

FRATZ Reflections

Theater o.N. |

Intersectional perspectives on dance for young audiences



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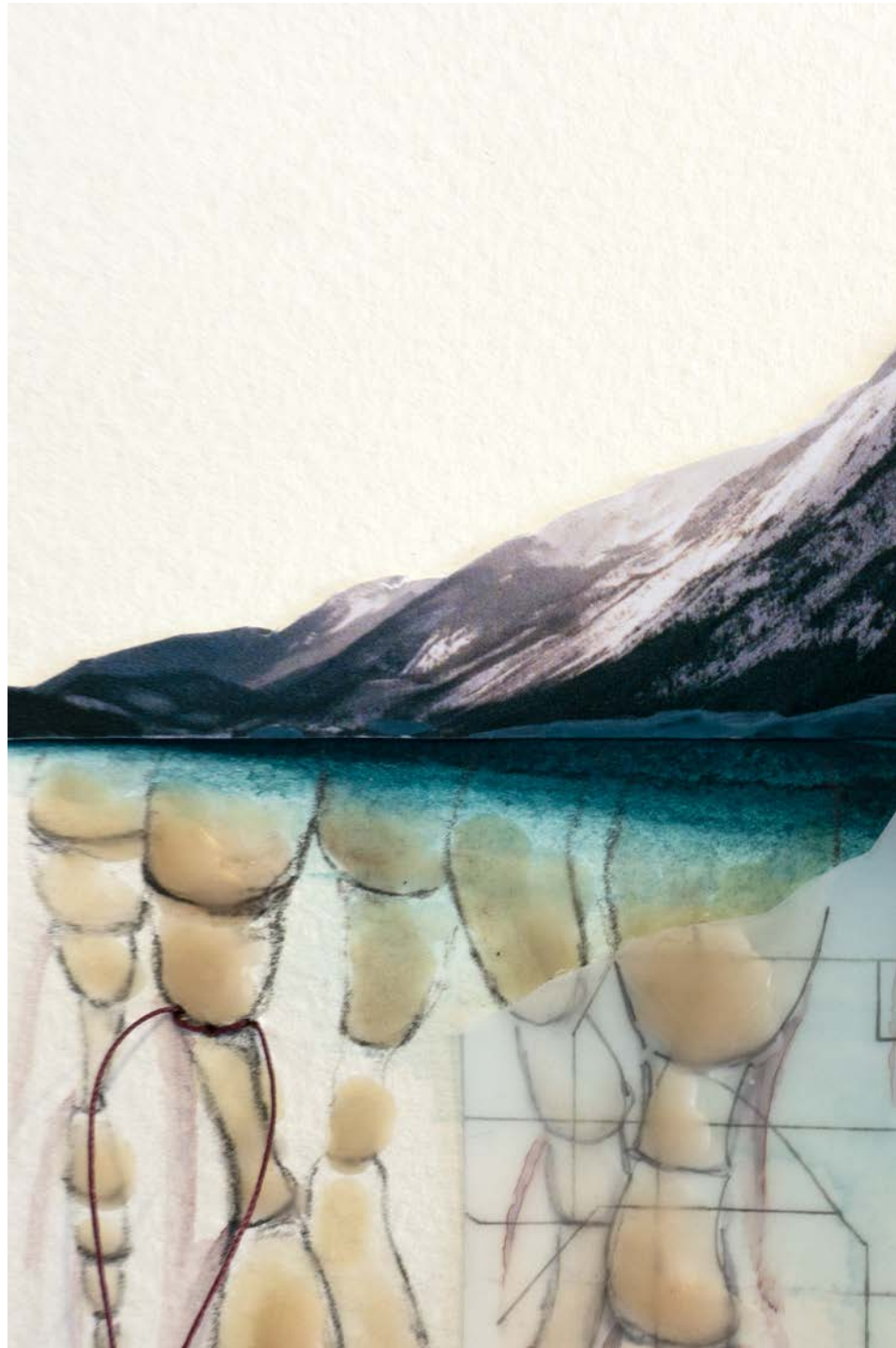
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Publications

Besides this current issue of **FRATZ Reflections. Intersectional perspectives on dance for young audiences** (2020; in German and English), other publications are also available at Theater o.N. or free to download:

- **Große Sprünge. Künstlerische Begegnungen im Theater mit den Jüngsten** (2014; in German)
- **FRATZ Reflections. The young child as counterpart** (2015; in German and English)
- **FRATZ Reflections. Music theater for the very young** (2017; in German and English)
- **FRATZ Reflections. Another World** (2019; in German and English)





Contents

Introduction	5
Dagmar Domrös Research Laboratories 2020 Race. Class. Gender: Creating access to complex topics for the very young	8
Marie Yan Queer An interview with Lury Salustiano Trojaborg	12
Christine Matschke Making contact Impressions from FRATZ International 2020	16
Inky Lee Looking for the rocky star Thoughts and poems on the complexity of the self	22
Nora Amin Playing with Authority Keynote speech	34
Documentation of the group and panel discussion following the keynote lecture “Playing with Authority”	39
Shelley Etkin Landing at the Intersections	45
Nasheeka Nedsreal Touching Utopia Theater as a space for transformation	50
Cindy Ehrlichmann Equality needs a tender heart An attempt to explore a state of being, multi-generationally and digitally	52
Authors	56



Introduction

Dagmar Domrös

Dear readers,

After each FRATZ festival and symposium, we take time to document and reflect on the art we have experienced and the debates we have held. In doing so, we want to capture new perspectives and insights and to enrich our future work as well. Interested parties and colleagues who could not participate in FRATZ International can immerse themselves in the festival through its central topics afterwards. This is the fourth issue of FRATZ Reflections, covering FRATZ International 2020.¹

Contemporary dance for babies and children

In 2020, the festival pursued a focus on contemporary dance. Most of the invited productions were dance performances and many of the participating artists were dancers and choreographers, some of whom were approaching very young audiences for the first time. We talked with Isabelle Schäd, Malgwen Gerbes, Jasmin İhraç, Milla Koistinen and Florian Bilbao about the challenges and differences in working for a very young audience, compared to their previous works for adults. How is it possible to do justice to the audience without abandoning personal artistic principles and working methods?²

2020's invited dance pieces were: "BOKS" for ages 18 months and up by Theater De Spiegel (Belgium); "DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids" for ages 3 and up by Isabelle Schäd (Germany); "DO-RE-MI-KA-DO" for ages 2 and up by de Stilte (Netherlands); "fragil" for ages 3 and up by Clébio Oliveira and Theater o.N. (Germany); "Les Sols" for ages 6 months and up by shifts – art in movement (France/Germany); "From Droplets to the Ocean" for ages 3 and up by Hiša otrok in umetnosti (Slovenia). Some of the invited guest performances could not actually take place, due to the pandemic.³

Race – Class – Gender. Intersectional perspectives in dance and theater for the very young⁴

For the first time in 2020, the symposium was held in cooperation with **Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum**.⁵ In the symposium we continued to explore topics that have occupied us for some time, especially since FRATZ 2019. During that festival, under the title "Another World," we searched for alternative designs for living

and working together, both in connection to our relationship with nature and the environment and against the backdrop of postcolonial power structures. A conversation developed among African artists Freddy Tsimba (Kinshasa), Joshua Alabi (Lagos) and Lwanda Sindaphi (Cape Town), Berlin-based curator and filmmaker Karina Griffith and European theater artists. The dialogue was about class and privilege, about white and Black bodies, about the absence of a universal childhood experience and the resulting distortions in the discourse on aesthetic and political issues in theater for children.⁶ We wanted to build on this, as we invited artists in Berlin, Lagos, and Cape Town to work on a self-selected question in the thematic context of race, class, gender, and intersectionality as part of the **Research Labs 2020**.⁷

Locally global: the laboratories

This was also the first festival in which some labs took place outside of Berlin. All the participants described the special form of international exchange that the new sites offered as very enriching.

The labs dealt with questions of how we can address life realities such as racism, colorism or gender discrimination in dance and theater for young children, and above all, how we can translate them into art. They tested collective working methods and looked for ways in which classical Western and traditional artistic approaches can create new forms together, free of hierarchy. The first article in this issue gives an insight into their processes.

Intersections

FRATZ Reflections 2020 features artists who shaped the symposium with their unique artistic and cultural-political approaches and their personal perspectives on the themes of race, class and gender. **Nora Amin's** keynote speech "Playing with Authority" is reprinted in full here. The talk posits the connections between authority and the performing arts, calling for a critical pedagogy to challenge existing hierarchies and inequalities.

Dancer, writer, and performance artist **Iury Salustiano Trojaborg**, a participant in this year's research labs, shares their⁸ thoughts on the concept of "queerness" and "class" in an interview with playwright and author **Marie Yan**.⁹

Interdisciplinary artist **Shelley Etkin** hosted landing sessions as part of FRATZ 2020, each of which exclusively takes one participant on an imaginative journey. She offers insights into her artistic practice of “landing” and explains how intersectionality describes not only relationships between people, but also between people and the land they inhabit and use.

Building on the symposium event “Touching Utopia,” dancer and choreographer **Nasheeka Nedsreal** reflects on theater as a site of decolonization, where uncomfortable realities can be voiced and the boundaries of the conceivable can be stretched.

Director and theater educator **Cindy Ehrlichmann** revisits the first attempt within the FRATZ Symposium to actively engage children in the exchange as well, and to think intergenerationally and digitally about the topic of “in:equality” in a workshop.



Doreen Markert and Canan Ere are opening FRATZ Festival and Symposium at Tanzhalle Wiesenburg

Lines of connection

In addition, we invited two authors to participate in the festival and symposium events, to search for their own personal path through the offerings and write about them from an outside perspective.

Christine Matschke uses the adaptation of “DER BAU – Gruppe/ Kids” by choreographer Isabelle Schad, the research lab “TAHDAM!” as well as the intergenerational workshop “Anarchy ≠ Chaos – In:equality” to shed light on theater people’s different attempts to get in touch with their audience, very directly during a performance and under difficult conditions during the pandemic.

Inky Lee’s contribution “Looking for the rocky star” combines a poetic inner journey through the events she attended – a “Landing Session” with Shelley Etkin, the lecture and workshop “Playing



Dagmar Domrös and Vera Strobel are welcoming the guests attending digitally

with Authority” with Nora Amin, and the research lab presentations “The superpowers of the so far not-celebrated superheroines” and “SKIN TONE,” with a critical reflection on how we, as a community of artists, can actually move from the sphere of utopia to a level of reality.

The contributions in this booklet try to reflect all the facets of the discourses we held at our FRATZ symposium, which are currently shaping the overall culture industry. There is the wounds caused by existing power structures and norms, which is recorded in human bodies. There are colonial wounds. There is the will to resist, to take action and fight. There is the constant recognition that the path to change is difficult, demanding, and painful. It will require



Introducing artists of the festival. On screen: Marie Yan, Nicola Elliot, Joshua Alabi. In the room: Iury S. Trojaborg, Dagmar Domrös

courage and a willingness to break down familiar and learned structures. Some must speak up and raise their voices, others must listen. And in the spaces in between, where discourse ends and art begins, there we find not only pain and resistance, but also the belief that another world is possible. That theater, especially theater from the very start, can shift reality a bit.



We thank all of the festival artists, speakers, authors and participants for their contributing to FRATZ 2020!

- 1 After we had first cancelled the festival, originally planned for late April 2020, due to the pandemic, we postponed it to take place in a reduced and modified form on two extended weekends in autumn. Three of the planned international guest performances could not be shown. We conducted the symposium in digital form. Performances for very young audiences, so dependent on their experience and comprehension through all the senses, are not easy to shift to a digital space. However, much that we learned during this exceptional situation for the area of theoretical discourse, we also want to keep for future symposia. For example, we would like to continue to make lectures and discussions accessible online by streaming or recording them. The audio and video archive for the 2020 Symposium can be found here:
<https://www.fratz-festival.de/en/archive/2020/recordings/>
- 2 The discussion entitled "Small, but mighty!" can be heard in our archive:
<https://www.fratz-festival.de/en/archive/2020/recordings/>
- 3 "BOKS," "DO-RE-MI-KA-DO" and "From Droplets to the Ocean" had to be cancelled. Also, the FRATZ studio "Where many birds sing" by Milla Koistinen could not be carried out as planned. In addition to the dance pieces, the festival had also invited the mobile performances "Verwandelt" ("Transformed") by GRIPS Theater and "i... livin' space" by Andreas Pichler.
- 4 Some notes on the use of language in the context of FRATZ:
"Black" is capitalised in the texts of the "Reflections" because the word was reclaimed as an identity, starting in the 1920s with author W. E. B. Du Bois demanding for the word "negro" (Spanish for "black") to be capitalised in the context of the United States. This spelling was then adopted in other languages. Capitalisation is a gesture of self-determination and self-definition that demands the respect and recognition of a diverse Black community sharing a common experience. This reappropriation of the word does not, however, contradict the fact that the category itself is a social construct that arose from a racist classification of humanity.

For further readings: Ask a Radical Copyeditor: Black with a Capital "B," Alex Kapitan, <https://radicalcopyeditor.com/2016/09/21/black-with-a-capital-b/>
See also Jamie Schearer and Hadija Haruna, Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (ISD): "Über Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland berichten" ("Reporting on Black people in Germany"),
<http://isdonline.de/uber-schwarze-menschen-in-deutschland-berichten/>

- 5 The "Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum" (Dance initiative for young audiences) is an alliance of four locally, nationally, and internationally active partners in the contemporary dance and theater scene for children and youth: PURPLE – International Dance Festival for Young Audiences, TANZKOMPLIZEN, Theater STRAHL and Theater o.N. Since January 2020, the network has been working to support dance for children from ages 0 through 18, with productions, professional conferences, workshops and cultural policy work. See also page 58.
- 6 For an account of this exchange, see Marie Yan, "Did you think of the children?" A conversation we started. Including an essay by Karina Griffith: For those children in the lonely place" in the 2019 FRATZ Reflections.
https://www.fratz-festival.de/fileadmin/DATEN/Ver%C3%B6ffentlichungen/FRATZ_Reflections_2019.pdf, page 30
- 7 We were also able to realize the labs in 2020 for the first time in cooperation with "Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum," building a thematic bridge to a working process on racism in the dance scene that had already begun. See also "The Other Body? Symposium on Dance and Racism" by Nora Amin and Tanzkomplizen in the context of Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmPQu7VjdXE>
- 8 Neither in the international nor in the German-speaking discourse on gender(neutral) designations and pronouns does a consensus exist. The editors of this booklet would like to make the genders of persons visible, if they wish. Therefore, we ask the persons involved for their preferred pronouns, both in English and in German usage. This results in divergent designations for different persons. Likewise, we try to largely avoid gender ascriptions in general language use. We try to "degender" our language.
- 9 In a progressive glossary, Marie Yan examines various terms that concern us for their background, their genesis, their meaning in the cultural and societal context of Germany and in other countries. She points out various interfaces between the terms, creating a basis for exchange. The glossary is constantly being expanded and also invites comments and additions.
<https://www.fratz-festival.de/archiv/2020/glossar/>



Everything under control: Felix Unger (Music in the Box) and Hannes Raphael

Research Laboratories 2020

Race. Class. Gender: Creating access to complex topics for the very young

Dagmar Domrös

Since 2017, Theater o.N. has regularly commissioned research by (often interdisciplinary) artist teams as part of FRATZ and “Berliner Schaufenster.” The teams research a question related to artistic work for very young audiences. Sometimes the work deals with genre-specific questions, as with the laboratories on music theater for the very young (2017) or the lab on “New Circus and Theater” (2018). Sometimes we invite artists who have not previously worked with young audiences to explore how their own artistic interests and working methods can be adapted for children. This was the case with the Garden Lab (2018) and with “Nesting” (2019).¹

In 2020, we invited three international teams to develop a research question related to the symposium’s substantive themes: Race – class – gender. Intersectional perspectives in dance and theater for the very young. One laboratory based its work in Cape Town (South Africa), one in Lagos (Nigeria), and one in Berlin (Germany). The global Corona lockdowns impacted the work processes in each country, but all three groups found ways to research and explore despite the restrictions. We kept in contact with the artists via Zoom and even discovered enjoyment in these newfound opportunities for exchange across continents.

The work in the laboratories is deliberately open-ended. The artists choose whether to use the time for research and exchange or for actual staged work. At the digital symposium in November 2020, the two African labs presented their results in the forms of filmed contributions and oral reports and answered participants’ questions about their process. The Berlin lab was able to stage a live draft presentation in October and invite participants to a discussion.

The three labs and their research questions are briefly presented below. Following each segment is a link to the recording of the full exchange during the symposium, as well as additional links for further reading.

Common to all the labs was an intense level of engagement with the self-imposed topics and the young audience members. This question hovered over all activities and research: In the arts for young children, how can we address realities of life like racism, colorism², gender discrimination or classism, without reproducing existing structures or creating them in the first place? Educational research studies have confirmed the presumption that even

preschool-aged children are not “blank slates” but have already internalized structural inequalities and social role models before they can articulate them.³

After an intensive examination of their own prejudices, personal wounds and desires as well as demographic and statistical facts, all the labs developed affirmative artistic approaches: Encourage children to find and celebrate their own identities beyond binary patterns. Encourage children to perceive their skin color as beautiful rather than internalizing a hierarchy, so early in their young lives, in which those with the lightest skin have the best chances for social advancement. Give children from socially disadvantaged milieus access to theater experiences and encourage them to trust their own impulses and perceptions while watching.

In all three discussions on the laboratories, it became clear once again how crucial it is to connect with the accompanying adults from the childrens’ environment, to embed and frame the artistic experience through consultation with educators or parents. In every case, the encounters with children in the labs, the exchanges with educators and the research confirmed the importance of considering and addressing complex issues of discrimination, along with questions of self-worth and self-determination in the social structures of even the youngest members of society.

Lab Berlin: The superpowers of the so far not-celebrated superheroines

With: Caroline Alves, Iury Salustiano Trojaborg, Mareike Jung (research, creation, performance) and Marie Yan (dramaturgical advice)

Research question: How can we develop narratives that increase empathy and understanding of each other’s differences among children aged 2 to 6 years, by presenting them non-binary models of superheroines?

This research laboratory started off with the idea to present unsung figures of our society, whose stories usually aren’t told or heard – in the form of superheroines, like a non-binary Indigenous warrior who fights for gender equality or a female cook who feeds not only the body but also the soul of discriminated minorities. Which superpowers would they have? Empathy? Understanding

of differences? Capacity to listen? How do we illustrate such superpowers?

The artists wanted to try out how they could make these powers visible onstage these powers onstage. As an opening impulse, they used the movement language of the [wo]men in back company⁴ as well as the media of performance and contemporary dance.

The first research week in February 2020 began with getting to know each other, sharing professional and personal experiences with regard to gender and comparing respective perceptions of gender and queerness in Brazil and Germany. The first practical task was to bring a costume and introduce a superhero:ine to the others. From this material, the artists developed their first scenic sketches. The goal was to create a fantastic world, to open a safe space, where non-binary superhero:ines and other characters are shown and diversity is celebrated.



After lockdown, the lab initially shifted its exchanges online engaging with various texts and studies on gender and childhood and further developing the scenic ideas. For this process, the lab created a digital journal documenting the steps of their work and the text references. It can be viewed here:

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/RHFCSHkwFnBG/>

In the summer, it became possible to resume rehearsals and continue working on the draft staging. In August, to the great joy of all those involved, a public rehearsal could be shown at our open-air venue, to a daycare group of children aged 3 to 5. A recording of this rehearsal can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOqsMoMvGc8>

The lab was presented at the FRATZ festival and symposium on October 25, 2020, in the auditorium of the GRIPS Theater at Podewil in Berlin-Mitte, where an audience of families and professionals viewed the draft production, followed by a talk with the artists about their experiences and findings. The discussion, moderated by dramaturg Marie Yan, can be heard here:

fratz-festival.de/index.php?id=356#c2070

An extensive interview with Iury Salustiano Trojaborg, conducted by Marie Yan, can be found in this brochure under the title "Queer" on pages 12 to 15.

Lab Cape Town: TAH DAM! (together at home, dance and music)

In association with MusicDance Cape Town und ASSITEJ South Africa

With: Thalia Laric, Manuela Tessi, Sumalgy Nuro (dance), Vintani Nafassi (African percussion), Coila Enderstein (piano, electronics), Grant Erasmus (Khoisan bow, wind instruments), Nicola Elliott (dramaturgy), Faye Kabali-Kagwa (research), Lindsey Appolis (video)

Project website: <https://www.tahdam.com/>

This project originally began by asking how artists can collaborate with children to compose a music and dance performance together in real time. When the Corona lockdown began and the involved artists could no longer meet, they found other ways to connect and adjusted their research design accordingly.

Research question: How can we create music and dance related activities for children and caregivers at home? How can we include these activities in a performance for children? Do these activities function as valuable "priming" of children for a more meaningful experience of live performance?

This research project looked at ways of bringing music and dance into the daily lives of young children (age 2 to 5 years). The goal was to provide parents and caregivers with activities and games to play with their children at home. The games were guided by basic principles of music and dance composition and were shared via short and easily accessible online videos. The material shared in these videos was drawn from the music and dance perfor-

mance that the artists were working on simultaneously. The group wanted to find out if these games for children to play with their family at home could provide an experience that would make a live performance event more personal and meaningful for them.

To this end, the team developed a project website on which the videos could be accessed and tracked and analyzed the number of clicks, to find out which children in what everyday contexts the project could reach. In 2020, it was not yet possible to investigate how extensively the goal of deepening childrens' aesthetic experience of live performance could be achieved through their viewing the videos before or after attending a showing. However, the project will continue its research.

At the digital FRATZ symposium on November 7, 2020, the artists presented the project together, showed video examples and described their research process. A recording of the presentation can be found here: <https://youtu.be/oQxXVtdVTYc>

In the conversation, the participants reflected on various aspects of the collaboration. The interdisciplinary group of artists from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Italy and the Netherlands came together in this constellation for the first time. Working collectively, they set out to find a unique, personal core from which to develop their composition and choreography. The musicians' collaboration offers one example of this approach. Coila Enderstein, who has a classical Western musical education, and Vintani Nafassi, who is trained in traditional African music, both describe a process of mutual rapprochement and gradually overcoming their personal insecurities. Coila, for instance, was afraid of not hitting the beat and of appearing ignorant of traditional musical forms; Vintani could not define in what musical keys he plays, since he doesn't apply that frame of reference in his music. While a piano is tuned using tools, Vintani basically tunes his instruments using simply his voice and hearing. Sensitized to the colonial legacy of centuries of hierarchization of their respec-

tive traditions, Coila and Vintani tried to find a common language in a musical dialogue. Regardless of the outcome, they both found satisfaction and hope in the journey of playing together and interweaving their respective musical backgrounds.

Christine Matschke describes aspects of the laboratory's dance and narration in detail in her article "Making contact" in this issue on pages 14–19.

"TAH DAM!" will be a guest production at the FRATZ Festival 2022 from May 13 – 19 in Berlin.

Lab Lagos: **SKIN TONE**

Joshua Alabi and KiNiNso Concepts, Lagos (Nigeria)

With: Aniefiok Inyang, Oluchi Ukachukwu, Chinenye Chukwudi, Julius Obende, Joshua Alabi

When we contacted Joshua Alabi in December 2019 and asked him if he would be interested in working with his company on a question of their choice around the themes of race, class and gender and in relation to very young audiences, he responded with immediate enthusiasm. The research question he formulated can be read as simple, or as equally complex.

Research question: Colors, can it just be beautiful?

As he and his colleagues reported at the digital lab presentation at FRATZ in November 2020, the topic sparked a long and intensive research process within the team, which the artists began by personally positioning themselves. Some said that skin color had never really been an issue for them before. Others told of experiences with discrimination, some of which they only now understood as such. The group developed a questionnaire and collected voices from interviews with colleagues and in public with adults and children.⁵ The documentary "SKIN" by Nigerian actress Beverly Naya became an important source of inspiration for the team. The movie explores contrasting perceptions of beauty through interviews and conveys how colorism shapes the face of the African entertainment industry.⁶

Through the survey material and extensive research, further aspects of inequality and equity continued to emerge, that the team continued to grapple with. For our symposium website, Joshua sent us the following text:

"Did you know? In places like Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and other parts of Africa both men and women wish to peel off their skin color or have it brightened within the blink of an eye, only if they had a chance. As a child, I remember the big aunts and uncles tried to change the color of their skin. The African society in a bid to demean this act would tag some as 'bleachers', but instead, those involved would term themselves 'toners'. Is the issue the differences of skin color or the ideologies of homogenization and hierarchisation colorism carries? When topics of color and race are depicted in theater one wonders what runs through the mind of children. Does curiosity come before amazement or the other way round? How do





the children see or react to the diversity of skin colors in the context of theater or arts and how can we celebrate it?

We intend to make the children see beyond the colors. Yes, colors are beautiful and they make the world glow and sparkling. But only eyes that see beauty can shun color bias and difference. Among children, we want to celebrate darker skin at the same time as we celebrate lighter skin. We will be working around 'SKIN TONE' this idea being birthed from our questions and thoughts about skin color, segregation, bigotry, intolerance, narrowness, separatism using our reflections around Nigeria, Africa and Europe as inspiration. Theater being the place that brings everyone together from all cultures and background, we want to share these questions and topic with the children and find ourselves escaping into secrecy, sacredness, simplicity and openness of heart."

As part of the digital lab presentation at the FRATZ Symposium on November 8, 2020, Joshua Alabi and KiNiNso Concepts showed an hour-long video documentary on their project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aFhop2icKA>

The link to the subsequent talk is here:

fratz-festival.de/index.php?id=356#c2074

KiNiNso Concepts has continued its work on the topic beyond the conclusion of FRATZ. Since then, three productions for different age groups have been created around SKIN TONE. FRATZ International 2022 will present "Kolofu" for children aged 2 and up in the festival program.

Trailer: fratz-festival.de/index.php?id=362

- 1 See also Dagmar Domrös: Research Laboratories "Music theater for the very young" in FRATZ Reflections 2017 and film documentation by Katelyn Styles on the laboratories, part of "Berlin Showcase" 2018:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qz5yZXUXSJw>
- 2 Definition of colorism: prejudice or discrimination, especially within a racial or ethnic group, that favors people with lighter skin over people with darker skin. Many credit the coining of this term to 1982 Pulitzer Prize winner Alice Walker.
- 3 Compare: E. N. Winkler: Children are not colorblind: How young children learn race. P.A.C.E.®: Practical Approaches for Continuing Education, 3 (3) 2009, page 1–8. Lawrence A. Hirschfeld: Seven Myths of Race and the Young Child. Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race 9:1, 2012. F. Farago & B. B. Swadener: Race and gender in United States early childhood settings: Researcher reflections. In: R. R. Scarlet (Ed.), The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood, 3rd edition, MultiVerse Publishing, Sydney 2016, page 333–341. Or recently: Christia Spears Brown: Unraveling Bias: How Prejudice Has Shaped Children for Generations and Why It's Time to Break the Cycle. E-book, 2021
- 4 Following the reflections shared by this laboratory, the company originally called "men in back" decided to make an intervention in its own name by adding the suffix "[wo]men in back."
- 5 Impressions of this first phase of research can be found in this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZwQx_Wofck
- 6 "SKIN" by Beverly Naya, directed by Daniel Etim Effiong (2019), nominated for the African Movie Academy Award/Best Documentation

Queer

An interview with Iury Salustiano Trojaborg Marie Yan

Iury Salustiano Trojaborg took part in this year's FRATZ labs, one called "The superpower of the so-far not-celebrated heroines," reflecting on how to present queer bodies to a very young audience. As a self-identifying queer performance artist and PhD fellow at Lund University/Malmö Theatre Academy, in a conversation recorded in the middle of the 2020 pandemic lockdown, I asked them a few questions. Hopefully some excerpts of our conversation¹ are even more informative than any long definition.



Photo: Mirjana Vrbaški

At the end I connect with some ideas that Paul B. Preciado and José Esteban Muñoz have when they say: "I'm tired of these identities. What I'm trying to do is the opposite: disidentification. I'm trying not to identify as, but to disidentify as."

All these identities are created by power in order to put you in a certain position in society, a certain category. More recently, the problem about identity for me is the question **"What does it mean to be a queer Person of Colour?"** People are getting to the point here, where you almost have to tick boxes. This constant demand, this paranoia, what they see in us as an identity.

"Frutas Afrosiásicas"² was very interesting because we had this Carmen Miranda impersonation, performing what it means to be a Latinx person in this European society: the song "South American Way" repeats, repeats and repeats and at a certain point we get tired: we say "Enough, we don't want to perform this anymore." We are also this cliché, but we are so much more than that.

I think this is exactly what we are talking about, intersections. It's so personal, also.

I always say "I'm a baby" in terms of being a Person of Colour, because the German society started positioning me as a Person of Colour 5 or 6 years ago.

It's quite often again about power.

It's a society that points at you and tells you who you are and tells, which box you belong in.

I'm trying so hard to not let the society tell me where I belong, because this is changing all the time.

I feel that I'm learning new things about parts of myself, my soul, my body... I'm learning all the time. I see myself all the time as a mess being shaped into different forms according to my own process of growth.

Iury Everything that I'll try to say to you is based on stories that happen to me all the time.

Marie How would you like to introduce yourself?

Iury I'm constantly updating my CV and last time my husband heard me say: "I'm a queer, immigrant, Artist of Colour..." – so many identities before getting to who I really was – he said "this list is getting very long now" and I laughed so hard.

Marie I was listening to the interview of a trans person in France the other day and they said that they thought of the construction of one's identity – I liked the image very much – as "a stroll through the woods."³ You just walk slowly and you enjoy the landscape and maybe you notice a pond and you notice you enjoy going to the pond... That this is how they perceived the construction of someone's identity. A very leisurely walk.

lury In these woods where my husband Ulrik and I walk every summer [in Denmark⁴], we wound up learning about the birds that live there; the construction [of gender] is similar: the more you step into a certain area the more you start to identify it.

My first German teacher, she taught me: Whenever you are down, you have to go out for a stroll.

You go out because by the time you go home, it will make you realise how grateful you have to be for your life; so I did that a lot.

Her name was Elfriede Kellner, but nobody in Brazil could pronounce Elfriede, so she created another name, Jenny. She was so queer looking, that was what was so important to me. I was 22 years old; I was definitely still struggling with being queer. She didn't have to say a word, it was the way she looked: she was 65 years old and she had this German-Austrian accent – she was a model in the sixties in Salzburg, she still dressed like a model in the Sixties. So queer, so queer. With this huge hat looking so different from anyone. She just didn't care. "Just believe in yourself." "If you want to be pretty, then go out darling, be pretty for yourself or for the world." She became one of my best friends.

Marie I think bell hooks said recently in an interview that queer meant being a bit different, but being comfortable...⁵

lury I have to pay homage to Jenny, this person who really taught me to be queer and to have self-esteem, to appreciate myself for who I am. Because she was one of the queerest persons I'd ever met in my life and that has absolutely nothing to do with sexuality; it had to do with how this woman presented herself in such a queer way in relation to the society where she lived – she had absolutely no shame, she was so self-confident.

I also remember she had such a strong German accent when she spoke Portuguese. But nevertheless she would say: "My Portuguese is perfect." She would go out to buy a Coca-Cola in the Späti and she would speak this Portuguese that was hardly intelligible, but she would speak it with such confidence that she would make people understand her, and she would come back with the Coca-Cola and that was that.

Marie When was the first time you learned about queerness? Or what would you have liked to know about it when you were younger?

lury I was a happy child, really. From a young age, I was very content and very imaginative. And what happened is this: straight people around me started realising that I was not what they expected me to be and *they* started creating problems for me. Because I was quite ok to be playing with the girls... I just wanted to be free and do whatever I wanted.

Because of the signals I started receiving from the straight adults around me, I began to believe everything about me was

wrong. Everything I liked was wrong. The colours I liked and the way I dressed was wrong. I started thinking: "What the fuck!" and then I began to feel afraid. I started silencing myself, I started creating secrets. That sensation came from the outside, it didn't come from within me. I believe that to raise a child is to look at that specific child and help her along the way. Every child is different, so I believe. My own parents had a formula within a chauvinist society under a military dictatorship and applied the formula to my brother and me, but with very different results.

Marie I'd love to hear more about how the fact of your parents growing up in a military society shaped that.

lury My family was a microcosmos of the military dictatorship that ruled society. My father is from the marine corps, both my grandfathers are from the army, I was raised in a military family. Both my parents believed very much in discipline and binary thinking: black and white, men and women, this kind of order... In a military dictatorship you don't have any freedom. There's one rule and you obey this rule and this is exactly how I was raised. My father never allowed us to question anything. He would give us a direction like: "do this" and we couldn't ask why, there was no space to question him, we had to do it. Every Sunday, I had chores. I had to clear my father's boots, I had to clean the yard, then I had to go back to him and ask him "What do I do next?" It was like living in an army general's headquarters. My education was very much, I can say, a one hundred percent representation of the military dictatorship that was happening out in society.

Marie That's so illuminating a story on the links between nationalism and gender issues. If you consider that the army (which is based on virile representations of strength) is the only thing that maintains the State and the Nation-State as a border and that you feeling queer was going against your military-like education, it makes it so shiningly clear the way that gender non-conformism disrupts the order of the Nation-State.

lury Completely.

Marie That's what I find so fascinating with stories, you always find all the structures, even in the smallest anecdotes.

lury I've been thinking a lot about the concept of autoethnography – I have just read "Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research" by Tony Addams, Stacy Holmes Jones and Carolyn Elis, three scholars from the United States – looking at knowledge that comes from a certain subjectivity; I think that's the only way. We are starting to believe in the production of knowledge through stories. I wrote a text called "The Feminine Presence." It's actually mainly about my maternal grandmother Voinha – she's

going to turn one hundred years old this year. In this text, I tried, again, to talk about the way I was raised. I'm basically describing how the categories of masculine and feminine were introduced to me: what does it mean to be feminine or masculine? My father would go out to work everyday and my mother would stay at home because my father forbade her to work. He said: "You have kids, and as a woman (my mother was studying at the time) you're not going to study anymore, you must quit your studies, you must quit your jobs and you're gonna take care of the kids." I saw this as what is a man and what is a woman: I started to believe that all men go out to work while all women stay at home and take care of the kids. This was not only my experience, but how many children grew up in the 80s in Brazil. It's not a coincidence that we have a society that kills so many transgender people nowadays. It's just a continuing consequence.

Marie I remember videos you showed me of you interviewing your grandmother, and I remember that a part of the narrative she had of herself was the work.

lury My grandmother had thirteen children, so I had thirteen aunts and uncles on my mother's side. On my father's side, I had eight aunts and uncles. And out of this huge amount of people, only my maternal grandmother was single. She was the only one who worked for herself. I started looking at my grandmother and thought "I want to be like her, I want to be her: she doesn't stay at home taking care of the kids." I realised that all women were completely controlled by men. And my grandmother, because she had no man, she didn't have anyone controlling her. "I want to be free. I don't want to be controlled by these stupid men." She was the first feminist and the first non-binary person I knew. She made me understand that the feminine and the masculine could coexist in the same body. My grandmother was feminine in the way I understood the feminine: she was tender with me, she would put me to bed and sing me lullabies, but she was also very masculine in the ways that I learned were masculine: she had a strong temperament, she was very certain and open about her opinions, she would fight against the world. I want to be this mix of feminine and masculine that she is.

Marie Telling these stories is really a way that we see how the terms we use like non-binary, gender etc. they existed for much longer as people who found their way in the world.

lury I want to kiss my grandma's hands and say thank you, thank you Voinha for showing me a way out. At some point as a teenager I thought I was really blocked. She pushed me out of those walls. I met so many wonderful women along the way... they were always there for me.

Marie I think at some point during the lab you said you couldn't talk about gender without talking about class and race, so far I don't think we've really talked about class, do you want to say something?



Photo: Michi Muchina

lury in a scene from "Frutas Afrodisíacas." Maxim Gorki Theater/ Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Berlin 2016

lury Imagine a country that is led by military people; I lived in a family completely militarised. My father wasn't wealthy at all, we started out from being really poor, but because of his military position – he was rising very quickly in the ranks – we achieved a higher level in Brazilian society – upper middle class. We had privileges because of that. Now to connect class and race: everyone in my family – my brother, my father – they are all darker-skinned than me. My father is really dark, he really looks like a Black person, but because of class and position, my family in Brazil never identified as Black or People of Colour. Then I came to Europe and made all these discoveries, I started identifying as a Person of Colour: my family still don't understand that at all, they think I'm completely crazy. When I say "I've understood this thing about race..." they don't understand. They see themselves as white people, because of their class, because of the position they occupy in society. For example, my father, although much darker than me, would never experience the sensation of being stared at by white people the way I am stared at here in Berlin. Why? Because he always enters a restaurant through the VIP entrance.

Marie That stresses so much the construction of these very categories, it is really a matter of the context within which you experience them.

lury It feels very confusing to me to travel from Berlin to Rio de Janeiro; I enter the aircraft one person and when I disembark, I am another person. I have to reset all these intersections in a completely different way.

Marie Would you like to ask me anything? Would you like to ask the people reading this interview anything?

lury I don't want to ask you anything, but I do have a request. I've been thinking about this a lot: identity, queerness and race: I've been realising that the racial problem is not with BPoC, it is with white people. The gender issue, the queerness: the problem is with straight people. My request is: Why don't *they* deal with *their* problems of gender, of queerness, of race? I have been dealing with these issues all my life. The problem of queerness is that most straight people don't accept us; the problem of racism is that most white people don't accept People of Colour. So my request is that straight white people confront and deal with the problems solely created by them, not by us.

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- 1 A note on methodology: The excerpts I present here are mashups of different moments of our conversation and have been read, amended when needed and approved by lury.
 - 2 Salustiano Trojaborg, lury; Jaikiriuma Paetau, Simon(è); Luna, Jair. Frutas Afrodisíacas. Berlin: Maxim Gorki Theater, Ballhaus Naunynstraße 2016. <https://www.gorki.de/index.php/de/frutas-afrodisiacas>; http://ballhausnaunynstrasse.de/stueck/frutas_afrodisiacas
 - 3 Héloïse's testimony, a trans womxn living in Liège, Belgium, talking to Charlotte Bienaimé in the Arte Radio podcast "Les mauvais genres: trans et féministes (25)," https://www.arteradio.com/son/61663807/les_mauvais_genres_trans_et_feministes_25
 - 4 Where lury's husband comes from and where they go on holiday.
 - 5 "all of our lives we've experienced ourselves as queer as not belonging, as the essence of queer. I think of Tim Dean's work on being queer, queer as not being about who you're having sex with, that can be a dimension of it, but queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live." bell hooks in "Are You Still a Slave? Liberating the Black Female Body," bell hooks' residency at the New School, Eugene Lang College, 6 May 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rJkohNROvzs

Marie Yan is a dramaturge and author with a focus on queerfeminist and postcolonial perspectives who has been working with Theater o.N. in the context of FRATZ International and "Berliner Schaufenster" since 2017. For FRATZ 2020 she created a progressive glossary of terms circling around race, class, gender and intersectionality:
<https://www.fratz-festival.de/symposium-fratz-festival/glossar/>

Making contact

Impressions from FRATZ International 2020

Christine Matschke

Introduction

What are the needs and interests of children aged three to six when they attend theater and dance performances?

What can spark contact and dialogue between people of different generations with varying backgrounds and diverse lifestyles, or even simply within a family, between parents and children? How can living together in community work on a small scale with a view to the bigger picture? What inspirations does dance offer to (very) young audiences?

All of these questions form a connecting thread for me through the FRATZ Festival 2020, and they become even more important in the current situation. Surely these times of social distancing, especially as experienced by many children and young people during lockdowns, sound a clarion call for theater as a space to explore shared values, free of requirements and constraints.

Young audiences still have the ability to “say what they think, not what they think they should think.”¹ This is invaluable in times of escalating tensions – social injustice, populism, and political pressure from the far right are intensifying during the pandemic. Especially now, theaters should serve as vibrant places where thoughts are voiced and opinions are allowed to develop.

The events that I describe below illustrate in special ways how artistic approaches can connect people with each other. In October 2020, I was still able to experience a live performance of Isabelle Schad’s dance piece “DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids (3+),” with a limited audience and adapted to then-current hygiene regulations. Part of Schad’s choreographic concept is creating open images to elude fixed categorizations.

The original intent of the laboratory presentation of “TAH DAM! (together at home, dance and music),” a project developed in cooperation with MusicDance Cape Town and ASSITEJ South Africa, was to compose a music-and-dance performance in real time together with children aged two to six. Instead, it became a research project with Internet participation. The children attend online, accompanied by adults, as a preparation for attending live performance. Without an overload of input, the piece gently introduces them not only to an interplay of dance and music created for the stage, but also to essential aspects of attentive interpersonal interaction.

The creative workshop “Anarchy ≠ Chaos – In:equality,” in which participants of different generations playfully exchanged and reflected upon experiences of equality and inequality, also had to be re-organized online at short notice. The event illustrated with amazing clarity how, with a bit of skill in theater pedagogy, a sense of connectedness can emerge even within a temporary online community.

Keeping an open perspective. Or: Of giant turtles that were really beanbags

Isabelle Schad – DER BAU Gruppe/Kids 3+

At first they look like “hippos.” Then the black beanbag pillows lying scattered across the floor push themselves apart leisurely, “like big turtles.” Moments later, they pile themselves into to a “big hill with many heads.”²

“DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids” by Berlin-based choreographer Isabelle Schad is living proof that nothing concrete is needed onstage to ignite the imagination of small audience members. Since its premiere in 2014, the piece, originally titled “DER BAU – Gruppe” and inspired by Franz Kafka’s eponymous story, has gone through two metamorphoses: in 2019, Isabelle Schad redirected the original, somewhat sinister version towards young audiences for the first time, using just a few adjustments along with subtle humor. An adaptation for children ages six and up was shown at the Purple Festival. Last year, Schad tried out a version of the shape-



shifting play conceived for ages three and up, firing the imagination of a (very) young audience at the FRATZ Festival.



Creating trust

In order not to unnerve the young spectators, the performers stand onstage at the opening of the piece.³ Only once all the children are seated do they disappear beneath the huge pillows: “It was important for us to create a welcoming situation and only then to hide,” says Isabelle Schäd in conversation with Dagmar Domrös at the FRATZ event “Klein, aber oho! Choreograf:innen über die Arbeit für ein (sehr) junges Publikum” (Small but oho! Choreographers on works for (very) young audiences). For this reason, she also worked with fewer performers.

The latest adaptation of “DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids” actually does feel more intimate than its predecessors shown in the former public transit garages of Berlin’s Uferstudios.

This version was performed in Isabelle Schäd’s studio, which lies hidden as if enchanted between wildly overgrown walls in a ruined section of the artists’ residence Wiesenburg, in Berlin’s Wedding district.

The sheltered setting also made it a good context for first-time-ever experiences within the audience: “For the youngest of the 8 girls and 4 boys, it was their first visit to a dance piece for children. For some it was even their first time at a cultural institution,” relates Benjamin Olzem, an educator with a background in movement, who came to the performance in Wiesenburg with three colleagues and an inclusive and international group of twelve children.

“Escaping” categories

As in many of her pieces, Isabelle Schäd worked with open images in “DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids.” Becoming form, but not complet-

ing it, working with repetition and variation, is significant in her artistic approach. It is also a subtle form of resistance against one-sided and entrenched views of the world.

The diverse kindergarten group from the Kreuzberg district is able to deal very well with this semantic openness, the “it is what it is” and “but wait, there’s more” nature of Schäd’s piece, even during the performance. It makes them curious and inventive and encourages them to talk about it: “What are they doing there?” – “You can see that, they’re hiding.” And, “Is that a monster?” – “No a turtle.” Four months later, they still fondly recall their performance visit. No doubt they can also remember the central themes in Isabelle Schäd’s piece so well because “transforming,” “hiding,” and “building” hold so much of their own familiar joy in experimentation. One particular scene, in which the performers pile up beanbags to form a meter-high mountain, has stayed in their memories. For example, five-year-old Felix reports: “The theater with the sacks was really good. They made a huge tower out of sacks,” and four-year-old Elja adds, laughing, “but they kept falling down.”

The experience lives on

“Imitating what they have experienced and developing it creatively in play is especially important for preschool children,” Olzem explains. The opportunity to try out the beanbag pillows after each performance of “DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids” fulfills the children’s special need and, with their teachers’ support, continues to show effects over a longer period: “After our visit to the FRATZ Festival, they eagerly and creatively built things with cardboard boxes, cushions and blankets, erected and collapsed towers of foam building blocks, and crawled under big, round supplies tubs to get an impression of what it’s like to be a turtle carrying your own house, your own cave around.”



Sharpening all the senses. Or: Listening to togetherness
The online project “TAH DAM! (together at home, dance and music)” for children from 2 to 6 years, developed in cooperation with MusicDance Cape Town and ASSITEJ South Africa

“Do you hear that?” So begins each of the five six- to seven-minute videos at www.tahdam.com, in which Thalia Laric, Manuela Tessi, Sumalgy Nuro (dance), Vintani Nafassi, Coila Enderstein (music) and Nicola Elliot (dramaturgy and voice-over) gently introduce young viewers to the basics of musical and dance composition.



Open exchange

The first three videos of five in total, the “songs” are inspired by the elements water, earth and air. Two others, titled “Body-Song” and “Song-Song,” playfully explore the instruments of the respective art forms: the dancers’ bodies and the musicians’ instruments. The focus is less on emphasizing on the particularities of each art form, than on creating a dialogue between them as equals.

“No element of the performance is so fixed that you couldn’t change it, for example, in the relationship between the musicians or dancers, or also in the relationship with the audience,” reports dancer Manuela Tessi during the online lab presentation at the FRATZ Festival in November 2020.

The five-part piece was originally planned as a live performance with an open character that grants the artists improvisational freedom and personal expression within a fixed structure. The filmic presentation also conveys this openness well. Its essence is expressed in the dancers’ and musicians’ attitudes towards each other. They cultivate an alert, mutually attuned togetherness, both as attentive observers, curiously watching their counterparts, and also in their own actions and the musical and/or danc-

ing communication. In order to interact intuitively and spontaneously, they are in constant contact.

Developing dialogues

In all five “songs,” acoustic, dance, and narrative elements interweave to create sensory journeys of discovery, each one based on a simple dramaturgical arc of rising and falling dynamics.

In the first piece, the **“Water Song,”** the sensual journey of discovery is linked to a narrative. The children watching are slowly transported into an imaginary seascape via watery associations: A splashing, like rain. A rocking boat.⁴ Out on the ocean, a raging storm. Then figures enter: two graceful mermaids gradually appear in the eye of the storm – the dancers’ movements suggest them with increasing clarity – swim to the beach and turn into crabs. At the end, as at the start of the sequence, there is only one dancer left on stage.⁵ Acoustically, the “Water Song” is framed by the sounds of two rainmakers.

The **“Wind Song”** displays a choreographic pattern of duo-group-duo. First, Thalia Laric and Manuela Tessi demonstrate through an improvisation exercise how to set yourself in motion by exhaling. Then Sumalgy Nuro (dance) with a sound hose and Vintani Nafassi (music) with an umtshingo (a kind of flute) also join in the dance. In a circle, as each performer turns on their own axis, the four of them revolve across the stage, moving alternately into the foreground of the picture. The voice of the unseen narrator calls action words, which can relate to the theme of wind and, at the same time, sound like a description or instruction for movement.⁶ The narrator’s use of first-person and we-perspectives establishes closeness with the audience. Intimacy is also conveyed by the camerawork on this song, which tries to involve the audience in the action via the cinematic “long shot” device, among other tactics.⁷ This song is visually and acoustically framed by the theme of “breathing in and out.”



In the **“Earth Song,”** Sumalgy Nuro moves across the stage with large steps, trying out rhythm and beat. On beat 1, he takes big sideways jumps to the right or left. On beats 2 and 3, he dips his knees. Piano and drum accompany the emerging dance solo. The narrator’s voice conveys enthusiasm and tells in first-person perspective how rhythm and the resulting vibrations affect the body: “I feel the rhythm in my body, and even in my toes. Ohh. I feel it in my spine. Even in my nose.” At the end of the sequence, pianist Coila Enderstein reworks a simple cardboard box into a drum and plays back the rhythm that Vintani Nafassi plays to her on his drum. The theme of “rhythm,” an essential commonality between dance and music, frames this song.



Listening for tactile sounds is the focus of **“Body Song.”** This carries over from the previous song, which already showed that the body can also be an instrument. Thalia Laric, Manuela Tessi and Sumalgy Nuro create sounds through movements, first with the hands, then with the whole body. In a synchronized, choreographic sequence of motions they generate “rubbing,” “tickling,” and “sliding” sounds. Later, the narrator repeats these and other terms to underscore an increasingly free dance by the trio; a movement’s description becomes a movement task, as in the prompts often used for dance improvisations. Finally, the song emphasizes the essence of the whole work once more: discovering and doing together, finding a common level. While the dancers freely improvise to the spoken terms, they seek mutual eye contact and jump up together on “Tah” to land in unison again on “dam.” This instance clearly shows how synchronous movement in a group requires a body that listens with all its senses.

“Song Song,” the last song of the piece, brings to the focus back to learning from and imitating each other. Using an “echo” principle, it builds on the foundation created by the “Body Song”:

When you find a common level with each other, a common song, a dialogue emerges. Musicians and dancers mirror each others’ musical and dance movement patterns in this song. “We invent the dance while we dance, my friend and I,” the text here states, closely reflecting children’s everyday experiences in play, in being and in becoming.

Sensitizing social beings

Online arts formats like “TAH DAM! (together at home, dance and music),” that adapt for age-appropriate attention spans and make dance and theater accessible to the very young, offer a good possibility in pandemic times to not completely lose all forms of cultural and social participation.

This project also illustrates that artistic interaction on film, working in a fixed setting with flexible, improvisational structures, – i.e., focusing on presence as well as spontaneous and intuitive exchanges – can support the development of social and emotional skills. The individual videos can sensitize young viewers in a very lively way to their own (physical) perceptions and prepare them for real playful and sensual group presence, with all its nuances in mutual perceptions of body language, mood and atmosphere. This togetherness, so indispensable for artistic improvisation, also encourages everyday appreciation and constructive interaction with each other.

Creating connectedness. Or: A playful philosophical approach to “equality” and “equal rights”

Workshop “Anarchy ≠ Chaos – In:equality” with Cindy Ehrlichmann and Marie Yan

In November 2020, 10 children and young people and 13 adults, some from the same families, embarked on an unusual journey



at the FRATZ Festival. In a workshop titled “Anarchy # Chaos – In:equality”⁸ they entered into a digital community space for two hours, seeking answers to these two questions: When do you have a feeling of equality, or of having equal rights? And what conditions does this feeling require?⁹

Sitting around the digital campfire

The introductory welcome already diverged widely from conventional online meetings: Each person was asked to place their hands above and below their own image and at the edge of their own screen, creating a first contact with the other participants in the gallery view – not real physical touch, but contact involving their own bodies, in any case. The workshop called upon this willingness to engage with one’s self and with others throughout. Inspired by autobiographical storytelling methods, this was an experiment – entirely within the tradition of Theater o.N. – in solidifying a universal meaning of “equality” and “equal rights” using cross-generational storytelling, and in relating these terms to specific feelings.



In three digital breakout rooms, theater educator Cindy Ehrlichmann, author-playwright and dramaturg Marie Yan, and playwright and live illustrator Nora Haakh each led a portion of the group through the afternoon with various games and digital tools. In closing, the groups reconvened to share their experiences with each other.

Crashing airplanes, splitting apples and opening spaces

“I was traveling on an airplane. It was a very big plane for a long-distance flight. Everyone got settled in and made themselves comfortable,” one participant begins his story on the theme of “equality” and “equity,” to which he sketched an upside-down Boeing on the digital sketchboard. “And suddenly the plane

started shaking. There was turbulence and I got scared and so did the others around me and then all at once, we were a community sharing the same fate. Everyone thought the plane was about to crash. All of a sudden, we saw each other as maybe the last people we would ever see. And then the plane flew on again smoothly and we all got off together, so happy and at the same time still shaking all over our bodies.” In this story of an exceptional situation, one participant sees a parallel to the start of the pandemic, in how it seemed to affect everyone equally at first.¹⁰ In the groups’ joint review, this story stood out because, in contrast to all the other examples of establishing a feeling of equality or equity, it was connected to a negative experience.



At the same time, many examples of equality and equity also turned up in topics related to ordinary life, especially in those around school and family. For example, one participant spoke about her mother, who always bought two of everything so that she and her sister would feel treated equally. Another participant also recounted a childhood experience, a ritual in which her father always sliced an apple evenly, so that each family member would get a piece.

Feeling treated equally also played a role in the school context. Here, actively striving for equality proved to be a way out of feeling alone and excluded. For example, if someone felt unfairly treated by a teacher, it made sense to approach them in community. “To go to the teacher together first requires that someone speaks out about the problem, and it also means that someone makes themselves vulnerable about it, and that takes a lot of courage,” added one participant. It seemed important to understand how free and equal spaces can be created. The person who opens the space could also have manipulative motives. Still, the group was concerned with finding out how to create positive spaces. The stories told by the participants evoked these feelings:

“love,” “happiness,” “belonging,” “trust,” “security,” “liveliness,” “affirmation,” “justice,” “freedom,” and “solidarity.”

Impetus for a more equal world

The workshop concluded with a ritual among all participants. This time, instead of talking or drawing, it took the form of writing in the digital chat. The final question: What do we need from the world, or from a person, to feel this sense of equality more often? Or: What do other people who cannot sense these feelings need from us, or from the world, in order to be able to do so? The answers could be expressed as a wish or a promise: “Listening,” “trust,” “openness,” “communication,” “curiosity,” “relaxation,” “a tender heart,” “time,” and “calm for togetherness, shared experiences,” “mindfulness towards others,” “just being, without a role,” “expressing needs,” and “addressing problems,” “showing yourself,” “making yourself vulnerable,” “trusting your own pace,” “accepting the feelings of others,” “making music, dancing, being creative.”

“Equality,” as the close of the workshop confirmed Marie Yan’s premise, is an ideal to be pursued. And “equality” is also real action in the world to bring this ideal into being.

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- 1 So said author Maurice Sendak, creator of the classic picture book “Where The Wild Things Are” to the AP news agency in 2003, calling children better audiences and better critics (Source: welt.de).
 - 2 The quotations come from my 4-year-old son, who attended a performance of Isabelle Schäd’s “DER BAU – Gruppe/Kids” with me in October 2020.
 - 3 This was not the case in the first version of “Der BAU – Gruppe” for children, nor in the original version.
 - 4 Manuela Tessi, solo, sitting cross-legged.
 - 5 The structure of this song is solo-duo-solo.
 - 6 “We spin and twirl, we climb and soar, we flit and float, drift and sweep, swirl and twirl, we float, sink and settle.”
 - 7 The top of the sequence shows a close-up of Manuela Tessi’s face. With a friendly smile, she takes a breath and, exhaling, symbolically blows air at the viewer. Standing in the background, Thalia Laric watches her curiously.
 - 8 Anarchy ≠ Chaos is a series of events by Marie Yan and Johanna Hawighorst, which took place on four evenings in 2018/2019 at Theater o.N. Together with the participants, the artists explored concepts and ideas of anarchy and anarchism in different formats. Un:gleichheit continues this series: Anarchy ≠ Chaos #5.
 - 9 Starting with the concept of anarchy, it was also about finding out how to live without hierarchy and as freely as possible within a community.
 - 10 We now know that this is a fallacy. For example, peoples’ social status and their related housing situations can facilitate or impede the spread of COVID.

Looking for the rocky star

Thoughts and poems on the complexity of the self

Inky Lee



she looks at her skin
she touches her skin
she licks her skin
she bites her skin
gently
then
harder

it hurts
to soak back into
the physical memories
of
race
gender
class

(as a child
her naiveté
used to
disgust her)

feelings
not
thoughts

blood
not
brain

like secret marks on
intimate parts of her body

she bites her lips
runs her fingers over her lower lip
closes her eyes
chews on her fingertips
and
thinks about rocks

because she finds rocks comforting and grand in their quiet everywhere-ness and whatever-ness. Rocks not only record time and stories, but also exist in such diverse shapes, sizes, layers, and colours. She remembers back to when she placed her hands on a 1650 million-year-old rock, and decides to use the pronoun 'it' to address herself throughout this text. The distance this pronoun creates between the self and the expectation of the self from the outside world helps her to feel more at ease. From now on, she will be addressed as 'it'.

***What are our taboos in the field of public expression?
Being too emotional and dramatic, hysterical***

It is speaking with Shelley Etkin, one-on-one, in a spacious room. The windows are open. From the outside, it sees the elegant autumn leaves swaying on a voluptuous tree, hears the birds and the breeze, and feels the warmth of the sun. It is participating in "Landing Sessions," created and facilitated by Shelley. In the opening ceremony of the festival, Shelley spoke about porousness of children as intelligence, a place of learning. Since children have fluid boundaries between themselves and the outside world, they have the ability to more easily and fully connect with all the life (earth, flowers, insects, animals...) around them. Shelley shared that the workshop examines the ways to create a mutually livable world for all living beings on land.

As it listened to Shelley speak, it thought about porousness and skin. Porousness is the natural and healthy state of the skin, before it thickens as a coping mechanism to survive in the world. The thickened skin is more prone to blockages, irritation, and isolation. The porous skin is vulnerable, yet sympathetic and compassionate, because it retains the ability to perceive the sensations and nutrition of its surroundings as its own.

***We live in a diverse city. Does that diversity
translate into equality?
No***

It recalled the look of repulsion on a white grandmother's face when it visited a home of its white friend as a child. It was walking out of the bathroom, and when it saw the look on the grandmother's face, it got confused. 'Maybe she doesn't know I am her grandchild's friend. She may think that I am a stranger walking in from the street just to use her bathroom?' it thought. Later, it sensed that the grandmother's feelings had transferred in through its skin, into its body, and became its own. These incidents of unconsciously absorbing the unhealthy influences from the outside had slowly blocked parts of its skin from the inside. It exhaled, remembering to breathe, breathe, breathe deeply and to allow its pores to open up so that they could let out the sediments of lies.

***What do I recognise and validate?
Generosity, openness, strength, care***

After talking with Shelley in "Landing Sessions," it decides to ask nature about grace and groundedness. It lies on the floor as Shelley guides it through a meditation. Its body sinks under the surfaces of the building and down into the earth and lands on top of a big rock, covered with sharp pieces of seashells that cut its skin open if it's not very careful. The rock stands in the middle of a wild ocean. There is no one around. The sun is warm. No sound of seagulls, only the sound of rushing waves.

"What do you feel at that place?" asks Shelley.

"I feel relieved to be away and alone, but also afraid because of the water all around me," it answers.

"What do you want at that place?" asks Shelley.

"Freedom," it answers.

"When you think of grace, what do you see?" asks Shelley.

"The sky and the water," it answers.

"When you think of groundedness, what comes to you?" asks Shelley.

"Knowing the depth of the ocean. And knowing that the huge rock I am lying on stands somewhere deep underneath the sea as the water comes in and out, and as the scenery around it changes," it answers.

"When you touch the top of the rock where you are lying on and the bottom where it stands, what is a sensation that arise in you?" asks Shelley.

"Sadness," it answers.

"What does that sadness ask of you?" asks Shelley.

"Just this. To be seen," it answers.

Startled by the transparency and vulnerability that surfaced so naturally, it hastily gets up and leaves the room. But was the sadness coming from it or from the rock? From this moment on, it decides to give itself a name, 'Rock', so that the rock can speak, be heard, and be seen.

***What does authorisation mean in your personal life?
Giving myself permission***

Rock walks into the theatre and meets three non-binary super-heroines onstage, who chant, “Werde was immer du willst! (Be whatever you want!).” Throughout the performance, “The Superpowers of the so far not-celebrated Super-heroines,” by Caroline Alves, lury Salustiano Trojaborg, and Mareike Jung, Rock laughs and feels joy. Made for young audiences aged between two and six years old, the performance incorporates fun magic spells to conjure up abundant colours out of dull gradients of gray. The performers, who initially are dressed in bland clothes and are therefore dissatisfied, transform into happy stars decorated with bursting colours and ornaments by the end. “Werde was immer du willst!” they shout happily.

In the following discussion, the artists say that the work focuses on embracing queerness and diversity. lury shares how the process of creating this work has been healing for them, since, having been rejected for their queerness as a child, they could now tell their child self that being queer is in fact *great*. Rock understands the feeling of its desires being called defects, and notices some old layers of its insides shifting around as it listens to lury speak. It is, in fact, an enormous privilege for children to be able to be whatever they want to be, because so many factors (financial status, social status, cultural background, education, and so on, which all intersect with race, gender, and class) determine the degree of access children have to the exploration of the self.

***Do we question the norms?
Yes***

A beautiful aspect about children, Rock thinks, is that they possess the embodied knowledge of what they want and need. They may not yet have the words to articulate, but they feel. Despite the rejection, lury felt and knew that they were different, queer. It thinks of a story of its friend who is non-binary. As a child, the friend got punished at school for tacking inside of their locker a photo of a female pop star taking a shower. Not only their desire was condemned, but also their sexual orientation. “I didn’t understand *why* I was being punished! I just put the photo there because I *needed* it!” they exclaimed. Though yet unaware of their sexuality at that young age, their body knew. From then on, they remembered being bullied by the boys who called them “homo.”

Perhaps the magic spells of the super-heroines aim to open up a vivacious space for children to find joy in being themselves, as well as to celebrate the uniqueness in each other, even when their individuality deviates from social norms and does not fit into clear categories. The artists express their desire to show the full extent



of joy in being their queer selves during the performance, for it is important for them to make such a space possible. 'If we give ourselves and others permission to express our true selves fully, we could all be brightly shining stars!' Rock thinks. It decides to add a star at the end of its name and becomes 'Rockstar'. It hopes that this change will allow itself to feel and express more freely, for it is often concerned with overstepping the acceptable social boundaries, and is used to holding back.

What does fragmented-self mean to you?

Having different rooms in myself – it's not negative, but is rather flexible and graceful

The interweaving of the topics of race, class, and gender can easily feel personal, therefore emotional. Rockstar perceives this bite of hurt when it watches the film, "SKIN," produced by Beverly Naya and directed by Daniel Effiong, and participates in the research lab, "SKIN-TONE" by Joshua Alabi and KiNiNso Concepts. "SKIN" is a documentary film about the rampant skin-bleaching practice that has been taking place in Nigeria, where 77 percent of women use skin-lightening products, according to the 2011 World Health Organisation report. *Women*, not men. Many societies pressure women to look a certain way to fulfil their role of being ornaments pleasant enough to be looked at. The definition of "pleasant" is often falsely and impossibly fixed, and thus suppresses the potential for diversity and individuality.

The film emphasises the beauty of Black skin and encourages the viewers to accept and love one's true colour. This freedom, however, is not just a matter of choice, but is rather related to one's class and gender. What if a woman comes from the working class and has no choice but to bleach her skin, as it is a determining factor for her income? What if the woman's appearance heavily and drastically influences her daily survival? What happens when competition for survival is so extreme that there is no option left to consider? In this case, skin-bleaching becomes a larger issue than that of low self-esteem. It is a matter that can be changed only through transformation of the media, education, and society.

all surfaces seem brutal

mirrors
TV screens
pages of magazines
words of comments
your skin
you

pressure
becomes
desire
becomes
obsession
becomes
poison
becomes
you

how can you be seen?
how can you be wanted?
how can you belong?

follow the examples
all
around
you
want
to be
beautiful?

pale skin
high nose bridge
big eyes with double eyelids
oval face shape, like an egg
long legs
thin

mirror
reflects
pain

you stand in front of it
for hours
cover your
pronounced jawline
sadly
with your two hands
imagining
how much better
life would be
if
your jaw
looked like this

you gaze over at
beautiful people
and imagine
how much easier



life would be
if
you looked
like them

you obsessively
look at
other girls' legs
under
their school uniform skirts
comparing them with
your own
muscular
ugly
legs

you desire the whitening lotion
that other girls wear at school
but
have no money to buy it
a generous friend
lets you use it
once
you feel that
you can bare
to be looked at
just a bit more

glues and stickers
on countless girls' eyelids
to make fake double eyelids
eyelids gradually deform
begging for
the knife

almost everyone around you
goes under the knife
to feel more
beautiful

your sister tells you
she wants to be anorexic
so that she can be
thin
happy
beautiful
successful

she fixes her eyes
ruins her organs

she is now
thin
jobs tell women
if two have the same skills
they would hire
the prettier
or even
just hire the pretty one
without
inspection of skills

looks
for women are
etiquette
skill
survival

your skin shrivels up
from exhaustion

you run away
looking for
life

now
you are
doubtfully
different
excellently
exotic
achingly
alone

desperate for money
you look for jobs
find
nothing
sell your soul

asian girl
nameless
asian girl
is
your name

sometimes
accidental impulses
come over you
means nothing
haha





nameless laughter
nameless scenes
nameless faces
nameless nights
nameless places
nameless bodies
nameless you

you
run away
looking for
your soul

where are you?

where are you?

where are you?

Prompted initially by the film, “SKIN-TONE” has worked under the research question, “Colours, can they just be beautiful?” The lab opens with a screening of a film that the artists, who are also from Nigeria, created. The film shows the process of the artists researching and creating a choreographic work on this topic, as well as the presentation of the performance that resulted from this journey. It underlines the importance of seeing all colours as beautiful, and therefore accepting and loving one’s own skin colour. This message sounds like a cliché, but its significance lies exactly in this point. Since many parts of the world are thoroughly infiltrated with the notion of darker skin being less worthy (an idea that is manifested daily in media, social structure, interactions, etc.), this message had to be spoken out repeatedly until it became a cliché. And still, it has to continue being reiterated because hierarchies based on skin colour spread rampantly like a sly virus. It is therefore important to reverse these atrocious lies in young children’s minds, before they even have a chance to set in. The openness and fluidity of children is a creative, powerful, and moving place of learning for people of all ages. It is where we can dream and take risks together to imagine and create a different world.

Spending the majority of its teenage years in South Korea, the country with the highest ratio of plastic surgery procedures per capita, according to a 2019 International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery statistic, Rockstar deeply understands the disabling experience of growing up under constant pressure to conform to a society’s aesthetic standard that blindly praises and imitates Caucasian features. In Nigeria, the country with the highest rate of skin-bleaching, reflecting a pattern of denouncing one’s own features in place of another’s considered to be more “superior,” the effort to converse with Nigerian children about this issue seem crucial. After the screening of the film, we have the opportunity to hear from the artists of “SKIN-TONE” about their research process.

The artists of “SKIN-TONE” share that they have learned a tremendous amount during their research. One of the male artists says that he never knew about the widespread skin-bleaching practice in Nigeria, which reveals the gender privilege that men have over women in the Nigerian society. Rockstar remembers the moment in the film where one of the female artists says that her voice cannot be heard because she is female and femme, and for that reason, she has to ask her male friends to speak for her when she wants to be heard. Another artist says that he realised how, in Nigeria, people often make jokes based on skin colour, such as “Oh, you are so Black.” “It is a common but an expensive joke,” he adds. Rockstar flashes back to the moment in “SKIN,” when a small child says that she is not “so dark,” and how she would not want to be “so Black.”

“How do we embody these findings and contemplations, and bring them onto the stage?” was the next question for the artists in their research process. One of the ways they attempted this was by showing what we all do as humans, regardless of skin colour, to highlight the fact that “the only race is human race.” One part of their performance illustrates this idea. In this scene, three performers apply cream on their bodies in a jolly manner, while giving each other playful instructions on different ways to do this. This scene depicts the act of loving and caring for one’s own skin regardless of its colour, as well as the support we can offer each other throughout. It also demonstrates how this process can be joyful and fun.

Due to the Corona regulations, it has been challenging for the artists to have a real-time exchange with children. Once, however, they could share their performance, and were surprised at how engaged the children were and how they understood everything. At the end of the discussion, the artists say that their work is just at a starting point. They express their enthusiasm to continue their research on this topic so that they might have a meaningful dialogue with children through their performance. There follows an abundant exchange of suggestions and possibilities between the artists and the research lab participants on how they can develop the work further. Sharing this moment with everyone in the virtual space, Rockstar feels a buzz of excitement.

It looks away from the computer screen, opens the window of the room, hears the gentle sound of the wind brushing the leaves on the trees outside. The serene rush of ocean waves thrums as it lies on the rock and looks up at the sky. It opens its palms, exhales, and smiles. Here I am.

***What do I dream for the future?
To not be lonely in my endeavour.***

The italicised and right-aligned questions throughout the text are some questions that Nora Amin asks the participants during her lecture in “Playing with Authority.” Nora, the creator and the moderator of this event, poses many questions, one at a time, says “think,” and pauses. The answers to the questions are my immediate responses at each moment of the pause. “Playing with Authority” investigates the notion of “authority” in the context of education and arts for youth, and discusses possibilities for facilitating alternative pedagogy that do not comply with systems of hierarchy, privilege, and other-ing. Livia Patrizi, who gives a concise speech in the beginning, says that the art and education in Germany are divided, and are not in communication with each other. The fact that many pedagogues and artists have gathered to share their visions about what the new pedagogy can look like evokes the feeling of hope. There are flowing ideas and questions.

When the question of action is addressed, however, tension snakes in. Someone shares that it frustrates them that we are talking and thinking about our plans and goals, instead of just acting now. Another person says that when they are asked to act, they feel overwhelmed, and thus need time to stop and think. Another person chimes in by saying that they feel unable to change the system at large. At the same time, they add, we can aim to change a specific structure and power system. This discussion feels delicate, like pinching the underside of one's inner thigh – it reveals each person's sensitivities, hesitations, and vulnerabilities, all of which, when we manage to weave them together in a harmonious mechanism, can construct a functional body with various strengths to work towards a kind of change.

My next question is, how do we find a way to work together amongst ourselves? Through our individual contributions during the discussion, it is clear that we are a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, perspectives, and working methods. This is a valuable resource. But what would be a structure in which we can brainstorm, work, and act together? How can we refuse to settle for just a single meeting that muses on utopia, but actually bring it into some sort of reality? How can we be independent from, or find a way to work with, the funding institutions that we often depend on? Someone comments that the funding situation in Germany separates art, culture, education, and politics into pre-defined categories. How can we change this structure? What can we do now, individually and collectively? Do we want to do it?

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수도꼭지
water faucet
people called me
when I was a child

walking
수도꼭지
here it comes

again and again
foreign places
foreign languages





tears
became
my words

faucet
turns on
water
drips

.
.
.

gushes
out

the world is a row of winters
birds shrieked
as they flew by
looking for
warmth

cold
froze
the water inside
me
into
rocks of ice

one day
summer came
I felt
the sun

slowly
the rocks
melted

that summer
I taught myself how to swim
to be *in* the water
splash
squeal
cry
like a child

autumn came
the water evaporated
up to the sky
and became
stars

clear autumn night sky
filled with
stars

I gaze up

laugh
like a child



FRATZ



Playing with Authority

Keynote speech

Nora Amin

Throughout the history of performance – theatre, music and dance – Authority has always been present, as it is usually present when dealing with any form of public expression. On one hand the public aspect of those forms of expressions make it crucial to scan and monitor what is being presented, as it would occupy a part of the visibility of communication, and would create socio-political statements, which would probably have an impact on public opinion. The authorisation of content and form has always been within the power of the state, cultural élite and the governing systems in general. According to which some states have created official departments of censorship – some of them under the ministry of culture – and some different states have opted for making the scanning and monitoring indirectly, and even confidentially. The power of the society can also be an authority, an authority to permit and to forbid. The ruling ethical system and the bourgeois conventions have made it possible to use rejection, elimination and shaming in order to exclude certain content. Anything that falls within the category of opposition to the political system or to the ruling ethical system, would probably be an excluded content. The word taboo has been always affiliated not only to certain deeds and acts, but also to expression.

What are our taboos in the field of public expression?

The word taboo is probably more affiliated to the expression of those deeds/acts than to actually committing them. Again the public expression of something can be stronger than the thing itself. The public statement and dissemination has the power of expanding, spreading and impacting. Therefore transforming expression into a political tool. Power is an ability, as a child and teenager I had the power to dance in the street of Cairo, I was full of that power, it nourished me, but could I really dance in the street? No. I did not have the authority to implement the power that I had, to put it into action, to allow it to happen. Someone else had – and still has – that authority, the authority to permit my power to be implemented, and to permit such acts in general. I could not dance or create street performances for most of my career – although it was my dream with Theatre of the Oppressed in Egypt – because there was a so called emergency law that lasted for 35 years – and until the revolution of 2011 –, and that did not authorise street performances and listed them as public political acts. No distinction between a protest or a dance act. Anybody

who had the power and the disposition to act upon something, needed an authorisation. Authority, authorised and authorisation.

What does authorisation mean in your personal life?

But who had the power to authorise? Who had the power to authorise the power? Of course it was the state, the regime, the government, the legal and judiciary systems, the religious institutions, the parents, the teachers, the spiritual leaders, the political leaders, the chief of the political party, the intendant of the theatre. Authority was a way to instrumentalise power, to filter it, to exploit it and to subjugate it. There was no power then in reality. But only authority. Does this apply to Germany? To Europe? Does it apply to democratic states? In my opinion the concept of authority applies anywhere and anytime, as it is a pre-requisite for governance. There is no governance without authority. But when democracy is claimed and retrieved, authority can perhaps be achieved with transparency and equality, transparency and equality being principles and protective measures at the same time. The legitimacy of those who hold authority, who hold the power to authorise, is made valid via elections, advocacy, public discussion, justice and transparency. Hence the legitimacy becomes itself authorised by the people. And only then, when we are in such a situation, we can question the mentality of the people and their system of thinking. Our overall systems of thinking are ruled by notions of normativity and normality. Those notions are not independent from our universal histories of oppression, discrimination and hierarchy. Those notions are not innocent. Like all the fields of ethics and morality, they are contaminated by a traumatic history of what is “normal,” what is “acceptable,” what is “in order” and what is “out of order,” what is “beautiful” and what is “ugly,” what is “superior” and what is “inferior.” This universal history would not have survived till nowadays – because it is alive until now – if it was not for pedagogy. Pedagogy is the tool to protect the norms, the ruling ethics, and the constitution of personality and identity. Pedagogy, the overall field of the transfer of knowledge, the overall learning systems, whatever shapes and informs our understanding of the world and of ourselves since we are born. This pedagogy is the safeguard of authority. It is the safeguard of the power of authorisation. Therefore knowledge, traditions and norms are transmitted from one generation to the other, and preserved via pedagogy. Yet pedagogy in itself can be anything

and everything, it can be a chaotic pedagogy, a secular pedagogy or a religious pedagogy, an oppressive pedagogy or a liberating and empowering pedagogy.



“Nora’s Doors,” dance theatre performance inspired from “A Doll’s House,” choreography and text by Nora Amin

What types of pedagogy did your society go through?

For each ideology and system of governance there is a suitable pedagogy. Nonetheless, pedagogy can also be reversed through extraordinary and long time efforts. It can be reversed from oppressive to liberating, and vice-versa. Again the authority holds the key to both directions. Paulo Freire (great thinker, educator and philosopher) and Augusto Boal (the founder of Theatre of the Oppressed methodology) worked hand in hand to transform the pedagogy of the oppressive and turn it into a pedagogy of the self-liberated. The authoritarian system in Brazil back then – in other words “the dictatorship” – had guaranteed its life via a ped-

agogy of oppression. In 1968 Paulo Freire created a foundational text of critical pedagogy, his celebrated book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” where he includes a detailed Marxist class analysis in his exploration of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. In the book, Freire calls traditional pedagogy the “banking model of education” because it treats the student as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. He argues that pedagogy should instead treat the learner as a co-creator of knowledge.

I am suggesting critical pedagogy – as part of the bigger field of critical discourse in general – to re-examine our practises and environments. For example, the oppressive pedagogies – existing in many places across the world – would instrumentalise the citizens by making them reproduce the systems of their own oppression. As I once said about Egypt, it is not enough to remove the head of the regime, we must work as citizens towards changing our own system of thinking, otherwise we risk reproducing the same oppression again and again. Therefore the long battle for change and equality is the one taking place within the field of pedagogy.

What presence do we have of critical pedagogy in our society?

If – in our society – we are still dealing with questions and issues regarding diversity, equality and justice, then we need to re-examine our pedagogy, because even if we are living in a democratic state, there is no guarantee that our pedagogy is void of illnesses. Democracy in itself is not enough if the overall thinking and convictions of the majority are not based in equality and justice. It is a long process of questioning and re-examining that brings us here today, brings us together, and brings us to the field of performance for youth or for young audiences. Because working for youth puts us directly within the domain of questioning values and normativity.

Do we question the norms?

... as well as questioning our positions within our professional work.

Do we question our professional positions?

When we are working with – and for – audiences that are in a process of growth and transformation, we know that every information, movement, dialogue and visual composition will contribute to expanding the consciousness of those young spectators, and to shaping their identities, their notion of normality and their world vision. It is a gigantic responsibility. A responsibility that does not exclude the fact that we – as adult artists, administrators and workers – are still within our own process of questioning our own identities, value systems and professional positions. I would say “our intersectional positions.” For each of us is MANY.

What are the roles that I play everyday?

The roles we play and the histories we carry, create of each of us an intersectional field of identity and self-positioning. But does this intersectionality and plurality come to play within the creation of our work? And how? Do we meet restrictions? Prejudices? Taboos? Do we frequently question the overall pedagogy within which we operate? Why do we question it? How do we question it? Do we do so because our positions – intersectional positions – drive us towards that questioning? Do we do it for political convictions? Do we do it because we have been – in our personal lives – persecuted, discriminated against, labeled, disempowered and threatened? Where is the answer? Or is the answer intersectional as well?

What are my personal struggles?

It is so surprising for me that the domains of education and the arts are so strongly distinguished one from the other. For me, such distinction is impossible to make. Insisting on it – even forcing it – can only happen out of a mentality that works through divisions, disruptions and borders. It shows a need to continuously create separate categories and to distance them from one another.

What are the categories within which I operate?

Such mentality of divisions and categorisation represents a vision of the world that cannot be holistic or intersectional.

What does “holistic” mean to you on a professional level?

It is a vision of the world that does not fit with the natural flow of how identities grow, fuse, connect interweave and intersect. A vision of the world that sees as “normal” a self that is fragmented.

What does “fragmented self” mean to you?

A teacher can be an actor too, a dancer can be a teacher, a mediator and a healer. A performance can transmit the possibility of a transformation, of a self-realisation, of an imaginary deed, of a value that goes against the social normativity. A performance that is created by and with youth is a statement of possibility.

Do I create “statements of possibility”?

It is also a statement of recognition and of validation of what is yet to become.

What do I recognise and validate?

It is a statement of acknowledging youth as providers of knowledge, as creators and co-creators of pedagogy. Within this statement there is a huge potential to shift the borders between education and the arts, and fuse the stage with pedagogy, and transform both. For we should not forget that the stage itself is not a place that is free from authority, ...

What forms of authority exist in our theatre field?

... it is not free from hierarchy...

What forms of hierarchy exist in our theatre field?

... and it is not free from oppression.

The histories of performance carry the traumatic experiences of rejection, shaming and elimination. Each society has its own wounds that are also imprinted on its stage in the form of taboos, the taboos hide and deny the wound and therefore extend and deepen it: What to show and what not to show? And if we abide by “not showing” something, it would mean that we are accomplice in hiding the truth or in being selective of which reality to present/represent? Does the pedagogical system allow us that choice to start with? Or are we conditioned by some kind of an auto-censorship where we even exclude topics and experiences without discussing them with ourselves?

The authority within the arts system also functions as a dictatorship, where some art forms are totally shamed and excluded, where there is always some pre-conceived notions of what is “acceptable art,” what is “good quality” and “excellence.” As a migrant, I have the privilege of not knowing everything, of always questioning and asking “Why.” Why is this considered a good theatre piece, and why is that form considered folklore or cultural art? Why is it impossible to present a Baladi dance performance for youth or invite them to practise Dabke? Why is the spectatorship considered as such or constructed as such? And – since every performance is constructed on a principle of “gaze” – what gaze are we dealing with here? From which perspective? Who owns the authority to decide the perspective of the gaze? Are we somehow conditioned to a certain gaze that is not really ours? And how to offer empowerment for young audiences so that they can create their own free gaze?

Each performance is based on a concept of how it should be viewed. With our youth audiences, how do we formulate the way that our performances should be viewed? According to which system of authority? Which position? And how does all this work with the social and human values of equality and solidarity? How does this work within a knowledge system based on other-ing? How do we handle the questions of identity when it comes to young audiences, knowing that we are also participating in the overall pedagogy of citizenship, of rights, and of responsibilities and freedoms? What perspective do we need to support our creative processes towards more openness, fluidity and plurality?

How much openness, fluidity and plurality do I have in my practise?

Race, gender and class. The very primary notions of categorisation, divide and other-ing. The word race should be taken out from any constitution, and definitely out of our perception of humanness.

There is one race though, it is the human race. While we are in a continuous battle with racism, we should not forget sexism and the authority of patriarchy, a universal authority that unifies the worlds of the oppressor and the oppressed by racism. And while the privileged socio-economic class always helps to escape authority by belonging to those who create the rules and laws, those who are economically deprived become social outcasts. It is all connected. Intersectionality is not a new invention that we have woken up to, it has always been there, in its negative history and its positive potentiality. To think in an intersectional way is to expand our understanding of our identities and of the world we live in, it is to re-think the principle notions of our work and life, and to re-define them as connected and interwoven. It is also to think of the intersectionality between the stage and human rights and the global growing aggression towards children that we need to address in all its complexity and sensitivity, because even children in Kitas recently appear to have been enduring traumatic experience, although in quite rare cases, but nonetheless crucial for the building of awareness towards self autonomy, protection and rights.

To think inter-sectionally is also to act inter-sectionally, and never to lose sight of our personal histories and experiences of trauma. To think inter-sectionally is to think of performance as pedagogy, of pedagogy as a performance of authority, and of our creative selves as spectators and creators at the same moment, as adults and youth at the same moment. To think inter-sectionally is to look within our identity and locate the several itineraries of the self that are all still alive and functioning and intersecting. To think about the intersections of race, gender and class, is to also think about the intersections of oppressions, the intersections of privileges, and the intersections of oppressions and privileges. To think who goes to the theatre, who sees us, who hears us, and we: who do we address? Who do we talk to? how do we envision our society, and how do we dream of the future citizenship?

What do I dream of for the future?

To think of the intersectionality of authorities is crucial. There are many authorities influencing our artistic sector, they are state authorities, economic and social authorities and politico-historical authorities: Who has the final saying? Who has the final decision? What are the criteria? What is the norm if there is one? And why do we need to have a norm in the first place?

To become an artist is an authority related fact, it is related to having access to the arts, to being admitted into that world, to being accepted by that community, and to having the possibility to study the performing arts – if it is wished – and to practise them professionally. If I am a woman of colour with an underprivileged economic situation, a big body and a slight history of disability, how much chance do I have to become a dancer? How much chance did I have as a child to watch ballet at the Stadttheater? And how much chance did I have to see on stage a dancer who

might be similar to my intersectional identity? Some situations are simply not imaginable. As long as they are non-imaginable we remain without equality and without solidarity. Because to work towards those unimaginable scenarios is also to work towards a future society where the pedagogy has been liberated from a colonial history, economic privilege and patriarchal domination. The stages of the performing arts, whether for youth or for adults, are still entirely contaminated by those histories, those intersectional histories. And perhaps moving forward would – at some point – entail giving up privilege, or a tiny part of it, but it would be quite of a gain as it can be considered as a political act that brings back the feeling of solidarity and helps to reconstitute a kind of togetherness that can implement a better future for everybody.

Now isn't all of that connected to authority? To race, gender and class? We live in a diverse society for sure, but does that diversity translate into equality?

Does that diversity translate into equality?

Does it translate into a plurality of artistic practises and of access?

Or is it a diversity that is categorised and “authorised” as a label in itself?

Is youth theatre a category that is inferior to adult theatre? Why is that? Where does that hierarchy come from if it does not come from the assumption that a child is an inferior entity compared to an adult? And thus the whole sector of youth performance? How to make from “theatre for youth” a theatre OF youth, and a pedagogical domain that is ahead of society and cultural policy, a pedagogical field of tomorrow?

How can we employ authority to de-construct authority and recreate the legitimacy of the creative self, leading to the authority of non-authority?

How can we play with authority? Can we play vis-à-vis authority? Or can we play with an attitude of authority?

Does playfulness form a potential transformative power in our field?

To discuss all those issues here today, and together, is to move forward. It is a movement where there is no separation between artistic creativity and activism, because collective actions that have a clear target and a strategy are activism. Beyond the traditional image of protests and demonstrations, we – as artists – can create our own form of activism. With only one letter distinguishing one from the other, ART and ACT, we can transform and develop our ideas, responses, proposals towards creating a plan of passing acts on, where each person/institution can expand the question/statement and extend it by a future symbolic or artistic action. Let us

aim for questioning as a foundation of any future act, and let us aim for doing more. Let us aim to play it all together. Let's play!

- 1 The concept of "othering" emerged from the context of postcolonial theory. It was mainly coined by authors such as Edward Said and Gayatri C. Spivak. Othering is a permanent act of demarcation, in which people are made into the "others" by means of stereotyping. The "others" are categorised and devalued as not belonging and deviant. The process of othering often occurs within a power differential. For further information compare:
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-othering-5084425>

Documentation of the group and panel discussion following the keynote lecture “Playing with Authority”

Critical pedagogy, social responsibility, emotionality, intersectionality, collaboration, school system, cultural education, artistic concepts, authority, autonomy, privilege, categorisation, body as knowledge, decolonisation!

These were only a few words among a big pool of ideas that were exchanged during the workshoping part of “Playing with Authority.” A three hours session designed to cover the intersectionality between education and ‘arts for youth’ from a critical discourse perspective encompassing theoretical input, workshop exchange and advocacy planning, “Playing with Authority” was conceptualised and moderated by Nora Amin as part of FRATZ Festival 2020 (in cooperation with Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum), and as a continuation to “The Other Body?,” a conference on dance and racism that was previously created by Tanzkomplizen and Nora Amin (again as part of the Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum).¹ As a model of extending the critical discourse within the field of performing arts for youth, this section of the FRATZ symposium aspired to develop the reflections that were presented during “The Other Body?” And expand the possibility of individual interactions and applications by taking the topics of authority and equality into an area where the theoretical input intersects with the various personal engagements and perspectives of the participants, with the hope of reaching the point of suggesting future actions so as to keep expanding the discourse and creating impact.

“Playing with Authority” started with an introduction by Livia Patrizi, the artistic director of Tanzkomplizen, where she focused on the necessity of examining the dynamics within the field of performing arts for youth in order to create positive change and implement equality. She also guided the participants to consider the event as a new chapter in a collective process that has already started since “The Other Body?,” and that keeps growing via all the partners of OfTa as a way of actively and positively reflecting on our artistic field. This was followed by a lecture where Nora Amin attempted to redefine “arts,” “education” and their connections from a critical perspective.

The lecture focused on the notion of “authority” and how it shapes the production and transfer of knowledge in both domains (arts and education). The lecture also directed attention to the influence of discrimination on invalidating artistic form and content, and how systematic racism creates its own notions of au-

thorisation and un-authorisation, thus shaping a specific knowledge about what art should be, and how it should be. Nora Amin continued to examine the processes of transmitting knowledge within the specific context of “arts for youth,” and analysed the strategies of hierarchy, privilege and othering (compare footnote on page 38) versus an alternative and potential sphere of equal knowledge production, plurality, and identity growth.



In her lecture, Nora already opened spaces to question the individual professional positions, the notion of normality and normativity, and how to reflect on the artistic and cultural categorisation while examining one’s own personal experiences. There was a process of engaging the participants via a special format of presentation that included 22 questions distributed within the lecture, each question was related to one critical topic to which the participants were? invited to reflect on. Each question was created in a way that addresses the personal and professional experiences of the participants, therefore bringing in their own personal side to the discussion, as well as their individual professional positions.

Self-reflection and positioning

There is a holistic quality to one's fragmented self – which shows how complex and ambiguous life is, diversity within ourselves.

What are the hidden authorities that determine my work?

Who decides which role I play? Can I play with my roles myself, can I decide which role I want to play now or later?

Do we question our “normality”?

Can I implement change if I do not have authority?

How many authorities are judging within ourselves?

Critical pedagogy starts from the connection (with myself and with others).

We should recognise and work with our adultism in our pedagogic works.

In this sense the lecture was somehow interactive and already paved the way to the next section of the event, where the participants were divided in groups of four people each, in order to discuss and share their responses and applications of the topics and questions that were presented. This part was supposed to create exchange via a practise-based perspective in order to reach a collective view of what the practical challenges are, what needs to be done, and how to operate within each artistic project/institution to create a difference.

The exchange within small groups was followed by returning to the big group of participants where everybody could exchange responses again whether via audio/video interactions or in a written form via the chat box. With some diversity within the group

of attendees there was a real chance to understand the various positions, perspectives and applications. With the presence of artists, pedagogues, dance scholars, cultural managers and more, the process of questioning grew and took the shape of a collective action during the last part of “Playing with Authority.” Questioning became in itself an action during the time of the event. Although held online, the gathering became more and more alive and concrete, through the interweaving of the responses and the action of questioning that resulted from it. One could easily see that each of those questions represent a potential field of examination and criticism that – if undertaken – would probably bring a potential process of change which could be considered as a continuation and a development to the symposium:

Questions concerning the relationship between adults/artists and children and adolescents

Self-check: In which areas can we give up more and more authority (e.g. to children and young people)?

How can we make differences between us and youngsters productive?

If you have an advisory board of young people to program a festival, perhaps they will choose only one type of work that is popular at the time. Is it necessary or relevant to introduce other work into the program, even if initially they won't like it?

If we hand over the authority to the young in an artistic process, can we live – and do we want to live – with the results?

What can we as adults give to teenagers? And are we really open to how they receive it?

Young audiences (and all audiences) appreciate receiving a holistic, fragmented self. We should not hide our specificity, our intersectionality, the different roles we play, from our audience, as this empowers and enlightens.

Young kids, what do they want to share with us/each other in expressing/performing?

How much do we as adults have incorporated the system and have difficulties to think (imagine) a different world and can learn from young people?

Isn't it necessary, to set values and norms but at the same time to empower the young to question them?

Acknowledging that we give possibilities for young people to step outside of the boxes that they are in.

If I have the authority, I also take over responsibility and that can also be a relief.

Sometimes the role of an arts educator is to hold the frame, to set the boundaries for safe structures. There is freedom within the structure but using the authority of my role to keep it safe is part of the creative process too.

Especially young people ask us to concentrate on what unites us, on the sameness. At the same time we have to acknowledge the differences because it can be painful not to. How can we negotiate between the two?

The role of the body and dealing with taboos and shame were also raised in the groups and in plenary:

Body/Trauma

What histories are inscribed into bodies? And do bodies have then time to express those histories? when and where?

Written/saved knowledge is more acknowledged than in dance form.

What role does the (moving) body play when it comes to equality?

When I work with young people with different social, class, gender background – how much am I aware about trauma and the effects of trauma on bodies?

What is a trauma informed artistic work?

Shaming is one way to preserve hierarchy in our profession.

Body as knowledge

How to work with the taboo of social wounds?

The form of each question represents the personal perspective of the person who shared it, yet all the questions can be seen as a representation and outcome of the collective process of listening, speaking, discussing, exchanging, and formulating responses to the questions of the lectures while re-emerging with new questions that remain open as a path for continuous critical engagement. This rich process of individual and collective reflection can become a tool for guiding critical discussions and gatherings within our artistic sector. It can provide us with a collective pool of knowledge via the questions that we keep sharing and reflecting on, while regarding the action of questioning as a collective ongoing action for the improvement and growth of our sector towards equality and the removal of all intersectional forms of discrimination (including the discrimination against specific forms of art).

Questions about the system

What kind of privileges should be given up at what time to enhance change? What maybe doesn't make sense?

How does the funding situation separate art into categories? What is cultural? What is educational? What is political?

How to increase the involvement of the families and the educational structures in which/for which we work (schools, theatres, kitas), so to have our work reflect and build community processes?

The separation of art and education is part of the authoritarian system because it is a way to control Innovation and Change. How to create a movement that brings change into this? How to make things different?

What kinds of pedagogy did my society go through?

There's worth in working both with and for children, but ho gets to decide this balance?

Can we let go of the "product"?

How can marginalised people and groups become autonomous and independent from white gaze and judgement? What is wanted? Independence? Cooperation? Or a utopia?

How much can we really listen to what children and teenagers want when we are acting within a certain system (funding system)?

It was a chance to revisit the notion of activism, and re-interpret it as a form of action-taking that addresses an issue and aims to strategically realise the aim of change. Therefore questioning can be a tool of activism, self-criticism can be a tool for activism, building up on the current discussions and developing/expanding them can be a tool for sustainable and growing activism. Every action-taking by an individual towards change and justice is activism. At the end of "Playing with Authority," Nora Amin invited the participants to keep connecting and to try to adopt the natural steps of solidarity, passing on knowledge, and advocacy, all within the sector of theatre and dance for youth, and via public, artistic and symbolic representations. The publication of this report is also a form of extending the symbolic representation of the possibilities towards positive change.

Paths to change

Critical pedagogy uses strategies of reversal and criticises oppressive systems of knowledge.

Since the end of 2018, the Berliner Projektfonds Kulturelle Bildung has created a body of young people within its board for the evaluation of submissions, this body also evaluates applications for grants and shares its opinion with the adults.

Invent exercises that question authority and cultural tradition.

"tolerance to ambiguity" = main aim of art/theatre

Reversing the hierarchies of knowledge production – (written/danced knowledge – rationalised/felt knowledge) as a tactic to reverse oppression and achieve a decolonisation of knowledge

Critical pedagogy as a tool to curate artistic process/ workshops without a leader but to experiment: just regularly provide a space to young people who are interested.

Emotionality is a tool and power to impact authority.

Artistic work, projects with participation can bring new perspectives of “collaboration” into the school system – playing with authority.

Let's play and work towards:

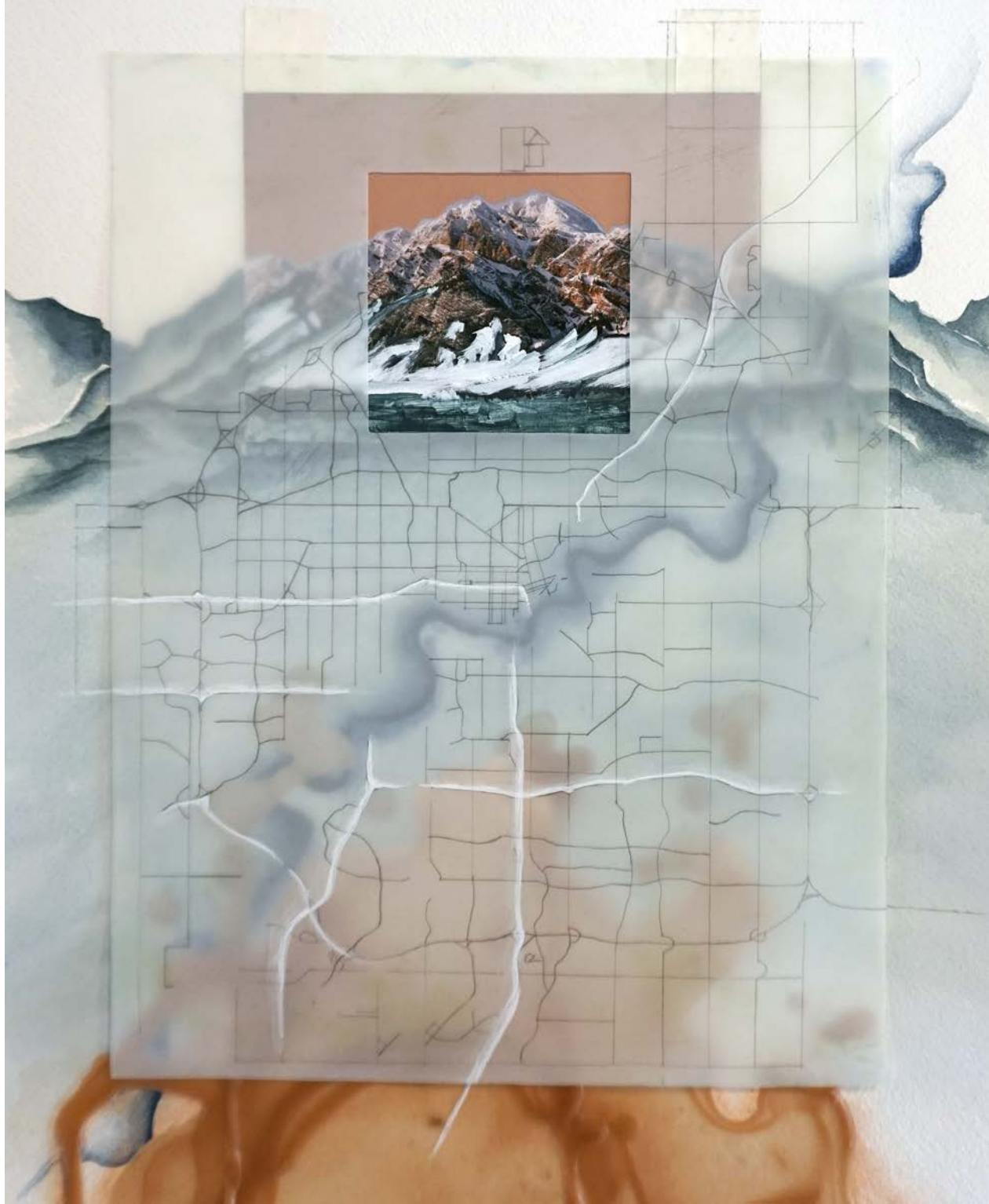
Unity Compassion Organization Cultural Synthesis

Paulo Freire – educator, thinker and author of “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1968) – has already advised us almost fifty years ago, that those are the possible actions that we can adopt if we want to reverse an oppressive system and create our own critical pedagogy. We're already doing it!

¹ This documentation was created in a collaboration with Nora Amin and Dagmar Domrös.

Here are more words to think about and to create your own responses:

Taboos
Critical Pedagogy
Question Norms
Question Professional Positions
My Roles
Personal Struggles
Categories
Holistic
Fragmented Self
Statements of Possibilities
Recognise → Validate
Hierarchy
Authority Theatre
Openness, Fluidity, Plurality
Dream of the Future
Diversity → Equality
Diversity/Plurality → Practice Access
Diversity → Label?
Legitimacy → Creative Self
Authority of Non-Authority



Landing at the Intersections

Shelley Etkin

What comes to mind personally when you think of land? What is your relationship with land right now? Here, in this moment, as you find yourself reading this text, I invite you to allow any and all associations that come up to be part of your response to the question: *What is my relationship with land?*

“Landing” is a practice developing throughout several years, across many places, in which participants are guided into a journey, dropping into layers of sensing and speaking from within their field of perception and perspectives. Each participant can potentially enter the land where we practice, recall the lands that they come from, have moved through, been influenced by, or invoke mythic, not-yet-known places (often some composite of these elements). Information may arrive through image, felt-sensation, emotion, or language.

Each session begins with asking about one’s relationship to land and each journey unfolds in response to the personal archive of places that have informed them. These fundamental questions may seem simple but continue to open up so much complexity. As you lean into this question now, there may be surprises wherever your journey takes you. Perhaps memories come to mind, forgotten histories, images, sensations, events, or even more questions. I invite you to keep this complexity alive as you continue along this text. Attend to what emerges as your eyes trace the weaving of words on the page, allowing your body and mind to draw from your own entanglements with land and all its intersections.

When we consider lenses of relating such as race, class, gender, sexuality – these deal at the same time with very interpersonal interactions as well as inherited social, historical dynamics that have developed over a long time, continuing to shape us and be shaped by us. Given that dance, theatre, and performance can be spaces to renegotiate these modes of socialising, how can we include our relations with land and place? Can we unearth crevices where we can engage with other ways of relating or perhaps, even temporarily, perceive other worlds and their unique languages?

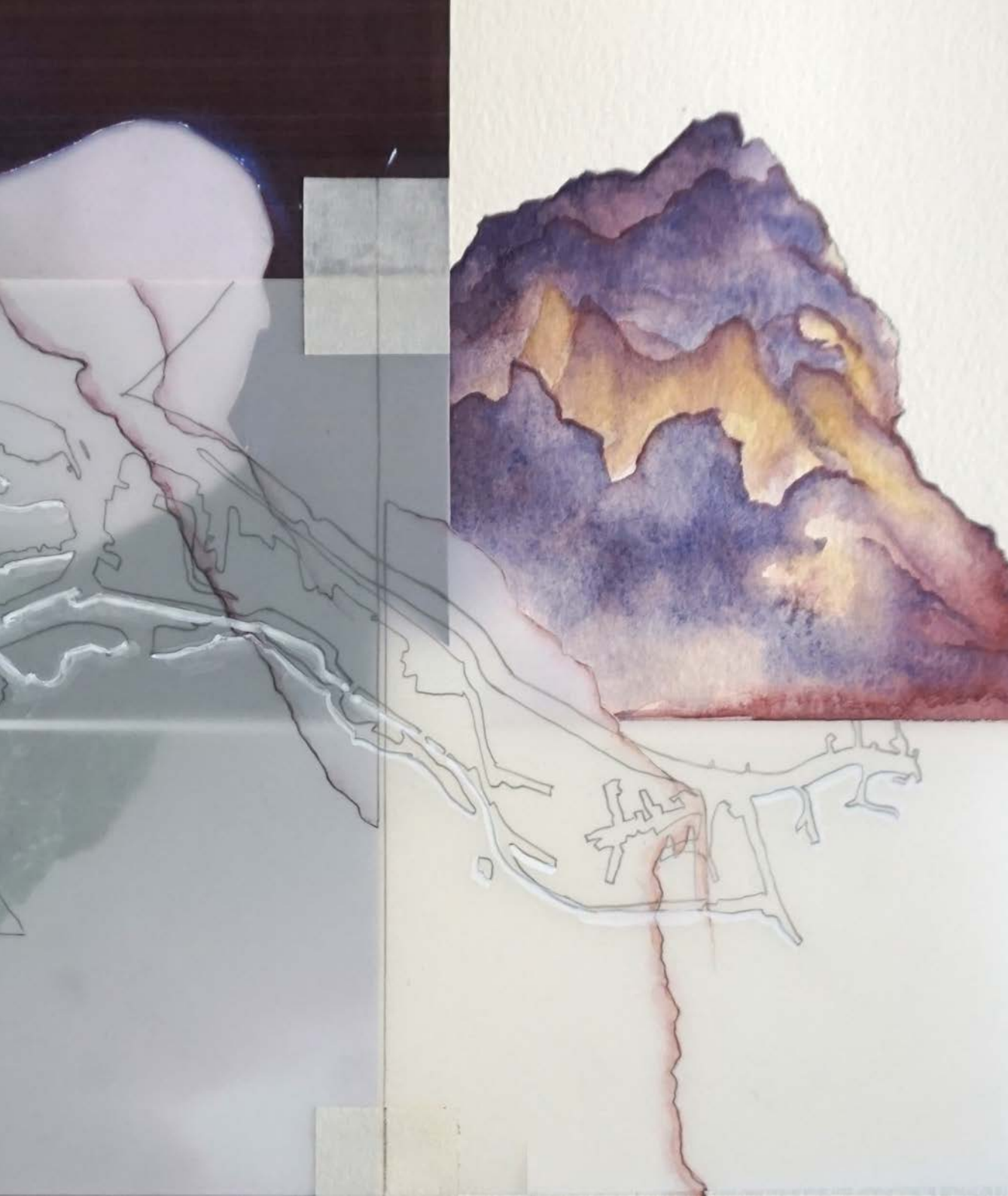
It has been my pleasure to work with Theater o.N. in various ways throughout the last couple of years. In 2019, in the context of the FRATZ Atelier, I collaborated with members of the ensemble and

interdisciplinary artists to create “Nesting,” a sculptural installation offering an environment for resonance between inner and outer dimensions. In 2018, I was part of another cohort engaging in a research laboratory dealing with soil’s matter and meanings. In both these settings, we intended to research embodied ways of relating to one’s environment with children who are at a developmental stage where they don’t necessarily distinguish between themselves and the outside world. Since they have not yet drawn these strict borders, we could see them as experts of a porousness between what is ‘them’ and what is beyond them. Viewing this as a form of intelligence, these projects have wanted to learn from that mode of perception and the world views it could empower.

Yet, if we were to focus exclusively on humans relating to other humans, it would in a way only be addressing one aspect of ‘the social’ or ‘society.’ ‘We’ don’t exist without a context and the primary context is land. Truly, nothing exists without land. When I talk about land I mean it as a whole sphere that encompasses all beings. It is the literal material land that is the foundation beneath you right now. Wherever you find yourself, that place infuses your being in tangible and subtle ways. Land includes all those who live in interdependence within it; the waters, the creatures, the flora and fauna, the invisibles. But it is not just the backdrop or the setting for ‘us.’ In acknowledging land, we can see the word ‘knowledge.’ Land is a field of knowledges, a field of wisdom. Land is a field of relations that is alive and includes layers of memories, histories, dynamics, changes over time. So the human activity and the land activity cannot be seen as separate from one another.

From that awareness, we cannot disentangle racism from colonialism, from a movement over lands to access so-called ‘natural resources’ and the extraction of those leading to creation of wealth and ideas of property. At the root of these fractures have been ruptures between people and their place-based knowledges. We cannot disentangle patriarchy from the suppression of primarily matriarchal earth-based cultural practices and cultures. And we cannot disentangle land from all the ways that nationalist movements have manipulated it into an ideal of purity, of normativity, to justify the exclusion of certain bodies from ‘belonging.’





People have moved across land, inhabited land, adapted and changed with land, cared for and engaged with land in so many ways, for as long as we have been on earth, despite all of these interruptions to our senses of place. We all have relationships with land even if they are not in the foreground of our awareness all the time and even if they are uneasy. We are all from somewhere, often many places or movements between places, and we always meet somewhere. Our relationships with land are deeply personal and begin forming very early on, informed by the histories of ancestral relationships with lands. How we treat each other is intimately wrapped up with how we treat land and in return, how the land will treat us.

Intersectionality shows us how social dynamics are composed of many currents crossing, mixing, passing by one another, simultaneously running alongside, and pouring into the other; a living web that is inextricable. When I imagine the word 'inextricable' I envision a knotted up fabric where not a single thread could pull the whole thing neatly apart. Rather, this fabric is woven, tangled, twisted, enmeshed. Roots are not straight lines, they lead to other roots, blending and exchanging with all the micro-beings in the soil, with other root systems. The more we include in our realities, the more complex the tapestry becomes, but the more whole as well.

So it's all there, but beyond conceptualising, it is also crucial to give the body and imagination space to express or digest these in ways that are true to each person, place, and moment. Landing proposes that we are able to journey not only physically or geographically, but also through our perception. In the landing sessions, participants are invited to enter a kind of dream-like state to touch these topics from a different place. Through the practice of landing, the journey offers possibilities to inhabit different perspectives, so images and their expressions are queerly dynamic and never fixed.

The wind for one allows them to yield into a strong flexibility as they cease to resist it. For another, there is a sense of being at home in the wind, trusting to be carried without a need to arrive, eventually dropping through earth, water, and pebbles that are loose, soft, giving way. Yet another might pass from wind into a viscous substance, falling through a gap in the material into another quality entirely.

In my experience, offering space for questions allows other questions to arise. During this symposium, I had the honor of facilitating sessions both in person in Berlin and online (due to lockdown restrictions.) Whether we shared a physical space or a virtual one, each participant honed a specific question that was pertinent for their journey, directly addressing land as they understood it.

Often, there is a surprising moment along the way, when some thing becomes apparent that is so pivotal for their process. A gaze becomes a companion or a portal into another viewpoint, something unfamiliar becomes familiar, an impossibility becomes possible. Something lands for them and through this, movement is possible.

Landing is not about 'land' being out there. Something to point to or own or conquer. Not even somewhere to 'end up' at. Rather, I see landing as a continual process of arrivals, encounters, departures. I propose that we are landing all the time and concurrently, the land is (in a process of) landing at all times. The landing sessions are offered to see what emerges from that place of sensitivity to the unknown, to witness what gets unearthed, and what perspectives might emerge. To navigate the question of 'how do you relate to land now' is a journey into the moment, in an open and fluid way, to pose some of these questions directly to that sphere. Landing is an opportunity to be in a creative space where comprehension and exchange can happen through working with embodied imagination – to value the imagination as a faculty of intelligence, a space of communication that can support a rippling of changes in the ways we relate with land and each other.

Imagine now a gathering of humans, as a gathering ensemble of mountains, streams, concrete streets, humid air, buoyant earth. What if all those places are actively converging to meet the place that hosts us for the time being? Imagine the emotional topography felt in these places over time; the moments of fear, relief, anxiety, comfort, and inspiration. Imagine that, as we address each other during this gathering, we simultaneously address the land and open to listen as it addresses us in return, as if our social relations stem from information held within the land. Imagine then, that we allow our attention to expand, attending to all of these gathering forces as an inextricable part of our collective mutual liberation; mountain, concrete, human, air, creature and earth alike. In this expanding sensory experiment, our gathering could hold space for the dynamic complexities between us, in differences and similarities. Imagine the feeling of engaging with each other simultaneously as persons and living archives of multiplicitous places. Could we then become more capable to include land and our relations inside of the interlocking matrices of power, oppression, inheritance, dissolution, and transformation?

If so, what would you like to ask land?



Visuals by Marina Hulzenga

Marina Hulzenga currently resides in Amiskwaciwaskahikan, otherwise known as Edmonton (Alberta, Canada), on Treaty 6 territory and works within both a spatial design and art practice.

The essence of her work not only invokes interactions between space, land, history and environment but also hints at the reminders we have of our fragile and humble place within such a landscape. Her work seeks to celebrate a history, listen to the land, and constantly engage the philosophical, conceptual, and social dialogues of our spatial surroundings.

Naming the places we come from and inhabit has been an influential practice throughout the process of creating these visuals. To acknowledge these lands is to recognize the many intersections and crossings that have brought us to this present moment. The lands of our ancestors: Israel, Palestine, Poland, Ukraine, Czech, the Netherlands, France; movements over waters to new homes in North America. A meeting of beauty in Rajasthan, India. The current places that held these landing sessions: Berlin and Helsinki. The lands that supported the creation of these visuals: Amiskwaciwaskahikan (Edmonton) and the wild places surrounding them.

These visuals arose out of many inspiring exchanges between Shelley and I, in which we shared our own relationships with land while reflecting on the landing sessions offered during this FRATZ Symposium and expanding on their potential to engage with intersectionality. Experiencing a landing session, journeying into the lands of my imagination, I became enraptured by the landscapes I sojourned through and began to materialize their forms, colours and movements.

Through a process of creative experimentation and listening to my imagination's knowledge, these visuals emerged. Layers of history and memories that exist in a place, all merging together to meet us exactly where we are. These intersections of encounter have the potential to reveal wisdom and create openings for reflection and restoration. Echoing the experience of a landing session, the materialization of the visuals is created through compositions of direction and letting go; the imagery of maps with their solid, rigid lines in juxtaposition to the use of wax that flows and seeps at its own will. The visuals are an attempt at mapping the multiple landscapes and the traversing over those landscapes that our meeting here springs from.

Seeing water as the connector and transporter to lands, there are many pathways and channels throughout the visuals that can guide the eye. Perhaps these can navigate your own imagination towards the information held within your relationship with land.

Touching Utopia

Theater as a space for transformation

Nasheeka Nedsreal

"Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere." Carl Sagan

For me, the beauty in imagination is its endlessness, its infinity. It goes on and on, taking different shapes, shifting landscapes, creating new pathways. Because of this, imagination is the starting point for envisioning change. It is a critical tool to reflect on the limitations of the present and to manifest a new future. In the context of art and theatre, imagination is essential. Similarly, utopias also motivate and guide change. They provide counter-narratives and reasons to question reality and its limitations. Like imagination, utopias are transformative, and transformation rests on the desire and belief in an attainable future. There is a quote which says, "The search for utopia has not meant the pursuit of impossible desires. It has meant the pursuit of ways in which desire remains possible." Utopias reach for more, for better and it is important that our utopias also be regarded as obtainable and foreseeable.

Art has been a means of expression since the evolution of mankind. As varying the methods and practices, art has been used to explore, articulate and communicate ideas and emotions. It is intrinsically wound into our society and within the right context, a vehicle for substantial change and utopian imaginings. In theatre, what I particularly love and miss is the togetherness. It reminds me of our collective desire for social discourse and culture. It also reminds me of our collective desire for community and connectivity. This togetherness has so much potential. It expands our capacities, understandings and perspectives and can allow us to take risks and hold space necessary for transformation. It serves as a place of incitement that can fuel both social and political change.

As I continue to understand that language does not describe society, but rather shapes it, it becomes clearer the capacity that lies in theatre and art for shaping, reshaping and transforming our perspectives. It is in these spaces that we can interrogate the status quo and visualize new possibilities which empower all of humanity. These pressing and difficult conversations catalyze a necessary unravelling of embedded biases and injustices. In this regard, I believe, art and theatre spaces should also be spaces where restorative and transformative justice are understood and put into action. As theatre continues to evolve and we move into a future of inclusivity and accessibility, the way that we use theatre as a vehicle for change must evolve as well. Thus, it is my wish

that theatre and the arts develop the abilities to implement and embody values around, but not limited to, inclusivity, equity, and decolonization. These difficult conversations are rife with complexity and trauma. However, with much work, unlearning, self-reflection, compassion and bravery, I do think we can hope for a kinder, safer, braver and more equitable future. Bertolt Brecht said, "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it" and I believe this is both appropriate and necessary.

I believe theater should be a safe space. Though the more I reflect on the term safe-space, the more I drift further from the use of this "flexible phrase." Safe spaces conflate safety with comfort, and can be afflicted with a tendency to depreciate and deflect. Lately, I've used the term brave-space. Alejandro Marquez writes, "Brave space is a term that addresses the beneficial and transformational dialogue of difficult conversations." It underlines genuine commitment and engagement rather than intentional or unintentional restraint or avoidance. The process of brave spaces disrupts established patterns and ways of being. Brave spaces are not just an action but a commitment to a continuous process. Theatre should then be a brave space. Author Lily Zheng writes, "Every single space in which we exist as trans people, indigenous people, Black and brown peoples, disabled people, women and femmes, queer people and/or working class people is a 'brave space.'" It is thus important to remember that brave spaces are not spaces that force marginalized people into exploitative, educational and emotional labor positions. I don't believe safe or brave spaces are the final step. The process of language, imagination and utopia are ever evolving. But when put at the core of our everyday existence, we are able to think about and create expansive and inclusive worlds. In this way, imagination and utopia run contrary to power and can contribute to the destabilization of oppressive systems. In this way, theatre complements the processes of utopia as well.

In writing this, I also began to think about the ideas of utopia and how it relates to decolonization. Ian Cull writes, "Decolonization is the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches." It involves dismantling structures that perpetuate the status quo and addressing hierarchies and unbalanced power dynamics. It involves valuing and revitalizing the knowledges and approaches of the oppressed. The process must not be limited to institutions, but seen from a social and individual position as well. Decoloniz-

ing is deeper than just being represented. A utopia is deeper than just being represented. They are both complex. This also means that in order to fully tackle or engage with the possibilities of different utopias, we must also be prepared to decolonize the presumptions on which utopian imaginings are conventionally based. Further, the utopias of the disenfranchised, oppressed and marginalized are valid and must be acknowledged and not exploited. "Utopia is at the core of the decolonial struggle," writes Bill Ashcroft. We must not let the ideas of decolonization or utopia become a metaphor.

For me, theatre is a place where we can normalize exploration of the future, realistically and frequently. It is a place where we can oppose lived realities and its limitations. It is a place where we constantly push the boundaries. It is a space of decolonial thought in action. The more I write, the more I see intersections and parallels between ideas in theatre, utopia and decolonization. The magic of theater rests in its ability to transport us to alternate locales in order to encounter a wide range of perspectives on the world. Coupled with utopia and decolonization, theatre can be a place where ideologies can be countered and collective futures can be imagined. I believe art and theatre have a responsibility, with its platform, to confront us with uncomfortable, contemporary realities, challenge and dismantle inherent systems of oppression as well as write and imagine a future that empowers and uplifts all of humanity.

Sometimes it feels like a dream, but even a dream is the first step at manifesting a new future. Oscar Wilde writes, "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias."



Choreographer and dancer Nasheeka Nedsreal participated in the panel discussion "Touching Utopia – Learning and Teaching New Relationships" at FRATZ 2020. There she shared her experience of founding the Soul Sisters Berlin network and exchanged ideas about more equitable practices in education and the performing arts. Mikros Dounias (educational project on the Greek island of Lesbos with refugee children and local children), Tebogo Nimindé-Dundadengar (founder of the online platform tebalou, which sells toys and children's and youth literature with a focus on diversity) and Anne Sophie Winkelmann (intercultural educator with a focus on intersectionality and adultism, author of "Machtgeschichten") discussed with her. In this contribution she deepens a discourse on theater as a space for transformation started on the panel.

Equality needs a tender heart

An attempt to explore a state of being, multi-generationally and digitally

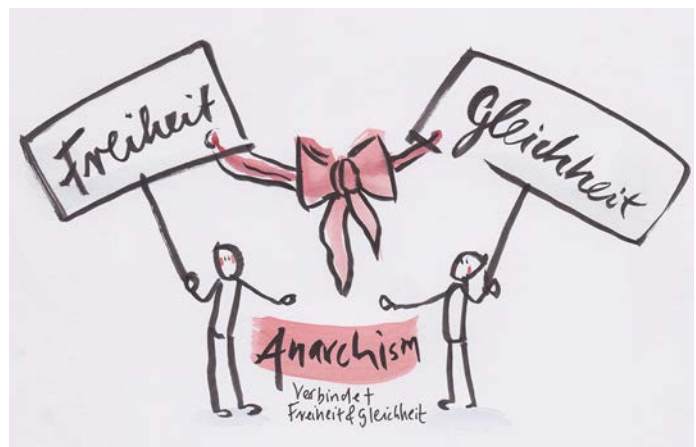
Cindy Ehrlichmann

When I try to capture a precise or fitting image of equality from my childhood, I see my great-grandmother and myself at about six years old, standing in the old farmhouse kitchen. She opens a coffee bean tin and chuckles to herself. She says she just loves snacking on coffee beans and asks me if I want a taste. I'm allowed to have one, even though it's not really something for kids. We stand over the tin and inhale the aroma of the beans, chewing together with relish. A shared experience. In this moment there is no young and old, there's just us and the tin, in this moment of crushing a fragrant bean between our teeth. That made me very happy. And this is likely a feeling of equality. We get to do the same thing at that moment, even though we're different ages.

The symposium is the part of FRATZ International where professional and social discourses around the performing arts are intensively conducted and made tangible. It is also a space where we can explore questions on staging and representation in theater, its target audience and the public, through experimental studios and research labs. In previous years, it was quite possible to work WITH children in the studios; however, at most symposium events, professionals still talked ABOUT children rather than with them. While this form of exchange was and is important and beneficial, thematic discussions that included participating children and young people were still missing from the last festival editions, an empty space we were determined to fill. Since our original target group is children aged 0 to 2 years, it seemed practically impossible for us to involve them in the discourse. Within this given fact, however, we saw increasingly less reason why we should not include older children and their range of experience in the symposium. As a theater that has actively welcomed children and young people onstage and behind the scenes in participatory projects for years and has proven experience in joint research work with children and youth, we started looking for ways to open up parts of the symposium to them. As in our artistic work with children and young people, our interests for the symposium lay in exploring questions together, in exchange and dialogue that was enriched by age-related differences in perspectives. Our workshop design for this purpose would therefore need to fulfill two essential structural conditions: it had to be multigenerational and, due to Corona, digital.

The idea of "Anarchy ≠ Chaos – In:equality" was to develop a creative workshop to be carried out within the framework of the symposium, in which participants could exchange and reflect on stories of equality and inequality.

Have you ever felt "equal" to someone? What is equality? What does it mean to have equal rights? How does that feel, have you



experienced it? When? Can we better understand inequality, or even fight against it, if we know what a situation might feel like where we are “equal” or “have equal rights”? Is that even possible? (Excerpt from the invitation letter to young participants)

The workshop that dramaturg and author Marie Yan and I¹ conceived aimed to create a temporary common space where young and old could share across generations what equality or equity means to us, and how our perspectives might enrich each other. “Anarchy ≠ Chaos” was originally a series of events by Johanna Hawighorst and Marie Yan at Theater o.N., in which hosts and participants explored concepts and images of anarchy and anarchism artistically together, in different formats, on four evenings in 2018/2019.

For the first draft of this intergenerational exchange, with the additional challenge of a digital setting, we settled on a target group of people aged 8 and up. In the process, we faced questions already familiar to us from our work with children and youth in Berlin’s outer districts: How and where do we reach children and young people to invite them? How do we address them? How do we facilitate their access to the discourse? How do we create spaces where they want to share? What might be rewarding for them? What experiential space beyond language can we create in this format? In response, our workshop incorporated the method of graphic recording by Nora Haakh, a theater-maker and live illustrator, for a layer of imagery to establish a sensual level of expression alongside the verbal discourse. How do we establish a meeting on an equal basis between the participants, with a common goal? What number of total participants seems appropriate? How do we mix the groups? Would the young people rather keep to themselves? Will two 8-year-olds dare to say anything in a setting with many adults? We spent a lot of time considering the “right” composition of the small groups, a daunting task for us. We tried to feel our way into a potentially comfortable, intimate digital space where a young person would enjoy sharing, tapping into our own needy inner child from the past. We worked to keep families with younger children together, hoping it would offer more security for the young members. We put teenagers together with at least one peer, and adults were usually in the majority anyway. It was a great challenge to create the right “mix” in such a way that it did not favor or disadvantage any one age group.

For this multigenerational premiere, we approached teachers and educators at schools with whom we were already working, friends, families and (guest) artists of the theater, as well as festival visitors, and sent out digital letters of invitation. 22 people responded, including fathers and mothers along with their children, on November 6 from 05:00 to 08:00 p.m.

Welcome! It’s good to have you here! Can you touch your screen neighbors with your hands? Can we connect like this? What about the participants sitting above and below your own screen?

The process was strongly grounded in warming up together at the start of the session. We hoped that everyone would already have a chance to say something before going into a more intensive exchange.

Is there anyone here, like me, who has not had enough sleep in the last three days? Can you please raise your hands? Who else has brothers and sisters, like me? Is there anyone else like me who sometimes wears socks to bed? Does anyone else want to know about anything? Go ahead, the space is yours...

The participants took up this offer to directly “get in touch with each other” very hesitantly at first, but later they became more animated, livelier and bolder. In fact, a kind of unselfconscious “ping-pong” session emerged in which both younger and older people spoke up, seeming to have lost their initial shyness. Waiting, being patient, giving time and space. As a facilitator of this digital communication process, I could not sense the palpably energetic presence of people in the room as a translation code for



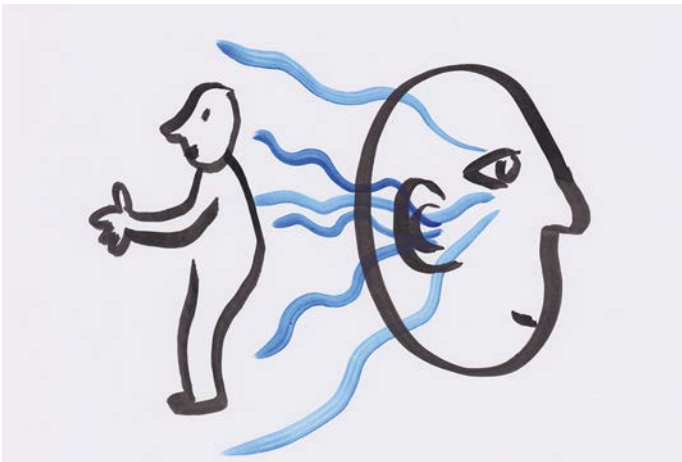
the current atmosphere. I felt a bit disoriented, as if swimming in an open sea. It cost great energy and attentiveness. Finding the right moments to activate, stimulate and decelerate felt more challenging than in live settings.

In mixed-age small groups in digital break-out rooms, we deepened and continued the thematic discussion.

Choose one image from the template that you associate with equality. Why did you choose it?

Think back on a situation where you felt equal with someone, where you felt a sense of equality or equal rights. Where was it? With whom? When? Can you draw something to show this? Maybe you can also find an object in your home that has something to do with this story? You have about 10 minutes for this. Present your sketch/drawing or object to the small group. How did you feel at that moment, when you experienced "equality"? Why does the moment you described represent equality to you?

Afterwards, the small groups shared about the feelings that come up in these situations and which conditions make a feeling of equality/equity possible.



"Being equal is feeling proud and connected. It is feeling 'heard,' included, and reassured. A prerequisite/condition for equality is to be treated fairly, treated with respect, openness. Equality is unconditional. Everyone has to play by the rules of the game."
(Summary from small group chat)

This first round of the digital workshop seemed to work well for younger participants. Apparently, the activities of the playful beginning, the "picture show," remembering one's own story, and looking for or drawing an object offered them plenty of variety. However, at this point after about an hour, it also seemed that levels of concentration and excitement in the youngest of them had run out. Afterwards, all workshop participants met again digitally in the large group and summarized their exchange. Each group presented its results without commentary – often with alternating spoken contributions from different generations – while all the others listened with their eyes closed, creating a sensual moment. As an alternative to the act of speech, this round concluded with a (written) discussion via chat function on the following question:

What do you need from society, political policies, or specifically from people (you meet) to experience equal rights, or to sense a moment of equality?

"To listen to each other. To express your needs. Communication, openness, curiosity. Relaxation. A tender heart. Peace and time to feel your own feelings and desires. Talking, sharing, helping. Being together. Trusting others. Opening up. Making yourself vulnerable. Having the courage to speak up about a problem. Being tolerated for who you are. Showing yourself. Honesty."
(Excerpts from large group chat)

Future theater workshops might look something like this: We sit in cohorts in front of our computers and tell each other things. Pointing memory relics at the camera, asking each other questions, raising our hands to signal connectedness, and collectively closing our eyes as we emotionally contemplate deep thoughts. Who knows? We are in year 2 of the pandemic and much is different. Encounters are finding new formats. An entire society has to shift out of its comfort zone. The adults among us have no blueprint for this, no head start on any experience with this unprecedented scenario. This might not be such a bad starting point from which to set out and explore together. Maybe it will make a good intergenerational training ground for further project formats.



Nora Haakh is a cultural studies scholar, theater maker and graphic recorder. She studied Islamic Studies, Political Science and History and wrote her doctoral thesis on questions of translation and transfer in theater. As a dramaturge she worked at the post-migrant theater Ballhaus Naunynstraße and realises her own works as a director. Since 2016 she has been working as a graphic recorder with live visualisations and graphic clips and has been experimenting with the merging of live drawing as a performance and storytelling on stage. www.nora-haakh.de



Photo: Jacob Stage

Nora Amin *Performer, choreographer, author, theatre director and scholar*
Fellow of the centre for Theatre of the Oppressed (Brazil, 2003), Alumni of the arts management program at John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (USA, 2004), S. Fischer guest professor (FU Berlin, 2004–2005), guest lecturer/Ford associate at Mount Holyoke College (USA, 2005), founder of The Egyptian National Project for Theatre of the Oppressed and its Arab network (Lebanon, Sudan and Morocco), fellow of the Academy of the Arts of the World (Cologne, 2015), fellow of the International Research Centre “Interweaving Performance Cultures” (FU Berlin, 2015–2016), Valeska Gert Visiting Professor for Dance and Performance (FU Berlin, 2018), visiting lecturer at the department of cultural policy (University of Hildesheim, 2018), visiting lecturer at the centre for contemporary dance (Zentrum für Zeitgenössischen Tanz, Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Cologne, 2020), workshop instructor at Tanzfabrik Berlin “UnlOcking” (2019–2020), Mentor at Performing Arts Program (LAFT Berlin) and Bundesnetzwerk flausen+ program.



Photo: Ilya Nee

Shelley Etkin *Transdisciplinary artist, educator, and gardener*
Shelley’s work combines dance, ecology, pedagogy, and curation. She works independently and collaboratively in a range of environments hosting practices in embodiment and land relations, including “Ponderosa” – a rural artist residency in Germany where she facilitates the “Garden as Studio” platform. Currently, she is a guest lecturer at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She is in ongoing collaborations with Laura Burns as “LARK: Living Archive of Remembered Knowledges,” as well as with Anna Nowicka, Angela Schubot, and Aune Kallinen, among others. Shelley holds an M.A. in Ecology and Contemporary Performance (Finland) a B.A. in Gender Studies (USA), a Permaculture Design Certificate, and is a student of homeopathy.



Foto: David Beecroft

Cindy Ehrlichmann *director, theater educator and director of participatory projects at Theater o.N.*
Since earning her master’s degree in theater education at Berlin University of the Arts, Cindy Ehrlichmann has been creating theater projects and performances and developing plays with children, youth and adults. Starting in 2011, she has explored through various formats how children and youth from “low-stimulation” environments can be inspired to make theater, including projects in the Berlin district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. In 2013, her production “hell erzählen” was invited to show at the national competition “Theatertreffen der Jugend.” Currently, she directs the FRATZ Encounters series, as well as the Künstlerische Kollektive, in which artists collaborate with young people to create and perform new pieces. Before earning her Master of Arts, she studied social work; today she works in parallel as a family therapist in Berlin-Neukölln.



Photo: Alicia Grant

Inky Lee *Writer, musician, and performance artist*

Inky Lee is living in Berlin. Her writings appeared at tanzschreiber, tanzraumberlin, COVEN Berlin, Choom:in, Time Out NY, FLAUNT Magazine, among others. She was an artistic director and a writer (along with the guest writers she invited) for her writing platform, “Right now,” which was founded in collaboration with Tanzbüro Berlin. This experimental writing platform focused on the embodied experiences of the marginalized individuals in Berlin’s performance scene. Inky currently works as a mentor for the tanzschreiber workshop program that facilitates expressive writing about the Berlin dance scene. She is also a member of a writing collective, “Stream,” located at Tanzfabrik Berlin. She has played music with various artists in Berlin and worked as a performer and a choreographer in Berlin and New York City.



Photo: Theresa Beschmidt

Christine Matschke *Independent dance journalist*

Christine Matschke studied modern German literature, art history and French in Wuppertal, at Besançon and at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She completed her master’s studies with a thesis on dance and pursued her interest in dance studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. For several years she worked as an assistant at a Berlin institute of further education, a dramaturgy assistant in Cologne theaters and a press assistant for the “Tanz im August” festival. Today, Christine lives and works as a freelance dance journalist in Berlin. She writes for various print and online media such as the “Berliner Zeitung,” “tanz,” “tanzraumberlin,” “tanzschreiber,” and “Missy Magazine.” She regards writing about “dance for young audiences” to be one of her professional perspectives.



Photo: Yatri Niehaus

Nasheeka Nedsreal *Dancer and choreographer*

Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Nasheeka Nedsreal now lives in Berlin and works in the fields of movement, music and visual art. In her work she deals with identity, rituals, futurism and improvisation. She has performed nationally and internationally and has collaborated with various artists as a dancer, teacher, model and visual artist. She is a co-founder of “Soul Sisters Berlin,” a collective dedicated to connecting Black women across Germany, as well as “Black and Brown Bodies in Motion” and “The Blackism Collective,” and she is a member of “Santo Schwarz.” She has been working with the company “Grupo Oito” since 2017 and premiered in the performance “Unrestricted Contact.” Recently, she explored the politics of black hair in a solo multimedia performance titled “New Growth,” which premiered at Ballhaus Naunynstraße (2020). In 2018, Nedsreal began working with choreographer Trajal Harrell and is currently a guest dancer at Schauspielhaus Zürich. Since 2019, she has been performing in the Theater o.N. production “Future Beats,” a performance for the youngest from 6 months to 2 years.

The **FRATZ Reflections 2020** document research, artistic perspectives and productions of the festival and the symposium FRATZ International 2020.

FRATZ International 2020

23th to 26th of October and 6th to 9th of November 2020
in Berlin
www.fratz-festival.de

Presented by
Theater o.N.



Funded by

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Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum

The Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum Berlin develops innovative dance formats for young audiences between the ages of 0 and 18, focusing primarily on production, networking, mediation and artistic research. It has been initiated in 2019 by four partner institutions based in Berlin: PURPLE – International Dance Festival for a Young Audience, TANZKOMPLIZEN, Theater STRAHL and Theater o.N.

From **2019 to 2021**, a total of six productions were developed, each with its own thematic focus. A research-based approach and high artistic standards form the common basis of the productions. A central element of the project is the professional networking with relevant institutions, training centers, schools, scenes and festivals. In this context, symposia, each with a different theme, act as a platform for a lively exchange between artists, professionals and a young audience. In addition, various workshops offer teachers, parents and educators the opportunity to further educate themselves in the art of dance. Furthermore, the possibilities of an inclusive approach are explored with different formats, such as performative encounters outdoors, research labs and discussions as a symposium on the topic of dance and racism or with projects for performative encounter.

In the fall of 2021, the “Offensive Kulturbus” was launched, a bus shuttling project which takes daycare and school children to performances at over 40 Berlin venues free of charge. In **2022**, the second phase of the project will begin: The activities of the Offensive Tanz will be continued, new initiatives such as RAUSGEHEN will be tested, and a decidedly equity-sensitive perspective will be developed and implemented in the different layers of the project.

The Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum Berlin has set itself the task of breaking down barriers, creating new approaches, giving dance a positive connotation as an art form and thus establishing it as a theatre offering and valuable aesthetic experience for children and young people – beyond language barriers and regardless of educational background.

www.offensive-tanz.de



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