

# Introduction: The Political Potential of Applied Theatre Practice, Education and Research

*Petro Janse van Vuuren*

Head of Department, Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

*Bjørn Rasmussen*

Professor in Drama/Theatre, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Norway

*Ayanda Khala*

Lecturer, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

This edition is a result of a longstanding collaboration between two centres of applied drama, theatre education and research: the Department of Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa and the Department of Arts and Media Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim. From 2017 to 2021 this collaboration has included student and teacher exchange, as well as arts-based research involving theatre companies and cultural centres. Joining our efforts and shared expertise from different cultural traditions, we collaborated to achieve our overall aim – to strengthen the quality of our work as well as bring increased attention and consciousness, within our universities and society at large, to the humanities and to the political value of theatre education and research.

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Equality and reciprocity are important virtues connected to democracy and to this collaboration project. Symbolic of the democratic ambition that filters through this edition, is the space and opportunity given to several new researchers and PhD students, including an innovative collation of master's student contributions (chapter 4). In the same spirit, we have deliberately chosen the Open Access publication format to ensure our research and stories – originating from many continents – reach all interested readers, among them students and creative partners who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to engage with our offering. We also considered the differences in the socio-economic conditions for doing collaborative research in Norway and South Africa, respectively. Notably, a lack of paid research time is significant amongst the South African partners, and as a result this edition has been produced jointly, but on unequal terms. Consequently, in gratitude, we acknowledge that this has made great demands on the energy and dedication from some contributors, editors included.

Our project title<sup>1</sup>, which also became the title of this edition, demonstrates our ambition. How can theatre possibly build democracy? Even in societies where some value is ascribed to theatre arts, a political role beyond entertainment and sensuous experience is seldom acknowledged by key national stakeholders and policy makers. Indeed, the very institutionalization of art, historically and in many contemporary instances, can be regarded as a kind of controlling strategy to distinguish the fictitious from real matters, in hopes – by those in power – of protecting our democracies from unpredictable as well as critical performances and playfulness (Hallward, 2006; Rancière, 2009; Rancière & Rockhill, 2013). This western perspective must, however, be moderated somewhat when the context is South Africa and the arts outside of the institutional spaces continue to flourish and are increasingly recognized for their political-educational value. This is thanks to a legacy of theatre as a consistent contributor to

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1 “Theatre and democracy: Building democracy in post-war and post-democratic contexts” grew as an international follow-up from a previous Norwegian project, “Drama, theatre and democracy 2014–2017”, which unified 60 Norwegian university teachers and researchers in one common project. The current project and collaboration has been kindly funded by our universities and the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education.

civil action and political commentary. Today, wherever we are working in applied theatre – predominantly with cultural democratic ambitions – our joint frustration is that there are fewer funding support initiatives for arts activities, resulting in far more artists than funding structures, within and beyond the arts industry. Nevertheless, applied theatre studies acknowledge the significant presence of aesthetic modalities in our societies and their applications to healing, education, individual and social development – perhaps more explicitly so and more culturally integrated in South Africa than in Norway, in spite of a frequent lack of economic structures in South Africa.

When we approach our students – all post-graduate – as citizens and community members, we introduce a notion of qualitative research which is closely linked to building democracy. We understand theatre art as research and as cultural production through its inquiring into individual and social conditions and concerns. At both centres of applied drama and theatre, we are united in a strong interest in arts-based research methodologies. We trace this interest in the arts as social-aesthetic cultural production and qualitative research, both from indigenous cultures as well as from western arts history – that is, historical practices and thinking that lead to reforms both in art (political avant-garde art) and in research (action research) (Argyris & Schön, 1989; Lewin, 1946; Rasmussen & Kristoffersen, 2011; Reason, 1988).

At the beginning of the last century, among European modernistic experiments, art was conceived as a platform for the individual to relate intentionally to society. Art was renewed as a social communication platform for investigation and problem solving on urgent life matters, not least on behalf of minority groups (Shahar, 2004). In this light, theatre research not only reaches beyond the art discipline, it also becomes an integrated cultural practice and a platform to generate social knowledge as well as improve life practices in which all participants are simultaneously related as researchers and the researched. Hence, through theatre agency, we seek transferable knowledge as well as skills about, and through, the making and communication of theatre as a complex multi-modal medium. In this edition, all the chapters will, to a greater or lesser degree, present research questions and designs that endeavour to embrace

the double ambition of researching theatre as well as theatre acting as methodology for inquiring into social issues through aesthetic means.

A radical notion in both theatre and qualitative research generally, this way of working highlights multimodal ways of knowing evidenced at the research level and thus replaces objects of measurement, objectivity and generalization with other validity criteria such as self-reflexivity, context awareness and arts methodology skills – revealing and processing intentions (see above) at play in human communication. Through this perspective, all theatre and performance artists become cultural agents in their struggle to develop aesthetic forms of inquiry and in their journey as creative problem-solvers. Our research training therefore provides knowledge that enables students to recognize their theatre making as arts-based qualitative research.

Furthermore, our current base for inquiring how theatre may build democracy is already suggested by theses from cultural studies (Williams, 1981), stating that symbolic media offer the (perhaps only) way of linking sensuous knowing/felt experience to propositional, system knowledge. Concurrently, we teach theatre work and theatre research from a specific epistemological point of view: art and symbolic media as a way to bridge and heal a split between sensuous experience and knowledge that seems to characterize modern existence (Reason, 1994), an existence sometimes leading to passivity, apathy, frustration and even violence for some of our students, actors and audience.

In other words, we stand on the shoulders of a longstanding tradition of theatre art as healing, problem-solving and relational knowing that implies a distinct engagement with current democratic conditions. This is why we have framed our collaboration and edition around political theories on “post-democracy”. Applied theatre research and politically framed theatre theory have recently pointed at the “post-democracy” and the associated “neo-liberalism” as critical frames for cultural practice and research (Davis, 2014; O’Connor & Anderson, 2015; Szatkowski, 2019). This is a condition of democracy that seems common to democracies that are in tandem with a global market liberalism. In this post-democracy, democratic government, neo-liberalism and market liberalism have fused, forging a democracy with distinct characteristics (Swyngedouw,

2019). Since we are particularly concerned with the human consequences of our democratic condition, and since we face theatre artists and participants whose emotions, ideas and imaginations affect and are affected by the condition, we find such characteristics important.

Following Swyngedouw, one obvious trait is **the economization of politics**, where societies nurture political decisions that are reasonable within a strict market logic and associated “new public management”. A fusion of politics and economic politics affects all citizens in our democracies. Closely connected, another characteristic is the **de-politicization of a predominant economic rationale**, where this rationality seems internalized in bodies and systems, unquestioned and beyond political dispute. Any other rationality of organizing the production and distribution of life is deemed non-sense.

Furthermore, **power is given to unauthorized political actors**, such as experts, managers, consultants, and we face a techno-managerial governance where “doing politics” is reduced to a form of institution-alized social management. This has a great impact on citizens, creating a “permanent state of emergency” (Swyngedouw, 2019) including the nurturing of fear, expectations of pending catastrophes – where the catastrophe is always reserved, not for the elite, but for the excluded and powerless. Liberalist individualism, consumer “freedom” and competition also carry with them uncertainty, accentuate social polarization and produce exclusion. A relevant example of this seems to be the polarization effect of the digital divide caused by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on work, study and social patterns and practices, with so much of it now being done online. The pandemic can be exploited for its potential to cause more fear, and can be used to substantiate the apparent threat of pending catastrophe already well nurtured in our post-democracy environment.

In addition, a distinct power strategy of consensus policy, **regarding the “People-as One”** adds to the exclusion. In fact, a system strategy of diversity tolerance adds to a form of sophisticated repression: the inclusion and subsumption of different opinions on anything imaginable as long as it does not question that of the neo-liberal, political-economic state of affairs. Many political scientists have noted the number of people

feeling increasingly frustrated and excluded in the post-democracy (for example Crouch, 2004; Mouffe, 2005; Rancière, 2006). Moreover, it is suggested that ways of repressing antagonism by seemingly allowing diversity can lead to intensified outbursts of antagonistic violence (Rasmussen, 2017; Swyngedouw, 2019).

This brings us back to one very serious backdrop for investigating the potential of theatre in democracy, namely the terror attacks we currently experience in our democracies, such as the Norwegian July 22 2011 event carried out by an ethnic born Norwegian who had the privilege of 12 years' public education. In this edition, chapter 1 specifically elaborates on the concept of post-democracy and how it can affect theatre practice. We might here also include the way in which the Covid-19 pandemic has been mismanaged by governments to provide them with an excuse to take stronger control of "the people", excusing violent and brutal police action and authoritarian restrictions to further political agendas in the guise of protecting citizens. In South Africa, in June 2020, 49 cases of police brutality had been reported since lockdown began (Mngadi, 2020). Reports of other cases across the world had been reported including in, the Philippines, Brazil, Pakistan and India (Delvac, 2021).

The reader will find the philosopher Jacques Rancière features prominently as a reference in the chapters of this edition. He makes the point of staging "dissensus", both in art and society, allowing the unheard and unseen voices of the marginalized standing outside the given consensus management in our societies to be heard – claiming not only freedom of expression but also equality (Nash, 1996). Following Rancière, acts of dissensus are the political means by which to redistribute policy-making and he suggests that certain types of artistic work provide a (peaceful) space for such acts, by blurring politics and art. His thinking can be seen as performative idealism, something which many applied drama and theatre practitioners will relate to. This is notwithstanding the fact that political scientists and art philosophers often dismiss educational, therapeutic and applied arts practices as being part of an "ethical turn" rather than seeing them as dissensual and "unethical" actions (Bishop, 2012; Rancière, 2006b). See chapters 1, 3, 10, & 12 for elaboration on this topic.

We find little correspondence between, on the one hand, the accusations of being ethical and policy supportive and, on the other, the fact that theatre and the arts are seldom acknowledged as social and political ways of knowing in current democracies. On the contrary, we experience that our societies fear the kinds of diversity, agonism and critical creativity that arise from citizens who might play unpredictable roles in unpredictable spaces. Even though applied drama and theatre may take place in regulated schools and institutions, we still think applied theatre maintains informal and unpredictable practices where art is not expected. We think attempts at belittling applied theatre as being too ethical to be recognized as autonomous art, or as being “not quite” art or performative politics, is unfortunate, and we hope this edition will throw more light on the current democratic potential of theatre and its practitioners.

To summarise the context that served to motivate our work, we cite the following from our joint project Manifesto: <https://www.democracythroughtheatre.com/>

We launch the “Building democracy through theatre” project in response to the conditions of the post-democracy that we experience in our societies. We want to understand and engage with conditions that:

1. *Enrol the citizenry as passive*, quiescent, even apathetic receptacles, responding only to what is given to them.
2. *Force alternative thinking and behaviour* to take form as either radical and *violent exclusion* and rejection or *an uncritical inclusion* of different opinions on anything imaginable as long as it does not question the neo-liberal, political-economic state of affairs.
3. *Strategically de-politicize the arts*; stimulating theatre industry as compensatory, non-binding entertainment; muting the educative and political potential of theatre, impeding the staging and negotiations of the unseen bodies and unheard voices in non-violent spaces.

The manifesto also lays down what values we are committed to in our work in opposition to these conditions:

1. A belief of the **intrinsic value** of each person in each context as an active citizen who is already contributing to their society.

2. An appreciation of the **multiplicity** of voice, body and perspective.
3. The promotion of **participant-audience centred** education and theatre making.
4. The **critical interrogation** of habitual and dominant narratives.
5. A search for the meaning and practical implementation of **deep democracy**.
6. An acknowledgement of the **systemic nature** of the human condition in all its aspects.
7. An understanding of **theatre making as political act**.

## The book structure

We conceptualised this anthology as having two distinct types of submission: traditional research articles on the one hand, and submissions of arts-based artistic/creative research in the form of a link or links to representations of arts productions, videos, photo journals or play scripts on the other. This second submission type was to be accompanied by a short framing document that should contextualise the work and link it to the methodological theoretical underpinnings that inform it and the ideas and concepts of democracy that drive it. Our edition process ended up including two contributions of this type (chapters 4 and 8). The first of these reports on student-teacher activities on our joint MA exchange project whilst the second explores the representation of gendered and raced identity in South Africa through an Applied theatre and performance research lens.

This choice of two types of submission correlates with our joint emphasis on traditional academic research and a more recent “arts-based” research focus, as well as with our inclusive, democratic ambition. The thinking was that, in a democratic context, the use of the arts is essential to reframe what can be known. This is particularly important in our context of theatre as a way of making visible those bodies and making audible those voices that might be marginalised by post-democratic politics and neo-liberalist conditions.

Another implicit structure which the reader will notice grows from a number of subtasks on the agenda when practices are reported and analyzed:



- (a) The **theatre-making task** of how to create/explore form, workshops and performances with, and for, post-democratic communities (chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13).
- (b) The **aesthetic reflection tasks** for generating multimodal aesthetic understanding in a context of democratic agency (chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 & 13).
- (c) The **societal tasks** of pro-active involvement in human and social dynamics in Norway and South Africa – involvement in building deep democracy at the level of everyday living, and in engagement with participant-driven issues (chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12 & 13).

After some discussion, we chose to sequence the chapters following the different contextual relations implied, so we start with the contexts of history, post-democracy and arts-based research, and proceed through elaborations of politically framed theatre cases to single and detailed case analyses.

In **Watch out! Theatre is Anywhere – Redistributing the Ethics of Arts Education and Applied Theatre**, Kristian Knudsen and Bjørn Rasmussen explore the conditions of the post-democratic, placing emphasis on three characteristics: consensus, fictionalization and paradoxicality. By highlighting the examples of two performative interventions, one in Germany and one in the USA, they emphasize the need for the arts to question the effects of neo-liberal conceptions of democracy. They maintain that arts education and particularly theatre education with its understanding of the performative can be harnessed to do the work of creating Rancièrian dissensus, and making visible the fictions of the post-democratic state we are in. In this way they set applied drama and theatre up as the leading field in such work.

Courtney Grile, in her chapter **Drama/theatre and Democratisation: What Two Revolutions Reveal**, sets the historical frame for ways in which theatre provides both dissensus and confirmation. She does this by offering a background for understanding the various ways in which theatre may intervene and become powerful and influential in crises of democracy. Notably, Grile reminds us that theatre history shows that theatre can contribute to both democratization as well as de-democratization.

Through her analysis of two pivotal events in the history of democracy, the French Revolution and the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia, Grile shows how theatre is instrumental in bringing about democratic change in some phases, as well as in consolidating governmental control in other phases. Moreover, she discusses not only how theatre became politicized in crises but also the performative parallel: How political and judicial practice became theatricalized in the same crises. Interestingly and perhaps controversially, she argues that the function of theatre relates to the way theatre is structured as communication. Even if dissensus and political change can be directed through a one-way flow from sender to receiver, Grile in fact finds this form of “monologic” theatre to be predominant when the state tightly controls drama/theatre, and “dialogical” theatre to be dominant when theatre is influential in the “democratization processes”. Although the field of “applied theatre” has little place in this historical retrospect, Grile does acknowledge how current interpersonal approaches of applied theatre resemble the dialogic qualities that worked effectively for democratisation in the revolutionary space.

In chapter 3, **Theatre as Inclusive Arts-based Research: A Key to Political Art in the Post-democracy?** the context of history gives way to the context of arts-based research and its democratic potential. **Petro Janse van Vuuren** and **Bjørn Rasmussen** explore the terrain of academic research within the creative arts, and write a necessarily ambiguous and thought-provoking argument on the complexities of navigating the politics of inclusion and access, quality and political relevance in creative research in Norway/Europe and South Africa. The research includes a discussion on different conceptions of artistic/arts-based research as well as the differences within the creative and applied theatre fields across the two countries. They highlight, also, the points of intersection and congruence, and the risk of exclusion in artistic research, and argue for a common inclusive approach to research in applied drama and theatre. Given the global context of the decolonization project within education – most pronounced in spaces where colonization is a historical context – the authors point to the ways in which practitioners in both countries confront contemporary politics and resist marginalization within their local creative industries. The authors examine perceptions of theatre

practice as political threat and political opportunism and ultimately present arts-based/creative research as a platform evidencing the effectiveness of praxis in both post-war and post-democracy contexts.

In chapter 4, **Performing Theatre and Democracy**, Theatre educator **Leila Henriques** looks at applied theatre, democratic issues and cultural differences in another context, the educational. She reflects on the pedagogical exchange between two universities, across two continents, and through the perils of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, and presents the creative work resulting from a self-reflexive Performance Ethnography course embarked upon by the postgraduate students participating in the exchange programme. In their creative practice projects, the students courageously and candidly engage the myriad of opportunities and problems taken on board by communities as a part of citizenship in democracy. The video installations explore struggles of self-determination in circumstances of poverty, love and intergenerational family relationships, crime and masculinity, death, violence, mental well-being and democratic citizenship. All the themes are explored in ways that portray how acutely personal the bigger political questions about human life and fulfilment in democratic spaces are, and will continue to be. As programme facilitator, Henriques provides a context for the work of each student and allows it to tell a unique story about performing theatre and democracy.

In subsequent chapters the reader will find reports and analyses from politically framed theatre work from a considerable period of time in four different countries, all set in a common context of criticizing and building democracy. **Muneeb Ur Rehman** is a theatre maker working in Karachi, Pakistan. He is currently working among the young of that city on projects to counteract violent extremism. Grounding his work on Stephani Ethridge Woodson's understanding of Community Culture development as a model for treating young people as civic assets and social actors in their own right, he asks if the democratic values of the model can be sustained in the context of a donor-funded environment where donors constantly seek tangible proof of its effectiveness in curbing violent extremism. In chapter 5, **Democratic Theatre Practice in Donor-funded Projects: Challenges and Interventions**, Rehman looks at the work done with 42 youth groups over 11 months culminating

in a social action project with the express goal of seeing if the values of democratic collaboration can carry the project into the everyday lives of the young people once the donor funds are no longer available to bolster the projects. Amongst other things, he examines the impact of issues like categorizing participants by age, the complexity of stakeholder relations, and the requirements for theatre expertise vs. superficial cultural training.

In chapter 6, **What Role can Physical Theatre Play in Reimagining Democracy in South Africa?** Kamogelo Molobye frames his creative questioning by asking how physical theatre might facilitate, in its participants and audiences, a process of rethinking democracy in South Africa. Specifically, Molobye focuses on the work of Mamela Nyamza in *19-Born-76-Rebels* (2014) and *Pest Control* (2020) in order to explore how the performed lived experiences of dance artists can serve to challenge the status quo in society and activate political thought and change so as to address what Molobye identifies as the ever present tensions between South Africa's apartheid past and post-democracy present. The author speaks frankly about the effervescence of historical pain in South Africa, expressed through issues of inequality, race and economic class. Molobye positions theatre as well able to excavate and grapple with the complexities of being an artist of colour in South Africa's creative industry, and advocates for physical theatre's role in fostering agency as a part of citizen participation in democracy.

In chapter 7, **Creating Democratic Spaces Through Theatre: The Case of *Speak Out!***, Cletus Moyo reports on a theatre project that he facilitated with young Ndebele-speaking people from the region of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. There is a strong political background to this work, since it was devised as a response to the Gukurahundi genocide as well as to the subsequent silencing of the victims. Moyo reports on a specific case of offering theatre as a democratic space for second-generation sufferers to share stories of pain and suffering when mainstream media platforms do not seem to offer the same opportunity. Moyo understands devised community-based theatre as a research methodology. Through Boal-inspired workshops and a process of performances, and by means of observations, interviews with participants and group discussions, Moyo

explores how theatre offers a space for telling inherited and personal stories and looking for new ways of dealing with the past. In particular, Moyo shows how theatre offers a safe but also direct sensuous way to “speak” and hence process past violence, terror and abuse. The chapter provides evidence of the ways in which theatre can recognize people and stories that are elsewhere being silenced and unrecognized, even in democracies.

Through the artistic work described in **Redemptive Theatre – When the Performance is in the Silence** (chapter 8), **Tshego Khutsoane, Les Nkosi** and **Petro Janse van Vuuren** wanted to work methodically to generate a dialogical and democratic theatrical design, following principles that can be applied to stories of privilege and questions of guilt and injustice in the South African context. This contribution offers another close look at the potential and the tools of theatre. Through phases of identification, script development and performance, the authors and artists argue that their work seeks routes for redemption and comes close to the realization of Jacques Rancière’s idea of an aesthetic regime and the concept of democracy as a redistribution of what can be seen, heard and experienced. The work includes voices calling for decolonization, voices for African wisdom traditions and marginalized knowledge systems, as well as the voices of the privileged race, gender and generation experiencing silencing in a vulnerable democracy.

In chapter 9, **Performing Young Adult’s Reflections on Work, Citizenship and Democracy**, **Vigdis Aune** reports on the creation of a performance in the Norwegian democratic context, where themes and questions regarding the dreams, expectations and realities of young people in relation to future work, employment and vocation are explored and performed. It highlights two phases in the process, namely theme exploration in “democratic fora” and performance development. In both the phases emphasis is placed on making the interactions as democratic as possible – in the first instance looking for ways to democratize the relationship between researcher-facilitator and researcher participants, and in the second between actor-facilitators and audience participants. For its philosophical inspiration Aune also relies on the writings of Jacques Rancière, particularly his understanding of political subjectivation,

equality and dissensus. The chapter culminates in a set of observations and insights gained from the whole process, including a reflection on power relations and a reference to the impact the 2020 Corona lockdown had on shifting the perspectives. Central to this is an analysis of the layered complexities around who gets to choose the vocation of their dreams and who must accept the burden of doing necessary but menial and boring work that no-one wants, of which jobs are deemed valuable and desirable and which are not, and of how Covid-19 in some ways challenged these categories.

Another challenge to Norwegian democracy and artistic work is treated in **The Aesthetic Model of Disability** by **Nanna K. Edvardsen** and **Rikke Gürgens Gjørsum**. They examine the political-aesthetic implications of the integration of disabled participants within the Norwegian Arctic Arts Festival's youth initiative. The authors present observations and voices from selected responsible artists who found that the participation of disabled people either caused a deterioration of artistic quality or contributed a specific expressive style that was aesthetically interesting. Calling on the scope and concepts of Rancière and his aesthetic regimes the authors argue how arts practice does distribute common policies by confirming negative conceptions of the disabled. Even when the artist tries to avoid "enfreakment" and further stigmatization, the attempt at protection actually creates or confirms the negative conception. However, the study also provides evidence of practices of artistic redistribution where the aesthetic of the disabled is approved in its own right, or, put differently, where disability appears as an aesthetic phenomenon. This leads to a proposal of an aesthetic model of disability. A reconstrued conception of disability occurs when human expressions or actions are perceived and recognized aesthetically, perceiving the aesthetic quality of the disabled as being able. The model and the study offer a cultural democratic approach and a precise insight into ways of building democracy that promote the aesthetic and political equality of minorities. This also demands a reconfiguration of what should be recognized as "proper" art and artistic quality.

In the final section we present detailed analyses of single case studies of theatre methods and works applied to various social issues,

such as environmental protection, gender-based violence, poverty and injustice.

**Heli Aaltonen** reports in chapter 11 from a particular student performance week and invites the reader to consider the work within a non-human performance research approach, as a means to achieve social justice for human beings and the environment, specifically birds. Referencing Kirkkopelto's (2017) thoughts on the capacity of human beings to transform the current trajectory of climate change, Aaltonen reflects on philosophical questions of being and knowledge, on the present ethical complexities presented by human life on the planet and on the practical implications of avian-human performance as an intervention for change. The author, who acted as both teacher and researcher, created a narrative of the process with students that involved the embodied engagement of corporeal activities in children's theatre. This was done so that the life of birds could be understood in as visceral a manner as possible. In Aaltonen's own words, "Participating in the avian-human performance practice, carries a potentiality to imagine a more equal world and voice the needs of birds" (Aaltonen, 2020, p. 14). A photographic journal compliments the author's writing and is demonstrative of the interactive engagements that form part of the work.

**Kathy Barolsky** and **Cheraé Halley**'s critical investigation in chapter 12 is a reflective journey into the power dynamics present in a playback theatre re-telling of a story of gender-based violence – **Liesel's story**. The playback conductor, Kathy, and actor, Cheraé, were tasked by the theatrical form to question the silencing and invisible-making of the stories of women who live through gender-based violence. Drawing on the work of Jacques Rancière on the political responsibility of the arts to redistribute what can be experienced by the senses, they illustrate the difficulty of meeting this requirement as artists. The weight of this responsibility and the intensity of the affective entanglements they experienced contributed to them missing the heart of Liesel's story and failing to create the dissensus that can illuminate the plight of women. They conclude with an allusion to the importance of the playback rehearsals as being the site where the artist-researchers should wrestle with their own entanglements in relation to social issues, so as to prepare them for their important political work on the playback stage.

**Ellen Foyn Bruun's chapter *The Hospital Scene: Deepening Democracy with Theatre-led Inquiry*** offers a detailed insight into how theatre as an experiential learning tool can appear as performance activism in one single ninety-minute theatre workshop, and where participants from many backgrounds and cultures unite in the sensuous processing of a shocking real-life story from one participant and witness from Uganda. The author and workshop leader Ellen Foyn Bruun argues that the workshop in the playing answered to democratic ambitions in ways of equal investigation, making explicit diverse power structures, intentions, and tacit relations. And furthermore, what comes into being in play, comes into being in life; the workshop brings together performing practices on stage and in life. She introduces to theatre the concept of "deep democracy" from psychology, and argues how theatre offers a space for increased awareness, diversity of voices, and revelation of embedded wisdom – which emerged when the fictional and factual levels of the investigation merged at one particular point. By working through several potential emotions and responses involved, and staging the story in several ways, the lens shifted from each participant's personal responses to an enhanced awareness of the context and its difficult conditions. Bruun reports on a moment of transformed, shared experience from where the work elaborates through character work, monologues and shared reflections. The chapter offers a detailed insight into how learning through theatre can operate as a way of moving the participant through stages of inquiry and reflection on both a sensuous, cognitive and perhaps political level. By addressing a story that otherwise would have remained silenced, the work also proves to be a form of performance activism.

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