

UNFOLDING A SERIES OF SUGGESTIONS

A Reflection on a publication practice permeated by dialogue between practices

-- Leonie Persyn (Ghent University)

How to share a process with peers and an audience is a valuable and urgent question to both academia and the artistic field. This article aims to contribute to an answer by questioning how within academia the process can be re-evaluated. In order to do so, it focuses on how the notion of unfolding provides the publication format A Series of Suggestions with the power to become a tool for sharing and thinking. This article does not only bring the perspective of the researcher into the discussion of collaboration within performance studies, but by doing so it shows the importance and consequence that result from a methodology in listening rather than composing.

Keywords: unfolding, research processes, a tool for sharing and thinking, listening, researcher-as-dramaturg

Introduction

Talking about collaboration within the scope of performance studies happens mostly from the perspective of the artist and in a context of performance as research or practice-led research. The main focus of edited volumes such as *Artistic Research in Performance through collaboration* (Blain & Minors, 2020) or *Performance as Research: knowledge, methods, impact* (Arlander, Barton & Dreyer-Lude, 2017) reflect upon collaboration within rehearsal spaces or artist studios and how they function as research by indicating the nuances and differentiations in the balance between artistic and reflective strategies. Within the current arts field, especially in Flanders and Brussels, one of the most urgent questions is how to share artistic research among peers and with an audience. It is a question which does not only concern artists, but also art schools and policy makers. The discussion about the status and different accounts to artistic research is definitely not over yet. But having said this, it must be addressed that overall, the perspective of the academic researcher on these artistic collaborations remains too often a posterior addition to the actual collaboration.

This article thus questions how, within academia, the process can be re-evaluated. In order to so, I have a look at my own research process and the strategies I have developed to share my process. While working at S:PAM (Studies in Performing Arts and Media, Ghent University) over the past six years, I have positioned myself as a researcher-as-dramaturg, which implies a “hyphenated thinking, [in which] knowledge is not situated in one individual or in one privileged center, but resurges from the hyphens in-between thinking entities, with thoughts evolving in perpetual modulation” (Stalpaert 80). Working as a researcher-as-dramaturg in a context of hyphenated thinking does not favor the researcher or the dramaturg as the singular figures but celebrates and embeds the richness of dramaturgical strategies in academia in order to activate and engage in long-term and sustainable collaborations. This results in dramaturgical work not focusing on a particular production but on the processes in-between those productions, with the aim to find certain essence or life-lines.

The identification as a researcher-as-dramaturg within the scope of my doctoral research titled *The Sound of a Shared Intimacy* implies that if I want to learn more about the re-evaluation of the process, I have to look into the (dramaturgical) collaborations at the base of the project. In my exploration of how listening functions in the field of performance and performance studies, I write about works of artists with whom I invested and still am investing in long-term and sustainable collaborations. In order to acknowledge the importance of these collaborations for and within my research, I developed the publication format *A Series of Suggestions*. The idea for this series originated during the Covid-19 pandemic and is an answer to the question of how to give back to the artists I am working with. At that moment and to this day those artists are the Polish-Belgian choreographer Kinga Jaczewska, Dutch in situ artist Rita Hoofwijk and Belgian theatermaker David Weber-Krebs. Although their work might appear very different at first glance, due to their difference in training or discipline, their practices do share for me a certain essence: a particular way of coping with listening. On top of that they all work within that Flemish, Brussels context in which I question the importance and urge of sharing processes.

The artistic practice of Jaczewska, with whom I made the first editions of *A Series of Suggestions*, titled *The common texture is our body*, is a continuous exploration of “the relationship between the event and the non-event” (Jaczewska). While working with different media, going from dance, over drawing to video and installations she invites to bring “the focus to the overlooked [...] by exposing presences and movements hidden besides such focal points” (Jaczewska). For the first edition of the series we selected five materials with specific textures that were often addressed in our conversations and working processes. By exploring those textures, we engaged in “both a de- and recontextualization of thoughts and imaginations” (Jaczewska & Persyn). The first edition became an attempt “to destabilize preoccupations and reorient our habits [about these materials] towards new possibilities and questions” (Jaczewska & Persyn) for the future of our practices and the upcoming editions.



Figure 1. Kinga Jaczewska. *Time it takes* (2019), © Diego Franssens

The next artist with whom I took up those questions was Rita Hoofwijk. Over the years, she developed a space-oriented practice, in which a particular work always roots in a defined place or context. By spending time she generates strategies through which her work opens up a revealing or disturbing perspective upon that place or context in which it originated. Due to its situatedness her “work [has been] varying [in] shape and scale” (Hoofwijk). She herself described her artistic practice as “an attentive way of relating to what – and who – surround us” (Hoofwijk). By developing the second edition of *A Series of Suggestions* we tried to get more grip on that attentiveness at the core of her practice. *Here (not anywhere)* can be read as “a recipe, averse to ingredients. It is a field guide that is inspired by the idea of a cookbook. It focuses on the experience of creating, starting from the place where one cooks to the digestion of the meal. *Here (not anywhere)* [...] reveals how the works resulting from her practice originated in a specific here that wasn’t anywhere and neither could be everywhere. [...] It shows the richness and intimacy embedded in the encounter between a place, an artist and an audience member” (Hoofwijk & Persyn).

Figure 2. *I wonder is time blue*. Fragment from Rita Hoofwijk’s *Jean* (2023), © Rita Hoofwijk



Last but not least, my collaboration with [David Weber-Krebs](#) goes furthest back in time, from when I was working for him as a production manager in the context of *The Guardians of Sleep*. Weber-Krebs is a purebred storyteller, who mostly works in the black box. By creating specific set-ups and situations in which these stories are told he “questions the traditional relationship between the work of art and its” audience (Weber-Krebs). We started our PhD-research simultaneously and in the third edition of *A Series of Suggestions* we try to hum along to each other’s practices. Our understanding of humming heavily relates to Deleuze’s concept of the *ritournelle*. By humming along, we try to mark the moments when we leave our own territory and stretch our agency. In this edition we “do not aim for meaning immediately, instead our humming is after presence, a presence of being, a state, of a feeling, and meaning seems to [reveal] later” (Suk-Jun Kim 7) in the resonance between stories, drawings and our individual work. Through his storytelling Weber-Krebs zooms in and out on situations, bodies, their behavior, thoughts and environments.



I wonder



is time blue

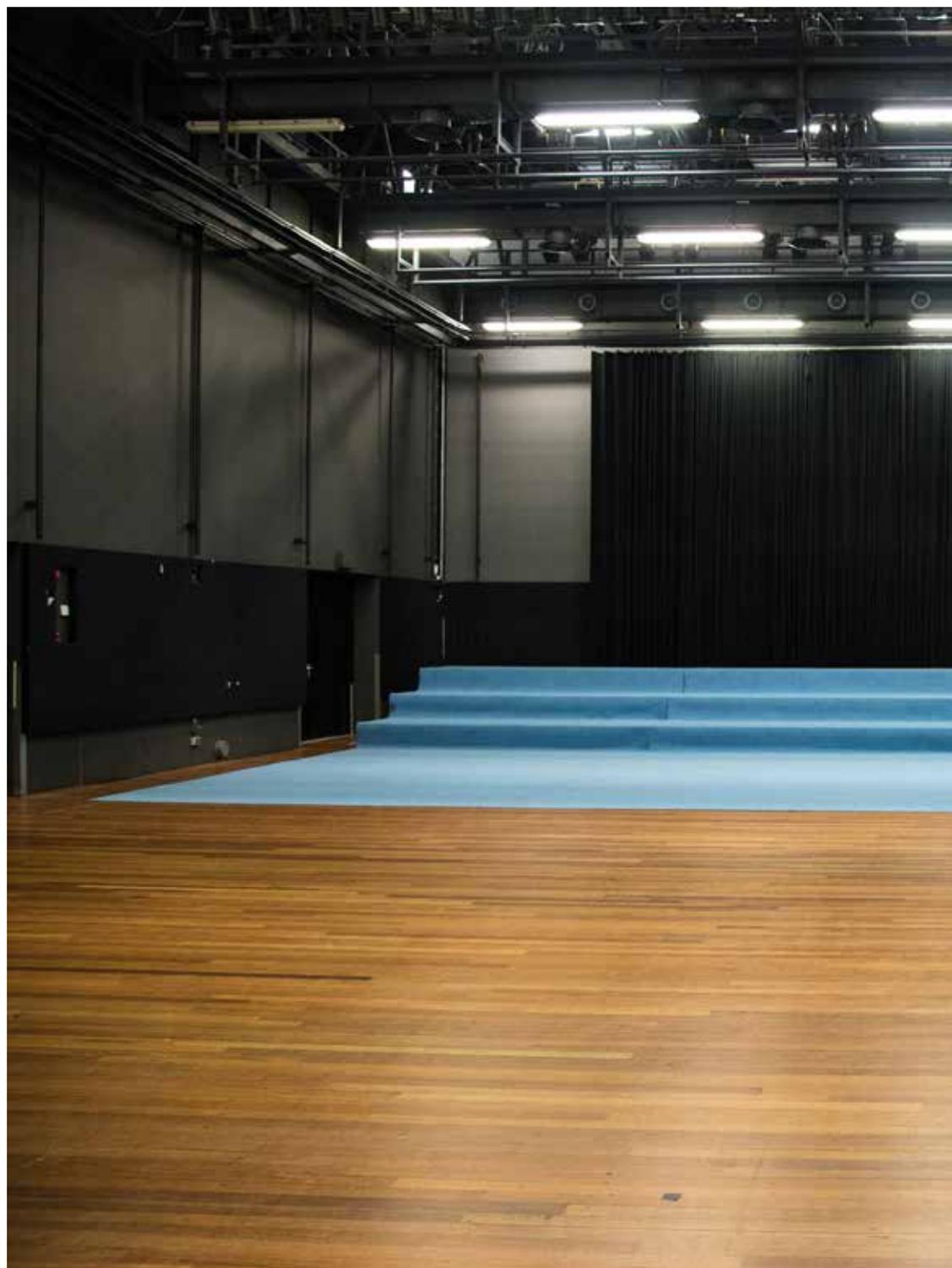




Figure 3. David Weber-Krebs, *The Guardians of Sleep*, theaterschool Amsterdam, 2016, © David Weber-Krebs

What binds these three practices for me is that what they do highly embeds and relies on listening, although they don't necessarily work with sound or are aware of this themselves. *A Series of Suggestions* has been a way for me to explore this hypothesis while engaging in a direct collaboration that acknowledges their agency and the importance of our collaboration within academia. On top of that *A Series of Suggestions* has been a way to take care of these artists by giving back, while providing myself the space to develop a methodology that allowed me to make working in academia more sustainable.

At the moment the series is compiled of three editions, one for each collaboration behind *The Sound of a Shared Intimacy*. In what follows I will present to you the format of *A Series of Suggestions* and how it embeds the notion of unfolding. Afterwards I will mainly focus on how the notion of unfolding provides *A Series of Suggestions* with the power to become a tool for sharing and thinking. This article does not only bring the perspective of the researcher into the discussion of collaboration within performance studies, but by doing so it shows the importance and consequence that results from a methodology in listening rather than composing.

The Notion of Unfolding in the Format of *A Series of Suggestions*

I built the format of *A Series of Suggestions* on the action of unpacking and unfolding. Together with graphic designer Laura Broux, we refined the format so that each edition comes in an A6-sized box that is wrapped in a sleeve. Once opened the box contains two postcards and five booklets, which are actually five A3 posters folded into a Mini-Zine, which is why they contain eight pages each and 40 pages in total. The eventual format and especially the packaging simultaneously hints towards a book cover and a jewelry box. The sleeve has a soft material quality and a particular form that invites the reader to engage in the precious act of unpacking. The first thing one encounters while unpacking is a pile of booklets in-between two

Figure 4. The Format of *A Series of Suggestions*, showing the packaging and the Mini-Zine fold, © Laura Broux



postcards. The first one contains an introduction that addresses the collaboration and intention at the core of the edition. The second one at the back of the pile provides the reader with context on the artist and the researcher with whom they spend time.

Although you can read each edition of *A Series of Suggestions* as a book which tells a certain story over five chapters of which the middle one always inserts a certain twist or even a disruption, the box immediately invites the reader to completely unpack and unfold the entire content. That invitation is stressed by the slightly uplifted corners and the gaping in-between pages. The form invites the audience member to unfold the pages, and to start to play with the content. The invitation aims at the activation and engagement of the reader. When the reader unfolds the booklet, they reveal the same content in a different constellation. This shifts the sense-making and breaks open the linearity of the narrative that has been read before. The unfolding thus creates room for the imagination of the reader. The reader starts thinking through the unfolding, therefore it is no longer only a conversational tool for artist and researcher by which they try to understand each other's practices but equally functions as a tool for the reader. In the unfolding *A Series of Suggestions* is passed along and implies the possibility of modification and adaptation to each body it encounters, even that of the graphic designer as is exemplified in the following words of Laura Broux:

The Mini-zine fold of the five booklets embeds both the action of folding and unfolding as they can and must be opened by the reader into 5 A3 posters to completely grasp the essence of each edition. Due to the importance of these actions, *A Series of Suggestions* highly resonates with the art of origami. In the Japanese word origami, the first syllable *ori* not only means fold but also indicates an "opportunity, change or suitable time" (Japanese Dictionary, 2023). Therefore, origami should be understood as a process of folding and unfolding in which especially the act of unfolding is important, because it gives time and direction towards the following fold, the following possibility without having a destination in itself. This etymological interpretation of origami implies that within the context of *A Series of Suggestions* it is the unfolding that makes dynamics, textures, dimensionality, volume and depth possible. More precisely, the unfolding transposes the strategical aim of dialogue towards the reader. By doing so, it functions as an invitation to bodily engage

Antwerp,
February 24, 2023

Dear Leonie,

Unfolding in *A Series of Suggestions* can be addressed from different points of view. Presumably, as a graphic designer, I experience the unfolding most literally. In my case, your chosen format serves as the formal playground for a “curated” encounter. The folds are the chalk lines of the terrain; and thus crucial. They do not serve as a rigid boundary, but rather as a stimulating suggestion. It is clear that you see the graphic form not as an end result but as an active player within the process.

As a designer, I try to transform the research into a physical precipitation in order to allow the reader to become a spectator of our dialogue. The folds in the paper provide different perspectives, both for me as a designer and for the reader. The viewer can zoom in on the artists’ work while reading from left to right or can throw everything open. Because of that your format encourages new ways of looking and thinking.

Your beloved
Laura

Figure 5. Letter from Graphic Designer Laura Broux written after the release of *A Series of Suggestions #2*

while reading. The unfolding provides the reader with time to pause, to experience the textures behind the ideas by opening up its main strategy to laymen. By doing so, it creates room for (un)foreseen resonances.

Unfolding from the main strategy of the researcher-as-dramaturg towards a tool for sharing

In the previous section unfolding has been defined as the action that enables a shift in sense-making, because it breaks open the linearity of the narrative. Both of these qualities heavily relate to the work of both the researcher and the dramaturg. Both constantly break up the narratives they encounter, in order to share their experiences of particular performances with an artist, peers or an audience. For both their biggest aim is to open up equivalent forms of sense-making and possible meaning, which often result in the formulation of suggestions, which “are never clear-cut answers or solutions for a problem, but which hover between a recap of what has already been done and a forecast of undiscovered paths” (Jaczevska & Persyn). Therefore, unfolding isn’t a strictly deduced or unambiguous activity, because each narrative and underlying collaboration demands a diversified form of unfolding and carries a manifold of possible paths.

Each of the editions of *A Series of Suggestions* stems from a practice of listening. In previous work I addressed how listening is a multi-sensory act that demands the listener to appear and disappear at the same time and how that makes listening fragile. The fragility embedded in listening demands care for the I, the other and the ways in which different senses, bodies, stories, temporalities and imaginations interact. It stimulates listening to expand across borders and in-between the lines. Therefore “listening is a process that impacts ethical discourse [..., because it] gives space to speaking, inviting other people into a dialogue that impact the discursive environments that then impact us” (Parks, vii). Therefore listening and the resulting collaboration is the acknowledgment of the agency of the other and the embedded dynamics of responsibility. But how can one reach such an acknowledgment?

According to Jean-Luc Nancy, “listening comes at the unity and disparity of sensorial dispositions sideways. It makes the perceptible registers and the intelligible register resound among themselves” (26). He defines listening as following: “To listen is to enter that spatiality by which, at the same time, I am penetrated, for it opens

up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me [...] To be listening is to be at the same time outside and inside, to be open from without and from within” (14). In this definition listening proves to be an excellent research strategy because it enables us “to have a relationship with knowing and not-knowing simultaneously” (Rajni Shah 49). Due to this particular simultaneity, all forms of judgement get suspended, leaving us on the edge of meaning. Consequently, listening and the resulting collaboration at the core of *A Series of Suggestions* can be defined as a conversational way of undoing and unlearning. In the book *The Practice of Dramaturgy. Working on Actions in Performance*, Andrea Božić and Julia Willms describe “undoing (...) as an exercise in attention” (228), which they divide in two different phases: looking in-between and dividing one’s attention. This is exactly what I do when I listen and when I engage in the development of *A Series of Suggestions*.

In other words, being at work as a researcher-as-dramaturg means I am looking in between the individual productions or creations of an artist while dividing my attention between my own practice, the practice of the artists and the different contexts and environments in which these practices arise. Due to its suspension of judgement and its allowance of not knowing, listening also feeds into collaboration as a way of unlearning, because for both the artist and the researcher involved the development of the publication functions as a way to “repeat and reactivate what others have already said, established, performed, written” (Azoulay 44). According to Ariëlla Azoulay unlearning therefore equals “a withdrawal from the quest of the new” (16). In this sense, each working session throughout the creation process and even each reading session of the final result functions as a rehearsal [of one’s own practice] with others” (15). Applying this to the collaborations and conversations between the artist and the researcher-as-dramaturg this means that a format like *A Series of Suggestions*, which incorporate unfolding, enables both a search for the depths and overlooked essences at the core of their practices. In order to further explore and understand the ambiguity and complexity of unfolding I will have a look at the different collaborations and quests at work in *A Series of Suggestions #1- #3*.

A Series of Suggestions #1: The common texture is our body, a shared practice of collaging with Kinga Jacewska

The collaboration with Kinga Jaczewska has been the slowest process of all three. Part of this slowness can be attributed to the fact that the format was in development while creating the content. Nevertheless, it is an inherent characteristic of our overall way of collaborating. The creation process of *A Series of Suggestions* started while already being engaged in a more traditional production dramaturgy for her installation *Meanwhile* (2019) and choreography *Time it takes* (2021). The sessions we spent time around the same table or physically working together exclusively focused on the development of *The common texture of our body* were limited. The kick-off of this project took place during in-between moments of rehearsal or while being isolated due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our collaboration was characterized by a continuous contact of sending each other fragments of texts, images, drawings, quotes, et cetera of work by each other or others.

In what I call our breakthrough session, we brought together all the material collected throughout this continuous conversation and started to literally cut and re-combine all of it in connection to the five selected materials (concrete, paper, red plastic, silk and breath) that in one way or another characterized our practices. We started juxtaposing and assembling texts, quotes, images, drawings for several months in order to build a narrative telling our story. The collaboration with Jaczewska can be defined as an intuitive collaging based on material qualities. The further our process evolved the less clear it became what material belonged to whom. We both experienced this mystifying of authorship as something refreshing and fruitful, because the more we engaged in it, the more we understood the format and the unfolding embedded in it. Although the recognition of authorship is often claimed to be a condition for an ethical and sustainable collaboration we experienced this the other way around.

Of the entire series, *A Series of Suggestions #1: The common texture is our body* relates most to Azoulay's understanding of unlearning as "repeating and reactivating what others have already said, established, performed, written" (44). The collaboration with Jaczewska taught me to focus on the non-event of the dramaturg, the time outside the rehearsal or the production of a particular performance. By actively engaging in what Jaczewska would call the non-time of the dramaturg, our shared unknowing and struggle with the format

was revealed. In its rigidity we could now recognize the necessity of these rigid chalk lines as borders of a playfield to work within. Finding this room to play around with our practices and bringing them into a readable conversation indicated that we understood the agency of the format. This understanding mainly roots in the allowance to work with each other's material and inspirations without claiming authorship over a particular meaning that resulted from a certain juxtaposition.

A Series of Suggestions #2: Here (not anywhere), a collaboration with Rita Hoofwijk

Compared to the first edition the material and its authorship in *Here (not anywhere)* remains distinguishable. This does not necessarily have to come as a surprise as Hoofwijk and I started the development of this second edition with the aim to get to know each other's practice beyond the surface of the blind dates preceding this collaboration. *A Series of Suggestions #2* roots in curiosity and stems from the initial bodily reaction and the resonance I experienced to Hoofwijk's small publication *On a Monday I walked the same earth as you (2020)*, which I received in my letterbox during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over a period of nine months, Hoofwijk and I engaged in a dialogue, where we tried to get a hold of what exactly makes Hoofwijk's practice her own. On a regular basis we sat down and talked about her work, in-between I drew and I painted in reaction to these conversations and her work. During the process we both wrote each other short letters or messages to share how we digested the addressed topics of our preceding conversations. Hoofwijk herself describes our way of collaborating as follows:

Hoofwijk's description shows how the second edition of *A Series of Suggestions* mainly focuses on the aspect of unfolding and unlearning which Azoulay calls "a withdrawal from the quest of the new" (16). It also highlights how the conversation behind the development is non-hierarchical but can be defined as horizontal, which does not mean that there is no distribution of labor, but rather indicates the reciprocal engagement and "distributed creativity" (Blain & Minors 124) *Here, (not anywhere)* functions as a documentation of our conversation. Due to the simple decision that all left pages contain my voice and the right ones Hoofwijk's voice, *Here (not anywhere)*

Brussels,
February 25, 2023

Dear Leonie,

For *A Series of Suggestions #2*, and later for 'Here (not anywhere)' we sat side by side, not across from each other. We literally often sat on the same side of the table, or one of us at the corner. For me this exemplifies the content of our conversations. Together, from a different background but a similar position, we looked at what we would call 'my practice'. Even though it was no more mine as it was yours at the moment of conversing. Step by step, a little further, a little longer, we unraveled what happens in the stages before the showing of the work, during and after. In fact it was as if we looked at this practice in the same way as I would look at a 'here' to come to a work. You didn't interview me, nor would I have had the answers. It felt as if we together tried to unfold what was happening already. We looked at a hidden knowledge that was within the work and that might be insightful in creating future work. Or, inevitably this unfolding of an artistic method, from the start to the finish, unfolds new work would the unfolding continue endlessly.

With love,
Rita

Figure 6. A letter from Rita Hoofwijk written after the launch of *A Series of Suggestions #2 Here: (not anywhere)*

in itself reads as a dialogue. Consequently, it functions as a witness of the care for each other's practices by "disseminating the (initial embodied) mode of knowing" (Blain & Minors, 122) and encountering.

Where the first edition transmits my own methodology of listening, the second one shows how through unfolding and by sharing my methodology of listening, the essence of another practice can be found and shared. The baseline *Here I am listening to it. It will take us nowhere else* (Hoofwijk & Persyn) running through the five booklets is testament to this embedded reciprocity. The collaboration with Rita Hoofwijk reminded me of the importance of generosity and the richness of reciprocal engagement and dialogues between practices.

A Series of Suggestions #3: The Invisible geographies of resonance (work title), in collaboration with David Weber-Krebs

My collaboration with David Weber-Krebs goes back to 2017 and the production of *The Guardians of Sleep*. Our way of collaborating roots in the relation between an artist and a production manager. In 2017, I spent a lot of time in and around the rehearsal room while listening and experiencing without intervening. Next to the practical organization, working as a production manager has a lot to do with being present and available for all those involved in the production process. The most important task here is to listen and hear explicit and implicit needs while restricting and postponing intervention to the most suitable moment. The intervening and presence of the production manager can be defined as humble and subtle. Nevertheless, the agency of the production manager is crucial for the process and the well-being of all those involved. As a production manager one has to sense the atmosphere and environment of a production process and act upon it. In this sense, the agency of the production manager and the responsibility that comes with it highly resonates with what Weber-Krebs expects from his audience. This resonance enabled us to transpose expand our collaboration beyond *The Guardians of Sleep* into a dramaturgical conversation focused on the experience and agency of the audience.

Up until today our conversations are not frequent, on the contrary they are as limited as possible. They are based on a comprehensive acknowledgment of each other's agency and the conviction that one honest remark or rather question can subvert a process or a problem. The suggestions in this collaboration are considered but not less generous and root in the engagement of a similar listening attitude as the one of the production manager who is present in and around the rehearsal space.

Consequently, and comparable to how Weber-Krebs is working, we started the development of *A Series of Suggestions #3* from stories he had written. Because I couldn't get a profound grip on the constellation of these narratives I fell back on my strategies of drawing, sewing, collaging and painting I developed throughout my years of research, in order to search for resonance. During our breakthrough conversation it turned out that the forms of my material research highly corresponded to drawings Weber-Krebs has been making for years without showing them to anybody. Due to this unexpected resonance I became invited to engage in the strategy of writing stories, a practice I have done since my adulthood but have not shared up until now. The process with Weber-Krebs taught me that when engaging in listening and thereby acknowledging other's agency the possibilities and strength of vulnerability and humbleness show.

At first glance, this collaboration might seem less horizontal than the other two, but it is not. Due to the full and challenging acknowledgement of each other's agency, which consequently will play a crucial role in the third edition, we have become able to share aspects of both of our practices which have never been shared before. The encompassing acknowledgement of agency roots in the allowance of not-knowing what the other will suggest and demands a constant openness to possible subversion which brings along a lot of vulnerability.

In conclusion of this section and before taking all of this back to the notion of unfolding, there is one more thing about these collaborations that needs to be addressed. In retrospect it became very clear that the way in which each of these collaborations took form in the development of *A Series of Suggestions* heavily reflects the status in which both of the practices at stake were. Consequently, the entire series posits the possibility to evoke the evolution of my research trajectory towards an audience. From collecting and playing around with material and content trying to understand one's own practice and the agency of the method with Kinga Jaczewska; to sharing one's methodology and practice with someone else in order to make it readable and valuable for an outsider with Rita Hoofwijk, to acknowledging each other's agency including that of the audience through writing. These insights suggest that the series is a tool in the making. But how does that function and who benefits from such a tool?

A Series of Suggestions as a tool

According to Tim Ingold a tool, in the most general sense is an object that extends the capacity of an agent to operate within a given environment” (2021, 315), which means that

[n]o object considered purely in and for itself, in terms of its intrinsic attributes alone, can be a tool. To describe a thing as a tool is to place it in *relation* to other things within a field of activity in which it can exert a certain effect. Indeed, we tend to name our tools by the activities in which they are characteristically or normatively engaged, or by the effect they have in them. Thus, to call an object a saw is to position it within the context of a story [...]. To name a tool is to invoke the story (2011, 56).

Taking Ingold’s definition into account and considering *A Series of Suggestions* as a tool in the making would mean that it extends the capacity of both the artist and the researcher-as-dramaturg to operate in the world of Performance and Performance Studies and that the activities of listening and unfolding would define its name. In order to explore this hypothesis, I want to focus on the perspective of the researcher-as-dramaturgy, because I prefer not to speak on behalf of the artists.

A Series of Suggestions in relation to other strategies within academia generating a re-evaluation of the process

Within the format of *A Series of Suggestions* academic strategies such as the publication of books, articles, conference papers, conversation with artists or more in general reading, writing and dialoguing are being put in conversation with each other. This conjunction is fully revealed whenever *A Series of Suggestions* is put on display and unfolded into the embedded exhibition dispositive.

In *A Series of Suggestions* it is the format itself that puts the object (the box with the booklets) in relation to the academic context. But what are the effects it exerts? First and foremost, the format opens up the rigidity of the more traditional academic formats by providing space for artistic or dramaturgical strategies like drawing,



Figure 7. The unfolded version of *A Series of Suggestions #2: Here (not anywhere)* during Beyond the Black box 2023, © Alex Heuvink

painting in juxtaposition with writing, referencing and quoting. During the development of an academic research process like *The sound of a shared intimacy* I encounter several knots and each time I encounter such a knot my thinking starts to materialize. I start to draw, paint, fold, and sew. I become intimate with my own thoughts and experiences in order to unravel or unfold the tangle. *A Series of Suggestions* therefore gives me the opportunity to show and share my full process inclusive the hesitations and struggles, that would otherwise remain invisible. In this sense, it serves as a tool to share and re-evaluate the process within academia and as a tool to actualize the situation of struggle.

Re-evaluating the process, *A Series of Suggestions* as a tool for acknowledging agency and collaborations

The hesitations and struggles in my research trajectory often deal with my experience of an actual performance and root in real existing relations between people embodying different functions (artist, researcher, dramaturg, audience member, performer, human being). Therefore when I consider *A Series of Suggestions* as a tool to actualize the situation of struggle, I consequently consider it as a tool for collaboration. As seen in the previous sections, these collaborations can be defined as processes of unlearning by putting one's practice into dialogue with another, in order to suspend knowledge and engage in a multi-sensory way of sense-making in which unfolding generates dynamics of exchange and allows for depth.

By putting my practice into dialogue, I was able to create room to listen beyond my own words and thoughts. The dominance of listening over speaking can be recognized in the folding lines because it is exactly the act of folding and unfolding that provides space and time to not-know what the other will suggest. The folding lines are symptomatic for how one can "perceive the nuanced and ever-changing relation in which self [being it from the artist, the researcher and or the audience] is always embedded" (Labelle 8) and multiple.

Therefore, *A Series of Suggestions* possesses the quality to question how I work and simultaneously reveals that my work as an academic in performance studies is a relational and responsive practice, which "first emerges and becomes specific in particular collaborations and situations" (Peeters 11). Due to this quality *A Series of Suggestions* promises to become "tool for thinking through what is happening" (Stengers 185), a tool that "addresses and actualizes this power of the situation, that makes it a matter of particular concern, in other words, makes us think rather than recognize" (Stengers 185), because it aims at new possibilities for [practices] to become present, or in other words to connect. Consequently *A Series of Suggestions* does not approaches practices as they are "[...]" but as what they may become" (Stengers 186) through dialogue and by listening to them.

In this sense and through unfolding *A Series of Suggestions* encourages to engage in "a sensibility tuned to the energetics of being [and working] in [a certain world]" (Labelle 8) and by doing so it becomes

a tool in the making to reveal resonances that possesses the possibility to become an analogue “technology of belonging” (Stengers 186) by combining strategies from what Stengers indicates as the major key or stage, into a tool for thinking in minor key that brings forth an ecology of practice and collaboration.

Following Stengers, this implies that *A Series of Suggestions* takes into account and brings forth ethics. Because of the series roots in a methodology based on listening the ethics it produces can be understood as an ethics of listening, meaning that they “do not become a pattern of rules, of commandments to be obeyed, but a contingent negotiation and participation in the generation of a concurrent ruling and the morality that it might trigger” (Voegelin 75). Ethics are especially at stake when allowing for the not-knowing of the upcoming suggestions and the acknowledgment of the other’s agency which generates dialogues of vulnerabilities between practices.

All of this contributes to the fact that the act of unfolding *A Series of Suggestions* encourages us to engage in “a sensibility tuned to the energetics of being [and working] in [a certain world]” (Labelle 8) and by doing so it becomes a tool in the making to reveal resonances.

Conclusion

After introducing you to the format of *A Series of Suggestions* and the notion of unfolding on which it is built, this article had a look into the collaborations at the core of both *The sound of a shared intimacy* and *A Series of Suggestions*, before considering if *A Series of Suggestions* has the potential to function as a tool. The presented exploration of *A Series of Suggestions* brought to the surface that its functioning as a tool is multiple and more complex than I initially thought. This has to do with the fact that the act of unfolding at the core of the format testifies to its possibility to be passed along and functional to each body it encounters, be it a researcher, an artist, a graphic designer or an audience member, without losing its essential form. *A Series of Suggestions* has proven to be a tool with agency.

Consequently, and despite its multiple functionality and ability to open up a range of fields to play with and within, it must be addressed that *A Series of Suggestions* is a tool that cannot be taken up by one singular person alone. On the contrary it has proven to be a tool for collaboration

which demands reciprocal engagement. From the context and collaborations in which the tool arose it could be deduced that this reciprocal engagement roots in listening and therefore the use of it demands care for the I, the other and the ways in which different senses, bodies, stories, temporalities and imaginations interact. *A Series of Suggestions* can only function as a tool when all those involved allow themselves to not know, to unlearn by which they acknowledge the agency of the other and create room for a vulnerable engagement with the practice and material of the other. By doing so, they open up the possibility to discover the essences, the life-lines of the practices involved and reveal resonances. When such a sensible attunement can be reached *A Series of Suggestions* carries out the potential of a tool in the making for fruitful and sustainable dialogues between practices and the people embedded in them.

Works cited

- Arlander, Annette, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude and Ben Spatz. *Performance as Research: knowledge, methods, Impact*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Azoulay, Ariella Aïsha. *Potential History. Unlearning imperialism*. London: Verso, 2019.
- Blain, Martin and Helen Julia Minors. *Artistic Research in Performance through Collaboration*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Hoofwijk, Rita. <https://ritahoofwijk.com/en/#about-temp1>. n.d. 16 June 2023.
- Hoofwijk, Rita and Leonie Persyn. *A Series of Suggestions #2: Here (not anywhere)*. n.d.
- Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive. Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- . *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Jackzewska, Kinga. <https://www.kinga-jaczewska.com/>. n.d. 16 June 2023.
- Jaczewska, Kinga and Leonie Persyn. *A Series of Suggestions #1: The Common Texture is our Body*. Brussel: Leonie Persyn, 2022.
- Kim, Suk-Jun. *Humming*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.
- Labelle, Brandon. *Sonic Agency. Sound and Emerging Forms of Resistance*. London: Goldsmith Press, 2018.
- Parks, Elizabeth S. *The ethics of Listening. Creating space for Sustainable Dialogue*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.
- . <https://leoniepersyn.wixsite.com/aseriesofsuggestions>. 2022. 16 June 2023.
- Peeters, Jeroen. *And then it got legs. Notes on Dance Dramaturgy*. Brussels: Varamo Press, 2022.
- Persyn, Leonie. *A Series of Suggestions*. 2022. 16 June 2023.
- Stalpaert, Christel. "Performing Arts Activating Climate Change Awareness: Hyphenated Thinking in Common Dreams — Flotation School." *TDR-THE DRAMA REVIEW-THE JOURNAL OF PERFORMANCE STUDIES* 67:1 (2023): 74–81, doi:10.1017/s1054204322000892. <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/01GVFK1861PEPY0NWGQX-79N51A>
- Voegelin, Salome. *Sonic Possible Worlds. Hearing the Continuum of Sound*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Stengers, Isabelle. "Introductory notes on An Ecology of Practices." *Cultural Studies Review* 11:1 (2005): 183-196.