

**Practice-Based Research in Performing Arts**  
The NSU Winter Seminar, February 22 – 25 2007

**ABSTRACTS**

**Bruce Barton      Practice-Based Research in North America: Spokes for a Spinning Wheel**

My presentation for the “Practice Based Research in the Performing Arts” NSU symposium in Copenhagen will provide a summary and analysis of the perspectives that emerged in this timely gathering in Chicago. Further, I will propose how this distilled information can provide our own project with valuable contextualization, inspiration, and cautionary instruction, given our very similar stated objectives. Conversations about this topic often seem to take the form of “reinventing the wheel,” as the unconventional nature of PBR often seems to necessitate a thorough re-imagining of its composite parts (“practice” and “research”). But, as we know, much valuable and pertinent groundwork has been done in this area, and forward movement requires that we identify, scrutinize, evaluate, and apply the lessons already learned elsewhere. My presentation will offer insights into, in a sense, the “state-of-the-art” of PBR across a wide spectrum of North American contexts, allowing us to adopt and adapt those “spokes” that are appropriate for our own, already turning wheel of PBR processes, policies, and procedures.

**Pil Hansen      Exploring the concept of reflection - as method, practice, and creativity**

With the words "practice based research" expectations of systematic methods, a clear problem, and predefined objectives may clash with the notion that performance is research in and off itself. Rather than stalling at such perceived boundaries I suggest exploring the concept of reflection as method, practice and creativity. This paper will comment on ways of integrating advanced levels of reflection into multiple stages of a creative process for purposes of development, research, and the production of reflected and articulated experiences. One of the challenges has to do with the hermeneutic sense of reflection as interpretation. How does one manoeuvre between the desire for definition and "knowledge" and a process of creation with change, movement and spaces in between the known? What are the alternatives to interpretation? How may we explore the concept of reflection?

**Lasse Ekstrand, Yvonne Savy & Monika Wallmon**  
**Performance Art in the Context of Change. Towards a philosophy of politics, aesthetics and action**

Formal research in performing arts has traditionally been concerned with the conceptual scaffolding of an interpretive approach conducted by a (from a distance watching) researcher. This traditional orientation should be abandoned in favour of a view based on the dynamic categories that constitute the humankind of change and instability, of becoming and as a process.

In that process, we want to stop this ideological ‘ritual’; interrupt the ‘journey-in-fiction’, arrest the somnambulistic movement, restore a public focus, a concentration on radical changes. What is implicit about aesthetics must be exposed as explicit: the myth must be visually concretized and unmasked. The absentminded, hypnotic relation with narratives must be challenged by a conscious social act.

In our research we define performing arts – using the German artist Joseph Beuys’s term – as ‘social sculptures’ (a form of art-events); and advocate that PBR can be understood as action research where the researcher him/herself is a part of a development process.

Henrik Vestergaard Pedersen

### **Zarathustras Onkel**

I mit paper vil jeg fortælle om Zarathustras Onkels nuværende projekt som er en rekonstruktion af samtlige tolv værker i den danske Kulturkanon for Scenekunst. [www.kulturkanon.kum.dk](http://www.kulturkanon.kum.dk) for mere information om den danske Kulturkanon.

Jeg er interesseret i copyright og patenter og undersøger hvordan disse gør sig gældende i forhold til scenekunst.

Flemming Enevold, formand for Kanonudvalget for Scenekunst, skriver i forordet til bogen "Kulturkanon" at værkerne i kulturkanonen ligefrem "skriger på at blive iscenesat af vor tids spændende unge teaterinstruktører"

Jeg er hverken ung eller en spændende teaterinstruktør, men finder spørgsmålet om hvorvidt man overhovedet kan rekonstruere scenekunst spændende. Forsvinder dét, Walter Benjamin kalder Aura, ikke ved reproduktionen, eller kan man erstatte den med en ny og mere tidssvarende aura? Hvem har retten til scenekunst, til dramatik, musik og bevægelser. Kunstneren eller samfundet? Gives der stadig ny scenekunst eller ser vi ikke blot gentagelser af fortidens værker?

I det seneste nummer af Visslingar & Rop – nummer 21 kaldet Manifest – er Zarathustras Onkels Julmanifest optrykt. Dette uddyber bevæggrundene og De resterende spørgsmål vil blive besvaret i min paper.

Hvis jeg betragter Zarathustras Onkels historie og værk hidtil med det kritiske, historisk funderede blik, som jeg underkaster andre kunstnere, er det manglen på originalitet, der stikker i øjnene. Jeg kunne og kan sagtens smøre mine værker ind i smarte salgstaler, men når alt kommer til alt ved jeg bedst af alle, at de er hule, for værkerne er tomme i deres mangel på originalitet.

Selv denne hævdede mangel på originalitet er dybt uoriginal fordi den er hugget fra Erik Polds projektbeskrivelse til hans kommende forestilling (2008) kaldet "Mastercopy"!

Birgitte Bauer-Nilsen

### **"The Butterfly" – The Choreography**

I connect artistic and academic work. The research is focus on a connection between an aesthetic learning process and performances skills from different culture. I am concerned about these subjects in the dance performance The Butterfly.

#### **SYNOPSIS "THE BUTTERFLY" – THE CHOREOGRAPHY:**

In the Nordic mythology, there is a World Tree named "Yggdrasil" which symbolizes the center of the earth. The roots of this Yggdrasil tree symbolize the people of the earth and each of its roots represents a different culture.

The different cultures join in the trunk of the tree and in the branches new cultures are created - and this is a metaphor for the artistic vision of the Yggdrasil Dance Ensemble.

Just as the "Tango" is essentially Argentina's traditional fertility or courtship dance, equivalent dances – about the meeting between man and woman – exist in other cultures, such as the 4 cultures from where the Yggdrasil dancers are from:

In Tanzania this traditional dance is called "Sindimba," in Denmark there is the "Brudevalsen" or the "Bryllupsmarchen" and India and Vietnam each have their own equivalent with just as much strength and character. The common tone is eroticism and sensuality - and the different dance traditions all reflect universal feelings.

The courtship dance in Tanzania, "Sindimba," is an expressive dance with shaking of the hips and shoulders and direct eye contact. It is performed as a group dance – in sharp contrast to the Danish "Brudevalsen" (i.e. Wedding Waltz) which is only danced by a couple and where the man leads the women in harmonized steps sliding across the floor. In Vietnam it is all about small movements and steps, with very elegant hand gestures, no eye contact, and no touching of each other. In India it is the slapping of the feet, isolated torso and head movements, short glimpses to the partner and up to the Gods, magnificent finger movements and hardly any touching of each other either.

The dancers' artistic meeting point is Modern Dance – but they are all without exception highly skilled in Traditional Dance from their respective cultures.

The Butterfly dance performance paints a nuanced picture of love, in a cross-cultural fusion between Vietnam/Asia, Tanzania/Africa, India/Asia and Denmark/Europe.

The Butterfly represents a global meeting and an aesthetic dialogue between man and women in different cultures. The Butterfly will inspire a better understanding of different cultures and their aesthetic attitudes. Hopefully it will contribute towards making it easier for people to meet and live in a global society.

A butterfly is transformed from a caterpillar into a pupa and finally into a free-flying being. And this can serve as a metaphor for the spiritual transformation that goes on in humans, in the meaning between man and woman and in the meeting between different cultures of the world.

#### Fia Adler Sandblad **My wish, my work**

I have a longing and a wish that I might, through my work as an actress, come closer to, understand and being able to talk and share human experiences of life in its many aspects. It is the intense experience of life in real time: NOW, and the possibility to share experience with other people in the context of the scenic situation that is in focus in my work. ... It is about going beyond the known, what you already know, but *through* what you know, to persistently repeat something seemingly meaningless for to pass the surface into the core, where other experiences and significations than the already known can start to talk to you. It is of lesser importance if this something you are doing is a movement, a word, a sound, because beyond the movement, word, sound is a common denominator which the artist in her/his work might come in contact with and expose, make visible, through her/his unique instrument.

#### Jette Lund **Konkrete erfaringer med problemet uddannelse til den moderne, genreover skridende performancekunst /installationskunst**

Når man i dag taler om "scenekunst" og "scenekunstnere" er det udtryk for en erkendelse af, at den moderne scenekunst overskrider rammerne for de klassiske arter og genrer som teater, ballet, opera - og billedkunst. Men hvordan udmønter denne forståelse sig i uddannelserne?

Den uddannelsesøgende vordende kunstner er ikke i tvivl om at der er en forskel. Man vælger bevidst at søge sin uddannelse enten på Statens Teaterskoler, eller på f.eks. School Of Stage Arts - SOSA - eller i udlandet. Man søger bevidst anderledes produktionsformer og anderledes udtryksformer - og forkaster (somme tider med foragt) det "psykologiske teater" - men hvad sættes der i stedet? Hvad er egentlig forskellen på de forskellige undervisningstilbud?

Det er ikke beskrevet eller undersøgt. En stor sammenlignende undersøgelse på nordisk plan er - såvidt det er mig bekendt - endnu ikke offentliggjort.

Derfor er det skriftlige materiale, jeg her kan tage til grundlag og lægge frem, alene baseret på mine egne praktiske erfaringer, samt tre beskrivelser, som jeg selv har stået for.

Den første er beskrivelsen af et fireårigt forsøg med "Dukkemagergrunduddannelsen" 1996-2000 i

Hanstholm, et projekt, som af tekniske grunde ikke kunne videreføres og som nu er lukket ned. Beskrivelsen er udført med baggrund i, at en sådan uddannelse ikke havde nogle ækvivalenter andet steds i verden, og at en dokumentation af undervisningsplan, didaktik og erfaringer var væsentligt for at fastholde forløbet.

Den anden er en beskrivelse af uddannelsen ved SOSA 1997-99, udført på skolens vegne til brug for ansøgning om godkendelse som refusionsberettiget uddannelse, en godkendelse, som skolen ikke fik. Denne uddannelse er skabt og ledet af Nullo Facchini, og trækker i høj grad på internationale lærerkræfter.

Den tredje er en endnu ikke fuldstændig afsluttet rapport om et laboratorieforsøg ved Odsherred Teaterskoles "Institut for ny scenekunst" i 2005-2006, hvor 8 scenekunstnere fik muligheden for over ialt 6 weekends at udvikle deres eget sceniske projekt, under vejledning af instruktøren Catherine Poher og mig selv som dramaturg. Fra dette forløb foreligger også en dvd med bl.a. optagelser af sekvenser af de enkelte projekter.

De tre beskrivelser kan fra årskiftet downloades fra [www.pramnet.org](http://www.pramnet.org)

I alle tre sammenhænge arbejdes der med teaterformer, som ofte ikke bare ligger fjernt fra mainstream-teatret, men også forlanger helt andre talenter og færdigheder af udøverne end de, som Statens Teaterskoler bygger på og formidler.

Hvis vi vil skabe tidssvarende uddannelser på de kunstneriske områder i det hele taget - og ikke bare overlade feltet til "mesterlære" og begrebet "talent" - ikke at forglemme talentet for at bruge albuerne - hvis vi insisterer på at diskutere kunst også ud fra et begreb som "kvalitet" - så er uddannelse for mig at se sammenfaldende med forskning, og omvendt.

Ethvert konkret uddannelsesforløb for en konkret person er et forskningsprojekt, såvel for personen som for læreren. Det er måske banalt, men også en nødvendig erkendelsesmæssig forudsætning. For begge har brug for at legitimere eller problematisere deres praksis, at få ny inspiration, og for at opsamle og generalisere den viden om uddannelsesprocessen, som de er nået frem til, og sammenligne den med andres viden.

Det kræver kontinuert, konkret forskning, og den kan ikke være andet end praksis-baseret.

**Katrine Nilsen**      **"RespOnce – Design for Breakdown"**  
- *how to develop a devising tool for interactive stage design.*

How do artist research and why? Artist and academicians do not necessarily have the same motive and final goal for their research and I would therefore like to start a discussion, by presenting an example from my own work, "*the RespOnce project*". What purpose should Practice Based Research within Performance Art serve and who could benefit from it? How can we distinguish between the different motives and what methods should be used?

The artistic process includes both a *analytic* phase, a *experimental/inventing* phase and finally a *productive* or a *performing* phase. These parts are closely connected and mutually dependent. But the methods that most artists use, is often self-taught and highly personally, developed for a limited and specific artistic purpose. Furthermore the artist has to deal with the fact, that parts of the creative process is so fragile that there is always a risk, that to try and put it into words would actually stop the process and ruin the outcome. It is therefore very difficult to describe, analyse and to reconstruct the artistic method, both for the artist working with it and for the researcher who wants to analyse and document it.

With *the RespOnce project* I aimed to deal with this situation, by suggesting a tool that, partly without words, makes it possible to analyse, work on and document the material during the process, and perhaps also makes it easier to reconstruct the process after the production is finished.

This way it will be made possible to refer both process and result into the context of academic research and, if alternative notions of the research "product" is accepted, it could perhaps even be defined and accepted as research in itself!?

**Jørgen Callesen**      **Experiences from a practice based research project in between traditional conceptions of art and research**

This presentation deals with the question "Why develop discourses on Practice-Based Research in the performing arts?" It aims to provide some insights from an actual case to initiate the discussion "For who do you develop it?" ... It is my belief that art and research are two fundamental different ways of reasoning ... The artist wishes to gain insight into a new material and medium and then use it in the production of a work of art. This insight comes through the process and the experience of the actual work and can be defined as "sensuous knowledge" or "experiential knowledge".

For the academic researcher this knowledge is not the point of interest. It is the documentation and reflection leading to proof or dismissal of the initial thesis, but this academic reflection is not necessarily useful in the artist work.

In practice based research it must therefore be decided to whom this knowledge is made available and useful...

