom was directing. *Louise Michell* was reviewed by Mary Brennan in *The Herald* who argued that the hectic energy of the piece 'tended to show only the members of For We Are Many getting totally absorbed in a sub-text that meant something to them . . . but sadly didn't reach out to include the audience'.[2] Its third show *Rigmarole* (2008) was made with five performers. It was directed by one of the company members who did not perform in the show and co-written by the director and one of the performers. It was described by Gareth Vile as 'a more formal and considered production' than their previous works.[3] What I observed as the company developed, which seems to be reflected in these reviews, is that its work became more coherent and clear in communicating to the audience. Through informal discussions with the company at the time it also seemed that as it moved towards a less collective model, the process of making work became smoother. Was the designation of specific roles of writer(s) and director within this company what led to its work becoming more coherent? How did the dynamic of the group change when they started working with a director and writers? Does my perceived quality of the end product reflect a failing of the original company structure?

In both of these examples the relationship between collective theatre-making and the necessary yet problematic role of a director figure are indicative of a tension involved in devised theatre practices. As Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling identify, in their book *Devising Performance: A Critical History,* the director's function within devising practices 'complicate[s] the notion of non-hierarchical work of democratic participation'.[4] As such, I have arrived at this subject with a keen interest to further develop and understand the role of the director within a collaborative environment. To investigate the inherent complexities and contradictions of the director's function within collaborative practices it is necessary to ask; What is the role of the

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[1]   Joyce McMillan. 'Shit and Sugar review'. *The Scotsman.* 22nd November 2006.
      http://living.scotsman.com/features/Shit--Sugar.2828964.jp accessed June 2011.

[2]   Mary Brennan. 'Arches Live review'. *The Herald*. 1st October 2007.
      http://www.heraldscotland.com/arches-live-arches-glasgow-1.840608 accessed June 2011.

[3]   Gareth Vile. 'Rigmarole review'. *British Theatre Guide.*
      http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/rigmarole-rev.htm accessed June 2011.

[4]   Dierdre Heddon and Jane Milling. *Devising Performance: A Critical History.* London: Palgrave,
      2006. p. 5.

director in devised theatre? is director even the right word? What might a model of directing for collaborative practices entail? How might the director facilitate this (supposed) collaboration? What stakes of ownership are deployed in the work created in collaborative devising contexts? How is devised theatre written? Can/should we attribute authorship to anyone in this process? Academic study into the critical history of devising and directing in contemporary theatre already exists[5], however through answering the above questions this thesis will contribute to a more focused investigation into the distinct relationships involved in the making of contemporary theatre. The majority of writing about directing in devised theatre offers either a critical account of the work of devising companies or archival documentation of their process. There have been few sources where both the theoretical and practical have been thoroughly engaged within one debate. Heddon and Milling state in their introduction that 'Given the widespread use of the mode of practice that we might call 'devising', it is curious that the conversation that [Alison] Oddey hoped would result from the publication of her book [on devising] has never really taken place'.[6] Although Heddon and Milling's work (2006) and other subsequent publications are of course a contribution to this conversation, the processes and practices of devised theatre, and in particular the role of the director in this context, are territories that are still heavily under-researched.

An attempt to define devised theatre as a form will help the investigation of it as a subject of study. As discussed in Heddon and Milling's book, the term devising could also be used to describe the 'traditional rehearsal and staging of a play-text' as in this context a performance is devised but using a script as a starting point.[7] However their argument is that this categorisation is unhelpfully broad given the huge range of performances that the definition would encapsulate. In response they offer a focus for their study that defines devised theatre as a 'process for creating performance from scratch, by the group, without a pre-existing script'.[8] I

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[5] Most notably Alison Oddey's *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*, Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling's *Devising Performance: A Critical History*, Jon Whitmore's *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance*. Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington's *Making a Performance,* Jen Harvie and Andy Lavender's *Making Contemporary Theatre* and Alex Mermikides and Jackie Smart's *Devising in Process.*

[6] Heddon and Milling. p 1.

[7] Ibid. p. 3

[8] Ibid.

would refine this by terming devised theatre as theatre or performance that is made usually, but not always, in collaboration with other theatre-makers, in which there is no written script at the start of rehearsals but a performance is created through practical exploration using a concept or idea as a starting point.

Given the breadth of devising practices, histories, and styles that even this definition includes it is necessary for this thesis to define a focus on what I would term 'contemporary collaborative devised performance' as this is where I would locate my practice and where I believe the most relevant work is being made in relation to the concerns raised above. In this sub genre the resultant style could variously be described as 'postmodern', 'post-dramatic', 'image-based', 'collagistic', 'multiplicitous', 'fragmented', 'non-linear' and 'anti-narrative'. This style of work is often termed 'postmodern performance', however, I have avoided this categorisation as the 'postmodern' is bound up with its own complexities and shifting definitions in a twenty-first century context. There is also an extent to which the label of 'postmodern' in theatre does not always allow space for the practice of collaboration. For instance, in Jon Whitmore's 1994 publication *Directing Postmodern Theatre* he places importance on the director as author, communicating meanings through the complex navigation of semiotic sign-systems rather than focussing on the collaborative nature of much work that could be labelled 'postmodern'.[9] As this genre of devised performance has a lineage that can cite a range of theatre, art and performance practices, it will be important for me to occasionally broaden this focus in order to contextualise or locate this strand of devising within a wider historical and theoretical framework. It is for this reason that I will draw upon the histories and practices of British political theatres of the 60s and 70s, applied theatre practices, the rise of the theatre director amongst twentieth-century modernist theatres, the historical avant-garde, twentieth-century actor training and physical theatres. In this sense, whilst the subject of this research may be specific to the context of contemporary collaborative devised performance, I hope that my findings will contribute to and stimulate the wider discussions and critical discourses on the role of the director and the practices of theatre-making more generally.

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[9] Jon Whitmore. *Directing Postmodern Theatre: Shaping Signification in Performance*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994. pp. 1-30.

As a theatre-maker I am also interested in exploring and understanding my own practice as a director. As a result of this interest the thesis will include reflections upon a series of practical devising workshops that I conducted between January 31st and March 14th 2010 and contextualising sections that will outline professional projects I have undertaken outwith the research for this thesis. These projects have inevitably informed and been in dialogue with the discussions that follow and as such I hope that they can serve as constructive interruptions to the main content of this thesis. In order to investigate the processes and relationships present in the making of devised theatre this practice-as-research methodology, working within a performance studio, has been imperative. Baz Kershaw makes a distinction between practice-*based*-research and practice-*as*-research. He defines practice-based-research as 'research *through* live performance practice, to determine how and what it may be contributing in the way of new knowledge or insights in fields other than performance.'[10] Whereas practice-as-research is 'research *into* performance practice, to determine how that practice may be developing new insights into or knowledge about the forms, genres, uses etc., of performance itself'.[11] Kershaw argues that in this context the researcher(s) will need to be in some sense 'a creative performance practitioner' and whilst implicit in this definition is an acknowledgment of the methodological approaches that might be employed, that of employing practice as a methodology, a more useful definition might be: research into performance practice, that uses performance practice as a methodology in order to develop new insights into or knowledge about performance practices.

In undertaking the task of making performance I have been able to examine and evaluate first hand the relationships between the director, performers and the resulting devised work, however my use of practice as a methodology, to contribute to new insights about devised theatre has been complex. My research output from the practice has not been the practice (the resultant performance) but my own reflections and analysis of the process of making that practice. In this sense it could be termed process-as-research. Practice-as-research methodologies have their own complexities and problems, as Kershaw argues, 'the ephemerality of performance introduces into any research aiming to deal with

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[10] Baz Kershaw. 'Performance, Memory, Heritage, History, Spectacle- *The Iron Ship.' Studies in Theatre and Performance*. 22:3 (2002) p. 165.

[11] Ibid.

it an experiential component in which the subjective-objective/participant-observer dyads… are deeply problematised.'[12] For this reason, and in an attempt to support or challenge the findings of my own practice, I have observed, participated in, discussed and reflected on the processes of Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore, co-directors of Glas(s) Performance and Junction 25. This participant observation, whilst not always explicit in the thesis and not without its own complexities, has certainly informed the work and allowed me to develop and refine my ideas.

Chapter 1, 'The Director of Devised Theatre: A Context' will provide an historical and theoretical context to the discussion of the director in devised theatre. I will explore the idea of the director as 'auteur' and the rise of the director as a creative artist, rather than an interpreter of texts, during twentieth-century developments in new theatre forms. I will place this alongside the notion of the actor as a creative contributor that emerged with the evolution of actor training in the twentieth-century in order to investigate the potential tensions and contradictions between the creative performer and director/auteur. I will re-chart the emergence of devising as a form in a way that acknowledges its relationship to, rather than distinction from, text-based theatre. Tracing the lineage of devising practices can provide a clearer definition of the form and therefore a clearer understanding of the director's role within this form. I will examine the history of collaborative practices within post-war political theatres, and the shift from working structures that were in alignment with socialist ideologies to collaboration as a means to develop a multiple and postmodern performance. Finally, I will identify the current politics of collaboration within contemporary devising companies as one where the desire to collaborate stems from a distrust of fixed truths and hierarchies, but where the necessary role of the director as a facilitator of democratic participation is acknowledged.

In Chapter 2, 'Directing Devised Theatre: Collaboration – Clash and Consensus' I will outline a series of models of collaborative practices in order to investigate in more depth the problematic tension between the director and collaboration. I will explore how the shift in collaborative practices has led to a value placed on specific roles and skills within devising processes and how the director's role has become one of facilitator of collaboration and shaping of a coherent performance

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[12] Ibid. p. 166.

work. I will draw on Alex Mermikides 'Clash' and 'Consensus' models in the work of Forced Entertainment and Shunt to explore the process of collaboration in the practice of making work and interrogate the director's position within this. Finally, I will use the practical workshops that I led between January and March 2010 and my collaboration with Glas(s) Performance on their show *Generation* (2011) to offer some practical approaches for facilitating collaboration and identify their potential problems. In this section I will explore the usefulness of creating a shared language, allowing an open dialogue, and joining in with group activities in the process of devising.

In Chapter 3 'Ownership 1: Concepts of Authorship, Imitation, Copyright and Intellectual Property' an exploration of the director's claim to authorship of a devised work will require me to chart the construction of authorship during the romantic period, one that defines the author as singular creative originary. I will expose this as a construct, and argue that it still determines how authorship is defined legally and the effect this has had on the prioritised status of the written text in theatre production, drawing on examples from the American Repertory Theatre's version of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* (1984) and The Wooster Group's *L.S.D. (…Just the High Points…)* (1984) which incorporated long sections of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. In order to deconstruct the romantic conception of authorship I will draw on poststructuralist critiques of the author found in Barthes and Foucault. In an attempt to answer who 'writes' devised theatre I will ultimately argue for the director's role in devised theatre practices as one of authorship through direction in the way that they select and arrange constituent material into a coherent, readable work.

If Chapter 3 looks at who can stake a claim of authorship over a devised work, then Chapter 4 'Ownership 2: Empowering the Performer' will look at whether the performer can be said to own the resulting work of a collaboratively devised process and how this can be facilitated by the director. I will draw on Dorinda Hulton's essay 'Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)' which provides examples of ways in which actors can be trained in skills of generating and selecting material as creative contributors rather than interpreters of text. I will again draw on my own practical devising workshops in order to identify moments where the performers were empowered as creative contributors and what my role was in facilitating this. The idea of empowering the performers in devised work

shares concerns with applied theatre practices and as such I will draw on the theoretical discourses surrounding this practice as well as observations of the practice and processes of Glas(s) Performance and Junction 25 in order to help define the ethical responsibilities of the director in certain devising contexts.

The cumulation of these chapters will attempt to carve out a new definition for the director of devised theatre. By asking what the role of the director in contemporary collaborative devised performance is and exploring how they might facilitate collaboration, ownership and empowerment, I wish to place importance on the distinct job of the director within collaborative theatre-making.

1 The Director of Devised Theatre: A Context

This chapter will site the role of the director in contemporary devised theatre by placing the history of the theatre director's emergence in the twentieth-century alongside that of the rise in popularity of the devising form towards the end of the twentieth-century. I will start by exploring the term 'auteur' in relation to theatre directing and the origins of the creative actor, by this term I mean an actor who contributes creatively to the development of a work through improvisation, and the use of games and exercises in rehearsal. As I will explore below, the discussion of this term often forces the binary of creative vs. interpretive, however, in reality the 'creative actor' could also broadly encapsulate acting in various forms of text-based theatre. I will investigate the tensions implicit in collaborative practices as displayed in socialist theatre companies of the 60s and 70s, which arose from the political context of the New Left, the trade union movement and the idea of 'participatory democracy'. I will ultimately look at the way that these histories have impacted upon the director's role within contemporary devising company structures. I will go on to challenge the often preconceived binary that exists between 'devised' and 'text-based' theatre and by charting the complex web of influences that have defined contemporary devising practices, I can contest the patriarchal history of modern theatre developments from one of singular male innovators to a more collaborative and intertextual lineage. This can help in recognising how a devising 'tradition' has emerged and how the director of devised theatre may claim a role that requires its own specific skills as different to but not distinct from traditional ideas of the director as an interpreter of texts. Finally, I will provide an historical context for the emergence of collaborative practices as democratised working structures within theatre-making, how this has shifted in the development of devising forms into an acknowledgement of the useful function of the director that does not ignore their potentially problematic, prioritised status.

The director 'auteur' and the creative actor

David Bradby and David Williams chart the rise of the modern theatre director in their book *Directors' Theatre,* which traces a shift in focus amongst innovative theatre practices of the twentieth-century. This shift carved out a role for the director as an artist and 'auteur' of the work. It is useful to provide a brief description of the term 'auteur'. *La politique des auteur* or auteur theory was first

articulated by a collection of French film-makers and intellectuals in the magazine *Cahiers du cinema* and was developed by French film-maker Francois Truffaut in his 1954 essay 'A certain tendency in French cinema'. The theory defines a film as the product of the director's personal creative vision, and argues that therefore they should be considered the 'author' of that film. Truffaut also suggested that 'good' directors have a distinctive style that is traceable in their body of work.[13] Of course, in the practices and histories of 'film' and 'theatre' there are important distinctions to be made; the director of a cinematic work has a bolder claim to authorship due to their opportunity to control what the audience sees through the use of the camera; they are essentially *guiding* the viewer's gaze in a way that is not nearly as easy in the theatre. In addition to this, cinema is a comparatively recent development that does not have the same relationship to historical literary traditions as theatre; the screenwriter has never really been regarded as 'author' in the same way that the playwright has. However, despite these distinctions, I will discuss how the shift in the theatre director's role during the twentieth-century does share similarities with the cinematic 'auteur'.

Bradby and Williams argue that in today's theatre – or at the time of writing in 1988 – the director is the main creative force. They recognise that critics identify 'Brook's *Lear*' or 'Planchon's *Tartuffe*' and thus the 'director claims the authorial function even though he has not written the original play'.[14] Clearly this resonates with Truffaut's idea of the auteur. When Edward Gordon Craig coined the term 'stage director' in the early twentieth-century he intended to emphasise 'the director's role as a master of all the signifying practices peculiar to stage-gesture and movement, sound, lighting, costume, design and speech'.[15] This emergence of a 'job description' of sorts emphasises the shifting importance placed upon the skill and technique of the theatre director that is in line with *la politique des auteurs*. Furthermore, this is one of the first instances in which the priority of 'signifying practices' is not indebted to the written text, but rather is an acknowledgement of the many potential meaning makers on stage. Bradby and Williams expose a problematic element within Craig's thinking in line with criticisms of auteurism. They state that:

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[13] James Naremore. 'Authorship'. *A Companion to Film Theory.* Eds. Toby Miller and Robert Stam. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. pp. 2-5.

[14] David Bradby and David Williams. *Directors' Theatre.* London: Macmillan, 1988. p. 1.

[15] Ibid. p. 4.

> The director must indeed be the orchestrator of all the expressive idioms of the stage, yet if he treats them exclusively as raw materials to be reshaped he misses the most important thing, which is that, however impressive his vision, it only comes to life through the creative work of the actors, designers and all others involved in the process.[16]

Within this lies an important contradiction inherent in the idea of the director as 'auteur'. There is a difficulty in crediting one single author of a work when the process is unavoidably collaborative in its nature. In his essay on authorship in cinema, James Naremore makes a similar criticism of auteurism. He argues that when the inherently collaborative nature of cinema is acknowledged, the idea that the director is the single author of a cinematic work is highly problematic.[17] If you grant authorship to the director then this effectively 'writes out' the contribution of the screenwriter, producer, director of photography, actors, etc. This is also true when we consider the theatre director as auteur, especially in the context of a collaboratively devised performance.

The ideas that were developing concurrently and arguably in contradiction with the emergence of director's theatre were concerned with placing importance on the actor's creativity. Perhaps the most important developments in thinking surrounding the actor in the twentieth century was that of the 'creative performer'; an actor who was not just an interpreter of texts but also contributed to the creation of material. This concept grew from developments in psychological thinking in the early twentieth-century that placed importance on self-exploration and self-expression as a way to liberate the individual, placing the performer as both 'subject and object of the creative process'.[19] These theories manifested in practical theatre-making as 'the application of games and other playful activities and improvisation into the devising and rehearsal process'[20]. Although both Stanislavsky and Meyerhold were aware of the importance of the actor's contribution in the development of new forms, the theatre directors that are most often cited as the key innovators in the development of the creative actor are Jerzy

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[16] Ibid. pp. 12-13.

[17] Naremore. p. 9.

[19] Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington. *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices*. London: Routledge, 2007. p. 31.

[20] Ibid.

Grotowski, Ariane Mnouchkine, Julian Beck and Judith Malina with The Living Theatre and Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre. Grotoswki's experiments in his Laboratory Theatre of 60's Poland 'required actors to undertake a process of self-exploration and physical training to strengthen their creativity'.[21] Chaikin's Open Theatre was, according to Dorinda Hulton, 'the first well-known American group to explore collaborative creation, and four major projects were undertaken in which the actor played a central role in generating and researching material for performance.[22] These few practitioners working in the second half of the twentieth-century are often identified as the originators of the devising form and suggest a lineage that is more complex than the 'passing of the torch' that is often suggested in the narrative of twentieth-century theatre forms, which often reads as Duke Georg II inspired Stanislavsky who then inspired Meyerhold who then influenced Grotowski (an idea I will discuss in more detail below). In their book *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices*, Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington describe the landscape that instigated the emergence of the creative performer. They state that the development of the actor's creativity,

> not only reflected a commitment to breaking the authority of directors and, in some instances, to challenging the authorial voice of the playwright, it also signalled a new interest in the power of spontaneity and improvisation. It was a way of thinking about human subjectivity which drew inspiration from the newly emergent field of psychology, where freedom of expression and self-exploration was considered both personally and socially enriching.[23]

The authors of this book attribute the use of improvisation and play in the practice of theatre to this emergent psychology. Govan *et al.* comment that through the games, improvisation and other playful activities 'the idea that creativity liberated the individual was brought to practical theatre-making'.[24] In the 1920s, theatre director Jacques Copeau talked about the link between childhood play and artistic creativity in the theatre. He wrote that:

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[21] Ibid. p. 32.

[22] Dorinda Hulton. 'Joseph Chaikin and aspects of actor training: possibilities rendered present'. *Twentieth-century Actor Training.* ed. Alison Hodge. London: Routledge, 2000 p. 154.

[23] Govan, Nicholson and Normington. p. 16.

[24] Ibid. p. 31.

> It is through play, in which children imitate more or less consciously all human activities and sentiments, which is for them a natural path towards artistic expression and for us a living repertoire of the reactions of the most authentic kind.[25]

This approach to conceptualising 'play' in making theatre can be traced through to a much more recent study of the creative actor. In Dorinda Hulton's essay 'The Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)', she offers an account of the 'Creative Actor' Theatre Practice course that she runs at the University of Exeter's Drama department. Hulton defines her course as one that is 'concerned with the question of how an actor might be trained in the making of plays rather than in their interpretation'.[26] It should be noted that Hulton's implied distinction between 'creative' and 'interpretive' is an oversimplification. The traditional process of interpreting and realising a play-text still relies on the creativity of all of the contributing artists. As expressed by Ariane Mnouchkine's long-term assistant Sophie Monosco when she states that 'even if you have a text, there is improvisational work. That is, you improvise with the text'.[27] Nevertheless Hulton states that in the process of making a performance 'the student actors who engage in her training are, in a way, not called upon to be more or less "creative" than a child on a beach finding, selecting, arranging and then naming a collection of driftwood'.[28] In comparing notions of childhood play to artistic creativity, the assumption that creativity is in some way synonymous with genius is challenged. The notion of the creative actor, then, problematises the idea of the auteur as one objectively talented individual making important work, and puts the creative decisions in the hands of the actor's subjectivity.

Govan, Nicholson and Normington chart the histories of thought surrounding inward creativity. They attribute it to developments in psychology that saw the theories of Freud and Jung become widely available, then embraced and developed by Dadaists as a reaction against the First World War. They argue that

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[25] Jacques Copeau quoted in John Rudlin. 'Jacques Copeau: The quest for sincerity'. *Twentieth-century Actor Training.* ed. Alison Hodge. London: Routledge, 2000 p. 74.

[26] Dorinda Hulton, 'Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)'. *Theatre Praxis: Teaching Drama Through Practice.* Ed. Christopher McCullough. London: Macmillan, 1998. p. 15.

[27] J. Feral. 'Théâtre du Soleil – A Second Glance'. *The Drama Review.* 1989. 33:4. 98-106. p. 106

[28] Hulton. p. 16.

> The idealisation of the creative individual was responsive to the mood of the times, in which traditional values associated with Christianity and patriotism were subject to radical scrutiny by artists and intellectuals scarred by the horrors of trench warfare in the First World War.[29]

They go on to argue that at this time, and in light of this war, the idea of trusting the individual felt a more 'optimistic' alternative than 'following the heroism of "great men"'.[30] Given that the origins of the creative actor lie in this distrust of 'great men', the fact that the developments in actor training have mostly been led by male directors in a position of power becomes problematic. This leads to the key question of whether it is possible to have both an empowered performer and a director-auteur. In her introduction to *Twentieth-century Actor Training,* Alison Hodge asks whether the 'potentially dictatorial auteur has ultimately facilitated or disempowered the actor?'[31] Leading the innovation of the empowered performer were arguably the directors discussed earlier – Grotoswki, Mnouchkine, Chaikin – and not the actor's themselves. Stanislaw Scierski, who worked with Grotowski in his Laboratory Theatre in the 60s supports this argument when he comments that 'the progress of the collective search was in Grotowski's hands. He helped the "studies" to develop, respecting our right to take risks; he selected them; very often he inspired them'.[32] Although Grotowski was developing modes of practice that embraced collaboration and saw the actor as a creative artist, there was still an extent to which the investigations were led by him. We can trace repetitions of this pattern throughout twentieth-century theatre, with directors such as Joan Littlewood and Chaikin for instance. In British political theatre of the 1960s and 70s, fostering collaborative practices became about ideological as well as aesthetic concerns, developing a theatre practice that was in alignment with current socialist and feminist politics. However problems still arose as to the collective credentials of the companies. As Heddon and Milling argue

> Whilst the rhetoric of devising emphasised the collaborative nature of the empowered actor in generating the performance material, the extent to which any of the theatre groups discussed here relinquished the idea of directorial authority is a moot point.

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[29] Govan, Nicholson and Normington. p. 30.

[30] Ibid. p. 30.

[31] Alison Hodge. 'Introduction'. *Twentieth-century Actor Training.* London: Routledge, 2000. p. 2.

[32] Govan, Nicholson and Normingtom. p. 34.

They go on to observe that rather than the director being disempowered by the emergence of the creative actor, the 'director-auteur' of alternative political theatre 'represented the culmination of the rise of the director.'[33] They cite theatre academic Arnold Aronson who noted that during this time:

> Most groups functioned more on the model of the totalitarian phase of communism: there was a collective of actors, but the groups tended to have autocratic, even dictatorial, leaders in the form of visionary directors, who, in essence, replaced the playwright as the creative fount for texts.[34]

As with the twentieth-century innovators, rather than seeing a democratic dispersal of power, we see the director taking the place of the playwright as 'authorial', 'dominant' and 'visionary'.

In applying the ideas of the director-auteur and the creative actor to *contemporary* devising we can learn about the hierarchies, practices and processes of the devising companies involved. What is present within the structure of the groups discussed below is a blend of collaborative practices that shifts from company to company and is, as Heddon and Milling state, 'determined by the working practices (and histories) of each company'.[35] In their chapter entitled 'Postmodern Performance and Contemporary Devising', Heddon and Milling highlight that 'most companies cited… have one designated director, and… this role does not rotate' but there is a tendency to work collaboratively within this hierarchical structure.[36] James Yarker of Stan's Café Theatre Company comments on his role as 'artistic director' within the group:

> I tend to bring the core ideas to the table for each new project. These may well have been influenced by discussions with other company members, they may arise out of previous shows we have worked on or common lines of thought, but I tend to set the agenda first off. Then everyone else gets their hands on the idea and there is no real preciousness about who's come up with what.[37]

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[33] Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling. *Devising Performance: A Critical History.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. pp. 47-48.

[34] Heddon and Milling. p. 61.

[35] Ibid. p. 213.

[36] Ibid.

[37] James Yarker. www.stanscafe.co.uk/qcollaboration.html accessed on 22nd October 2010.

This is a democratised practice that is initiated by one 'artistic director'. This process can also be seen in Goat Island's company structure; although director Lin Hixson sets the prompt for devising, 'the decision about which material is retained and which discarded is taken collectively'.[38] This pattern is also identifiable in Sheffield-based company Forced Entertainment, which develops performances collaboratively, with Tim Etchells taking on the role of director and writer.[39] Meanwhile, Elizabeth LeCompte of The Wooster Group describes it as her job to 'build the frame around the performer's lives', using the actors as a resource to create an artistic work.[40] Some devising companies work with two directors acting as co-directors of the work; Gregg Whelan and Gary Winters are co-artistic directors of Lone Twin Theatre.[41] Sheffield company Third Angel was co-founded by Alexander Kelly and Rachael Walton in 1995. They state that their work is 'devised, directed and designed' by them, but they also work with other performers.[42] It could be argued, then, that the contemporary devising company is diverse and heterogeneous, it is shifting and defined by the specificities of the individuals involved who have settled on a structure that best suits their practice, which they have arrived at through experimentation and an exploration of the practicalities of devising and the distinctive skills of each company member.

The version of devising histories I have articulated here places importance on the 'rise of the director' and the development of the 'creative performer'. At some points in this narrative there has been conflict between the creativity of the actor and the authorial role of the director but by looking at the organisational structures of contemporary devising companies it is clear that this conflict has been resolved to an extent, but it is specific to each company and each set of individuals collaborating within that company. The developments in these relationships can be attributed to a shifting set of concerns amongst twentieth-century theatre-makers; starting with the necessity to establish new forms, then to facilitate the creativity of individual contributors, to develop ideologically sound working practices, and finally to create a process that matches the aesthetic concerns of a 'postmodern' arts practice. I recognise that not all devising practices share these concerns and

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[38] Heddon and Milling. p. 213.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Tim Etchells. *Certain Fragments*. London: Routledge, 1999. pp. 55.

[41] Lone Twin. http://www.lonetwin.com/about.htm accessed on 23rd October 2010.

[42] Third Angel. http://www.thirdangel.co.uk/about.php accessed on 23rd October 2010.

different histories exist – as in the context of physical theatre devising companies emerging out of the training and influence of the French mime tradition. However, I remind the reader that I am focussing on contemporary collaborative devised performance and as such we can trace a lineage that is rooted in the concerns above.

Charting a web of influences: Exploding the binaries of 'devised' and 'text-based' theatre.

In his blog for *The Guardian* website Andy Field, theatre-maker and co-director of Forest Fringe, has commented that 'all theatre is devised and all theatre is text-based'.[43] In this article Field makes the point that all theatre is devised in the sense that to devise is to invent, whether this be one person writing a set of instructions to be interpreted by another set of people or a group of people playing around with a series of ideas and collectively deciding what to keep. He also argues for the text as a blueprint for performance, even if this means the embodied text of a physical performance.[44] Whilst Field is right to note that a binary opposition of 'devised' and 'text-based' theatres may not be useful, especially in the discussion of work that cannot be so easily defined, I find his approach of combining these definitions into one too easy. The complexities of what we might define the 'origins of devised theatre' and the shared histories it can claim with 'traditional', 'text-based' theatre can create a more nuanced definition that acknowledges devising's difference – not distance from – other theatre forms. In doing this we can further understand the role of the director in this process.

The first major study of devised theatre was published in 1994 in the form of Alison Oddey's *Devised Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*, which provides both a critical study of devising practices as well as practical exercises and suggestions for new and student devisers. Whilst Oddey's study was an important first step in the discussion of this fairly young form, it too often places 'devised theatre' in opposition to other, more traditional forms of theatre. Oddey states that:

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[43] Forest Fringe is an artist-led festival and venue that makes 'space for theatrical experimentation at the Edinburgh Festival and beyond'. Forest Fringe http://www.forestfringe.co.uk/about-us/ accessed on 25th October 2010.

[44] Andy Field. 'All Theatre is Devised and Text-based'. *The Guardian Website* http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/21/theatre-devised-text-based accessed on 18th October 2010.

> Devised theatre is an alternative to the dominant literary theatre tradition, which is the conventionally accepted form of theatre dominated by the often patriarchal, hierarchical relationship of playwright and director. This dominant tradition revolves around and focuses on the interpretation of the playwright's text by a director, culminating in a performance which is realized through a production process (within a prescribed period and means) in a theatre building.[45]

Whilst this may be true in many cases, it is perhaps an unhelpful distinction that fails to acknowledge the complexities. Heddon and Milling argue against this when discussing the impact of the creative actor on ways of thinking about devising. They state that:

> to have the actor as creative contributor to the making of performance, and not an interpreter of text, has perhaps encouraged the idea that devising is anti-literary by nature and this is by no means accurate.

They go on to argue that despite the emergence of the creative actor in the second half of the twentieth-century, there has still been an emphasis placed on the role of the writer in the rehearsal room.[46] The implications of this suggest a prioritising of the distinct 'job' of the writer in the creation of theatre, meaning that the writer's skill set is seen as purely their domain and could not be performed by a director or actor in the devising process.

In order to explode the binary between devised and text-based theatre, yet challenge the writer's prioritised status, it seems necessary to (re)chart the emergence of devising, starting with the early twentieth-century innovators of 'modern' theatre discussed earlier. Both in the histories and the discussion of these histories there remains a tendency to refer to one singular innovator 'passing the baton on' to another singular innovator; defining the rise of the director as singular, male and homogenised. By returning to both Edward Braun's and Bradby and Williams' studies of the rise of the director, it is clear that both books identify a relationship between innovators that relies on a familiarity with each other's work and the desire to develop their ideas further, building on the innovations of previous directors. Braun states that Stanislavsky did not miss a single performance of Duke Georg II's Meiningen Players when they visited Moscow in 1890 yet found that they 'brought little that was new into the old stagey

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[45] Alison Oddey. *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*. London: Routledge, 1994. p. 4.

[46] Heddon and Milling. p. 7

methods of acting'.[47] Meyerhold was an actor in Stanislavsky's company but thought that his efforts to create a stage reality lacked the most important theatrical quality: play.[48] These histories do little to express the complexities of charting the emergence of a form such as devising. However, if we (re)conceive the idea of through lines of directorial influence as a 'web of influences', then we can challenge the idea of singular innovators without forgetting their contribution, and provide a conceptualisation of the history of modern theatre innovations that embrace ideas of collaboration and intertextuality. This idea is elucidated by Richard Schechner's description of Grotowski's influence on practices of devised performance: he describes it as operating 'the way a rock dropped into a pond causes concentric waves to expand onwards in ever widening circles'.[49] This metaphor acknowledges the complexities of influence, and although it starts with one man – Grotowski – it is easy to imagine any number of waves expanding throughout Europe and North America at this time. Hodge recognizes this in the work of Joan Littlewood with Theatre Workshop when she argues that in combining Stanislavsky's method with the movement training of Rudolf Laban, Littlewood, 'rather than re-interpreting Stanislavsky… finds the interface with a completely different system of movement training'.[50] Hodge then goes on to argue that within this web of influences, collaboration has been a prevalent characteristic. She explains that:

> Brook, Barba, Staniewski and Chaikin have all worked with Grotowski in various contexts. Barba and Staniewski both actively participated in Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre. Chaikin and Brook invited Grotowski to introduce his training techniques to their actors.[51]

To further complicate Schechner's example of the rock being dropped into a pond of water by imagining other theatre-makers as obstacles in this pool, each obstacle would not absorb the 'waves of influence' without sending their own distinct ripples back out amongst the pool. The complexities of this are demonstrated practically in Joseph Chaikin's distrust of the dogmatic teachings of Stanislavsky as he had been taught them by American acting teachers.

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[47] Braun p. 13.

[48] Bradby and Williams. pp. 13-14.

[49] Govan, Nicholson and Normington. p. 34.

[50] Hodge. p. 5.

[51] Ibid. pp. 5-6.

Stanislavsky resisted the idea of his Method as fixed and Hulton argues that his hope was that 'In choosing a path, each actor reinvents and personalises the System'.[52] Stanislavsky stated in his later years that 'The System is a guide. Open and read. The system is a handbook, not a philosophy'.[53] Chaikin identified a discrepancy between Stanislavsky's theories and what he was taught as an actor. In *The Presence of the Actor* he states that 'each teacher I studied with taught the Stanislavsky method in his own way, and each assured his devoted students that they would find "inner truth" *only* by subscribing to the specific method of that teacher'.[54] Chaikin's distrust of 'fixed' systems not only demonstrates the point that Stanislavsky's Method differed depending on the many different interpretations of the individual acting teachers, but can also be seen as representative of a distrust of homogenous 'fixed' truths in general. Thus, if we apply this complex web of influences to a history of devised theatre practices it becomes difficult to place 'devised' and 'text-based' theatre as diametrically opposed due to their shared and overlapping histories which place them in debt to the developments of twentieth-century theatre forms.

This is just one of many possible histories, this web of influences could also be applied to the Jacques Lecoq school in Paris and the work of contemporaries Philippe Gaulier and Monika Pagneux whose training and influence was present in the emergence of British and Australian physical theatre companies in the 80s and 90s such as Moving Picture Mime Show, Trestle Theatre, Theatre de Complicité, and the Drama Action Centre.[55] It should be acknowledged that while these companies are not the focus of this thesis, as groups who employ devising techniques, their work intersects and collides with the development of contemporary postmodern performance. Simon Murray and John Keefe identify the 'productive' and 'symbiotoc' points of intersection in the histories of contemporary devising and physical theatres. Using the example of Pina Bausch with *Tanztheater* Wuppertal they note the significance of her impact on 'such diverse figures… as Peter Brook, Simon McBurney, Matthew Goulish and Tim

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[52] Hulton. p. 33

[53] Stanislavsky in Hulton. p. 33.

[54] Joseph Chaikin. *The Presence of the Actor*. New York: Atheneum, 1972. p. 43

[55] Heddon and Milling. p. 179

Etchells in the cosmology of contemporary theatre/performance'.[56] Tim Etchells acknowledges this influence, in a similar way to Schechner's example, when he states that Forced Entertainment were 'on the end of a huge Chinese whispers which started in Wuppertal and ended up in Sheffield with us'.[57]

The cross fertilization and adaptation of ideas and techniques that can be found in the origins of devised theatre can perhaps be seen to be mirrored in contemporary histories of devising practices. Heddon and Milling ask 'given the apparent fragmentation of devising practice, is it possible to suggest that a tradition of devising has emerged in British, American or Australian culture?'[58] I would agree that the term 'devised theatre' can be unhelpfully broad. However, if this is narrowed to 'contemporary devised performance' or 'postmodern performance', then we can recognise a certain style of work. It is arguably this kind of work that is being reinforced and disseminated within University theatre studies courses when the term 'devising' is applied. Books like Oddey's *Devised Theatre*, Heddon and Milling's *Devising Performance*, Govan, Nicholson and Normington's *Making a Performance,* Jen Harvie and Andy Lavender's *Making Contemporary Theatre* and Alex Mermikides and Jackie Smart's *Devising in Process* are all examples of the prevalent critical discussions and disseminations of devised theatre practices within a University context and beyond. Geraldine Harris' fascinating essay 'Repetition, Quoting, Plagiarism and Iterability (*Europe After the Rain* – Again)' discusses two separate 'devised' productions of *Europe After the Rain*. One was devised by Harris and 38 first year Theatre Studies students at Lancaster University in 1993, the other was devised by 34 third year Performing Arts students from University College St. Martin, Lancaster, who used Harris' text from the first production as a starting point for devising a new performance. Harris uses the similarities between these two productions to discuss the emergence of a 'style' of work amongst University devising. Despite this essay having been written in 1999, it still seems particularly resonant with my own experience of the landscape of University level and recent graduates' devising work. In the essay Harris provides an extensive list of devices or sequences that often appear within

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[56] Simon Murray and John Keefe. *Physical Theatres: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2007. pp. 18 & 77.

[57] Tim Etchells. 'Addicted to Real Time'. *Entropy*. 1997. Included in *Forced Entertainment* resource pack.

[58] Ibid. p. 22.

University devised work. I feel that it is important to list all of these to give a full sense of the landscape that Harris is discussing. She cites the use of:

> Microphones, video monitors to show both pre-recorded material and live, on-line sequences, structures of repetition and interruption and of extreme theatrical self reflexivity, direct audience address in a style which suggests 'lack of technique', sequences in which the performers act as if becoming increasingly drunk or drugged, repeated on-stage costume changes and the juxtaposition of textual material drawn from a wide range of different sources, including television and film as well as pre-existing play-texts and works of fiction and non-fiction. These structures and devices are often mixed with borrowings from Pina Bausch and/or DV8 sometimes by way of Impact Theatre Co-operative, Jan Fabre and Robert Wilson. These influences produce work containing systemic choreography sequences based on natural movement and gesture which often involve the cast in a great deal of falling down (a Lancaster University favourite) and performed to the music of Arvo Part, Michael Nyman or Wim Mertyns, sequences of jumping, falling and being caught at the last possible moment, punishing and exhausting action sections in which the performers seem genuinely to become distressed or exhausted, autobiographical material drawn from the performers' lives, extreme slow-motion sequences, deliberately 'beautiful' sets, forties or fifties costumes, particularly print dresses and heavy overcoats, sequences based around suitcases, 'dance' lighting, as opposed to traditional theatrical lighting, music used as a 'soundtrack', rather than as incidental, and so on.[59]

Whilst Harris acknowledges that the professional companies listed here also apply a level of intertextuality in their *own* work in drawing upon references from a range of genres, forms and pre-existing material – she also argues that wide-spread use of the specific devices listed above amongst University devised work exists as a result of 'the repeated use by lecturers of the companies cited above as "models" for devised work' leading to the distinctive examples listed above becoming part of a 'shared vocabulary'. Harris goes on to argue that within this 'post-modern' practice of 'quoting' or 'borrowing' from other work it is still possible to create distinctive and original theatre but too often the practice within University devising becomes mere plagiarism.[60] It is quoting without critiquing, appropriating without re-appropriating. As Heddon and Milling state in reference to Tim Etchells' Chinese Whisper metaphor 'what is spoken and what is heard is never quite the same… Copying [leads] to difference'.[61] It is arguably the director's responsibility

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[59] Geraldine Harris. 'Repetition, Quoting, Plagiarism and Iterability (*Europe After the Rain* – Again)'. *Studies in Theatre Production*. 1999. 19: 6-21. pp. 11-12.

[60] Ibid. pp. 12-13.

[61] Heddon and Milling. pp. 219-220.

to be aware of these 'models', their conventions and techniques, and to 'manage' the quotations in a way that does lead to difference.

I would argue that it is the institutionalisation of devised theatre and the subsequent dissemination of specific devising companies through these institutions that has determined the current format of influence and innovation in devising practices. Within contemporary devising there is a trend for a level of intertextuality that embraces the notion of borrowing from and quoting each other but that also risks becoming repetitive, generic, plagiaristic or stale. However, it is a format of influence that owes a lot to the rise of the director and the emergence of the creative actor and the intersection(s) between devising histories and text-based practices is found in this lineage. In this sense, then, why should 'devised' and 'text-based' theatre be seen as oppositional? As Heddon and Milling conclude, 'devised performance lies on a continuum with script work'.[62] If the origins of contemporary performance is developed into a web of influences that sees the many strands of 'devised' and 'text-based' theatre overlap and intermingle then we have a more accurate understanding of the histories and contemporary practices of theatre and how the director's role within devised theatre has emerged from the director's theatre of the twentieth-century.

Why collaborate? The politics and aesthetics of collaboration.

The empowerment of the actor as a creative artist inevitably led to a more collaborative way of working as the creative actor contributed to the creation of the work. The development of this line of thought by innovators such as Grotowski and Mnouchkine was based in an aesthetic concern to develop new forms rather than an explicit political agenda. What emerged in the second half of the twentieth-century were collaborative practices that were based upon a political alignment with socialist ideologies. In the early 1970s a style of political performance protest emerged from the struggles of left aligned workers. The style of agit-prop, as it was named, consisted of short, fast, attention-grabbing performances that intended to clearly convey the political message and mobilise support for workers' struggles. Agit-prop plays were cheap to produce and could respond quickly to real events, this suited the fact that the political intentions of the work were often more important than its professional aesthetic. As stated by The Agitprop Street

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[62] Ibid. pp. 6 & 39.

Players, who were re-named Red Ladder in 1971, 'Theatre is not our end; it is our means'. [63] As Heddon and Milling argue in *Devising Performance* these companies recognised the importance of developing working practices that reflected their politics. They state that:

> Many theatre workers throughout the 1970s actively sought to create organisations that did not promote or support bourgeois ideology, in particular the hierarchical structure of boss and workers. This desire to implement models that ideally enabled the practice of 'participatory democracy' initially led, in most cases at least, to the use of devising as a means of production. [64]

The collective structures that were developed in the 1960s and 70s are still existent within many current devising companies. There has, however, been another shift of focus: from collaboration that is based in 'aligning political ideologies with working practices', [65] to collaboration as a process with which to create a multiple, complex, 'postmodern' product. Therefore, the practice of collaboration has shifted back from a position of political to aesthetic necessity. With this in mind it becomes useful to ask; what were the problems involved in the emergence of politically defined collaborative practices? What led the shift from political to aesthetic concerns?

As early as the 1940s and 50s companies were experimenting with collective structures. However, in the histories of political devising companies, the problems inherent in collective practices are played out again and again. Theatre Workshop, was established by Joan Littlewood and Ewan MacColl in 1946 and 'although Littlewood was always the main source of energy behind the group, it was not set up as her company but as a workers' co-operative in which all drew the same salary and all had an equal voice in decision-making'. [66] Littlewood's desire to practise methods of collaboration is displayed in her reflections on her work from 1961 where she states that:

> My objective in life… is to work with other artists – actors, writers, designers, composers – and in collaboration with them, and by means of argument, experimentation and research, to keep the English theatre

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[63] Ibid. pp. 100-101.

[64] Ibid. p. 95.

[65] Ibid. p. 101.

[66] Bradby and Williams. *Directors' Theatre.* p. 28.

alive and contemporary. I do not believe in the supremacy of the director, designer, actor or even the writer. It is through collaboration that this knockabout theatre survives and kicks.[67]

So in this instance, the need for collaboration emanated from a distrust in the supremacy of traditional hierarchies. However, the extent to which these beliefs were practised in reality becomes problematic. Howard Goorney, a founder member of Theatre Workshop, explained that although all of the decisions were discussed collectively, it was usually Littlewood and MacColl who would 'get their own way'.[68] These comments expose the difficulty in reconciling the political ideologies of a theatre company with their working practices, rendering visible the 'struggles… in attempting both to determine and then to practice a collective model'.[69]

These difficulties are reflected in the experiences of a number of theatre practitioners working throughout the 60s and 70s who attempted to establish democratically collaborative structures. Richard Seyd of socialist theatre company Red Ladder comments on the complexities of the company's collective nature, stating in 1975 that developing an appropriate working structure 'has been perhaps the most problematical part of the work'. Seyd observes that in striving for equality the company actually created an 'anarchic tyranny of structurelessness'.[70] Another result of this process was that it may have led to the most dominant members of the group getting their way. Heddon and Milling comment on the danger of such apparently democratic models in relation to marginalised groups when they state that:

> within a culture in which women feel that their opinions carry less weight, they are less likely to voice those opinions. The fact that a structure exists which would allow them to voice their opinions does not make that voicing inevitable; nor does it mean that their voices would be heard or their opinions taken seriously; wider cultural and systemic change would be required to make it truly effective.[71]

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[67] Joan Littlewood. 'Goodbye Note from Joan' *Encore*, October 1961. pp. 15-16.

[68] Howard Goorney quoted in Govan, Nicholson and Normington. pp. 48-49.

[69] Heddon and Milling. p. 105.

[70] Richard Seyd. 'The Theatre of Red Ladder', *New Edinburgh Review,* 1975 30: p. 42.

[71] Heddon and Milling. p. 223.

This example illustrates that the aspirations of collaborative devising as 'a means of wresting the mode of production from the grip of dominating institutions and dominant ideologies', was problematic in practice.[72] As Sandy Archer of the San Francisco Mime Troupe argued, collective theatre processes led to a situation where the 'trust and respect that was associated' with roles within theatre production became diminished.[73]

Another model of collective working practices was one that acknowledged the skill of specific theatre practices – in particular, writing. But was this a lingering view of the hierarchy of the playwright? John McGrath of 7:84 defined the role of writer within the company as one that 'can never be a totally democratic process'. He defines it as a skill 'which need[s] aptitude, long experience, self discipline and a certain mental disposition in one individual'.[74] McGrath is aware of the contradiction within this but argues for a socialist theatre that does not de-value the skill of individual theatre-makers; he states that 'this wasn't to be a free-for-all, utopian fantasy: I wouldn't expect to play Allan Ross's fiddle, or to sing in Gaelic, or act'.[75] Similarly Gillian Hanna of feminist theatre company Monstrous Regiment identifies the problematic notion of the role of writer within a democratic collective, but argues that enough members of the company 'had been through the painful experience of writing shows collectively in other groups to know that the skill of playwrighting was one we wanted to acknowledge'.[76] So the complexities of attempting to establish collaborative practices in alignment with political ideologies are ones that present the problem of working 'democratically' with a director in charge but also the idea that the writer's prioritised status is sometimes necessary and a de-valuing of the skills and roles within a theatre-making environment can lead to a confused theatrical product with a difficult working process.

In addition to this, since the 1960s and 70s there has been a shift in the context and thinking surrounding political 'truths'. Oddey states that 'a group cannot devise in a vacuum' but must constantly 'address the changes brought about by the

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[72] Ibid. p. 17.

[73] Ibid. p. 108.

[74] John McGrath. 'Boom: an Introduction'. *New Edinburgh Review.* 1975. 30 p. 9

[75] John McGrath. *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil.* London: Methuen, 1981. p. x.

[76] Gillian Hanna. *Monstrous Regiment: Four Plays and a Collective Celebration.* London: Nick Hern Books, 1991. p. xxxiii.

socio-political and cultural climate of the time'.[77] Heddon and Milling identify that the idea of a 'shared understanding of what constituted oppositional activity' is now problematised. They argue that in contemporary times

> Multinational capitalism, globalisation, postmodernity – make concepts of the "political", "political activity" and "political opposition" contested. The pluralist "politics of postmodernism", for example, would resist promoting the idea of a "single" political solution, such as Socialism.[78]

As a result of these problems there has been a shift from the application of collaborative practices – from those that are ideologically aligned with the politics of a company, to those that are used in *process* to define an aesthetic *product*. This is an idea that is present in the comments of Terry O' Connor, a performer with Forced Entertainment, when she talks of collaboration. She states that working collaboratively is

> a situation offering the chance to produce work with a group of people whose ideas I respect so much, and with whom the working process is so good that I know the result is going to be much greater than what I could do myself.[79]

In this statement there is a preference for collaboration based on the quality of the end product rather than for any explicit political concerns. Collaboration, in this context, also affects the structure and style of the resulting work. It is Heddon and Milling's argument that:

> A group devising process is more likely to engender a performance that has multiple perspectives, that does not promote one, authoritative "version" or interpretation, and that may reflect the complexities of contemporary experience and the variety of narratives that constantly intersect with, inform, and in very real ways, construct our lives.[80]

This description of how a collaborative devising process may lead to a complex and multiple aesthetic sheds light on why the collaborative practices of the 60s and 70s failed. Heddon and Milling argue that as the agit-prop style became more formal 'the perceived failure, by practitioners, of group devised "plays" perhaps lay

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[77] Oddey. p. 2.

[78] Heddon and Milling. p. 128.

[79] Terry O' Connor quoted in Oddey. p. 73.

[80] Heddon and Milling. p. 192

in the fact that the desired form was the conventional play-text'.[81] In this observation, a political concern for collective writing cannot be accommodated by an aesthetic concern for a coherent, singular voice defined by the traditions of twentieth-century playwriting.

What does the current climate of politics and collaboration within contemporary devising say about how the landscape has changed since Heddon and Milling's *Devising Performance* in 2006? Theatre-maker Nic Green states on her website that her practice has a focus 'on the notion of making positive change, and empowering others to do the same'.[82] Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore, co-directors of Glas(s) Performance, state that they are 'committed to a socially engaged theatre performance practice that collaborates with real people in the place of fictional characters to tell stories that resonate with audiences of all ages and experience'.[83] They also co-founded Junction 25, an experimental performance group where young people between 12 and 17 'engage in a collaborative process in order to create original and personal performance works'.[84] In their 'hu-manifesto' the performance company amplifier, of which Nick Anderson is a member, state that:

> Together we are strong, therefore amplifier is a collective based on togetherness. This is not a body that thrives on inherited structures, but rather advocates the notion of skill sharing and reflexivity. It seems essential now, in these times, to work together… This is a free-form group. There is no eternal instigator or leader, however for the purposes of specific projects one member may take a more directorial role. Leadership is beneficial as long as it is supported and scrutinised in equal measures.[85]

For these artists both the aesthetic and political alignment with the practice of collaboration seems important. Although the contradictions within this are not always reconciled, they are present and the difficulty of their presence is acknowledged. However, it should also be noted that these artists are all graduates of Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama's (RSAMD)

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Nic Green. http://www.nicgreen.org.uk/ accessed on 24th October 2010.

[83] Glas(s) Performance. http://glassperformance.co.uk/main/about accessed on 24th October 2010.

[84] Junction 25. http://junction-25.com/main/about accessed on 24th October 2010.

[85] amplifier. http://thisisamplifier.wordpress.com/ accessed on 24th October 2010.

Contemporary Performance Practice course and as such they share a vocabulary for talking about their work that originates from the same place and is part of its own web of influence, with recent tutors Robert Walton and Grace Surman having come from Dartington College of Arts.[86] However, a similar rhethoric can be identified elsewhere; Forest Fringe, a not-for-profit venue that locates itself outwith the formal economic structures of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, operates a 'pay what you can' policy for audiences and does not charge companies or artists for use of the space. On their website they argue for establishing a community of audiences, artists and producers, giving them the opportunity to 'come together collectively, contributing their time and energy to make exciting, improbable, spectacular things happen. The kind of things that none of us could have achieved individually'.[87] The micro-politics of Forest Fringe's ideology can be seen as a rejection of the capitalist hierarchies that dominate the majority of arts production in Edinburgh during August, allowing the artists to make work in a relatively risk-free environment. The politics of Forest Fringe and the artist practices discussed above are reminiscent of the searches for community, collective structures and democratic processes that were prevalent in the political companies of the 60s and 70s. However, they do not seem to cling to political truths, deemed problematic in a postmodern discourse, and as such are arguably less problematic themselves. Perhaps this is the blueprint for political collaborative practices in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The rise of the director-auteur led to innovations in twentieth-century theatre practices, however there is a contradiction in crediting one 'auteur' in an inherently collaborative practice. Alongside these innovations the creative actor emerged as a development of psychological theory and as a resistance against traditional hierarchies of theatre production. However, this is problematised by the creative actor's emergence being led by solo directors. This contradiction exposes a key insight in this thesis, that is the inevitable and recurring tension between the empowered actor and the director. It is useful to chart the origins of devised

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[86] During the writing of this thesis RSAMD has changed its name to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). As I am referring mostly to graduates of the CPP course I will refer to the institution as RSAMD.

[87] Forest Fringe http://www.forestfringe.co.uk/about-us/ accessed on 25th October 2010.

theatre as a complex 'web of influences' in order to explode the binary of 'text-based' and 'devised theatre' that can lead to an over simplification of theatre histories and a failure to recognise their shared influences, practices and diverse forms. We can start to identify and define a strand of devising as 'contemporary devised performance' that is perpetuated through the dissemination of University Theatre Studies courses and conservatoire performance practice courses; this dissemination has arguably led to a 'generic' form of a once marginal and experimental arts practice. A recognisable sub-strand of these devising practices approaches the politics of collaboration with an awareness its historical complexities, but a commitment to striving for an appropriate process for their product. Despite attempts by political theatre companies of the 60s and 70s to create non-hierarchical working structures that were aligned with oppositional politics of the time, in practice this led to conflicts in process and a confused product. Towards the end of the twentieth-century and in the last ten years the desire to collaborate in making a performance has become an aesthetic rather than political concern; representing the shift from collaborations that wanted to replicate single authored, traditional play-texts to a product that was, in general, multiple, diverse and heterogeneous. Within these contemporary collaborations, however, the director re-emerges in the late twentieth-century as an artist who 'constructs' and 'writes' a performance, ironically supplanting the playwright.

Where this chapter has focused on the historical context of collaboration, in the next chapter I will look in more detail at the practice of collaboration within contemporary devised work. I will offer theoretical models and practical approaches to develop collaborative practices and explore the director's role as a potential facilitator of this collaboration and how this conflicting hierarchy is acknowledged and navigated by contemporary devising companies.

A Description of Process 1: *Rough Mix.*

Figure 1 – *Rough Mix* Participants in Dance Base's Studio 2.

From 11th-22nd January 2010. I participated in Edinburgh-based theatre company Magnetic North's inter-disciplinary creative development program *Rough Mix*. During this two-week residency, at Dance Base in Edinburgh, director Nick Bone brought together a group of practitioners from a range of different disciplines and gave them time and space to develop new projects in a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. The practitioners worked with each other and a group of five performers in rotation towards a work-in-progress showing at the end of the two weeks. The artists taking part and their disciplines were:

- Ruth Barker – Visual Artist

- Nicholas Bone – Theatre Director

- Catriona MacInnes – Film-maker

- Linda McLean – Playwright

- Ian Spink – Choreographer/Director

I was participating as an 'emerging artist' and as such I did not bring a project to develop during the two weeks, but would at times participate in exercises, often offer up my creative opinion, and generally observe the variety of different processes. The performers who were taking part were Catherine Gillard, Veronica Leer, Kirstin Murray, Michael Sherin and David Walshe. On the first two afternoons of the first week each practitioner presented, to the rest of the group, examples of their practice and the idea that they were hoping to develop.

Every morning a two-hour workshop session was led by choreographer and director Sheila McDougal, who introduced us to Mary Overlie and Anne Bogart's Viewpoints technique through physical exploration. Viewpoints is a philosophy of movement improvisation, and a technique for composing performance that provides a vocabulary for thinking about movement and gesture. In Overlie's version this vocabulary can be broken down into six elements under the mnemonic SSTEMS. Each letter stands for the following:

S – Space –	The ability to perceive relationships.
S – Shape –	The ability to perceive form.
T – Time –	The ability to perceive duration and systems of duration.
E – Emotion –	The ability to perceive states of feeling or be in states of feeling.
M – Movement –	The ability to identify kinetic states through memory.
S – Story –	The ability to perceive or observe a series of actions over time and draw conclusions.[88]

McDougal tackled these one letter a day, slowly building up the group's physical vocabulary, until we were generating improvisations and composing mini-performances using all of the Viewpoints we had explored. The emphasis of Viewpoints, which is distilled into each of these headings, is a concern with creating 'an open awareness and interaction with others in the room (and the

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[88] Sheila MacDougal's definitions taken from my own notes during *Rough Mix*

room itself)'.[89] In applying this to a group of practitioners and actors, most of whom had never worked together before, in the development of new ideas, McDougal and Nick Bone created a space in which a strong collaborative bond was formed over the short period of two weeks. By leading these Viewpoints workshops Sheila managed to instil a sense of ensemble within a group of artists from across disciplines and with very different levels of experience in performance.

Anne Bogart states that in practising the Viewpoints technique 'you cannot make things happen; you can only create the circumstances in which something might occur'.[90] I believe that this was the main aim for *Rough Mix,* to create ideal creative circumstances in which projects could develop and artists collaborate with an open awareness of each others' creative practices and process. Participant Ruth Barker has contributed a reflection of this process on Magnetic North's website where she states that the Viewpoints sessions

> gave us some kind of stability, as well as a shared language (this was vital, I think), and a shared time to learn together, which became important for developing a group dynamic.

Barker argues that in this context, with participating artists from across disciplines, the Viewpoints workshops acted as a kind of 'levelling' process.[91] This shared experience created a shared vocabulary and a level playing field from which we could collaborate more easily on diverse projects. At the work-in-progress showing on Friday 22nd January, Barker presented a choral spoken word performance derived from the greek myth of Odysseus and the Sirens (see Figures 2-3), Nick Bone created a short performance investigating the storm scene from the Buster Keaton film *Steamboat Bill Jr*, Catriona MacInnes presented a short scene inspired by some haunting found footage of an anonymous Irish couple at their house in the countryside, Linda McLean presented an improvisation based upon the object manipulation of various

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[89] Royd Climenhaga. 'Anne Bogart and SITI Company: Creating the Moment'. *Actor Training*. 2nd Edition. Ed Alison Hodge. London: Routledge, 2010. p. 295.

[90] Anne Bogart. *And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World*. London: Routledge, 2007. p. 54

[91] Ruth Barker. 'Ruth Barker Looks Back'. *Magnetic North website*. http://www.magneticnorth.org.uk/discussions/rough-mix/106-rough-mix-2010-ruth-barker-looks-back.html accessed May 2011.

kitchen implements, and Ian Spink created a short movement performance based on the story of Anna, a German/Australian air hostess who was using a false identity. In this process, I would label Bone as the director through his facilitation of a collaborative environment.

Figure 2 – Ruth Barker performing *Odysseus and the Sirens* in Studio 1.

Figure 3 - Ruth Barker performing *Odysseus and the Sirens* in Studio 1 (with L-R Shaun Bell, Linda McLean, Kirstin Murray and Michael Sherin).

2 Directing Devised Theatre: Collaboration – Clash and Consensus.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the rise of the director, the emergence of the creative actor and the development of a devising style, all of which contribute to a cumulative understanding of what the role of the director is in contemporary devised theatre contexts. Where the last chapter focussed on historical collaborative practices, the focus here is on how collaboration is utilised in contemporary contexts and what the models of this collaboration might entail. Theatre is an inherently collaborative artform. It is about the relationships between people: actors, director(s), designers. But it is also about the communicative relationships between performers and the audience. In spite of this being true of all theatrical forms, the word 'collaboration' seems to be one that is inextricably linked to the practice of devising and its critical writing. Therefore, to understand the role of the director in contemporary devising, it is necessary to explore what collaboration means and how a director might facilitate it, whilst also recognising the contradiction inherent in this exploration.

In the Introduction to *Devising Theatre* Alison Oddey argues that devising is about 'inventing, adapting, and creating what you do *as a group*' She goes on to state that 'what makes devising so special is the potential freedom or opportunity to move in a number of different directions through a collaborative work'.[92] It is this idea of collectively navigating through unknown territory that makes the types of collaboration used in devised theatre processes distinct from theatre that is made with a pre-existing play-text as the starting point. There is also a potential shift in hierarchical dynamics, from the writer and/or director owning the interpretation and 'having all the answers' to a dynamic of shared discovery. This chapter aims to investigate the distinctiveness of collaboration within devised theatre-making through a discussion of the following questions: How have the ideological necessities for collaboration shifted since democratic modes of the 60s and 70s? What models of collaboration are employed by contemporary devising companies? What practical approaches might be useful in order to facilitate a collaborative environment? In *Making Performance* Govan, Nicholson and Normington argue that the 'problem of how collaborations work in practice, and how companies that

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[92]   Alison Oddey. *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*. London: Routledge, 1994. p. 3.

are committed to fostering the creativity of the performer manage divisions of labour […] are recurring issues for devising companies'.[93] These issues are certainly prevalent in the discussions below. In *Devising Performance* Heddon and Milling state that in the light of the shift from more radically political democratic modes of production 'contemporary [devising] processes might require us to ask what "collaboration" means'.[94] In this chapter I will chart the shift in the uses of collaboration by comparing 60s and 70s supposedly democratic models with contemporary uses of collaboration. I will examine two collaborative models through the processes of Forced Entertainment and Shunt (both documented and eloquently written about by Alex Mermikides). And I will offer some practical approaches to encouraging a sense of collaboration through the explorations in devising that I undertook between January and March 2010 and from the devising process of Glasgow-based company Glas(s) Performance. Collaboration is inevitably interwoven with ideas surrounding authorship, ownership and responsibility and whilst I have attempted to disentangle these from notions of collaboration there is inevitably some overlap between the ideas discussed in this chapter and concepts of authorship that I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

Collaboration: Then and Now

As discussed in the previous chapter, collaborative models of devising emerged in Britain in the socialist theatres of the 60s and 70s in an attempt to challenge hierarchical processes of theatre-making, and as a way to align working structures and modes of production with political beliefs. As Lizbeth Goodman argues, this was an ideology that believed that 'the relations of production within the group should reflect its politics and provide a model for the organisation of society as a whole'. This manifested itself in a devising process where ideally 'everyone has a say, everyone shares both the challenging/exciting and the tedious aspects of the work, everyone is happy and fulfilled'.[95] This process attempted to challenge hierarchical and patriarchal modes of production, and in doing so acted against the

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[93] Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington. *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices.* London: Routledge, 2007. p. 38.

[94] Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling. *Devising Performance: A Critical History.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. p. 5

[95] Lizbeth Goodman. *Contemporary Feminist Theatres: To Each Her Own.* London: Routledge, 1993. p. 91.

authority of the director and the writer. The recognised failings in the extent to which these companies achieved the ideal of a democratic working practice, resulted in processes that are described by Jen Harvie and Andy Lavender as 'at best sometimes frustrating and at worst grossly compromised'.[96] I would argue that the legacy of these experiments in Socialist devising led to a shift in the extent to which companies have attempted to employ anti-hierarchical approaches. The important questions in relation to contemporary devising, posed by Alex Mermikides and Jackie Smart in *Devising Process*, are:

> If earlier models of devising process represented collaboration as an alternative to the hierarchy of the director's theatre, is contemporary devising still defined by its collaborative nature and, if so, what kinds of collaboration are employed?[97]

They cite Heddon and Milling's arguments, as discussed previously in this thesis, that in 'postmodern' performance, collaboration is employed due to its ability to produce a fragmented product that resists interpretation. They argue that companies such as Forced Entertainment, The Special Guests, Third Angel, Goat Island and the Wooster Group use collaborative devising in this way to contest the 'authority of text and of the individual creative artist – and by implication, any suggestion of a singular "truth"'.[98] What I hope to develop in this chapter is the idea that this 'postmodern' challenging of authority and singular truths bears an implicit politics that questions the same capitalist, patriarchal modes of production that companies such as Monstrous Regiment, 7:84 and Red Ladder were reacting against. Harvie and Lavender put forward a strong argument for the shift in politics present in this contemporary work, arguing that the practitioners explored in their book *Making Contemporary Theatre*:

> demonstrate a concern with power – but this is a concern not to reproduce what many of them might consider a failed political theatre focused on content, but rather to produce a theatre attentive to its own ambivalent relationship to the power of its forms.[99]

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[96]   Jen Harvie and Andy Lavender. 'Introduction'. *Making Contemporary Theatre: International Rehearsal Processes.* Jen Harvie and Andy Lavender eds. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. pp. 1-16. p. 4.

[97]   Alex Mermikides and Jackie Smart. 'Introduction'. *Devising Process*. Alex Mermikides and Jackie Smart, eds. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. pp. 1-29. p. 2.

[98]   Mermikides and Smart. p. 6.

[99]   Harvie and Lavender. p. 13.

This argument favours a politics of form rather than content. I would argue that if that form is developed through a process of collaborative devising, then it implicitly acts in opposition to hierarchical structures and dominant, patriarchal narratives. To return to Heddon and Milling's argument:

> A group devising process is more likely to engender a performance that has multiple perspectives, that does not promote one, authoritative "version" or interpretation, and that may reflect the complexities of contemporary experience and the variety of narratives that constantly intersect with, inform, and in very real ways, construct our lives.[100]

These multiple perspectives situate contemporary 'postmodern' devising companies in opposition to patriarchal narratives through their communicative modes, the implicit presentational structures of the product, rather than in their explicit content. Heddon and Milling's argument that 'multinational capitalism, globalisation, postmodernity – make concepts of the "political", "political activity" and "political opposition" contested' reminds us of the difficulty of practising a collective theatre process based on grand political narratives in a 'postmodern' world.[101]

Alongside these theoretical concerns about democratic models of collaboration have emerged practical justifications for the importance of individual roles within devising companies. In their introduction to *Making Contemporary Theatre* Harvie and Lavender argue that:

> After aiming for years (since the 1970s at least) to disperse power, ostensibly in pursuit of democracy, practice appears increasingly to value leadership. What this trend indicates is not always that devised theatre has abandoned the pursuit of democracy, though this may sometimes be the case […M]any practitioners are now exploring strategies for *negotiating* democratic practices and relationships, in recognition that dispersed power is not necessarily democratic power and also that negotiated leadership can facilitate group agency.[102]

The argument here recognises the complexities involved in democratic processes and emphasises the fact that companies must balance collectivity with leadership in order for voices to be heard. To return to the words of performance collective

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[100] Heddon and Milling. p. 192.

[101] Ibid. p. 128.

[102] Ibid. p. 4.

amplifier, 'leadership is beneficial as long as it is supported and scrutinised in equal measures.[103] On a section of their website entitled 'letters to a young practitioner' company member Nick Anderson lists the following statements under the title 'leading as service':

> Remember, you are an artist! It's ok to remind yourself this! [...] If I seek passion, I have to lead with passion. If I seek voices, I have to be a vocal leader […] I remind myself that I am at the end of a cycle of experience. I remember that the group are at the beginning […] I remind myself that I was in their shoes 3 years ago and that I was looking for leadership […] I remind myself that I am in a position to possibly inspire people […] I remind myself that right now, my service is leadership.[104]

Whilst this list comes from the context of Anderson directing younger students on the Contemporary Performance Practice course at RSAMD, its acceptance of the potential benefits of effective leadership speak directly to the director's role in facilitating a collaborative process. The importance of this leadership can also become crucial in the attempt to communicate a coherent work of art. The result of this negotiated leadership means that the emphasis on the work of the director (or someone else in a similar role) as navigator of this coherence is just as important as it always was. In reference to contemporary devising companies, Mermikides and Smart state that, 'in most cases, even when there is not a single named director, someone will "step out" in the later stages of the process to take on that role'.[105] The tension inherent in the director's role when leading a collective is highlighted by Mermikides when she argues that:

> the spirit of collectivism lives on in a residual resistance to the directorial role. At the same time, recognition of the power of the individual director's vision in creating innovative theatre, as well as the practical advantages of leadership in making both administrative and creative decisions, ensure that the *auteur*-director never really goes away.[106]

It could be argued that one problem with the democratic devising models of the 60s and 70s is that they fail to recognise the importance of specific skills neccesary within theatre-making processes. Mermikides emphasises this idea in

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[103] amplifier website. http://thisisamplifier.wordpress.com/ accessed on 24th October 2010.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Mermikides and Smart. p. 26.

[106] Alex Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director'. *Making Contemporary Theatre: International Rehearsal Processes.* Jen Harvie and Andy Lavender eds. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. pp. 101-120. p. 105

her discussion of theatre collective Shunt in her essay 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*'. Shunt is a collective of ten artists, most of whom graduated from Central School of Speech and Drama's Advanced Theatre Practice Masters and have, since 1998, occupied a series of disused spaces from which to produce large scale shows and regular arts events. From 2004-2010 Shunt took over a disused wine warehouse underneath London Bridge Station, which was named The Shunt Vaults and their current home is a large warehouse space on Bermondsey Street (close to the vaults). Mermikides states that:

> Although [Shunt's] publicity material never credits the artists in particular roles (probably in order to avoid any impression of hierarchy), there are acknowledged areas of expertise and preference, often but not always coinciding with their training in a particular stand of the Advanced Theatre Practice Masters' course (which includes pathways in directing, performing, scenography, dramaturgy and writing for performance).[107]

In Shunt's process, then, although they are all credited as 'artists', there is still an importance seen in the distinct roles required to make a coherent devised performance. A collective ethos is established and practised at the stage of generating material, but in later stages of the process 'defined areas of responsibility' emerge and 'in particular, the directorial role becomes important in bringing some cohesiveness to the individual work different company members have been doing'.[108]

The ease with which some companies might establish collaborative company structures is dependant on many factors. Mermikides and Smart recognise the dominant effect that funding situations have over these structures, noting that while devising company the People Show attempts to exist outwith the mainstream 'its core funding and home base facilitate a collective ethos which it is much more difficult for less established companies to achieve'.[109] They also draw attention to the power with which commissioning bodies can determine the structure of a particular project. Faulty Optic's *Dead Wedding* (2007) was commissioned by the Manchester International Festival and Opera North, 'whose terms were that the

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[107] Alex Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*'. *Devising Process*. Alex Mermikides and Jackie Smart, eds. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. pp. 147-164. p. 159.

[108] Mermikides and Smart. p. 19.

[109] Ibid. p. 15.

piece should be a collaboration between the company and a composer/musician, and that the commissioners should have approval over the choice of composer'. Having had their first choice rejected, the company ended up collaborating with a composer/musician whose process conflicted with that of the company.[110] These examples serve to illustrate funding directives (the necessity of funding pointing at the same time to economic imperatives) that define ways in which companies work, collaborate and structure themselves. So how can a process which relies on the long-term collaboration between a whole company be facilitated without the benefit of core funding? Mermikides and Smart identify the popularity in current devising companies of two artists sharing the responsibility of the director's role (present in the company structures of devising companies Third Angel, Faulty Optic, theatre O, Gecko, Quarantine and Glas(s) Performance among others) as a way of resolving two conflicting factors:

> the desire on the one hand for group structures that enable collaboration and to some degree resist sole directorial authority, and on the other, the economic difficulty of continuously sustaining a large group of people.[111]

They note that Third Angel's co-directors Alexander Kelly and Rachael Walton fit this model 'in that there is no director or writer and all roles are shared. Kelly and Walton work both separately and together under the company banner'.[112] Another approach to developing collaborative practices without the financial constraints of a permanently employed ensemble is present in the work of Complicite 'where there is a small permanent core, usually made up of founder members' but 'individual projects may bring together a large number of participants and these will normally be people to whom the company returns again and again'.[113] This idea of a constellation of ensemble collaborators to choose from allows companies to develop shared 'aesthetic and/or methodological "languages"' without the financial constraints of employing a large company on a permanent basis.[114] This way of working is made easier by the shared training histories of company members. In the context of Complicite this manifests itself as training in the French

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[110] Ibid. p. 16.

[111] Ibid. p. 17.

[112] Ibid. p. 17.

[113] Ibid. p. 16.

[114] Ibid. p. 16.

mime tradition or in the example of Shunt they are all graduates from the same CSSD contemporary performance course. However, there is a danger within this structure that the core members have a prioritised status within the company, which may restrict open collaboration and reinforce hierarchical modes of production. I will examine this concept of shared languages in more detail below using my own practical explorations as examples of approaches to encouraging a collaborative environment.

I have identified that whilst collaborative practices are still used in contemporary devising, they are used to produce a postmodern product and are facilitated by the role that the director occupies in leading a group discovery. The importance of the director in this discovery lies in their ability to structure the ideas, performances and material of the group into a coherent work. It is important to ask whether this role necessarily has to be taken on by the director, is it not the job of a dramaturg or writer? Could it not be a responsibility shared between group members? I would argue, in alignment with Anderson's views, that the director is usually at the end of a cycle of experience that involves honing skills in composition, leading a workshop or rehearsal constructively, practice in communicating to the audience, understanding potential readings of images, text, movement, design and space. It comes down to the director having the appropriate skills and training in order to direct, but this list of skills is nowhere near exhaustive and would shift from project to project. Who is to say that the director has these skills over a writer, dramaturg or performer? The director's role within two specific collaborative devising companies discussed below will help to extrapolate and interrogate some of these questions.

Collaborative Practices: The System model and the Ensemble model.

In her essays 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*' and 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director', Alex Mermikides defines two devising models, applying them to an analysis of Shunt and Forced Entertainment, in order to shed light on the contradictions between collaborative models of theatre-making and the idea of director's theatre. The first model is described as *the system model*, or 'clash' principle, in which 'to avoid authorial intention […] [performers] tend to be compartmentalised so that they

respond individually to the system [of generating material], with little collaboration with each other'. This model of theatre-making leads to a product that is deliberately incoherent, fragmented and made up of multiple contradictory elements. The second model Mermikides coins is *the ensemble model* or 'consensus' principle in which a director or directors:

> gather a group of practitioners who subscribe to the [director's] vision and are willing to dedicate themselves to its realisation […] While the material-generation phase of the process may involve the performers as authors, the fixing phase represents the reassertion of the director's authorship as she sculpts the material into shape.[115]

The performance that results from this principle could be described as having a singular vision and communicates coherently to an audience. Whilst Mermikides gives these models different names for each essay the fundamental lineage of these principles are the same, with the system model or 'clash' finding its origins in the Happenings of the 50s and 60s and the ensemble model or 'consensus' developing as a result of the director's theatre of the early twentieth-century, arguably initiated by practitioners such as Meyerhold and Grotowski undertaking intense laboratory investigations with the same ensemble of actors. Mermikides uses these models to argue that whilst both companies in some way resist authorial intention and encourage collaborative practices, their works are still made into coherent 'wholes' by the 'vision' of the director (figure) to which the other company members subscribe.

The Shunt *Lounge* was a regular event at the Shunt Vaults where a series of experimental performances in various stages of development would take place in the many spaces of the venue. Mermikides argues that the structure of the *Lounge* has its origins in the Happening form that Michael Kirby has defined as a style of performance where 'the arrangement and contiguity of theatrical units […] are completely self-contained and hermetic'.[116] She states that:

> there is a similarity here to the structure of the *Lounge*, where the Shunt artists work in parallel rather than in collaboration, with no particular intention to create a sense of overall coherence. In the happening, the resulting discordance was intentional because it subverted authorial

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[115] Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director' p. 106.

[116] Michael Kirby. 'Happenings: An Introduction'. *Happenings and Other Acts.* ed. M.R. Sandford. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. p. 5

intention, and with this, traditional notions of art as a display of virtuosity, meaning and coherence.[117]

Mermikides also identifies this 'clash' in the material generating period of *The Travels*. Forced Entertainment's *The Travels* was developed from the performers' visits to various streets in the UK picked out of the A-Z because their names seemed 'directly or indirectly to promise adventure, or at least metaphor and allegory': Achilles Street, Bacchus Road, Rape Lane, Universal Road...[118] In each of the streets the performers set themselves tasks to complete; 'to get their fortune told, to find locations for an imaginary film, to ask tricky questions,'[119] and the resulting performance became a series of testimonies of their visits to these streets; 'descriptions of the UK's various cities, suburbs and rural areas; retellings of interactions with bemused, aggressive, friendly, indifferent locals; the performers' meditations on the conjunctions between name and street'.[120] Mermikides argues that as a system for generating material the process that the performers embarked upon - picking a street, visiting that street, setting themselves tasks and reporting back to director Tim Etchells - 'quite clearly absolves Etchells from authorship over the material, opening the process up to the operations of chance'. She argues that:

> Firstly, the performer has some choice of which streets or cities to visit […] and what task to perform on her street visit […] which will determine her experience there[…] Secondly, the performers author their own accounts of their visit, either by writing a report […] or through improvising from memory and from their note books back in the studio.[121]

Mermikides again likens this to the happening form; at this stage of the process there is no central author, and no coherent work, 'each participant's creative input is self-determined, running in parallel with, but not affected by, the other participants' individual contributions'.[122] Whilst I would agree that this is true to an extent, it becomes problematic to argue that the company members work can ever

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[117] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*' p. 153.

[118] Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director' p. 102.

[119] Forced Entertainment website. http://www.forcedentertainment.com/page/144/The+Travels/111 accessed March 2011.

[120] Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director' p. 103.

[121] Ibid. p. 111.

[122] Ibid. p. 111.

be seen as hermetic from their other performers as they have developed a shared language and aesthetic which is perhaps always present in their improvisations. There is also an extent to which Forced Entertainment's process of gathering material provided some element of unity. They all visit a street, perform a task and then feedback about their experience. The fact that these 'rules' were in place would have led to a bank of material that shared certain concerns and adhered to a recognisable structure.

Mermikides then goes on to detail the ways in which, despite these examples of embracing the randomness and chance in the generation of material, there ultimately has to be an element of 'consensus' in order for the work to be coherent. She argues that:

> There comes a point in Shunt's process, as in most devising processes, when this "free-for-all" experimental phase must be tempered with practical concerns and decision making. This is something that scholars and practitioners of devising seem to forget: the rhetoric about devising tends to emphasise what Oddey called its "freedom of possibilities" – a suspension of judgement, a softening of hierarchy and a policy of "anything goes". However, this way of working invariably gives way to a more rigorous phase, a moment in the process that is often marked by a shift to a more hierarchical structure as a director takes the lead in sifting out what is inappropriate from the abundance of material that is generated in the first phase and bringing what remains into a coherent form.[123]

Mermikides notes that although the members of Shunt refer to themselves as artists and do not have defined roles (in the programme) this responsibility of bringing the work into a coherent form is always taken on by the same member, David Rosenberg. At a certain point in the process it becomes important that Rosenberg 'steps forward in his role as director.'[124]

Whilst I would agree with Mermikides that this role is an essential one in order to produce a coherent work, there remain problematic tensions surrounding the apparent contradiction of a collective led by one director. Rosenberg makes some fascinating remarks in reference to his role when he states that:

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[123] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*'. p. 155.

[124] Ibid. p. 155.

> The vision that I'm trying to implement is never my own, that vision came from collective creation. Of course there are times when elements of hierarchy slip in, but usually it does feel that I am trying to implement the goal of the collective that has come out of rehearsal. Sure there're lots of fights but it's ok. It's always complicated but it's ok.[125]

This statement identifies the complexities of the director's role within collaborative devising. Not only does Rosenberg have to implement a vision but, in order for him to feel comfortable in his role, that vision has to be the goal of the collective, which requires Rosenberg to have an astute understanding of the potentially multiple visions of the group and for him to navigate through these in the creation of the work. How does Rosenberg make the distinction between 'his' vision and the collective vision? Or do the complications and fights result from times when Rosenberg fails to disentangle his directorial vision from that of the other company members? These complexities are further elucidated by Mermikides' detailing of the 'consensus' principle. In this she returns to the idea of the visionary director who inspires and leads a group in collective creation. In processes of collaboration:

> what the director aims for is "consensus". In an ideal situation, this is achieved when the group shares a vision – the views, values and organising principles that will determine the creative work. More usually, consensus is achieved through a director, the strength of whose vision encompasses or inspires those of individual group members. The more unified the group, the smoother the emergence of a coherent piece of theatre from the disparate elements that inspired it.[126]

This insight not only displays the importance of a group to share views, values and organising principles, but also (and perhaps more revealingly) it suggests that the creation of a coherent piece of theatre lies in the ability of the director to lead the group to this 'consensus'. Mermikides argues that 'successful devising depends to a great degree on finding the appropriate balance between clash and consensus', with 'clash' producing fragmentary works that resist interpretation, and 'consensus' producing work that is a coherent whole. Mermikides draws on David Graver's terms of 'collage' and 'montage' from avant-garde art practices, to define the term coherent whole. In the collage 'the artwork is the framing device that holds

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[125] David Rosenberg in Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*' p. 160.

[126] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*' p. 155.

together disparate found material', creating an incoherent fragmentary work.[127] Whereas, in the montage, the disparate material is shaped into a new whole meaning that 'all elements are related rationally to the whole despite the heterogeneity of their sources'.[128] For devising companies making work that could be classed as montage 'even when a particular aesthetic style deliberately cultivates a fragmentary feel… the resulting work is a coherent whole.[129]

In Forced Entertainment's *The Travels* Mermikides relates Tim Etchells' role in the more 'rigorous phase' to that of the director-*auteur* in an ensemble model of theatre-making. Mermikides explicates this argument with reference to Etchells' writing process: She comments that

> While each 'report' has its individual author, the work as a whole is composite and fragmented. However, once Etchells begins to craft this material into a script, once dramaturgical and aesthetic criteria are applied, then we might ask whether this constitutes the imposition of individual authorship […] After all, the act of writing is the quintessential expression of authorship: a solitary creative act that commits to paper one vision of the show-to-be, excluding alternative visions.[130]

Despite Forced Entertainment's collective devising process, Etchells' ability to craft and assemble the work, employing dramaturgical and aesthetic principles to the group generated material, is identified by Mermikides as a key role in the creation of a coherent work. However, this description of Etchells' role seems to site him in opposition to a practice that is often defined as anti-literary, intertextual and that resists authorial intention. Mermikides idea of 'clash' and 'consensus' offers us a two-pronged lineage, the benefits of which on the resulting work is perhaps what was missing from the collective experiments of 60s and 70s democratic models; Forced Entertainment and Shunt are able to balance 'a commitment to anti-hierarchical group creation with the precision and rigour that comes from the clarity and uniqueness of an individual vision'.[131] The product of this is that their work is 'coherent', whilst still managing to resist interpretation. Is the director then the author of the work created? What is the relationship between the director's role in

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[127] Ibid. p. 157.

[128] David Graver. *The Aesthetics of Disturbance: Anti-art in Avante-Grade Drama.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. p. 31

[129] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*' p. 157.

[130] Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director'. p. 115.

[131] Ibid. p. 119.

shaping the performance and a more traditional authorial role? These ideas will be developed in more detail in the next chapter. In the following sections I will anchor the ideas discussed by Mermikides by referring to my own practical explorations and reflections on my collaboration with Glas(s) Performance on their production of *Generation*.

Practical approaches to facilitate collaboration (and their problems)

Between 31st January and 14th March 2010, I led a series of workshops with a group of undergraduate participants from Theatre Studies at the University of Glasgow. The weekly workshops culminated in a work-in-progress performance that was devised collaboratively from the material that we generated over the course of the previous weeks. Two participants were in first year, five were from second year and one student was in their fourth and final year of the course. I had met two of the participants prior to starting the workshops, in a tutor/student relationship, but did not know any of the other participants beforehand. The participants were neither auditioned nor selected based on skill but they chose whether or not to attend the workshops and engage with the process in response to email notifications and announcements in lectures. I see the naming of participants in this thesis extremely important as it provides them with an authorial credit which it would be highly unethical to deprive them of, given the nature of the research. They have all given their consent to be named.[132] The participants were, in alphabetical order: Sarah Bradley, Lauren Clarke, Amy Cullen, Anna Marshall, Edison McKenna, Rebecca Wade Morris, Patricia Verity and Elli Williams. Participants are subsequently referred to by their first name only.

In *Devising Performance: A Critical History* Heddon and Milling ask how you build a 'sense of ensemble' within a group that is not comprised of long-term collaborators?[133] This was my task in these workshops: how might a director use games or exercises to facilitate collaboration? What processes should the director employ to assemble a performance collaboratively? My critical reflection of these workshops identifies some key concerns within group devising projects that attempt to encourage collaborative relationships. I will also reflect on some

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[132] Participant consent forms are included in the appendix.

[133] Heddon Milling. p. 178.

potential problems of this process and ways in which, although a collaborative structure may appear to be anti-hierarchical, the extent to which the director relinquishes control is problematic. However, it is important to remember that the importance of the director's role in structuring a coherent work within this should not be underestimated.

In this section I will also be reflecting upon my experience collaborating with Glas(s) Performance between March and June 2011 on their production of *Generation* at Tramway, Glasgow. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Glas(s) Performance are a Glasgow-based devising company co-directed by Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore who devise work in collaboration with 'non-performers'. *Generation* was devised with four individuals aged 17-18, exploring their hopes, aspirations and fears for the future in the context of cuts to higher education. Whilst I was participating in this process as a creative collaborator, having never worked with the company before, I was also observing the ways in which their process echoed or challenged my own and as such it is relevant to draw on this experience to broaden the discussion below.

1. A Shared Language

One key aspect of encouraging collaboration in the making of a group performance work lies in creating a shared 'aesthetic vocabulary' and 'methodological language' through which the group can communicate and discuss ideas. Although these terms have been mentioned above by Mermikides and Smart, I develop fuller definitions for use in the section below. By 'aesthetic vocabulary' I mean the practical, physical, improvisatory performance-based tasks and activities that are shared by and with the group; in other words the material that is developed, in whatever stage of development in the room. By 'methodological language' I mean the processes and structures of development and rehearsal; warm-ups, structures for reflecting on work. These terms are overlapping and though they could be called product and process, in reality they are much more fluid and interchangeable; nevertheless distinguishing them here will be helpful. Variations of these phrases can be found in the rhethoric surrounding devised theatre; Simon McBurney of Complicite states that the aim of collaboration is to 'establish an ensemble with a common physical and imaginative

language'.[134] Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment similarly comments that collaboration is about 'simply finding the process of developing new words for the strange situations in which a group can find itself.'[135] Mermikides defines the notion of 'consensus' within the ensemble when she references Meyerhold and Grotowski. She argues that:

> consensus is easy to achieve because the group shares the same values – and often also a willingness to submit to the director, as when one of Meyerhold's actors states that: 'he built a production as they built a house. And we were happy to be even a door knob in this house'.[136]

Mermikides likens this model to the company structures of Shunt and Forced Entertainment, however I would argue that there is a difference between my workshops and the way in which these contemporary groups were founded; as a collective of artists/performers they presumably already shared certain aesthetic and ideological interests, whereas, our group was assembled on a much more arbitrary basis and I had not collaborated with any of the participants before.

Mermikides' notion of ensemble highlights the importance of the director's role in facilitating a shared vision, and a shared language. In the workshop sessions that I led, one way that I hoped to encourage a shared methodological language was through starting each session with the same warm-up. I consistently led the group in a short warm-up exercise borrowed from Sheila MacDougall's Viewpoints classes during *Rough Mix* in January 2010. This warm-up focuses on the connection that the group has to the ground and the space in the room, as well as their connection with each other through the spatial arrangement of a circle. This warm-up asks the group to work with an 'open heart', and became an important way to start the workshop sessions. It focuses on mutual respect for everyone in the room, instigating a way of working that encourages openness and fosters the importance of an awareness of other bodies in the room. The ritual of starting the sessions with this warm-up allowed the group to establish a routine that became part of the methodological language of the group. The process for *Generation* similarly established a collection of warm-up games and exercises which helped the group to feel comfortable in each other's presence and attempted to develop

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[134] McBurney in Mermikides and Smart. p. 10.

[135] Tim Etchells. *Certain Fragments*. London: Routledge, 1999 p. 62.

[136] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*' p. 156.

an intuitive collaboration during improvisations, and thus contributing to a shared aesthetic vocabulary. There was one particular task, adapted from a Frantic Assembly exercise, that Tashi Gore led during the first development week which asked the group to walk around the room to music, Gore would shout instructions such as 'clear' (where the performers had to run to the edges of the room, 'centre' (they had to run to the middle of the room), 'floor' (they had to lie on the floor), 'slow-motion' (they had to walk in slow motion), 'double-speed' (they had to walk at double-speed), 'hug' (they had to hug the closest person to them). The performers then developed tableaux based on ideas that we had discussed around the stimulus of 'what does the future look like?' The group performed physical representations of a political rally, a speech, an accusatory point. This exercise progressed so that the performers could choose which movement to 'deploy' when. What emerged was an intuitive collaboration based on a shared 'language' of physical actions. Multiple meanings were created simultaneously, in isolation and in collaboration.

There was a moment during the course of my own workshops that I noticed the group using a shared language to generate ideas. The workshop on 14th February focussed on using exercises from the Goat Island *School Book 2* to generate material (the book is a collection of exercises and essays compiled by the Chicago-based collaborative performance group Goat Island). After I had led the group in a continuous writing exercise from this book we then attempted to develop the material into some sort of group performance. In suggesting ideas for development, the group referred to games and exercises that we had used in previous workshops in order to communicate their ideas. When participant Patricia introduced an idea of running the same scene two or three times and allowing different stories to be 'substituted in', she recalled an improvised storytelling game we had played in the second workshop on February 7th. Elli came up with the idea of applying a mirroring exercise we had done from the same workshop, where the performers stood in a diamond configuration and had to replicate the movements of whoever was at the head of the diamond; 'I was just thinking earlier of that exercise we did'. In trying to establish a way to pass the story on to the next person, Sarah commented that 'you know like the ball game, you could be in a circle or something and you know that it's going to pass on to a certain [person]… so you know which chain you're in'. During these workshops the group were starting to use some sort of group vocabulary based on the work that had been

done in the previous sessions, allowing ourselves to share our own unique way of communicating to each other within a collective sphere of experience.

Mermikides identifies the potential problems that the 'consensus' of this shared language poses. She states that:

> while agreement might seem a positive value (after all, it makes for a smoother process), too much may hinder the opportunity for innovation and novelty, and risk what the business world would call "groupthink" – a too easy acceptance of any proposals made within a group to the point where non-conforming views are sidelined.[137]

This idea is supported by Shunt artist Louise Mari who argues that:

> if someone has an idea that they know doesn't fit in with Shunty ideas, […] they keep it to themselves or you start trying to think of things that you know are going to fit in with the group approach and so you get a kind of group sensibility. Everything gets smaller and smaller and smaller and the ideas for it get smaller and smaller and smaller and the suggestions, in the same way, get more and more limited.[138]

The risk of the shared language, then, is a danger of limited vocabulary that might hinder innovative creativity. It is for this reason that Forced Entertainment allows its permanent members to take sabbaticals of up to a year to pursue their own projects, knowing that when they return they will 'bring back something new'.[139] Over the course of my practical workshops, which lasted only a relatively short duration, I doubt that this was likely to become an issue, however it highlights the potential problems of working with the same group of people for extended periods of time. There is also a danger when using a shared language that the work created becomes stale. If everyone, involved shares a vision then there is no room for the creative conflict that can lead to innovative resolution. The most interesting developments in the Glas(s) process would often occur when Thorpe or Gore's ideas were challenged by someone in the room; this would often come from one of the performers and would be welcomed. Other times Thorpe and Gore disagreed with each other about a particular moment or structural decision and the idea would be discussed until consensus was achieved. It is the way that these

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[137] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*'. p. 158.

[138] Louise Mari in Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*'. pp. 160-161.

[139] Matt Burman in Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director'. p. 110.

conflicts are navigated that provides the most interesting moments of collaboration. For instance there was a stage in the devising process for *Generation* when performer Stephanie Hunter worried about only one facet of her personality being represented onstage (much of her material at this stage was about her obsession with the band *My Chemical Romance*). We started to develop other sections of material with her that presented her fandom as less specifically about that band and more open to be interpreted as a passion for seeking out role models. As a result of Stephanie's concern we realised that it was important for the versions of these people that were performed onstage to be as complex as possible, that we were presenting more than one facet of the person onstage. In order for Stephanie's worries to be voiced it was imperative that an environment was established in which Stephanie felt comfortable sharing these concerns, a safe environment in which an open dialogue could be facilitated. I will discuss this idea in more detail below.

2. An Open Dialogue

Another key aspect involved in facilitating collaborative practices can be attributed to the importance of having an open dialogue between the director(s) and other company members. The ideal result of this is that every company member is aware of why each decision has been made and are also able to challenge those decisions if necessary. Mermikides and Smart elaborate on this point when they note the many 'innovative techniques' that devising companies use for sharing their ideas. They observe that:

> Shunt maintains a blog which provides a continuous forum for discussion and the exchange of ideas; company members of the People Show who have been working separately on scenes come together and take turns to "narrate" the show to each other, so that all the participants have an opportunity to express their personal sense of how things fit together and what overall meaning or structure is emerging.[140]

They argue that these opportunities to share, respond and discuss 'enable company members to share responsibility for shaping the overall direction a production will take'.[141] Mermikides also argues that in Shunt's process, the activity

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[140] Mermikies and Smart. p. 26

[141] Ibid.

of discussing potential material with the whole group is extremely important, as it is 'the mechanism by which all the artists and collaborators contribute to the process'.[142] She also identifies the importance of this open dialogue to Tim Etchells' process with Forced Entertainment, arguing that what keeps Etchells from fully inhabiting the role of the *auteur* is a 'culture of transparency', noting that:

> one of Etchells' most important roles was in making explicit the tacit aspects of the creative and decision-making process, speaking eloquently and at length about the effect of a particular trial or the reasons for a particular restructuring of the script.[143]

In my series of research workshops I attempted to encourage this open dialogue by creating space for reflection and discussion of exercises and potential material. I was keen that this was encouraged at the fifth session on 7th March when we started to assemble more stable ideas for performance from the disparate exercises and material generated in the previous weeks. I attempted to facilitate a democratic method for discussing ways to develop material into performance. I split the group into pairs and gave them time to note down ideas based on the following instructions:

> I just want you to talk about any things that we've done since the very beginning session. Think about things that have stuck with you or things that you think are interesting that you might like to develop, but also maybe think about any themes or links that emerge between the work that we've done with a view towards what might work in one piece. And it doesn't have to be that eloquent but just any ideas that come up and we'll just share them at the end.[144]

Figures 5-9 show the notes from each pair of participants.

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[142] Mermikides. 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the *Lounge*'. p. 160.

[143] Mermikides. 'Forced Entertainment – *The Travels* (2002) – The anti-theatrical director'. p. 118.

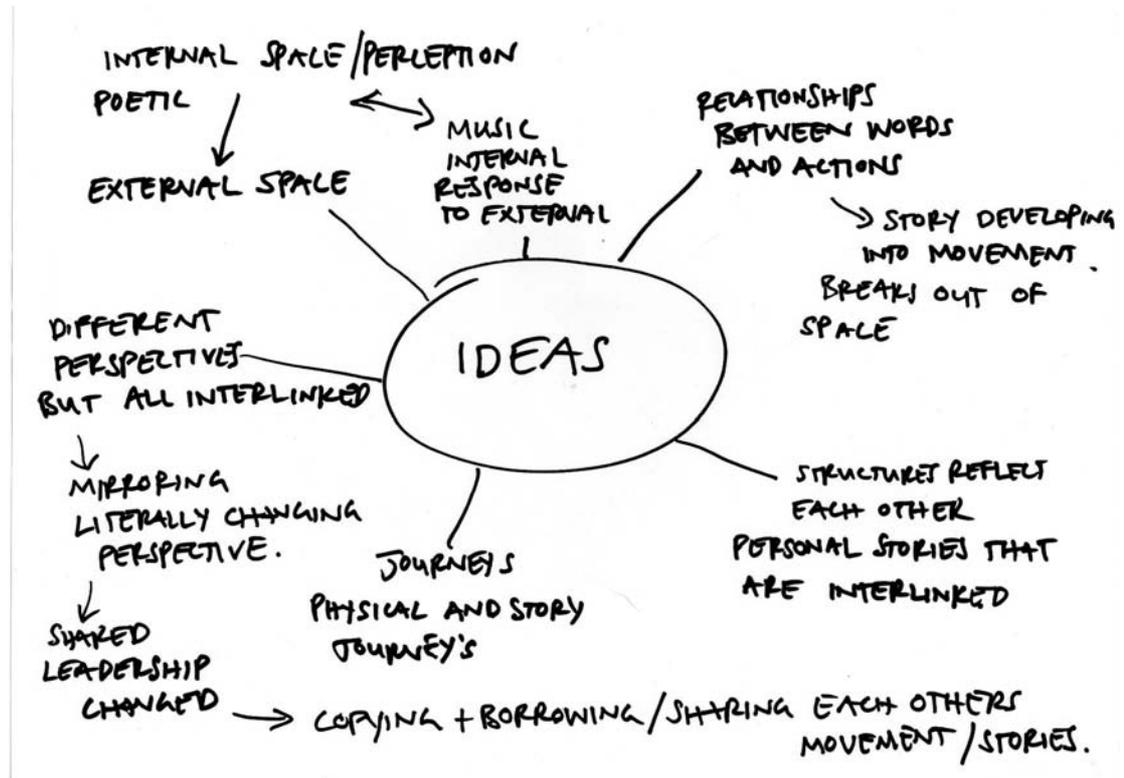[144] Transcribed from the video documentation of the workshop 07/03/10.

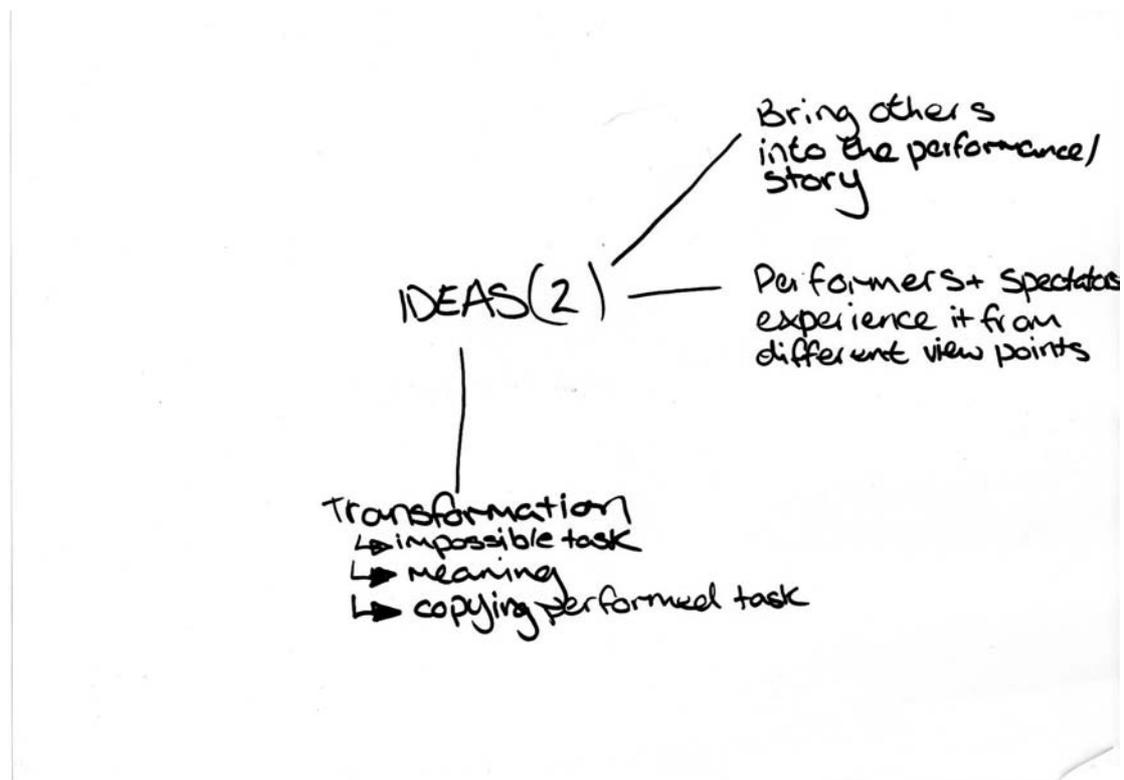**Figure 4 - Harry Wilson and Patricia Verity's notes**

Figure 5 - Harry and Patricia's notes 2

Becca's fight circle → rhythms! (clapping/speaking)! (Group Participation) music task ⭐
didn't know how abstract/real it should be. Ours were quite narrative. → could be restrict-ive.

Becca in space → described herself in space (3rd person) whereas others just described space.

Use of LFX & SFX

Euphoria machine!

narratives in week 1: 'write a story' → I gave too much background info, not really any action so difficult! (could be boring).

Sarah on Gumtree: realistic due to facial expressions/lack of speech.

Fairytales (?) 👁

Impossible tasks (sounds good - sad we missed it!) ♥

Newspaper "All good stories gone" Edison → was really seriou Lauren: tea addiction (simpler the better)?

Figure 6 - Lauren Clarke and Edison McKenna's notes

Possible development ideas.

- Journey around building.
  - Lead?
  - map? . . .
  - Audience 'find us' by walking around.

- Acting part...
  - Scripted snippet of a story? - quite seemingly abstract at first untill added to the other snippers + final gathering
  - mixture of speach and Movement. Some of us speak our story others act out a movement to emphisise or carry on the story/theme.

- Collabritive piece @ the end: develop the idea of the piece we did where we miror each others movement and pass on/share or intewpt each others story telling.

The snippers make sense when brought together - perhaps order of events is altered or something.

Figure 7 - Elli Williams and Sarah Bradley's notes

- Personal Experiences / journies .

- Experienceing other peoples memories.

- Movement - (Group) - Impossible tasks. Mirroring.

- Improvised / Devised / Polished...

- Collective Storytelling // Individual. Moments.

- Use of space → Transforming space ?.
  Journies. ←

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* Take the audience on a journey
→ through building // Memoory //
Movement.

* Individual at times
   Collective at others.

Figure 8 - Elli and Sarah's notes 2

Figure 9 - Rebecca Wade Morris and Amy Cullen's notes

We took turns to discuss each of the diagrams that the pairs had come up with, sharing interests and discussing ideas. Although this process *seemed* democratic there was still a sense that the ideas needed to be validated by me to be explored further. There was a moment in this discussion where the pretence of democratic participation was exposed. This came after each pair had shared their discussions and I attempted to move the session on:

Harry: I also think that it would be good to have something that linked each of the performances on this journey, whether that's a repeated movement or whether it's a story that happened that gets told throughout the journey and whether that's different versions of the same story or one story with different details like the one with the box. It could even just be those stories. I suppose there are different ways of getting the audience to experience that, whether someone does take them round.[145]

In the above section I was definitely leading the outcome of the discussion by asserting that the performance would benefit from linking sections, and each subsequent suggestion may have been interpreted by the group as 'suitable' ways to do this. As the group started to suggest ideas themselves it became clear that my role was as a validator of their suggestions. In discussing ways to link the material Amy and Rebecca suggest using a treasure map, to which I reply:

Harry: A treasure map would be good because that ties in with that weird story. And then in here there is some sort of group action or group performance that either brings something together or just whether it's that movement thing but using the movements from the stories.[146]

It could be argued that I am only re-articulating what the group have already developed in order to effectively progress the workshop session. However, in the discussion following this, the group appeared to have more confidence in articulating definitive ideas for performance as a result of the tentative parameters having been set. In the exchange below we can see ideas being discussed, refined and developed:

Becca: You could even describe where things might be round the building or tell some sort or narrative or story that would correlate with the rest of the building. […] We've done a lot of stuff with narrative and storytelling so you could almost do that like a relay. We could play with that idea of passing it on… passing on a story. Passing on a movement somehow.

[…]

Patricia: Maybe the person waits at the end of that piece and then they take the audience to the next space.

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[145] Transcribed from the video documentation of the workshop 07/03/10.

[146] Ibid.

> Amy: I quite like the idea of us being in our spaces. It's that whole idea that we claim them long before anyone else is there. If that makes any sense. But you could definitely do some interesting stuff if you wanted to incorporate the storytelling with the start of a story here and then… like we all start with the same story like we did with that writing exercise we all started with the same story but it came out with very different meanings and we all start with the same story in here but in our own space it becomes something different. It becomes our own.
>
> Becca: I do think it's important if we are doing that thing of the person being there when the audience come in but you could have someone from the previous space come in and tell the story and continue it or something.[147]

In the above discussion the act of shaping through discussion, sharing and refining ideas was present. The group defined what form they wanted the performance to take by developing rules for how the work could operate. Patricia suggested that the audience are led to a new space by the performer, but Amy disagreed, stating that the performer was already set in the space before the audience arrived in order for them to 'claim the space', Becca then added to this by suggesting that the performer comes back in, to continue the story. In this process the group were collaborating through discussing, developing, refining and disagreeing. It was by framing this session as an exercise in sharing ideas for development that this collaboration was possible and highlights a key aspect of developing work in a collaborative environment, the importance of allowing voices to be heard.

3. Joining in

During these workshop sessions I experimented with the extent to which I, as facilitator of the workshop, joined in with the games and exercises. The group reflected on my participation in some of the exercises as follows:

> When you joined in the exercises, to me, it felt more like we were experimenting as a group to see if things worked. I think it was interesting how we all worked as a team, including you.[148]
>
> When you joined in the group task we felt that it was a communal project and even though you were the leader you were part of the group too.[149]

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[147] Ibid.

[148] From Lauren Clarke's journal

> I do think that it helped the group to bond as a whole by the fact that Harry initially participated in the exercises. It meant that an 'us' and 'him' scenario didn't develop and the work was therefore more organic.[151]

> When he participates in the exercises he moves even further away from the director's chair and it does boost the collaborative atmosphere as we are ALL sharing our ideas.[152]

Should the director participate when the group is leading the workshop collectively? In this context it seemed that it was important for me to join in the game as it engendered strong feelings of group/community/bond/collaboration by not instilling the director as an 'outsider'. Participant Amy makes an interesting observation about my participation in this game indicating a move away from the perceived function of the 'director'. She states that:

> if you weren't taking part and were just watching, you might have stopped us and asked if we wanted to start again. This would have meant you were more in control rather than part of the group. Both are necessary as we do need someone to guide the group and shape tasks but we all need to get on/work together/share ideas etc...[153]

In this statement we can see that in a collaborative devising context the director needs to balance the need for leadership and observation with feelings of trust and community created by participation 'on the same terms' as the performers.

The problematic tension between encouraging collaborative practices and knowing when to lead was present in much of the workshops. What happens when an ensemble gets 'writer's block' collectively? Should it be the responsibility of the director to lead the group past silence? Once you have developed ideas or material how do you assess collectively what 'works' and what does not? Assuming that a robust creative practice is based upon the ability to interrogate ideas then, within the context of a democratic practice, is it possible to criticise other people's ideas without offending them? And from what position does one do this, does it have to come from someone with the skills, knowledge and

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[149] From Patricia Verity's journal.

[151] From Sarah Bradley's journal.

[152] From Amy Cullen's journal.

[153] From Lauren's journal

experience to support their claim, or can it come from a subjective and perhaps elusive notion of what 'works' and what does not 'work'? Heddon and Milling challenge this notion when they argue that:

> Though the work does not exist and is unknown in advance of its making, there is nevertheless an assumption that there is a work to be "discovered" or "recognised"… One feels that something is "right" because it fits the model of the already known, already sought; the "found" gesture is only, in fact, seen – or enacted – because it is already learnt, anticipated, or is being looked for.[154]

This comment relates to the problems identified by Mermikides in relation to the dangers of a shared language and complicates the notion that devised work is inherently innovative or original. If there is a recognisable model for devised work then the question in the context of my practice remains: who is looking for this moment? Who decides when this work is discovered or recognised? Presumably the director's function is to look for these moments in the work of the performers. The director is then assembling meaning from a range of texts 'authored' by the participants but with the input and collaboration of these authors in the subsequent decision making process.

Conclusion

In addressing the question of what the director's role is in facilitating collaborative devising practices; in this chapter I have discussed how democratic modes of production have shifted from being explicitly aligned with a socialist politics of the devising companies of the 60s and 70s to a process of collaboration that engenders a postmodern product. A simultaneous shift can be traced through an emphasis on individual roles in the devising process, specifically the role of the director as an arranger of material into a coherent whole. I have outlined Alex Mermikides' 'clash' and 'consensus' principles in relation to Forced Entertainment and Shunt. In these processes there is a stage of clash and incoherence which then becomes clarified by the important role that the director has in applying dramaturgical and aesthetic principles on the material generated by the company members. The tension between ideas of the creative actor figure and the director 'auteur' discussed in the previous chapter have been avoided by the companies discussed above, potentially as a result of the director's specific role as author of

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[154] Heddon and Milling. pp. 198-199.

the work being recognised. Using examples of my own practice, and that of Thorpe and Gore with Glas(s) Performance, I have outlined some practical approaches to facilitating group collaboration; focussing on creating a shared language and allowing open dialogue within the process, as well as experimenting with joining in games and exercises.

A useful way to attempt to define the director's role in collaborative devising is to ask how the workshop participants defined my role within the sessions. When asked to define this Amy commented that:

> I think there were times that we ended up guiding Harry or when no-one was guiding. As much as we were learning from him, there were really rewarding times when it felt like he was learning as much as we were.[155]

This seems necessary for any dynamic of group collaboration: no single authority and no singular, right answer but a collective discovery. In the post-show discussion a question arose as to whether the group shared responsibility? Participant Sarah Bradley reflected on this question by stating that:

> Because it was a shared experience and a shared product then we all equally shared the responsibilities. However, having Harry there as a leader figure meant that it felt that less could go wrong.[156]

When it came to discussing responsibility for the product, Sarah saw me as a leader figure in this process. However, when asked if she felt safe in my hands Amy comments that

> This question suggests that Harry was in some kind of position of authority over us and it just never felt like that. I didn't feel like I was having to trust Harry any more than anyone else in the group.[157]

There was a general consensus amongst the group that there was a shared responsibility for the work, despite disagreement as to whether I was in fact leading or not. Tied up with issues of joint responsibility is the notion of authorship in devising processes. The ease with which the performers from the companies discussed above hand over authorial control to the director is evident of a trust in

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[155] From Amy's journal.

[156] From Sarah's journal.

[157] From Amy's journal.

the director's role in facilitating group devising. In the next chapter, I will go on to examine the complexities of attributing authorship in devising processes in relation to theoretical and legal definitions of the term.

A Description of Process 2: *Pictures of Heaven*.

Figure 10 - Sophie McCabe and Scott McDonald in *Pictures of Heaven* (The Arches, 2009)

Pictures of Heaven was made for ArchesLIVE! theatre festival in September 2009. It used *Instructions for Pictures Heaven*, a short story by Ali Smith, as a starting point and utilised four actors, a fiddle player and a short instructional video to tell multiple disparate stories of absent characters in heaven. Their stories were sometimes narrated and sometimes acted out, whilst their 'picture of heaven' was projected on to a frosted perspex screen followed by a caption of when the photograph was taken ('Michael King, ten years old, Ullapool').[158] These stories were interjected with other projected captions that glimpsed at the narratives of many other characters outwith the main piece ('i. Lewis, smiling for the camera, at the town hall' (see Figure 11)). The piece finished with a projected video of instructions for how to make your own pictures of heaven in the style of Blue Peter or Tony Hart (see Figure 12). I was interested in introducing different layers of textuality to the piece, so we had the spoken text, the live fiddle, the written text (projected), the performed images,

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[158] In Smith's original story a 'picture of heaven' is an image made from a collage of blurred faces cut from newspapers or old photographs. These are placed on to cotton wool and submerged in water before a photograph of the new image is taken and a hoaxed image of those people in heaven is created.

projected images, and the projected video all in dialogue with each other and Smith's original story.

The process behind *Pictures of Heaven* differed substantially to processes of making that I have embarked upon before. Firstly, I was working with a writer and previous collaborator, Catriona Easton and so the material content of the piece did not need to come solely from practical exploration or improvisations in rehearsal. Secondly, we were using a written text as a starting point (Smith's story), as opposed to other projects such as *A Screening* (2008) which used missing scenes from Buster Keaton's film *Daydreams* as a stimulus, or *Helium* (2010) which took the depletion of helium as its starting point. This meant that there were already two authors/writers associated with the piece before we had even started work. The project grew out of an initial idea we had in which we hoped to adapt a selection of Smith's stories and present them theatrically as *Scottish Love Songs* but we were unable to gain permission from Smith's agent. Our aim for the piece became to come up with an 'original' work distinct from Smith's story but using it as a starting point, that was written by Catriona, with a group of actors in mind, but that could be assembled and structured by myself in rehearsal with the actors. Whilst the ownership of *Scottish Love Songs* would ultimately have lied with Ali Smith, the claim for authorship of the performance work *Pictures of Heaven* and where ownership lies within this was much more complex.
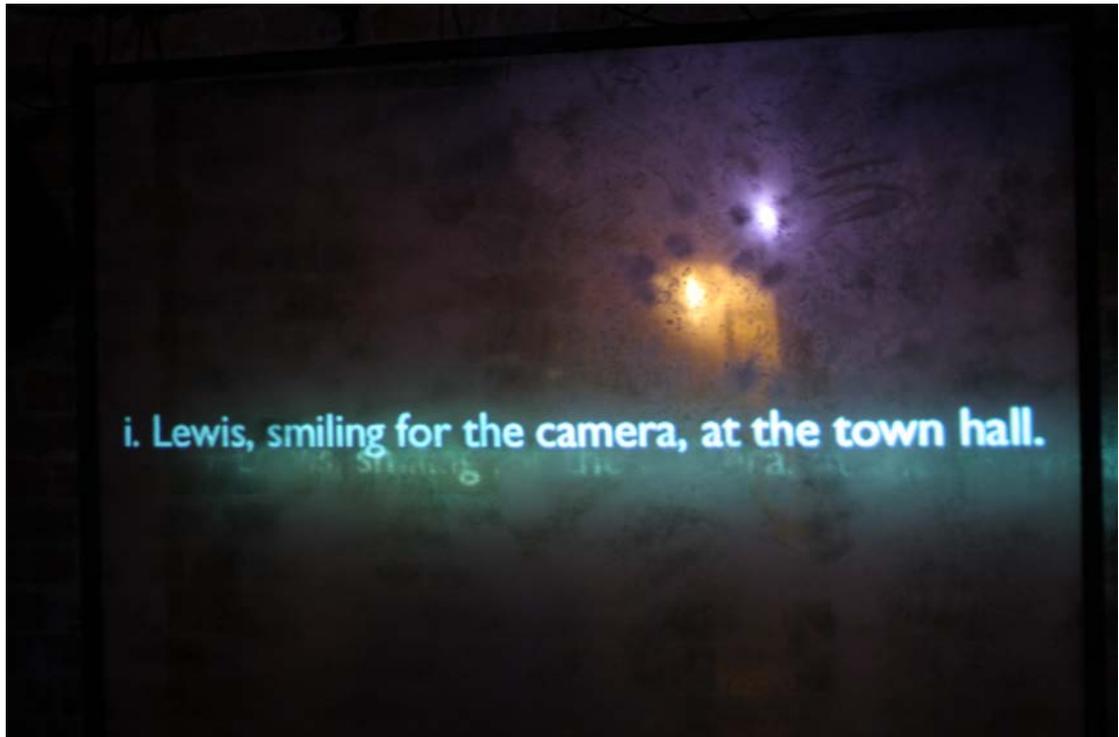
Figure 11 – The frosted Perspex screen with Caption.

Figure 12 – Stefanie Ritch in the projected video section: instructions for pictures of heaven

We started work by developing ideas with the performers through a series of informal workshop sessions.[159] This development period started in July 2009 with myself, Catriona, and the cast making our own pictures of heaven from the

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[159] The cast were Sophie McCabe, Scott McDonald, James Oakley and Shantha Roberts. We were also joined by Stefanie Ritch as the video performer and Becky Leach who played live fiddle in the performance, as well as selecting and arranging the music that we used.

instructions in Smith's story (see Figure 13). We then photographed these images and projected them in the rehearsal space. Each performer took turns at introducing these characters in short improvisations. Three of these images made their way into the final piece and became versions of the characters developed in this session. We also worked on improvised storytelling exercises in order to invent or develop characters. Catriona and I would ask the group 'who is this a picture of?' To which each actor responded and then a group consensus was made as to which narrative line was the most interesting to pursue. We would then ask another question based on the first reply; 'why is he holding a trophy?' It was through this collective improvisation that we came up with the character of Michael King who has his photograph taken after winning a stone-skimming competition in his local town. However, the details of Michael's story were very much 'authored' by Catriona in her subsequent writing process.

Following this development process we had about a months break from rehearsals. This semi-enforced break allowed Catriona to write the majority of text for the piece, although she left the task of allocating stories and structuring the material to me to work on during rehearsals. In this way the process of rehearsing the show was much closer to the kind of devising process I have experienced previously. Instead of an arguably more traditional relationship where the work of the director and actors is to interpret and realise the playwright's singular vision, it was my role to act as selector, editor and composer of the constituent material into a coherent whole. Having said this, much of the important work done with the actors was in finding an interpretation of the text that allowed the actor to perform that text with the appropriate feeling or emotion and in a way that felt 'natural' or 'naturalistic'. This became the most difficult aspect of the project for me as a director as this character development work is not always as necessary when developing material directly from games, exercises and improvisations. When the actors have organically developed their characters, or are playing versions of themselves, as in much collaboratively devised work, the discussion about how to interpret a text rarely takes place. During these rehearsals I also worked on developing distilled movements with each cast member to add to the visual text of the piece. I made compositional decisions from all of this material, and using my directorial 'instinct' as to what 'worked' where I imposed a structure on to

the piece, rather than having a collaborative discussion as to what could go where and when. Would a collaborative process have offered a better final product? Through the collaboration of other artists, the work created would have most certainly differed; it would arguably have relied less on my own formulae of directing in deciding what 'works', but it may have lacked the aesthetic unity that I was aiming for. If I consider Catriona and myself as the 'authors' of the piece, where does that place Ali Smith, the actors and Becky who decided on what pieces of music she would play and their arrangement? Is this a collaborative practice? Did the performers feel that they could claim ownership over the final product?

Figure 13 - A picture of heaven made in the first development workshop. This became 'Grant at the party, 2009'.

3 Ownership 1: Concepts of Authorship, Imitation, Copyright and Intellectual Property.

In Chapters 1 and 2 I discussed the tensions between the creative actor and director auteur and how collaborative practices might embrace the director's function within devising practices. Embedded within these ideas is the concern of who the work belongs to; who can claim ownership over what is created? In order to answer this question it will be necessary to interrogate what the 'work' is and how it is defined. Therefore, this chapter will explore the construction of authorship, its application in the development of intellectual property and copyright laws, and the effect of this on an ideological belief in the priority of the written text in play production. I will investigate how the role of 'author' has come under scrutiny as a result of poststructural theories of authorship and text. These investigations lead to the question of whether it is the director of devised theatre, rather than the writer, who can claim authorship and ownership over a piece of devised work. In order to answer this question there needs to be an exploration of what makes the overall performance text of a production differ from a written text in the way that it is constructed, and in what ways this effects its legal status? In spite of Roland Barthes's concept of the 'death of the author', the theatre industry, and society in general, still defines authorship through a legal discourse that prioritises single-authored texts over collaborative creation. This may suggest that poststructuralist ideas are difficult to apply practically to the idea of aesthetic and legal ownership of work. However, the job of the director in devised theatre is distinctly different to that of an interpreter of texts to be faithfully realised, as is often the case in traditional play production. Therefore we need to re-think the director's role as distinct from traditional concepts of writing and directing into a role that sees the director as more of a composer, editor and arranger of multiple *texts*.

Concepts of Authorship as defined by the law.

In order to define the term 'authorship' in reference to directing practices of contemporary devised theatre it is important to situate it within a context of historical concepts of authorship from the late eighteenth century onwards and the effect that this history has had – and still has – on the discourses of legal copyright and intellectual property laws in Britain and America. By examining the legal

construction of 'authorship' in this context a case can be made that there is no definition that fits the practice of contemporary devising. In asking questions such as: 'who authors devised theatre' and 'who owns devised theatre?', the processes of making work and the role of the director within this practice can be defined and interrogated.

Peter Jaszi's article, 'Toward a Theory of Copyright: The Metamorphoses of "Authorship"', charts the history of copyright law as a social construct defined through the ideological conception of 'authorship' in the romantic period. Jaszi argues that copyright doctrine tends to 'assume the importance of "authorship" as a privileged category of human enterprise', when in actuality 'authorship' has been 'anything but a stable, inert foundation for the structure of copyright doctrine'.[160] Intellectual property has been, and still is, defined through the legal discourses in which it originated – discourses that favour capitalist modes of production and reception. As Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford argue, the notion of author 'is a peculiarly modern construct, one that can be traced back through multiple and overdetermined pathways to the development of modern capitalism and of intellectual property'.[161] In legal discourses, then, there is a failure to identify "authorship" as a construction, it is taken as a definitive role that can be attributed to one individual. Another element key to authorship's legal construction is the emphasis that romantic discourses placed on ideas of 'creativity', 'originality' and 'inspiration'. Literary critic Martha Woodmansee has suggested that this emphasis, alongside the emergence of copyright laws in the eighteenth century, manifested itself as a conversion of 'things of the mind into transferable articles of property … [that] has matured simultaneously with the capitalist system'.[162] In 'Collaboration v. Imitation: Authorship and the Law' Anne Jamison also identifies a link between legal developments and a capitalist ideology. She states that:

> copyright law primarily exists, it is argued, to promote private intellectual labour which, in turn, produces works of public value… But it is also a law that increasingly exists to drive a capitalist economy that favours private reward rather than public benefit. In order to justify itself, copyright law has had to both produce and legitimise a particular kind of

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[160] Peter Jaszi. 'Toward a Theory of Copyright: The Metamorphoses of "Authorship"'. *Duke Law Journal*. 1991.2 (Apr, 1991): 455-502. pp. 455-456.

[161] Lisa Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford. 'Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship'. *PMLA*. 116.2 (2001): 354-369. p. 354.

[162] Martha Woodmansee quoted in Jaszi. p. 467.

author, usually singular and involved in an individualised endeavour to produce works of an original nature and in doing so, it affects and controls literary and other artistic production.[163]

This prioritising of private reward over public benefit can be followed through to the idea of the moral rights of authors, discussed by I.J. Merrymen and A. Elsen. They state that:

> the primary justification for the protection of moral rights is the idea that the work of art is the extension of the artist's personality, an expression of his innermost being. To mistreat the work of art is to mistreat the artist, to invade his area of privacy, to impair his personality.[164]

This insistence that mistreating the work of art is to mistreat the artist is present in two controversial productions discussed by Gerald Rabkin in his essay 'Is There a Text on This Stage?: Theatre/Authorship/Interpretation'. Rabkin considers Samuel Beckett's objection to the American Repertory Theatre's production of *Endgame* (1984) in which director JoAnne Akalitis set the play in a 'desolate length of subway tunnel replete with derelict cars and the detritus of modern technological civilisation', directly contradicting Beckett's stage directions which call for a 'bare interior… two small windows… a door'.[165] He also discusses The Wooster Group's production of *L.S.D (…Just the High Points…)* (1984), which incorporated long sections of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* – albeit sped up and re-contextualised.

Both of these productions led to legal challenges from Beckett and Miller over the 'unauthorised and/or allegedly distorted productions of their work'.[166] In both of these cases the perceived mistreatment of the play-texts was seen as personal invasion, impairment, and a violation of the playwright's aesthetics. These examples seek to clearly demonstrate how the law upholds certain hierarchies in the making of theatre, namely that of the author's dominance over the written text. Jaszi points to this when he argues that the romantic "authorship" construct has an 'implicit recognition of a hierarchy of artistic productions'. He argues that through this construct 'art contains greater value if it results from true imagination rather

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[163] Anne Jamison. 'Collaboration v. Imitation: Authorship and the Law'. *Law and Literature*. 18.2 (Summer, 2006): 199-224. p. 202.

[164] I.J. Merryman and A. Elsen quoted in Jaszi. p. 497.

[165] Gerald Rabkin. 'Is There a Text on This Stage?: Theatre/Authorship/Interpretation'. *Performing Arts Journal*, 9:2/3, 10th Anniversary Issue: The American Theatre Condition. (1985): 142-159. p. 146.

[166] Ibid. p. 142.

than mere application, particularly if its creator draws inspiration directly from nature'.[167] The limitations of this ideology can be highlighted if we place the idea of 'true imagination' and 'inspiration' alongside the context of a collagistic and postmodern theatre practice, as I would categorise The Wooster Group's work. This is a practice that highlights the intertextuality of performance over ideas of originality and creative genius, where new multiple meanings can be created from placing existing texts alongside each other. Jamison argues that the danger of the kind of thinking that prioritises originality and creative genius can result in a 'commodification of art and knowledge' that derives from 'a conflation of literary and intellectual property with all other kinds of material property', which leads to copyright law having the power to deem 'who is a real "author" and who is not'.[168] In the context of copyright law Akalitis and The Wooster Group's director Elizabeth LeCompte are *not* deemed authors of their works.

These definitions of 'authorship' in copyright law have a profound effect on where the *ownership* lies within collaborative practices. In 'Devising as Writing' Lizbeth Goodman documents a workshop at the Theatre Writers Union (TWU) organised by Julie Wilkinson in 1989. Wilkinson states that at the time of this workshop TWU attributed "authorship" to 'the person who physically writes down the material of the script, whether group devised and conceived or not'.[169] This attribution fails to acknowledge the complex practices of collaboration involved in devised work. In this process a performer/deviser may have contributed instrumentally in the development of character, situation, or specific material. If the devising is task-based improvisation, where the performer has created an original piece of material from an exercise that another company member has planned, then the physically written down material of the script may only contain the original task, and not the resultant action. How does TWU's definition attribute authorship to movement sequences or a complex layering of text, projection and sound that make up the whole performance 'text' of a production? Jamison argues that the legal construction of authorship is inherently opposed to collaborative practices. She states that an 'aesthetic discourse of originality… effaces the more collaborative

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[167] Jaszi. p. 462.

[168] Jamison. p. 202.

[169] Lizbeth Goodman. 'Devising As Writing: British Women Theatre Writers and Educators Demand Contractual Status'. *The Drama Review*. 34.2 (1990): 17-18. p. 18.

norms of creativity that go into the production of a text'.[170] She also cites James Millar's summary of the aesthetic problems surrounding the instigation of copyright law in Britain where he states that the legal apparatus governing copyright law is '[a social construct] pushed in one direction by copyright holders trying to solidify control of their work in a way that legally undercuts the collaborative processes that [make] their work possible [in the first place]'.[171] Legal definitions of authorship, then, are decidedly ill-equipped to tackle the inherently collaborative and multiply authored 'texts' of devised theatre.

In his book on intellectual property law Michael Edenborough offers some useful definitions of the term 'joint authorship'. However, if we consider using Edenborough's definition to describe authorship in devising contexts, it is still problematic. He states that:

> a work of joint authorship means a work produced by the collaboration of two or more authors in which the contribution of each author is not distinct from that of the other author or authors.[172]

In this definition the collaborators are deemed joint authors when it is impossible to disentangle their work from someone else's. But when Edenbrough notes that 'a person who merely suggests the idea, which is then developed by another into a recorded work, is not a joint author with the latter',[173] he fails to recognise the difficulty in some cases of identifying where the work of one person ends and another begins. Heddon and Milling argue that within devised theatre processes, deciphering 'who made which suggestion, or initiated a movement that became a moment of performance' relies on memories that are 'continually forgotten'.[174] In an inherently collaborative practice, like theatre, the work is made by a number of people, whether this is recorded or not. The implication of this is that most devised theatre should be classed as a work of joint authorship. In this sense it becomes important to name collaborators, contributors and joint authors even if they 'merely suggest an idea'.

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[170] Jamison. p. 200.

[171] James Miller quoted in Jamison. p. 201.

[172] Michael Edenborough. *Intellectual Property Law.* London: Cavendish, 1995. p. 65.

[173] Ibid. p. 65.

[174] Heddon and Milling. p. 23.

I am aware that the legal model of defining copyright and authorship is not always applicable to a devised theatre practice. These laws have been dictated by the outcome of copyright lawsuits; intellectual property law has only been defined because it was necessary in order to grant ownership in these cases. It is for this reason that there are such different models for authorship between a 'dramatic work' and a 'cinematic work' that credits the director of that work as the author. As a result of this there are no laws that specifically apply to devised performance. However, in comparing or applying this model to a devised theatre practice it becomes apparent that the legal model or even the need to define authorship places the discourse of the law in alignment with an ideological belief in art as a commodity and thought as property.

Poststructuralist critiques of Authorship and their limitations.

If legal definitions of authorship and the rights of intellectual property seem to be ill-fitting when applied to devised theatre, in the twentieth-century the law would seem even less equipped to deal with the author. Poststructuralist critiques of authorship have led to shifts in concepts of 'text' and 'author' that have had strong repercussions for the practices of experimental theatre-making. The idea of the death of the author, put forward by Roland Barthes in his seminal book *Image – Music – Text*, was developed by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault in a way that reconceived thinking surrounding 'author' and 'text'.[175] In the light of the author's subsequent decentred status, legal definitions of authorship seem hardly robust enough to withstand scrutiny. However, in legal discourses, a romantic conception of intellectual property persists and the proliferation of these poststructuralist theories has led to accusations that critiques of authorship deny author-ity to those who have always been denied it, namely women and other marginalised groups. I will now explicate some important aspects of these theories of authorship and how they relate to the form of 'postmodern' devised theatre before discussing some of these limitations and the ways in which theatre practice may be able to establish authorial control for those denied authority.

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[175] Roland Barthes. 'The Death of the Author'. *Image, Music Text*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1977.

Michel Foucault. 'What Is an Author'? *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.

Derrida, Jacques. 'Signature Event Context'. *Limited Inc.* Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988.

In 'The Death of the Author' Roland Barthes puts forward the case that it is in the reader, not the author of texts, that meaning is located and 'to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing'.[176] In opposition to the romantic construction of authorship, he argues that:

> we know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.[177]

In the light of this statement, it can only be in the reader where this multiplicity of meanings is present. Barthes states that 'the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost'.[178] In the context of the death of the author, then, the protection of individual author's rights seems at best inaccurate and at worst futile. In their essay 'Theology of Authorship?' William Stanton and Christopher McCullough summarise Barthes' theory by claiming that, as all writers are also readers, the act of writing becomes a 'process of constructing a "net" of texts from all those [texts] which are "present" in the writing'.[179] Once again the protection of originality and intellectual property seems futile in the absence of an original, single-authored text.

In 'What Is an Author', Michel Foucault argues that our attempts to define and categorise the author figure stem from our fear of the proliferation of meaning. He cites the romantic – and legal – concepts of authorship in which 'we are accustomed… to saying that the author is the genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustible world of significations'.[180] However, Foucault supports Barthes' belief in the author as a limiting force when he states that:

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[176] Barthes. p. 148.

[177] Ibid. p. 146

[178] Ibid. p. 148.

[179] William Stanton and Christopher McCullough. 'Theology of Authorship?'. *Studies in Theatre Production*. 17 (1998): 21-37. p. 25.

[180] Michel Foucault. 'What Is an Author'? *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984. p. 118.

> the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses.[181]

Foucault terms this functional principle the 'author function' and suggests that it is a mode of discourse that is received in a certain way and must receive a certain status, and that this mode of discourse is recognised by the author's name. He goes on to argue that 'the author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and culture'.[182] Foucault asserts that the use of the author function in discourse identifies one text as distinctively 'authored' over another. He uses the example of a private letter as having a signer but not an author or a contract having a guarantor but not an author. In saying this he reiterates that the author function 'is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society'.[183] I would argue that it is the 'author function' that seeks to prioritise the written 'authored' texts in the doctrine of copyright and intellectual property, therefore if a performance text has no singular 'author', as is often the case in collaborative devised work, then it is understandably 'written out' of the legal definition of a protectable work. Or another common practice in the categorisation of devised work is for a singular 'author' to be indentified – usually the director – regardless of the collaborative nature of the project. In her essay 'Repetition, Quoting, Plagiarism and Iterability (*Europe After the Rain* – Again)', Geraldine Harris argues that in group devising processes a 'theoretical sense of group ownership does not, in practice, stop authorship of professional pieces being attributed to one key member of the devising process, usually the director'.[184] This attribution can be seen as the practical example of the ways in which authorship and ownership is still defined through a legal discourse.

An additional complication to the ideas of originality and innovation that are upheld by a romantic conception of authorship can be found in Derrida's idea of iterability. Harris provides a useful summary of Derrida's arguments from *Limited Inc.* She states that:

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[181] Ibid. pp. 118-119.

[182] Ibid. p. 107.

[183] Ibid. pp. 107-108.

[184] Geraldine Harris. 'Repitition, Quoting, Plagiarism and Iterability (*Europe After the Rain* – Again). *Studies in Theatre Production.* 19 (1999): 10-21, p. 10.

> each repetition of a word… must in some way differ from that which it cites or it would not be a repetition but would appear as the 'thing itself'. Each repetition subsequently differs from the last and, as a result, new meanings for the same signifiers are constantly produced so as to infinitely defer the production of 'full' or 'final' meanings. This process of differing and deferring undermines the idea that it is possible to definitely decide on the meaning of any given act, utterance or signifier in the past or in the present, whether by reference to authorial intentions or anything else.[185]

This development of Barthes' idea of a lack of fixed meanings in a text – or anything else for that matter – manages to highlight how implausible it is that texts can be controlled as commodities when their meanings can be 'endlessly repeated… out of the context of their production'.[186] When placed alongside the legal conception of authorship, these theories deconstruct the very notion of authorship and even question the extent to which the writer of a work can claim ownership over its meanings. Ultimately, these theories serve to illustrate just how ill-equipped intellectual property and copyright are for dealing with collaboratively devised, intertextual work.

What these theories also highlight, however, is the difficulty of, or even resistance to a practical application of poststructuralist theories to the processes of literary text production. Both Jamison, and Ede and Lunsford argue for the contemporary application of poststructuralist theories to be in the field of Internet culture and 'hypertext'. Jamison argues that the practice of following links that divert from the main text 'liberates both reader and writer from the linearity of print'.[187] Ede and Lunsford describe a 'relentless intertextuality' present in hypertext and argue that 'the rapid proliferation of multiple selves online… would seem to have moved us well beyond autonomous individualism'.[188] Ede and Lunsford also highlight the challenge to resolve ideas of multiple selves and the death of the author in this practice; they argue that 'the opportunity to deploy virtual selves with distributed and potentially ever-changing identitites can be a source of alienation and anxiety as well as of liberation'.[189] To this extent the current questions in contemporary

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[185] Ibid. p. 14.

[186] Stanton and McCullough. p. 27.

[187] Jamison. p. 217

[188] Ede and Lunsford. p. 354.

[189] Ibid. pp. 354-355.

concepts of authorship are, 'What is an *electronic* author?'[190] and – capturing the awkward complexity of online selves – 'Who am we?'.[191] It seems important to ask why these discussions and concepts of a postmodern text seem to be much more easily suited to the hypertext of the internet? Could it be that, as an entirely contemporary phenomenon, hypertext has been able to define its own rules of engagement that are distinct from literary traditions of the author? In the historical lineage of devising practices that was charted in Chapter 1, it is apparent that the emergence of devising was led by singular directors-as-authors, bearing much resemblance to the romantic conception of the author as singular originary. However, it is necessary to break from this conception of authorship in the context of collaborative devising. In order to do this it is important to redefine the role of the director as composer, editor, and constructer rather than 'author'. The weight of the term 'author', demonstrated by Foucault's 'author function', serves to delineate that if a work of devised theatre is presented as having a singular author then it will be received in a certain way and given a certain status – the effect of this is that the contributions of devising collaborators may be written out of the work.

I have focussed on ways in which poststructural critiques of authorship have challenged traditional legal and literary definitions of what an author is, as well as how the practical application of these critiques has reconfigured the ways that the mode of text and author operate within our society. However, Ede and Lunsford, as well as identifying web texts as potentially alienating, also argue the damaging effect of the death of the author on marginalised groups. They ask whether it is 'merely a coincidence… that the death of the author was proclaimed just as women and scholars of colour were beginning to publish?'[192] They chart the arguments of a number of feminist and postcolonial theorists who have focussed on the 'urgent need to recover the voices of those whose otherness denied them *authority*'.[193] Lisa S. Klinger supports this argument in her essay 'Where's the Artist? Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theories of Authorship'. She states that these critiques of authorship 'have deflected the trajectory of feminist cultural production by defusing feminist ideas that developed around the idea and person

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[190] Jamison. p. 218

[191] Ede and Lunsford. p. 355.

[192] Ibid. p. 355.

[193] Ibid. p. 355.

of the artists in the seventies' and that the critique of authorship 'carries enormous potential for stymieing the full participation of women artists in contemporary culture at the point where critical practice and artistic production meet'.[194] These arguments on the problematic tension between the death of the author and the need for marginalised groups to claim author-ity can go some way to defending single-author texts in the right context. For instance, before now I have found problematic Nic Green's performance work *Trilogy* (2009), 'an epic three-part interrogation of what it means to be a woman today'.[195] In the way that the show was billed and publicised Green was presented as the singular author of the work, when in fact the performance relies on an important network of collaborators (not least the many local women volunteers who perform a choreographed naked dance at the end of Part 1). However, in the light of Ede and Lunsford, and Klinger's arguments, it becomes important for Green to be identified as the creative originary of that (performance) text in order to reclaim or re-define authorship as female and her female voice as authoritative.

Authorship in devised theatre-making: Directing as Authorship, and performance 'texts'.

In *Intellectual Property Law* Edenborough asserts that in order for copyright to exist in literary, dramatic or musical works, they must be:

> Recorded in writing or in some other manner... Thus, there can be no copyright in a mere unrecorded idea. As a consequence, copyright cannot subsist in any ad lib improvisations of a play that have not been recorded in some manner.[196]

As discussed above there is an unreliable process of memory involved in devised theatre that would mean that unrecorded ideas that may have been instrumental in the development of a work get lost. In addition to this there is an assumption made in this definition that the work is what is written down, when in fact the ephemeral, unrecordable, live moment is what defines performance in a contemporary context. There are also some attempts in the intellectual property law outlined by

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[194] Linda S. Klinger. 'Where's the Artist? Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theories of Authorship'. *Art Journal*. 50.2 (Summer, 1991): 39-47. p. 39.

[195] Nic Green. *Trilogy Programme Note*. (2010).

[196] Edenborough. pp. 25-26.

Edenborough to define what makes someone the 'author' of a work. He states that:

> The author of a work is the person who is responsible for physically creating it… for example, the writer of a book or the drawer of a picture… a person who merely suggests the subject matter of a picture or the plot of a book would not be considered as the author.[197]

The description of an author as someone who physically creates a work becomes problematic when applied to a piece of theatre. The role of the director could easily be described as one of physical creator of the 'performed' work, as opposed to the 'written' work. But then, as has been previously discussed, intellectual property law understandably prioritises the tangible, fixed 'written text' over something ephemeral and arguably 'unrecordable'. In this context we need to ask: what is the work that is being physically created, is it the written play of the performed work? This question inevitably leads us to a necessary definition of the 'performance text' of a production. Rabkin charts a shift that occurred in experimental, avant-garde theatre practices of the sixties and early seventies that overthrew the idea of 'the written text as a sacred, inseminating source which commanded devout fidelity… in the name of a revolution of physical presence.' He goes on to argue that during this time:

> the function of the playwright was spread among members of the ensemble or subsumed by the director-auteur. Or – as in the early work of Grotowski and Schechner – a classic originary text became the unprivileged ground from which a radical performance text was created.[198]

This shift reconceived the importance of the singular written play-text in favour of a multiple overall performance text. This argument is elucidated by Richard Schechner (in *The Drama Review*) when he states that 'text is not coterminous with, but *one* of the constituent elements – along with score, scenario, plan, or map – of drama'.[199] Rabkin builds on Schechner's statement by arguing that 'since performance can be read, it constitutes its own textuality; but it is a complex textuality because it is created from the usually prior textuality of the play or

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[197] Edenborough. p. 57.

[198] Rabkin. p. 143.

[199] Schechner quoted in Rabkin. p. 150.

score'.[200] If the written text is destabilised in contemporary theatre practices then it seems that the legal approaches to dealing with intellectual property and copyright are less applicable to contemporary theatre practices, at least in theory. In his essay 'Mining "Turbulence": Authorship *Through* Direction in Physically-Based Devised Theatre', Bruce Barton argues for acknowledging the complex relationship between writing and direction in theatre-making. He states that traditional theatre-making practice assumes that '*authorship* is almost invariably associated with dramatic *texts*, while *directing* is understood as the realm of theatrical *realisation'*. But he warns against such simple distinctions arguing that the writer/director relationship 'is a far more complicated, fluid, and negotiable field of interaction'.[201] Of course, as Barton notes, when this complex relationship is considered in the context of devised theatre-making – specifically physically-based – where the 'role of writer is dispersed among a collective body of creator/performers utilising found, adapted, and invented text', the complexity of these relationships is 'multiplied exponentially' and the 'designation of authorial and directorial role, rights and functions becomes highly problematic'.[202]

In what context has the conception of authorship led to single author written works being prioritised? Film critic Richard Corliss argues that 'one reason for directorial supremacy in the film is the virtual absence of the screenplay's validation in book form, while the total film is more readily accessible'.[203] In theatre we get the reverse, a situation where the published text of a play is often more readily accessible, more tangible and more widely disseminated than the actual production and therefore attains a prioritised status. Jamison puts forward another reason for the written text being upheld by copyright law. In her discussion of Coleridge and Wordsworth's literary collaborations she argues that due to the social construction of literary property,

> the physically available evidence (identifiable labour) of authenticated ownership becomes much easier to demarcate in singularly authored works… opposed to collaboratively authored works… In terms of actual collaboration between two or more people, there is still… a propensity

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[200] Rabkin. p. 151.

[201] Bruce Barton. 'Mining "Turbulence": Authorship *Through* Direction in Physically-Based Devised Theatre'. *Directing and Authorship in Western Drama*. Ed. Anna Migliarisi. Toronto: Legas, 2006. 115-133. p. 115.

[202] Ibid. p. 115.

[203] Richard Corliss quoted in Rabkin. p. 155.

to disentangle rather than accept as a whole the products of such partnerships and collaborations.[204]

In this argument there is again a case made for the legal apparatus of intellectual property and copyright as being ill-equipped to deal with collaborative practices and performance texts that are multiple and intertextual.

However, there may be a case for a legal definition of authorship to be applicable to the director in devising theatre. In Jaszi's article he pinpoints the moment when photographic works became protectable by the law as 'authored' works by citing a case from the US in 1884. The Supreme Court's decision to protect a photograph in this example was defended by the description that a lower court had found the image to be a:

> useful, new, harmonious characteristic and graceful picture, and that the plaintiff made the same… entirely from his own original mental conception to which he gave visible form by posing [the subject] in front of the camera, selecting and arranging the costume, draperies, and other various accessories in said photograph.[205]

If we appropriate this example by imagining the 'subject' of a performance to be the play script, then it is the director's 'original conception' to which he or she gives visible form in a similar way that is being defended here. In Barton's study of Canadian physically-based devising company Number Eleven he puts forward a strong case for the director authoring the work through the practices of directing rather than the act of writing. He eloquently argues that:

> composition within physically-based devised theatre can effectively be understood as a *montage*-based hybrid process of authorship *through* direction – an act of "mining turbulence" – in an effort to extract, manipulate, and refine a distinctly visceral and substantial performance text.[206]

Barton's use of the words 'composition' and 'montage' highlight, for me, a recurring trend in the definition of making devised theatre work that seems to bear more resemblance to the vocabulary of music and visual art practices than literary playwriting. Barton then goes on to describe Number Eleven's process as one

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[204] Jamison. p. 210.

[205] Jaszi. p. 480.

[206] Barton. p. 117

where the performers initially generate movement or voice sequences using their own stimulus and then director Ker Wells,

> assumes the lead role in the troupe's search for points of resonance… After carefully observing the performers individually, Wells begins to orchestrate multiple, simultaneous enactments of two or more sequences… His early responses therefore assume a dominant authorial influence, as he attempts to identify the initial conjunctions, or sites of relational meaning, in the embryonic narrative structure.[207]

Therefore the authorship through direction described by Barton in Number Eleven's process is through an act of selecting, arranging and composing material generated by the performers; the romantic conception of a singular author cannot survive this contemporary definition (though the concept of 'authorship' does). Barton argues that although the director of this work must assume 'with uncommon honesty and audacity, the weight of the work's central authorship, as the primary agent of selection, organization, and modification', the director's authority is 'liberated through a heightened group awareness of its arbitrary status as a consensual function within a collaborative equation'.[208] Therefore it is through the act of collaboration that the author's role does not receive a prioritised status as, what Barthes would term, Author-God, but is still recognised as an important practical function within the context of making work. The director/author in this context is a reconceived role which does not interpret and realise a singular written play-text in theatrical form, but rather assembles a whole performance text from found, invented and adapted 'texts'.

In The Wooster Group's production of *L.S.D. (…Just the High Points…)* they perform a sped-up, re-interpreted version of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Rabkin notes that in the work of the The Wooster Group 'the "classic" play-text – perceived as one of many kinds of texts – became a constant but destabilised element'.[209] The complex practical applications of authorship and ownership in this work, as a result of LeCompte's use of *The Crucible*, are evident at least in Miller's objection to *L.S.D,* claiming that it was a distorted version of his work and 'blatant parody'.[210] If the deconstruction of a classic text as part of an experimental devised

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[207] Ibid. p. 125.

[208] Ibid. pp. 124-127.

[209] Rabkin. p. 146.

[210] Arthur Miller quoted in Rabkin. p. 144.

work problematises ideas of authorship and ownership then how should we react to a 'faithful' recreation of a 'classic' devised performance text? In April 1999 Birmingham-based devising company Stan's Cafe revived *The Carrier Frequency* (1984), a collaboration between Impact Theatre Cooperative and novelist Russell Hoban. Frances Babbage refers to the original production as having achieved 'almost mythic status' in the field of devised performance.[211] None of the members of Stan's Cafe had seen the original Impact show and they attempted to recreate the performance from a video of the original production. In the history of British devised theatre practices *The Carrier Frequency* has become a 'classic' text, however rather than an existing written play-text of the production, the performance text exists as a video recording, documenting *one* of the performances. Is this document more or less accurate than a play-text, and in what ways was Stan's Cafe challenging the authorship and ownership of the original work? In other words, who owns what Stan's Cafe performed in 1999 considering it exists as a Chinese whisper of the Impact show, a re-interpreted version of the original? Harris argues that some devised theatre pieces are 'unrepeatable events' that are 'seldom revived or re-interpreted by other practitioners and certainly never become part of a general "repertoire"'.[212] Why are devised theatre events so unrepeatable? Does devising's comparatively small dissemination and resulting lack of accessibility contradict a practice that is so distrusting of a prioritised hierarchy of production? Arguably, Stan's Cafe was striving to protect the performance text of *The Carrier Frequency,* but attempting to do this from a video document has its inevitable limitations. Babbage comments that in the process of reviving the show:

> problems and challenges inevitably arose… gaps in the video-eye perspective had to be filled in by the company. Another dilemma: was that moment, that stumble I saw, a mistake? If so, should my performance edit this out, or should I repeat it anyway?[213]

Babbage labels this process *recreativity*, and the application of this term serves to accentuate the extent to which Stan's Cafe could not have summoned up *The Carrier Frequency* as the 'thing itself' but as a re-interpreted, re-contextualised,

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[211] Frances Babbage. 'The Past in the Present? A Response to Stan's Cafe's Revival of *The Carrier Frequency'*. *New Theatre Quarterly*. 16 (2000): 97-99. p. 97.

[212] Harris. p. 11.

[213] Babbage. p. 98.

Stan's Cafe product. James Yarker, director of Stan's Cafe, makes this point clear when he states that 'we have tried to be true to the video, being aware at the same time that the video may not be true to the show'.[214] Derrida's idea of iterability comes to mind here, the act of re-viving, or re-*vivre* (to live), is not an act of bringing the same thing back to life but of giving birth to something new, the same but different.

Conclusion

Despite a poststructural decentring of the author, a strong case can be made for the director of devised theatre authoring-through-direction in the selecting and arranging of material into a multiple performance text. However, crediting the director as sole author of the work, although important in the case of allowing marginalised members of society to claim author-ity, goes no further in defining an inherently collaborative practice which is, in many cases, authored by the whole company. The tensions discussed in Chapter 1 between the creative actor and the director auteur are appeased by Barton's definition of the director's role within devising. In the context of devised theatre it is important to define the director's author-ity as a 'consensual function within a collaborative equation'.[215] If the term 'author' is loaded with the weight of Foucault's author function then it becomes important to reconceive the director's 'authorship' in the context of collaborative devising as composer or editor. The fact that the majority of devised theatre operates outwith the realms of commercialised theatre explains why the authorship and ownership of the end product is not as clearly defined legally as in some of the cases discussed in this chapter, this is a lack of clarity which fails to acknowledge the act of collaboration or joint authorship in the making of work.

There are some examples in which the definition of ownership within the work becomes more importantly attributed to all of the makers of that work, as is often the case in community devising contexts. This idea will be discussed further in Chapter 4 as I address empowerment, with specific reference to the work of Junction 25 and Glas(s) Performance. The question here becomes 'can we still attribute authorship to the director when the work is intended to be owned by the participants'?

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[214] Ibid. p. 98.

[215] Barton. p. 124.

A Description of Process 3: *Helium.*

Figure 14 - Laurie Brown and Sarah Bradley in *Helium* (2010, The Arches: Glasgow)

Helium was a devised performance made for Arches Live Theatre festival in September 2010 that took its stimulus from the predictions of Lee Sobotka, professor of chemistry and physics at Washington University. Sobotka claims that the earth's supply of helium is rapidly depleting with the largest reserve expected to be used up by 2015. For this project I collaborated with Kieran Hurley as a dramaturg and text contributor and with Laurie Brown and Sarah Bradley as performers and contributors. During the development stages of the piece I invited Catriona Easton and Chris Hall into rehearsals and as well as contributing ideas and taking part in some improvisations they also contributed text to the performance. In the later stages of the project I invited Jo Shaw into rehearsals as a creative assistant and Briony Berning, who designed the lighting for the performance. *Helium* received development support from the Arches as a 'new work commission' and from the University of Glasgow's Alasdair Cameron Fund. *Helium* also received funding from the Scottish Arts Council's Arts Trust Scotland award. The way in which this project was funded had a direct outcome on the structure of development and rehearsals. We used money and in-kind rehearsal space from the Arches to fund the first development week that ran from 3rd – 7th May 2010. We then used the money from the Alasdair Cameron Fund to support the second development week from 12th -17th July 2010. Stipulations in the criteria for this fund resulted in two public work-in-progress performances at Gilmorehill G12 Theatre on Friday 16th and Saturday 17th July. The contribution from Arts Trust Scotland was then used to cover production costs for the rehearsal period which ran from 30th August – 10th September, with production week the following week from 13th -18th and three performances on 16th, 17th and 18th September.

First development week: generating material.

The first development week from 3rd – 7th May 2010 concentrated on introducing the creative team to the project's starting points and aiming to leave at the end of the week with a wealth of potential material. There were two main aims for the week. Firstly to investigate possible ways to present material around the following topics:

- Scientific information about helium.

- Personal stories about helium

- Historical information about the Hindenburg disaster

- The disaster movie *The Hindenburg* (1975)

- The film *Le Ballon Rouge* (1956).

- The story of Falcon Heene whose parents were guilty of faking his disappearance in a helium filled balloon

- Edgar Allen Poe's balloon hoax.

Secondly, I hoped to investigate the practicalities of using balloons and helium onstage as well as the aesthetic quality of this and their incorporation into physical actions. On one of the days we also experimented with projecting films, images and text on to the balloons. For the whole week we had a large sheet of paper on the wall detailing these starting points and their relationship to each other, which at various points throughout the week would be added to or changed (see Figure 15). By the end of the week we attempted to make a list of all of the material that we had made or even discussed and the things that we felt were missing from this list that needed to be in the show (see Figure 16).

The fact that we had five contributors – myself, Sarah Bradley, Kieran Hurley, Chris Hall and Catriona Easton – all contributing in different ways in the generation of material makes it very complicated to discern who wrote *Helium*. The notion of the singular author is simply not relevant in this context when we consider that I brought in articles and information from a variety of sources; Sarah, Kieran, Chris and I all took part in improvisations at various points; Kieran and Catriona contributed written pieces of text that responded to ideas discussed or even sometimes transcribed and written during an improvisation; and in addition to all of this we were directly referencing and incorporating the film 'texts' of *The Hindenburg* and *Le Ballon Rouge*. However, as I will go on to discuss, the role of 'author' or 'composer' of the work was one that I was subsequently attempting to fill through answering the following questions that were posed by Kieran in between the two development weeks:

- What is the frame that motivates the investigation?

- What story are we trying to tell? Is it about helium or the two characters' relationship to it?

- What is their story?

- What is the narrative arc or the journey or the story you're telling?

- What are the core ideas?

- What is the hoax material doing?

- What is *The Hindenburg* film material doing?

- What is the impulse for these characters to be doing these things?

At some point in between the first and second development week we decided to lose the material about the hoax and from *The Hindenburg* film giving the resulting material a sharper focus on helium and its depletion. The second development week, would be about attempting to answer some of these questions and trying out some sort of structure for the material.
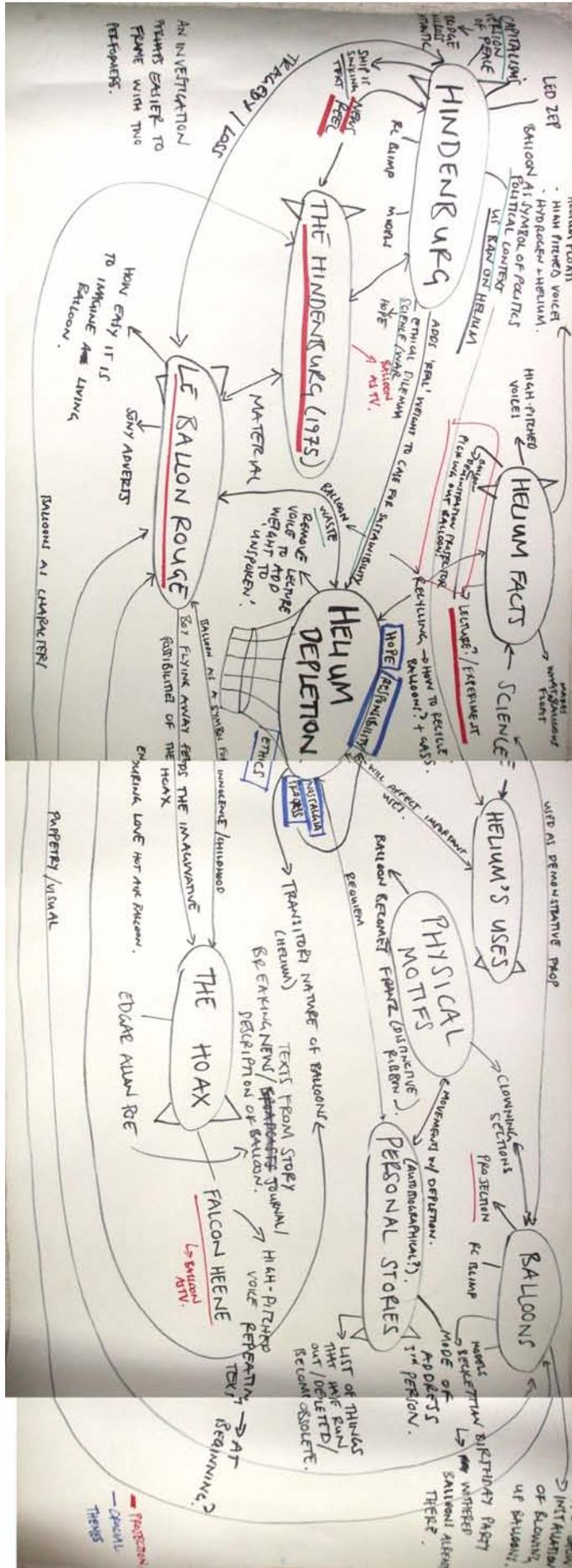
Figure 15 - Starting points for *Helium* after the first development week, May 2010.
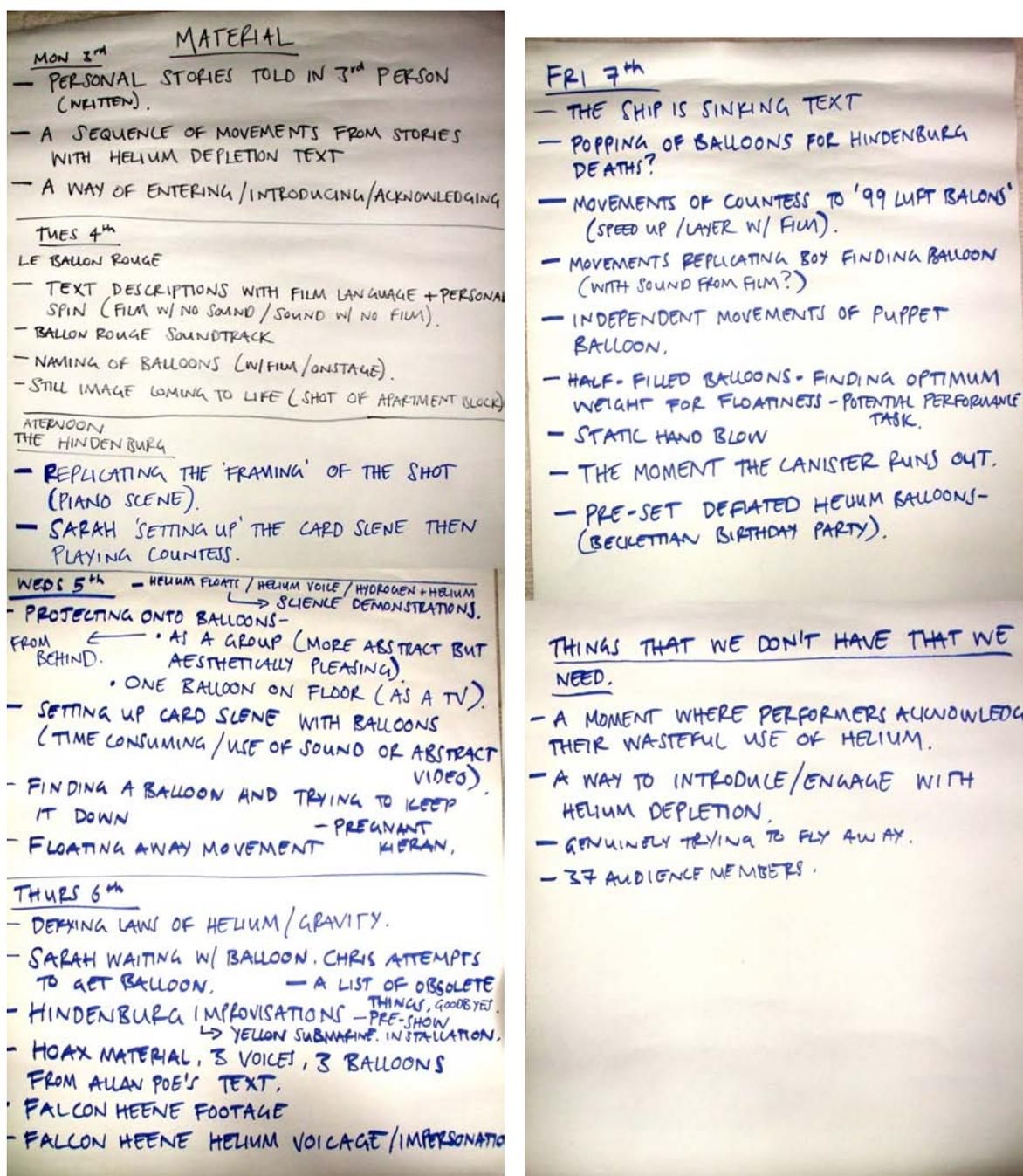
Figure 16 - Menu of material created after the first development week, May 2010.

Second development week: Finding the right relationship

The second development week for *Helium* would be focused on finding the right relationship between the two performers. We were joined by Laurie Brown who would be performing alongside Sarah in the final performance. In preparation for this week I had transcribed selected extracts from Sarah's improvisations with Chris Hall in the last development week, in which they attempted to present information about the Hindenburg disaster to the audience, and arranged these into two sections. We experimented with this material, interrogating what the

important things to communicate about the Hindenburg were and the specific dynamics of Sarah and Laurie's relationship. This developed into a piece of material in which Sarah was presenting the information and Laurie was acting as a visual aid, playfully undermining Sarah's facts whilst enthusiastically trying to help. We also spent this time experimenting with Kieran's texts that described scenes from *Le Ballon Rouge,* deciding that it would be useful for Laurie to improvise these from his own perspective in order to find where his interests lay in reaction to the film. An interesting point arose in reference to the ownership of material in this case. Because I came up with the initial stimulus long before Laurie and Sarah joined as collaborators, one of the greatest challenges throughout the whole process was in finding an appropriate way to frame the material so that the performers appeared confident, passionate and genuine in their care for helium and its depletion. I think that this was made more complex by the fact that Sarah and Laurie were on stage as versions of themselves. We had lengthy discussions about their own reactions to the starting points, reactions to the text written by others and ways for them to 'own' the specific elements of the performance so that they could appear honest and believable in their passion for the information they were presenting. I asked Sarah to script her Hindenburg information herself for us to tweak in rehearsal and we developed Laurie's favourite things about *Le Ballon Rouge* so that he felt more comfortable with the material. Finally, we played with the practicalities and timing of how many balloons could be inflated, tied and attached to the ground in performance. We placed the resulting material into a structure of sorts to present to an audience in the work-in-progress performance.

In a meeting with Kieran we decided that the questions that were left unanswered by the material as it was were:

- Why is *Le Ballon Rouge* Laurie's favourite thing about helium?

- Why is the Hindenburg Sarah's favourite thing about helium?

We also received some important feedback from audience members at the work-in-progress showing. One audience member wondered why they should care about helium and thought that the human tragedy of the Hindenburg trumped the fact that helium was running out. Another audience member fed back that

they felt it was unclear as to whether Laurie and Sarah's 'presentation' was planned or spontaneous, or if it was both then *when* was it planned and *when* was it spontaneous? In the period between this second development week and rehearsals for the show Kieran and I arrived at the decision that the main idea driving the investigation was that the loss of anything unique through human activity is a tragic loss. It was as a result of this discussion that we decided we needed a text that was a list of extinct or obsolete things to draw comparisons between the tragedy of helium depletion in relation to the loss of a whole range of other things.

Figure 17 – Laurie Brown and Sarah Bradley from *Helium* work-in-progress 16th July 2010.

Figure 18 – Sarah Bradley and Laurie Brown in *Helium* (2010, The Arches)

The final stage: Structuring, Scripting and Rehearsing

The process of structuring the show was done in collaboration with Kieran between June and August, based upon the initial development week and in turn informed by the work-in-progress performance. The first step in this process involved me gathering all of the material we had created in the May development week. This ranged from written texts to transcriptions of improvisations, ideas for movement sequences or images, as well as text taken from articles on the internet, and physically arranging these into an order on the floor. Once I was happy with the first version of this I typed it into a document and sent it to Kieran for feedback and suggested changes, which we met to discuss before a second version was attempted. This process went back and forward a number of times. When we met we discussed the structure, the texts, what they were doing/communicating. The biggest changes to this text came after the second development week when we had explored the relationship between the two performers, as a result of deciding to leave the hoax material and *The Hindenburg* film material out of the order, and finally during rehearsals when we were re-shaping, editing and developing as we were going.

As I mentioned previously the biggest challenge in rehearsing this performance was finding the right quality for Laurie and Sarah's performances. We discussed that we wanted them to be 'genuine', 'passionate', 'present in the space', 'confident', 'likeable', 'sincere' and that in general it didn't work when they were being 'too performed', 'disingenuous', 'child-like', 'apologetic'. The fact that the performers' personal responses to the stimulus existed alongside more factual, presentational content perhaps highlighted when the performers were reciting, performing and being disingenuous. We decided that the frame for the material worked best when they could convince the audience that they were passionate about helium depletion, the Hindenburg and *Le Ballon Rouge*, confident in their presentation of factual information and taking the whole thing seriously as two adults presenting to an adult audience. There were of course playful elements to this but they always worked in relation to how seriously the performers took their task of convincing the audience why it would be a tragedy if helium were to run out. Ultimately, I am unsure as to whether we achieved this in every moment. It is a hard trick to convince the audience that you, or a performed version of you genuinely cares about something and that the audience should also care.

There could definitely be a claim that I 'authored' this show in collaboration with others, but the extent to which I could say I 'wrote' this show is complex, given the development process discussed above. Further to this the text was cut, adapted and changed in rehearsal to such an extent that a printed version of the script wasn't in existence until after the dress rehearsal and even then it differed from the performed version.[216] The text was there as a guide, as a document, to serve the performers and their performances rather than existing as a sacred thing to be interpreted and realised. The written text also existed alongside the film texts of the Hindenburg footage and *Le Ballon Rouge* as well as the visual texts of some of the movement-based images. My role within this project at times felt similar to when I have directed a pre-existing text; I had to facilitate Laurie and Sarah in their building of believable characters (namely two people who are worried about helium depletion and have a passion for the different source materials). However, we did not have a pre-existing text and as

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[216] There is an extract from *Helium* in the appendix that shows how the text developed in different versions of the script.

a result my role in the way that the work was constructed was as composer, arranger, and editor of constituent material.

4 Ownership 2: Empowering the Performer.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I explored how the director of devised theatre might facilitate a collaborative practice and how this collaboration becomes problematic when sited in relation to legal and theoretical discourses surrounding authorship and ownership. In this chapter I am interested in investigating the performer's assumed empowerment within the rhetoric of devising, where the director can be sited in this relationship, and ultimately where the ethics of ownership lie within collaboratively devised work. In Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington's book *Making a Performance* they state that devising relies on the 'creativity of the performers'.[217] If this is the case then in what ways can this creativity be nurtured or encouraged by the director? In what ways can the director empower performers to become creative devisers? As discussed earlier the idea of the creative actor emerged with experiments in new theatre forms conducted by Grotowski, Mnouchkine, Malina and Beck, and Chaikin, developing an actor that was not just an interpreter of texts but contributed creatively to the development of the work. Dorinda Hulton's development of this lineage into a model of deviser 'training' that she teaches on the University of Exeter's Drama course seems to offer her students the dramaturgical and artistic skills with which to actively make performance. To what extent could this really be seen as the actor's empowerment, as Hulton would term? What happens to the director if this is the case?

In this chapter I will extrapolate these questions through a discussion of Hulton's course and by returning to the workshops I led with undergraduate Theatre Studies students at the University of Glasgow between January and March 2010. The idea of the creative actor, empowered to make performance, that is present in Hulton's contemporary devising training intersects and collides with issues of empowerment present in applied theatre practices and in the work of Junction 25 and Glas(s) Performance, who collaborate with 'non-performers' or 'experts in everyday life' to create contemporary devised performance. Therefore, the final part of this chapter will widen the focus to examine the work of these companies. In Junction 25 and Glas(s) Performance the directors could be said to be 'authoring through direction' as discussed in the previous chapter. However, this

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[217] Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington. *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices*. London: Routledge, 2007. p. 29.

notion becomes problematic when the issue of participant ownership of the resultant work is raised and it is this tension that I will explore in order to shed light on the director's role within a collaborative environment.

Hulton's Creative Actor

The workshops that I led between 31st January and 14th March 2010 hoped to explore what models or processes of collaborative devising might empower the participants to claim ownership over the work created, and what my role was as the facilitator of this group. A model I was interested in testing came from Hulton's essay 'Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)'. Hulton's article offers an account of the 'Creative Actor' theatre practice course that she runs at the University of Exeter for ten weeks at the start of the student's third and final year of undergraduate study. It attempts to make the participants aware of their own individual skills in generating and selecting material as devisers. This is a process, defined by Hulton, in which:

> the choice of material would most naturally lie with the actor, responsibility for its development would be shared between the actor, director and writer, and responsibility for its meaning in relation to an audience would lie with the director.[218]

This pedagogical approach attempts to re-position authorial control into the hands of the performer, challenging notions of the artistic authority of the director and writer. Hulton's reasons for empowering the performer seem to be in order to create a process and product in alignment with contemporary forms of collaborative devising – where there is often a plurality of voices and an inherently fragmented and open work. In this sense Hulton's development of a pedagogical practice in which the actor is a creative contributor is in order to train 'successful' devisers.

Hulton charts a range of exercises that place the student in the role of the creative performer, exercises that make them the generator, composer and editor of material into a coherent performance that communicates effectively to an audience. She expresses that this process is dependent on three stands of training that complement and contradict each other in their interdependency. The

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[218] Dorinda Hulton, 'Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)'. *Theatre Praxis: Teaching Drama Through Practice.* Ed. Christopher McCullough. London: Macmillan, 1998. p. 35.

first strand sees the students create a series of short compositions that intend to develop certain performance skills as well as imaginative skills in the creation and selection of material. Hulton states that this strand 'follows the notion that it is practice determined by her/his choices which will teach her/him, rather than a blueprint provided by the tutor'.[219] Hulton makes an interesting point about the process of making in this context:

> The processes and structures within the work are intended to encourage ways of thinking that are either generative or selective or both. The student actors who engage in the training are, in a way, not called upon to be more or less 'creative' than a child on a beach finding, selecting, arranging and then naming a collection of driftwood. A thing made is a thing made. Its value, within different contexts, is a question of perception.[220]

In this argument Hulton is challenging the assumption that might be made in the interpretation of romantic conceptions of the 'author'; that creativity is in some way synonymous with genius. This notion of the Creative Actor is in opposition to the idea of one objectively talented individual making work, but instead puts the creative decisions in the hands of the actor's subjectivity and the level of value they place on the 'thing made'. Hulton's pedagogy also encourages the student to engage with innovative processes and theories of theatre. In the compositional process Hulton invites students to chart their territory of exploration and what material they have chosen to use in an attempt to remind them of the time limit often placed on theatre-makers. Hulton states that these exercises are 'a method of applying [Stanislavsky's] theory of objectives to the role of 'actor as devisor''.[221] Within this process we see a revision and adaptation of a (now) conventional aspect of actor training or rehearsal process in order to suit a new form of theatre-making. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the practice of devising is not located in a diametric opposition to traditional forms of text-based theatre but as a development of the form that is rooted in earlier ideologies and practices.

The second strand of the creative actor training aims to locate the student within what Hulton calls 'a safe place' from which to explore the first strand (this section of the course is taught in alternating weeks and as such runs alongside the making

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[219] Ibid. p. 16.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid. pp. 18-19.

process). This strand engages the students with a range of technical forms of actor training such as 'movement' and 'voice' and offers the techniques that help to 'contextualise and broaden the students' own practice'.[222] The third strand of training focuses on perceptions of the work, where the students act as a small audience to the compositions generated. This training aspires towards a form 'appropriate to a director who may be engaged, with the actor in the making of plays rather than in their interpretation'.[223] In the Creative Actor course the students mostly work as solo practitioners, however Hulton emphasises the importance for the students to perform their work in front of the rest of the group. This is not only a chance for the student actors to assess their effective communication to an audience but also provides a space in which ideas and initial responses can be shared in order to 'provide, collectively, a pool of suggestions and responses intended to develop the theatre language with which the actor is working'.[224]

Interestingly, this is the first text I have read that locates the process of making performance so specifically. Hulton argues that within this course

> choice ultimately remains with the actor in relation to the selection of material and methods. Beyond the course, the thought is that the actor, empowered by practice in making work, is better placed to share, genuinely, in a collaborative process with a director, writer and other actors rather than being a means (through improvisation within one process of devising) by which the director and writer develop their own ideas.[225]

The claim here being that the performer is empowered by 'practice in making work', the assumption is that their creative devising skills are 'tapped into', preparing them for future collaborations. Hulton argues for the empowerment of the actor in order that they can be trained to be fully equipped for the shifting forms of contemporary theatre-making; those of collaborative processes developed and defined in relation to thinking surrounding devised theatre forms.

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[222] Ibid. p. 17.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid. p. 35.

Devised Theatre Workshops: Empowering the Performers?

After Hulton, I created the below instructions for my first research workshop on January 31ˢᵗ 2010. Following a series of warm-up games and trust exercises I asked the workshop participants to:

1. Think of an event or experience that has happened to you and that you have a clear memory of.

2. Start to write this down as a narrative in as much detail as possible in your note books (you have 15mins).

3. Pick a part of this narrative and present this to the group using *indicative* imagery, that is in a way that tells us what happened without attempting to imitate your 'part' in the story naturalistically (this will probably be the closest to what you have on the page).

4. Now pick another part of your narrative (you can use the same section if you wish) and present this to the group using *imitative* imagery, that is in a way that shows us what happened in a naturalistic way, with you engaging in a character or characters in the narrative.

5. Repeat the above task using *expressive* imagery, that is in a way that expresses a feeling or emotion using a physical or vocal form.

6. Finally, repeat the above task using *metaphoric* imagery, that is in a way that uses a substitute action that might imitate, indicate or express an important element within the event.

7. Try to compose a small performance using any or all of this material. You may wish to alter some of the moments or repeat elements. Try to think about ways in which imagery from this material may be selected, combined and transformed in order to create a new piece of work.

A successful element of this part of the workshop seemed to be the confidence with which the majority of participants shared their ideas. The time for the group to develop performances in response to instructions 3-6 was very brief, yet the level of engagement and enthusiasm was very high. Participant Sarah Bradley comments on the spontaneous, almost subconscious level of authoring/editing at play:

> A pattern seemed to emerge that we would think up a performance and get up and do it without practicing – for me this meant that the idea of the performance was more of an immediate experiment. This meant that sometimes the idea worked and other times it didn't… I felt quite comfortable sharing my performances as all the other performers were in the same boat.[226]

Whilst the exercises in the afternoon of this workshop may have encouraged the participants to become the authors/editors/composers of their *own* material, I feel that it did little to empower them to make these kind of decisions later on in the process when they were becoming the authors/editors/composers of the *group* material. The act of 'immediate experimentation' in front of a small group of contemporaries is very different from the process of contributing and voicing ideas in a group to be developed into performance. In the exercise discussed above there is, to an extent, a 'risk-free' scenario where sometimes the 'idea worked and other times it didn't', but there was no end product to worry about as such. As a result of this, I would question to what extent Dorinda Hulton's pedagogy really does prepare actors for a *collaborative* devising process in a group context. Central to this discussion is the extent to which I was seen as an authority figure within these workshops and whether or not this might have effected the potential for collaboration and empowerment.

At the workshop session on 14th February 2010 I led an exercise for the group from Goat Island's *School Book 2*. The initial instructions for their 'impossible task' exercise read as follows:

1. Write an impossible task on a piece of paper.

2. *Pass the paper to the person next to you.*

   If the instructions are difficult to understand, perform what you think you are being asked to try. There is no right or wrong way to follow these instructions. Perform your confusion or mis-understanding with confidence.

3. Create an action that demonstrates the impossible task described on the piece of paper received. Perform this action a few times to get the sense of it and to perfect it. It should be something that can be repeated over and over. As you perform it

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[226] From Sarah Bradley's workshop journal.

> for yourself allow it to develop into something you enjoy performing.[227]

Again this exercise focuses on allowing the performers to be the composers and editors of their own performance material. The impossible tasks written by the group were: 'having a tea party on the ceiling', 'kissing a ghost', 'lifting an elephant with one hand', 'paying for food without any money', 'turning water into spaghetti', and 'flying over the Niagra Falls, not in a plane but with wings'. Following on from this exercise we discussed ways in which the tasks could be developed. I asked the group to form a circle with their impossible tasks with them and asked for their responses. My intention was that the practice of openly talking about or dissecting the exercise in this way, would remove the mystery and/or authority of the workshop leader, allowing the group to deconstruct their experience of participation and the usefulness of the exercise. I then asked the group if anyone had any idea of how to develop this. Rebecca explained how her movement changed from 'lifting an elephant' to reaching for the ceiling. This prompted me to ask if they could write down a different meaning that could be attributed to their task and then re-perform their tasks with this new meaning in mind. Some of the movements were performed in exactly the same way, which became quite funny (Sarah washing someone's hair as if she was turning water into spaghetti for instance) and some of the movements were adapted to fit the new meaning (Rebecca reaching for a balloon rather than lifting an elephant). During this new exercise they became accidental authors of their task through the new meaning ascribed to it. Finally I asked if the group could pick someone else's movement and try to replicate it; they then performed this in groups of three.

Although the group were generating and editing their *own* material there was a large extent to which I was leading the developments of this exercise in an active way that *did not* empower members of the group to collaborate in developing the initial performances. I ultimately had the final say. In this context, I found it hard to resist suggesting starting points for development, as the director. I was attempting to balance an open way of working that encouraged the group to develop material collectively, with my own habitual notion that we should reach a certain stage of development before we moved on to the next task. This balance was coupled with a feeling that the participants had less experience of collaborative devising. This

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[227] Goat Island. *School Book 2.* Bristol: Goat Island, 2000. p. 12

all feeds into the question of whether the director can really be equal to the performers if inherent in the relationship is a trust based on the knowledge/skill/ability to lead the group and communicate tasks effectively. Jess Thorpe comments on this dynamic in relation to Junction 25. She states that:

> It's been really tricky to find a process that fully enables young people to participate in making their own work, whilst also recognising that what [Tashi and I] bring to the work is quite specific as well which is that we work in theatre and we're trained in theatre so we know about… those kind of conventions and techniques.[228]

Thorpe goes on to criticise applied theatre practice with young people that uses their participation and the fact that 'they made it themselves' as an excuse for 'shoddy practice'.[229] In attempting to define the director's role in collaborative devising there is a clear tension present between enabling and leading, empowerment and authority, creating a space for open discussion but being able to move the developments forward if that discussion does not happen.

There is also an argument that the role of the director in collaborative devising is to validate the ideas of the group. An example of this can be seen in the workshop on 21st February 2010 when during a discussion on ways that we could develop the idea of site-specific performances around the Theatre Studies building, participant Patricia Verity put forward the idea that 'It would almost be nice to do a walk from place to place.' The silence that followed was perhaps indicatative of the group's lack of experience in devising, due to their reluctance to try this idea out practically. In order for Patricia's idea to be tested, thus empowering her, I felt that it was my position as the director/facilitator to ask the group; 'shall we try just going from one position into the next one?' moving the content of the workshop on so that Patricia's idea could be tested out practically. Of course knowing when this is appropriate or not is a difficult thing to chart and comes down to the director/facilitator's ability to judge the situation. There are definitely times when I have got this wrong and should have allowed the discussion or development to progress naturally without intervening. In Tina Bicat and Chris Baldwin's rather prescriptive book on devised and collaborative theatre, Baldwin suggests that the director's role in devised theatre is that of 'enabler':

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[228] Interview with Jess Thorpe.

[229] Ibid.

> He is not telling the group why the stimulus is important, indeed the reverse. He is using a strategy every good teacher/enabler uses every day: he is asking open-ended questions and avoiding those kind of questions which have implicitly correct and incorrect answers.[230]

This metaphor of the director of devising as a 'teacher' figure certainly rings true in the work of Junction 25, in a rehearsal for *Gender Divide* that I attended on 24th November 2010 I was surprised by the way in which Thorpe and Gore managed the group with an almost teacher-ly authority that was perhaps necessary for a group of fifteen teenagers. It felt as though in my workshops too, the dynamic of teacher/student was established early on due to my status as a postgraduate student and tutor on the second year group projects and their status as undergraduate students, albeit of different ages and levels of ability and dependence. In this case, then, their empowerment relied on the extent to which they felt that they were discovering for themselves rather than being taught. This idea is reflected in participant Amy Cullen's journal reflections on the process where she states that:

> I think there were times that we ended up guiding Harry or when no-one was guiding. As much as we were learning from him, there were really rewarding times when it felt like he was learning as much as we were.[231]

This seems necessary for any dynamic of group collaboration; no one authority and no one right answer but a collective discovery. So the role of the director in empowering performers is that of validator, enabler, at times teacher but also co-learner.

There is an inherent problem when discussing empowerment and collaboration within these workshops, which lies in the hidden hierarchies within the group. These hierarchies render the questions, who is empowered and for what purpose? ever more relevant. There were a couple of moments when Amy seemed suitably empowered enough to shape the direction of the material. During a group discussion she said 'To be honest I'd like to go and see people's spaces'. With a general feeling of agreement in the room I asked 'shall we go and do that then?' This tour around the group's different spaces became a key moment in developing the content of the final performance. In another example Amy explicitly set the

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[230] Chris Baldwin. 'The Director'. *Devised and Collaborative Theatre: a Practical Guide.* eds. Tina Bicât and Chris Baldwin. Marlborough: Crowood, 2002. p. 17

[231] From Amy Cullen's workshop journal.

rules for the way that the group engage with a performance. After a tour of the spaces and an attempt to re-create that tour in the performance studio Amy suggested that we 'perform our manifestations of the space in the space'. After I agreed that we should try this, on our way out of the studio Amy told the group:

> I'm just going to say if we do that, shall we just say we'll do whatever it is we do in each space but then maybe when the next person's space feels like it's the right time they can just lead us on because we were getting a bit like [lost].
>
> Harry: Yeah.
>
> Amy: Just because otherwise we might just be in the toilets forever.

Whilst this initially presents itself as an exciting moment of empowerment for Amy it was perhaps inevitable due to her inherent confidence and dominant position within the dynamic of the group. Returning to the context of socialist theatres of the 60s and 70s, Richard Seyd of Red Ladder Theatre, attempted to work using an 'organisational structure that is at the same time democratic, productive and non-oppressive to the individuals working in the collective'.[232] In *Devising Performance* Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling argue that one of the dangers of this organisational structure is that it could lead to an 'anarchic tyranny of structurelessness'.[233] Arguably one way to avoid this structurelessness is to allow the hidden hierarchies naturally present in the dynamic of a group of individuals to play out. However, there are also dangers to this. Heddon and Milling chart that:

> Red Ladder initially employed a model of unanimous agreement. However, Seyd revealed that such "unanimity" might in fact be the result of the most dominant members of the group – typically the men – getting their way, rather than there being an actual agreement with all proposals.[234]

Although the dangers identified in this example are strongly linked to the specific political context of women struggling against a patriarchal society, the pattern of dominant members of a devising group 'getting their way', or perhaps more fairly in this context, feeling confident and assured in offering up their ideas can be easily identified. So in this context, why is it important to empower participants? Do

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[232] Richard Seyd. 'The Theatre of Red Ladder', *New Edinburgh Review.* 1975 30: p. 42

[233] Ibid.

[234] Heddon and Milling. p. 106.

they need empowered in the first place? How does the director of devised theatre navigate the hidden hierarchies within a group dynamic?

Junction 25 and Glas(s) Performance: Authorship Through Direction problematised?

Junction 25 is 'a group of young people aged between 12 and 17 making contemporary theatre and performance works as part of the wider programme of performance and visual art presented at Tramway'.[235] It is a company founded and run by two professional theatre-makers, Tashi Gore and Jess Thorpe who, sometimes working alongside other professional collaborators, also direct the work. The work is funded by Tramway through its participation programme and the company aims to devise two new performance works a year. With Junction 25 there is a focus on the young people being the authors and owners of the collaboratively devised work, empowered to make contemporary performance about issues that they want to make contemporary performance about. The question lies in where Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore are placed as facilitators of this potential empowerment and why they see this way of working as important. Thorpe and Gore are also co-directors of Glas(s) performance, a Glasgow-based company which proclaims itself to be 'committed to a socially engaged theatre performance practice that collaborates with real people… to tell stories that resonate with audiences of all ages and experience'.[236] Whilst both Glas(s) and Junction 25 seem to acknowledge the legacy and influence of applied theatre discourses on their practice – discourses that place focus on the participation of 'non-professionals' in order to 'forge a sense of community', to 'empower participants to speak publicly about those issues or concerns that are not being addressed', or 'to bring about personal change' among the participants – they are also committed to high aesthetic values.[237] They comment on their website that they 'prioritise a professional aesthetic and artistic process that aims to challenge pre-conceived notions of the place of communities or "non

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[235] Junction 25 website http://junction-25.com/main/about accessed February 2011.

[236] Glas(s) Performance website. http://glassperformance.co.uk/main/about accessed February 2011.

[237] Heddon and Milling. p. 148.

professionals" within the wider dialogue of performance'.[238] Thorpe talks about the importance of Junction 25 being defined as separate from the work of Thorpe and Gore with Glas(s). She states that:

> It felt really important that it had a different name… it would have its own identity and that for us felt like a massive part of meaning people actually being the authors or owners of the work, so that the work is always Junction 25. So there's always a difference between Glas(s) Performance, which is Tashi and I, and Junction 25 which is the group, which is our collaboration with young people.[239]

The siting of Junction 25 and Glas(s) Performance as contemporary devising companies that are engaged with the discourses surrounding applied theatre, complicates the notion of 'empowerment'. Are the young performers in Junction 25 being 'trained' to become creative devisers as in Hulton's definition, or are they empowered as a marginalised group to speak publicly about concerns that are not being addressed? I would argue that in the case of Junction 25 there are elements of both of these definitions at play. However, what I also explore here is the extent to which the work of Junction 25 is owned or authored by the young people, whether they are empowered in the making and performance of that work and what Thorpe and Gore's role is as directors/facilitators of the group.

Junction 25's process consists of an initial research period where the young participants collectively come up with a theme that they want to investigate and bring in a series of stimuli related to that theme. The individual members will then come up with 'manifestos' of where their interests lie and Thorpe and Gore will then set them tasks based on that stimuli in order to generate material. Thorpe and Gore take the generated material and 'thread it together as one whole picture' which is then discussed, revised, or challenged by the group.[240] Thorpe states that what is clear within this process is 'that we all have our roles, and "devising" is something that we do together, but "putting it together" as in a running order and composing, is something that we do, and then performing it, delivering it is something that they do'.[241] This seems a fairly recognisable devising structure, and

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[238] Glas(s) Performance website. http://glassperformance.co.uk/main/about accessed February 2011.

[239] Jess Thorpe. Interview with Jess Thorpe, co-director of Glas(s) Performance and Junction 25. RSAMD, Glasgow, 10 November 2010.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid.

I would argue that, as was noted in the previous chapter, it is this act of assembling and composing that can be seen as a way of authoring the resultant work. Although the young people may have authored elements of the material and discussed the structure that Thorpe and Gore initiate, the careful and complex act of shaping and threading together disparate performance material lies with the directors. It seems apparent that initially Thorpe and Gore's roles are as 'enablers' in this process, facilitating empowerment through a relatively rigid structure that allows for the young people to make a certain type of work in a certain way.

In the context of applied theatre practices Majid Rahnema elucidates on the complexities surrounding the facilitation of empowerment when he states that:

> When A considers it is essential for B to be empowered, A assumes not only that B has no power – or does not have the right kind of power – but also that A has the secret formula of a power to which B has to be initiated.[242]

In this context, then, as directors of Junction 25 there is a danger that Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore assume that the model of collaborative devising that they use to facilitate empowerment of the young performers is the 'secret formula' to power. The Junction 25 model is one that has its own hegemonic traditions, vocabulary, and legacy as a practice of devising taught and disseminated on the Contemporary Performance Practice course at RSAMD – a course that both Thorpe and Gore have graduated from, and on which Thorpe now teaches Applied Performance Practice. This legacy has its routes in the 'models' of devising that Geraldine Harris references and owes a lot to the dissemination of devising companies that have come to define a 'tradition' such as Forced Entertainment, the Wooster Group, Goat Island and Impact Theatre.

Conversely, it is the work that Thorpe and Gore can be credited more clearly as authors of, the work with Glas(s) Performance, which relies more complexly on the participants to create the style and content of the show. Discussing *Hand Me Down,* which was created with ten women from different generations of one Port-Glasgow family, Thorpe states that:

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[242] Majid Rahnema. 'Participation'. *The Applied Theatre Reader*. Eds. Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston. London: Routledge, 2009. pp. 141-147. p. 143.

In our Arts Council Report they said that they would have liked to have seen more of the darker side of sisters. But at the end of the day, another group of sisters may have given us that, but these sisters did this show… because they wanted to affirm and celebrate female relationships. So the products have to be that thing for them. It can't be that we have a different agenda… and it's not ethical for us to push them into a place where they don't want to go.[243]

There is a different dynamic here than that of Junction 25. The women in *Hand Me Down* presumably have a different impetus for engaging with this participatory theatre than the young members of Junction 25. They do not want to become performers, but rather are interested in affirming their relationships. In addition to this, the Junction 25 members have a kind of student/teacher relationship with their directors. During the rehearsal I attended for Junction 25's *Gender Divide* one of the young performers, Adam Low, approached me to ask a question about a task he had been set to come up with synonyms for the word Man. The Junction 25 member was looking for guidance. Thorpe and Gore have to adopt this dynamic as facilitators: as I mentioned above, the task of controlling a room of fifteen requires a certain level of leadership and authority. The Junction 25 members are also engaged in this learning process over a long period of time (the first performance from Junction 25 was in 2006 and most members have been involved since then). In *Applied Drama* Helen Nicholson refers to Richard Schechner's critique of the term social *transformation* as fixed and immediate. Schechner prefers the term *transportation* and suggests that:

In the process of transportation, the outcomes are clearly focused but not fixed, and change may take place gradually, a collaborative and sustained process between participants and often in partnership with other supportive agencies.[244]

The young people involved in Junction 25 have the potential to be empowered over the years that they are involved in the company. However, as Nicholson argues, if the motive of applied theatre is a personal transformation or transportation 'is this something which is done *to* the participants, *with* them, or *by* them? Whose values and interests does the transformation serve?'[245] The process of empowering young people to make contemporary performance about their own

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[243] Interview with Jess Thorpe.

[244] Helen Nicholson. *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*. London: Palgrave, 2005. p. 13.

[245] Ibid. pp. 12-13.

experiences and concerns is also tangled up with these questions. Are they empowered to make work according to the values of Tramway, Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore, or themselves? Whose theatrical language are they using for their voices to be heard, and is there a tension involved in this?

Empowered by dialogue and a shared language: Devising processes.

Jess Thorpe identifies that, when working with young people in Junction 25, creating an open dialogue with the performers relies on creating a shared language about the readings of a performance work. She states that:

> What's really fascinating as well is the responsibility we have to their reading of things. Because actually the audience is adult, the majority… And so the audience will look at their bodies on stage, and they will project on to children. And it is ok for that to happen but Junction have to be totally aware of what that is.[246]

Thorpe goes on to argue that 'if we'd planned an image with them and if they understand what that image is, they're completely in receipt of all the readings, they have responsibility for the work'.[247] Thorpe provides an example to illustrate her point. During rehearsals for *Picnic* (2007), a site-specific performance in Tramway's Hidden Gardens that sought to explore ideas of Britishness, there was a section where Francesca Lacey, one of the performers, was playing with jam, spreading it all over her hands: when she noticed the jam she would 'freak out'. Thorpe comments that after having watched this material they commented that 'that looks like you've just started your period and you're totally freaking out… but if we change it to Nathan doing it, it looks like the dictator image that we're trying to make'.[248] Thorpe argues that those potentially uncomfortable conversations need to take place in order for the young performers to be fully aware of the potential readings and thus empowered by the ownership they have over their own material. There is an important point to be made that relates to some of the discussions above; the act of teaching or telling the young people of Junction 25 what an image reads as, what meaning is communicated, assumes that Thorpe and Gore are in a position to read those images through their own cultural and

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[246] Interview with Jess Thorpe.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid.

ideological values. The sense that these young people are empowered is relational to the extent to which their empowerment is shaped by Thorpe and Gore as directors of the group. This point is further problematised by Maijid Rahnema's argument of the basic dilemma with a participatory ideology that

> No form of social interaction or participation can ever be meaningful and liberating, unless the participating individuals act as free and un-biased human beings… all societies hitherto have developed commonly accepted creeds (religions, ideologies, traditions etc.) which, in turn, condition and help produce inwardly un-free and biased persons.[249]

Therefore, the difficulty of empowering participants in a meaningful and liberating way becomes insurmountable due to the 'commonly accepted creeds' of the facilitator or artist, in this case those of a contemporary performance practice that Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore have been trained in.

Returning to Geraldine Harris' arguments in her essay 'Repetition, Quoting, Plagiarism and Iterability'; contemporary devising is a practice that has 'proliferated to such an extent that [its] style-forms, devices and structures… while still usually attributed to specific sources, have become part of a shared vocabulary, if not in some way "generic"'.[250] If this shared vocabulary exists in the context of the contemporary performance work made by Junction 25 it becomes difficult for their voices not to be communicating through someone else's vocabulary. In addition to this, two of Junction's older members, Rosie Reid and Francesca Lacey are currently studying on the Contemporary Performance Practice (CPP) course. Thorpe's hope is that 'we would one day pass it over to them… so when the first graduates get of age, we would like that they take it and they take it to where they would like to see it go'.[251] It is easy to see the empowerment possibilities of this shared vocabulary, however as Sheila Preston argues in relation to participation:

> Harnessing the consent of a group through the communal spontaneity of "participation" might carry a "useful" hegemonic function in society. The seductive "feeling" of participation and "joining in" with others is

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[249] Rahnema. p. 143.

[250] Geraldine Harris. 'Repetition, Quoting, Plagiarism and Iterability (*Europe After the Rain* – Again)'. *Studies in Theatre Production*. 1999. 19: 6-21. p. 12.

[251] Interview with Jess Thorpe.

less a neutral or benign act but, rather, manipulation into compliance with a social order.[252]

I am wary of comparing the values of Junction 25's directors to that of a manipulative social order. However, what this comment illustrates is that the act of participation and empowerment, far from being simple and inherently productive, can be used to reinforce dominant ideologies and values. The place of CPP within a conservatoire institution highlights the complex issues of the dissemination of a model or tradition of devising and the subsequent difficulty of developing an empowered voice using the forms of an established vocabulary. Is the 'gift' of empowerment always a benign act or can it sometimes have hidden agendas or benefits for the facilitators or artists?

The Gift of Theatre.

In *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* Helen Nicholson discusses the metaphor of the 'gift' and relates it to the practice of applied theatre. She charts Marcel Mauss' legacy as the first anthropologist to identify the 'coercive function of gift-giving'. He noted that among communities such as the Kwakiutl in the north-west pacific, 'the aim of gift-giving was to overwhelm rivals with presents, which they were both obliged to reciprocate and which were so "generous" that they could not possibly repay them'.[253] Nicholson goes on to argue that Mauss' discovery 'problematises the relationship between gift-givers and recipients' and 'serves as a useful reminder that not all acts of giving are made unconditionally'.[254] When applied to participatory theatre practices, Nicholson identifies a series of illuminating questions to interrogate:

> What do we, as practitioners, expect in return for our labours? Artistic satisfaction? The participants' acquisition of skills or abilities? Do we ask participants to adopt new ways of thinking of different political values? Do we expect them to change their behaviour in particular ways? In turn, how far might our own perspectives alter as a result of the work? What about the funders? Do they have expectations of a return?[255]

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[252] Sheila Preston. 'Introduction to Participation'. *The Applied Theatre Reader*. Eds. Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston. London: Routledge, 2009. p. 127.

[253] Nicholson. pp. 160-161.

[254] Ibid.

[255] Ibid.

If we think about these questions in relation to the work of Junction 25, the issue of empowerment takes on a complex ethics of responsibility, between the director/facilitators and the performer/participants. Nicholson cites Chantal Mouffe's defintion of ethics as 'a domain which allows for competing conceptions of the good life'.[256] This is a definition that acknowledges ethical responsibility as a complex negotiation of values and ideologies. Nicholson asks, 'What does it mean to act ethically in contexts where there are "competing conceptions of the good life" among participants and practitioners in applied drama?'[257] Not only does an ethical responsibility take on different forms depending on the participants of the work, but the 'gift' of empowerment may not be unconditional.

Nicholson's discussion of the 'gift' of theatre proceeds to chart oppositional arguments to Mauss' gift theory. She argues that for Jacques Derrida the idea of the gift is always ethical if kept separate from cycles of reciprocity. By refusing to place the gift within this cycle, Derrida 'replaces the homogeneity of a fixed system of economic exchange with the heterogeneity of generosity, in which the gift becomes associated with shifting roles, spontaneity, desire, loss and risk'.[258] Nicholson argues that when applied to drama, this reading of gift theory:

> Acknowledges the risks, contradictions and uncertainties of theatre-making in community settings. It also offers an opportunity to renew a commitment to openness, in which practitioners recognise that their role is not to *give* participants a voice – with all the hierarchical implications that phrase invokes – but to create spaces and places that enable the participants' voices to be heard.[259]

So there is an ethical responsibility to create spaces and places for these voices to be heard and a difficulty with the easy assumption that the facilitator has the formula with which to empower the participant. Lee Anne Fennell suggests that 'gifts are set apart from ordinary commodities because they are specifically chosen for someone else as part of a process of sustaining and deepening personal relationships'. She coins the term 'empathetic dialogue' and argues that:

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[256] Chantal Mouffe. *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso, 2000. p. 92

[257] Nicholson. p. 157.

[258] Ibid. pp. 162-163.

[259] Ibid. p. 163.

> A successful gift… involves the donor putting herself in the recipient's place and imagining not only what they would like, but also what they would like to receive from this particular person. In turn, the recipient imagines the donor's "empathetic efforts" to find the right gift, and it acquires sentimental value that has little to do with its market value.[260]

This metaphor of the gift manages to define the act of gift-giving as a complex personal and emotional activity that requires continual negotiation and (re)evaluation. As a metaphor for the relationship between the director/facilitator and performer/participant in collaborative devising processes it seems fit-for-purpose. Rather than suggesting any particular model or way of working, it embraces the idea that the 'relationship nurtured by the facilitator or artists is crucial and therefore their sensitivity and skill in working "with" participants and enabling democratic ownership of creative mediums is key'.[261] Therefore, in order for the director within collaborative devising contexts to act as an enabler of democratic ownership, it is imperative that s/he is engaged in a process of continual negotiation and (re)evaluation with the collaborating performers.

Conclusion

The role of the director in empowering performers to be creative devisors within a collaborative practice is one of enabler, teacher, and validator and it is the careful performance of this role that can be seen to facilitate empowerment of participants in an ethical, political and aesthetically important way. In the case of Junction 25, the company of young people seems to be empowered to make work by a shared language of collaborative devising that is focussed on the ability to read the potential meanings created by performance images. This is a result of Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore's dynamic directorial leadership. However, the danger of this is that they are being tutored in a very distinct style and tradition that is notably a product of university and conservatoire disseminations of devising histories, processes and practices. The very idea of empowering participants/performers relies on a complex relationship incorporating Nicholson's ideas of gift-giving and the dangers of hidden hierarchies within a group dynamic. Nicholson asks what the applied theatre practitioner expects in return for their labours. If the context of this question is shifted we might as easily ask what the director hopes to gain from

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[260] Lee Anne Fennell, 'Unpacking the Gift: Illiquid Goods and Empathetic Dialogue'. *The Question of the Gift.* Ed. M. Olsteen. London:Routledge, 2001. p. 86.

[261] Preston. p. 128.

a collaborative practice that empowers the performers to be creative devisers. Is it the desire to challenge the hierarchy of the director from within that role? Or to feel comfortable that the director works using an ethics of practice that allows everyone's voice to be heard? It is the director's role to ask these questions in order establish a rigorous critical practice within collaborative devising.

Conclusion

The Role of the Director in Collaborative Devised Theatre

In Chapter 1 of this thesis I provided a context for the discussion of the director's role in contemporary collaborative devised theatre. I examined the rise of the director as a creative artist during developments in twentieth-century theatre forms. The notion of the 'auteur' director from film theory seems apt for this relatively new kind of director, but it fails to acknowledge the necessary act of collaboration. The creative actor's emergence in post war theatre challenged the hierarchy of the director and writer, but there lies a contradiction in the fact that these innovations were mostly led by charismatic director figures such as Chaikin, Grotowski and Mnouchkine. The attempt by socialist theatre companies to create non-hierarchical working structures that reflected their ideological and political beliefs resulted in troubled processes and confused products which have been reconciled to some degree by contemporary devisers recognising the importance of specific skills and roles within a theatre-making context and the shift from the desire to collectively write a 'play' to wanting to create a diverse and heterogeneous 'postmodern' product. Through researching the role director in devised theatre it has become apparent that there exists an un-useful binary between 'devised' and 'text-based' theatre that fails to identify their shared histories and practices. However, it is useful to acknowledge what might be different about directing an existing play-text from directing in devised contexts. It is possible to do this by identifying the shared traditions, practices and processes that have become a tradition of sorts for contemporary devisers, coined by Geraldine Harris and proliferated on university theatre studies courses and conservatoire contemporary performance programmes.

Chapter 2 of this thesis has examined theories and models of collaborative practices. In this chapter I outlined Alex Mermikides' clash and consensus principles and their relationship to devising processes. I have argued for the importance of the director's role in applying dramaturgical and aesthetic principles to the material generated by the company but how this also leads to a tension between the auteur director and the creative performer over the ownership of the work. I offered suggestions of how to foster a collaborative environment within a company, focussing on creating a shared language and allowing an open dialogue

within the process. It is also important to allow a collective discovery within this process, so that the hierarchy of the director is diminished as a result of their role as co-learner with the performers.

In Chapter 3 I examined legal conceptions of authorship and intellectual property, how these have been defined in the context of a capitalist importance placed on material property and the tangible saleable work. Poststructuralist theories by Barthes, Foucault and Derrida have challenged these conceptions of authorship by arguing that multiple meanings exist in a work and in fact it is in the reader not the author where these meanings are created. These arguments have supported my claims that the director of a performance could be seen as the 'author' of the work as they assemble the whole, ephemeral performance text, although the term 'author' still holds the weight of romantic conceptions of what Foucault terms the 'Author-God'. In the light of this it is important to notice the required skills and specific role of the director within devised theatre as the composer and arranger or the work into a coherent whole, but that the term author is complicated by its own history in relation to legal and romantic conceptions.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I re-examined where ownership lies within collaboratively devised work by drawing on Hulton's creative actor course in relation to my own practice and by widening my focus in examining the work of Junction 25 and Glas(s) Performance. The role of the director in empowering the performer can be seen to be in alignment with rhetoric surrounding teaching; the director is an enabler, validator, and facilitator. In the work of Junction 25 the young performers appear to have been empowered by a contemporary performance vocabulary. However, it is arguably the vocabulary of directors Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore rather than a distinctively teenage voice. In order to be in a position to empower the performer in an ethical and politically important way, the director must be engaged in a process of continual negotiation and (re)evaluation of the relationship between him/herself and their performers. It is this discovery that explains why the director's role within this work is shifting and difficult to define. It very much depends on the company, individuals, style of work, ideologies, aesthetics of those involved. Whilst the director in this context may rely on a pre-existing devising 'tradition', this tradition is not-linear or prescriptive, it is appropriate to the form of the work; critical, academic, rigorous, transgressive, heterogeneous and diverse.

In spite of this difficulty I will attempt a definition based on the findings of my research. In attempting to define the director's role within contemporary collaboratively devised theatre, it is useful to chart a list of attributes that, through the course of this research I have discovered are important for the director to have. These are:

- An ability to nurture a collaborative and creative environment.

- The ability to create an open dialogue between collaborators.

- The ability at times to teach, at times enable and at times validate the performers.

- But also the willingness to experience a collective discovery led by other members of the group.

- The ability to lead a group in a way that facilitates democracy.

- The ability to develop material or set tasks that help the performers to develop material.

- The director must possess dramaturgical skills in selecting, arranging, developing and composing material.

- The ability to manage the many meaning makers on stage into a coherent work that communicates to the audience.

These are the attributes that I would hope to take into a project as a director. However, in reality this list would be different for every director, every company and potentially from project to project. Creating a one-size-fits-all 'person specification' for the director's job in devising contexts would display a set of skills overwhelmingly more complex and diverse. To return to Bruce Barton's definition of the director's role within devised theatre; I favour a description of the job of work as '"mining turbulence" – in an effort to extract, manipulate, and refine a distinctly visceral and substantial performance text'.[262] This seems to acknowledge both the

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[262] Barton. p. 117

level of 'authorship' involved in devising but also the element of discovery. Barton also goes some way to addressing the problematic authority of the director; he argues that this authority can be avoided when the director's role is seen as a 'consensual function within a collaborative equation'.[263] It is this description of a collaborative practice, one that acknowledges the complexities of the director's role, that I find appealing. However, it fails to specify the potential tensions between this consensual function and the dramaturgical one. How does this tension play out in collaborations, discussions and disagreements about the shape and direction of the work? How and in what ways do company members give their consent for the director to occupy this role? In devising processes there is an importance placed on the director, or someone who acts as a director, to achieve a 'coherent' product. It may be the case that the word 'director' is too problematically linked to its own history. The word is caught up in complex definitions throughout the history of theatre. Perhaps some better words for the director in devising contexts could be:

facilitator/dramaturg/outsideeye/collaborator/composer/editor/arranger/developer/enabler/

It would be difficult to choose one of these terms to describe the work of the director, but the cumulation of them all goes some way to describing how directing a devised theatre piece may require skills which seem distinct from the traditional role of the director as interpreter of a playwright's text. However, by comparing these with the attributes from the previous page, which are weighted toward the facilitation of a collaborative group process, there is a tension between enabling collaboration and applying dramaturgical skills to a devising process in order to communicate clearly. One way to navigate this may be by considering the facilitation of democratic practices and enabling collaboration as dramaturgical skills also, in as much as they will inevitably affect the dramaturgy of the piece, engendering a work with a specific style and content. This again begs the question; for what reason is collaboration important? The answer being specific to different, social, political and cultural contexts of making work. For me, collaboration becomes important in contemporary collaborative devised theatre in

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[263] Barton. p. 124.

order to align politics and aesthetics in a practice that interrogates, explores and deconstructs our position in a contemporary context.

Where am I at the end of this project?

Having spent two years interrogating the relationships of collaboration, process, writing, directing, performing and creativity in my own and other people's practices, I have arrived at a way of working that acknowledges the important role of the director but that attempts to genuinely collaborate in the making of work. I feel that I am sensitive to the dangers of hidden hierarchies, whilst still acknowledging that if I am working on a project where I am the lead artist, I will be hoping to collaborate with individuals who are respectful of my process and role within that specific project (as I would be if I were collaborating on other people's projects). I am at the end of this period of research feeling that I would benefit profoundly from working with a writer again, but working in a collaborative way with a group of performers to devise a work. I have also spent the last eight months attempting to develop ways in which a network of potential collaborators, can share skills, approaches and processes, in a hope to encourage the development of shared methodological languages and aesthetic vocabularies. This year, myself and fellow theatre-maker and academic, David Overend, set up an informal performance group in order to share ideas in a workshop setting. Our proposal for the group was that it would be

> A group for workshop-based performance activities that aims to share ideas, skills and approaches to making performance work. The aim for this group is that it will unite directors, performers, writers etc… into a collective of artists that determine what the group is and will be. The hope (but not the expectation) being to develop a network of potential collaborators across practices and institutions. Each workshop session will be led by a different group member(s), depending on what they would like to share/investigate. We want the group to be owned and run by its members.

I am still intrigued by the notion of collaboration and through projects like this, I will continue to interrogate the many complex relationships found in the act of making contemporary performance.

Appendix 1

Workshop Outlines

<u>**The Creative Actor Workshop – Empowering the Performer**</u>
<u>**31/01/2010**</u>

1. Think of an event or experience that has happened to you and that you have a clear memory of.

2. Start to write this down as a narrative in as much detail as possible in your note books (you have 15mins).

3. Pick a part of this narrative and present this to the group using Indicitative imagery, that is in a way that tells us what happened without attempting to imitate your 'part' in the story naturalistically (this will probably be the closest to what you have on the page).

4. Now pick another part of your narrative (you can use the same section if you wish) and present this to the group using Imitative imagery, that is in a way that shows us what happened in a naturalistic way, with you engaging in a character or characters in the narrative.

5. Repeat the above task using Expressive imagery, that is in a way that expresses a feeling or emotion using a physical or vocal form.

6. Finally, repeat the above task using Metaphoric imagery, that is in a way that uses a substitute action that might imitate, indicate or express an important element within the event.

7. Now pick an event or story from the newspaper.

8. Pick a part of this story and present this to the group using Indicitative imagery, that is in a way that tells us what happened without attempting to imitate your 'part' in the story naturalistically (this will probably be the closest to what you have on the page).

9. Now pick another part of the newspaper story (you can use the same section if you wish) and present this to the group using Imitative imagery, that is in a way that shows us what happened in a naturalistic way, with you engaging in a character or characters in the narrative.

10. Repeat the above task using Expressive imagery, that is in a way that expresses a feeling or emotion using a physical or vocal form.

11. Finally, repeat the above task using Metaphoric imagery, that is in a way that uses a substitute action that might imitate, indicate or express an important element within the event.

12. Now on your own try to remember all 8 moments of performance (it might help to write these down in your notebook).

13. Try to compose a small performance using any or all of this material. You may wish to alter some of the moments or repeat elements. Try to think about ways in which imagery from this material may be selected, combined and transformed in order to create a new piece of work.

14. Share these performances with the group, each audience member should provide a sentence of feedback in response to each performance.

Directing Devised Theatre - Practice

Before this strand of the practice starts I will run a workshop open to the first 15 participants to sign up. This workshop *will not be* part of the practice but will aim to engage the participant actors in what Dorinda Hulton defines as the creative actor. I will attempt to make them aware of their own individual skills in generating and selecting material as devisers that 'might be trained in the making of plays rather than in their interpretation.'[264] This will be crucial to their engagement in the following research and will aim to test to what extent Hulton's method might prepare actors for collaborative devising processes, an environment, defined by Hulton, in which 'the choice of material would most naturally lie with the actor, responsibility for its development would be shared between the actor, director and writer, and responsibility for its meaning in relation to an audience would lie with the director.'[265]

The research questions specifically aimed at this stage of the practice are:

- How useful is Dorinda Hulton's notion of the Creative Actor, in a post-training context, to the director of collaborative theatre?

- What games and exercises are useful for a director to employ with a group of strangers in order to create a safe environment from which the actors can feel comfortable in sharing personal stories with each other?

- How might the director of devised theatre develop the performance skills/knowledge of the participants required to create the work?

- What exercises can a director use to generate material using the participants' experiences as the stimulus?

- What exercises can a director use to generate material using an 'outside' text as the stimulus?[266]

- What methods might the director of devised theatre use collaboratively with actors to select material in the creation of a coherent work that communicates effectively to an audience?

January 31st 2010

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[264] Dorinda Hulton, 'Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)'. *Theatre Praxis: Teaching Drama Through Practice.* Ed. Christopher McCullough. London: Macmillan, 1998. p. 15
[265] Hulton. p. 35.

[266] I use the word text here to mean any object in which a meaning can be read, a newspaper article/photograph/song etc… I would like to avoid using play-texts at this stage of the research as I will focus specifically on play-texts in another strand of practical workshops.

(This will be a day long workshop with the following games in the morning and some exercises from Hulton's creative actor course in the afternoon, the reason for this being that it would seem odd to 'get to know each other' after work has been shared.)

What games and exercises are useful for a director to employ with a group of strangers in order to create a safe environment from which the actors can feel comfortable in sharing personal stories with each other?

This session will involve a series of exercises that all focus on getting to know more about the participants and developing trust within the group.

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

Say your name and one interesting fact about yourself. After each name the group will perform an action that represents that interesting fact.

BALL THROWING EXERCISE

This exercise involves throwing a ball in a sequence so that it makes its way around the whole circle and back to the first thrower. As the ball is thrown the thrower must say the name of the person they are throwing the ball to. Once a sequence has been remembered by the group, the leader may wish to add more balls in the same pattern. Theoretically it is possible to introduce as many balls as there are people (but of course it depends on the concentration and rhythm developed within the group).

NAMING CIRCLE

'In a group: Standing in a circle, the person elected to start, A, looks at B and walks slowly across the circle to them. Meanwhile B looks at C, who must say B's name aloud before A reaches B. B is then free to look at D and move to them. D must now look at E, who says D's name before B arrives and D is free to move.'[267]

TRUST EXERCISES

1. Everyone stands at one end of the room except for the teacher/leader/facilitator/director, who stands at the other end. In turn, each person walks the length of the room with their eyes closed, until the leader says "Stop!". The rest of the group observe individuals to see if they slow down in anticipation of the command to stop and open their eyes.

2. Repeat (1) at a jogging pace.

3. Repeat (1) at a running pace. (Note: The leader must pay particular attention to safety provision in terms of physically stopping the individual, and allowing plenty of surrounding space at this end of the room.)

4. In pairs: In turn, A and B practice falling backwards into each other's arms. It is best to start with one person standing closely behind the other until confidence and trust is established. Ideally, B should be some

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[267] Alison Oddey. *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook.* London: Routledge, 1994. p. 182

distance away from A, so that A falls backwards, and B steps forward to catch A. (Note: B should bend knees when taking the weight of A.)

5. In group(s): Divide into small groups with each person in turn standing with their eyes closed in the centre of the circle. The group should be sufficiently close to catch the falling person and gently pass them to and fro within the circle. There should always be two people working together to receive the falling person and pass them across the circle. (Note: This is a real test of group trust, and is also a relaxing experience for the person in the middle of the group.) [268]

February 7ᵗʰ

How might the director of devised theatre develop the performance skills/knowledge of the participants required to create the work?

This session will seek to strengthen the participants' abilities to use their bodies as tools for physical communication and give them experience of 'on-the-spot' improvisational storytelling.

YOGA SALUTE TO THE SUN-

A short set of 12 yoga movements that is an excellent physical and mental warm-up.

MIRRORING WITH PARTNERS

A and B stand opposite each other keeping eye contact. A starts making small movements that B follows. These movements should become larger and more ambitious. The pair should swap so that B leads A.

A development of this exercise involves neither A or B leading but the pair attempting to slightly exaggerate the natural movements of their partner so that they are leading each other subconsciously and simultaneously.

MIRRORING AS A GROUP

Another development of the above exercise involves either three participants in a triangle or four in a diamond shape. The group all face in the same direction and whoever is at the head of the triangle (or Diamond) leads the movements. This again should start with small movements and progress to more elaborate ones. If the leader turns to the right then there is a new leader at the head of the shape. If they turn to the left then the person to the left takes over. (If the group is in a diamond then a 180-degree turn means that the person at the opposite end of the group takes over).

All of the above mirroring exercises are excellent for building concentration and physical awareness (the final exercise can also becomes a beautifully organic dance).

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[268] Oddey. p. 183

BOAL'S MACHINE OF RHYTHMS

> An actor goes into the middle and imagines that he is a moving part in a complicated machine. He starts doing a movement with his body, a mechanical, rhythmic movement, and vocalising a sound to go with it. Everyone else watches and listens, seated on the floor in a circle around the machine. Another person goes up and adds another part (her own body) to this mechanical apparatus, with another movement and another sound. A third, watching the first two, goes in and does the same, so that eventually all the participants are integrated into this one machine, which is a synchronised, multiple machine.[269]

The facilitator then speeds up and slows down this machine until the whole group end together. Variations on this exercise include a love machine or a hate machine, or a machine that represents Britain today etc…

INTRODUCTORY IMPROVISATIONS

TABLEAUS

Two participants stand in the centre of a circle adopting a tableau. Someone from outside of the circle taps the shoulder of one of the performers in the middle. They then adopt a stance that in some way changes the meaning of the first tableau. This continues with all the group members taking part.

THE CHAIR

There is a chair placed in the centre of a circle. One at a time the participants must improvise a situation with that chair that transforms the object into something that is not a chair. Words can be used if the actors wish.

SHOE FETISH

A row of odd shoes are lined up along the front of the performance space. Five participants at a time are to select a shoe in their head and imagine that one of their feet has a relationship with that shoe (be it romantic, friendly, or unfriendly). Their foot, acting independently, has to lead the performers' bodies to the shoe.

IMPROVISED STORYTELLING

This game aims to give the participant actors experience of improvising within a set of rules. One actor will start telling a story in the present tense with the audience as the subject of the story (i.e. YOU are walking down the street). This story continues until another performer takes over the narrative, this carries on until the story reaches a suitable end. At times performers might help out the person on the spot, sometimes humour is derived from the performers' inability to complete the

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[269] Augusto Boal. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London: Routledge. 1992. pp. 90-91.

task, leading to interesting theatrical moments as the improviser attempts to dig themselves out of a narrative dead-end.

February 14th

What exercises can a director use to generate material using the participants' experiences as the stimulus?

This session will use exercises in an attempt to generate material 'from nothing' or more accurately from the stories and experiences that exist within the participants.

GOAT ISLAND'S IMPOSSIBLE TASK EXERCISE

1.   Write an impossible task on a piece of paper.
2.   Pass the paper to the person next to you.

If the instructions are difficult to understand, perform what you think you are being asked to try. There is no right or wrong way to follow these instructions. Perform your confusion or mis-understanding with confidence.

3.   Create an action that demonstrates the impossible task described on the piece of paper received. Perform this action a few times to get the sense of it and to perfect it. It should be something that can be repeated over and over. As you perform it for yourself allow it to develop into something you enjoy performing. Simplify it so that it can be taught to someone else.
4.   Repeat the impossible task for 1 minute.

Does the movement change during the repetitions?

5.   For one minute perform your action while describing your movement out loud.
6.   For one minute perform your action as slowly as possible.
7.   Pick a fragment, a sample, from within your action. For one minute perform just that sample.
8.   Divide the group into two groups. One group watches as the other group performs and vice versa. Each group performs for one minute. Each person performs any version of their task that they wish (with descriptive words, slow motion, fragment).

Does the movement remind you of anything new-unrelated to its source?

9.   Each group should take one minute to move across the space performing their action.
10. Now think of your action as a movement sequence and imagine that it exists on a plane such as a piece of paper. Conceive a way to fold it in half as you would a piece of paper or a cloth so that the progression of the sequence is changed. Now some elements will be performed simultaneously. The beginning and the end will be in the same place and the middle will start or finish the sequence. Take a few minutes to compose this new version.

11. Divide the group again and each group watches the other perform the folded version of their original task.[270]

GOAT ISLAND'S WRITING EXERCISE

1. A pen and paper is required, find a comfortable space in the room, place the pen and paper down and close your eyes. Focus on your own breathing, clearing the head and body, but aware of your presence in this room, noises of people around you, street traffic etc.

2. Locate in your memory the very first accident or injury that you can remember. Begin to recall the specific event. Slowly recall this experience: when, where, who what – was anyone with you at the time? – colors, smells, temperature, any dialogue that is occurring around you. What is the date, time, and place of this memory? When you have the memory clearly in mind, take up your pen and paper to write. Notate this experience in as much detail as possible. No one else will see your writing so notate in whatever form or language you wish.

3. Closing your eyes once more, take the experience of the accident, and transfer the event to a field of grass with a house situated at the far right hand corner. In the course of transferring the event to the field, one act of kindness occurs between you and another person who is with you. Begin to write down what this act of kindness is. What is happening between you and the other person?

4. With eyes closed, watch two other people come out of the house in the far distance, it doesn't become clear at first but they have two spades and are digging a hole in the field. You both decide to go and see what they are digging. In the whole in the ground is a box. You are all looking into the hole. The two who dug the whole do not say anything. They open the box and you all discover a sheet of paper with three words written on it. And there is an object. What are the three words and what is the object? When you know what these are write them down.

5. Close your eyes again. The three words signify a gesture from the two people in the house to you and your companion. What is the gesture? Is the object incorporated into this? Begin writing when you are ready.

6. Close your eyes. After all that has occurred between you and the three other people there is a brief silence and a pause. Take a short moment to notate how you are all positioned together. What kind of image have you created together? Begin writing when you are ready.

7. With eyes closed, watch as you all walk toward the house, away from the accident, into the home.

8. This is the end of the writing exercise. Begin to look over the details you have written. You may wish to add or edit.

Create a menu of material from this exercise:

1. Date, time, place
2. One act of kindness
3. Three words, one object
4. Gesture from three words by two people from the house
5. Tableau image of four of you around the hole[271]

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[270] Goat Island. *School Book 2.* Bristol: Goat Island, 2000. p. 12

[271] Ibid. pp. 16-17

February 21ˢᵗ

What exercises can a director use to generate material using an 'outside' text as the stimulus?

In this session we will use text and objects brought in by myself and the participants and use exercises that generate material using these texts as a stimulus.

GENERATING MATERIAL USING A SITE AS STIMULUS

Leave the room and find a place or site in the building that is of interest to you. Spend ten minutes observing the details of this site (you may wish to write about the site, draw a plan or a map etc…) Return to the workshop room and try to recreate this site for your audience. You may wish to use text, a ground plan, limited props or set or a physical description of the space or even describe a feeling it evokes. Take one section of this description and slow it down so that it lasts the length of the original performance.

CONTINUOUS WRITING EXERCISES USING A TEXT AS STIMULUS

Listen to *Les Lumieres (Part I and II)* by the Belle Orchestre. Once the music has finished write continuously for 10 minutes without taking your pen off the paper. Try not to think too much about what you are writing and try not to stop writing at any point. Once you have completed this task, read over what you have written. Pick five phrases or sentences that you find interesting and are happy to share. All of the participants will read out one of their most interesting phrases and these will be collected on one sheet of paper. Try to create a movement or action for each of your phrases that in some way represents the feeling or sentiment of each phrase. Rehearse these movements until you are comfortable performing them repeated in sequence. Half of the group will perform their movements accompanied by the original song while the rest of the group observe. Swap round so that the rest of the group perform while the others watch.

What are your responses to this performance?

February 28ᵗʰ

What methods might the director of devised theatre use collaboratively with actors to select material in the creation of a coherent work that communicates effectively to an audience?

In this session I will attempt to select material collaboratively with the participants in an attempt to create a short coherent work. Discussion and brainstorming will be essential tools here as well as literally placing sections on the ground in order to rearrange them visually in a storyboard fashion.

March 7ᵗʰ

What methods might the director of devised theatre use collaboratively with actors to select material in the creation of a coherent work that communicates effectively to an audience?

This session will seek to run all of the selected material together and discuss its potential meanings in performance using responses from the group and myself.

March 14th

A few runs of the performance to allow rehearsal and refinement will then be followed by a showing in front of a small invited audience.

Appendix 2

The Performance Text – practical workshop work-in-progress performance 14th March 2010, Gilmorehill Theatre, Glasgow

1.Theatre Foyer

Patricia: If you'd just like to gather behind or beside me. What I'd like you to do is walk alongside with me as I take you on my journey through the first time I entered into this building. I remember entering into this building through the doors behind into what was once a church… once a gym… once an exam hall and now the Theatre Film and Television Studies department. I remember seeing the Box Office. This is a site of commercial transaction, where hard cash is parted in exchange for an intangible experience represented by a ticket. And we have that space through there that's another world and you have worlds that are almost real, almost fantastical. The good, the bad, or what makes you think. It can make you laugh make you cry. If you can just be quiet for a second. Can you hear this buzzing? The sounds of this building. And you can hear cars outside. A collage of the inside world and the outside world and the world beyond those doors. If you'd just like to line up against that wall. I don't know why but whenever I've been in this space at this point in front of the lift I like to show off a bit. I like to do a pirouette. Just because I can. I guess I like this space because it's the middle. You're not at the beginning, you're not by those doors, but you've not quite reached your destination yet. This is a place of anticipation and expectation. You could be going to see Shakespeare and have strong views about how this should be peformed and what you're going to see. Or you could be open minded and receive a completely new experience. I guess that's why I like this in between space. I like being here.

Elli interrupts from the Balcony above.

2. Bar

Elli: Look how high up I am. I love being on the boat. Up and down. Up and down. I love to stick my toes between the bars but I always get scared that my shoes are going to fall off. I love to lean right over as far as I can and feel the spray of the water across my face. Come up and try it come on.

Patricia: Let's go up let's go up the steps

The audience go up to the bar.

Elli: I remember when I first saw it. I was six. It was massive. I was just a tiny little speck stood in front of this massive building. And it wasn't the spire or the massive wooden door that I was first taken aback by. It was those huge glass windows. We went inside and the sun was pouring through… on to the big wooden floors, and I remember thinking. Just think of all the people who shared their memories right here. Come on let's go inside.

3. The Top Stairwell

Edison: I can see your feet clunking. Your mouths flapping. I bet a different voice comes out of each one. I wonder how my voice sounds. I bet it sounds amazing to you all. But silence not a single sound, I can't even hear what I'm saying to you. What am I saying? It could be anything. I just feel lonely up here in all this silence. I fell empty, like there's nothing, nothing holding me up here. So it feels like I'm moving downwards. Descending slowly but surely. What was that? Is that what sound is? It's faint but it's there. (Laughs) this is brilliant, it's been too long it really has. Right if there's sound down here then I'm staying. Do you think there'll be more sound the further down we go? Well I'm going to find out, are you's coming along?

He runs down the stairs and meets Anna who then leads the group.

4. The Bottom Stairwell

Anna: Shhh!
Edison: (whispering) Are you kidding me on?

Anna rushes down the stairs, stops to close a set of doors to a cupboard and then continues down to the bottom of the stairwell. In the darkness we hear two people pressing down the keys of a payphone and hanging up in a repetitive rhythm. A light is turned on by Patricia who then joins Edison and Anna on the third payphone. Anna hangs up her phone, moves to Patricia and hangs up her phone and then moves to Edison and hangs his up. She goes to the light switch and turns it off. She then rushes up the stairs.

Anna: (Whispers) come with me.

The *audience* follow her up the stairs and through to the level 2 lift.

5. The Lift

'Around the World' by the Red Hot Chili Peppers is blasting out of some speakers in the lift.

Edison: OK if six of you could get in the lift. The rest of you's stay where you are.

Six audience members enter the lift. The lift doors close. We hear 'Around The World' but it is muffled. We can hear some human noises from inside the lift. The lift then moves up to level 4 and in the distance the remaining audience members can hear shouting upstairs.

Edison: I'm glad you's are amused back there, because you've got nothing to do practically and you're still managing to get a smile in. What's going on there?

The lift sounds come down to level 2 again. The lift doors open causing sound to spill out. Edison counts the audience members.

Edison: If three more people go in just now.

Three people go in the lift. The last four audience members remain. They make conversation outside the lift. The lift doors open again.

Edison: And the rest of you.

Inside the lift Lauren and Elli are facing away from the audience and dancing as if they are at a festival. Lauren keeps getting pushed by someone. She discovers an injury on her foot.

Elli: Oh there's blood. We're going to have to get you to first aid. Excuse me.

Elli and Lauren push their way around the audience members in the lift until they arrive at the entrance and make their way round the corner. The audience are ushered out of the lift by Patricia.

Patricia: Alright the next performance is ready if you'd like to follow me. We're just going to be going through to the end of the corridor. Please stop before the door.

6. The Balcony

The audience follow Patricia through to the Balcony.

Patricia: If you'd just like to wait at the end of the corridor.

Amy enters through a door at the opposite end of the balcony to where the audience are. She kneels on the floor.

Amy: I know you probably don't want to see me. It's really hard for me to admit that I was wrong, but I was. I never meant to get you involved, it just happened. It's not an excuse. Please listen to me. I'm sorry.

Amy stands up and walks to halfway between her entrance and the audience and kneels again.

Amy: I know you probably don't want to see me. It's really hard for me to admit that I was wrong, but I was. I never meant to get you involved, it just happened. It's not an excuse. Please listen to me. I'm sorry.

She stands and walks forward until she is right in front of the audience and then kneels.

Amy: I know you probably don't want to see me. It's really hard for me to admit that I was wrong, but I was. I never meant to get you involved, it just happened. It's not an excuse. Please listen to me. I'm sorry.

Amy stands.

Amy: And now that we're all friends again, shall we go to the cinema.

The audience follow Amy to the cinema. It is dark except for a spotlight on the lecturn at the front.

7. The Cinema

Amy: Now we're all going to sit at the front because I can't hear when we sit at the back.

All of the other performers are sitting at the front also. Sarah is lying on the floor in a bit of a heap. She slowly gets up in an awkward fashion as if her body isn't working properly or she is a puppet. She moves to behind the lectern only the top of her head visible and fades the lights out. The lights fade back up. Becca stands from within the audience and starts to walk out.

Becca: You stand up and you turn round. Your general intention is to walk up the aisle.

8. The Staff Room.

Becca: You are hesitating in the corridor because you can't quite remember where the door is that you need to go through but you remember it's to the left so you find it and you go through the door.

The audience follow Becca through the door and up the stairs.

You start to walk up the steps. When you get to level 4 you decide to go up another set of stairs. You go up to the back of the theatre and you open the door and listen. You can hear people performing in the theatre so you walk back down the stairs again.

Becca walks down the stairs.

You pause on level 4. You decide to walk through the door labeled 'Dressing Rooms, Green Room'. You pause at the door labeled staff only. You enter 'ooh rebel' he said. You drag a chair up to the back of the room and sit down. They amble about near the door way wondering what to do next. They sit down on the seats around the table. She looks around and she can see the Xerox machine where she dared him to Xerox his arse but he wouldn't. She can see on the right side where the staff make their teas and their coffees, the fridge, where they keep the little cartons of milk. She can see the hot water machine thingy. She can see four mugs turned upside down on the dryer. She can see three teaspoons, she can see two dirty mugs in the basin, she can see the backs of some of their heads. She can't, she can see them looking at her. She can see the big window behind them. She can see the formation of the arch behind the window. She can see the blinds. She asks them; 'Do you want a cup of coffee?'

Pause. An audience member (Kieran) says yeah.

One cup of coffee? She says. One cup of coffee? She says. She goes to the cupboard she gets out a mug she gets a Kenco coffee jar. She opens the lid, she finds a tea spoon. She puts one teaspoon of the Kenco coffee into the mug. She asks 'would you like some milk?'

The audience member says no thanks.

She goes to the hot water machine thingy and she fills up the mug with hot water. She asks 'would you like sugar?'

One please.

She goes and finds the sugar and she uses the same tea spoon she used to put the coffee in the mug. She puts one teaspoon full… this is very complicated she thinks. She puts one teaspoon full of sugar into the mug and she stirs it with the teaspoon. Then she puts the teaspoon back and then she gets the top of the lid that goes on top of the jar she puts that back on and she puts the jar back where she found it. She then carries the mug of coffee to the table. They are quite unsure what to do now so they look around, they look to the middle of the table and they see that there are in fact blank pieces of paper and also pens so they each grab one.

The audience grab a piece of paper and a pen each.

Amy:
Whilst they draw they remember that time in 1992 when they were 6 or were they 17? It was raining and he was crying because he didn't have a hood on his coat and it was really unfair and so you swapped coats with him because your coat had a hood on it.

Becca:
She coughs twice. She watches them draw.

Amy:
You remember that bottle you found and it was a bit like buried treasure, except it was just an empty bottle of ale really. And you remember him saying: "D'ye ken hen?" And the smell of his breath.

Becca:
They start to draw something else, a bit different. They seem a little distracted.

Amy:
You remember they had hoods on – hoods again – and they were looking at you but they don't have features. Well obviously they do but you don't see them and you don't care either. You just think it's a bit of a weird situation.

Becca:
Now they are shuffling around in their seats.

Amy:
And the rain was quite light but of course like a film set you notice there is thunder too. And maybe some lightning, but only because you assume the thunder is a result of it. And the forest stands very tall and looming on the right side of you.

Becca:
They feel kind of unsure and a bit awkward so they stop drawing. They are unaware that she is still drawing.

Patricia: She remembers the Euphoria machine and all the chaos of movement and noise.

Lauren: She remembers Edison's weekly outings to chicken cottage.

Sarah: She remembers drawing with eyes closed but mind open.

Music starts

Edison: He remembers how they would always work with an open heart.
Anna: She remembers finding two keys.
Elli: She remembers all the team building exercises.
Patricia: She remembers the story telling and how/ one person would start telling a story about going to an ATM machine…

The group all start to talk at the same time.

The end.

Appendix 3

Examples of Introductory 'why we are here' section from *Helium* showing the development of the text.

Version 1 220610
Written by Harry Wilson, section highlighted in yellow was taken from an article written by Tony Fitzpatrick in 2007 found on the website of Washington University in St. Louis http://news.wustl.edu/news/Pages/10754.aspx

Sarah: Hello…

             Laurie is inflating some Helium balloons over there.

             We're going to talk to you tonight about Helium.

Laurie: Before it's too late.

Sarah: Laurie!

Laurie: What?

Sarah: There's no need to scare them

Laurie: Well its true.

Sarah: Unfortunately, Laurie is right. According to Lee Sobotka of Washington University, St. Louis. The largest Helium reserve in Amarillo Texas is likely to have depleted in the next five years. So I would kindly ask that you are entertained by our presentation this evening. If you don't enjoy it then it will have been a waste of this precious gas. Thank you.

Laurie: Sarah.

Sarah: Yes Laurie.

Laurie: Do we have enough balloons yet?

Sarah looks at the area DSL.

Sarah: No let's swap.

Sarah starts inflating balloons.

Laurie: *(Sheepishly to the audience)* Hi…

Sarah: I think we're ready for our first presentation now.

Version 2 120710

Sarah: We are here tonight to share some of our favourite things about Helium before its to late. It is impossible to recycle the Helium we will use during the performance, so we really hope that you enjoy what we're doing.

            Laurie really loves the French film 'Le Ballon Rouge' or 'The Red Balloon'. Earlier he described the opening sequence from the film and he might return to this again later.

These are some of his favourite things about the film…

Version 3 200810

Sarah: The element that lifts things like balloons, spirits and voice ranges is being depleted so rapidly in the world's largest reserve, outside of Amarillo, Texas, that supplies are expected to be used up within the next five years.

Laurie lets go of a balloon.

Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable. helium is a rebel, a loner, and it does not combine with other atoms.

Laurie releases another balloon.

Helium is the most Noble of gases, meaning it's very stable and non-reactive for the most part. When we use what has been made over the approximate 4.5 billion of years the Earth has been around, we will run out.

Laurie lets go of the final balloon.

Silence.

Laurie: Which… is why… we're here.

Laurie and Sarah join each other centre stage. Laurie puts his arm around Sarah.

Sarah and I would like to tell you a few of our favourite things about Helium. Now as Sarah said Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable, and will eventually run out… Unfortunately… in this show we can't recycle any of the Helium we will use, but we do think it is necessary in order to give you a true sense of the amazing properties of this gas. But we really do hope you enjoy it.

Sarah will now do a short demonstration about Helium, which I have kindly agreed to help out with.

Version 4 300810

Sarah: Helium is running out.

This is a fact.

The world's largest reserve of Helium, outside Amarillo, Texas, is running out of gas.

The element that lifts things like balloons, voice ranges and children's spirits is being depleted so rapidly that supplies are expected to be used up within the next five years.

Laurie lets go of a balloon.

> Helium is the most Noble of gases, meaning it's very stable and non-reactive. It is a rebel, a loner, and it does not combine with other atoms.

Laurie releases another balloon.

> Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable. When we use what has been made over the approximate 4.5 billion of years the Earth has been around, we will run out.

Laurie lets go of the final balloon.

Silence.

Laurie: Which… is why… we're here.

Laurie and Sarah join each other centre stage. Laurie puts his arm around Sarah.

> Sarah and I would like to take this opportunity while we can to tell you about, and demonstrate for you, a few of our favourite things about Helium. Now as Sarah said Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable, and will eventually/ run out

Sarah: In five years/

Laurie: In this show, as you can see, we use *real* Helium. Now, recyling Helium is a complex, difficult, expensive, and high emissions process – that's part of the problem really. Unfortunately this does mean that we can't recycle the real Helium that we are using for this show for you tonight. So of course that means we really want you to enjoy it, and we'd just ask that you really go with us

Sarah nods, looking at audience

> Just really try to commit, really give it some as an audience. If you're feeling a bit sleepy, or still thinking about the last show you just saw, or secretly wishing you were out in the bar then perhaps now is the time to maybe just think about raising your game. Because otherwise, it really has been a bit of a waste.

Sarah: Thanks Laurie

Laurie: And so with that in mind, Sarah's going to kick things of with our first demonstration, which I'm going to help out with. OK? Sarah.

Version 5 300810 edits by KH

Sarah: Helium is running out.

> This is a fact.

> The world's largest reserve of Helium, outside Amarillo, Texas, is running out of gas.

The element that lifts things like balloons, voice ranges and children's spirits is being depleted so rapidly that supplies are expected to be used up within the next five years.

Laurie lets go of a balloon.

Helium is the most Noble of gases, meaning it's very stable and non-reactive. It is a rebel, a loner, and it does not combine with other atoms.

Laurie releases another balloon.

Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable. When we use what has been made over the approximate 4.5 billion of years the Earth has been around, we will run out.

Laurie lets go of the final balloon.

Silence.

THE FOLLOWING BIT I'VE CHANGED A FAIR BIT, IN A WAY WE DIDN'T QUITE DISCUSS, SO JUST SEE IT AS A SUGGESTION. THE AIM IS TO MAKE IT LESS APOLOGETIC, AND MORE A CALL FOR THE AUDIENCE TO GET ON BOARD, IN A KIND OF HUMOUROUS WAY. I THINK I QUITE LIKE IT, BUT DOES IT RISK BEING TOO ALIENATING? FEEL FREE TO CHANGE IT BACK OF COURSE - KH

Laurie: Which… is why… we're here.

Laurie and Sarah join each other centre stage. Laurie puts his arm around Sarah.

Sarah and I would like to take this opportunity while we can to tell you about, and demonstrate for you, a few of our favourite things about Helium. Now as Sarah said Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable, and will eventually/ run out

Sarah: In five years/

Laurie: In this show, as you can see, we use *real* Helium. Now, recyling Helium is a complex, difficult, expensive, and high emissions process – that's part of the problem really. Unfortunately this does mean that we can't recycle the real Helium that we are using for this show for you tonight. So of course that means we really want you to enjoy it, and we'd just ask that you really go with us

Sarah nods, looking at audience

Just really try to commit, really give it some as an audience. If you're feeling a bit sleepy, or still thinking about the last show you just saw, or secretly wishing you were out in the bar then perhaps now is the time to maybe just think about raising your game. Because otherwise, it really has been a bit of a waste.

Sarah: Thanks Laurie

Laurie: And so with that in mind, Sarah's going to kick things of with our first demonstration, which I'm going to help out with. OK? Sarah.

Version 6 060910 developed in rehearsal with LB and SB

Sarah: Helium is running out.

           This is a fact.

           The world's largest reserve of Helium, outside Amarillo,
           Texas, is running out of gas.

           You may be familiar with Helium from such things as birthday
           parties, fun fayres, silly voices and childhood memories. But
           supplies are expected to be used up within the next five
           years.

Laurie lets go of a balloon.

           Helium is non-renewable, so the earth won't make any more.
           And irreplaceable, so we can't make any more. When we use
           what has been made over the last 4.5 billion years, we will
           run out.

Laurie lets go of the final balloon.

Silence.

Laurie: Which… is why… we're here.

*Laurie and Sarah join each other centre stage. Laurie puts his arm around
Sarah.*

           Sarah and I would like to take this opportunity while we can
           to tell you about, and demonstrate for you, a few of our
           favourite things about Helium. Now as Sarah said Helium is
           non-renewable and irreplaceable, and will eventually/ run out

Sarah: In five years/

Laurie: In this show, as you can see, we use *real* Helium. We haven't
           been using any Helium in rehearsals. Now, recycling Helium is
           a complex, difficult, expensive, and high emissions process –
           that's part of the problem really. Unfortunately this does
           mean that we can't recycle the real Helium that we are using
           for this show for you tonight. So of course that means we
           really want you to enjoy it, and we'd just ask that you
           really go with us

Sarah nods, looking at audience

           Just really try to commit, really give it some as an
           audience. Because if you weren't here then it would be a
           waste.

Sarah: Thanks Laurie

Laurie: And so with that in mind, Sarah's going to kick things of
           with our first demonstration, which I'm going to help out
           with. OK? Sarah.

Version 7 – 150910 further developed in rehearsal with the performers.

Sarah: Helium is running out.

This is a fact.

The world's largest reserve of Helium, outside Amarillo, Texas, is running out of gas.

You may be familiar with Helium from such things as birthday parties, fun fayres, silly voices and childhood memories. But supplies are expected to be used up within the next five years.

Laurie lets go of a balloon.

Helium is non-renewable, so the earth won't make any more. And irreplaceable, so we can't make any more. When we use what has been made over the last 4.5 billion years, we will run out.

Laurie lets go of the final balloon.

Silence.

Laurie: Which… is why… we're here.

Laurie and Sarah join each other centre stage. Laurie puts his arm around Sarah.

Sarah and I would like to take this opportunity while we can to tell you about, and demonstrate for you, a few of our favourite things about Helium. This presentation is a celebration. It is also a chance to grieve. Now as Sarah said Helium is non-renewable and irreplaceable, and will eventually/ run out

Sarah: In five years/

Laurie: If you could just pass that round. As you can see, in this presentation we use *real* Helium. Recycling Helium is a complex, expensive, and high emissions process. Unfortunately this does mean that we can't recycle the real Helium that we are using tonight. So of course that means we really want you to enjoy it, and we'd just ask that you really go with us. Because if you weren't here it would have been a waste.

Sarah: Thanks Laurie

Laurie: And so with that in mind, Sarah's going to kick things of with our first demonstration, which I'm going to help out with.

Appendix 4

Participant consent forms (attached)

University of Glasgow

Description of the Research

I am an MPhil Research student studying the role of the director in the devising process. Your participation in this research will involve seven workshop sessions led by myself. The content of these workshops will involve a series of theatre games and exercises culminating in a final showing in front of a small invited audience. I will be documenting these workshops using a video camera, but this is purely for my own personal record of the sessions and WILL NOT be viewed by anyone except myself. I will ask you to note some of your thoughts and experiences of the sessions in a journal that I will provide and I may use your notes in the final thesis of the research. I will also conduct recorded interviews with you to in order to gather your experiences of the process. I will use these responses in my analysis, which will be included in a written thesis deposited in the University library and will also be available electronically on the web.

Your participation in the project implies your consent for me to use this material and, as the nature of the research will stress the importance of authorial credit in the making of collaborative theatre, participants' names will be used.

Finally, all participants have the right to withdraw their participation and materials from the project at any time.

I PATRICIA VERITY understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed. *Patricia Verity*

Date. 31/i/2010

Researcher's name: Harry Wilson (h.wilson.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Supervisor's name: Dr Deirdre Heddon (d.heddon@tfts.arts.gla.ac.uk)

Department address: Dept. Theatre, Film and Theatre Studies, University of Glasgow, 9 University Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8QQ

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Finally, all participants have the right to withdraw their participation and materials from the project at any time.

I _Lauren Clarke_ understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed _Lauren Clarke_

Date _31/01/10_

Researcher's name: Harry Wilson (h.wilson.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

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I ...ELLI WILLIAMS.... understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed...*Elli Williams*

Date...31/01/10

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I ....Edison McKenna........... understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed...... ~~40/9xm~~

Date..... 31/1/2010

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I ANNA MARSHALL .... understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed...Anne Crute Marshall

Date......31./.01./.10

Researcher's name: Harry Wilson (h.wilson.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Supervisor's name: Dr Deirdre Heddon (d.heddon@tfts.arts.gla.ac.uk)

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Finally, all participants have the right to withdraw their participation and materials from the project at any time.

I ......Sarah Bradley...... understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed...... Bradley......

Date... 31 / 1 / 10 ......

Researcher's name: Harry Wilson (h.wilson.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Supervisor's name: Dr Deirdre Heddon (d.heddon@tfts.arts.gla.ac.uk)

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Your participation in the project implies your consent for me to use this material and, as the nature of the research will stress the importance of authorial credit in the making of collaborative theatre, participants' names will be used.

Finally, all participants have the right to withdraw their participation and materials from the project at any time.

I ....Amy Cullen.................... understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed.... *Amy Cullen*

Date..... 31/.1/.10

Researcher's name: Harry Wilson (h.wilson.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Supervisor's name: Dr Deirdre Heddon (d.heddon@tfts.arts.gla.ac.uk)

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Your participation in the project implies your consent for me to use this material and, as the nature of the research will stress the importance of authorial credit in the making of collaborative theatre, participants' names will be used.

Finally, all participants have the right to withdraw their participation and materials from the project at any time.

I ...REBECCA...MORRIS....... understand the research project that is being undertaken by Harry Wilson. I consent to Wilson's use of materials generated by me during this research, for the purposes of his research. I understand that the results of this research will be made available publicly.

Signed...*Rebecca Mc*...

Date...31 / 1 / 10...

Researcher's name: Harry Wilson (h.wilson.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Supervisor's name: Dr Deirdre Heddon (d.heddon@tfts.arts.gla.ac.uk)

Department address: Dept. Theatre, Film and Theatre Studies, University of Glasgow, 9 University Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8QQ

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